

In the second in our series on developing a personal practice, Eddie Ephraums talks to **Jo Scott** about the evolution of her work and how she came to accept that she was an artist.

All images © Jo Scott



Jo Scott hasn't always been a photographer and only recently accepted this also meant she was an artist. Back in 1999 she bought an SLR and went travelling with her husband to see life beyond work. They were both surveyors. Jo discovered just how much she loved taking pictures, but afterwards went back to work part-time, took a part-time photography course and carried on photographing for pleasure, taking pictures of people, their kids and 'arty stuff'.

The people Jo photographed said she was very good and she was offered a wedding photography commission through contacts at work. Knowing she had little idea how

#### LOOK AROUND YOU.

*Jo's advice: 'Think about the location and the light, and how to use them to create the results you want.'*

Jo met John Somerville, a renowned sculptor and severe stroke survivor, when his life-sized bronze sculpture of Spike Milligan had just been unveiled. She sought to portray 'John's gentle nature and thoughtful countenance, coupled with his resilience and determination to continue enjoying his creativity.' It's not just the expression on his face, but the thoughtful white space above him that I love about this image.

to do it, she went on a course. Afterwards she decided that if she wanted to photograph professionally she needed to get qualified, to know she was good enough to charge people. So she did a BIPP licentiate and associateship in portraiture, then a fellowship in fine art over a six-year period.

For Jo, the realisation that being a photographer also meant she was an artist came

on a writing workshop. Each participant was asked to write something about all the others in the group. From what they wrote about her, it was clear they saw her as an artist, even though she didn't. The workshop provided a safe space in which she could accept this realisation.

In a similar way, Jo says her portrait clients often cry when they see pictures of themselves or their children. There can

be a huge, therapeutic and life-affirming value to having your picture taken, as there is in practising photography or attending a workshop.

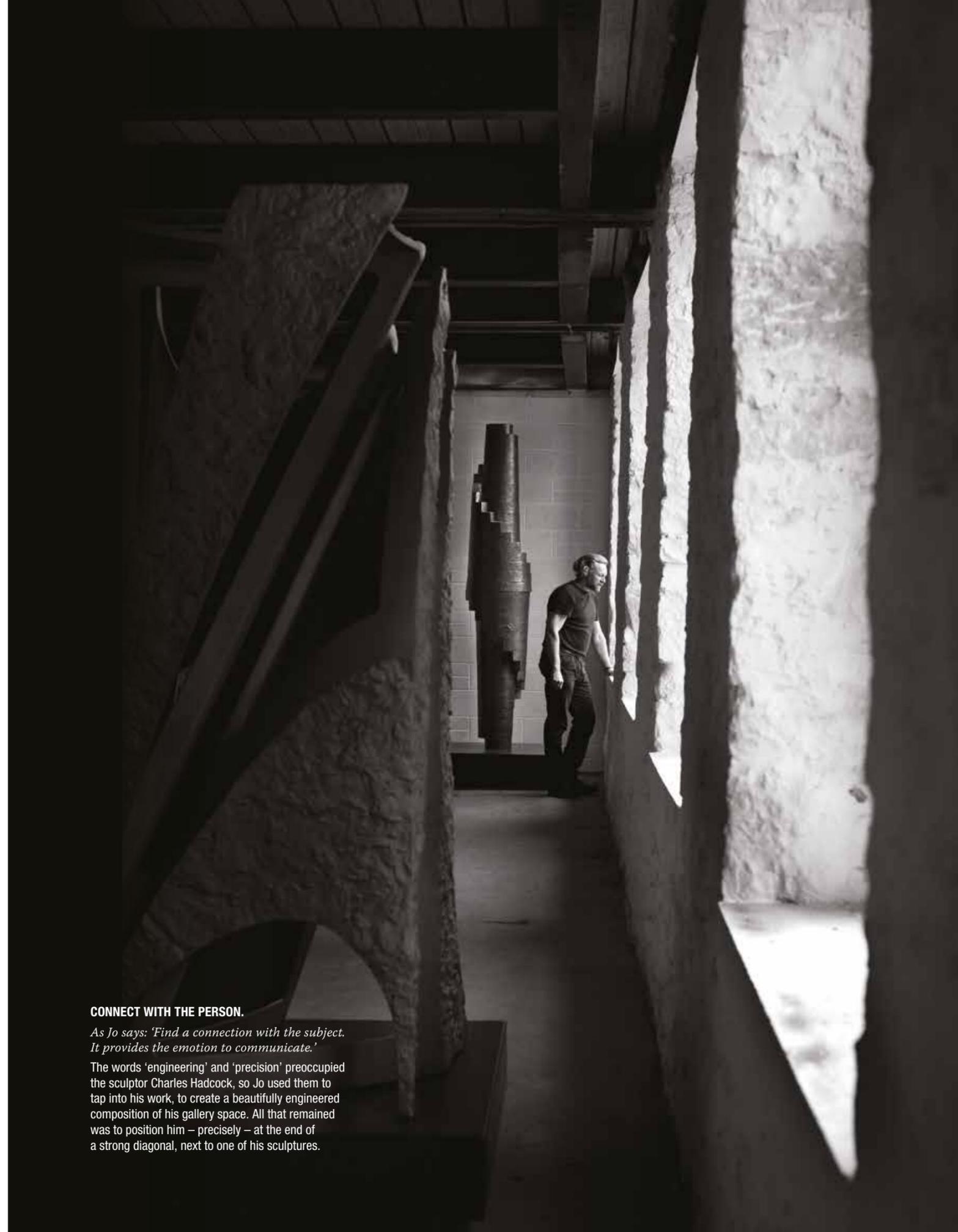
In all her photography, whether it's commercial portraits or personal projects, Jo strives to make artistic images. She describes these as pictures that have an intention and which have been visualised. She works with available light and natural surroundings to create her photographs, rather than taking snaps – which are more simply responses to things that look nice without understanding why.

