Following Giacometti:

A Case Study for a Multidisciplinary Approach to Art Education

Sebastien Fitch

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Art Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts (Art Education) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
September 2011

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Sebastien Fitch

Entitled: Following Giacometti: A Case Study for a Multidisciplinary Approach to Art Education

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Art Education)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Chair

_____ Examiner

_____ Examiner

_____ Supervisor

Approved by _____
Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

_____
Dean of Faculty

Date _____

ABSTRACT

Following Giacometti:
A Case Study for a Multidisciplinary Approach to Art Education

Sebastien Fitch

Though generally much maligned in recent years, the idea of learning about art through copying pre-existing works was the principal method of art education for centuries. The debate concerning its use in an educational context continues, however, especially as the artist/teacher phenomenon has brought practicing artists into the field. Though copying may be dismissed by many art education theorists, artists themselves attest to its usefulness in their own creative process.

How, then, does one learn from copying? What can, in practical terms, be learnt from it and what does it in fact entail?

In this thesis, I use a hybrid research methodology based on self-reflective studio practice, art history and qualitative analysis to explore the working method of Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966). At its core, this project demonstrates that it is the process of art, not its product, that holds the greatest potential for knowledge.

Furthermore, I make the argument that this multi-faceted approach to studio-based research can function as a template for a holistic method of teaching art within the classroom, allowing for bothanalytic and creative thought, and thus introducing students to a practical and transformative experience that mirrors the act of artistic creation itself.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the following individuals without whom this project would never have seen the light of day:

Michael Dean, for helping me formulate the initial ideas that would eventually lead to this thesis; “Why not just go ahead and copy one of Giacometti's pictures?”, he said. Indeed.

Martin Midwood, Head of Art at St Bees School in Cumbria, U.K., for his encouragement (and humour) early on in my explorations, and for letting me use an entire high school art department as my personal studio at night.

Dr Lorrie Blair, my Supervisor for this thesis, for helping me make the links between my research and the field of Art Education, as well as for teaching me the virtues of pragmatism.

The members of my Thesis Committee, Dr Richard Lachapelle and Dr David Pariser, for their support, suggestions, ideas and encouragement.

Alex Page, for his invaluable support and advice.

My brother, Dr Fabrice Fitch - composer, musician and fellow obsessive researcher, who listened to all my ideas, and scuttled what needed scuttling.

My parents, Professor Brian T. Fitch and Josette Fitch, who will always be a constant source of inspiration in all my endeavours.

And finally, Alberto Giacometti.

“It matters what men of good will want to do with their lives.”

– R.B.Kitaj

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Following Giacometti:
A Case Study for a Multidisciplinary Approach to Art Education

Chapter 1

Introduction

This project began, like many such projects do, with an apparently simple idea. My long-standing interest in the works of Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966) led me to attempt to replicate the style of his paintings in order to better understand his working methods. The plan was to assuage my curiosity by copying one of his pieces; just a couple of days working on a canvas. A week or two at the most, if it went well.

The more I worked, however, the more questions were raised, both technical and theoretical, including questions concerning how artistic research in general and research into artists in particular are traditionally approached. Days quickly turned to months, and suddenly I found myself surrounded with half-finished canvases amongst a chaos of catalogues, books and photocopies.

That was seven years ago.

In the interim, I was accepted into the Department of Art Education at Concordia University, where I found myself engulfed in a sea of new information, ideologies and polemics. Emerging from this academic soup, I eventually found a topic that seemed to speak to me. Confusingly, it seemed to go by many names: *art-based research*, *art-as-research*, *art-led research*...This relatively recent, rhizomatic field approached art-making in a way that seemed to me at once new and old at the same time. What interested me

most about this paradigm was the idea of *art research through art*, by which I mean the discovery of information related to art through various forms of research, but including the creation of art as an integral part of said research.

As I discussed my ideas with department faculty and my fellow students, it soon became clear to me that what I had been doing in my art practice fit perfectly into the context of art-as-research, and could serve a wider purpose than just to satisfy my own personal curiosity.

Here, then, was a intellectual model that could be of use to me.

Genesis and Giacometti

A great deal of writing exists analyzing the works and life of Giacometti, much of it lyrical, philosophical or biographical. Despite the importance of such writings, however, rarely is much attention paid to the actual practice involved in the works' creation. Indeed, very little has been written regarding his actual working method; the myth of the reclusive artist-as-genius has gone a long way to obscuring the sort of investigation that is my principal interest. That said, such poetic writings as I have mentioned above should not be ignored, as they serve as a perfectly viable starting-point from which to analyze the work in question.

Sullivan (2006) states that "what artists do in the practice of creating artworks, and the processes, products, proclivities, and contexts that support this activity is less well studied from the perspective of the artist. As an 'insider' the artist has mostly been content to remain a silent participant", (p26).

In terms of art education, Eisner (1974) argues that the very act of attempting to separate product from process is wrongheaded: they cannot be dichotomized since "they are two sides of the same coin", (p95).

Clearly, what is lacking in the field of research is the artist him/herself. How, then, does one go about understanding the process of creating art? At its core, my methodology is based on the belief that it is only through *doing art* that one can truly come to understand it. Furthermore, the best way to begin to understand the work of a particular artist is to experience the creation of that work as closely as possible - which is to say, to copy it.

In this thesis, I explore how the apparently simple act of copying can serve as a basis for an original, multi-faceted approach to studio-based research, using art history, self-reflection and qualitative analysis. Not only do I claim that the working method I am establishing is of use to artists and art historians, but that, as it encompasses various sub-disciplines of what we consider the subject of "Fine Art", it can also serve as an original approach to teaching art to students at both a secondary and post-secondary level. Allowing as it does for both analytic and creative thought, it introduces students to a practical and transformative experience that mirrors the act of artistic creation itself.

Notes on the Text

An initial, abridged draft of this thesis, entitled *Following Giacometti: Copying as a Basis for Studio Based Research*, was published as an article in the Winter 2010 issue

of the Canadian Review of Art Education[1]. Additionally, an exhibition of the paintings themselves took place in May of 2011 at the Faculty of Fine Arts Gallery at Concordia University, Montreal.

Chapter 2 delves into the academic framework in which this project has been cast. It explores the pedagogical debate around copying in a studio-art context and discusses basic ideas behind the paradigm of *art-as-research*. My methodology and data sources are also explained. Chapter 3 examines the art-historical context of this project; it includes a short biography of Giacometti as well as a discussion of the role of phenomenology in his work and a review of several of the major treatises that have been written concerning the artist. Chapter 4 concerns itself with the paintings that were produced during my research, and is divided into three sections: *Still Lives, Figures,* and *Imaginary Portraits*. Each section discusses particular observations and discoveries that were made during their creation. Although each of these sections focuses on one or two paintings in particular for the sake of conciseness, more examples of similar works are contained in corresponding appendices.

1Fitch, Sebastien. (2010). Following Giacometti: Copying as a Basis for Studio Based Research. *Canadian Review of Art Education*, Volume 37, p73-89.

Chapter 2

To Copy or Not to Copy: Is That the Question?

The debate over copying in the art classroom is a longstanding and contentious one. In the past, the discussion has been erroneously characterized as a two-sided argument between those who view copying as the vilest of crimes to be perpetrated in an art classroom, and those who see in it a useful and even essential tool for learning.

According to Duncum (1988), the debate's complexity stems from the fact that it involves two different approaches to copying; copying as expression versus copying as a form of learning. Those who equate all image-making with art and art as self expression, such as Orban and Viola (1958, 1936), necessarily find themselves siding with Lowenfeld's (1952) research and his oft-cited injunction "Never let a child copy anything!", (p.4).

There is, however, a host of studies that refute the dichotomy between expression and learning (Hubbard, 1991; Leeds, 1984; Pariser, 1979; Kozlowki and Yakel, 1980). Leeds (1984), for example, claims that self expression is formed through a process of learning of which copying is an integral part. Lamme and Thompson (1994) make the argument that in other areas of activity such as reading, music, and sports, students are actually encouraged to have models which to emulate. Along with Holt (1983), they make the case that children use adults and peers as models from which to learn not only of the product, but also the process of art-making.

Similarly, Kozlowski and Yakel (1980) state that "by copying exemplary models

the child will add to the repertoire of techniques and as a result open for himself a new dimension of expression. Thus, copying is a direct line to creativity", (p.26).

Furthermore, they contend that to discourage copying actually has a *negative* impact on learning:

> "If we accept the belief that there is a continuum of progression through the developmental states in visual image making and that realism is a natural part of this sequence, then to deny this will have serious implications arresting the child's creative potential." (p.25)

An overview of the relevant literature reveals that this debate is primarily centered on students at the elementary or junior high-school levels (Duncum, p.204). Past a certain age - or so the argument goes - copying becomes at best a technical exercise, and at worst a quaint throwback to old-fashioned forms of art education that many contend have been rightly relegated to the waste basket of history ever since the Impressionists decided to break with tradition and turn their backs on what they considered a conservative and stifling form of learning.

