Filtration of thought

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“Filtration of Thought”
by Chad Holliday
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Final Approvals

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Date: 3/12/2002
The intention of this thesis is to demonstrate the relationship between different materials by referencing the properties of the materials with an emphasis on the similarities and differences. A variety of materials will be used to reference human relationships. This will in turn demonstrate how these works can exist by them self and/or simultaneously exist in multiples and create a cohesive whole.

Daily life is filled with a bombardment of information brought about by new technologies and social relations. Individuals are compelled to filter information and select their response. Your decisions make you who you are and how others will perceive you in society.

As stated by Giacometti in Hohl, *Alberto Giacometti: 1901-1966*, “Every moment of the day people come together and drift apart, and approach each other again to try to make contact anew. They unceasingly form and reform living compositions of incredible complexity.”

The filtering of these interactions with people is of utmost importance in the daily thoughts of the average human. Some discrimination is predisposed from what a person are born and further effects how these interactions with others are perceived. Filtration and balance of information is important. The proper balance develops a sense of survival in an individual. Therefore, a person’s view of their position and role in life is the sum total of experience and reaction.

The relationship of materials is used as a metaphor to describe the relationship between different people “and for the appearance of reality” in a sculptural context. This is a representation of the art/life dichotomy (Higgins). Just as each part of the object is significant in itself, a person exists in the same way.
As the elements are brought together to form a whole, they begin to form relationships with other materials. These works "are layered in terms of materials and metaphors." (Chattopadhyay) Noah Purifoy uses this idea to bring links to culture just as I am intending as well.

This exhibition is the product of my investigation into how I receive information and interact with others, and how these interactions influence my visual work. These communications influence visual aspects such as the use of line, color, texture and materials. They also influence the choice of subject matter such as the face and head as a symbol of humanity and myself.

When the viewer encounters my work I hope to evoke an emotional and/or intellectual response and create a relationship with the viewer. Regardless of the nature of their interest I hope to draw their attention and to create a relationship for further investigation. The audience becomes a "collaborator and necessary to complete the narrative." (Whitney)

In some of the work the audience will be confronted with a mass. The mass should be seen as a collection of elements that have built up over time. This is a symbol for the bombardment of overwhelming information.

The single element within each work is as important as the mass, but "every element carries a split charge." (Whitney) The single components symbolize self. When the viewer is confronted with the single component the response should evoke a feeling of struggle between the self and other people.

*Part of the Whole*

The emotional response that is created in the mass used in *Part of the Whole,*
(plate 5a, 5b, and 5c) should be seen as a collection of raw feelings that have accumulated over time. Mass is used to generate an uncomfortable feeling.

This work consists of a group of faces that appear to be breaking through a glass film. The group is contained within a frame that holds both sides of this allegory in glass. The frame represents an environment and symbolizes the structure within society.

The single face on the reverse side is a self-portrait that is in contrast to the other faces, which appear without identity. The self-portrait maintains its identity even though it is part of the group on its reverse side. The single face deserves attention because of the difference in material, color and placement. All these elements work together to create a whole visual simile.

The visual information that each work provides, introduces elements referencing time. The single heads Soul Eye, Head/Reflection (plates 3 and 4) and Traveling Head (plate 1) are an example where time is suggested from the use of patina and implied motion. There is a feeling of duration from external forces having acted upon it.

Our thoughts and reactions are determined by past events in our lives and experiences we have encountered. I am interested in the effects of the information attained from these experiences. Knowledge has a great effect on our mind, soul, and body and effects people in different states, either the state of the individual or the situation being introduced.

Like our bodies, which filter nutrients entering, our mind does the same. Unlike the body, which physically separates nutrients, our mind is doing this subconsciously. This process is abstract, a sort of implied notion, but filtering just the same.

Humans experience different states of consciousness that I break down into two
1. *Traveling Head* Cast glass, steel, patinae and mixed media, 46x21x7.5 inches.
2. *The Chariot*  Alberto Giacometti  
Bronze, 167x89x69 cm.  
Alberto Giacometti Foundation, Zurich.
3. **Soul Eyes**  Hot cast glass and paint, 10x6x6 inches.

