

MARTIN NELSON



Diana

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Maybe its about time I wrote about you before time beats me?

But where to start.?

Seeing you slowly drift away Is still a memory that remains crystal clear. It seemed to be happening in slow motion. That day is as yesterday. We were both resident at the hospice In Leeds, having gone there a week earlier when your life become unbearable. It had slowly slipped away, your independence, so that you were now a victim of your disease. We thought we could beat it. That day was unreal.

That last Day

It's more than twenty years since Diana died on that fateful day, the eve of Valentine's Day, the 13th February 2005. I have tried several times to relive that moment and to put down what I remember but as I approach the task, I become tearful and hesitant. Now at last I am ready to bury that ghost and to revisit that day and record my memories of it.

Looking back. I realise it began one Friday evening when we were preparing to go out to a friend's house for Friday night dinner. Diana was in the shower when I heard her call out to me. She had been washing her left breast and thought she could feel a lump. She asked me to feel her breast. I had examined many female breasts during my training and immediately felt a hard lump. My heart dropped, I knew what it was.

It turned out to be cancer and what followed was a long and painful journey lasting almost five years until this moment.

Diana had become increasingly weak, and it became obvious that the twice daily visits by the district nurse was not enough to keep her comfortable and clean. So after discussion with the doctor at St Jemma's Hospice, she was admitted.

Her large airy room was on the ground floor with a glass door opening onto a patio onto which her bed could be wheeled if the weather allowed. An extra bed had been brought in to allow me to stay with her and I began to do that during that last week.

We knew that she had developed liver secondaries, so the outlook was poor but she continued to have her daily medication, the chemo-therapy and the bone tablets.

She didn't like them but accepted that they may help. We never talked about the 'time after' but I later learned that she had written personal letters to Sarah and Paul.

We were both talkative, sharing so many thoughts and fears, so having no secrets we had said as much as we needed although as I look back there are so many things I should have said but didn't.

The last day began like any other. They offered Diana breakfast and she had some porridge which I helped her to eat. Then the nurses came and made her comfortable. But something happened that day that I have struggled to understand.

When the medicine trolley came round, Diana was told for the first time that she didn't need to have her medicines if she didn't want to and later a nurse came in and gave her an injection, 'for pain' she said although Diana fortunately was not having much pain. At the time I didn't appreciate what was happening but later, much later I felt puzzled by these two events.

Diana was made more comfortable, and we talked for a while about mundane things. She wanted to know when the children would come again. They both lived and worked in London, so coming to Leeds was difficult. Diana then said that she would like to sleep a little, and she turned over and was soon asleep.

Looking back, I didn't realise then, that would be her last sleep and she would not wake up. I sat with her, holding her hand and watching her. She was sleeping peacefully, and I didn't want to disturb her. Lunch time came and the nurses brought in her lunch but when I said I would wake her, they suggested letting sleep as she must be tired.

Again I didn't suspect anything untoward. By the afternoon I was getting a bit perturbed and I called the nurse. That was the first time I was told that she had been given a stronger painkiller.

When the nurse left, I puzzled about this as Diana was not suffering much pain. As the shadows lengthened, I noticed a change in her breathing. No longer regular, it had become irregular with gasps and periods of breath holding. These became more frequent and the periods of apnoea longer.

Suddenly a cold fear grasped me and I tried to call out but my voice didn't come. I realised I was watching her dying and it was just a matter of time. Strangely I then didn't seek help. I realised she was not going to recover and that the end when it came would be peaceful. She stopped breathing at about 6 pm. There was then a strange quiet in the room. I held her hand which was warm and if it hadn't been for the silence, I would have believed she was still alive. We were alone for several hours when Paul who had been travelling from London arrived.

We two sat together through the night protecting her so that she wasn't alone until the undertakers arrived. Sarah and Nigel arrived the following day. Diana and I said goodbye for the last time. Year later I learned that a dear friend with whom we had regularly played bridge carried out the Jewish religious cleansing of Diana's body the following day.

