

absence made visible

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Absence-ab'sence/ˈabsɪns/ *noun* 1. The state of being away from a place or person 2. An occasion or period of being away from a place or person 3. The nonexistence or lack of

Void- /void/ *noun* 1. A completely empty space 2. An emptiness caused by the loss of something 3. An unfilled space in a wall, building, or soil

Photographs serve as a reminder of what once was; a moment that will never be retrieved except in the nostalgic realm of remembering and recreating the past. My work revolves around photographs that are now the only reminders of people who are no longer in my life. Catalyzed by the death of my younger brother, Avery, when I was nine years old, and solidified through my experience as a foster family and my most recent trip to a Ghanaian orphanage this past summer, I get lost in the power an image has to keep these people present, despite being physically out of my reach.

This semester I've set out to explore the paradox of these images, as they keep a person present while simultaneously exposing the void their absence has created in my life. As a painter, I am exploring different approaches to recreating these photographic images in ways that express this dichotomy.

I began the semester working in egg tempera due to my attraction to its flat, matte surface and the challenge a new medium presented. This choice worked well to replicate the flat surface of a photograph, especially as I worked relatively faithfully to the representative nature of the image. Conceptually, however, I struggled to articulate my intentions verbally and visually. I was inspired by the overwhelming sense of loss I encountered when I returned to the States after spending a month falling in love with Ghanaian orphans, but unclear of what to do with it. My reliance on photographic sources was at first only out of practicality, as I could no longer paint a portrait from life, as these children were now thousands of miles away. It was the prompting of my SMP advisor, Lisa Scheer, to re-examine my reliance on photographs and push it further.

The next series of works set out to expose my allegiance to photographs and their role of freezing and fragmenting a moment. I closely cropped highly expressive images of these children resulting in what I hoped would be intimate snapshots of our relationship, while exaggerating the photograph's effect of reducing a memory into a fragmented instant. Unfortunately, rather than realizing my actual intentions, my audience struggled to overcome the difference of race between my subjects and myself. With this in mind, I realized, despite my efforts, that if I wanted to portray these children, I could not avoid skin color. My next painting reconsidered a previous painting, on a monumental scale, as an exploration and abstraction of flesh as a way to embrace and then push beyond skin color. Now working with oil paint, this work became much more about the experience of painting it and my understanding of color, instead of any emotional relationship with my subject.

While visually interesting and artistically challenging, I quickly realized this composition was not something I wanted to continue. However, this manipulation of flesh and juxtaposition of artificial and naturalistic color was an exciting development in my painterly style and an aesthetic decision I decided to further explore.

Following a conversation with my academic advisor, Sue Johnson, and a lecture by Dr. Andrea Giunta, I had a new realization within the last few weeks that in order for my work to be successful it was imperative that I stay in control of my audience's perception and reconsider what was most important. Race was not important. What was most important was the fact that these people, who in this instance happened to be Ghanaian, were gone and it was the void of their absence that riveted my soul.

My most recent works reflect this transition and new consciousness as I focus on this absence by creating a physical void within my canvas. I recreate iconic photographs from within my personal history, while leaving out the person that is no longer with me as an empty silhouette. My work has always been intensely autobiographic, yet my personal relationship with my subjects was somewhat ambiguous. I want to focus on my body as my main subject to help explain my relationships, as I deal with the absence around me. I am also now working life-size in order to allow my audience to interact and relate with my work, body to body, and break down the barrier created by my previous intensely cropped images. I will expand my subject matter beyond just my summer's experience to now include my brother's death, and foster children that have come in and out of my home. I hope this will also expand the boundaries of race that previously restricted the understanding of my work.

This document book is organized chronologically throughout the journey of the first semester of my St. Mary's Project. This decision was intended to provide the most comprehensive understanding of the evolution of my process through the specific events that have shaped and inspired my work. Included within the thirty pages of this book are my reflections following art events and critiques, and my evolving intentions over the past few months.

Initial Intention Statement

September 6, 2010

Why am I so attached to portraiture? I've spent the majority of the summer asking myself questions and delving deep into my motivation behind my work. After the death of my brother, the thirty-plus children that have come in and out of my home, and this summer's experience of falling in love with Ghanaian orphans, I am shaken to the core. These people that I have loved each take a piece of me when they are gone. I no longer want to wait until they are gone to appreciate them. At the moment this project might sound incredibly self-indulgent, but I hope to explore the universal emotion aspect of loss and grief. I hope to connect to my audience by helping them realize too, to appreciate those around them before they are gone.

I worry that such an autobiographical exhibition will be inaccessible and disinteresting. Why will my audience care about paintings of people they have never met? In the next few weeks I want to address this insecurity by pushing myself as an artist and focusing on my craftsmanship. My general plan for these next few weeks is to create at least one painting a week in order to have six works worth displaying for the Mid-Term Critique, be constantly reflecting on my goals and intentions, and exploring the successes and failures of each work. I am committed to working in Egg Tempera for the time being, and will try to push the limits of the medium and myself as an artist.

The composition and source of each piece is still debatable. My first two paintings were of a six-year old girl from Ghana, named Ruth. I was relatively satisfied with these works and would love to continue with a series of similar images- candid, up-close snapshots- except that I am thousands of miles away from her and I only have so many photographs to work from. I want to paint the people around me and in my life currently, but because I am away at school many of them are not close. Consequently, I am re-examining my goals in order to reconcile my deficiency of source material. I could either work with the photographs I have and possibly reuse sources I have already painted, or paint only the people that I currently interact with on a day-to-day basis. If I commit to only painting from life I will still likely have an issue convincing my friends to pose for me for hours on end. In the next few weeks I want to really examine my source material and have a clear narrative planned out for my next six works to decide if this path is worth pursuing.

(DA)What inspires you? What are some of the sources, both within art and outside of art that you turn to?

(AS)For me, I think my inspiration's just the people I meet and the relationships with those people, and usually they're unexpected relationships and how that can evolve. My latest work is stemming from the idea of losing these relationships, as a result of death or distance. I also think the photograph itself is an important inspiration to my work. Not a particular photograph, but the idea of the transcendence of a photograph through time and the way it literally and figuratively reshapes a memory.

How important is self-expression to your art making? In what way does 'self' enter your artwork?

I think my work is really autobiographical. I don't do that many self portraits but I feel like the portraits that I do are a representation of me, on a whole as a narrative of my life, but through the people that are around me. I worry that my work is too personally entwined with my life experiences and too self-indulgent

How does your choice of medium(s) affect your work and contribute to its meaning?

Well as a painter it makes me more present in my artwork, like the presence of my hand as an artist, in comparison to a photograph, which I think would be a little less accessible, and I would be more removed. As far as more specific medium, the egg tempera...I'm not totally committed to egg tempera right now, but I'm working with it and I think its an interesting contrast between working with photographs, which is a technology based medium, and the more classical egg tempera. As I move to larger scale works, I have decided to move back to oil paint, but work with a cold wax medium to maintain the matte quality I appreciate with tempera. I think the flatness of my images create an unexpected abstracted quality despite them being fairly representational portraits. With this abstraction, I think the emphasis of color and the color of flesh can be more apparent, especially as I deal with racial differences.

Is your work ultimately more about your process or about the final product? Why do you feel that way?

