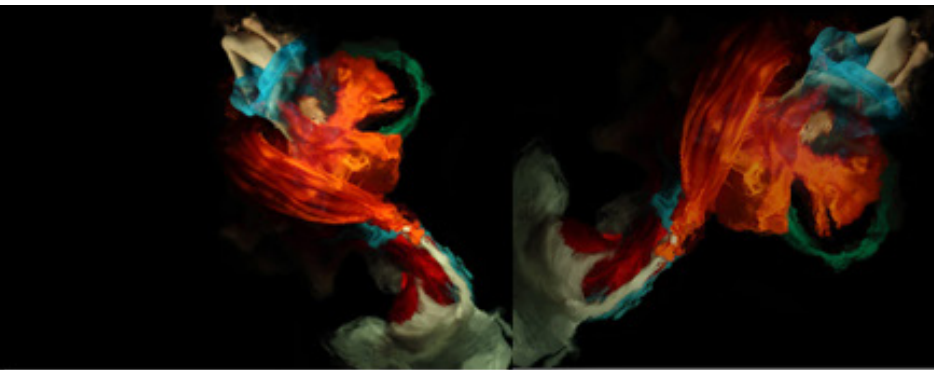


COLOUR IN THE DARKNESS





## COLOUR IN THE DARKNESS

***“Explain art to someone who has never seen it. What does it mean?”***

***Its meaning is that it is there, and it is seen.***

***Our work is to reveal. Nothing more.***

***The question is: what to reveal?***

***We reveal ourselves.”***

Van der Pryss.

Colour in the darkness is the story of a portrait and its artist. The portrait and artist were lost to the Covent Garden Fire of 1808. The fire burned for 9 hours killing 23 people. It's a time of war and economic chaos. Francis Wesley is an artist whose studio has serious debts. His clients, because of the war with Bonaparte, are unable to pay. He's threatened by loansharks. He faces bankruptcy.

The Dutch artist, Van Der Pryss is Wesley's old apprentice. Wesley learns they've been commissioned to paint the portrait of Emmeline Hodnett. Emmeline's fiance is Sir Charles Devere. His cousin is Prince George's personal secretary. Rumours surface that the portrait is scandalous. Wesley is coerced into discovering the truth about the nature of Emeline's portrait.

But, there is a problem. Wesley and Van der Pryss haven't spoken for years. They had a falling out. A violent argument. There is this dark secret between them.

This is where our story starts. What is the secret between Wesley and Van der Pryss?

What is the nature of the portrait? What has been painted?



***“The world is falling apart...  
We can no longer clog the holes  
and persuade ourselves it can be prevented.  
We are watching the final laps of a race.  
Sadly, most people never want to  
believe the truth until it's too late.”***

Ormsby

1800 marked the beginnings of the Romantic period. It flourished until mid-century. Its emphasis was on the imagination and emotion. It emerged as a response to the the aftermath of the French Revolution of 1789. In just over half a century our world evolved, and our relationship with art and image changed .

As a director and writer it's possible for me to draw parallels with today. War. Economic chaos. European borders and politics. Yet the impact this period had on art is perhaps undervalued. Goya's La Maja desnuda dates from around the same period. When it discovered around 1813, it brought the artist before of the inquisition. It shocked. It surprised. It reshaped the idea of portraiture.

Surprising and shocking images abound. We can see whatever images we want on a variety of screens with a variety of resolutions. Have we forgotten that a part of our response to an image is the journey we make to see it? Standing in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome where I live, and seeing Caravaggio, is quite different from viewing his art it on a computer. The surprise, shock and wonder of viewing a portrait, is intrinsic to it being a physical object. They have a texture, smell, the colours emerge out of the darkness. I stand before the artist.

What does art give us? Why do we pursue it? Why do we look at it? Why do we need images? Why do we need to capture an image of someone? Why do we like to look and be looked at? The desire for a portrait and the need to post a selfie, do they spring from the same source?

I love the idea of ensemble theatre. I love a stage that teems with life. I love working with a company of actors that play many roles. It's difficult to produce, but always worth the effort. The play has 19 named parts . Plus chorus of studio assistants, soldiers, crowds and servants. Of the protagonists, 6 are women, three are men. This is not a story about male protagonists. This is a story where women move the story forward.

I have directed eleven of Shakespeare's plays and I have taken much from him. The structure of the play and the process in rehearsal are all things that Shakespeare has taught me. The joy of developing work over five or six weeks with actors in a room creates an electricity for an audience that is magical.





