**SUBJECT AND ARTIST COMMENTARY FOR EXHIBITION DISPLAY AND BROCHURE**

**MELISSA HAMMOND [151 words]**

Do you see what I see? A person in pain? A person who struggled to get dressed and do their hair that day? A person calculating what they will have to give up in their week to recover from this? My battle is not only with my body, it’s the part of me you can’t see.

In 2015, I was involved in a car accident. As a result of my injuries, I was left with the invisible disability called chronic pain and became homeless, needing to couch surf to get by.

You could think for a moment that I’m lying but the truth is, being questioned whether I am is just another way having an invisible disability hurts me. I don’t share my disability and hardship as an excuse or to get out of things, I share it to explain the barriers I am facing; hoping to be understood and supported.

**HILARY [152 words]**

Melissa and I created this portrait after a long discussion about invisible disability and homelessness. Melissa has lived with chronic and debilitating pain since an accident. Her outward appearance to all intents and purpose looks ‘normal’, though that word should never be used! Because of her disability she has experienced homelessness, hence using the couch.

Her pose reflects the two forms of human nature that intrigues me - being irony and contradiction. Here she sits in the road, all dressed to the nines with the sun on her face looking resilient and calm.

The mirror reflects a different point of view. One cannot assume that just because a person does not have an obvious health problem that they are well and able. It is fluid. I wanted to show Melissa’s beauty and resilience against adversity. The backdrop is a home that has been vacant for a couple of decades, hence the irony.

**ELEANOR WAIGHT [165 words]**

I am an emerging artist with low vision, dabbling in a variety of media.  I have always had a creative leaning, be that music, writing or art.  I wanted to capture me as I am now, particularly following a period of personal hardship, including COVID.

Hilary and I had a good rapport early on and I felt comfortable.  I even came up with my own pose which was indicative of how comfortable I became.  I think the poses where my cane leaned against the sculpture were particularly powerful.

I didn't want to be portrayed as a sad figure.  I wanted people to see me as I am and I really liked the end result.  There is a tendency for people to see the white cane before they really see the person, which is a shame.  I like the way it shows me looking forward with a certain sense of anticipation.  I think what surprised me was my own presence as the focus of the portrait.

**HILARY [147 words]**

Eleanor and I met at the NGA Sculpture Gardens as she is a creative individual.

I wanted to make a strong positive portrait of Eleanor as she was previously a runner and has also lost weight. It was important to me to use her cane in the

image as a way to make the viewer question what it was.

As an able bodied person I have learned much about disability when photographing for the exhibition. Eleanor and I had a lovely chat about life, family, relationships and work.

I felt that even though there are many differences in our lives there are far more similarities. I really enjoyed the time together making her portrait.

Choosing the portrait was interesting as photographically at first I did

prefer a different image, but in the end it was great that we ended up both

agreeing on the chosen image easily.

**WILLIAM (GLENN) DOIG [191 words]**

I was born on a 1100-acre farm in Lockard NSW, with my Mum, Dad and 4 siblings. It was a mud brick house estimated to be over 118 years old.

I loved growing up on the farm and was very rarely clean! It was a great teacher to me in adapting and overcoming struggles, especially with my cerebral palsy. I went on to achieve a Diploma in Computing at Charles Stuart University, and then moved to Canberra to work at the Bureau of Statistics for many years.

I have been part of a church group for a long time and through this group I met my beautiful wife Sharon.

I love to talk about my childhood and family. I am pictured holding photos as I love to share them and tell the stories behind them.

I am interested in science and natural wonders, and enjoy the comic Footrot Flats, and the creator of the Muppets show Jim Henson. I love sharing these with people through YouTube.

I found Hilary very interesting and really enjoyed talking with her. I was very impressed that she made me look so good in the photos!

**HILARY [127 words]**

Glenn and I met a few weeks before we did the actual portrait. We had a lovely discussion about his wife, his condition, his photos, and what I did.

He tells me his wife has also been doing a photography course. He also spoke about his faith and how important it was is to him. It is how he and his wife met.

Glenn’s smile is infectious as is his wonderful positivity. The day I photographed him it looked like it was going to rain and he told me that he loved the sound of the rain on the tin roof.

