Thesis Inquiry & Process: Something About Reality

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Thesis Inquiry & Process: Something About Reality

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of: Master of Fine Arts in Visual Communication Design

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Abstract

This thesis documents the employment of a system of Process and Inquiry as it serves as a structural foundation for an investigation of the manner in which Reality is represented in visual portraiture. Through a vigorous exploration of the concept of Reality and its singular nature, it is hypothesized that intrinsically unique experiences could potentially be communicated through the perceptive abilities of the emotional quotient. The effects of media, timing, complexity, abstraction, and authenticity are examined for their effect on the apparent clarity of concepts transmitted in this manner. The inquiry ultimately manifests in the daily creation of self-portraiture, as well as a multimedia exhibition inspired by the theatrical arts, that speak to the communal understanding of the Human Experience.
Preface

There are multiple natures of a thesis project. In addition to an infinite array of topics, and an exponential set of proposals, there are a number of platforms on which a project may be built. Some theses seek to solve a particular problem, promote an awareness, or generate a call to action for the masses. Others are the basis for the wandering, abstract, intense exploration of often-personal concepts. Choosing a thesis platform is not unlike a self-assessment. The success of the project may, in fact, revolve around the compatibility between the thesis platform and the candidate's methodological processes.

In my own personal evaluation, I foremost recognized my critical qualities. Since I am equally analytical and intuitive, I understood that my approach toward a Master's thesis would need to incorporate both methods of deduction. By opting to do an explorational thesis, I could turn my perception toward myself in a manner of Inquiry. Adding the analytical component to the formula resulted in the further development of my fascination with Process. So, from these two traits, I had a title for my platform: Thesis Inquiry & Process.

The subject matter was more difficult to solidify, as I had a sufficient collection of personal obsessions and a long list of existential questions. As Visual Communication Design is a conglomerate of artistic disciplines, I decided that I should build my foundation in the realm of photographic imaging, since I had benefitted from an extensive education in that field. Portraiture, in particular, had been the core of my academic and professional studies. I had spent a significant number of hours over the last five years, in both the studio and the lab, attempting to control the physical and metaphorical interactions between people and photons. The eventual contraction of this god complex, as it was fondly referred to, manifested in my pursuit of digital retouching.

As I worked in the industry, I was repeatedly challenged to determine the appropriate amount of image manipulation for a given application. I understood enough about human subconscious processes to know that there was merit in a so-called 'gut reaction.' I began to formulate ideas of how, and why, that sensation was triggered. From there, I took a divergent approach and addressed the generic roots of that question: How do we know what is real, and what is fake? And, when it's all said and done, what does it mean to be real?

It was through this thinking that the subject of reality became the center of my proposal. Although this was a thesis grounded in the visual arts, I was energized by the prospect of adding a philosophical component to my inquiry. In order to portray my perspective of reality, it was imperative to investigate the concept in depth. This became the first stage of a multiphase process. The visual exploration took place during the second stage, which resulted in the creation of the project's physical components. Stage three was characterized by the analysis of the artwork generated in stage two, including the organization and indexing of a web gallery. Fourth and finally, the artwork and website were combined with a performance piece, producing an exhibition which served as the dissemination of the thesis.

Stage one was spent testing the commonly accepted notions of existence. Unbeknownst to me, it was also spent tempting fate. I soon found myself wandering in the theoretical world of such a vast topic; Reality was an undiscovered forest with an infinite number of branches to climb. But the further I ventured into the woods, the more uncertain I became of my own convictions, until I began to question the very likelihood of existence.
Every moment was framed in the context of a non-existent reality. Every conversation was recognized as naive and pointless. My interactions with loved ones were disengaged and scientific. My spare time was spent exercising the elasticity of my logic, rearranging simultaneous perceptions of the same instant, and tricking myself into believing that I had been tricking myself all along. I challenged the boundaries of cause and effect, which at one point resulted in an ignorantly sustained injury. At times, I thought I might be delusional. At other times, I felt near enlightenment. And sometimes, I would think, “It doesn’t really matter what I am, because I most likely don’t even exist.” Yet, despite months of this psychological rollercoaster, I somehow emerged with a sense of clarity.

In fact, the constant fluctuation of my existential inclinations had helped me realize my error. My inability to articulate the definitive substance of reality was due to the transient nature of existence: any given state of reality is composed of an infinite number of variables which, fundamentally, can never again permutate in the same manner. This is because, according to the nature of a syllogism, the very act of altering an element of a reality also alters that reality as a whole.

Henceforth, my inquiry turned toward inward to observe the function of the artist, bound by this essential limitation. My interest in art was never driven by an appreciation for the precision of craft required to generate a visual likeness of an object. What captivated my attention was the ability of a non-photorealistic rendering to generate an inarguable likeness of an object. For me, that is the intrinsic quality of successful art: it touches upon the essence of the human experience in a subtle way that feels indisputably genuine and personalized for each viewer.