I would say the final product, because just I'm concerned about what it's going to look like, and how my audience is going to view it, I don't really think about what I'm doing as I'm making it, except just to get it to look the best way possible, or how I want it to look. After giving this question more thought I realized this previous statement is really inaccurate. As I deal more with memory I realized that the process of painting became a new experience to recreate these memories and almost meditative. Although this SMP experience is a whirlwind crammed into only a few months, I don't have an incredibly long time to work on my images in comparison to say, Chuck Close, I still think the time I put into my work conveys my devotion to my subjects.

Does the context in which your artwork is displayed affect your artistic choices? How might you address this in the upcoming fall exhibition?

Right now, I'm thinking about if I want it to be read as a narrative, or if I want it to be read like person by person, or if I want to have the pieces all in a big group where it's just one face among many. I'm not really sure how I'm going to address that yet, but I'm definitely thinking about it. As I move larger, I'm also thinking about how I want my work to be a physical presence in the room. I think this will be a combination of the larger scale pieces and the sheer number of my smaller portraits, and the physicality that mass will create.

Do you have a mission? What do you consider to be your purpose for creating art?

My mission, I guess my mission is really just to get...well, originally I wanted people just to care about the people around them, and see my attachments to the people around me or the people who have left me, and then I want my audience to appreciate the people that are in their lives now and not wait until they're gone. So, I guess that's my mission.- after reflecting on this question for a few more weeks, I'm not sure that my work has a defined mission. I have my ideas and what interests me, and what I hope will interest my audience, but I can't look at my pieces and hope that my audience will walk away with a moral or lesson. I really just want them to become more aware, I suppose, but even then I feel like I'm simplifying my work too much.

How do you measure the success of your artwork?

I would consider my artwork successful when my audience cares about the people in my paintings. I feel like there's a problem 'why are people going to care about what I'm painting about, why are they going to care about these people they've never met.' If I can get them interested or just to care about them, I guess I would feel successful. With my next large piece- the largest painting I've ever done, I'm anxious to create a physical presence without letting my image fall apart once its so big, With this particular painting I would consider myself successful if my image doesn't fall apart once its enlarged, and visually I hope for an delicate tension between abstraction and representation.

What about making art intimidates you?

I guess the aspect of rejection, that people wouldn't appreciate or get what I'm doing or just think that its too cliché. Really it's just the audience/faculty's response. Art in general is such a personal endeavor, I don't have numbers or data to hide behind or support my arguments like a scientist would, it's all just me. I think that's even part of my motivation for working from photographs, because at least then I have something to depend on. It's so subjective, too. There's no right or wrong answer. As a math minor, I appreciate exams that are black and white. The conceptual aspect of art can be overwhelming. It doesn't even matter if I was the best painter technically in the world, only whether or not I had an interesting enough concept to support my work and if I could then articulate it effectively.

If you could have your portrait done by anyone who would it be and why?

I would say right now, Lucian Freud. Just because I really like his flesh tones, and how he works his brush, and it's just these effortless movements and moments that just capture a person. Although I'm not painting from life in my current work, I'm intrigued by his personal connection to each of his models that he develops through painting them. He's not just painting you, but trying to understand your essence- to see that translated in an image would be the coolest thing.

I was excited to meet a St. Mary's College graduate who has set out in the real world to succeed in art. It seemed as if she touched on every single one of my insecurities: grad school, questioning myself, making an income... Coincidentally enough, as I begin my graduate school search I find myself drawn to Virginia Commonwealth University, her alma mater, due to its relatively low tuition, location, and prestige. Hearing that someone could indeed be kicked out of graduate school had never occurred to me and sent shivers down my spine. I now have many questions regarding my own qualifications for Graduate School. Is my Bachelor's of Arts in Art & Art History sufficient in place of a Bachelor's of Fine Arts? Would I, too, only be accepted provisionally, if accepted at all into the graduate programs in which I apply? I could go on, but for the sake of this reflection I will end here, and to say that at the least, she re-ignited much of my anxiety regarding graduation and my future.

With that said, she also proved that life does go on, even after you've been asked to leave graduate school and reiterated the idea that networking and being at the right place at the right time is vital to an artist's success. Her work while at Sculpture Key West was beautiful, for lack of a better description. Her relationship to photography as a sculptor was most interesting to me. The idea that an artwork can exist only in a single photograph was liberating. It sparked a new path for my art; I wonder what would be the impact of taking a photograph of my painting of a photograph- too cliché? Perhaps. But if I'm interested in the translation from photograph to painting, I wonder what would happen if it is re-translated, painting back to photograph. I'm not sure if I could ever throw away my work...even though the work I keep is piled up somewhere, collecting dust with no specific purpose.

As her work progressed into her "visual puns" as she described them, her work became more and more politically charged. Her first of the genre, "Carpet Bomb," seemed almost too literal and obvious as she explained her motivation behind the piece. However, if I was to encounter this piece on my own in a gallery space, without her narration, I think I could appreciate the craftsmanship and cleverness of the piece more successfully.

Regardless of my own political beliefs, her connection between hand-making an artwork, or a mass-murdering weapon, with responsibility really resonated with me, and was something I had previously never considered. Whether I agree with our country's military choices or not, I think no one can disregard the need for responsibility and accountability in the actions we make.



Courage, Kwame, Yaw, and Patrick
Egg Tempera, 18 in x 36 in.



Ruth I
Egg Tempera, 8 in x 10 in.



Ruth II
Egg Tempera, 8 in. x 10 in.



Bless I
Egg Tempera, 8 in x 10 in



Bless II
Egg Tempera, 8 in x 10 in

Critique Response:

Our first official critique experience was a whirlwind. Entering it I was most concerned with whether or not my images were communicating an emotional response beyond being a pretty portrait. Was my relationship with these children being represented successfully? Are these paintings interesting? Am I employing my medium successfully? I was afraid that without my background story, the images would be flat, lifeless pieces. In the moment of the critique I felt like I had directed it the way I wanted, and asked thoughtful questions. Unfortunately, after the dust had settled I felt unfulfilled with still many questions left unanswered. I think the true test will come when I have my studio visit with Karley, someone with no background knowledge of my experience in Africa and relationship with my subjects.

Lisa brought up an interesting idea that such extreme emotions could be read both positively and negatively, even using the word, “grotesque” and “death masks.” I have a hard time seeing the grotesque nature of my images, but that is probably due to a bias as the artist and after looking at them for so long. I'm excited to meet Karley and get a fresh perspective. Connecting my images back to their photographic sources I am eager to emphasize the idea of freezing a moment, an action.

It was brought up in the critique about representing these children in objects rather than likenesses. This wasn't the first time this idea has been mentioned, so I'm considering tying in symbolic textiles. In Ghana, textiles were so important and emblematic. Because painting these children may seem to be a bit “one-note” I want to expand my work's horizon, and I think by including textile patterns will do just that. It will also help locate my pieces in the African culture.

Additionally, while this was not specifically mentioned my critique, I was inspired by a comment talking about Kathleen's work to include text on my pieces. I'm thinking about handwriting my works with the kids' names on the paintings. I will play around with this idea, but at the moment I'm visualizing labeling each piece very free-handedly, seeming as if I just jotted it down to help me remember/organize my images. Particularly with the textiles, I think labeling them will connect them to corresponding portraits, and literally put a name to the faces.

Intention Statement:

I paint people that I love, and miss. I worry that my work is too self-indulgent and empty without projecting my own emotions on to the pieces. How will a third party view the pieces without any background knowledge of my experiences? I want to focus on this continuing issue I deal with by emphasizing my works' photographic sources and the idea of freezing a lost moment. I do feel slightly limited by the egg tempera medium because it is an inherently flat medium. I will, however, continue to experiment with tempera, and push its limits, but will remain open to returning back to oil paint.