I would like to digress for a moment and raise the question, "What is the role of Hospice in the management of Cancer, in remission or terminally."

The literature of the hospice movement since its inception has emphasized both palliative and supportive treatment. Although most terminal patients die in a hospice, some go into remission and return to their homes and a very few recover or die at home from an unrelated cause. Diana had received supportive treatment in the way of regular chemotherapy by IV Drip. She also received the occasional Blood transfusion. It seemed to me at that time she was receiving supportive therapy.

Later when her condition deteriorated, she received palliative care. I realise now that the doctors had decided that as there was no other treatment and that she should be allowed to die with dignity. That last injection was probably a sedative.

I remain confused. Shouldn't I her husband have been involved in those discussions?

Our lives seemed so sure, we were both managing to be happy. I was looking forward to my retirement and planning my future. She was establishing her Art career when her whole world changed.

The day we met

The first day I saw Diana remains vivid in my memory. I had been invited for Sunday lunch at my brother Geoffrey and his wife Barbara's house in Hampstead. She and Diana were close friends. After lunch we walked into a local park separating into small groups. Diana and I walked together.

She was very young and shy. I was eleven years older than her and it seemed an unlikely relationship.

The Beginning

Diana was brought up in North London and attended the North London Collegiate School, an all girls school, where she excelled in Art being awarded an 'A' at advanced level.

She then spent a year in Paris studying Art and learning French before returning to London to work as the PA for a Member of Parliament.

It seemed that chance played no part in how Diana and I met. It was destined. Geoffrey my older brother was married to Barbara and Diana was her best friend.

She was nineteen at the time and I twenty-eight. Despite our age difference, we shared a lot in common and arranged to meet again.

A disastrous dinner date at the Palladium in London with Eric and his girl friend followed, almost ending our relationship before it had begun. Diana was very shy and hardly spoke a word.

Not daunted, I persisted and invited her for Sunday lunch at my home in Kentish Town shared with two school friends, Eric and Arthur. She and Sandra Eric's girlfriend prepared lunch while the men went to a local pubn!!

Further dates followed but then I was appointed as a doctor in Sheffield and our meetings became less frequent. On my weekends off, I would drive my Triumph Herald down the M1 to meet her. She was living with her parents near Hendon Central. Her Grandparernst lived near Lord's roundabout and later, Diana and I were often their guests on a Friday night.

Our courtship wasn't smooth as I was then posted to Gillingham in the Meday Towns to work at the St Bartholomew's Hospital. Happily Diana managed to persuade her parents to let her visit me at the weekends.

But Diana was ill prepared for domestic duties having been banned from the kitchen by her mother.

She wanted to help and offered to cook dinner one night. While I was at the hospital, she visited a local butcher shop where she asked for grilling steak. He chose to sell her stewing steak.

The meal was a disaster and ended with Diana in tears and I threatening to visit the butcher and tell him what's what.

The Origin of Species

Sharing a love of reading, Diana had given me a copy of Charles Darwin's book, *The Origin of Species* .

As a doctor in training, I was being posted to one hospital after another so I meetings became fewer and fewer and our relationship cooled when I was appointed to the Sheffield Hospitals. It was now very difficult for us to meet. But I never forgot her.

Some months later, Diana received a parcel containing the 'Darwin' book- I was returning it to her.

Diana's' mother, Vera commented,
'he wants to marry you.' and she was correct.

In 1965, we were married at the Marble Arch Synagogue by the late Rabbi Unterman. Our wedding was celebrated at the Dorchester Hotel in London.

Sarah is born in 1966

When I was appointed at Guys, we set up home in an apartment overlooking Greenwich Park.

In 1966 Sarah our daughter was born by forceps delivery. She arrived deeply cyanosed but thanks to the skill of the attending nurses, she was soon pink and crying lustily. Today I think Diana would have been offered a Caesarian.

In 1968 thanks to Mr Jack Batchelor I was seconded to Johns Hopkins Hospital Baltimore. Our family now with one child Sarah travelled to Baltimore. Returning a year later.