When framing this belief within the context of a world where every viewer has not just one unique reality, but an infinite number of unique realities, I was struck by the likelihood that any single piece of artwork could relate to more than one person in any one composition of reality. I deduced that there must be an underlying commonality among these seemingly infinite realities; something that, once touched by genuine art, becomes a direct portal from one soul to another. Theoretically, this was the only manner in which a singular experience could be shared.

To test my theory, I embarked on the second stage of my inquiry. The next ten weeks were spent creating experimental self-portraiture as I attempted to capture the emotional, physical, and psychological experiences of my constantly mutating reality.
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Thesis Statement

Within the context of visual arts, the subconscious ability to identify authenticity is a comparatively underexplored phenomenon. Biological instincts provide an element of security, enabling an organism to conduct a rapid analysis of abnormal factors within an environment. It seems as though a similar inherent sense operates in the refined aspects of human society, allowing us to perceive virtually inconspicuous details in works of art. It is due to this instinct that we are able to assess the authenticity of a creative endeavor, and ultimately, its essential Truth.

This admission of a mutually recognized Truth is the first step in successful communication, and therefore plays an formidable role in the interconnectedness of human beings. Where does this fundamental knowledge come from, and how does art utilize it to invoke such an intense connection?

While the viewer may not logically understand a work of art, they may understand it emotionally. It could be argued that it is even more important for art to inspire a sense of empathy, rather than rationality, since the emotions surrounding an idea often make a greater impact than the concept itself. When compared to logical reasoning, which is shaped and moulded over time, emotional comprehension appears to be a more intuitive perception. While the origin of EQ is still unknown, I believe it is deeply connected to the communal phenomenon known as the Human Experience.

By using the elements of artwork to activate certain triggers, such as experiential sensations, we are able to elicit this ingrained empathy for the facilitation of elevated communication. I contend that the intrinsic quality of successful art is this ability to draw upon the essence of the Human Experience in a manner which feels indisputably genuine and personalized for each viewer.
Topics Of Inquiry

The objectives of my exploration were not fully conceived prior to the initial phase of experimentation, but developed alongside the thesis narrative instead. The further I delved into a particular experiment, my understanding of the driving initiative became more concrete. It is very possible, and even likely, that these notions were present for much of my artistic development over the years. It was only through the production process that I was able to articulate them more effectively. Despite being named retrospectively, these were the underlying questions that generated my system’s guidelines and gave direction to my investigation.

Media Choice & Experience

One of my primary curiosities was the ability of specific types of media to share an experience in a more effective manner than others. It had often occurred to me that a piece of art and its medium were an inseparable pair; if it were made of a different material, it would be a separate message altogether.

Inspiration–Creation Proximity

It’s arguable that a perspective is completely genuine, regardless of refinement or analysis. Graduate school places an emphasis on careful dissection, questioning, and comparison in order to fully develop a concept. While this is a skill that is valued for its rigor, it is not the only manner of ideation. Alternatively, some of the most interesting thoughts are subconscious and only manifest in bursts of raw expression. This is a method with a great capacity of exploitable creative energy. When examining the differences between rawness and refinement, time clearly stood out as a primary determining factor. The elapsed time between the birth of the concept and its artistic expression is directly correlated to the practical refinement of an idea. I thought of this as the proximity between artistic inspiration and physical creation.

Complexity Of Process-Based Design

Along the lines of media choice and experience, I wondered if using a multifaceted creative process would yield a more comprehensive representation of complex subject matters. Since the majority of a subject’s Truth is due to the singularity of its experiences, then utilizing a process that calls upon a comparable combination of experiences should create a more direct pathway for communication. From this deduction, I generated a goal to explore the capacity of complex, multimedia art to convey complex, multifaceted Truths.

Inspiration Of Infinite Realities

By utilizing complex creative processes to express the Truths of singular experiences, it was natural that I explored the idea of infinity. I was inspired by the concept that each experience is, in fact, its own reality. Since there is theoretically an endless scope of singular experiences, there is a syllogistic indication that the permutations of Reality are potentially infinite, as well. This idea, which I refer to as the concept of Infinite Realities, fueled the manner in which my conceptual perspective emerged for each portrait.
Empathy Through Human Experience

The fundamental Truth of being human is otherwise known as the Human Experience. It is an element of every single Reality, and is therefore the only discernible commonality shared by all human beings. This factor is undoubtedly at play in the way we are able to communicate and connect with one another. One of my objectives of this thesis was to explore different ways in which the Human Experience might be accessed, either consciously or subconsciously, to inspire a sense of empathy and understanding within the viewer.

