Vie des Arts

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Luc Giard: Portrait of Alberto Giacometti

John K. Grande

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MARC QUINN *SELF*

By Dorota Kozinska

Self, 2001
Blood (artist's), stainless steel,
perspex and refrigeration equipment
80 11/16 x 25 9/16 x 25 9/16 in.
(205 x 65 x 65 cm)
© the artist
Photo: Stephen White
Courtesy Jay Jopling/ White Cube (London)

The self-portrait is the ultimate in personal expression, and British artist Marc Quinn's *Self* must be the ultimate in those. To put it simply, he creates three-dimensional self-images using his own blood.

Each portrait is made with 10 pints (approx. 5.5 liters) of the artist's blood, which he collects over a number of months. He then makes a self portrait cast, and once the blood is poured in, *the artwork* is refrigerated. Why the italics? Because try as I may, I cannot see art in it, as fascinating and eerily beguiling those heads are.

It all began in 1991, when Quinn (b. 1964) caused an international stir with *Self*, exhibited in a specially designed refrigeration unit at the sensational *Sensations* exhibition, where every work was aimed at shocking.

This, the original *Self*, is one of those iconic works made by the so-called YBAs (Young British Artists), most 'discovered' by gallery owner, Charles Saatchi. And it was he, who purchased it for close to 13,000 pounds (UK).

Quinn is a prolific artist; among other things, he is also famous for painfully dismissive, albeit cast in gold, sculptural studies of model Kate Moss, as well as white marble sculptures of people missing one or more limbs. That striking series was the artist's way of calling for the emancipation of disabled peopled, showing, in both cases, his strong social engagement.

What is it that draws him to such unusual subject matter is a question for discussion, but it is certain, that by confronting the purely physical aspects of life, including his

LUC GIARD

PORTRAIT OF ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

By John K. Grande

It all begins in a vortex. Then you begin. Life's like that. Life is life-like. Once you're here, on this page, it changes. It's something else. And that face, once there, is now here. This face can mirror that face. Faces respond to other faces. Faces respond. And faces, whether in reality or in art, endlessly mutate, as expressions shift so subtly. Faces in art are painted, photographed, video taped, digitally recorded, drawn. Each face is

incredibly human, though faces have so many individual life shapes. Each of us sees each of these faces one way. We may remember each of these faces altogether differently. We look at faces through the eyes on our face. The face is a moving solid form. It has two eyes, flesh, a nose, two ears, and many features are particular. A face can tell you everything. Sometimes a face tells you nothing.

Faces are subtle. Faces are dimensional. You will find a universe of solids, hollows, lines, folds, curves and shapes in a face. Faces contemplate, and faces express moods. Faces can grimace or faces can smile. Faces can be smooth and young, or faces can be old and marked by time. Faces are a record of the life of each and every one of us, of our feelings, our experience, of tragedy and of comedy. Faces are multi-dimensional. Faces represent perception within and perception without.

Alberto Giacometti's face seems to have surfaced in all this malaise of facial description right now. The Montreal artist Luc Giard made this portrait of Alberto Giacometti you

are looking at adjacent to my text. Luc Giard's studio looks like a Schwitters Merzbau. It's a live-in artwork (the artist's living space that is). Luc Giard piles his drawings methodically. Over time the art subjects on those sheets of paper that are piled one on top of the other become objects. Then those object/piles of art start to climb the walls. This time-based art now exists as four-foot piles at various strategic locations in Luc Giard's studio. I can see a few portraits – faces – on his walls.

Is art a kind of reverse archaeology? Instead of digging to discover artifacts and portrait busts – faces - from the past, we are creating, piling, adding new layers – some of them visible, still other less visible now in a digital era – to add to our portrait of civilization over time – and the faces are multiplying. How can we make up with history? We are all informational archaeologists, producing, sorting and sifting through extreme bodies of information, a history of images. The images are like masks, like faces on top of faces. Layers of faces – faceless faces, or faces with a soul. And all those

own mortality, he presents the viewer with a disturbing dichotomy between beauty and ugliness, the ethereal and the mortal.

It all sounds wonderful, but is very difficult to apply to a bloody head of a middle-aged man.

The artist plans to continue to make a new *Self* every five years, until he is incapable of doing so. "The final one will be done after I die, with blood drained out of my body," he told UK's The Art Newspaper. I wonder who will get that task... □

image faces are being experienced by real living people – so many faces. I am looking at Luc Giard's face now... the face of the artist that captured Giacometti's face. Giard's thick dark glasses that sit on his face have that same graphic intensity as the faces he draws – like this Giacometti in this text about faces. Giacometti's face has an inquisitive expressive quality. The faces in Giacometti's art, on the other hand, are elongated, stretched and have an archaic quality. □

STAN DOUGLAS
THE INCONSOLABLE

By Melissa Lam

Inconsolable Memories, 2005
Film Still
Image courtesy of the Artist

I am enraptured by a haunting still from Stan Douglas's 2005 work *Inconsolable Memories*. A photographer turned filmmaker, Douglas came out of the Vancouver Photo-Conceptualist School in the 1960s along with Jeff Wall, Rodney Graham and Roy Arden. Douglas's work often challenges traditional narratives and the way in which we view advancement of plot. His films make use of such structural techniques as Becketian repetition and miniscule incremental differences in order to defy the viewer's expectation of chronological plot in storytelling. 'Inconsolable Memories' takes place in post-revolutionary Cuba where the past is somehow present in the telling. The black and white old-fashioned quality of the film, the muted dark tone of the wall and the faded polka-dot pattern of the woman's skirt add to the retro-quality of the scene. The chosen still reveals two faces – a close-up of a man's grim profile and a woman in the background in the act of turning. The younger man is hunched forward, eyes focused on a postcard of the New York skyline off camera, his eyelashes strangely beautiful,

the afternoon light reflecting patterns on his skin. The still reveals an action sequence; the man's steady gaze works in contrast with the woman's startled face caught by surprise. The tilted angle of the lamp on the bedside table and the crumpled folds of the blankets contribute to the hurried nature of the scene. The shadows created by the whiteness of the blanket contrasts with the shadows of both the man and the women's white shirts. Even though the still captures all the brightness and light of the outdoor sunshine and hotness of the tropical country of Cuba, the photo plays with different layers of darkness – from the dark wall contrasting against the thick darkness of the woman's hair, against the blackness of the bedside table, the rectangle of black on the floor against the richness of the man's skin. The viewer is interrupting a private moment between the two characters but the expression on the woman's face indicates that she is aware of the interruption, which is what makes the film still so interesting. The viewer has become the intruder in this photo who has created the interruption and thus, in a way, created the action of turning and surprise in the scene. □