

RAWREVIEWS

EXHIBITIONS

Film still from *Hermione Kingdom of the Sky*, A. Holden, 2022



**FULL OF DAYS: HERMIONE BURTON AND ANDY HOLDEN**  
The Gallery of Everything, London  
March 19 – May 7, 2023

In 2017, artist Andy Holden (b. 1982), having collected amateur paintings for over 20 years, became the custodian of a body of work that a friend spotted in a local charity shop. It comprised a treasure trove of paintings by the artist Hermione Burton (1925–2007), and a booklet, *Facets of my Life*, described by Holden as a “list of facts” about her life. The paintings cover the parts of Burton’s life that words can’t and, after coming into possession of these bold and purposeful works, Holden sought to find out more about the mysterious artist. His dedication brought us this exhibition.

The paintings in “Full of Days” (from the last line in the *Book of Job*), cover around 25 years, though none are dated except for a nude self-portrait (1980). There is also a 40-minute film (with interviews, animation and narration) and 3D printed sculptures of Burton, both created by Holden. In an accompanying event – “In Conversation: Jennifer Higgin and Andy Holden” in April this year – he noted that the sculptures “feel like a cross between action figures and religious figurines” and that, having been immersed in the paintings, he was trying to reanimate Burton and bring her back into three dimensions. The show can also be seen as conceptual art because Holden’s curation and participation (his research, film, sculptures) open Burton’s paintings and life up through space and time, adding many more layers to the experience of her work.

Painting created a kind of diary for Burton that came from a desire to share without being self-aggrandising or arrogant. She was born in Buckinghamshire and lived with rheumatic heart disease. She moved to the USA as an adult, and underwent open-heart surgery and long hospitalisations. She began to paint during occupational therapy, starting with traditional painting styles and subjects. She continued to paint, adopting her own style, moving from landscapes and seascapes to the metaphysical, and choosing not to take advice on capturing perspective.

When asked which painting he would live with, Holden immediately said it would be the “retrospective” painting – an imaginary exhibition of imaginary paintings that he felt gave permission to show her work. In the gallery, the colour of the walls and the layout of the room serendipitously matched this painting. In following his instincts with Burton’s work, Holden has created a rich and multidimensional conceptual work that crosses physical barriers.

**NUALA ERNEST**



A. Holden, *Hermione Pleasant Thought*, 2023

Hermione Burton, *Hermione's Art Exhibition*, n.d.



Hermione Burton, *Self-Portrait*, 1982