Abstraction As Truth In Portraiture

Much like the superfluous refinement of aesthetics can lead to oversimplified imagery, excessively polishing concepts often results in rudimentary connections between uninteresting ideas. The more modern movements of art, such as Expressionism and Dadaism, are heavily critiqued by the masses as being crude and talentless. However, the nature of these avant-garde styles allow the artist to display an enlightened representation of intricate concepts. They also allow a wider gamut of interpretation as influenced by the expanse of viewers' perspectives. This is where the undersung value of abstract art lies: in its ability to communicate not only one or two premeditated Truths, but a slew of hidden and subconscious Truths, as well. My closing objective was to visually and conceptually explore the abstraction of the soul, or the subject's intrinsic Truths, to demonstrate its effectiveness as an accurate form of portraiture.
Survey Of Research

As my thesis inquiry addressed multiple topics, and the styles of my artwork spanned across digital and traditional techniques, my research reflected this via a conglomerate of diverse source types. Areas of cerebral processes, typically regarding philosophical or psychological content, manifested naturally in scholarly articles and written works. This was also true of my technological resources, as they primarily regarded the website development.

In addition to these literary resources, the majority of my visual research came from conducting a survey of art. The nature of my position as an archival photographer meant that I was continually exposed to an expansive collection of visual design, and I am sure that there are countless works of art which influenced me subconsciously in the creation of the individual portraits. However, since the progression of my thesis took place over an extended period of time, it would be impossible to have documented every artifact which left an impression on my inquiry. For that reason, I have only included the primary influences used to design the final exhibition.

Survey Of Literature

Benjamin On Art & Mechanical Reproduction

In an essay on the revolutionary genesis of true mechanical reproduction, Benjamin examines the various manners in which art is experienced. From an analysis of the events and consequences of the past, to the impending influence of technological advancements in the future, The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction confronts the political, cultural, and spiritual implications of the ability to duplicate authentic artistic creations. Despite some of my personal disagreements with his sentiments, Benjamin's arguments left heavy impressions on the way I approached my inquiry. Above all, his commentary focused on the inherent singularity of authenticity, as well as the capability of technical processes to both imitate and affect the reality of a work of art.

The conclusion I disputed most passionately proclaimed that the state of existence is an exclusive attribute of original artwork:

> Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership.¹

This notion may have been more accurate in Benjamin's time, but the advancement of the digital age has proven otherwise. Even digital copies of digital works of art are affected by their transportation from one place to another; as data is transmitted between digital locations, it accumulates damage from processes such as compression and file conversion, which are often necessary to transfer images through consumer servers. The exception to this case would be a virgin document which was created in a completely uncompressed format, such as a .CR2, .DNG, or .TIFF file. Nonetheless, Benjamin’s statement was influential enough that I incorporated the topic into my inquiry, addressing how the procedural degradation of image quality creates a unique historical account of a work’s existence in addition to cultivating its character.

Among the multitude of his hypotheses which I did support, two topics were particularly relevant to my inquiry. The first concept revolved around the infinite loop of cause and effect:

> During long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity’s entire mode of existence... The adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception.²

What Benjamin describes here is the intrinsic mutation of perspective as it is affected by environment. This cyclical conundrum is responsible for the indefinable nature of reality. It explains how its meaning is shaped by the manner in which the masses perceive, and that reality then comes to influence the general manner of perception employed by the masses.

The second topic supports my hypothesis that the EQ has a direct influence on the successful visual communication of Truth:

> It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty.³

Benjamin references the ‘cult value of the picture,’ which he previously describes as the spiritual significance associated with unique works of art. The human fascination with portraiture is deeply rooted in religion, as well as culture and nature. Early portraiture was a method of documentation, created solely to preserve memories and assist in recalling the semblance of loved ones. Across the countless religions in practice around the globe, and regardless of the presence or absence of faith, the ritualistic air with which we value portraiture remains consistent.

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² Benjamin, The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction, 17–18.
³ Ibid., 23.
The Beauty Of A Bilateral Brain

In the 1960’s, Michael Gazzaniga worked alongside neurobiologist Roger Sperry to conduct a series of tests regarding cerebral lateralization. While Gazzaniga’s research actually concluded that proper functionality relied on the communication between both sides of the brain, it was misinterpreted by general society and popularized as the split-brain theory. Although there is ample scientific evidence that both creative and logical processes occur in both cerebral hemispheres, the dichotomous right-brain left-brain myth has prevailed in popular culture to this day. This may be due to the striking simplicity of the concept, and its ability to provide a sensation of belonging to a like-minded group of people. Those who are profoundly imaginative, perceptive, and artistic are considered right-brain dominant. Those who are said to be left-brained are predominantly logical, analytical, and scientific.

Many artistic professionals are right-brained and gravitate toward creative methods involving intuition, passion, and whimsy. While some systematic procedures are generally taught in foundations classes as guidelines, the romantic idea of the artist is one who breaks these rules and defies those boundaries. By championing this creative approach and steering away from left-brain functions, we are immediately discarding half of our brain’s potential. My goal to combine the creative techniques of freeform inquiry and structured process is an attempt to regain a fuller functionality of the human brain, and in turn, lead to more effective visual communication.

I admit that the theory behind this bilateral technique merits its own critical study in a scientific environment, but the priority of this thesis is to maximize the potential for the graphic arts. Once this has been done, a more thorough examination of any methods leading to success may be conducted by a future party with the appropriate expertise and resources. Therefore, while the Inquiry & Process concept is explored throughout the execution of this project, it is only in its infancy of development. In continuation of this thesis, it may be viable to resume sculpting this theory, either by myself or potentially by subsequent candidates for this degree. In that sense, the beginnings of my investigation as documented in this thesis may serve to pioneer a previously unexplored region of Visual Communication Design.

