Digital Imagery in Human-Computer Interaction Design
Project 6.A/B  Self Portraits & Identity in the Digital Age
Thursday March 24th 2010

Eli Blevis, Associate Professor of Informatics

Project
Make a self portrait using digital photographic means. The most compelling and interesting portrait wins. Be prepared to reflect on what is it that a digital image captures about you that words or another media cannot.

Think about lighting sources—how many will you use, will you use natural light or artificial light? Think about color—will you use color or black and white? What sort of white balance or special filter effects work best to make your self portrait compelling? Where will you place your self in the image—in a corner, in the middle, in a larger context or will the entire image be only a part of you? Will you appear actually or metaphorically in your own self portrait? Will you alter your own image in Photoshop to present a more idealized version of yourself or will you present yourself exactly as the digital sensor captured you? At what point does mastery of digital image processing techniques allow you to reveal yourself to us metaphorically as you truly are and at what point do such techniques cross the line into alternative notions of identity or even exaggeration or misrepresentation?

Format:
Your project must be presented on three and only three landscape mode pages in pdf format. The first page should be a sketch, the second page should be your self portrait, and the third page should be your primary and secondary attributions lists—if for example, someone else helps you with your self portrait or you are inspired by an idea from someone else. Upload your work to oncourse, as instructed in class. Be certain to reference all of your sources accurately and completely.

The example on the pages that follow gives an idea of what a self portrait could look like for the purposes of this class project. The example is by no means the most ideal project—yours should not be longer, but it can and ideally should be more compelling and interesting. Note that I have not provided a sketch this week, but you may want to do so, optionally. This is intended to be a fun, yet serious project, with implications and potential for informing how you construct your professional and other presence in the world.

DUE Thursday April 1st no later than 9:00 AM
A FINAL form completed project.
Listening. Self Portrait, 2010

Reflection
Here, I portray myself as someone who is not talking, but listening intently to someone—is it you?—who must be telling me something that must be quite serious and engaging. In digital image form, the representation of my attention span for listening to others is much more robust than my actual attention span is in actual life—an irony of the use of imagery which is intended here as quite the opposite of any serious intent. That is, I may be able to listen to you intently in actual life for some time, but this portrait may give you the impression that I am able to listen to you endlessly.

Technical
M8.2 Digital Camera, ISO 160, 40mm Leitz Wetzlar Summicron-C (1973), f5.6, 0.7 seconds exposure, 2 fluorescent light sources. In Adobe Lightroom, the image has been adjusted for fluorescent white balance, converted to grayscale, has been adjusted to exaggerate the black regions, and cropped to square dimensions. The tip of the subject’s nose has been set to the top left apex of the bottom right third of the image.
Primary Attributions
Image by the author

Secondary Attributions
None