However, if such a major body of research exists demonstrating the benefits of copying for children, surely older students can also profit from the same. After all, a brief survey of art history reveals how widespread an activity copying has been amongst those whom we consider accomplished artists; not only those for whom copying was an established exercise within the educational context of their time, as was the case, for example, of Rembrandt or Delacroix, but more tellingly amongst recent artists such as Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Euan Uglow and Tony Scherman, to name but a few. In the context of this thesis, it is particularly telling that Giacometti himself made pencil

drawing copies of artworks; an exercise that began in his early childhood and continued throughout his life.

Art as Research

> "If the broad intent of research is seen to be the creation of new knowledge and the theoretical quest is to explain things, then art practice achieves this goal in a distinctive way." (Sullivan, 2008, p242)

In the last decade, a new emphasis has been placed in academic circles, and especially within art education, on the potential for studio practice as a site for the creation of knowledge. Terms such as *art-based* or *studio-based* research are all part of a new paradigm based on the theory that new knowledge can be gained through the process of creating artwork.

Bolt (2007) describes this paradigm as "a form of tacit knowledge (which) provides a very specific way of understanding the world, one that is grounded in material practice", (p.29).

> “Praxical knowledge takes a number of forms and it is this multiplicity that provides creative arts research with its distinctive character. Whilst the artwork is imminently articulate and eloquent in its own right, knowing and the generative potential of process have the potential to reveal new insights; both those insights that inform and find a form in artworks and those that can be articulated in words.” (p.31)

David Hockney's (2006) book *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters* serves as an excellent example of such research. Hockney, in collaboration with optical scientist Charles Falco, makes the claim that, contrary to established art historical beliefs, the use of pin-hole cameras in painting did not stem

from the nineteenth century, but may well have gone as far back as four centuries prior.

Although the “Hockney-Falco Thesis”, as it has come to be called, is still a subject of intense conjecture[2], what is important for the purpose of this thesis is the way in which Hockney reached his initial conclusions; his methodology, while consisting of a great deal of practical historical research, was based on the process of creating artwork. Essentially, Hockney argues that only "an artist, a mark-maker, who is not as far from practice, or from science as an art historian" (p.13), could have made these discoveries; the tacit knowledge that comes from making art brings insight that cannot be gained in any other way.

Similarly, the research presented in this paper stems from work done in an artist's studio; without the act of artistic creation, the insights and knowledge described here would not have been possible.

Methodology

So, what can, in practical terms, be learnt from copying? What is it that actually occurs when an artist chooses to focus on copying as a methodology in the studio?

The research presented in this thesis is part of a larger ongoing project that stems from my personal interest in the Swiss sculptor and painter Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966). Some time ago, my curiosity concerning Giacometti's working methods led me to several initial creative experiments which in turn led me to thinking about questions concerning how artistic research in general and research into artists in particular is

2 This thesis is explored in detail by Falco at http://www.optics.arizona.edu/SSD/art-optics/personal.html. A comprehensive presentation of its detractors is available at: http://www.diatrope.com/stork/HockneyTheory.html.

approached.

Focussing on Giacometti's paintings, my intention was to explore the practical question of how Giacometti worked in his studio through a physical recreation using practical working methods rather than from a purely conceptual basis.

My emphasis on *practice over product* and the creation of knowledge through the use of materials squarely places my methodology within the paradigm of *practice-led* or *studio-based* research, and is partially inspired by the writings of Graeme Sullivan (2005, 2006, 2008) concerning *reflexive methodology*, and the notions of *material thinking* and *tacit knowledge*, as discussed by Bolt (2007) and Jarvis (2007).

Material thinking "offers us a way of considering the relations that take place within the very process or tissue of making. In this conception, the materials are not just passive objects to be used instrumentally by the artist, but rather, the materials and processes of production have their own intelligence that come into play in interaction with the artist' s creative intelligence", (Barrett and Bolt, p.29).

In making the argument that Art History can be taught as an inquiry process, Erickson (1983) focuses on the role of imagination in order to reconstruct the past. Richmond (1992, 1993) similarly defends the role of imagination, not only in order to "overstep inadequacies of evidence and temporal and cultural distances" (1992, p39), but also as a vital element to effective art education (1993).

Imagination, therefore, is integral to my methodology, which requires a form of role-playing as I try to put myself in Giacometti's place in order to better understand his thinking. Taking on this role is facilitated by the use of biographical and historical

research into the artist's life as well as the philosophical and psychological writings concerning his work[3]. This methodology then becomes doubly self-reflective, as it must be applied to both my role as artist/researcher and that of Giacometti "double". Not only must I try to understand his thinking process, but also my own decisions regarding the direction of my research and what other possible avenues it may open.

The use of journals and field notes are essential in disentangling these two concurrent streams of analysis: the interplay between the subjective and the objective, between historically based knowledge and personal intuition.

Data Sources

My initial data comes from the primary and secondary sources collected during my research into Giacometti. These allowed me to make certain practical decisions such as that of limiting my choice of subjects to those that make up the vast majority of Giacometti's own work: namely still lifes, standing nudes and human faces, the last two being depicted from a frontal perspective.

However, part of the thinking that supports this thesis is that second-hand accounts can only answer the basic question of *how* an artist works; re-creation, on the other hand, helps one understand *why* he or she works in that way, or rather what are the end-results of practical decisions on the aesthetic characteristics of the finished artwork.

A second source of data is therefore embodied in the paintings produced in my studio and my experiences in creating them. This visual component was documented using digital photography to record the work in progress, while journals and

3 See review of literature regarding Giacometti in Chapter 5.

field notes served to record the experience of their creation as well as identify other possible avenues of research that I uncovered in the process.

The resulting works represent my attempts at reconstructing how Giacometti's paintings were "built"; not only examining the way that he applied paint to canvas but also the role of factors such as erasure, layering and reworking - factors upon which I will elaborate in chapter 6.

Rather than trying to create a replica of a particular Giacometti painting, it is his artistic methodology that I am replicating by a process of exploration informed by written and recorded sources, photographic reproductions, my own observation of his work in situ, and a great deal of experimentation and intuition.

The distinction between creating a copy of a particular painting and replicating a methodology is a subtle yet essential one. If I were to focus on copying one particular painting, the best I could hope for is a replica of said image. However, since the essential nature of Giacometti's work lies within his process, it is not the final product – the resultant painting – which is of importance, but how he went about creating it.
To narrow the focus of research merely on the product is to examine art *after the fact*.

Therefore, as it is the process that is being replicated, the resultant paintings *can not* be copies of individual works by Giacometti – it is quite simply not possible for it to be otherwise. In a sense, these are paintings that Giacometti never had the chance to make.

Chapter 3

Alberto Giacometti – A Brief Biography[4]

Alberto Giacometti was born in the Swiss village of Borgonovo in 1901, a small hamlet on the Swiss/Italian border surrounded by towering mountain ranges. From an early age, he seemed destined to become an artist; his father, Giovanni, was a well-established and admired Neo-impressionist painter, who encouraged his eldest son's interest in both painting and sculpture.

As early as the age of 12, Giacometti began to make reproductions of artworks by Durer and Rembrandt amongst others, that he discovered in books in his father's studio. This particular practice – that of learning through copying – was one that, as an adult, he considered to be essential to the education of an artist, and that he would pursue for the rest of his life.

In 1922, after a somewhat sporadic education in Switzerland during which his natural artistic aptitudes – if not his academic assiduity – were remarked upon, Giacometti moved to Paris, where he established himself in the quartier Montparnasse, the center of the art world at the time.

From 1922 to 1927, he frequented the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, though his attitude towards institutional education continued to be lackadaisical. His approach to art, however, was another matter: rather than attend classes, Giacometti spent the entire

4 The biographical information in this section is a synthesis of the biographies of Giacometti found in Fletcher (1988), Schneider (2009), and Weisinger (2008).

winter of 1923 in his bedroom, trying to draw a skull.

Over the next few years, his work focused on increasingly non-representational sculpture influenced by Cubism and Primitivism; later in his life he would explain that his true interest lay in working from observation, but his perceived inability to do so caused him to give up and experiment with abstraction instead. In 1929, two of these sculptures were exhibited in a group show at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher, where they were received with immediate acclaim. Giacometti was suddenly thrust into the avant-garde of the Parisian art world where he met such influential figures as Picasso, Miró, Ernst, and the writers Aragon and Bataille.

