
A CONVERSATION WITH HEIDE HATRY

Marc Pachter

MARC PACHTER: Are you bothered that people consider your work disturbing, or is that the point?

HEIDE HATRY: I have done work that people find disturbing, and I've liked it that way. I don't think I started out to achieve that effect, but I saw that it was one of the modes of an artwork's power to enter and unsettle people's relatively complacent lives. In this case, though, I certainly don't like it – if that is the outcome. In fact, it would totally disturb me, because I am trying to do exactly the opposite. My intention is to make people feel great.

PACHTER: To comfort them?

HATRY: Yes.

PACHTER: But I think with your eyes opened to this question you must suspect that in our civilization – broadly a historically Christian, European culture – dealing with the mortal remains of people in this way might be considered a form of violation. The body is seen to be a vessel and the essence is the soul. So to cling to the body rather than to return it, “dust to dust,” is to do something that, it can be argued, is morbid: a challenge to the idea that we're more spirit than body.

HATRY: Although I can, of course, understand that perspective, having been a Christian myself, for me it is really disturbing that this “vessel,” which was a person, becomes a mere object when the person is dead; and an object that even makes us think of it as something like a nuisance until we can get it out of sight. The person disappears and this object is left behind. However inconvenient, it nevertheless incorporates what remains of our feelings for and connection to this other, who was deeply a part of us.

PACHTER: You seem to be celebrating what is left.

HATRY: I don't know about celebrating; to me it feels more like respecting. I feel that the object is the only thing we can hold onto. We have, of course, our ideas of who the person was, our memories, our feelings, and maybe some precious artifacts. I believe, especially since I began working on this project, that *matter matters* in a weird way. I've read a lot on

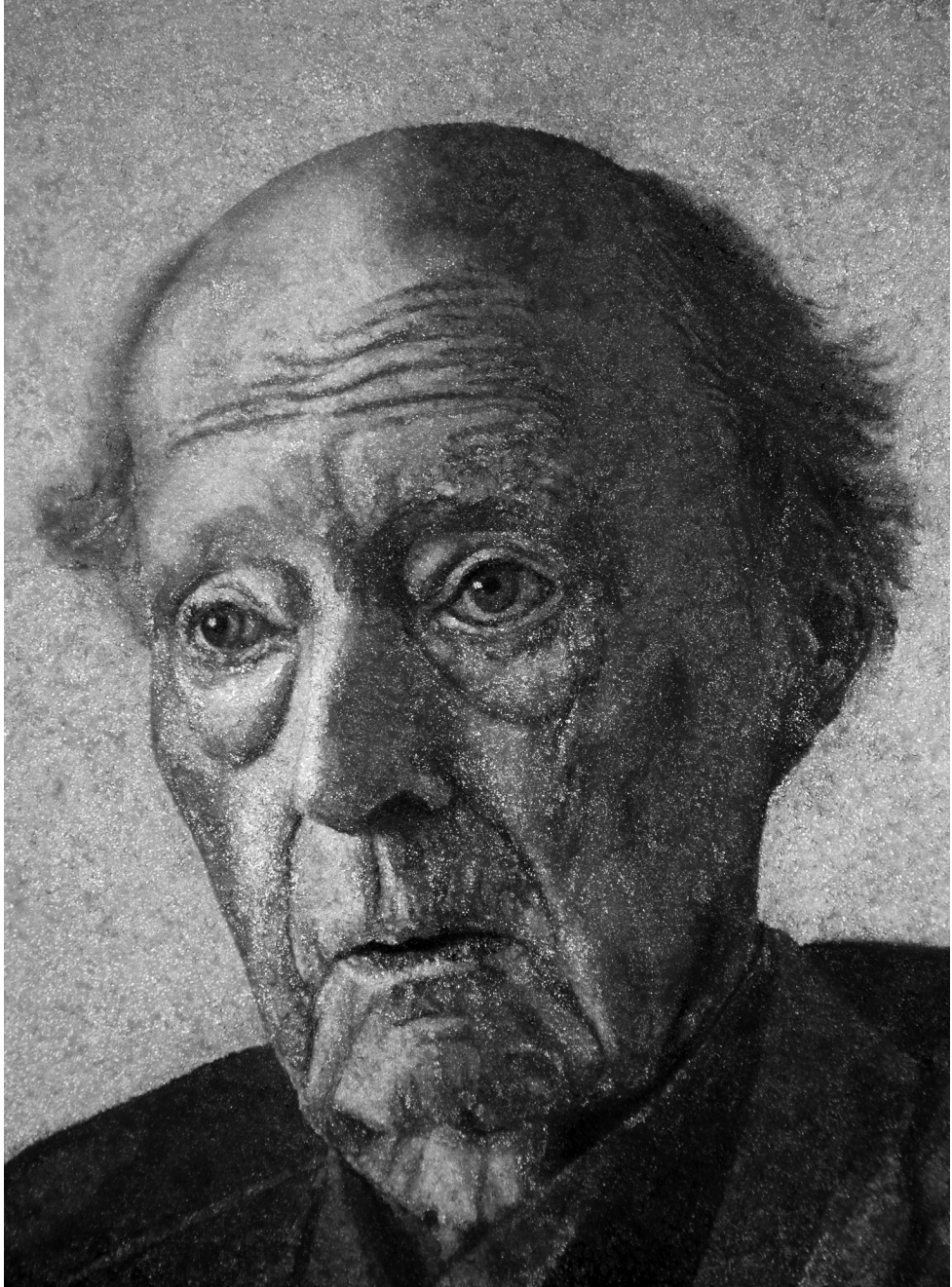
death and there seems to be a historically consistent connection to the thing, to the body itself, and to things that a person has touched or owned. If I can suggest a connection to my own past as a dealer in rare books: Why are we interested in having a book that is signed by the author? People don't just like signed books, they also consider them more valuable, both in price and as containing some sort of auratic quality – i.e., an aura of authenticity. If you had a copy of Kafka dedicated to Max Brod, let's say, that is so extremely interesting. But why? It is the idea that Kafka thought about it, thought about his friend, pondered their relationship for a moment, and conveyed some meaningful sense of their friendship in the book itself. That he touched it, and this copy went physically to Brod, incorporating the crucial connection between them in a gift that Brod then cherished for life.

