

MISTAKE

Mistake is a series of new figurative paintings in which my image manifests in ways that are inspired by real and imagined stories about loss of control and errors of judgement.

Situations are established in the studio that engage the tradition of theatricality in painting – situations that don't quite make sense. As in my previous work the figure in the paintings has returned to the ground - lying horizontal, the position for sleeping, dreaming, healing, sex and death.

Infected teeth were seen as the cause for a range of illnesses including arthritis, stupidity and all kinds of nervous diseases underpinning the 1920's Focal Infection Theory, which was widely taught until later being discredited.

Mistakenly, Virginia Woolf's psychiatrist George Savage, subscribed to 'Focal Infection Theory', recommending in 1922 that Woolf have three teeth removed to relieve psychological tension. Following this Woolf's mood did not improve, she wore false teeth and developed a distrust of medical treatment (she is never portrayed smiling in photographs).

The painting titled "If we survive the teeth we succumb to the waves" is a nod to Virginia Woolf and her references to teeth, which are many, in *Orlando* and *Mrs Dalloway*¹

Through the performative process I attempt to rupture the 'already familiar world',² questioning our presumptions about perception. For example, in some of the paintings I have played out a mistake and excessively applied Band-Aids to my face, creating an adhesive mask through which I cannot see, it suctioned to my skin. This suffocating act plunges me into a restricted visceral world of sound and space.

Through exploring arts' affective dimension I reflect on the practice of feminist artists of the 1960-1970's. The title of one of the paintings 'fantasmatic' is a term artist Lygia Clark coined "a term that covers the sense of experiencing something without a real or identifiable referent" – it is something that is not reducible to visibility.³ In a way our feelings are fantasmatic in that in they are not visible, we only see the body reacting to our emotions.

In this series of work I attempted to explore phenomenology through investigating the subtle energies of the body and attempting to visualise the 'felt' experience. This leads to questions about the boundaries between mind, body and emotion; are they so clear, are they there at all?

Amanda Davies

1 Orlando, Virginia Woolf, Vintage Classic, 2016, First Published 1928, 143

2 Maurice Merleau-Ponty

3 Susan Best, *Visualising Feeling: affect and the feminine avant-garde*. I.B.Tauris, 2014, 140