Feted as the new Surrealist Sculptor *par excellence*, Giacometti's name was suddenly and firmly established, and his future seemingly assured. However, after several years producing surrealist works, he began to once again model from life in 1934, much to the shock and dismay of many of his peers. His project to try and sculpt the likeness of a human head was greeted with scorn and he was called to account by the Surrealists, who considered this new endeavour an act of treason.

Giacometti's reaction was swift and decisive; he turned his back on his supposed brothers, and returned to his studio.

This self-imposed downturn in his artistic fortune was not to last long, however. Focusing almost exclusively on the human figure and working from both memory and observation, his new works quickly brought him renewed success; less than two years after his break from the Surrealists, his work was included in a group exhibition at the New York Museum of Modern Art.

Apart from a two-year period during which he was forced to relocate to Switzerland due to the onset of the Second World War and the German occupation of Paris[5], the rest of Giacometti's life consisted of an endless string of professional successes, with a steady string of both group and solo exhibitions accross Europe, the United States and even Japan. The last decade of his life was to bring him international acclaim on a grand scale, including his participation at the Venice Biennale in 1956 and 1962, a retrospective at the Guggenheim in New York in 1955, and three simultaneous retrospectives in 1965, in Copenhagen, the MOMA in New York and the Tate Gallery in London.

Concerning Obsession

Giacometti's success after his break from the Surrealist movement came at a high price, both physically and psychologically. His sudden abandonment of Surrealism and Abstraction in 1934 and subsequent return to questions of perception, scale and form in space after an interruption of almost ten years, is indicative of an obsession that had its roots as far back as his teenage years working with his father in the studio in Stampa[6]. This same dogged pursuit would continue for the remainer of his career, and only end with his death in 1966.

During the late 1920s, Giacometti had worked on designing furniture and interior decorations in order to make ends meet, and it was through this design work that he

5 Even this forced exile from his beloved studio in Paris did not serve as a respite for his work, however; the entire two year period was spent in a tiny hotel room in Geneva, where work on his sculptures continued unabated.

6 For a specific instance of the essential role of phenomenology in Giacometti's work, see the section Still Lives, in Chapter 6, p23.

began to feel stirrings of dissatisfaction concerning his Surrealist work.

> "I realized that I was working a vase exactly like the sculptures and that there was no difference between what I called a sculpture and what was an object, a vase! But, in my head, sculpture was something other than an object. Therefore it was a failure. I had bypassed the mystery, my work was not a creation, it was no different from that of a carpenter who makes a table! I had to return to the beginning and start all over again."
> (as quoted in Bonnefoy, p.555)

Despite the sudden acclaim they garnered him, it was clear that his Surrealist works had been a detour – a dead end, in fact – that he had followed out of frustration at not being able to achieve his true goal: to depict reality as he saw it. Unfortunately, for all of the experience that the previous ten years had brought him, Giacometti found that the problem that he had put aside for so long had not grown any less acute with time: "There was a desire", he wrote retrospectively, "to do some compositions with figures. For this I needed to make (quickly, I supposed, in passing) one or two studies from life, just enough to understand the construction of a head, of a whole figure, and in 1935 I took a model. This study (I thought) should take a fortnight, and then I wanted to realize my compositions", (as quoted in Sylvester, p.91).

Quickly, however, he was forced to abandon the idea of working on an entire figure – the task was simply too great. Therefore, he chose to concentrate on the head only; surely this would simplify the undertaking. Yet even then, his attempts only met with failure. With typical obstinate determination, he continued; what was meant to be a quick study turned into an exploration that lasted from 1935 to 1940.

When examining the career of Alberto Giacometti, it is clear that experiences such as the one related above are the rule rather than the exception; his work is a study in obsession, frustration, and the relentless pursuit to achieve the impossible.

Throughout his life, Giacometti eloquently expressed the impossibility of his goal as an artist; to communicate his subjective visual experience to others, and to do so through the medium of paint and sculpture.

One of his most important models, the Japanese academic Ishuko Yanaihara, described the artist's objective as the "actualization of reality on canvas":

> "[..]to transfer a real human being, his face with its own atmosphere around it and its eyes looking back at [the viewer]. The goal was not to make a picture but to approach reality."(as quoted in Wilson, p295)

The distinction is a subtle one, which is perhaps best explained in the words of the artist himself. Speaking to Yanaihara, who was sitting for him at the time, Giacometti commented:

> "You in person are five thousand times more marvellous than any sculpture or painting. Matisse tries to represent a model by his own ability. The model is only a pretext of his painting. For me, the model makes my painting. The quality of the painting is determined by reality, not the painting." (Takeda, p195)

Or again,

> "A human face isn't a pretext for making a pretty painting or a pretty sculpture; the canvas or the material are merely vehicles to allow me to better understand what I see."
> (In conversation with Jean-Marie Drot, 1963)

In order to simplify the scope of his enquiry, Giacometti kept his subject-matter to a minimum. His principal subjects were portraits, nudes and still lives, and his models were, for the most part, people and places that made up his everyday life; his wife, his brother, his mistress, his studio and the view from his window. "The most difficult thing to do well", he claimed "is what's most familiar", (Lord, p.67).

The impossibility of his endeavor led him to rework his paintings over and over again, never satisfied; he could work on the same piece for weeks or months on end. Observers would often bemoan the fact that he would continue working on a painting that they considered successful, only to apparently eradicate that success (Lord, p.90).

This obsessiveness naturally made itself felt outside the studio as well. It was particularly apparent in the artist's insistance upon a daily, almost unchangingly regimented routine that gravitated around the same tiny, ramshackle building at 46 rue Hyppolyte-Maindron in which he first took residence in 1927 and obstinately continued to both work and live in despite the considerable sums of money that his work fetched, especially in the last two decades of his life.

Interestingly, despite his sense of inherent frustration and nihilism, Giacometti never again abandoned his work as he had in 1924. Clearly something had changed since those early years that allowed him to continue in the face of apparent futility.

In *Between Crisis and Wonderment* (2009), curator Nadia Schneider argues that Giacometti's persistence in the face of the impossible elevated failure “to the status of an absolute creative principle”, (p76).

> "Insofar as Giacometti set himself a goal whose unattainability was a foregone conclusion, he was able to accept failure as a logical consequence without assigning a value to it." (Schneider, p76)

Essentially, failure was a driving force behind his work; as there was no hope of success, there was an absolute freedom to continue.

> "The daily loss of what was there at the start was plainly of no account to him regardless of how pleased he had been with it the night before: the value of the work done so far was in what had been learned in doing it. (..)Because I was able to go on sitting, he saw no reason not to go on painting." (Sylvester, p82)

Furthermore, as Schneider (2009) explains, it was "the *process and not the end result* [italics mine]" that was most important to the artist (p75).

> "[His] failure should [..] be understood as methodic failure (by analogy to Descartes' methodic doubt), which serves to subject the work to a self-critical appraisal and move forward from it by clarifying fundamental questions of cognition and artistic creativity." (p76)

This concept of a *methodology of failure* and the pre-eminence of process over product effectively casts his work as a form of research.

Critical Writings on Giacometti

A great deal of writing exists concerning the works and life of Giacometti, much of it lyrical, philosophical or biographical. The nature of his work and its often-overestimated links to the existentialist philosophical movement have made him an ideal subject for what Kleinbauer (1987) describes as *recreative criticism*: poetic flights of

lyrical description that seek to "guide the reader[..] in a highly personalized way and along clearly manipulated paths", (p213).

Amongst the major entries in the annals of Giacometti analysis, one finds such notable texts as Jean-Paul Sartre's seminal essay *The Search for the Absolute* and Jean Genet's *L'Atelier d'Alberto Giacometti*, both regarded as canonical works in existentialist theory.

Genet's poetic monograph is perhaps the most well-known if not the most important of these. In it, the author recounts bits of conversation between himself and his good friend Alberto, melding it with his own descriptions of works both completed and in progress, and the philosophical musings that they elicited in his own mind.

Another essential entry is the influential poet and theorist Yves Bonnefoy's massive monograph *Alberto Giacometti.* Bonnefoy presents an interpretation of Giacometti's work that melds psychology, biography and poetry

Employing a psycho-critical approach, "Bonnefoy places tremendous emphasis on the symbolic, epiphanic value of events, objects, dreams, obsessions, fantasies, places, and people in Giacometti's quasi-mythical life story", (Williams, p37).

Sharing Bonnefoy's attention to Giacometti's biography, but with an almost exclusive emphasis on a psychoanalytic decoding of the artist' work, is the more recent *Alberto Giacometti: Myth, Magic, and the Man* by Laurie Wilson (2003).

An overarching problem with much of these writings, however, is their tendency to emphasize a particular form of analysis that favours an examination of the artist rather than focussing on the works themselves. Soaring to lofty heights of poetic, literary,

philosophical and psychological acuity, what is often lost in these texts is the physical grounding of Giacometti's work, which is first and foremost rooted in the materiality of his process and of the experience of observation.