The next few years were spent bringing up her two children, Sarah (b 1966) and Paul (1968).

In 1969 we moved to Leeds where she trained as a teacher receiving her Certificate in Education in 1974. For the next seventeen years she taught at both school and at adult level (English as a second language).

In 1988, at the age of 44, Diana decided it was time to return to her love of drawing and painting. She had been a talented artist since childhood as a professional, enrolling in a Foundation course at Leeds College of Art.

She subsequently attended the Metropolitan University obtaining a BA (Hons) in 1993, followed by an MA in Art and Design also at the Metropolitan.

After her graduation, she joined the College's Board of Governors and eventually served as Chair of the Academic Standards & Quality Assurance Sub-committee.

Diana, spent the next years experimenting with different ways of producing images. Not satisfied, with simply drawing or painting. she gradually incorporated photography and copies of material (newspaper cuttings, documents, maps) into her work.

This flexible technique was particularly important in the development of an extensive series of small works exploring her Jewish Heritage and the experience of duality in being both Jewish and English.

Paul is Born in 1970

I was attending an Out-patient Clinic in Gravesend when the news came through that Paul was born. The sister in charge stopped the clinic and announced in a loud voice that Dr Nelson had just become the father of a baby boy. The patients in the waiting room all stood up clapping and congratulating me. Later after he had finished seeing the patients, he drove to the hospital to meet his new born son who was named Paul David.

A Room of Her Own

It was while working from her room at home, that Diana's fascination with paper began, using it not only as a surface on which to draw or paint but also as an important element in the images she made. She moved on to making her own paper and realised that it could become a work of art in its own right.

With it, she produced a wide range of textures by incorporating natural materials: seeds, fragments of plants, feathers, petals and leaves-into the fabric of her hand-made paper. This led her to consider the sculptural possibilities of using wet paper to mould objects, including her own hands.

She believed passionately that everyone should have the chance to express him or herself creatively. Using her skills and understanding of Art, she worked as a freelance workshop leader in a number of venues including Leeds Art Gallery, The West Yorkshire Playhouse, The Mercer Gallery Harrogate and the Manchester Jewish Museum.

In them, all she left a lasting impression on whoever encountered her. Happily working with children or adults from 9 to 80 years old, Diana's enthusiasm for drawing, paper- making, Lino and mono printing and art appreciation, was contagious.

9-11 Pennsylvania USA

In 2011, Diana was invited to exhibit her work at an Art Gallery in Pittsburg Pennsylvania, We went together, landing at New York and hiring a car. I drove to the city where we had booked into a hotel.

After lunch we decided to explore the city on foot, walking along a deserted pavements. In the distance, we heard loud shouting and found a baseball game in full swing.

Not having seen the game before we decided to stop and watch. We were directed to a high stand from which a good view of the game could be seen. The other on-lookers hearing our accents were eager to know where we were from and soon got into conversation, ready to explain the minutia of the game.

The evening was uneventful. We were tired and we went to bed early looking forward to the following day unaware of what we would find.

Coming down to breakfast, we saw crowds of people hunched around a small TV image. A tragedy was unfolding. Initially it was thought to be a film until they realised that it was real- the Twin Towers in New York had been attacked. There was horror and tears as the reality sunk in.

Suddenly the world had changed, Panic was everywhere, people rushing to their homes and their loved ones.



We had to get home to England and departing from Newark airport was our best bet. It was five hour journey. We arrived at the airport to chaos, with people rushing to get a flight. Fortunately our flight tickets were valid and we were soon in the Departure lounge awaiting take off. As we climbed into the sky, I was able to see the site of the twin towers, now a smouldering pile of bricks.



Arriving back at Heathrow, we stayed in London for a few days before returning to Leeds.

MAAZ Centre.

Situated in North Leeds, the Marjorie and Arnold Ziff Centre was a Day and Residential Jewish Centre combining daily activities including a Kosher Kitchen with residential Accommodation. There was also an art studio with an in-house art teacher

It wasn't long before Diana and a friend began a series of Art lessons at the centre, that were very popular and well attended. Paper making continued to be her love and she was soon very active in paper-making classes.