I also worry that by staying in such a small box of portrait painting my work will be restrained and "one-note." To break out of this box and experiment with pushing my message further, I am planning on incorporating text onto my images to give names to the many faces in my work. I also want to think of the idea of portraiture without portraying physical likenesses and thinking more about objects to represent a person, particularly textiles.

For my next series of portraits I want to choose photographs that focus on action, and the freezing, interruption of a moment. I will complete a small portrait to continue the series I've been working on, but in oil paint to compare the outcomes, and commit once and for all on medium. I will also paint a textile pattern on the same size panel and juxtapose the two images (textile and portrait) to begin thinking about display and presentation.

I am eager to meet with Karley and get a true outsider's opinion of the effectiveness of my images in communicating my relationships with my subjects. I must have my textile and text pieces completed for her meeting in order to compare my different ideas, and help direct my work into a more clear point of view.

Action Plan:

September 25-28:

- Complete a textile painting, Ruth's Dress

September 26th:

- Identify my 3 artists for PowerPoint

September 28th:

- Order more panels and brushes,
- Begin another small portrait (aim for one a week)

September 25th- 30th:

- Continue reading source material, begin annotated biography
- Complete PowerPoint presentation

October 1st:

- Compile receipts, turn into Lisa (should reach \$400)

October 2nd- 6th:

- Complete another small portrait

October 4th:

- Begin sketching ideas for a larger portrait, incorporating a likeness with a textile-patterned background

October 10th:

- Have larger painting finished

Influential Artists and Reading, *Bibliography* Part I

I have divided my influential artists and readings into two sections to reflect the moment in my process in which they were most crucial. For the first part of my exploration, as my perspective was just beginning to take flight and held much uncertainty, my choice in artists were more generalist portraitists in an effort to observe a broad range of portraitists and their relationship with (or without) photography.



Kehinde Wiley was one of the first contemporary artists I came across dealing with African American subjects. Because he is a more recent, contemporary artist, the scholarly reading on him is limited, but nevertheless his images are memorizing and imperative to my process as this point in the semester. He paints urban African-American men in a style he describes as “Neobaroque.” They most often mimic well known poses from historical paintings, taking on the appearance of saints, kings, and merchants. They are life size or larger, and further exaggerated by large, gold frames. In addition to his incredible realistic aesthetic, I was interested in his relationship with photographs and his incorporation with textile patterns. He too, works from a photograph. He employs the camera’s point of view to elevate the importance of his subjects by shooting his model from below eye-level. The textiles he includes in his work vary from African textiles, to cultural references like, “Martha Stewart.” I was particularly interested in this incorporation of textiles as I plan to include textile patterns to locate my experience and images in Africa.

Pollock, Griselda. "Mary Cassatt: Painter of Women and Children." *Reading American Art*. Ed. Elizabeth Milroy and Marianne Doezema. New Haven: Yale UP, 1998. 280-301.

I was initially interested in Mary Cassatt due to her connection to painting children. This article unexpectedly inspired me to include myself in my portraits, and deal with the relationships between mother and child, or in my case- quasi-mother and orphan. Pollock looks at a broad range of Cassatt’s work, highlighting her portrayal of mother and child despite the fact that Cassatt herself was not a wife, nor mother. Nevertheless, she could understand and capture the subtle interactions of mothers and young children, and the “women’s world” in which they inhabit. I was most attracted to the sense of touch and connection present within Cassatt’s portrayal of woman and child. This article examined her compositional choices and well as formal technique in order to meld mother and child.



Hughes, Robert. *Lucian Freud Paintings*. New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1989. Print

Within the first page of this book the author dives right into Lucian Freud’s relationship with photography and the mass-media culture as he challenges it’s emptiness against the transcendence of painting. I suppose this shouldn’t have come as quite a shock, but as I knew Freud painted only from life, I guess I did not expect such a explicit dialogue with mass media. This essay also looks into Freud’s influences, particularly Ingres and Frans Hals, in regards to Ingres, Freud seems to derive many of his own notions about color. A line that I immediately related to was a quote by Ingres, about he most beautiful thing is the juxtaposition of two similar colors. This idea is very apparent in Freud’s later work as so self-consciously delineates lines of



color to evolve into flesh. The author also provides explanation for Freud's use of color in a non-expressive or symbolic way. He purposely avoids heavy saturation of color, such as reds or blues, to avoid emotional significance. This very idea is core to my relationship with color, as I want the audience to have a sensory experience with my work, not a symbolic one. Hals' brushwork is reflected in Freud's due to its inherently modern feel of smearing and coarse displacement of paint. In regards to a portrait painted from life versus a photographed portrait, the author includes a conversation with Freud as he explains that a photographed portrait eliminates any tension between the artist and subject, and evokes the sitter's power of censorship. The painted portrait on the other hand allows the transaction of emotions (the artists and sitters) on both sides of the process. This idea has been an ongoing issue in my work, but I ultimately think working from photographs works best for me because I don't want my work to become about the experience of painting it, and rather just the experience of the moment

and its aftermath.

Moorhouse, Paul. *Gerhard Richter Portraits: Painting Appearances*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2009. Print.



Moorhouse dissects the broad range of Gerhard Richter's work, and considers only his portraits for the sake of this book. His *photopaintings* fall in the realm between a mechanical production of an image, and the human production of an art object. Unlike my work, which draws from extremely personal connections and memories from the photographs I choose, his photos are for the most part chosen without attention to aesthetics, concept or judgment. I am interested in his idea of revisiting a photograph, and painting it multiple times, extenuating the idea that it is a photograph, and can be mass-produced. Like Hockney, he is also exploring the dichotomy between the world as it is and as it is perceived. I think my work is in direct conversation with this idea, and the artificiality a photograph/likeness/appearance presents.

Studio Visit: Karley Klopfenstein

September 27, 2010

I was incredibly excited to get a set of fresh, unbiased eyes to view my work, and Karley certainly did not disappoint. She was exactly what I needed in this moment of my process, but I'm afraid she has confused me more than provided any sense of enlightenment or inspiration.

Her comments were not necessarily negative, and overall she seemed to think I was on to something with the egg tempera medium, but her lack of enthusiasm resonated with my own lack of enthusiasm for my work. Ironically, I feel like just as my work is beginning to make sense conceptually, I am unpleased with their visual impact. Her first impression of my work was the ambiguous connection with my subjects and myself. I think including myself in an image, and considering the mother-child relationship will help clarify this. She also said that she would like to see my work much smaller or much larger. I have felt restrained to a smaller size due to the quick drying medium of egg tempera, but despite this I definitely think a change in scale will help my visual impact issue, and I am committed to having at least one larger than life piece for our Mid-Term critique.

She also seemed to contradict many of our previous conversations. She thought I should move away from working from photographs, including more memory or work from life. I am not too discouraged by this comment because I know I need to push my choice of source further, and make it seem much more deliberate and not a choice due to convenience. She also thought that I needed to make my hand more present in my work, however liked my work that was most blended and worked-over. I personally am pleased with my brushwork and am excited to push myself, but I think I can make my work more personal with my next planned piece which will include my body in the image, literally placing myself in my work.

Overall I am glad that she got to see my work. Unfortunately, I can't say that she was inspirational or motivating, but then again, that's the art world. I am confident in my work, and overall I think she just reaffirmed my own opinions of where my work falls flat, and what I need to explore further.

