

## *Video Transcript*

### **Title:**

Victoria Crowe | Beyond Likeness

### **Summary:**

Crowe has developed an approach to portraiture that seeks to do more than record the outward appearance of a person. We see how she relates to and thinks about the personalities of her sitters as she aims to represent something of the inner life – the experiences and preoccupations of the individuals depicted – the world of ideas and dreams. In this video, Crowe discusses the creation of some of her portraits.

### **Duration:**

05:43

## *Transcript*

### *Victoria Crowe*

I try and work towards a moment when there is an intensity about the image that I feel absolutely committed to and when I've got that. And I've got it very clearly in my mind. I can then go about the business of actually how do I reach it. How do I achieve it. But I can't sort of start until I've got that sense of what the image is really going to be like pretty closely in my mind.

I'm not at all interested in making a generalised statement about. Landscape or light or people or anything. I'm interested in making a very particular and a very informed statement about those things.

When people actually open up. To you and present you with their inner life and their inner feelings that that's when the portrait really starts to happen. And that's when I feel that it's at its best when they cast aside this kind of polite veneer. I am just trying to get to the root and that's the thing I find fascinating and how did it do that in visual terms, you know? So sometimes it's something we've talked about doing sitting, sometimes it's an object that has a particular resonance.

Sometimes it's a line of writing. In the Kathleen Raine portrayed there's a poem about time it's called 'The Moment' and it's a very, very important poem, I think to me and to my

development because I have become much more aware of this incredibly transitory life. I mean with the portrait of my son Ben he died when he was 22. So when something happens like that you become very, very involved in this whole idea - not just of purpose 'what's it all about' - but also these crazy immovable forces. And we are left almost as these tiny, tiny things in the face of this. And so a lot of the paintings after Ben's death I mean for about 10 years afterwards I was always painting ephemeral things against sort of immovable objects.

What I really want somebody to take away from. A portrait is the experience of almost having touched that person and to see beyond. The immediate physical impact. The portraits I think that work best are when that has happened.

And sometimes people don't necessarily like the portraits. I can remember somebody saying about Winifred's portrait: 'Oh but she looks so dark and grey'. Yes she was: she was as strong as a mountain you know and I think probably the line people find quite a strong image I guess a lot of them are. But then that's really what I wanted to try and do.

With Duncan Macmillian's portrait the first sitting he was kind of looking down, quite kind of pensive but the more you talked to Duncan then the more you know. About how he works and thinks about art. There comes a moment when this sort of penetrating look comes up. And I wanted to get that come off again slightly concentrated look not necessarily confrontational but concentrated look of this powerful mind at work.

Painting Winifred it wasn't about painting this white haired old lady against the window in her sitting room. It was painting Winifred's wisdom and her intelligence and her spirituality and her incredible strength at the age of 92 94 and she was I painted her it was this intellectual strength that I was painting it just so happened to be an old lady with white hair. But it was that it was the strength was the thing that I wanted to paint.

Somebody once said to me you know white portraits you must enjoy it. And I thought, no it's not about enjoying it to me isn't about doing portraits it's it's about meeting another human being in a very intense way. And I find that this incredible sort of privilege.