

# Sense and Sentiment

Antonio Giacchetti

June 9 – July 8, 2017

Drawing influence from the history of non-representational photography, and recent practices by the artist in this field of production, this series serves as an active rejection of sensibility and sentimentality by Giacchetti himself. Using steel, a material cited by the artist as being foundational to the social and economic structure of his hometown of Hamilton, Giacchetti creates images that are fundamentally reductive in both form and meaning; offering up the representational history of photography in exchange for a photograph that essentially refers to and depicts nothing but itself. After sensitizing these plates using a silver gelatin emulsion, the plates are then exposed to the ambient light of Giacchetti's hometown. Although definitive in intention and execution, this work embraces objectivity in its purest form; reducing the artist's history to a flat black plane.

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Artwork in vitrines left to right:

*Sense and Sentiment #1*, Liquid Light on cold rolled steel, 2017

*Sense and Sentiment #2*, Liquid Light on cold rolled steel, 2017

*Sense and Sentiment #3*, Liquid Light on cold rolled steel, 2017

**Kesa Smith: Your work includes analog, studio-based and conceptual still photography, as well as experimental image making. What drew you towards the process you chose for *Sense and Sentiment*?**

Antonio Giacchetti: Near the end of my undergrad I found myself shifting away from representational photography. It felt extraordinarily limiting within the context of the vague and abstract ideas I was working through at the time and instead I spent a great deal of effort just experimenting with different photographic media on a chemical level. After I wrapped up my thesis, I wanted to take the opportunity to explore a completely different method of making *images* that subverted the objective truth we so often associate with photographic imagery. The work very deliberately relies on my intention rather than any objective way of seeing and identifying an image; and this fundamental subversion of the traditional way we see images has really come to define this series.

**KS: Can you talk about the process of creating this work?**

AG: Liquid Light is a type of liquid silver gelatin photographic emulsion manufactured by a company called Rockland Colloid. It's an incredibly versatile chemical and essentially allows a user to photo-sensitize nearly any material so long as it is adhered properly. To make the plates I begin by sanding and buffing a sheet of cold-rolled steel and immediately coat the plate in several layers of glossy polyurethane varnish. Once the varnish has set, the emulsion is brought to a stable temperature so it can be poured and spread onto the plate and exposed to light. Once exposure is complete, the plates are then transferred to the darkroom where they are then processed in a standard developer and fixed just like with a traditional silver gelatin print. Due to the size of the plates, the chemistry has to be sponged on and repeatedly rinsed over the course of

several hours to ensure even development, which turned out to be a surprisingly personal and therapeutic process.

**KS: I read that you use traditional photographic media to disrupt expectations when defining the photographic medium. This work acts as a rejection of sensibility and sentimentality, yet is created by the sensitivity of silver gelatin emulsion on steel, which can be an exceptionally tender process. Is this another way in which you are disrupting expectations?**

AG: Absolutely, and I would completely agree that silver gelatin is an incredibly tender and delicate process. In many respects, this work does utilize and pay homage to the work of the artists and scientists who so passionately pursued the perfect representational technology that we now know of as photography. However, I also think it is the duty of contemporary artists to constantly push the limits of these mediums and technologies both philosophically and chemically; and it is that constant desire for progression (or regression, depending on your perspective) that I think disrupts and ultimately calls to question what we define as photography. When I say my work rejects sensibility and sentimentality, I'm really referring to my own desire to capture and preserve a clear depiction of my hometown. And it is the act of relinquishing control of the image itself that makes this work interesting to me.

**KS: Do you see this work as a portrait of Hamilton and its ambient light using non-representational photography as a visual language or is your intention for it to be read as a visual object rejecting something more than itself?**

AG: In all honesty, I think it's a bit of both. For me, the process of making the plates is one that contradicts itself and contradicts the intention of photography. In many ways, these are truly and chemically *photographs* of

Hamilton. But it would be disingenuous to ignore the fact that the viewer has no way of seeing or identifying that truth, and in essence this incongruity reduces the images to nothing but three seemingly meaningless planes of exposed silver halides.

**KS: This work beautifully joins the concepts of memory, home and the deconstruction of photography as a medium, yet manages to embrace objectivity in its purest form, as mentioned in your artist statement. Can you elaborate on how these concepts inform this work?**

AG: For me and countless others, Hamilton came to be defined by the steel industry. Generations of families relied on these factories to sustain the lives of thousands and thousands of people and when these factory jobs began to disappear so did the steel families. When I began working on this project, I knew I wanted to infuse the memory of these people and places into the work itself and after I discovered a way to fix an image of my home onto the same steel it was built with, the series really just drove itself. Of course, taking documentary photographs of the city and its people would have been a far more direct way to communicate these ideas, non-representational photography has become my language of choice when it comes to communicating my thoughts and feelings. I also recognize that the sentimentality I have for my home is not one that is shared by everyone, and thus, I allowed the imagery to devolve into a purely unrecognizable and objective state instead of pursuing an image that could only fall short in terms of communicating my perspective. At the end of the day, if a viewer comes across these images, and enjoys them objectively for their simplicity and form, what more could I ask for.

**Antonio Giacchetti** is a writer and visual artist practicing in Southern Ontario, and holding a recently completed BFA in Photography at OCAD University. His practice includes a variety of experimental image making methods, conceptual and studio based photography as well as short performative and experimental films. Recent works have explored visual articulations of existential philosophy, deconstructions of the photographic image, mark-making, and notions of home, memory and formative experiences from the context of the male form. His work has been exhibited at various locations in Toronto and Hamilton, Ontario as well as internationally in Tampere, Finland and Berlin, Germany.