Survey Of Art

Five Angels for the Millennium

One of the most highly regarded video artists, Bill Viola pairs dramatic projection with poignant audio to create intensely immersive exhibitions. His installations are minimalistic, yet incredibly elegant, and deliver surprisingly powerful narratives concerning the Human Experience. Viola has been a great source of inspiration throughout the course of my thesis, as well as during the progression of my artistic education.

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Five Angels for the Millennium, which was partially inspired by Viola’s hydrophobia, is widely considered to be his most complex work. The installation features five video portraits of a fully clothed man, at varying stages of his descent into a pool of water. By playing some clips in slow motion, inverted orientations, and reversed time, Viola alludes to the distortion of perspective, in the way that light is refracted in water. In addition to the perplexity of the optical perspective, a clever parallel is drawn to the disorienting properties of emotional perspective. Five Angels for the Millennium addresses the duality of nature by confronting the cultural, philosophical, and psychological aspects of water. Viola speaks to this complexity through a transitional red-to-blue color scheme. This palette evokes the paradoxical associations of a single subject, such as drowning and baptism, or violence and tranquility. The result is a vivid illumination of the dichotomy of Truth.

Your Shared Planet
A new source of inspiration, in the form of Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson, was introduced to me during the final two stages of my inquiry. A prolific installation artist, Eliasson is at the forefront of immersive experience design. His work primarily focuses on the magical qualities of optics, with a particular emphasis on visual interpretations of motion. His exhibitions are wildly imaginative and offer multiple levels of conceptual development for viewer consideration. During the spring of 2008, The Museum of Modern Art hosted his interactive show, Take Your Time. In the exhibition’s introductory statement, curators Roxana Marcoci and Klaus Biesenbach elegantly encapsulate the breadth of Eliasson’s visual dialogues:

Eliasson engages in an ongoing exploration of subjectivity, reflection, and the fluid boundary between nature and culture, revealing the degree to which reality is constructed and helping us to reflect more critically on our experience of it.

Your Shared Planet, also titled Seu Planeta Compartilhado, was created in 2011 from a combination of mirror and colored glass. The installation consists of a series of kaleidoscopic structures, composed by an array of geometric forms, positioned around a unified vanishing point. By shattering the image plane into a multitude of visual fragments, Eliasson provides countless perspectives of a single object. As the exhibition travels, the change in vanishing point dramatically modifies the viewer’s experience of the installation, ultimately demonstrating the symbiosis of interaction and perception.

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Survey Of Technology

Tessellate Changelog

Although I used Tumblr as a platform for my gallery, I made a number of changes to the aesthetics and functionality of the template. I chose the Tessellate interface, which was designed by a third-party user, due to its minimalistic appearance and flexibility. The other factor that determined my selection was the availability of the theme’s changelog, which documented a list of bug fixes, quirks, and workarounds observed by users. This drastically simplified the customization process and reduced the guesswork involved in troubleshooting, ultimately allowing me to spend less time on development while still achieving my design goals.

W3Schools Online Web Tutorials

For the additional features of my website that required custom code, I refreshed my memory by skimming relevant W3Schools tutorials. Within the categories of HTML, CSS, and Javascript, I found various tutorials that assisted with writing and troubleshooting. Since I began working from a pre-existing theme template, I only sought to adjust minor details within the script. For the proper phrasing and formatting of tags, I checked my recollections against the W3Schools reference tables. This was the primary function of the resource, however I did glance over the angular tutorials once I discovered the framework within the template.

Mitsubishi XD500U User Manual

Prior to borrowing the Mitsubishi projectors from the cage, I was required to read the user manual. The document explained the operation sequences, optimal projection parameters, and image adjustment options. A troubleshooting guide was provided toward the back of the publication, along with a diagram of the various indicators on the unit.

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Structural Processes

While my thesis did not follow a prescribed process, such as the formulaic steps of Design Thinking, it did unfold in a systematic manner. This was a result of the complexity of the topic; in order to make any true progress, I was forced to adopt a vigorous policy of compartmentalization. By limiting my primary tasks throughout the various partitions of my timeline, I arrived at a procedural approach that coalesced into four stages. These stages served to address the philosophical, artistic, analytical, and performance aspects of my inquiry.

Stage 1: Philosophical

During the first stage of my inquiry, I delved into the philosophical component of the exploration. This weighed heavily on time and energy consumption, as my approach was based on self-reflection and deep meditation on my subconscious beliefs. I began by brainstorming in a large newsprint tablet, which was left over from my freshman foundation courses. Using a color-coded system, I generated a sizeable number of questions about the believability of manipulated photographs. After analyzing the scope of the ideas via highlighting various keywords, I saw that the majority of the questions were iterations of four central themes.

