

It began on a hot August afternoon. I was at the Museum of Holography on Mercer Street in New York setting up a portrait studio that was to open in conjunction with the “Holographic Instant “ exhibition that Ian Lancaster, the director of the museum was organizing. JK lasers had just bought Lumonics and was anxious to extend their markets. They agreed to lend us a one joule pulse laser under the auspices of Holographics Inc. the company I was involved with, and I was to run it. There were delays in delivering it, and John Webster, an expert on lasers, had to go back to England the same day it arrived. Needless to say his tutoring was minimal to none and there I was trying to understand the laser and design and construct a camera and studio in the lower floor of the museum. It was a very stressful time since a high profile opening had been scheduled.



*Fig.1
Ana Maria
with JK laser*

I was working on the laser when I looked up I saw this very handsome and charming man saying “Can I be of help?” It was Rudie whom I had not met before although of course I knew who he was. We talked and talked for hours and so began our friendship.



*Fig.2
Rudie*

Rudie would come by on his bicycle every afternoon and we would spend hours at the local coffee shop on Canal Street discussing love, life and especially holographic art. Was it an oxymoron? What did it mean to be

an artist; did the technology, the sheer difficulty of making a hologram affect the outcome? Was a hologram a work of art if the artist had not made the hologram, but had hired a technician or a lab to do it? What is the best way to align the object beam?

Holography, being a young medium at this time lacked a cannon to follow or rebel against. There were hardly any art critics writing articles about it or art galleries showing holographic art.

There was a lot of chatter and publicity about holography then, but it was all about the possible technological uses of the medium. The most difficult problem that a holographic artist had to confront, aside from how hard it was to make a piece was the dreaded “Gee-Wheez” factor. On seeing a hologram the main reaction of the public was “Gee, how do you do it?”

Photography was early on embraced by sculptors and painters. In holography only a handful of established artists like Bruce Neuman, Dali, Agam and later Chuck Close tried it.. Only James Turrell took it up consistently.

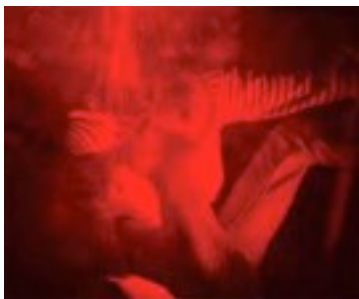


Fig.3
Bruce
Neuman
Hologram



Fig 4 D
Dali
Hologram

One topic that was close to my heart and kept coming up was what made a portrait a work of art.

From the Roman Egyptian Fayum portraits to Chuck Close and Karsh the human face has had a great fascination for artists. Cicero said” a face is a picture of the mind”.

Holographic portraits presented both a challenge and opportunity. The challenge is that the high fidelity of the recording shows every hair and wrinkle without the benefit of retouching. The opportunity is that that wealth of information can reveal more psychological depth than a photograph.



Fig. 5
Diane Dixon
Hologram

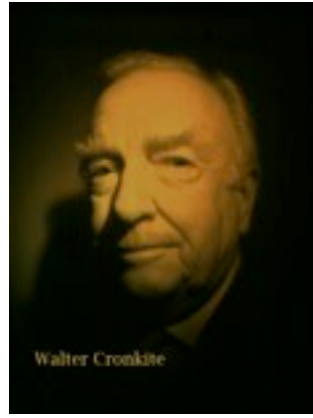


Fig. 6
Walter
Cronkite

I began doing portraits in Hawaii with my show “The Children of Hawaii” in 1973. I became fascinated by the sense of presence in the portraits, the sense that some essential quality of the person had been captured, almost another dimension of their being. I became quite good at it and made portraits of famous and not so famous people.



Fig. 7
Ana Maria &
Bishop Moore



Fig. 8
Bishop Moore
Hologram

This was a very exciting time Keith Haring sat for his portrait, as did numerous other notable people. CNN ran a whole segment, hosted by a novice Christiane Amanpour, about the process of making a portrait.



Fig. 9
Keith Haring
& Ana Maria



Fig. 10
Keith Haring
Hologram

This momentum gave rise to many many discussions between Rudie and I. Is a portrait a work of art, are the intentions of the practitioner as important as the presence of the subject. Is the very similitude that made the images so vivid and real a barrier against having an esthetic experience?