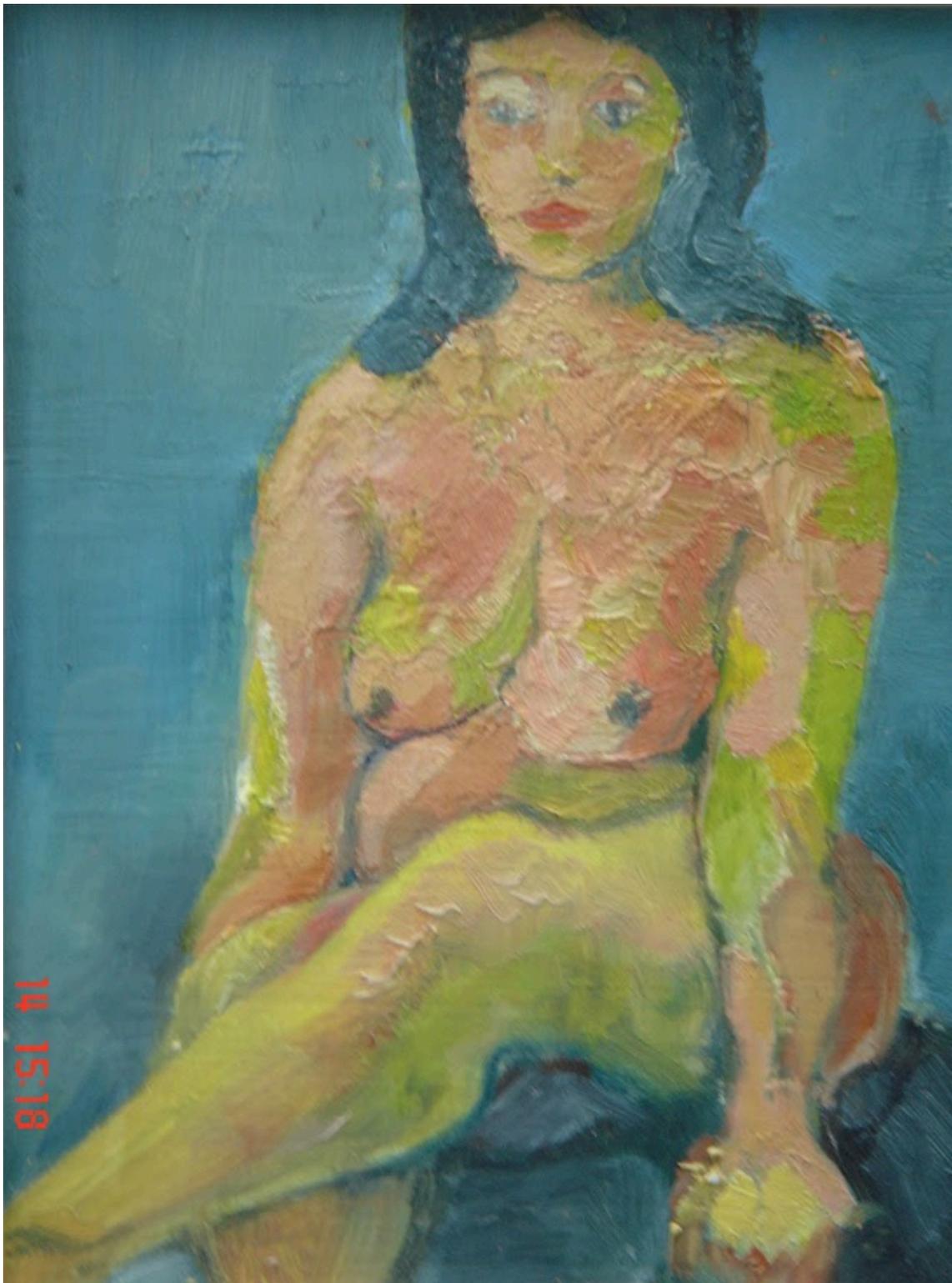
Nude Studies





