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Stan Douglas: The Inconsolable

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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. □