PACHTER: Shall I give you my guess as to why? The word I would like to introduce is *witness*. We understand that these people and their objects actually existed in such and such a time and place. But there is emotionally something in us that requires verification. This is a core reason why we hold on to and exhibit them in museums and in our own family holdings. These objects are witnesses to that existence.

HATRY: That's a concept that I find elegant, and respectful – very much as I see these portraits. A witness is a quiet observer who nevertheless offers eloquent, or fundamental, testimony to truth. So what about seeing my pictures as witness to this person? Something like that captures what makes them so important to me. And from my point of view, I can't imagine anything worse than throwing the ashes away; getting rid of this precious residue of what the person was, but which is also the truth that this person actually existed. The DNA is there, to put it in more contemporary but still primal terms. I have this urn of DNA; I have the REAL thing, the thing you rightly call the reason we collect our most meaningful heritage in museums or, on a more intimate register, the reason people place urns on their fireplace mantles.

PACHTER: Does it bother you that you yourself, as portraitist, are not usually a witness? Certainly with your father and with your friend you were witness to their lives. But when someone comes to you and gives you the ashes of a life you never knew *in* life – that, in fact, you can only come to know through a photo – doesn't that challenge your claim?

HATRY: Absolutely not, because I am not making it for me. I'm making it for that person. The artist, in general, still has something of the social function of the shaman, standing in for the deep spiritual needs of others and mediating between them and the future, or the past – which are both the same in their essential non-existence. For the images of my father, of my friend Stefan, and for James Purdy, the making process was important. I needed to transform my own feelings of loss into something that was saved and stayed with me. At the beginning I found this comforting and consoling. I thought those feelings came from the necessarily rather contemplative process of making, but I realized later that this wasn't true.



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I found the thing itself consoling; that the ashes are consoling, that to have the ashes *look* at you is consoling. That to speak to the ashes, or to listen to them, is consoling.

PACHTER: That's an important statement: the ashes *look* at you. Cremation is known in many cultures. We realize we can look at those ashes in an urn. But now you are saying that in a sense it is important for the ashes to look back. It's an interesting idea. Everything you say about the *witnessing* of the ashes I can understand. But why is it so necessary for the face to be replicated? Why be so literal?