1. Photographic Authenticity: How Cameras Are Not Cloning Machines
2. Developing Perspectives On Reality: The Cyclical Effects Of Technology, Media, And The Masses
3. The Past, Present, And Future Of Physical Image Manipulation
4. Multidimensional Methodology: The Importance Of Maintaining A Physical Existence

After identifying these subtopics, I was better suited to construct the guidelines of my inquiry. I decided upon a bipartite foundation, with equal emphasis on exploring the limitations of process-based art, as well as expanding on my personal understanding of reality. Ultimately, these two focuses would merge into one cohesive thesis, where process-based art would serve as a vehicle for the conceptualization and communication of ideas regarding the nature of reality.

Stage 2: Artistic

To ensure that my portraits were equally valid representations of my self-perception, I developed a set of guidelines that would assist in maintaining structure throughout my creative production. These principles were based on the primary objectives of my thesis. This framework was established in order to guarantee the legitimacy of the resulting imagery, so long as I remained aligned to three priorities.
Authenticity

The first, and most important requirement, was that each portrait should be completely genuine. These were to be heart-felt representations of myself; hiding, faking, or skewing the message of the piece through the artistic process was impermissible. This stage of the thesis happened to arrive at the same time as I relapsed in my health, as I struggle with migraines and a neuropathic disorder. This principle of authenticity, however, mandated that I showed my Reality as it was. Therefore, on days where I was ill and hardly left my bed, my portraits were made from my bedside, utilizing the available media and environment at hand. There were other times when I felt disconnected from my own image, and I hardly recognized myself in the mirror. These were days where my portraiture turned inward, using abstraction and conceptual devices to depict my Reality.

This authenticity was a mandatory component of each artwork, and as a result, my self-portraits became a substantial resource for reflection. The subject, media, and nature of each portrait functioned as the key to my subconscious states. I was able to see the range of my perspectives with clarity, so much that I could accurately recall the physical, mental, and emotional sensations that accompanied each image. It was the detail of these layers that provided not only a surface-level portrayal, but a richer understanding of the many Truths of my Infinite Realities.

Media Choice

As Marshall McLuhan noted with his famous quote, “The medium is the message,” the object of delivery and the manner in which it is delivered are intrinsically connected.\(^\text{12}\) There is an equal capacity of information to be derived from the materials of creation as from the visual graphics themselves. Unfortunately, I feel that the opportunity to invoke this manner of communication is often overlooked, or otherwise dismissed. However, when it is put into play, the result is undeniably effective. In fact, the most successful designs harness the inherent characteristics of a medium to support or enhance the message. This two-prong approach to visual communication is a direct route to a higher, or “meta,” level of art.

In order to demonstrate the capabilities of process-based design, it was essential to select the most relevant medium for the manifestation of each portrait. Forming highly conceptual plans would have increased my timeline exponentially, and because I had already placed faith in the authenticity of my subconscious, I felt that I was able to select the appropriate media in the same manner. I used simple logic to initiate the decision process, determining that above all, the medium must naturally speak to the essence of the Reality. The outcome was surprisingly comprehensive. By analyzing the relationships of medium and message, I saw a number of patterns. When I visually portrayed the complex processes of my mind, I also seemed to push the intensity of my process-based design. The portraits communicating transience and superficiality were primarily digital pieces. Images of intense emotional states, often depicted abstractly, took the form of gestural physical sculpture. This correlation consistently proved to enhance the informative quality of my self-portraits.

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Production Rate

My final guiding principle regarded the volume and timing of crafting the portraiture. I wanted to accurately and consistently document my perception of Reality, so I resolved to create at least one portrait per day. This daily update forced me to be productive, despite my level of enthusiasm or inspiration. As a result, I often designed with my heart in lieu of my mind, inadvertently strengthening my creative intuition. I realized that when it came to uncovering Truth, my subconscious perception is much more profound than my cognitive reasoning. The second significance of the production rate is its support of the Inspiration–Creation Proximity, which describes the correlation of successful communication and immediacy of creation. The quicker the artistic process succeeds the conceptual process, the more raw the expression of Reality becomes. To eliminate any possibility of refinement, I employed a deadline that required each portrait to be posted on the website by the end of the night.

Stage 3: Analytical

The third stage of my process was to analyze the portraiture for visual and conceptual themes. I found it necessary, however, to wait a week in between completing the images and beginning the critique. This allowed me to return to the portraits with a more objective eye, which served to assess the success of my visual communication. Typical observations included color, media, structure, symbolism, and degree of abstraction. I then generated a tag cloud, based on the most frequent attributes, in the folksonomy format. The logic behind using vernacular phrasing was correlated to my guiding principle of authenticity. In the same manner that I would not refine my portraits at a later date, I also would not refine my analyses. This kept the content raw, providing me with a more comprehensive environment from which to extract meaning.