Having missed Heather's talk due to a work conflict, it was a unique experience watching it on DVD. I had not met Heather until our Mid-Term critique, nor was I familiar with her work, but this talk gave me a bit of an insight to both. Her work seems to lie in the realm between concrete and abstract, evolving from elegant to threatening protrusions within the gallery. They physically confront the audience and transform the space. Heather related her work to poetry in terms of the layered meanings and "slippage" in and out of understanding. They are complex and fragile that does not remain solidified in any one understanding.

Although her work was at the most extreme end from my own work, her dealings with the ephemeral and unresolved issues of the world and our vocabulary resonated intensely as I immediately thought of Ally Moore's work with "things left unsaid" and Diana's anthropomorphizing of an abstract emotional atmosphere. She too incorporated science into her work, as she explained that even science is reliant on the non-rational. She used specific scientific charts to organize the chaos while inventing a stimulating object.

While she spoke very eloquently and gave a commendable effort to explain her motivations behind her pieces, I left the talk feeling slightly unsatisfied with her explanation. She referenced several quotes and ideologies, yet continued to say that it wasn't quite what her work was about. The abstractness of her work, both visually and ideologically, pushed me outside of my comfort zone of logic and order. I think this is why I had such a hard time relating to it, because it was not rational or easily explained. While I may not create a non-representational work anytime soon, I do feel more confident to not force myself into a logical explanation of my work and perhaps even break free of such a direct representation of a photograph. This has also made me realize that multiple interpretations of an image can be welcomed.



Bless III
Egg Tempera, 8 in x 10 in



Mercy
Egg Tempera, 8 in x 10 in



Ruth I (Repainted)
Egg Tempera, 8 in x 10 in



Ruth II (Repainted)
Egg Tempera, 8 in x 10 in



Mother and Orphan
Egg Tempera, 18 in x 24 in



Dress
Egg Tempera 10 in x 20 in



Sam's Shirt
Egg Tempera, 10 in x 20 in

Critique Notes/Outline:

Content/Concept:

- (Colby) David Hockney: one perspective, but worth looking into others, widely discussed topic of time and transcending time
 - o Artists: Rollin Bart, Fred Ritchen, *After Photography*
- (Joe) The idea of "personal": need to define what I want my personal connection to be, Family? Loss? Grief?
- (Heather) Race: images coming off "national geographic travel-log." Need to face the issue of race head-on.

Formal Choices:

- Cropping:
 - o (Colby) Intimacy, supporting idea of family
 - o (Cristin) Creating a frame = distancing viewer
 - o (Cristin) Framing, cropping is how I'm present = my eye is present, how I see, what I'm focusing in on
 - o (Billy) Most cropped images are most interesting = creating tension, not as easily resolved as standard snapshots
- Scale:
 - o (Billy) Smaller, typical size makes them more easily dismissible
 - o (Colby) Going larger would be more impact, but they become heroic, less intimate
- Painting:
 - o (Joe) liked the flatness, how the light played on them
 - o Abstracted quality, geometric
 - o (Karley) Abstracted, flat background spaces: could incorporate textiles

Critique Reflection:

Once I got over the initial anxiety of speaking, and realizing that the professors were really just wanting to help, it was a liberating experience. Overall I felt that they reaffirmed a lot of the topics I had discussed previously in my work, particularly dealing with cropping and fragmenting an image and the incorporation of textiles.

I think the biggest revelation during the critique was a question Joe asked; what is the “personal” connection that I’m trying to convey? I’m still struggling to answer this and realized I was approaching this idea much too broadly, and once I reach a better understanding of my intended goal I think it will be more easily achieved through my formal choices. As of now, I realized I was somewhat blindly choosing images based on aesthetic judgments, not conceptual, hence my insecurity and uncertainty of the impact of my images.

From the feedback of the faculty, I think the strength of my work was the close cropping of my images in order to enhance a sense of intimacy. With this in mind, I want to explore this idea, especially as I find an answer for Joe’s question. Billy commented that due to the typical size of my images they are more easily dismissible. Scale has been a reoccurring issue as I’ve felt held back due to the egg tempera, and Billy’s comment reiterated this concern. I think by verbalizing exactly what it is about the medium that I like (flat, matte) I have a better perspective and the realization that I can achieve this through other mediums on grander scales.

I’m attracted to painting because I think it makes myself more present as an artist, in comparison to a more passive, distant photographer. With Cristin’s comment about framing I realized that I was not as present in my brushstroke as I had intended, but instead through the presence of my eye as I hone in on particular fragments. I think working larger with larger strokes, my presence as a painter will be more successful.

Intention Statement:

Moving forward from the critique my largest goal is to explicitly identify what “personal” means to me. I think the strength of my close cropping, and the perceived intimacy it creates is a strong jumping point. In reading *Paint Made Flesh* about a “post-photographic” perspective as it relates to Jenny Saville’s work, I am inspired by the idea that a photograph invasively captures the details and crevasses otherwise unnoticed. In terms of my work, I think I can play with this idea as it creates intimacy, and exaggerating the subtle details on a much larger than life scale. I also want to return to the idea of fragmenting a memory, as you remember snippets of a moment and particular details of a person.

After talking to Carrie, I have decided to work with oils but using a cold wax medium to maintain a matte surface. While I appreciate the flatness of egg tempera I think I am going to experiment with texture and impasto. I want my pieces to have physicality and presence unattainable from a flat photograph.

While I want my work to be a physical presence in the room, I don’t want the large size of them to monumentalize, heroize, or monstrosify my subjects. I realize working so large could completely defeat my goal for intimacy, but I think by consciously cropping a face into abstracted segments, my work will become about the subtle features of a person, not the person themselves.

In addressing the issue of race, and the racial difference between my subjects and myself I think I want to focus just on the color of flesh and not the location in which my experience took place. By removing my works from a specific location, I hope to eliminate the “national geographic” aspect Heather mentioned. I want my work to be about the painting of flesh and surfaces of the face as it relates to creating and holding onto a memory of a person.

Action Plan:

October 23rd-24th:

- Trip to Lowes, buy plywood for surfaces
- Order acrylic gesso, larger brushes

October 24th:

- Select photograph, begin sketching for first large work
- Gesso panel

October 25th:

- Complete underpainting

October 26th- 30th:

- Begin painting, get a better sense of timeframe for completing
- Continue reading, annotated bibliography

October 31st- November 4th:

- Hopefully finish first large painting
- Pick photograph for next work, start sketching

November 2nd:

- Start underpainting for second piece

November 3rd- 10th:

- Complete painting

Art Event: Gallery Opening of Tenterhooks

October 27, 2010

The exhibition itself was an interesting composition of cultureless nomads existing within a space of culturally infused war objects. Anja's discombobulated figures juxtaposed against objects of murder evoke a sense of aftermath and destruction. I was most familiar with Karley's work, having attended her Artist Talk. I was disappointed that she more or less repeated her lecture, while the audience had to stand and listen to something the majority of us had already heard. I am perhaps being most critical of her work and talk because I was most familiar with her, but was furthermore disappointed that she invented an excuse for "purposively" leaving the tank unfinished.