HATRY: It's absolutely necessary; and it's necessary that the portrait is as realistic as possible because even though, as I said, the portrait of my father is not technically made from his ashes, I imagined having his ashes, and that's what that portrait means to me. I imagine that he's looking at me, or a bit off into the distance, as if we can't quite connect immediately any longer given our divergent existential states. I feel his presence is intensified through seeing his face. The face is where we understand communication is happening. Even when we see other aspects of the body as eloquent, the face is template for interpersonal communication, for capturing all the subtleties that make us human. The very idea of a face-to-face confrontation thus takes on an ethical function. Other ways of reading a person are incidental or filtered through this. If you say, show me a picture of somebody, I won't normally show you a picture of his hands or feet. I'll usually show you a picture of his face.

PACHTER: But in portraiture, more and more artists are beginning to understand that personality can be in every element of the body.

HATRY: Yes, a perfect example that springs to mind are the "portraits" by John Coplans.

PACHTER: Yes, they are brilliant! But it is interesting that you mention his work, because although it's his body, literally, that is photographed, he reduces its individuality. I would argue that he makes himself an abstraction, and so does not actually produce a self-portrait. But one can think of so many people whose most personally expressive feature to be portrayed might be, for example, an arm rather than the face.

HATRY: Have you seen the new photo book about Louise Bourgeois by Alex van Gelder? He photographed mostly her face, but also quite often her hands, and you can recognize her in those with equal force – which I suppose makes perfect sense for an artist, especially of her type. They're beautiful!

PACHTER: We can agree that if the goal, as I think of your project, is keeping someone permanently in our company, the face is the most natural way to do this. But I have another question about portraiture to pose for your project. It is a fixed way of looking at a person. The reality of being with somebody and knowing them is that they are not fixed; they float

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into many manifestations, both physical and in expressions of personality. Is that a problem for you, given your goals?

HATRY: I have thought a lot about how to make portraits, and, of course, these in particular. But with this project I'm concerned about their essence, and what it means to portray in general. In the beginning I was interested in making them as realistic as possible; that seemed, even if it is somehow secretly determined by a photographic aesthetic or ideal, to capture what I was driving at. And then some people asked: Why don't you make more conceptual or analogical portraits, for example of a pond or a tree, a garden or a landscape that s/he liked? Well, I don't find that interesting, and I think for exactly the reason that I don't like the idea of scattering ashes in a place someone happened to like. The place where the dead still live is in our memories, or more generally, in some amalgam of our sensorium and our memories, and to disperse their ashes just seems to me to deny them access to us. The conceptual aspect of scattering can be poignant, of course, but it also insures that one potentially powerful access to memory is abandoned.

As to the notion that the portrait in general misrepresents because it offers a fixed image of a dynamic being, I think that's a bit of a linguistic problem rather than a phenomenological one. The whole point of art is to capture what is vital in a static medium, and we have evolved lots of strategies to address that: symbolism, quasi-abstraction, ambiguity, and various means of insinuating emotion, all of which potentially contribute to more living representation. But to return to the photographic aesthetic that I think dominates our notion of portraiture nowadays even when it is not actually employed, life stops at some point. Possibility is arrested, or the multiple has narrowed down to the singular. It has been observed that the photograph is essentially preterite, a *memento mori*, and I think that in embracing this tendency in portraiture in general I am more or less subconsciously insinuating the notion of death. I think when you see these pictures you know that the subject is dead; but they also exude a calm and reassurance that comes from their very specificity in a past, or singular time. Or, perhaps it suggests the necessary affectlessness of the dead, which can also be one of the preternatural aspects of the photographic portrait. For death, one moment is as good as another, time has ceased to flow, and with it the vicissitudes of personality: our tendency to narrow our view of the dead, especially in seeing the good in them, might be another example of the psychological truth that the "static" portrait contains. This was me; that it wasn't all of me is irrelevant because I am showing you what we all have in common, even while I remain specific.

I told you that I had expanded this project at one point and memorialized things as well as people. For example, I bought this huge wooden dollhouse, burned it, and then made a painting of the house out of its ashes. A connection like that makes sense to me, but to make a house out of the ashes of a person doesn't, or at least not in my conception of this particular project.

PACHTER: I, of course, agree.