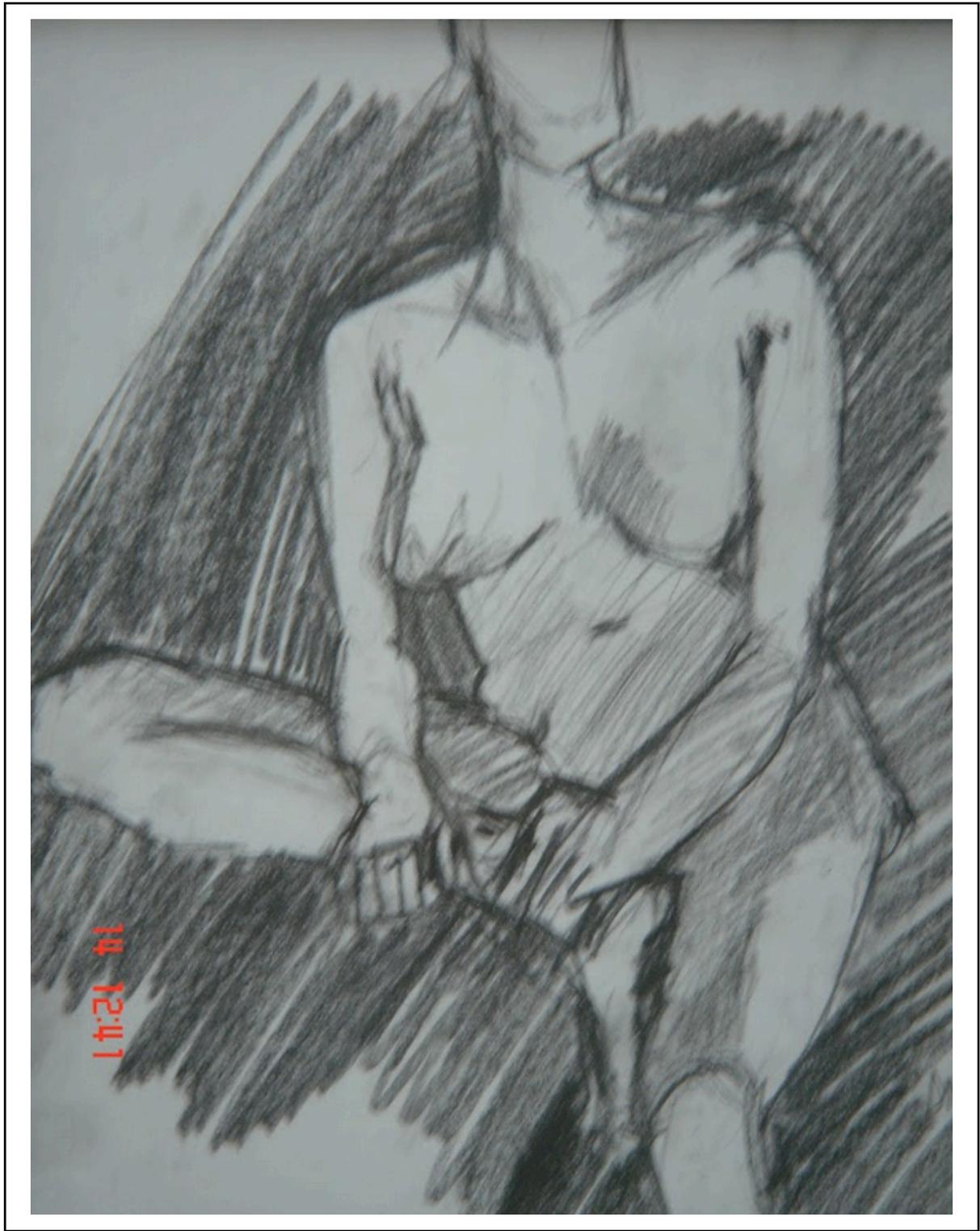
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