An important exception is James Lord's *A Giacometti Portrait*, which gives an invaluable chronicle of the author's experience sitting for the artist in his studio over the space of eighteen days in 1964. In this fascinating first-hand account, Lord recounts not only the conversations that took place during these painting sessions, but also specifically relates how Giacometti painted, insofar as his observation from the point of view of the sitter allowed.

For the purpose of my thesis, this singular book is an essential source of information regarding Giacometti's working methods as it includes such practical matters as the materials he used and how he held his brushes, as well as the tone and subject matter of the conversations that were undertaken as he painted.

Lord also had the opportunity to take seventeen more-or-less surreptitious black and white photographs of the portrait in progress, mainly while the artist was absent, or, more precisely, not in the room and thus unaware of what was being done behind his back. Although they are of dubious quality by the author's own admission, it is rare indeed to be privy to the layers of mark-making that preceded the final stage of a painting, and this record is one of the only, and certainly the most comprehensive, visual documentations of Giacometti's working process. [7]

7 A similar text also exists by the Japanese philosopher Isaku Yanaihara's, who travelled from Japan to Paris regularly from 1955 to 1961 in order to sit for Giacometti. Unfortunately, Yanaihara's *With Giacometti* (1969) was only ever published in a small edition that has as of yet not been translated into English. For an a tantalizing taste of Yanaihara's diaries, see the essay *An Unknown Country: Isaku Yanaihara's Giacometti Diaries*, by Yanaihara's student Akihiko Takeda.

Existentialism, Phenomenology, and the Role of Process

The most longstanding and pervasive myth associated with Giacometti is that of the Existentialist Artist; tortured, alienated and alone. Admittedly, this perception was an almost unavoidable product of a confluence of events. As an artist working in Paris after the Second World War who developed close friendships with such figures as Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Samuel Beckett, it is hardly surprising that his work, whose visual austerity cannot be denied, is associated with the major intellectual currents of the time.

In particular, Sartre's essay *The Search for the Absolute*, which was seminal in bringing public attention to Giacometti's work after the Second World War, would also be essential in linking him to the Existentialist movement. It is important to remember, however, that the philosophical framework in which Sartre cast Giacometti's work was, after all, Sartre's creation, not Giacometti's.[8]

Another particularly melodramatic yet unfounded link has often been made between his elongated, almost ghostly figures, and the emaciated bodies of concentration camp victims. Although this offered a tempting comparison for a post-war public that was only beginning to come to grips with the extent of the horrors of the war, this spurious interpretation fell into disrepute within academic circles in the following decades, yet remains to this day strongly affixed to the public perception of Giacometti's work.[9]

8 However, this does not mean that Giacometti was an unwilling victim of these readings of his work. In his 2007 essay *Giacometti et ses écrivains à Paris après 1945,* Thierry Dufrene's study of Giacometti's personal correspondence reveals to what extent the artist carefully chose his literary associations in order to control the public's understanding of his work.

9 This particularly facile reading of Giacometti's work was unfortuately resurected in Wilson's 2003 psychoanalytic study of the artist.

From the point of view of his personal life, it is also a well documented fact that Giacometti was anything but alone: although he lived and worked in the same tiny building for decades, this space was shared with his brother, and later his wife as well. His evenings were spent in restaurants and cafés chatting with his small but intense circle of friends, and the accounts given of those who posed for him invariably include mention of the conversations that were a consistent part of the experience.

The end result of these interpretations, according to art critic and philosopher Arthur Danto (2005), is that his work

> "[H]as become a cliché of book-jacket illustration for texts of popular sociology or existentialist philosophy, both which helped to create a received interpretation, disseminated in courses of Art History 101 wherever it is taught, which still stand almost indissolubly between Giacometti's work and its countless admirers." (p148)

This, Danto explains, "has made his work seem somehow anchored in a post-World War II mood, which it in fact has very little to do with at all", (p151).

> "By tempting the viewer to see only the ideas in his art, the Existentialist interpretation risks rendering his sculptures and paintings as merely philosophical means to and end, thereby diminishing the visual excitement and subtleties of his style and execution." (Fletcher, p35)

No, what tortured Giacometti was not a difficulty in interacting with others or the horrors of war, but rather the impossibility of the absolute communication of his subjective visual experience (Dupin, p64). His work evolved from aesthetic considerations; he was a visual artist, not a writer.

Although the development of phenomenological theories in the 30s and 40s must have undoubtedly influenced the artist (Fletcher, p33), various indications, including the anecdote in Chapter 6, clearly indicate that the question of subjective perception had been a constant preoccupation at least since his arrival in Paris in 1922, if not earlier.

However, in the majority of analyses of Giacometti's work, with the exceptions previously discussed, the focus is generally placed either on the biography of the artist or on the art object itself. Yet, as Refsum (2002) argues, artists "deal primarily with that which happens before artworks are made, this is their specialist arena; what comes afterwards is the arena of the humanistic disciplines", (p7).

To put it another way; artwork is what is left behind once the artist has left the building, so to speak. As previously stated, to narrow the focus of research on the product is to examine art after the fact.

Chapter 4

Creating Knowledge in the Artist's Studio: Learning Through Mimesis

During the course of my research, I have made a number of discoveries. Some of these serve as practical proof of information that I had already come across in the various monographs, catalogues and other assorted publications on Giacometti that I have studied over the years. Others are, to my knowledge, completely new, or serve to add a new dimension to previous knowledge.

What follows is an examination of a handfull of paintings that resulted from my research. Grouped by headings that mirror the limited subject matter that Giacometti allowed himself, each section represents a different avenue of learning that resulted from my investigations.

Although each of these three sections focuses on one or two paintings in particular for the sake of conciseness, more examples of similar works are contained in corresponding appendices.

Still Lives: the Field of Vision[10]

My experience working on this still life, inspired by Giacometti's *Apple on a Sideboard* (1937), and the resulting observations, are what planted the seeds for this research project. At the time, I was simply trying to find a way of loosening my painting

10 Additional paintings falling under this heading can be found in Appendix A, p53.

style, which I felt had become too controlled and mechanical; Giacometti, with his apparently free, impressionistic handling of paint seemed like a logical artist to look at.

I proceeded to set up a still life consisting of an apple sitting on a stool in the middle of my studio[11]. I first quickly sketched in the stool and its surroundings. My goal was to focus as much as possible on the apple and not get bogged down by the details of the surrounding room, which, by the nature of how I lived and worked, was a busy, chaotic environment. As I painted, I found that my gaze and my brush inevitably slipped to one area or another of the studio and it was a constant struggle to keep my attention concentrated on the apple itself.

(fig.1)

11 The stool itself was indeed as crooked as it appears in the painting; this is not an error of perspective by the artist!

After many hours of work, I called upon a colleague to get an initial reaction to this new direction in my painting[12]. Half way through our discussion, head cocked quizically to one side , he suddenly said:

> "You know, it looks like the apple is almost at the center of the canvas."
> I stared at the painting for a moment.
> "Actually", he added, "I think it's *right* in the middle."

I grabbed a ruler, and upon closer examination it turned out that the apple was indeed just short of a millimeter to the right of the exact center of the canvas.

This had not been my intention. When I had started, the stool had been quickly sketched in; the placement of the apple, however, had clearly shifted as the work had progressed.

Put simply, I had ended up unwittingly demonstrating a particular phenomenon of visual perception; if one is focusing one's gaze on a subject, that subject will always be exactly at the center of ones field of vision. Therefore, if one is being true to one's perception, that subject will by necessity be at the exact center of the canvas. This effect had been completely unconscious; I had simply set out to paint what I saw. Subsequent paintings would share the same centralized composition[13] – a feature common to most of Giacometti's paintings as well

This phenomenological issue – what we *see* in comparison to what we *know* – is one that Giacometti wrestled with from an early age, as the following account

12 Martin Midwood, head of the art department at St Bees School in Cumbria, U.K., whose initial encouragement was essential to this project.
13 See Appendices A-C.

illustrates:

> "[O]nce when I was eighteen or nineteen, I was in his studio drawing some pears on a table, at the normal distance for a still life, and the pears always became minuscule in my drawing. I began again, they invariably turned out exactly the same size. My father was irritated and said, 'But begin by drawing them as they are, as you see them!' And he corrected them. I tried to do them his way, and then, despite myself, I kept erasing, and half an hour later they had become exactly the same size as the first ones, to within a millimeter." (as quoted in Bonnefoy, p.65)

In this instance, while Giovanni Giacometti was indeed drawing what he *saw* – the particular shape of the pear before him – he was also drawing what he *knew*; namely that a pear has certain measurements, therefore the drawing of said pair must be of a corresponding size on the paper.