HATRY: I did think about making portraits that are not so fixed – and making them blurry, like the Gerhard Richter paintings of members of the Baader-Meinhof Group from the 1970s. It seemed like a perfect solution to this problem, because that way the person seems gone, far away, not possible to grasp, eluding us as s/he recedes into memory, and with an unclear quality that exemplifies our relationship to the most enigmatic thing in life: we just can't grasp what is going on, or what it means, or how we should deal with it; and those Richter images are haunting for these sorts of reasons – I even find them highly reminiscent of the “spirit photographs” of the late nineteenth century. In fact, they touch on the fleetingness of experience and of memory in general especially poignantly because they come from newspapers, which had documented the most powerful or horrifying things of that moment and are now almost as illegible as that horror or power in their distance from us, in our ignorance of them.

I showed people for whom I was preparing to make portraits of their beloved, examples of Richter's blurry pictures – which I think are philosophically and emotionally truer, because they make it much clearer that the depicted person is gone and that, while the idea of them is still there, it is becoming blurry in our minds pretty quickly.

But almost everybody disliked that idea. They explained to me that they want to remember that person, want the art to be more solid than memory can be (even if that means a distortion). That the whole point is to look the deceased again in the eyes and talk to him or her, and therefore she or he has to look as realistic as possible. They were afraid that the blurring is happening anyway in their minds and that they will forget too soon how she or he looked... Maybe they are right, but I did blurry faces as well. And I like them both.

PACHTER: Yours is a project that might breed comfort for some and stir accusations from others. Let's deal with some of those possible accusations. At least one of the theories of grieving is that you go through stages and eventually come to terms with death. This takes a while; the process should not be rushed. It might be suggested that you stick people permanently in one of those stages of grieving. That certainly can provide comfort at the time. But they don't move on.

HATRY: When we live with an artwork, much as with an actual personal relationship, we grow into it, our relationship changes, things mute or expand in a natural, unprescribed way, and one day we discover that the relationship as it had existed is just different; or we don't even discover it, it just is different. I think that these works tend to become part of our lives in that way, not desperately clinging to something that can no longer be, but a natural extension into the future of an important past, the specific quality of which can't be predicted. The change happens in us, not in the thing, but we see it differently as we change.

Let me start by telling you about my own experience. I was stuck in the grieving over my father's death for 15 years. When my friend Stefan committed suicide eight years ago,

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I was so afraid that this would happen again – he meant so much to me, and at the beginning it was even worse. But after I had made the portraits of my father and of Stefan, I found that I could cope with both deaths after a relatively short period of time. First I was in terrible pain, but then I talked to the portraits, told them why I was so angry, disappointed, and devastated... And then I started to calm down and started to understand and accept and was consoled by their “presence.”

I should say now that I equated their deaths not just because of the degree of my pain and the loss of both, but also because I believed at the time that my father’s death was also the result of suicide. I only recently learned that this might not be the case.

A friend of mine who is a psychologist said that this is a wrong approach, that I have to let go and I shouldn’t try to keep the person, because if you can’t let go you will never get over it. But I experienced something completely different, and I think she was wrong. I know, for example, that James Purdy is dead because I have his ashes; this is evidence that he is dead! And I feel that he is here because his ashes are with me and I can see his face and he smiles at me and I smile back. This was probably one thing that was so difficult for me about my father; that I couldn’t understand that he was dead, maybe because I didn’t have the possibility to see him in death, which is supposed to help a lot to understand that a person is actually gone.

PACHTER: Well, this is the famous question of the open casket. Some abhor it, but others say unless I witness the dead body I don’t emotionally believe.

HATRY: And, therefore, I believe that my solution is so perfect; in the open casket you don’t necessarily even recognize your beloved one.

My friend, the poet Franz Wright, died last year. (Do you know him? He was a brilliant poet and the son of a brilliant poet as well, James Wright. Both of them won a Pulitzer Prize. We collaborated several times.) He had lung cancer and was supposed to die a few months after he was diagnosed. But he somehow lived and was extremely productive for four years, writing some of his best work.

When he died, his wife Beth kept him at home; he was never taken to a funeral home. He stayed in his bed and was lying on special ice and you could go visit him where he had lived. The room was cool and dark and filled with nice spices and smells. In the last two days they covered the body with linen; you could still touch him and it was consoling, and everybody who wanted to see him could say good-bye. It’s not legally necessary to embalm a body, and I was really impressed by how beautiful it was to do it this way.

PACHTER: But of course what you’re doing is not saying good-bye.

HATRY: It is. I think these portraits can help you to understand, ultimately, the bare fact of death.