4. **Head/Reflection**  Hot cast glass, mirror and paint, 10x6x6 inches.
6. Part of the Whole (detail).
individual states that exist separately but depend on each other. First, there is one's own reality, which consists of all thoughts perceived and conceived by the single individual. This reality includes dreams, hallucinations, ideas and visions.

This concept is derived from the writings of William S. Burroughs. He states, "The conventional dream, refers to the dreamer's waking life, the people and places he knows, his desires, wishes and obsessions." (Burroughs, p 2) In his book, My Education he discusses how our thoughts and dreams are part of our reality just as other people's realities are part of ours as well.

The shared reality is the second state. Multiple individuals share this space and experience. At these moments, at least two individuals perceive the same situation. Each person may respond differently while being acted upon by the same outside force. By joining theses two states of the human condition, we have the perception of the individual and understand how circumstance changes and creates the decisions making process.

The sculptures are my response to reality based on the decision making process that I have described. It is my goal to share my reality with others. Varied experiences help to create new modes of reality and a discriminating sense of visualization. Decisions are then made impart by the joining of these two conditions.

Levels of reality are determined by pre-dispositions that are created by the circumstances into which a person has been born. Each new circumstance will add to the level of discrimination in the person's reality. The build up of these discriminating situations can be visualized as some sort of filtration system.

Imagine the build-up of various sized elements within a structure. As a new element (situation) is added, it must pass through the others before it is adapted to the
circumstance and perceived in whole by the individual.

Penetrated Circumstance

Penetrated Circumstance (plate 18 and 19) demonstrates the struggle within an individual to find identity. The tile and bulbous objects are at odds in their struggle for a complete visual and psychological solution. These elements are symbolic of the conflict within the individual for determining who he/she is at a certain juncture in life.

This is an ironic work because some of the components appear to be confronting one another yet working together. Elements may be interrupted, as breaking through or being held back. This is for the viewer to determine.

Some of the work is more abrupt and visually demonstrates these phenomena. Other works are artifacts of this process. My work then shows the effects that my psyche has on my experience. The mind is an “analyzer and interpreter of experiences.” (Whitney) The body of work is representative of my response to current and past circumstances and becomes a “visual model of experienced reality.” (Hohl 31)

As new situations are implied on my life, I can gather a better understanding of how this process works. To be aware of this filtration process adds to the filtering of the psyche and reality. The response is created by my reaction to my current situation, filtered through the circumstances leading up to the moment. As each new situation occurs, the reactions build up and effect the next reaction to the next situation.

Striving to share responses to reality is a unique condition. This is congruent with my thought that situations are understood and responded to according to the circumstance. The decision will be made based on discrimination due to these other situations.
7. Travelers Cast glass, steel and patinae. 144x18x6 inches.
Collectively the work discusses this idea of joining personal consciousness in relation to travel and time. When new people and places are encountered, our reality of the world is brought into question. This notion of consciousness “exposes the personal as a microcosm of the social,” as discussed in the article, “The Body is Exhausted.” (Whitney)

The drawings and sculptures demonstrate parallels in the expression of the mark and a sense of time and age. Mark making is a major part of the underlying theme of this work. The immediacy of the drawing and how the artist makes a mark can be seen in the material itself. The work essentially operates as a three-dimensional drawing.

The figurative elements in this exhibition are derivative of Giocometti in form and idea. The work is “an attempt at creating images of reality.” (Hohl 31) They demonstrate how I perceive myself now. The heads are also reflective of those around me.

By using the bust, I want to open new ideas of myself to the viewer. These self-portraits show the effects of others on my psyche. By relating Giocometti’s busts to the one’s I have created, it is easy to see a relationship in the expressive mark making and the weightiness. It is as if an outside force is acting upon them. In both cases, the viewer gets a sense of the artists’ perceived reality and the impact that reality has on the psyche through mark making.

*Traveling Head*

This self-portrait prominently features an element of time, as do most of the works featuring a human face or head. This sense of time is created from the use of texture and patina. There is a feeling of weathering from outside forces. The rust coating on the head is a strong visual element that adds to the issue of timelessness.
8 a. Side view.

8 b. Top view.