On the other hand, Alberto – however unconsciously – was drawing them *precisely* as his father had dictated. From the point of view of scale, this meant that the image of the pear on the sheet of paper would never be the same size as the actual pear for the simple reason that it would always be at a certain distance from the artist.

This anecdote illustrates the younger Giacometti's growing awareness of the phenomenological issues encountered by artists who set out to translate their visual experience into a visual language.

As Bonnefoy (2001) explains, a key question faced by artists dealing with visual representation, is whether or not they are capable or interested in detaching themselves from their subjective experience in order to become aware of what is actually contained in their field of vision.

> "[W]hile those pears grow smaller and smaller, the space around them on the sheet of paper becomes correspondingly larger, and could contain all the objects in the room. Therefore, [the paper] ceases to be merely the support provided(..) for the examination of relationships within the object being studied, and now begins to suggest the optical field, the visual space within which the object can be seen(..)." (Bonnefoy, p.69)

In the instance of the painting in fig.1 above, I had been aware of this matter, and had consciously chosen to paint the view of the studio at the scale that I observed it. I had focused on the apple and reworked it repeatedly, trying to paint it at the exact size that I viewed it. Unbeknownst to me, the apple had gradually shifted to the center of the canvas; in the process of trying to concentrate on one aspect of phenomenology, I had fallen prey to another.

The question of the artist's awareness of the optical field eventually led me to another experiment some years later (fig.2). It occurred to me that when I was painting a subject that was, by necessity, at the center of my field of vision, the boundaries of the canvas always served as an arbitrary framing device, limiting within its borders what could be included of what I saw.

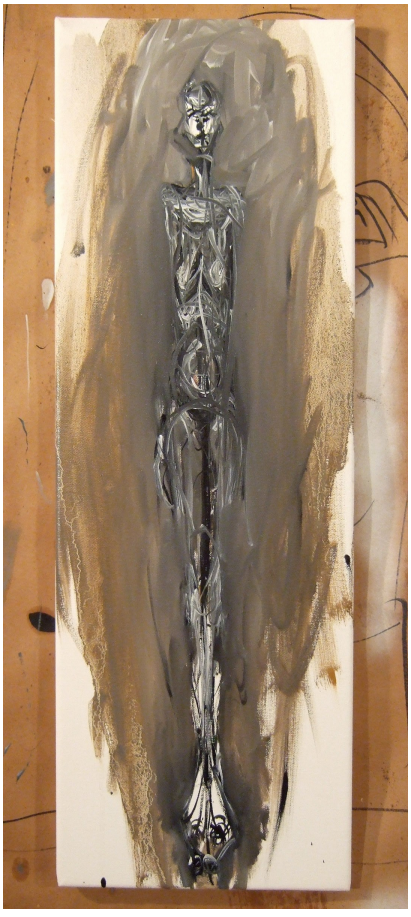
One should, theoretically, be able to enlarge the canvas so that it would incorporate ones entire field of vision. However, there would be a point where the canvas itself would encroach upon that same field of vision. I therefore decided to see how large a canvas I could paint that would represent my own field of vision of my studio without incorporating the canvas on which I was painting.

(fig.2)

The subject-matter of the painting – my studio, with a small sculpture serving as my focal point – was to the right of the canvas, the left hand edge of which cuts off where the canvas would have entered my field of vision as I looked from the canvas to the statue.

Figures: Embodying the Message[14]

As previously mentioned in Chapter 5, the impossibility of Giacometti's endeavor led him to rework his paintings over and over again, never satisfied; he could work on the same piece for weeks or months on end. I therefore decided to mimic this obsessive method; I began to paint a figure with the conscious decision that I was not going to seek an endpoint to the work. Using information from James Lord's (1965) account of sitting for Giacometti[15], I chose only four colours; black, white, ochre and a tiny amount of burnt sienna.



(fig.3) – hour 1

14 Additional paintings falling under this heading can be found in Appendix B, p56.
15 An essential source for my research, Lord's *A Giacometti Portrait* (1965) is a detailed narrative of his experience sitting for the artist over the space of eighteen days. In it he observes Giacometti at work, recounts their conversations and describes the evolution of the portrait with each passing day.

I would allow myself one hour or so every morning to work on the painting, but give myself no timeframe, no limit as to how many days I would continue. At that stage in my work, I found that this forced regimen of one hour per morning was necessary in order for me to replicate, however inadequately, Giacometti's obsessive nature. As I continued my research, however, I would eventually find that such an artificial contrivance was to become unnecessary[16].

(fig.4) – *hour 6*

(fig.5) – *final state*

When I first tried to replicate what I considered at the time to be Giacometti's *style*, the results were less than satisfactory. In particular, I seemed incapable of matching the various tones of greys and browns that were a constant element to his work.

16 This matter is discussed further in the following section of this chapter concerning *Imaginary Portraits*.

What I would learn from the eighteen painting sessions that resulted in this piece was that the colours in Giacometti's work were not actually pre-mixed in any way, but rather resulted from his constant reworking on the canvas. The various layers of paint would mix into each other and result in a multitude of subtle tones that were, for lack of a more poetic description, the result of chance.[17]

Eventually, I was to discover that the same could be said of other aesthetic aspects of Giacometti's work. The colours and the texture of his paintings, as well as the centrality of the subject within his canvas (as discussed previously in this chapter), were not a matter of "style" at all, but rather a by-product of his process.

In essence, this process of constant reworking expresses the impossibility of his goal, thus succeeding in spite of itself in communicating the ultimately futile nature of his endeavor. Literally, the medium *embodies* the message.

I could have understood none of this if I hadn't gone through a similar process through a mimetic method that helped me get closer to Giacometti's own frame of mind. Reading about it in a monograph simply could not take the place of experiencing it.

Imaginary Portraits: Trapping the Gaze[18]

Having gained insight, however partially, into Giacometti's basic methodology, I moved on to another of his favourite pictorial subjects: the human face. Knowing that he had worked both from life as well as from memory, I chose to do the latter, looking

17 Even in the instances when Giacometti did choose to colours other than earthtones in his painting, the same effect can be seen; as basic colour theory teaches, the more colours one mixes together, the more the result veers towards grey.

18 Additional paintings falling under this heading can be found in Appendix C, p 61.

simply to understand how his particular mark-making affected how he represented human features. I was not looking to represent any person in particular, but simply to paint a human face as closely as my memory would allow.

The resulting experience proved to be singularly fascinating, as well as frustrating beyond anything I had experienced as an artist. As I painted, the very nature of the face before me changed as it emerged and disappeared from the gray miasma of gradual over-painting.

(fig.6) – *in progress*

(fig.7) – in progress

> "Each individual becomes everyone, yet remains an individual. But who becomes a stranger. It becomes...one gets lost..."
> (Alberto Giacometti, in conversation with Jean-Marie Drot, 1963)

At times, it was a mask: static, fixed, false and lifeless. At other times it seemed to be merely a jumble of disparate features: a mouth, a nose, one eye on the left, another

on the right, each separate as if belonging to different people, like a haphazard jigsaw.

Occasionally the features would coalesce, and I would begin to feel as if I could almost recognize the face before me; as if my memory were taking over the movements of my brush and reconstructing the image of a friend or lover that had been subconsciously etched into my mind. At such times I thought I could almost guess who it was I was reminded of, but then this impression would dissolve just as suddenly as it had materialized.

(fig.8) – *final state*

Odder still, were the moments - very few moments - when I felt not only as if I were painting the face of an actual person, but also as if there was someone looking back at me from the surface of the canvas.

The key element was, invariably, the eyes. It was in the eyes moreso than any

other feature or even the whole of the face itself where the essential struggle took place. One line, one accent, one dab of paint and the eyes would suddenly take on a sense of life that had previously been absent. With only a brush stroke, however, the whole structure would come crashing down, all likeness cease, all presence evaporate, with only a mass of gray paint left behind.

(fig.9) – *detail*

This question of the gaze is perhaps one of the most important elements in understanding Giacometti's work; it is a theme that recurrs almost inevitably in the

various interviews given by the artist.

> "One day when I was drawing a young girl, I suddenly noticed that the only thing that was alive was her gaze. The rest of her head meant no more to me than the skull of a dead man. One does want to sculpt a living person, but what make him alive is withouht a doubt the gaze. Not the imitation of eyes, but really and truly a gaze." (Giacometti, as quoted in Danto, p154)

It is the gaze, according to the artist, which defines us and separates us from inanimate objects, the gaze which serves as the only certain indication of consciousness within a body being observed. "One feels", according to Danto, "that this is what [Giacometti] sought for the rest of his life, in his paintings and drawings, and in his sculpture. Not how things appear but the way they show themselves as conscious of the world", (p154).