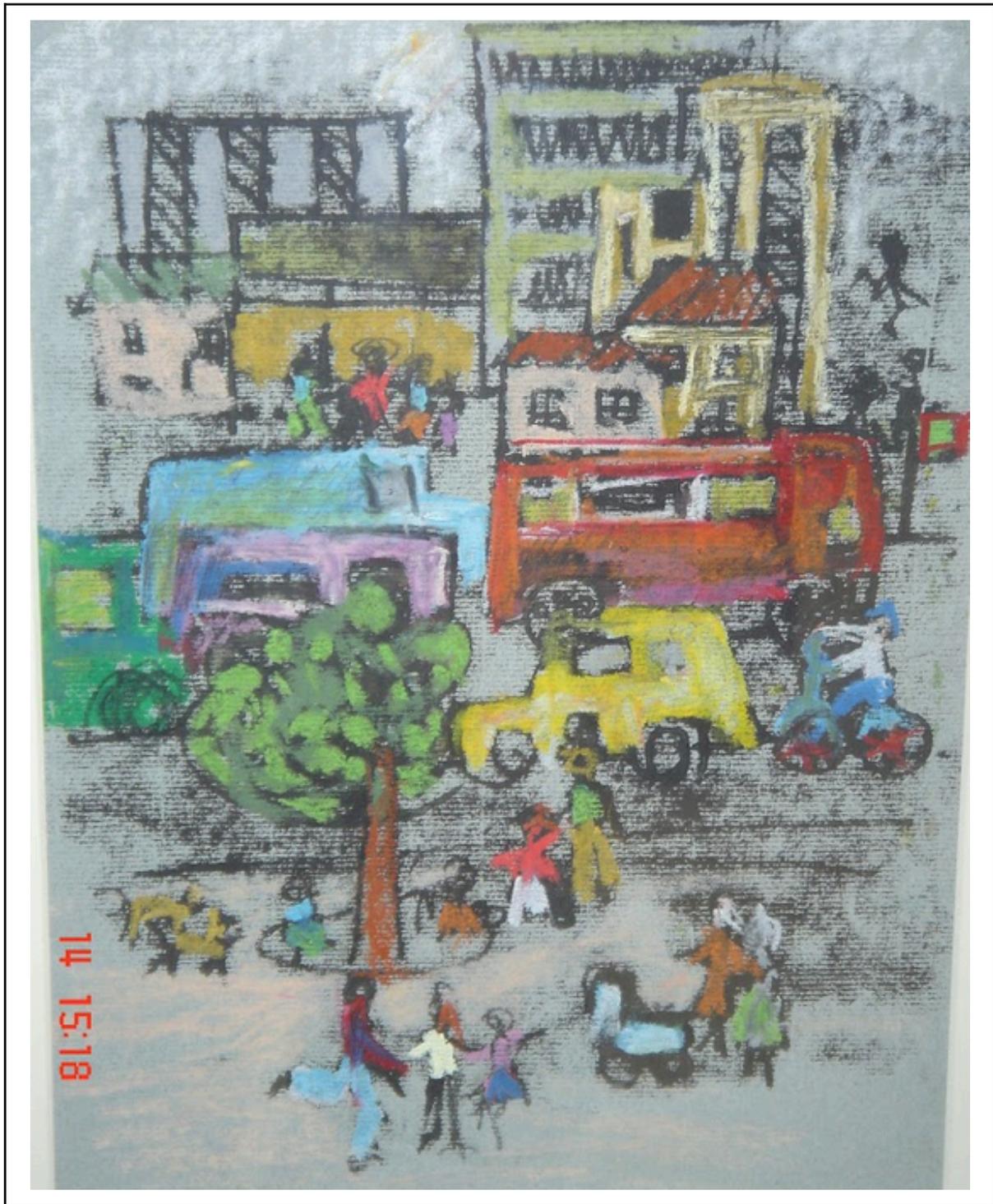