There was also a practicality about using a grammatically unrestricted phrasing structure. Some of these portraits were created from a highly confusing state of mind, and are difficult to translate into words. By avoiding a formal taxonomy, I didn’t feel the need to assign tags that were not of primary importance. For example, in *Prismatically*, there are no tags regarding color. The image is not in greyscale, but it is not saturated. There is a presence of both warm tones—found in the highlights— and cool tones— found in the shadows. The overall result is an unremarkable chromatic palette, which does not greatly affect the visual communication of the intended message. Therefore, *Prismatically* has no tags regarding color.

Once I had applied as many relevant tags as possible, I would be able to filter the posts on my website based on these common factors. Not only was this a convenient display trick, which yielded striking galleries, but it also forced intriguing juxtapositions where I did not expect to find them. When reflecting on the interconnectedness of these images, I would be inspired once again by the singularly holistic structure of reality. These small enlightenments affirmed the validity of my inquiry, and served to recharge my interest in the subject matter.

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13 See Appendix II.
Stage 4: Dissemination

The final stage of my Inquiry was to make my exploration accessible to others. My method was to utilize the elements of my abstract biographical narrative to tap into the commonalities of the Human Experience. Upon reflecting on my journey, and the resulting revelations, I was struck by how my quest to understand reality was so similar to the premise of the theatrical arts. The closer I looked at the nuances of my experiments, the more I saw in common between the two forms of expression. The elements that compose visual art include a subject, a viewer, an environment, and a canvas. In theatre, there is an actor, an audience, a set, and a stage. I ultimately noted that acting, like painting or photography, is also the portrayal of an experience. Therefore, for the dissemination of my concepts and creations, I chose the theatre as my vessel.

Projections

As my exhibition took place in Webb Auditorium, and was physically separated from the other thesis exhibitions, I knew it would be important to generate a sense of curiosity among passersbys. I chose to dim the house lights, creating greater contrast for my two projected elements. On the primary screen, which was flanked by the traveler curtains, I showed a single-page view of my thesis website. The gallery displayed all 66 original portraits rendered in various types of media, including still photographs, illustration, digital composites, motion graphics, and video. These were organized into a masonry grid format, showing the date, time, and portrait title below each post. In an attempt to draw focus to the imagery, I orchestrated a simple design for the web interface. Since my masonry grid had often reminded me of a traditional curiosity cabinet, and I am truly fascinated by indexed collections, I wanted to allude to the catalogue aesthetic. By adorning a simple white field with black monospaced typography, I was able to support the gallery's wide range of visual styles without compromising the hierarchy of its contents.

The second manifestation of projection was more abstract and experimental in nature. After sorting through folksonomies among the portraits, I began to place images together according to similar and opposite tags. Three main pairs of dichotomous concepts emerged: Chaos & Emptiness, Pain & Comfort, and Eyesclosed & Eyesopen. Images were grouped accordingly to these tags, and then processed as layers of a Folksonomy Composite portrait. These conglomerates were used in marketing materials for the exhibition, in both print and digital formats. Their ultimate function, however, was as a looping sequence to be projected onto the theater’s acoustic panels. Since these panels were three-dimensional geometric blocks, each featuring four triangular faces, they served to distort the line, shape, and fields of color of the projected artwork. Thus, these images were processed not only digitally, but also physically, to generate a new perspective for the viewer.

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14 See Appendix III.
Vignettes

Because my topic revolved around the concept of reality as a transient environment, it was important that I could bring elements of my typical surroundings into the exhibition space. Inspired by the immersive qualities of successful set design, I aimed to create a more complete experience for the audience by creating small vignettes with my personal possessions. In addition to the theatrical aspect, I used these vignettes to display the handful of portraits which were created using traditional media. To encourage viewers to participate in the exhibition, I scattered the vignettes across the orchestra pit. This required the audience members to descend the aisles and approach the stage, literally inviting them into the spotlight. Not only was this a physically engaging act, but it also provided a new optical and emotional perspective of the theater. In doing so, I hoped to promote curiosity and encourage an open mind.

Performance

The final component of the dissemination was an overt allusion to the analogy of theatre and visual art. It took the form of a performance piece where, in the manner of a work of art, I became one of the exhibition installations. By using traditional pieces of crown moulding, I built a full-scale frame in the likeness of my bedroom mirror. After painting it gold, and antiquing the finish with ebony stain, I added a label to imply the significance of the scene. The frame was hung on the side-extension of the stage, directly in line with the spotlight. Dressed in formal black attire, I stood behind the frame in varying portrait poses for the duration of the show.