***"We are also excited about subtle uses of digital technology to create the illusion of Emeline's portrait materialising out of thin air, creating the feeling that the public are a part of the creation of the portrait. I have been artistic director of a small European based touring ensemble for the last ten years. The theatre I love the best always comes from simplicity, so I am not keen that the technology overshadows the acting, it should compliment the actors, support them not outshine them."***



## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS.

The production would require a minimum company of twelve, with all but two roles being doubled.

Our ideal production would seek to stage this play in promenade, allowing us to tell the story in 360°. We are exploring the possibility of producing the play within a site specific context or within an adaptable theatre space.

The first stage is to organise a reading of the play. It would be fantastic if this could take place in a gallery or museum where the invited audience could be surrounded by the art or even the architecture of the period. This stage would give us the opportunity to seek out the following members of a creative team:

PORTRAIT ARTIST, to create imaginary artworks from the period. They would also be responsible for creating the styles of Van der Pryss and Wesley. COMPOSER. It would be very interesting to see what a contemporary composer such as Olafur Arnalds, Max Richter or Eleni Karaiandru could create. SET & LIGHTING DESIGNER EXECUTIVE/ARTISTIC PRODUCER.

The second stage of the project would be to look into the how and the where. Is a site specific piece the most exciting way to tell the story? Or could we create something special within a more traditional theatre space? I am quite keen to see what opportunities there are outside of London. Could we bring something to a part of the country that doesn't receive theatre like this very often?

This stage would also give us the opportunity with the designer and artist to develop the 3d imagery and how best to use it. ISADORA is a platform and framework that looks very promising but perhaps something simpler would be more effective. The work of United Visual Artists has been a reference point for my research. The final stage would be production. Ideally a rehearsal period of six weeks, the first week would be a very collaborative period where the company would spend much of the time creating a physical and textual world. I am a text based director. The play only works if what we say is as important as what we do and what we see.





Provisional tech sheet for

**COLOUR IN THE DARKNESS**

National Portrait gallery  
room 20

**contacts**

Ian Reddington  
reddingtoni@yahoo.co.uk

Director & writer  
Giles Smith  
giles@j33tre.org

## STORY

Colour in the darkness is about a portrait and its artist. Both portrait and artist were lost to the Covent Garden Fire in 1808, which burned for 9 hours killing 23 people.

It's a time of war and economic chaos. Francis Wesley is a portrait artist with serious debts. His clients, because of the war, are unable to pay. He's threatened by loansharks. He faces bankruptcy.

Wesley discovers his old apprentice, the dutch artist Van der pryss, is to paint the portrait of Emeline Hodnett. Emeline is engaged to Sir charles Devere. His cousin is Prince George's personal secretary.

Wesley hears Van der pryss's portrait is perhaps scandalous. Wesley is coerced into discovering the truth about the nature of Emeline's portrait.