Jo's journey into photography has been incremental and her photographic practice continues >

#### CONNECT WITH THE PERSON.

*As Jo says: 'Find a connection with the subject. It provides the emotion to communicate.'*

The words 'engineering' and 'precision' preoccupied the sculptor Charles Hadcock, so Jo used them to tap into his work, to create a beautifully engineered composition of his gallery space. All that remained was to position him – precisely – at the end of a strong diagonal, next to one of his sculptures.





### **DON'T GET BOGGED DOWN IN TECHNICALS.**

*Jo believes you should: 'Visualise the outcome you want and use the technicals to make it happen.'*

The artist Saskia Gall combines drawing, painting and 3D work. She talked to Jo about the dichotomy of violence and fragility, and the tensions of mind and body, which Jo sought to reflect in this image. The most successful images are often the more abstract ones, as in this blurred picture of the artist seen through her own art.

### THE NEXT CHALLENGE

**Jo's pictures speak for themselves, but she says she often struggles to explain to others what they are about. 'As a professional, it doesn't seem enough to simply say I photograph people,' she says. As an artist she also appreciates the power of being able to articulate and therefore inform her own work. So the next challenge is to produce an artist statement with professional support.**

**► To see more of Jo's work visit: [joscottimages.co.uk](http://joscottimages.co.uk)**

◀ to evolve in this way. She has various ways of achieving this, whether it is setting herself creative challenges, like the personal project artists' portrait series shown here, or going on various writing, photographic and business-led workshops. Also, she works in a mutually supportive environment. Her

sculptor husband always encourages her, while he realised he wanted to be a sculptor as a result of an art course she gifted to him.

The way Jo talks about her photographic practice reminds me of the Elliott Erwitt quote: 'Photography is an art of observation. It has little to do

with the things you see and everything to do with the way you see them.' Jo continually works at how she sees life, always noticing the world around her, deriving inspiration and energy from it, to charge her creative batteries. Like Erwitt, she has dictums of her own, as you'll read in the

picture captions. But, if there is one thing in particular that I've got from my conversations with her, it is not just to think about the way we see things, but to think about – and accept – the way we see ourselves and our potential.

Now, who among us can say they are not an artist?