I watched him sitting very happily and contentedly outside and felt it was only appropriate that I photograph him in the front yard of his home.

**ARTO LEVONPERA [139 words]**

I was born in Finland and came to Melbourne Australia with my mum, dad, sister and brother when I was 7 years old.

I studied computing at school and went on to become a computer programmer which I enjoyed immensely.

Despite suffering a stroke due to a brain tumour, I still have a love of computing along with science, engineering and space. I enjoy watching shows and documentaries on these subjects - particularly anything involving Professor Brian Cox.

I love to talk about my Finish heritage – which is where my love of beetroot comes from!

I really enjoyed that Hilary sat with me before the photo shoot and that we were able to have a chat and get to know each other. I loved having my photo taken and was smiling more than I have in a long time.

**HILARY [88 words]**

I sat down and enjoyed a cup of tea with Arto before photographing him. I learned of his love of the planets and stars, Brian Cox, robotics and that he was currently reading a book called Autonomy.

The book discusses self-driving cars, but it seems poignant that the word autonomy is part of his portrait, as his life requires much help and care. I loved that he had a twinkle in his eye and I enjoyed his quips.

I photographed him sitting in his chair at his home.

**BRUNO CIRILLO [133 words]**

I was born in Italy and moved to Geelong Melbourne as a child. I come from a tight knit loving family. My family has always been very supportive of me, especially my sister Maria and niece Rosetta.

I attended the Koomarri school and then worked for them for 44 years, retiring this year.

I love Elvis, ABBA as well as singing and playing the guitar. I love to do art and being around animals, playing games, watching old tv shows and cartoons. My favourite thing to wear is High Vis work wear.

I had a fantastic time working with Hilary. I would have been happy to posed and perform for her all day and was sad when she left. I love the photos and have covered my bedroom wall with copies of them.

**HILARY [116 words]**

When Bruno and I first met he wanted to show me his love of Elvis Presley. He loves singing the songs and dressing up as Elvis himself. I thought about photographing him dressed up as Elvis with the wig, the glasses, cloak and the microphone. We did get some lovely portraits of him dressed that way but it became more about the character, not Bruno.

One of the carers Amanda helped him put on his suit and as soon as he was dressed I realised this was Bruno. Dressed, with dignity with his guitar singing Elvis and looking wonderful. It means so much to me to be able to portray Bruno with love respect and dignity.

**REBUS THEATRE CAST: Edward Menzies, Leanne Shutt, Josh Rose, Carol Jayne McManus, Stephen Perkins, Sam Floyd, Zoe Trevorrow, Megumi Kawada**

**[197 words]**

Rebus Theatre’s bold new work *Utopiate* was performed at Belco Arts Theatre in November 2022. The cast-devised show explored the experiences, challenges and voices of the mixed ability cast through a fictional intergalactic sci-fi odyssey.

*“This is the first time I have been part of writing a play, there is a bit of all of us in it. It is an empowering fascinating journey. We support and encourage our diversity and quirkiness. It is a safe space allowing us to explore ourselves, our feelings and how we engage in life on this planet. It has helped me find myself, my voice, communicate, and explore my creativity. It opened my mind to new ways and possibilities. Theatre is therapeutic.”* **(Leanne Shutt – cast member)**

*“It’s been an honour to direct this incredible, insightful bunch of humans. They instantly gelled as an ensemble, responding like fish to water as we threw them in the deep end of devising and performance techniques. They shared openly and honestly, supporting each other in the creation of the story. They are a theatre ensemble in the truest sense of the phrase.” (***Ben Drysdale – Rebus Theatre Creative Producer & Co-Director of *Utopiate* with Sammy Moynihan)**

**HILARY [86 words]**

When I attended the Rebus Theatre rehearsals I was warmly welcomed. One of the Directors, Ben tells me that many people see theatre performed by people with disability, a hobby and activity. We felt it necessary to show that these actors are very talented at their craft and that not all emotion is happy.

We photographed the group going through an exercise where they were expressing an increasing amount of pain. The expression was visual and verbal. It was a powerful thing to observe and photograph.