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PACHTER: I think, perhaps, there are also underlying cultural assumptions. You are a European who lives in the U.S.; so you are a participant in both worlds. I'm interested in some of the assumptions going into your work when we think of European and American cultures. They are the same, as Western, but also not the same. It is often commented on that Europeans are more comfortable with death, in the sense that it is integrated into the idea of life. America, it is said, mostly denies, emotionally, the inevitability of death.

HATRY: I think everybody denies death, which I don't necessarily see as a bad thing. It has a lot to do with how we can proceed with our lives, unhobbled by despair, or at least anxiety.

PACHTER: But it still seems to me that, as a European, you are willing to contemplate death and how we deal with it more than most American artists. At least those I know of. But to be honest, I am trying to decide whether your approach reconciles us to the inevitability of death or is another form of denying it. Perhaps that is what concerned your psychiatrist friend. Do you think denial is at the core of your project?

HATRY: Although I can't control how others might see it, and the interpretive spectrum of such a large subject is also going to be vast, for me, in my relationship to the work, absolutely not.

PACHTER: Then might we call this an embrace?

HATRY: Embrace is too strong. I think it's coming to terms with it – a way of getting it, and moving on. And this isn't just skipping denial; it's really dealing with it. I dealt with my father's and friend's deaths in a way I've never dealt with anyone else's death. I was thinking about them. I was talking to them.

Having the portrait is almost like having a psychologist. I don't have a shrink, probably because we Europeans still don't believe so much in psychologists, we might still tend to think of that as something of an anomaly of our bourgeois past. But having the portrait was like someone (and not just someone, but specifically the person in question) was listening and making me think about our relationship and about their life. It was a healing process to interact with them. And now they are here and I smile at them when I walk by or see them.

PACHTER: That's the core of what you're trying to do.

HATRY: [Pointing at an installation on the wall.] Yes, I know this looks like it is still a big part of my life. But it's not, at least in that way.

PACHTER: It does look like an altar.



HATRY: Yes, it is an altar, and I like it; but it's really not there to console me, because I don't need consolation anymore. It's more like a touchstone and an often surprising reminder. It gives me a reason to have a brief thought about my father, and it's sweet. More often than not, though, I encounter it as an artwork, and it makes me now think of Josephine Meckseper – you know her, she is the one who displaces artifacts of daily life (like newly bought stockings, or panties, or jewelry on a mannequin), advertisements, and other shiny things, and elegantly arranges them in vitrines. I never got what she was driving at, as it always seemed rather random to me: which might be what she intended, to give an insight into the fundamental particularity of the person, even in a world full of manufactured needs and circumscribed desires but what I do understand is the idea to arrange artifacts, which reminds me of something like the impulse behind Joseph Cornell's work, which is certainly memorial in its essence, memorial of the world's forgotten course.

PACHTER: So, let's talk about the altar part of this. Do you expect that the people for whom you are doing this will create an altar?

HATRY: They might, but how they interact with the work is for them to decide. I had originally planned to offer options like that; for example, a hanging box with shutters that they could use as an altar in which they could put things that are precious to their memory of the person. Or a mausoleum of sorts, in which things connected to the dead person could be displayed. But I decided against that part of the project because it seemed to be exerting too much control and diffusing the focus of the work itself; which might actually hinder the process of letting go. And in New York City it wouldn't have been so easy anyway since most people have rather small apartments and certainly not space for an additional room within them.

PACHTER: But it's not just that. Perhaps also it is a way for an individual to personally participate in the memorializing, even if they have not done the portrait.

HATRY: That would be an argument *for* the mausoleum. And people can of course build their own mausoleum, they can also do what they want with the picture.

PACHTER: One comment and then a question. The comment is that of course in the case of people having taken their own lives, the anger is so natural. It would enrage anyone left behind. But I would argue that the impulse of anger is a lot more common even when suicide is not the cause of death because people feel abandoned even when it was not the intention of the person to die.

HATRY: That anger can extend to someone else, too; for example, in an accident. And of course what we are really dealing with in grief is the rending of ties within ourselves.

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Something is being torn out of us against our will, and so we react with confusion as our whole being responds to this violence.

PACHTER: But even if they just die, in the fullness of life, in their 80s, for example, a grown child often feels abandoned by his or her parents.

HATRY: But is that really anger?

PACHTER: That's a fair question. I think anger goes into grief because it's irrational. Anger is not just felt because you are wondering whether or not the deceased is responsible for their death. Anger is something you feel when you are alone and you need that person to be there.

