

## EXTRACT: SOPHIE MACPHERSON

What is much more interesting is how the figures are dressed. It is as though the artist has designed or imagined the design for a series of unique collars or devices that hold or display the heads and necks of the sitters. These are made using card, very thin aluminium, lace and leather, even thin slats of wood; these materials are collaged or glued into the images. It is difficult to grasp for what exact purpose the works are made only because they look as though they are things made for a purpose, fashion plates or layouts for designs, even including one or two measurements. But the collars and ruffs are too outlandish for any real figure to wear except to some bizarre fancy dress or as props for a film. Some have the look of certain modernist notions of space age designs, like those for *Aelita, Queen of Mars*. Several of the images come with extensive notes. One reads: 'Collars 8, 7 & 9 thinking originally for 'facial types' but this is too generic. Awful. Especially interested in F. and the 'Modigliani Neck'. Difficult problem to realise without compromising the curve at its base. There is still a difficulty with M. as she has such delicate features that perhaps normally one would set off say via examples: a.) i.e Lace & cloth set with wire to give or suggest depth, or stitched like example b.) Satin pillow for the neck – it emerges from that. Perhaps other extremes would be more helpful? i.e. offering analogies in cut, shape, form, padding and flow rather than correlatives. That is example c.) a more jaggedy, metallic line (tin snips?) to offset the extreme delicacy of the throat/neck/chin? This could cause more involved questions to be asked than answered. Discussing it with F. when I did the drawing: the idea of opposites or juxtapositions was the most generative for me. How to give L's neck and her pale skin the justice it deserves? The Napoleonic Heroine! Amazon Queen! F. said that most of the time she found the paintings made on top of the drawings more than adequate but I am still fascinated by the problem of how to realise them into actual things, things to wear. Apart from anything else it would be good sport to all wear them for the fete, like a Royal Ascot for oddballs.' This would be written on the reverse side of another three-sided portrait: 'The trick is to surely carry the essence, the idiosyncrasies of each sitter, to encapsulate, frame each one literally inside or against each 'device'. I mean to give them the necessary armour and to look for the architecture of character alongside feature, that's the key to it! I'm mixing metaphors but think I mean that there is a story, a mutable essence in each different person but it is not necessarily to do with physiognomy, it is much, much more complex and sophisticated than that and I find it is only available to me at oblique angles, seeing people out of the corner of one's eye, refracted, reflated. I need something regular, regulated and formal which is why the three sides helps. Nothing seems to work with a portrait viewed straight-on and I am not sure why. I suppose there is too much of a challenge in a gaze that requires meeting that forces me to impose myself on it, or into it. When light bounces off a chin in half profile or even just in the back of a head, it is much easier to locate something of their essence rather than imposing my own. Am I kidding myself? F. said this thing about auras that these devices are more for comparisioning the auras rather than the shoulders of the sitter.'

*Do we hear this note or just read it?*

Perhaps both. Then there is an extended movement that goes nowhere in particular through the building.

*Wait. I have lost my thread... Shall I check back? Read back a section?*

No, let's move onwards. I have it now, I think.