8. Vessels/relation  Cast glass, copper and fiber, 40x8x8 inches.
9. *Vessels/burden*  Cast glass, copper clay and patinae, 40x40x10 inches.
*The Chariot* (plate 2), by Giacometti (1950), deals with similar issues that I am trying to describe with *Traveling Head*. Both sculptures are a stopped moment in time. The figure actually seems to be stopping, hindered by an outside force while at the same time struggling to move in a forward direction.

According to Reinhold Hohl, Giacometti has “transformed virtual movement into metaphorical movement” in *The Chariot*. Giacometti uses the wheel for an allegorical function. As stated before, an outside force is hindering *Traveling Head*. Giacometti has placed “chock like blocks” under the wheels to show this same idea of hindered movement.

The head is simplified to show some sort of numbness to new scenery or rather a tolerance for and welcoming of new situations. This simplified form of the head and body is a generalization of a person and is meant to represent people in general as well as myself.

The shape of the head resembles a helmet to portray the idea of duration while based on and keeping true to the beliefs that have been developed and maintained in life despite the contradicting circumstances and beliefs of other individuals that are encountered throughout life.

There is an inherent “interactivity between the body and environment.”(Whitney) The head has been patinaed and rusted to enhance this idea. The weathered appearance introduces this concept. The remaining small portion is mirrored to give a sense of a tainted perception due to society’s viewpoint.

*Soul Eye and Head/Reflection*

In two other sculptures using the head, the mirroring emphasizes reflection.
Often, when a person criticizes another they are reflecting their own flaws onto that person. The viewer should understand that we incorporate each other within the perceptions of ourselves, either by choice or subconsciously.

After creating *Soul Eye* and *Head/Reflection* I have learned the value of working quickly and spontaneously. Most reactions are happening in this way. So, it only strengthens this notion of the work depicting how I am responding to different circumstances.

With these sculptures I was gaining a better understanding of the best way to introduce the ideas how others impose their thoughts and own misgivings onto other people. The viewer can actually see their self in the eye of *Head/Reflection*. This seems to be a bit abrupt but does physically incorporate the viewer into the work as well as show this person imposing on another.

*Travelers*

There is an ambiguity of direction and implied motion found in *Traveling Head* that was derived from *Travelers* (plate 7a. and 7b.). The implied motion of these forms is strengthened from their circular shapes. The forms also incorporate a shape that references a plow or a comma. This blade shape is intended to give the feeling of forward movement and gesture.

From observing those around me I have noticed a nonchalant attitude and a lack of direction in life. Just as these *Travelers* are in motion they have no final destination. The *Travelers* are following one another without a goal. This is my observation of people I have encountered during this investigation.

People enter life and immediately go towards the beaten path. It is when a person
deviates and changes direction that an individual identity is created. If a person continues to move with the others and follows without question they become like these Travelers in a state of undetermined destination.

The expressive qualities of the sculptures reference my beliefs of drawing and how a build up of multiple elements (i.e. linear elements) creates a whole as seen in plates 15, 16, and 17. This mass in turn works with the overall composition and other forms. Just as the gesture of a single line can hold as much importance and interest as the form it is part of, an element from a sculpture can operate the same way.

While each element, strand of thread, glass tile, or face, can be significant, each is working with the other to create a whole. This being the case, each element is as significant as the whole and should be seen to operate in this manner.

There is a relationship between the single and the mass that continues the concept of person operating in the “microcosm of the social.” (Whitney) The build up of elements creates forms, which is key to concept of my work. By the combining of elements, the viewer should feel some sort of cohesion between the materials. The different materials, while operating on their own also rely on the partner element to create this compound.

Physically a rhythm is created. The eye moves in and out and around the work directed by multiples and mass balanced by the single. These masses become either some sort of filter, physically or implied. They bend and refract light, in relation to the properties of glass.

Vessels/Relation and Vessels/Burden

Physically, the forms that make up Vessels/Relation and Vessels/Burden are holding one another in a desired position that denotes a direction and an encounter with
the others. The intersection of forms is important to what is happening in each particular situation.

*Vessels/Relation* shows two forms working together and intersecting the path of the other. This is representative of how peoples’ lives intersect and respond to each other. How these two support each other alludes to how a partner or significant other supports each other and how crucial the moment is when their lives intersect. They combine elements of glass, fiber and copper in each form that work well together. These individual forms then work with each other physically and sculpturally.