On the question of how we memorialize: as you know, I spend a lot of time in Asia and now think of two Asian traditions; one Chinese, and one Thai. The Chinese have a great tradition of after-death portraiture. There's much less a tradition of life portraiture. After someone dies, usually the distinguished father or mother of a household, portraits of them are painted.

HATRY: Really? And how did they do it, before the person died? Or on the death bed?

PACHTER: I don't know. Certainly this tradition predates photography.

HATRY: I don't think you have to go to Asia to find a tradition of post-death portraiture. In Egypt they painted portraits on the sarcophagus.

PACHTER: And of course there is the tradition of icons in ancient tradition and even now of portraits after death based on photography.

The other Asian tradition I want to mention comes of recent experience with friends in Thailand. There cremation is universally done among the Buddhist majority. It's worth noting how they deal with the ashes, at least in the ceremony I know of. They assemble a small representation of the human body in the form of a stick figure, made out of the ashes of the just cremated body, and is then presented in a bowl. This is the closest to what you are seeking to do. But it is temporary. In the end the ashes will be placed in an urn. I thought you would find this interesting.

HATRY: May I ask is this ritual taking place while you meet with all the friends and family? Who makes the figure? How long does it take?

PACHTER: The presiding monk, I think, does it. And presents it to the mourners. There are also assembled photos of the deceased. It's all quite elaborate. Funerals are very important.

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To turn to another matter, perhaps one of the most difficult challenges to your project. There are those who may find it particularly unnerving to hear of a German working with human ashes. How do you deal with this possible cultural challenge to your work?

HATRY: That is a serious problem for me. As I told you before, I have used my alter ego, Betty Hirst, as the ostensible creator of my art when I didn't want to reveal that I am German. I so often had this feeling that I don't want to be German, and that I don't want to have this history and this guilt, and that I don't want to not be able to do what I want, what I am passionately inspired to do, simply because I am German. But I am, and I guess I am responsible for what I am doing being German. And that's a huge part of my thinking, and dealing with, and feeling about so many things.

PACHTER: But that hasn't stopped you.

HATRY: No, for example with the book *Skin*. That was my first project and the first time I made something out of pigskin, and I was criticized for doing the same things that Nazis did when they made things, like lamp shades, out of human skin. There I saw no correlation between the practices, except the – as I thought – obviously negative one. Some critics (and I don't necessarily mean professional ones) latched onto the superficial resemblance and, therefore, failed to enter into the real space of the work. Nazis used human skin to degrade human beings, to show how worthless and at best merely instrumental these people were in the Nazi mind.

PACHTER: It was the final process of dehumanization.

HATRY: Yes, and what I did with the pigskin was the opposite: I was trying to redeem despised "cultural" materials precisely to remind the viewer, or, I hoped, the experiencer, that these had been living beings and that we are complicit, our whole civilization is complicit, in their unnecessary and un-thought-about mass destruction; to make people aware of how we treat other sentient beings. And the assonances that might connect that with Nazi practices were meant to reflect back upon ourselves, to make us think about our own actions in a rather brutal and unflinching way and not simply accept the flow of history as it leads to, or even is rooted in, brutality. Naturally, it tended to have the opposite effect, as we always try to protect ourselves from really seeing the horrors we've neutralized in order to live.

PACHTER: So, if we look at what the Nazis did to human beings, they eviscerated their humanity and individuality.

HATRY: That definitely was in my mind soon after I conceived this project; and it is precisely for that reason the most difficult one I have ever worked on. I am working with human ashes. People entrust me with the final remains of people they loved, and at the same

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time it is inevitable that the work will be, especially in view of the fact that I am German, connected with Nazi mass destruction of human beings, burning millions of bodies and dispersing their ashes: covering Europe with the all but invisible evidence of their unspeakable inhumanity.

I have been working on this project for eight years, and at one point, I think it was about two years into it, I had given up because of this problem. I couldn't see a way around it. When I researched what the Nazis did with the ashes of their victims, however, I learned that they tossed them into rivers and ponds and that they used Jewish labor to crush the bones as finely as possible so that no traces would remain; as if their victims had never existed and as if their slaves were mere instruments.

It was actually my friend, the wonderful novelist, Luisa Valenzuela, who got me back to work and encouraged me to continue because she is convinced that it is such a powerful and humane project. She even wants me to make a portrait of her ashes one day.