Mimesis, Empathy and Obsession

The series of works of which the above painting is an example - these *Imaginary Portraits*, as I have come to call them - are the closest I have come to an intimate, empathetic understanding of Alberto Giacometti as an artist and fellow human being.

By trying to emulate his obsessive reworking in a mechanical, almost synthetic fashion - giving myself a forced routine of one hour's work on the same canvas a day, for example - I stumbled upon phenomenological observations which led me to become genuinely obsessed. Whilst working on these paintings over the space of months, countless hours were spent working and reworking, not knowing when and if to stop, always hoping that the next few minutes worth of painting would bring me closer to

success or seemingly right back to where I'd started.

Similarly, Lord's account of sitting for Giacometti relates how the work seemed never to end; it was either a terrible mess, or just beginning to succeed. Even on the occasions where the artist seemed pleased, the frustration would ebb away only briefly; "il y a une ouverture" ("there is an opening"), he is quoted as constantly saying, which meant that there was a ray of hope after all and the work was worth continuing.

> "So once more we were confronted by the utter impossibility of what Giacometti is attempting to do. A semblance, an illusion is, in any case, obviously all that can be attained, and he knew it. But an illusion is not enough. This inadequacy becomes literally day by day, I think, less tolerable(..) even as he strives to go on, to go further. There is always, perhaps, a possibility of going a little further, not very far but a little further, and in the realm of the absolute a little is limitless." (Lord, p91)

Giacometti saw no hope of success, no hope of reaching his goal, so there was an absolute freedom to continue. By trying to understand his work through the act of copying, I ended up partaking in an experiential act that went beyond physical questions of technique and into a mental realm of extreme empathy, which resulted in shared obsession.

His obsession was to depict on canvas his subjective visual experience; my interest lay in understanding how he had accomplished these depictions. However, the more I worked at comprehending the physical properties of his working method, the more I shared in his own frustration, until eventually I was no longer thinking of the process, but was partaking in, engulfed by, the substance. I found myself similarly obsessed; drawn into a mania of constant reworking and repetition, trying to reach a goal that

seemed forever just a moment's effort away.

> “If someone else tried to do what I'm doing, he'd have the same difficulties I'm having.[..]And yet it seems so simple. What I'm trying to do is just to reproduce on canvas[..] what I see.”
> (Giacometti, as quoted in Lord, 1965, p.89)

Chapter 5

Applications within Art Education: a Return to a Multidisciplinary Approach

The methodology used in this project contains three key elements: the act of copying, art-historical research, and studio production. I will now examine each of these in turn, and discuss their importance in the context of the art classroom.

From Copying to Mimogenesis

As my findings in the previous chapter demonstrate, the act of copying has enormous potential for student learning. Clearly, as Smith (1985) points out, "there are different kinds of copying, some involving artistic behaviors and some not" (p147). The approach to copying presented in this thesis however, demonstrates its potential as a pedagogical tool. and goes some way towards Kozlowski and Yakel's (1980) claim – one shared by other researchers, as discussed in Chapter 2 – that "copying is a direct line to creativity" (p.26).

As Duncum (1988) explains, what is at issue is how one defines the act of copying. Perhaps the term *copying*, as demonstrated in this thesis, is therefore a misnomer. Quite simply, trying to make a true copy of a work is an impossibility. When one takes into account texture and the layering of material, it becomes clear that the best one can hope for if simply copying, is a flattened, lifeless and imperfect clone, more akin to a colour photocopy than an actual replica. The real potential of copying lies in its use

as a studio-based methodology, which is to say an artist's methodology.

Within the context of this project it is not so much the *product* – a particular painting – that is being analysed, but rather the *process*. Not only are the resulting paintings not meant to be duplicates of Giacometti's work, the knowledge stemming from this research cannot be readily discerned from their examination: the knowledge stems from the process itself.

Therefore, I propose instead the concept of **mimogenesis**[19]: creation through the act of mimesis[20]. *Mimesis* and *copying* essentially share the same meaning, however the former is more open-ended and places a greater emphasis on the mimicry of actions and behaviour over that of visual representation. This designation also serves to place emphasis on the role of creation within the process described in this article: not only is the creation of artworks involved, but more importantly, creation of knowledge.

Art-History in the Studio

The second essential element of my methodology is the use of art historical research as a basis for studio work, and this aspect in particular deserves further exploration, due to its problematic history within art education.

Much as is the case with copying, the teaching of art history in the studio has followed a chaotic path. In the 1980s and 90s, it was one of the key elements of the

19 I would like to thank my brother, composer and musicologist Dr. Fabrice Fitch, of the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester U.K., whose many discussions with me on the subject of my research led to the coining of this term.

20 The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, defines *mimesis* as: "The imitation or representation of aspects of the sensible world, especially human actions, in literature and art."

Discipline Based Art Education paradigm that was then in vogue. However, according to Galbraith and Spomer (1986), there was still a lack of such teaching in studio courses, despite its demonstrated results in the classroom (Day, 1987).

The art-historian James Elkins has written extensively concerning the nature of the institutional segregation between studio based education and art history, and the necessity for change within this paradigm.

“In North America”, he explains as an example, “graduate programs in art history often include classes on methods and materials, but those classes do not involve hands-on work: instead they are connoisseurial”, (2005, p3).

This segregation, results in “the meanings of the studio [being] left behind, and traditional links between seeing, knowing, and making are weakened”, (2005, p4). "Art history", he maintains, "would be written differently if most of its practitioners were also practicing artists; and universities would be configured differently if the experiences of the studio were considered essential for the education of art historians", (2005, p5).

The current paradigm of Visual Culture Art Education seemingly seeks to replace D.B.A.E.'s inclusion of art history – or lack thereof – with an emphasis on a vaguely defined cultural context. However, this context seems to be rooted in the immediate present in order to promote a particular agenda based on sociology and politics (Duncum, 2002; Elkins, 2002; Darts, 2006; Richmond, 1998).

On the one hand, this greatly limits the scope of the education being provided, and on the other it ignores the fact that art history deals precisely with matters of context.

In Freedman's (2002) essay on Visual Culture, the author presents a broad list of

possible contexts that apply to artwork:

> "As well as its surface form and content, [a painting] is about the people who created it, viewed it, showed it, bought it, studied it, and criticized it. [..]Contexts include cultures, countries, communities, institutions [..] and the socio political conditions under which art is made, seen, and studied. Contexts include theories and models of aesthetics." (p318)
> All of these contexts, Freedman argues, are lacking in the teaching of art

education, hence the necessity for a Visual Culture approach. However, Kleinbauer's (1987) discussion of the role of art history within D.B.A.E. argues that it helps students to better understand the visual world around them through what he refers to as *visual literacy*; this includes imagery found "in newspapers and magazine; on television; in movie theaters[..]; on billboards, highways, and freeways", (p206). For all intents and purposes, what Kleinbauer is describing is the basis of V.C.A.E., but without the ideological dogmatism.

I would therefore argue that art history has an essential role to play in the education of art; not only does it allow for the study of the various contexts that surround the making and viewing of art, but it also brings a number of other positive attributes to the table.

From a pedagogical standpoint, Erikson (1983), Korzenik (1985), and Stinespring & Steele (1993) assert that students can use art history to distance themselves from their own work and see their personal practice in the context of a continuum through time.

Furthermore, Kleinbauer (1987) contends that artists learn from other artists, and therefore art history is integral to Studio Art education.

> "Art historical instruction enables art students to select, reject, or modify such elements in the art of the past or the present as they generate their own creations, as well as to grasp why they are doing so. It helps them establish ideals they may elect to pursue. By providing fundamental conceptual tools and enhancing imaginative powers, art history strengthens students' intention and capacity to produce art, and it gives them a framework with which to comprehends their own artistic endeavors."(p208)

As this thesis demonstrates, one of the aspects of artwork that art history also allows to explore is that of the process. Kozlowski and Yakel (1980) emphasize the necessity of understanding the artist's process:

> "To assume that the visual imagery the artist makes is totally original is to place him on a pedestal and to deny the source of his ideas and skills. It is hypocritical, therefore, to accept their product while denying the process. [..]If we are teaching children to make art and are using artists as models of aesthetic achievement, then it is only logical that we look to artists for approaches to teaching art." (p26)

In Defence of Studio Practice

Finally, there is the matter of the actual creation of art by students. One might think that there would be no need to discuss the necessity of studio practice in the context of art education, but the effect of current post-modern discourse, with its emphasis on concept, ideas and ideology, has been the relegation (at least in theory) of the practical experience of artmaking to a distant second place after discussions of culture, context and social issues. Authors such as Lavendar (2003), Richmond (1998), Jarvis (2007), and Curtler (2000), find themselves in the seemingly odd position of having to defend the *making* of art in the art classroom.