*Vessels/Burden* brings about another idea of how people interact in a situation of confrontation. The single form is carrying the mass of linear elements and being intersected by three other forms. These forms seem to be pushing and altering the direction of the individual that is carrying all the weight itself.

This single form has accepted the burden of problems within the group and therefore taken the responsibility of the problems upon itself. The single form is demonstrating the idea of burden within the group and itself.

Intuitively, the viewer should feel a struggle of elements and issues within the whole, which can also be seen in *Penetrated Circumstance*. The elements could appear as being held back or controlled by the surrounding parts. This idea then demonstrates how viewers perceive events within their own life.

If an element passes through or the elements cooperate, the audience can get a feeling of empathy. On the other hand, when a person perceives this as a conflict or becomes uncomfortable, it should provoke the idea of cynicism. I hope that in both cases it will bring the viewer closer to the work, creating a “dialogue with the viewer
10. *Head of the Artist’s Father* I Alberto Giacometti
Bronze, 28.5x21x23 cm. Private Collection, Geneva.
11. *Stern Thought* Cast glass and mixed media, 15x8x8 inches.
12. *Depressed*  Cast glass and mixed media, 15x8x8 inches.
13. *Confused/why?* Cast glass and mixed media, 15x8x8 inches.
14. Exhibition, area view.

Studies I, II and III for Penetrated Circumstance (top).

concerning reference and identity." (Whitney) This again creates another relationship. Between the work and the viewer, a dialogue should be opened allowing him or her to get a sense of their self.

At some point I have felt isolation from the crowd, a separation that is created by the crowd and myself. I have a reluctance to drop my beliefs to enter a superficial life that is ruled by idolizing others and needing their bolstering. We are offered a freedom of choice that some never knows. Therefore, to allow one’s self to be like everyone else or to not demonstrate a drive and desire to live and embrace the moment and circumstance that one enters is apathetic. Self-identity is important to the general person as well as the artist. It is essential for existence, living with our self and operating within the “Global Village”.

**Self-Studies**

I have again used the head as a self-portrait. The grouping of three heads is meant to bring attention to the single person. By conveying my emotions through these self-portraits, I demonstrate my feelings of isolation from the group because of my perception at that moment.

The same concepts intended for *Traveling Head, Soul Eye* (plate 3), and *Head/Reflection* (plate 4) are also used in the Self-Studies. All of these works visually demonstrate how outside forces cause effects on the individual.

Together, *Stern Thought, Depression* and *Confusion* are titled Self-Studies. The Self-Studies are a response to situations that had been occurring in my personal life as well as happenings around the studio. The Self-Studies are very expressive and emotional. They are successful in that they are a physical representation of my psyche.
They are showing a build up of marks that alter the surface of the busts.

The body of work in this thesis exhibition has demonstrated how a person reacts to new situations. There are relationships created between the materials that are similar to those created between people. (Chattopahyay) These relationships exist because of similarities as well as differences. The similarities make them part of the group, appearing to be a single mass. The differences operate in a way that allows for the single to keep its own identity.

Relationships between people are directed by outside forces. As these forces are introduced a person must learn to filter out the information in order to perceive what is happening. Sifting through each situation to get the information desired is part of daily life. Just as outside forces need to be dealt with, a person must also filter through their own thoughts and biases. The biases that people have are created from every situation that a person experiences. It is then the responsibility of the person to understand the situation due to past situations.

This investigation of materials, people, and myself and how they reference each other has brought me to a new understanding of how and why I am driven to create and express myself in a visual manner. After creating this body of work, I have found that my interest in having elements exist successfully on their own but create a whole has allowed for a better understanding of how they work in reality. This is in contrast to how they are generally perceived. The sculptures further demonstrate certain sensitivities to the material in accordance with the concepts.
17. Study III: Penetrated Circumstance Mixed media on paper, 18x24 inches.
18. **Penetrated Circumstance**

slumped plate glass, copper, enamels, blown glass, resin, steel, and patinae, 16 x 3 x .5 feet.
Bibliography