By the way, in case you are wondering, Rudie came up with the final edict, a work is art if you say it is art. Those of you who knew Rudie will not be surprised at this. He absolutely believed in the power of the individual to shape his reality and not depend on some expert to tell you what is what. This is the great lesson that Rudie taught me and I am still learning, to play, to be free. He had no respect for the establishment art world with its galleries and articles and rituals. He insisted that the process of creation should be fun, joyous, that we should always be explorers.

I began to experiment with some more elaborate portraits, such as the one of me with ropes and the diptych of Rudie where I wanted to express the conflict between the desire to trust and the necessity of self protection that was such an ingrained aspect of Rudie's psyche. I placed him behind a wall looking out where he remains weary of the viewer. In the second hologram his hand breaks through the screen in his desire for contact.

Fig. 11
Rudie

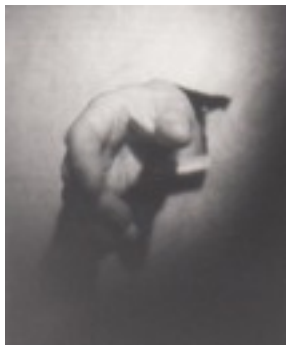


Fig. 12
Rudie/Hand

I bring this piece up because it was our first collaboration. At that time I had begun to feel a dissatisfaction with the constraints of a holographic portrait. They were, on the whole monochromatic, their depth limited, the space ungenerous. I speak here of reflection holograms. I had gone to see an exhibition of Francis Bacon's portraits and I was overwhelmed by them. Those liquefying faces, tormented by the weight of the flesh haunted me. Rudie and I began our conversations on how best to break the mold. How to have portraits be more abstract, more pliable perhaps more universal.



Fig.13
Francis Bacon
Self Portrait

We were using the pulse laser at the museum's portrait studio. The camera was functional but rather rigid. It had only one object beam illuminating the subject from above and the side.

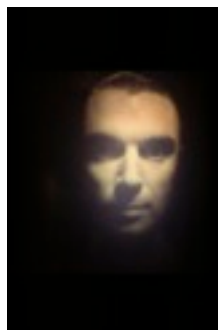


Fig. 14
David Byrne

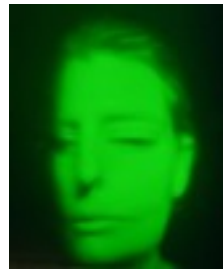
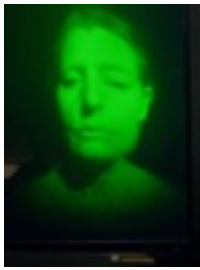


Fig. 15
Ana Maria
Self Portrait

We began to use only film and introduced irregularities on the platen behind the film. We got the most wonderful wobbly images that changed look as the viewer moved his head.

Even though the integrity of the image was broken by this method, creating very interesting distortions and effects, the results were haphazard and unpredictable.



Fig. 16
Rudie
Fragment 1

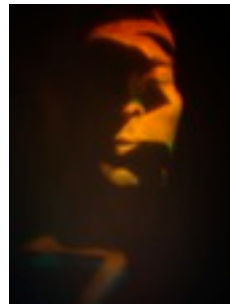


Fig. 17
Rudie
Fragment 2

To break up the face even more. We cut out different shapes out of pieces of cardboard and removed the diffusing screen from the object beam. This created a small, tight light source so that only the parts of the face that were uncovered were illuminated. That is why, for safety, our eyes are closed in all the holograms. Those were the masters, each with a different shape, different size, some recognizable as features some just abstract shapes.

We created the series in a matter of weeks, and then the work of assembling them into transfers began. I took the masters to our lab in Long Island City and some times combined two or more masters, sometimes just used a single image. At this point Rudie's input was greatly diminished. At that time he was not exploring reflection holography as he did later with such beauty. I was doing a lot of color combinations and the whole process of swelling and shrinking the emulsion with triethenolomine was too messy and primitive for him.

I, of course shared the results with him, but by that time our collaboration took on a different direction, more towards learning and practicing different healing modalities. I put the series away in a box and did nothing with them for a number of years,. In fact I had forgotten how interesting they were.

One day, Martina Mngovrious and Sam Moree who were working at the Holocenter with me, found the box and were quite enthusiastic about the work. I took a second look, called Rudie and proposed that we have an exhibition.

This was the show HOLOGRAPHIC COLLABORATIONS that was shown at the Center in 2008. We had a splendid opening, the show was a great success, Rudie came down from his mountain for it. It makes me glad but saddens me that it was the last show of his work that our great friend and companion attended.



Fig. 18
Rudie &
Ana Maria