Traffic Studies



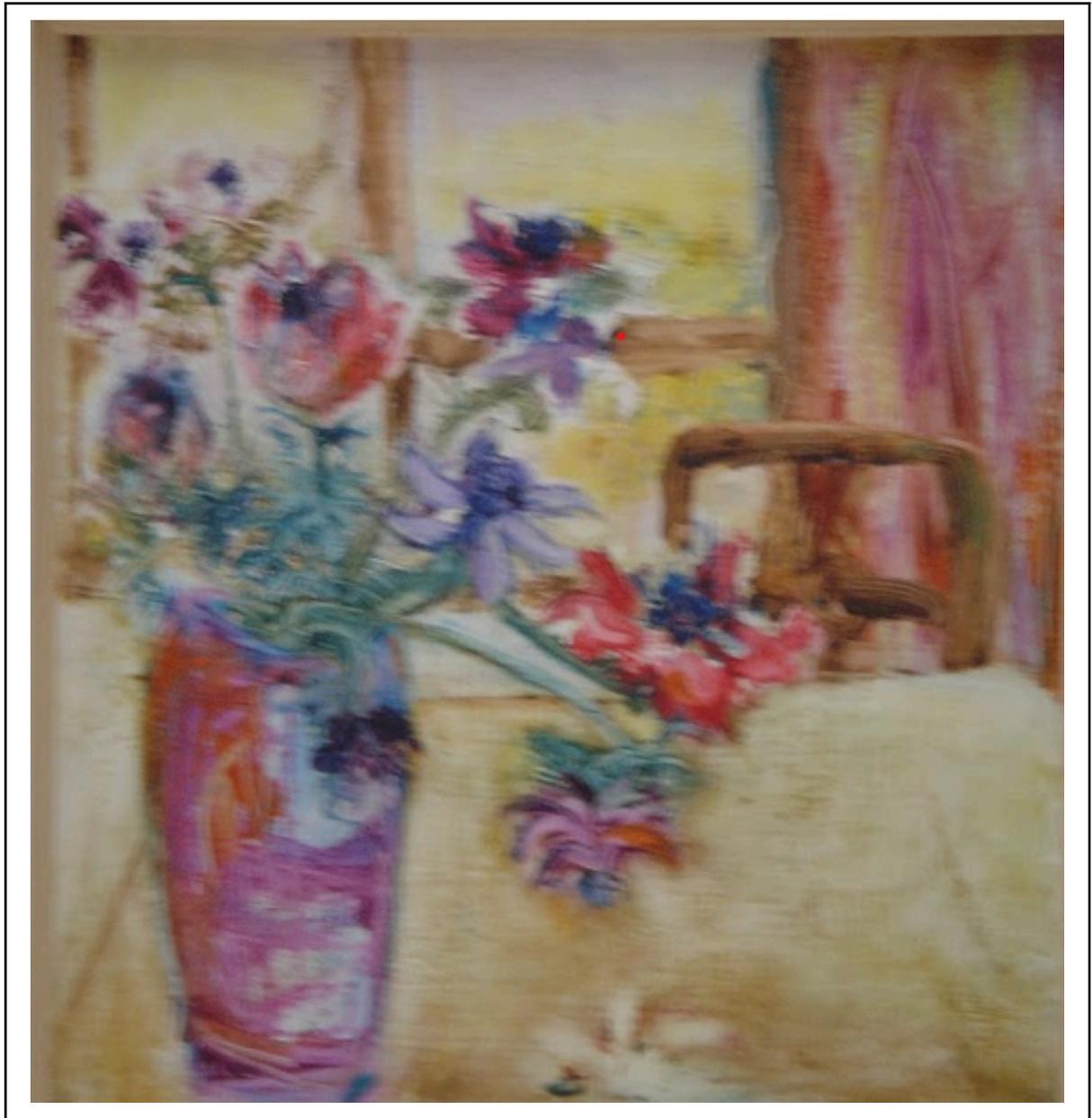


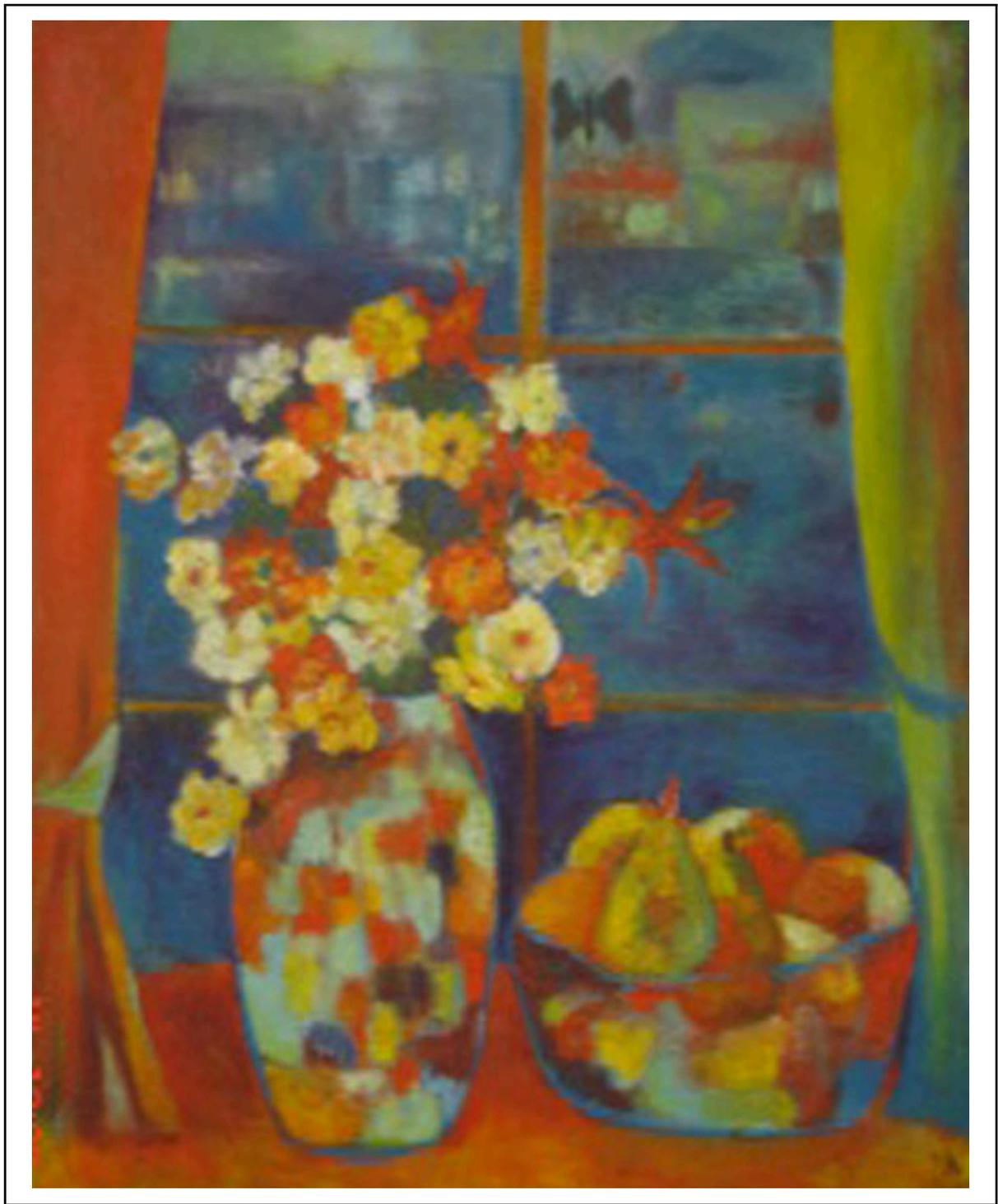


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Flower Studies







Paper Studies









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Charcoal Studies







Exhibitions

Diana exhibited in many local galleries including Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham.

Posthumous Exhibition at the Light

Following her death, friends helped to set up an exhibition of Diana's work at the Light, an open air area in the centre of Leeds.

Sarah Layton and Janet Williams



Mr and Mrs Stoller and Freyda



The Light Exhibition