I appreciated Anja's explanation of her work because it was brief, and an explanation for an otherwise ambiguous content. Karley's work was relatively self-explanatory. I was most attracted to Anja's hand-stitched bodies in comparison to her two-dimensional works. This could perhaps be attributed to my personal attraction to the figure. Personally, I felt that her life-sized bodies had a certain physicality and presence within the space that even Karley's 13-foot tank could not compete with. I think this presence was achieved by the contrast between the hand-sewn fabric, and the artificial glass eyes. While the eyes were artificial, they were also incredibly life-like and resulted in an odd satisfaction as I was trying to relate to such an abstracted body.

This juxtaposition between the hand-made natural material, with an artificial, mass-produced object has further supported my interest between the natural and artificial, and as it relates to my work: earth tones and artificial color. For my large painting I am excited to include subtle glimpses of artificial colors within the terrain of the flesh. I want to create a dialogue between these visually and metaphorically conflicting ideals as they combine to form a coherent image.

(DA)What is your perspective of the abstracted shapes that appear in the skin when you work on a large scale?

(AS)I'm definitely interested in the level of abstraction blowing my image to such an extreme size will create. I guess my perspective on it is still undecided as I'm still making the large painting and I'm not completely sure how it's going to turn out. I guess more than the shapes that are created, I'm more interested in the role the color plays in abstracting the form and creating those shapes. I'm not opposed to abstraction, but at this point I think I'm more curious to see how it will turn out and how abstract it will become.

How do you feel brush stroke comes into play in your work?

I'm certainly more aware of my brushstroke as I'm working with relatively giant brushes compared to what I'm used too. But by using oil paint, I have a lot more freedom and control. I liked the immediacy of working with egg tempera so I'm trying to stay conscious of my brushstroke the first time I make a mark, instead of trying to rework it and blend it. I think this will help out with physicality of image- I'm thinking of like Jenny Saville's giant bodies that are aggressive and tactile due to her immediate mark making.

Are you interested in exhibiting the physical properties of the paint and how they might relate to the surfaces and material you are depicting?

This kind of relates to the last question- but the more I've been exploring my motivations behind my work, I'm realizing its becoming more about painting and less about the relationships and concept. I'm not sure if this is good or bad, but I'm at least enjoying this more as I'm experimenting with a new size and technique. I'm using a Cold Wax medium to make my paint matte, which I think makes my colors more honest. But it also thickens the paint and allows for a cool impasto technique, that is not normally how I work. This texture I think, or at least I hope, will increase the physicality of the panel as an object in the gallery, and the tactile relationship to flesh.

Where do you currently stand with expressing an emotional connection to your figures?

It hasn't progressed or been as clear as I would hope- which is probably why I had such a hard time deciding on a composition for this last piece. This is also probably because I've been so focused on the painting part of it. I guess right now its just the idea of an intimacy within a family- but I'm not totally sure this is coming through my work yet, and how you remember really obscure moments and features of a person, especially as you are eagerly trying to remember someone you've lost.

How do you envision your paintings in the gallery? Are they stand-alone images, or do they rely on each other?

I think my large paintings will be stand-alone images, but I think I'm planning on including the collection of small 8 x 10 tempera paintings. Those I plan to display together to help convey the idea of quantity of people. The small ones will also help give my large paintings some context, especially if they end up being too abstract or aggressive.

Influential Artists and Reading, *Bibliography* Part Two

As my perspective has evolved and my confidence grew, I began to look at more specific artists in regards to painterly technique and concept. Especially as I decided to move larger, and more abstractly, these artists inspired me to break free of my loyalty to realism and reconsider the configuring of a photograph.

Braun, Emily. "Skinning the Paint." *Paint Made Flesh*. Scala, Mark, and Susan H. Edwards Nashville, TN: Frist Center for the Visual Arts, 2009. 24-41.

This article within *Paint Made Flesh* refers to Titian's *The Flaying of Marsyas* as the catalyst for contemporary painters' tactile and violent portrayal of flesh. Braun includes Jenny Saville, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, and Cecily Brown in her examination. She specifically references the use of photographic sources specifically in regards to Saville and Bacon's works and their conscious effort to challenge the limits of photography, especially through the three-dimensionality and sheen of oil paint. I am most interested in Saville's work and her use of mimetic color and physicality of her paintings, especially as I plan on working on a similarly large scale. Braun expresses the use of photography as the "invasive scrutiny of the camera into the private recesses of the body." While I see my work as less overtly aggressive, I am interested in this idea as it refers to an intimate memory captured by the photograph, expressed through highly focused, cropped images of flesh and faces.



Cohen, David. "Live in the Studio: Susanna Coffey." *Catalogue: Isabel Ignacio Gallery*. Seville, Spain: Isabel Ignacio Gallery, 2006. 24-48.

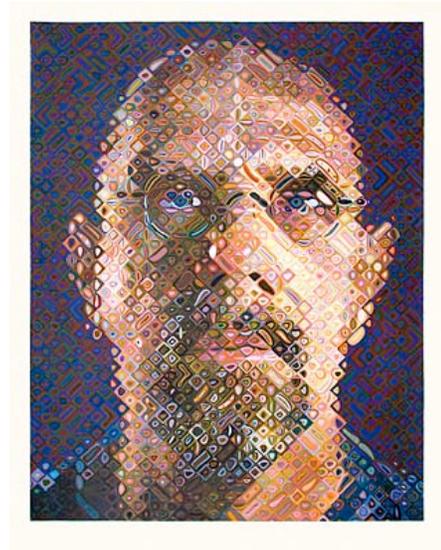


Susanna Coffey is an artist recommended by Sue Johnson, for her painterly style and self-portraitist tendencies. The essay by David Cohen examines her work and her motivation for using herself as her most common subject. Coffey claims she uses herself for practical reasons as that her body is always "free." Cohen reconsiders this idea and considers her work to not be an exploration of her identity, but instead a portrait of the artist as a witness. She works from life but stages her images by pinning newspaper clippings and other mass-produced photographic means behind her, and then paints her reflection from a mirror. I am interested in this juxtaposition between painting from life (her body) and then painting photographic sources. She is aware at every level her works potential from the conceptual framework, to her painterly application. This same awareness and consciousness is becoming more relevant and important in my own work. While

Susanna Coffey is a very successful artist in her own right, little has been written about her work. This essay provided some insight and explanation of her choices.

Grynsztejn, Madeleine. "A Constant-In-Process: Chuck Close's Self Portraiture." *Chuck Close: Self-portraits 1967-2005*. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2005. 108-115.

While I have always admired Chuck Close's work, I was concerned that his heavy focus on photorealism was too disconnected from my own work, except for the fact that we are both working from photographic sources. This article re-examined this idea, and describes his work in terms of the Process Art movement. The author describes his work to not be searching for inner emotion, but conveying intense outward expression through the dedication of his time-intensive process, evident on the surface of his works. I realized that this was an idea I have been seeking to articulate- the idea that my connection and devotion to my subjects would be evident in the dedication and time given to my paintings and portrayals. Unfortunately, with the time limitations of SMP, I don't have the luxury of spending 14 months on one painting (as Close does) and as a result, this idea isn't being supported by my work as strongly as I would like, so I intend to focus more heavily on a stringent process of creating, although my timeframe in creating is expedited. Additionally, the author explores the dichotomy present in his work as a result of working from photographs- the frozen instant of a snapshot with his long, enduring process of painting, subjective vs. systematic, mechanical vs. handmade, and parts vs. a whole.



Neel, Alice, and Jeremy Lewison. *Alice Neel: Painted Truths*. Houston [Tex.: Museum of Fine Arts, 2010. Print.