This performance was intended to serve as a first-hand experience of the exhibition's subject. By providing the physical object along with the gallery of synthesized portraiture, viewers could easily compare their own perceptions of me with those perceptions I had shared of myself. The intent was to highlight the intrinsic singularity of perspective, and to draw attention the various interpretations of any given moment. Moreover, I hoped that this demonstration would liken those singular perspectives, or Infinite Realities, as the environment of the experience. Although I did not interact with the audience, I was able to observe that my meaning had been communicated to the majority of viewers. Since many of those in attendance were my personal friends or relatives, they also brought their memories’ perspectives of me into the equation, adding yet another level of comparison.
Usability Considerations

Functionality
Since my thesis took the form of a self-driven inquiry, the usability portion of my design was primarily directed toward my own needs that developed as a result of the inquiry process. Most of these considerations were in regards to the analytical stage, culminating in the design of the web gallery. In order to select the most effective platform, I analyzed my list of initial objectives and noticed the possible limitations of the Inspiration-Creation Proximity. While the concept was mostly pertinent to the artwork stage, it was important that the portraits could be uploaded quickly. This enabled me to capitalize on the objectivity derived from the latent period between creation and analysis. By the same logic, I knew I would need an accessible dashboard to manage the posted content. This implied the use of a popular service, such as a social media site, which offered a desktop version as well as a mobile application. Having had past experience with Tumblr, I was aware of the various aspects of customizability through templates and custom code. This seemed to satisfy my practical requirements, while allowing me to control the aesthetics of the website.

Visual Organization
Throughout my inquiry, I was continually reminded about the importance of self-analysis. This was perhaps the most relevant in the context of usability, as it gave me a clear perception of the intellectual processes of my primary user. There are a number of strong dichotomies within my own personality, including my analytical inclinations. I’ve found that I tend to classify, or group, individual subjects within a collection; at the same time, I’m equally determined to elaborate upon, and therefore isolate, them. This flexibility is essential, and central to the design of my gallery. The aesthetics of the site were inspired by a fascination with 17th-century curiosity cabinets, also known as wunderkammern. As a digital interface design, this was easily accomplished by a masonry grid. However, while masonry layouts are traditionally paginated, I desired a more user-friendly solution that would augment the immersive experience. The answer was a masonite format, which combined the organization of the masonry grid with the fluid interactions of infinite-scroll.

User Interface
After creating the first handful of self-portraits, I quickly noticed the expanse of visual styles that would coinhabit the website. It was important that I kept the emphasis on the contents of the gallery, rather than the gallery itself, but I was determined to allude to the vintage collector’s culture that had inspired the interface design. To maintain the benefits of a “Zero UI” approach, I kept the color palette monochromatic and free of graphic enhancements. By employing the subtle influence of a monospaced typeface, I was able to give a nod to the vintage typewriter, as well as call upon the aesthetics of early computer scripts. This was useful on two fronts: it broadened the age range of the outreach demographic, while drawing a parallel between the cataloguing processes of the analog and digital eras. The resulting Rolodex aesthetic was subliminally supportive of the vision, but became invisible when compared to the portraiture.
Navigation

In order to add the tag cloud feature, which provided an organizational and interactive element for the interface, I had to begin with a prewritten plug-in. The one I chose was made by Felix Bonkoski, creator of Post-Theory. Despite the availability of a few design modifications offered by the generator, I chose to customize my cloud by hand to assure that it blended seamlessly with my website. I continued to employ the grey and white color palette, courier typeface, case-change hover-state, and use of punctuation as a design element. By adding the cloud as a mouseover drop-down menu, I was able to reduce the visual clutter without impeding the accessibility of the filter. In the mobile version, the mouseover simply becomes an onclick event.

Troubleshooting

It was extremely important to me that, especially for the final exhibition, all of the animated posts should be in action at once. I felt strongly that the motion was critical to the viewing of the works, and having them reset to a freeze-frame was unacceptable for the overall impression of the gallery. Adding the code to trigger the autoloop function, however, was a much larger challenge than anticipated. For some unknown reason, it was impossible to permanently enable the autoloop through the player’s interface. I sought the help of a family friend who assisted with troubleshooting. After many hours of collaboration, we found the issue: the infinite scroll feature functions by constantly refreshing the cache, which effectively resets the autoloop event listener. Once we used the infinite scroll callback to force the autoloop, the script executed perfectly.

Assessment & Continuation

Academic Significance

In lieu of a summary, which would imply that all of my questions have been definitively answered, I would like to reflect on the impact of this inquiry. Despite its atypical nature, I believe this explorational thesis carries a potential for substantial academic significance. The School of Design at Rochester Institute of Technology will become increasingly influenced by emerging media advancements, and the curricula for future MFA candidates will likely shift, as well. It is my hope that this thesis can be useful in promoting the expansion of methods and ideas, not only within particular programs or departments, but across the institute as a whole. The increasing overlap between academic disciplines provides a greater potential for innovation and evolution. While I undertook the philosophical portion of my thesis independently, my wish would be for all future graduate students, regardless of their primary department, to have the opportunity to attend courses relevant to their thesis topics. RIT prides itself on its innovative influence, and such a campus-wide collaboration could eventually become the model for higher level education.

In addition to its impression on university operations, I truly hope that this body of work can inspire at least one student in the future. Whether it sparks the interest in the visual representation of reality, or is a source of empowerment to pursue an exploratory process, I believe that this documentation of my experience demonstrates the reward of personal fulfillment. This journey has been difficult, no doubt, but it has altered the way I approach life on a daily basis. It has helped me sort through the most convoluted concepts, tragic events, and illuminating discoveries. There is no satisfaction that compares to a success attained through fortitude. Upon the completion of this thesis, I walk away with the ineffable pride of remaining authentic in my alternative pursuit of understanding.