The distancing between theory and practice, states Lavender (2003) in his defence of the teaching of aesthetic fundamentals, "is a loss to students", (p42).

Richmond (1998) argues that "[c]ontent or idea alone is insufficient for art" (p19), and the experience of art-making "provides many opportunites for learning", (p14).

> "Art making involves students in the difficult balancing act of fusing feeling, imagination, perception, and skill; qualities that, together with knowledge of tradition, form the genesis of style and originality in art bearing universal significance.[..]Students begin to understand what it means to respond to the world artistically, and in so doing they become aware of the attractions, difficulties, and satisfactions of creative work. Art making develops powers of perception and understanding of visual form, which constitute a very potent way of making sense of, and communicating, the meaning of experience." (p19)

The forms of learning embodied in art-making are clearly not restricted to skill aquisition, but include more intuitive and implicit forms of understanding; as Eisner (2008) argues, "knowledge or understanding is not always reducible to language", (p5).

Sullivan (2006, 2008) refers to the idea that artists actually think *in* and *through* a medium. "Understanding" he explains, "emerges within the process of media experimentation", (2006, p31). As such "the artwork becomes the primary site of knowledge and [..]the source of questions, problems and insights, which emerge as part of practice", (2008, p244).

This essential quality of art-making is what is referred to as *tacit knowledge* (Bolt, 2007; Jarvis, 2007). Not only does the involvment with process allow students to gain an understanding of this form of knowledge, it also helps develop a better understanding of art in general; what Jarvis (2007) describes simply as "a more informed viewer", (p201).

Essentially, this thesis demonstrates the importance of the tacit knowledge which can only be gained through first-hand experience with materials. To deny students the opportunity to actually *make* art is to deny them the very form of knowledge that is the corner stone of the art-as-research paradigm.

Chapter 6

Summary

The research presented in this thesis demonstrates that the apparently simple act of copying can serve as a basis for an original, multi-faceted approach to studio-based learning. To review my main points, I ask two questions:

a) What was learned using this methodology, and

b) What was needed in order to reach these conclusions?

a) Firstly, each of the three sections of the previous chapter describes knowledge acquired through the process of copying. The first section reveals phenomenological knowledge; it serves as a practical demonstration of optical phenomena leading to a better understanding of human visual perception and its representation in art. Such phenomena may well be documented in written form, but it is quite another thing to discover and understand them through practical experience.

The second section serves both the practicing artist as well as the art-historian. The knowledge that Giacometti's visual style was not an end in itself, but rather a product of his process - a byproduct of his obsessive working method - adds both to a greater understanding of the complex interrelation between process and product, as well as to the nature of Giacometti's work itself.

Clearly any sustained form of studio-based inquiry will enhance one's visual vocabulary and repertoire of painting techniques and (hopefully) strengthen ones skills. However, the third section demonstrates how new areas of inquiry can also be revealed.

What does my experience working on the Imaginary Portrait say about the way our memory works? How does recognition function? When we create something, how do memory and imagination interact? [21]

b) To answer my second question: the process used was a complex exercise in the examination of another artist's work through the act of copying. In order to accomplish this, various research skills pertaining to art history were essential, including an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of both primary and secondary sources. Not only monographs and catalogues old and recent, but also period photographs and recordings were accumulated in order to more fully understand the social and cultural contexts of both the artist and his work.

Conclusion

It is my assertion that the approach to copying described in this paper - an artist's approach that allows for both creative and analytic thought - can serve as an original method of teaching art to students at both a secondary and post-secondary level. By using this approach as a template for the creation of a multi-disciplinary holistic learning experience, students will be given the opportunity to acquire not only technical and research skills, but also an understanding of art-historical methodology and self-reflective artistic production. In effect, they will be introduced to a practical and transformative experience that not only illustrates but embodies the act of artistic creation itself.

21 Appendix D – *Studies and Sidebars,* includes work that similarly utilize/explore my knowledge of Giacometti's methodology.

Bibliography

Bolt, Barbara. (2007). The Magic is in the Handling, in *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* . eds. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt. London: I.B. Tauris.

Bonnefoy, Yves. (2001). *Alberto Giacometti*. Trans. Charles Penwarden. New York: Assouline.

Curtler, Hugh Mercer. (2000). In Defense of Values in the Fine Arts. *Journal of Aesthetic Education.* 34(1), p7-17.

Cutler, Ellen B. (2001). Distance, Detail and the Apprehension of Reality: the Sculpture of Alberto Giacometti. *Sculpture Review*, 50 (3), p16-23.

Danto, Arthur C. (2005). *Unnatural Wonders: Essays from the Gap Between Art and Life.* New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Darts, David. (2006) Art Education for a Change: Contemporary Issues and the Visual Arts. *Art Education.* 59(3), p6-12.

Day, Michael D. (1987). Discipline-Based Art Education in Secondary Classrooms. *Studies in Art Education*. 28(4), p234-242.

Drot, Jean-Marie. (Director). (1963). *Alberto Giacometti: Un Homme Parmi Les Hommes*. [Documentary]. France: Institut National de l'Audiovisuel.

Dufrêne, Thierry. (2007). Giacometti et ses écrivains à Paris après 1945: mythe littéraire et réalité, in *L'Atelier d'Alberto Giacometti.* (Catalogue). Paris: Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti/Centre Pompidou, p330-347.

Duncum, Paul. (1988). To Copy or Not to Copy: A Review. *Studies in Art Eduction*, 29 (4), p203-210.

Duncum, Paul. (2002). Clarifying Visual Culture Art Education. *Art Education*, 55(3), p6-11.

Dupin, Jacques. (1962). *Alberto Giacometti*. (Catalogue). Paris: Maeght Editeur.

Eisner, Elliot W. (1974). The Mythology of Art Education. *Curriculum Theory Network*, 4(2/3), p89-100.

Eisner, Elliot W. (2008). Art and Knowledge, in *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research,* eds. J. Gary Knowles and Ardra L. Cole. Los Angeles: Sage Publications. p3-12.

Elkins, James. (1995). Parallel Art History/Studio Program. *Art Journal*, 54(3), p54-57.

Elkins, James. (1999). *What Painting is: How to Think about Oil Painting, Using the Language of Alchemy*. New York: Routledge.

Elkins, James. (2002). Preface to the book A Skeptical Introduction to Visual Culture. *Journal of Visual Culture*. 1(1), p93-99

Elkins, James. (2005). *Why Art Historians Should Learn to Paint: The Case for Studio Experience*. Retrieved from http:saic.academia.edu/JElkins/Papers/71316/Why-Art-Historians-Should-Learn-to-Paint--The-Case-for-Studio-Experience

Erickson, Mary. (1983). Teaching Art History as an Inquiry Process. Art Education, 36(5), p28-31.

Fitch, Sebastien. (2010). Following Giacometti: Copying as a Basis for Studio Based Research. *Canadian Review of Art Education*, Volume 37, p73-89.

Fletcher, Valerie J. (1988). (Catalogue). *Alberto Giacometti, 1901-1966*. Washington, D.C. : Smithsonian Institution Press.
Freedman, Kerry. (2002). Social Perspectives on Art Education in the U. S.: Teaching Visual Culture in a Democracy. *Studies in Art Education*. 41(4), p314-329.
Galbraith, Lynn, and Marvin J. Spomer. (1986). Does Art History Go to School? *Art Education*, 39(5), p10-13.
Genet, Jean, and Ernest Scheidegger, eds. (1958). *L'Atelier d'Alberto Giacometti*. France: M. Barbezat, L'Arbalete.
Greer, W. Dwaine. (1984). Discipline-Based Art Education: Approaching Art as a Subject of Study. *Studies in Art Education*. 25(4). p.212-218.
Hockney, David. (2006). *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters*. London: Thames & Hudson.
Hohl, Reinhold. (1971). Alberto Giacometti. (Catalogue). New York: H.N.Abrams.
Holt, John. (1983). *How Children Learn*. New York: Delcorte Press/Seymour Lawrence.
Hubbard, G. (1991). Creative Copying. *Arts & Activities*, 109 (5), p38-40.
Jarvis, Michael. (2007). Articulating the Tacit Dimension in Artmaking. *Journal of Visual Art Practice* , 6 (3), p201.
Kleinbauer, Eugene W. (1987). Art History in Discipline-Based Art Education. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 21(2), p205-215.
Korzenik, Diana. (1985). Doing Historical Research. *Studies in Art Education*, 26(2), p125-128.
Kozlowski, Phyllis H. and Norman C. Yakel. (1980). Copying...The Direct Line to Creativity. *Art Education*, 33 (8), p24-27.
Lamme, Linda Leonard, and Sharon Thompson. (1994). "Copy?...Real Artists Don't Copy!" but Maybe Children Should. *Art Education*, 47 (6), p46-51.
Lampert, Cathering. (2007). *Euan Uglow: the Complete Paintings*. (Catalogue Raisonne). New Haven: Yale University Press.
Lavender, Randall. (2003). The Subordination of Aesthetic Fundamentals in College Art Instruction. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 37(3), p.41-57.
Leeds, Alice Jo. (1984). Copying and Invention as Sources of Form in Art. *Art Education* , 37 (2), p41-46.
Lipman, Jean and Richard Marshall. (1979). *Art About Art*. (Catalogue). New York: Whitney Museum of Modern Art.
Lord, James. (1965). *A Giacometti Portrait*. New York: Doubleday.
Lowenfeld, Viktor. (1952). *Creative and Mental Growth*. New York: Macmillan.
Orban, D. (1958). Creativeness in Visual Art, in *Education Through Art in Australia*, ed. B.Smith. (p.9-15). Carlton: Melbourne University Press.
Parinaud, André. (1962). Entretien avec Alberto Giacometti: Pourquoi je suis sculpteur. *Arts* (Paris), no. 873, p1, 5.
Pariser, David. (1979) Two Methods of Teaching Drawing Skills. *Studies in Art Education* , 20 (3), p30-42.
Pariser, David. (2009). Arts Based Research: Trojan Horses and Shibboleths, the Liabilities of a Hybrid Research Approach. *Canadian Review of Art Education*, Volume 36, p1-18.