I have been referring back to this book off and on throughout this semester as my relationship with Neel's work and my own is constantly evolving. Initially, *Painted Truths* served as an excellent jumping point into portraiture and provided me with various other modern and post-modern artists of which I could broaden my visual and literature library. These artists included Isabel Bishop, Raphael Soyer and Leon Kossoff,. The author was clear to explain that the book was not meant to be a biography of Alice Neel, but instead a commentary of her work in relations of other artists, particularly those working around the same time. As I revisited this text a few times throughout the semester I was increasingly aware of her abstraction, and the narrative that evolved as she portrayed the people that surrounded her life. While I would not think of my work as a linear narrative, I have always considered my work autobiographical and a narrative of those who have been present (or absent) in my life.

I had a really productive and evocative meeting with Sue on November 9th, via Skype. We focused on my choice of subject matter, and my motivation behind this choice. Is there other subject matter that I could portray to convey the same emotion? Am I at risk for being identified as just a painter of dark skinned people? Sue mentioned a recent Gogan show in London, and the controversy that surrounded it due to his status as a white painter, and his motivation to portray the primitive.

Sue mentioned Alice Neel who paints non-narrative portraits of the people around her, and as a result creates a narrative of her life. Originally, this idea was my main motivation for my SMP experience as I initially began looking at Nan Goldin's photography. I realized from this discussion that amidst the distraction of my photographic sources, this initial idea has been lost. I would consider my self a portrait painter, and I would really love to return to this idea. I'm not yet sure if this means I should move completely away from photographs, but I think I'm going to begin with my self-portrait, painted from life.

Another artist that Sue suggested was Susanna Coffey. I have seen her work before, but I have not read much about it. She paints many self-portraits, life size, straightforward with a direct gaze with the viewer. Sue thought that my recent large work created was confrontational and prevented the artist from relating with my painting. This is one motivation for zooming out from my subjects in my next series of works. Sue seemed to really like my smaller paintings, but felt they would be much more successful displayed individually instead of as a group. I had originally displayed them as a group because I wanted to convey the quantity of faces, but I really like them as paintings, and I agree with Sue, that they are not as effective, and I suppose more easily "dismissible" as Billy would say because of the way they are being displayed.

Sue also suggested that I do a few large scaled, thorough preparatory drawings. I was excited to hear her say this, as my work has been quickly moving away from drawing as I rely more heavily of the photograph. This comment may also be due to the fact that I had Studio Drawing with Sue, and she is most familiar with my work as a drawer, and not painter. For my next self-portrait I will create at least one preparatory drawing from life that I may display in the December gallery exhibition. I'm not yet sure how returning to drawing will effect my work, but I'm excited to be able to judge the difference between my paintings from life and from photographs.

It was a pleasant experience to get Sue's insight as a painter and drawer, as I really respect her as an artist and professor, and think I most closely relate with her own work. I'm excited to return to my roots as a drawer and paint my self-portrait from real life, but I am very uncertain how it will affect my future work the dialogue between my past works. But, like every thing else through this experience, I'm just going to go for it. I have lately been so concerned with the conceptual aspect of my work, I suppose I have been losing focus on my formal choices and my technique as an artist.



Ruth
Egg Tempera, 48in x 60 in.

Critique Reflection:

This was probably the least productive critique of the semester, and the first time I've left a critique feeling more uncertain than I did entering it. This was likely attributed to my very new, and poorly articulated direction following my conversation with Sue. I realized that I do not want to get stuck in the corner as just a white painter of black people, and even so I'm not sure painting just dark-skinned children is really helping my work conceptually as I deal with loss and memory. I feel as though people cannot get beyond the race difference between my subjects and I, and I don't think it is what I want my work to be about.

In the critique we discussed including varying levels of cropping and zooming in portraying the same person in a series of work. I think this is a great idea in order to reiterate my source of photography, but I don't think this is any longer the direction that I want to go in. My heart just isn't in it. I enjoy painting flesh, and zooming in close on a face is great way to do this, but conceptually I don't think it is working.

Instead I want to focus on the idea of absence by portraying those around me, and exposing those that are not. I will continue to work from photographs, but exaggerate the idea of losing someone, by recreating a photograph minus the people that are no longer around me. Is this too literal? Possibly. But right now I don't think my work is communicating anything conceptually other than my painterly style. I think I may need to take a more direct route to reach my audience. I'm also considering working from life and painting those around me to create a narrative of my life, but I worry that this narrative may not come to a cohesive realization in such a short time period, and my interest in absence will not be obvious without a written explanation to accompany my work- and as trite as it may sound, I would prefer my work to speak for itself.

Additionally, by recreating these photographs my body will take a new focus in my work, and although I may include some African children, they will no longer be the main characters of my work. I may also work from my family photos to include a new demographic in my work, and introduce a well-understood convention of society, while altering the outcome.

I am still dealing with some conflicting opinions in regards to an emphasis, or de-emphasis of drawing within my work. Sue Johnson strongly encouraged me to create in-depth, well thought out drawings to serve a preparation for paintings, or stand alone works. I may create a few drawings in order to better understand forms and shadowing.

Intention Statement:

Photographs serve as a reminder of what once was, a moment that will never be retrieved except in the nostalgic realm of remembering and recreating the past. I am interested in how these fragments of a moment are used to reshape our memory and hold on to the ones we love, while seemingly rubbing in our face what is lost.

I intend to re-create iconic photographs from within my history, while leaving out the person that is no longer with me as an empty void within the image. I want to focus on my body as my main subject, as I deal with the absence around me. I feel that my work is intensely autobiographic, but I think this idea is falling short because my relationship with my subjects is unclear.

Formally, I do plan to take some artistic liberties to maintain a painterly style in recreating these images to reiterate the concept of reinterpreting and recreating a memory, in my case, by physically painting it. I also will continue to focus on my understanding of color, particularly the color of flesh, and explore the effect photography has on discoloring reality (i.e. sepia tone, polaroids, etc.). Since moving to large panels, I enjoy working large, but I do not want to monumentalize my subjects and will paint close to life-size to make my images much less confrontational and eliminating the distance between my work and my audience. My audience will be able to relate to my subjects, body to body.

I may also incorporate paintings/drawing from life within my images in order to exaggerate the contrast of painting from life and the freezing of a particular instance within a photograph.

For the gallery exhibition I plan to include 3 large panels. I will include my large, zoomed in painting and two new "void" paintings. I am eager to see my professor's opinion of my diverging works, and see which is more successful in comparison.

Action Plan:

Saturday, November 13th:

- Buy more supplies for panels

Sunday, November 14th:

- Build panels, apply PVA.
- Begin sketching for next two works.

Monday, November 15th:

- Begin underpainting.

November 16th- 20th: Finish painting.

Tuesday, November 16th:

- Assemble Document Book
- Identify what needs to be edited and added too

Wednesday, November 17th:

- Write introduction for Document Book
- Assemble Draft

Sunday, November 21st:

- Begin sketching and underpainting for next painting.

November 23rd – 27th:

- Finish reading
- Finish annotations

Sunday, November 28th:

- Edit draft, assemble Final Document Book

Artist Lecture: Dr. Andrea Giunta

November 12, 2010

In hindsight, this event was much more influential than I could have expected, nor immediately realized. The work by Gustavo Germano, Ausenc a's, introduced to me by Dr. Giunta's lecture, has been the single catalyst for my latest series of works revolving around the empty silhouette of the person that is no longer with me.