My relationship to the dead people I portray is the complete opposite of the barbaric Nazi intention. My effort is entirely to preserve the sense of a person, of her or his individuality; to lovingly preserve that quality even in death, in memory, and with it the integrity of the human lineage through generations. But I must admit I still have trouble coming to terms with the reflexive connection to Nazi atrocity.

PACHTER: The Nazi process aimed not just to dehumanize but to negate the particularity of a life. They began with the abstraction of race and subsumed all that was individual in millions of human beings into that category. And, having eliminated individuality, they did what they could to destroy the category itself. It is significant that you are reaching for the particularity of a life, even when it may be said that cremation initially eliminates it, reducing the body to indistinguishable ashes.

HATRY: Exactly what I have in mind: returning indistinguishable ashes to the particular. In some ways a lot of my work is about re-literalizing, trying to return to the traumas, or the site of the traumas, that have been subsumed in culture. It seems to me to be a way of keeping alive what is always in danger of being lost or forgotten, or – more pertinently – ignored.

PACHTER: We don't trust memory. It fades, literally as we grow older, but also culturally. Probably when we suffer loss, our greatest fear is not of losing this person: we have lost them, they are dead. The greatest fear is losing them in our memory. You offer one solution.

HATRY: What about the fear of your own death?

PACHTER: An important question, of course, but something in me says that we basically don't think that we will die. Even at my late age, some two or three decades ahead of

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you, I don't emotionally believe it. I think the greater fear is the loss of others. Something I need has disappeared. My own death is unthinkable.

HATRY: It's funny. Why is it unthinkable for us? I just started realizing it now, that I too will die – and it startles me.

PACHTER: It goes back to our reality. Everything that is the world we distill through our senses. That's the only reason we believe that there is a world. And so if our senses go, then the world must go. So how can we die? We are the agent of the world's existence. I remember having a conversation with my daughter about the service after my death. At a certain age you're supposed to have that conversation. She stopped me. Not because it was too terrible to discuss. She's very unsentimental, in a very good way. She said, "It has nothing to do with you." It was the perfect answer, because it doesn't. That is the unimaginable world after me. I won't exist. It will be up to my children to do what they need to do. I think that you are precisely dealing not with the needs of the deceased but the needs of the living.

HATRY: That's a very good argument in response to a critic who said that it is very disturbing that I have done these pictures without the consent of the people who died. I don't think I need their consent. But I always tend to take seriously whatever sensitivity seems to be affronted by this particular body of work, since that is the opposite of what I am trying to achieve.

PACHTER: You may not need their consent, but it is interesting to think about the assumption that is built into their position. It is the assumption that we possess the memory of ourselves. So, often people want to construct their own memory.

HATRY: Absolutely, we do this all the time; when we're alive it's about our reputation.

PACHTER: Much of art and history is not allowing people to control the interpretation of their lives. We despise the powerful person who tries to control everything. So, many important people who know they will be written about often burn their letters, or now, perhaps, delete their e-mails and messages. It is a human enough impulse. I don't think we own our own narrative exclusively. Certainly not after we go.

HATRY: I find it a very difficult notion that we don't own ourselves, even though I completely accept the fact that everything we do, at least as artists, comes into its real being only when it interacts with others. The reason why people make art is at least in part to build this immortal *whatever*, that encapsulates their ideas, themselves, as perfectly and finally and immutably as they can. Or at least satisfies their needs for accurate portrayal of them as they understand it.

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PACHTER: But if it is art it will have a life of its own and it will read differently. The motivations that went into the artist's work will be the lesser part of its final value. The better the art, the less important the original intent. Of course we do things out of ego, and we yearn for a kind of immortality, but that doesn't convey ultimate value. If it is only you then it is not very good. It has to touch things that even you do not know you are touching in the process of creating it.

HATRY: I think the secret domain of art that is revealed only as it enters into the experience of others, is analogous to the way that the death of those about whom we care reveals the complexity of their effect on our souls. I think that mourning makes it clear that death is inherently a social phenomenon for people, and only through mourning is the actual meaning of death made real. If we can say that the work becomes a work of art only when it is engaged by its viewer or reader, we can equally say that without mourning death is the pure unknowable emptiness or cipher that the core Western philosophical tradition considers it. That is summed up in Wittgenstein's proposition that we do not experience our own death.