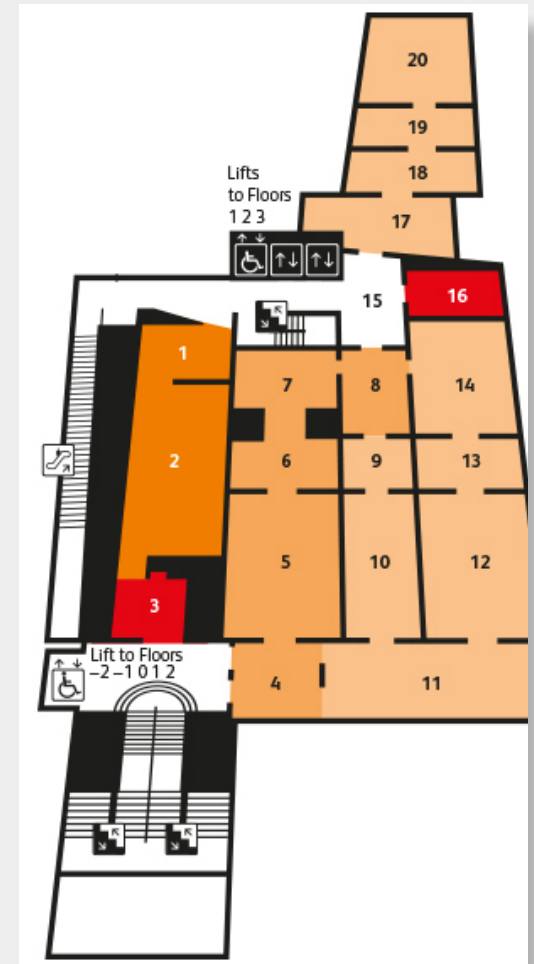
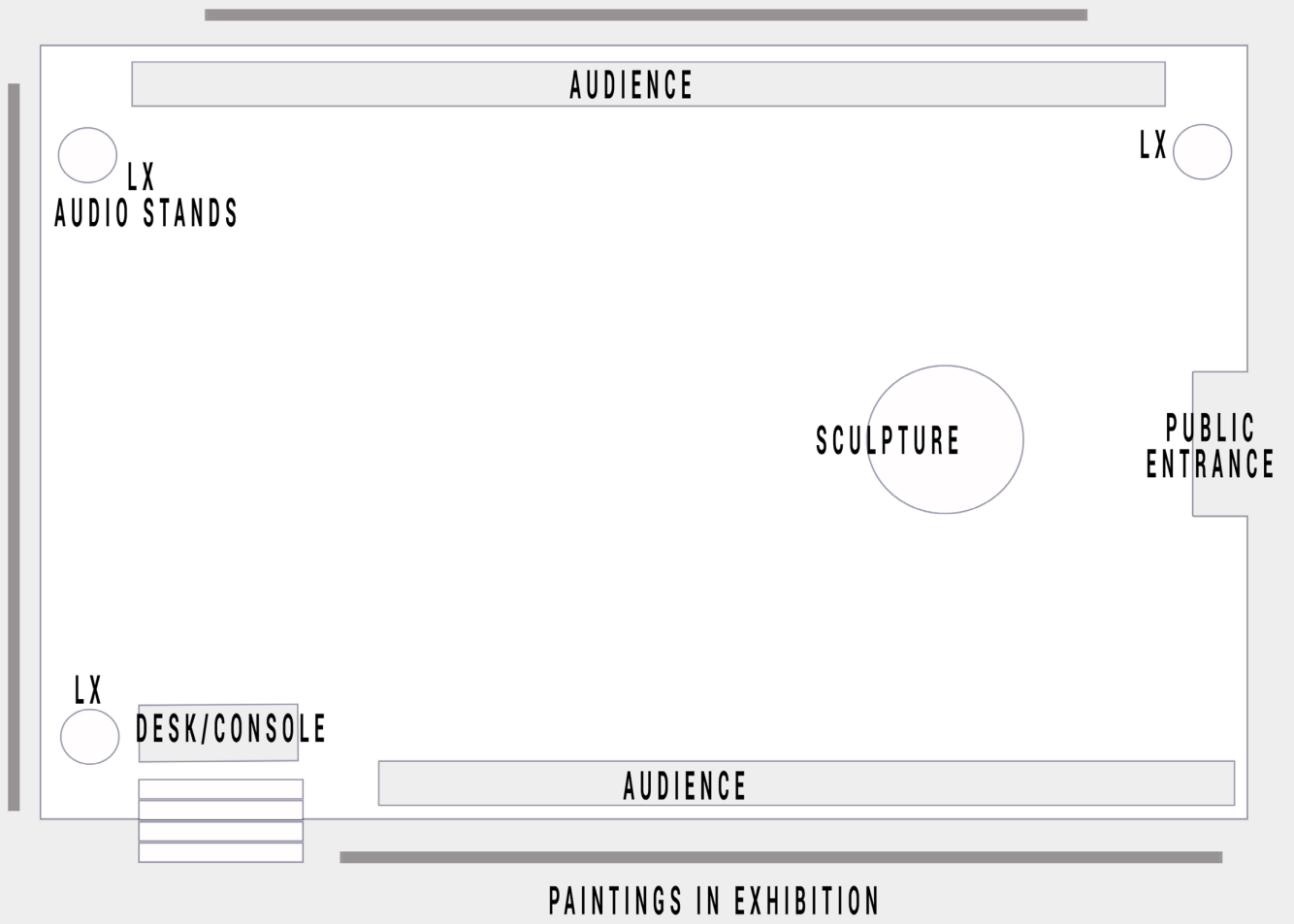
And that is where our story starts its journey: What is the nature of this portrait? What is it a portrait of? Why is it potentially scandalous?

However, there is a problem. Wesley and Van der Pryss haven't spoken for years. They had a falling out. A huge, violent argument. There is this dark secret between them. Which over the course of the story we discover.

Colour In The Darkness is a project in development. Using Room 20 at the National Portrait Gallery we will create a semi-staged event open to the public. The public performance will present several moments from the play .

The project will involve 10 actors, music and minimal lighting and take place between September and November 2016.

A collaboration between the performance and figurative arts and the National Gallery's education department.



## ROOM 20

“The Road to Reform”

### LIGHTING

4 x Arena 8 Inch 7°-60° Theatre Fresnel + gels.  
 1 x Source Four Fixed Focus 750w Profile spot.  
 4x Manfrotto light stand

dimmer / 12 channel lighting board.  
 1 x Video projector.

### AUDIO

Speakers, mixing desk.  
 radio mic's for 10 actors.

This is a provisional tech sheet.