I was initially not very enthusiastic about this discussion about art and human rights in Argentina, for the fact that I didn't anticipate very many relevant connections between the artwork presented and my own, however I was pleasantly surprised and intrigued by Dr. Andrea Giunta's lecture on Thursday, November 11th. Her talk encompassed the idea of how art works to construct political views and power, and examined the transition from newspaper memorials to high art in gallery environments specifically regarding the "disappeared" in Buenos Aires in the 1970's. While I did enjoy this lecture, it was sometimes difficult to understand Dr. Giunta because of her accent and the low volume of the microphone, and I wish she gave more background information about the events in the 1970's.

With this transition came an appropriation of the photographs in memorials by artists. I was most interested to see how they dealt with working from photographs. In a particular exhibition, Identity, in 1998, the artist covered the entire perimeter of a gallery with photographs of the disappeared and intermixed the images with mirrors. The intention of the exhibit was a hope for individuals in the audience to perhaps recognize their resemblance in the photographs and find the identity of their parents and origins, while bringing these images to a new audience within the gallery environment. Formal aspects of this project were that the photographs were life-size and hung at eye-level to maximize realism and emotional impact. The issue of scale has been a reoccurring concern in my work, especially as I'm now working back towards life-scale, in an attempt to break down the distance between my audience and work, an issue of which these artist/curators were most definitely aware.

Another work Dr. Giunta referenced was a photograph series dealing with how to represent the absence of someone. Conceptually, this became very relevant to my work and my relationship with my subjects. He chose to recreate photographs and emphasize the absence of the missing by not including the person that is now gone. As I am now working on a self-portrait, I think that the absence of the people that I miss in my setting may be more convincing than my original portraits.

I most enjoyed Dr. Andrea Giunta's lecture because when I typically think of political artwork, portraiture does not immediately come to mind. This discussion flipped this understanding, and while I would not necessarily think of my work as political, I definitely deal with many of the same issues as these artists.

Bibliography

Battenfield, Jackie. *The Artist's Guide: How to Make a Living Doing What You Love*. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo, 2009. Print.

This book has provided me with a light reading break and encouragement throughout this process as it gets down to the practical application and advice to become a successful, self-sustaining artist. In moments of frustration or uncertainty, it was a nice departure to regroup and remind myself why I am putting myself through this experience. Especially, as I begin to move forward in my path toward graduate school, this advice has been unmatched. The author, an artist in her own right, emphasizes the importance of networking and work ethic, and comments on such overlooked, but nevertheless important, elements such as documenting your work and writing resumes.

Braun, Emily. "Skinning the Paint." *Paint Made Flesh*. Scala, Mark, and Susan H. Edwards Nashville, TN: Frist Center for the Visual Arts, 2009. 24-41.

This article within *Paint Made Flesh* refers to Titian's *The Flaying of Marsyas* as the catalyst for contemporary painters' tactile and violent portrayal of flesh. Braun includes Jenny Saville, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, and Cecily Brown in her examination. She specifically references the use of photographic sources specifically in regards to Saville and Bacon's works and their conscious effort to challenge the limits of photography, especially through the three-dimensionality and sheen of oil paint. I am most interested in Saville's work and her use of mimetic color and physicality of her paintings, especially as I plan on working on a similarly large scale. Braun expresses the use of photography as the "invasive scrutiny of the camera into the private recesses of the body." While I see my work as less overtly aggressive, I am interested in this idea as it refers to an intimate memory captured by the photograph, expressed through highly focused, cropped images of flesh and faces.

Cohen, David. "Live in the Studio: Susanna Coffey." *Catalogue: Isabel Ignacio Gallery*. Seville, Spain: Isabel Ignacio Gallery, 2006. 24-48.

Susanna Coffey is an artist recommended by Sue Johnson, for her painterly style and self-portraitist tendencies. The essay by David Cohen examines her work and her motivation for using herself as her most common subject. Coffey claims she uses herself for practical reasons as that her body is always "free." Cohen reconsiders this idea and considers her work to not be an exploration of her identity, but instead a portrait of the artist as a witness. She works from life but stages her images by pinning newspaper clippings and other mass-produced photographic means behind her, and then paints her reflection from a mirror. I am interested in this juxtaposition between painting from life (her body) and then painting photographic sources. She is aware at every level her works potential from the conceptual framework, to her painterly application. This same awareness and consciousness is becoming more relevant and important in my own work. While Susanna Coffey is a very successful artist in her own right, little has been written about her work. This essay provided some insight and explanation of her choices.

Danto, Arthur Coleman, Robert Enright, and Steve Martin. *Eric Fischl, 1970-2007*. New York: Monacelli, 2008. Print.

'I paint to tell myself about myself.' 'I believe art is heroic. I believe that it deals with issues of what it's like to be a human on the most compelling and highest level.' – Eric Fischl

This book is comprised of two essays, and interview excerpts with Fischl over the course of seven years, 2000-2007. I was most attracted to Fischl's ambiguous narrative present within his images, which in my eyes is very similar to the ambiguity created by the photographic fragmenting of a memory. The images do not explicitly explain the happenings within the picture plane, yet seem to convey some set of universal visual vocabulary in order to reach every viewer and tell a larger story. Aesthetically, I am most interested in his more abstract and painterly works on paper, most of which were completed during the 1980's. The interview excerpts were in direct responses to specific works of art. It was enlightening to read thoughts and experiences regarding an artwork directly from the artist's mouth, in contrast to an art historian or critic's assumptions or opinions.

Grynsztejn, Madeleine. "A Constant-In-Process: Chuck Close's Self Portraiture." *Chuck Close: Self-portraits 1967-2005*. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2005. 108-115.

While I have always admired Chuck Close's work, I was concerned that his heavy focus on photorealism was too disconnected from my own work, except for the fact that we are both working from photographic sources. This article re-examined this idea, and describes his work in terms of the Process Art movement. The author describes his work to not be searching for inner emotion, but conveying intense outward expression through the dedication of his time-intensive process, evident on the surface of his works. I realized that this was an idea I have been seeking to articulate- the idea that my connection and devotion to my subjects would be evident in the dedication and time given to my paintings and portrayals. Unfortunately, with the time limitations of SMP, I don't have the luxury of spending 14 months on one painting (as Close does) and as a result, this idea isn't being supported by my work as strongly as I would like, so I intend to focus more heavily on a stringent process of creating, although my timeframe in creating is expedited. Additionally, the author explores the dichotomy present in his work as a result of working from photographs- the frozen instant of a snapshot with his long, enduring process of painting, subjective vs. systematic, mechanical vs. handmade, and parts vs. a whole.

Hughes, Robert. *Lucian Freud Paintings*. New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1989. Print

Within the first page of this book the author dives right into Lucian Freud's relationship with photography and the mass-media culture as he challenges it's emptiness against the transcendence of painting. I suppose this shouldn't have come as quite a shock, but as I knew Freud painted only from life, I guess I did not expect such an explicit dialogue with mass media. This essay also looks into Freud's influences, particularly Ingres and Frans Hals, in regards to Ingres, Freud seems to derive many of his own notions about color. A line that I immediately related to was a quote by Ingres, about the most beautiful thing is the juxtaposition of two similar colors. This idea is very apparent in Freud's later work as so self-consciously delineates lines of color to evolve into flesh. The author also provides explanation for Freud's use of color in a non-expressive or symbolic way. He purposely avoids heavy saturation of color, such as reds or blues, to avoid emotional significance. This very idea is core to my relationship with color, as I want the audience to have a sensory experience with my work, not a symbolic one. Hals' brushwork is reflected in Freud's due to its inherently modern feel of smearing and coarse displacement of paint. In regards to a portrait painted from life versus a photographed portrait, the author includes a conversation with Freud as he explains that a photographed portrait eliminates any tension between the artist and subject, and evokes the sitter's power of censorship. The painted portrait on the other hand allows the transaction of emotions (the artists and sitters) on both sides of the process. This idea has been an ongoing issue in my work, but I ultimately think working from photographs works best for me because I don't want my work to become about the experience of painting it, and rather just the experience of the moment and its aftermath.