Peppiatt, Michael. (2001). *Alberto Giacometti in Postwar Paris*. (Catalogue). New Haven: Yale University Press.
Refsum, G. (2002). Contribution to an understanding of the knowledge base in the field of visual arts. *Working Papers in Art and Design 2*. Retrieved (22-07-2011) from: http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdesresearch/papers/wpades/vol2/refsumfull.html
Richmond, Stuart. (1992). Historicism, teaching, and the Understanding of Works of Art. Visual Arts Research, 16(1), p32-41.
Richmond, Stuart. (1993). Art, Imagination, and Teaching: Researching the High School Classroom. Canadian Journal of Education. 18(4), p366-380.
Richmond, Stuart. (1998). In Praise of Practice: A Defense of Art Making in Education. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 32(2), p11-20.
Sartre, Jean-Paul. (1943). *L'Etre et le Neant: Essai d'Ontologie Phenomologique*. Paris: Gallimard.
Scherman, Tony. (1999). *Chasing Napoleon: Forensic Portraits*. (Catalogue). Scotland: Cameron&Hollis.
Schneider, Nadia. (2009). Between Crisis and Wonderment: An Introduction to the Theme of Crisis in the Work of Alberto Giacometti, in *Alberto Giacometti* (Catalogue). Zurich: JRP/Ringier, p54-80.
Stinespring, John A. & Brian D. Steele. (1993). Teaching Art History: Getting Started. *Art Education.* 46(2), p.7-13.
Sullivan, Graeme. (2005). *Art Practice as Research : Inquiry in the Visual Arts***.** Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
Sullivan, Graeme. (2006). Research Acts in Art Practice. *Studies in Art Education*. 48(1), p19-35.
Sullivan, Graeme. (2008). Painting as Research, in *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research,* eds. J. Gary Knowles and Ardra L. Cole. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
Sylvester, David. (1994). *Looking at Giacometti*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
Takeda, Akihiko. (2009). An Unknown Country: Isaku Yanaihara's Giacometti Diaries, in *Giacometti: Critical Essays*. United Kingdom: Ashgate, p187-208.
Van Zele, Michel. (Director). (2000). *Qu'est-ce qu'une Tete?* [Documentary]. Paris: Arte France.
Viola, W. (1936). *Child Art and Franz Cizek*. Vienna: Austrian
Weisinger, Veronique, et al. (2007). *L'Atelier d'Alberto Giacometti: Collection de la Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti*. (Catalogue). Paris: Centre Pompidou.
Wilson, Laurie. (2003). *Alberto Giacometti: Myth, Magic, and the Man*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Williams, Adelia V. (1996). Yves Bonnefoy: Art Historian. *L'Esprit Createur*, 36(3), p34-40.
Yanaihara, Isaku. (1969). *With Giacometti*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo.

Appendix A - Still Lives

(fig.10)

(fig.11)

(fig.12)

(fig.13)

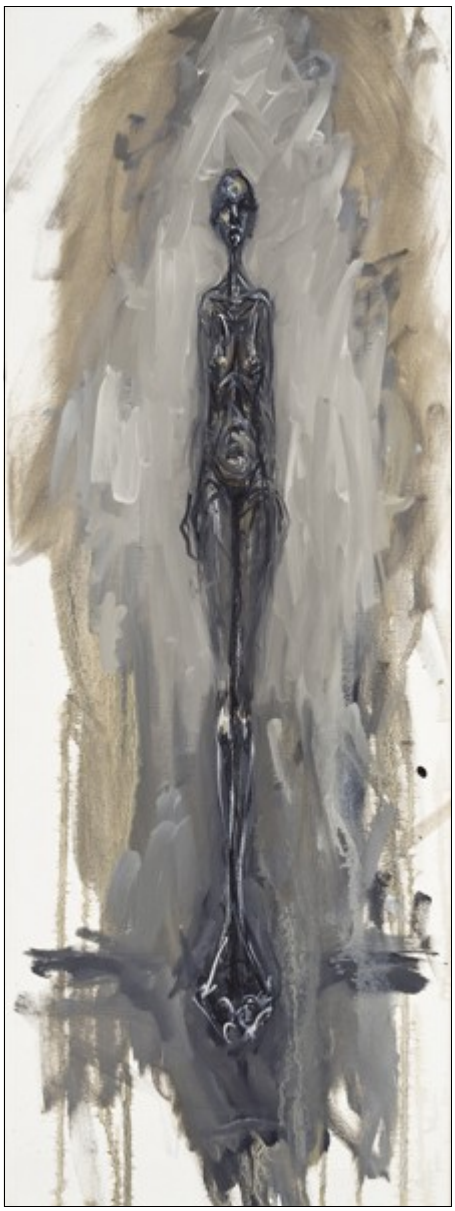
(fig.14)

(fig.15)

Appendix B - Figures

(fig.16)

(fig.17)



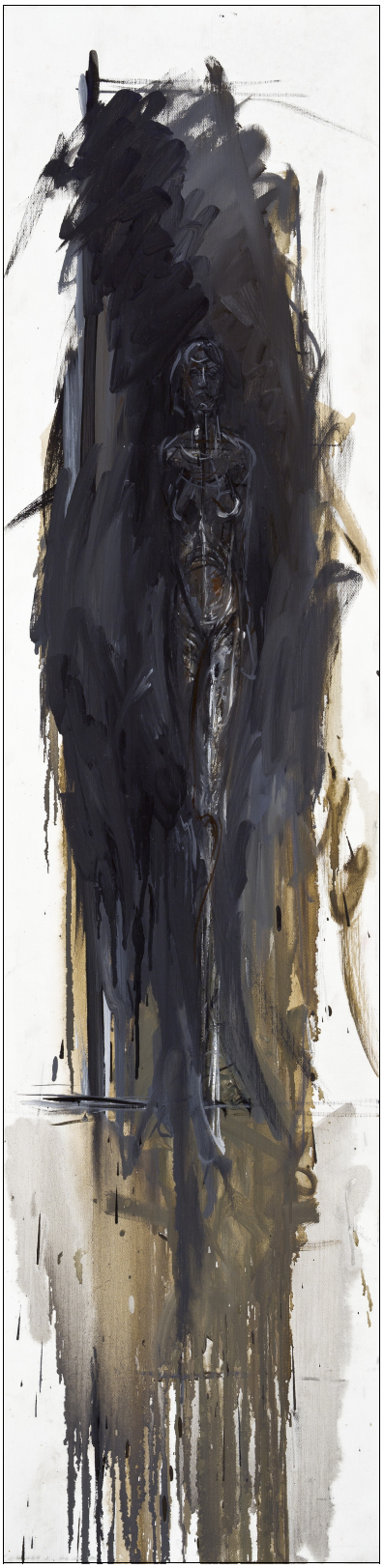
(fig.18)

(fig.19)

(fig.20)

(fig.21)

(fig.22)

(fig.23) 

Appendix C – Imaginary Portraits

(fig.24)

(fig.25)

(fig.26)

(fig.27)

(fig.28)

(fig.29)

(fig.30)

(fig.31)

(fig.32)

Appendix D – Studies and Sidebars

(fig.33)

(fig.34)

(fig.35)

(fig.36)

(fig.37)

Appendix E

Exhibition: *Following Giacometti: Art as Research*
May 9th to June 3rd, 2011. Faculty of Fine Art Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec.

(fig.38)

(fig.39)