Moorhouse, Paul. *Gerhard Richter Portraits: Painting Appearances*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2009. Print

Moorhouse dissects the broad range of Gerhard Richter's work, and considers only his portraits for the sake of this book. His *photopaintings* fall in the realm between a mechanical production of an image, and the human production of an art object. Unlike my work, which draws from extremely personal connections and memories from the photographs I choose, his photos are for the most part chosen without attention to aesthetics, concept or judgment. I am interested in his idea of revisiting a photograph, and painting it multiple times, extenuating the idea that it is a photograph, and can be mass-produced. Like Hockney, he is also exploring the dichotomy between the world as it is and as it is perceived. I think my work is in direct conversation with this idea, and the artificiality a photograph/likeness/appearance presents.

Neel, Alice, and Jeremy Lewison. *Alice Neel: Painted Truths*. Houston [Tex.: Museum of Fine Arts, 2010. Print

I have been referring back to this book off and on throughout this semester as my relationship with Neel's work and my own is constantly evolving. Initially, *Painted Truths* served as an excellent jumping point into portraiture and provided me with various other modern artists of whom I could broaden my visual and literature library. These artists included Isabel Bishop, Raphael Soyer and Leon Kossoff. The author was clear to explain that the book was not meant to be a biography of Alice Neel, but instead a commentary of her work in relations of other artists, particularly those working around the same time. As I revisited this text a few times throughout the semester I was increasingly aware of her abstraction, and the narrative that evolved as she portrayed the people that surrounded her life. While I would not think of my work as a linear narrative, I have always considered my work autobiographical and a narrative of those who have been present (or absent) in my life.

Pollock, Griselda. "Mary Cassatt: Painter of Women and Children." *Reading American Art*. Ed. Elizabeth Milroy and Marianne Doezema. New Haven: Yale UP, 1998. 280-301.

I was initially interested in Mary Cassatt due to her connection to painting children. This article unexpectedly inspired me to include myself in my portraits, and deal with the relationships between mother and child, or in my case- quasi-mother and orphan. Pollock looks at a broad range of Cassatt's work, highlighting her portrayal of mother and child despite the fact that Cassatt herself was not a wife, nor mother. Nevertheless, she could understand and capture the subtle interactions of mothers and young children. This article examined her compositional choices and well as formal technique in order to meld mother and child.

Riley, Charles A. "Color in Painting and Architecture." *Color Codes: Modern Theories of Color in Philosophy, Painting and Architecture, Literature, Music, and Psychology*. Hanover: University of New England, 1995. Print.

This book by Charles Riley was an assigned reading for my Color Theory class. It unexpectedly became motivation and inspiration for my interest and emphasis on color. This particular section about color in painting examines the classic argument of *colore* versus *disegno*, and looks at mimetic and invented color choices. I was most interested in the Cezanne's idea that color cannot be removed from line because all line is inherently a color, and exists as a result of color contrast. Also, because I am so deeply invested in mimetic and local color, especially from working with photographs, I was excited to read a well articulated discussion using Matisse's ideology regarding invented color, and the rejection of "imitation painting," because he saw color to have too powerful an emotive power to not consider it in itself. This idea has encouraged me to push my color choices, with hints of invented color to make my work more dynamic and hope that a juxtaposition of invented color with mimetic color will heighten my color choices.

Van Dembroucke, Celina. "The Absence Made Visible: The Case of *Ausenc'as*, Gustavo Germano's Photographic Exhibition." *InTensions Journal* 4 (2010): 1-29.

I searched for an essay regarding Gustavo Germano's photographic exhibition, *Ausenc'as*, which deals with the disappearances that went on during Argentina's last dictatorship. This exhibition was brought to my attention during Dr. Andrea Giunta's lecture on November 12th. The exhibition reconstructs family pictures from the seventies in which the disappeared was/were present. Germano recreates these pictures in the same place and conditions as the originals, and then places the original pictures from the past next to the new pictures taken more than thirty years later highlighting the absence of the disappeared. In this paper, the author describes the process of making the exhibition including the performative engagement of the participants who agreed to pose for Germano's project. The article also describes two pairs of pictures in order to address the effects of *Ausenc'as* on meaning as well as to reflect on the artist's use of the bodies of others in the staging of absence. I later realized that Van Dembroucke was a colleague of Dr. Giunta's at the University of Texas at Austin. With this in mind, I was excited to get a new, yet somewhat parallel and in-depth perspective on this exhibition, and my inspiration for making the "absence made visible."

Vickrey, Robert, and Diane Cochrane. *New Techniques in Egg Tempera*. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1973.

It was Robert Vickrey's work that was the catalyst for my choice to convert to Egg Tempera. He is a modern American realist painter, creating nostalgic, implicit narrative scenes often featuring his own children as models. I purchased this book to understand the technique of egg tempera painting. Vickrey divulges his process from the very beginning of creating his egg tempera medium, planning out the composition of his paintings, all the way to even more practical concerns of shipping and handling of Egg Tempera works. Unfortunately, because I was using pre-made egg tempera it was not water-insoluble and consequently many of his layering techniques were irrelevant and impossible to recreate without lifting the underlying layers. Nevertheless, this book provided excellent plates of his work, and was incredibly aspirational. While I later moved away from his realistic tendencies, his influence in my first portraits is very evident.

Weschler, Lawrence, and David Hockney. *True to Life: Twenty-five Years of Conversations with David Hockney*. Berkeley: University of California, 2008.

This book gave an insightful, intimate perspective on David Hockney's evolving relationship with photography. As a painter he did not trust photographs as sole sources, but instead only referred to them to help to remember what he experienced in person. His later photo collages addresses this earlier distrust, and set out to capture "relative importance", not accuracy. I was most interested in his opinion that a photograph is dead and uninteresting. He claims that one can look at a photograph at most for thirty seconds because no time exists in it, and it took no time to

create. By piecing together multiple photos this downfall is avoided because the viewer must take the time to consider each individual image. I am interested in how painting a photograph transforms the image and visual experience. And while the image may remain flat, I think it brings the experience of viewing the image to life due to the time that it took for me to create it, similar to Hockney's collage compositions.

Future Readings:

Debray, Cécile, and Lucian Freud. *Lucian Freud: the Studio*. Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2010. Print.

Hockney, David. *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters*. New York, NY: Viking Studio, 2006. Print.

Schjeldahl, Peter. *Let's See: Writings on Art from The New Yorker*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2008. Print.

Wiley, Kehinde, Brian Keith. Jackson, and Kimberly Cleveland. *Kehinde Wiley: the World Stage : Brazil*. Culver City, CA: Robert & Tilton, 2009. Print.

Witkovsky, Matthew S., Sarah Kennel, Diane Waggoner, and Sarah Greenough. *The Art of the American Snapshot, 1888-1978*. Lawrenceville: Princeton UP, 2007. Print.

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