Future Inquiries

The life of this inquiry is far from over, as these experiences have awoken the challenger within me. The desire to follow my curiosity, through whatever it may drag me, has never been so intrepid. I've realized that true innovation must follow jeopardy. This process of inquiry has become the foundation of my daily existence; I have a strong feeling that it will appear in every aspect of my life, for quite a long time.

In terms of future inquiries in the visual field, my investigation of process-based design will undoubtedly continue. I believe that its intrinsic complexity provides potential for an advanced form of communication, particularly regarding complex subjects. By pushing the limits of process, I hope to discover where the pinnacle of conceptual transmission lies in relation to the number of procedural iterations. My exploration of Process also created other topics of inquiry, each touching on a different aspect of design. The easiest to manifest is a test in the effect of visual resolution on conceptual communication. This was a topic I encountered frequently during the second stage of my thesis project, and it is something that I keep returning to as I continue to examine my interactions with the visual world.
Inspired by my research of Olafur Eliasson, I would also like to investigate the potential of interaction-generated visuals to touch upon the Human Experience. I have become intrigued by the impact of moving media on emotional perception, and would be interested to see how this phenomenon is connected to basic psychology. Of a similar notion, I'm incredibly energized by the idea of translating singular experiences from one biological sense to another. Such a discovery, partnered with an ally in the biotechnology field, may significantly increase the quality of millions of lives. And improving the life experiences of others is, to me, the ultimate function of design.
Appendices
Appendix I: Original Thesis Proposal

Thesis Proposal for the Master of Fine Arts Degree
Rochester Institute of Technology
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
School of Design
MFA Visual Communication Design

Subconscious Visual Perception: Detecting Manipulated Imagery
Blayke Mackenzie Morrow
October, 2014

Chief Thesis Advisor: Chris Jackson
Program Chair, Visual Communication Design

Signature Date

Associate Thesis Advisor Mitch Goldstein
Assistant Professor, Visual Communication Design

Signature Date

Associate Thesis Advisor Rachel Jerome Ferraro
Lecturer, Advertising Photography

Signature Date
Abstract

The perception of reality is an under-examined element of visual imagery. What is "real," what is "fake," and how do we determine the difference between the two? It is necessary to locate the tipping point of realism in photographic manipulation. What keys us in to a manipulated image, and when is that precise moment we notice an absence of realism? How do we explore these topics in a controlled manner and extract a definitive set of data to support this theory?

This inquiry is especially important as we approach the future of imaging. Having a better understanding of how our minds perceive reality in visual imagery will ultimately allow for greater advancements in both old methods and new technologies. Traditional art forms, such as photorealistic illustration and portraiture, would gain another level of visual comprehension that would elevate the effectivity of tromp l’oeil artistry. The Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality industries would particularly benefit from research surrounding the believability of computer generated or altered images. Long term results from such a study could include a fully immersed digital VR society.

To focus my direction, I will target a few of the basic elements that create an image. Lighting, reflection, proportion, and texture will be the initial set of the Four Investigatory Keys to explore in the research phase of the thesis project. A psychological research component will provide scientific data to qualify the importance of these factors in human perception of realism. The understanding of how subtle progression over time effects the viewer’s subconscious mind will determine the parameters for the animation’s length and intensity, resulting in the specifications of the final deliverables.
Subconscious Visual Perception: Detecting Manipulated Imagery
Blayke Mackenzie Morrow

Key Terminology
Artificial Intelligence  Movement  Tromp L’oeil
Digital Imaging  Portraiture  Virtual Reality
Hyperrealism  Subconscious Awareness  Visual Literacy
Image Manipulation  Surrealism  Visual Perception

Problem Statement
There is a definitive moment where the manipulation of an image is apparent to the viewer despite any awareness of the particular element that has been altered. By creating gradual time-based progressions of manipulated imagery, we can test multiple subjects to determine when they first notice an element of surrealism in a manipulated image. The alteration of lighting, reflection, proportion, and texture will drive this investigation as each of these Four Investigatory Keys stars in its own motion piece. Separating these elements will allow us to determine if there are unique moments of realization for each visual key. Having a better understanding of how our minds perceive reality will allow for greater advancements in AI and VR technologies, which could ultimately lead to a more rapid progression of a digitized society. The possibilities that this brings are literally endless.
Design Ideation

The main visual component of my thesis will be a set of four animations. These pieces will be slowly morphing portraits, made up of a compilation of screen shots taken during the process of photographic manipulative processes. Each of the four animations will target a specific Investigatory Key: lighting, reflection, proportion, or texture.

The portraits will be minimalistic to eliminate any other factors that may have an effect on the realism or believability of the image. This will also keep the emphasis on the facial features and visual elements of the image. They will be head-and-shoulders portraits with dead-pan expressions, giving the most realistic representation of the subjects. The subjects will be male and female, between the ages of 18 and 30. Each person will have a unique look to represent the diversity of society, but the overall group will seem unified.

The visual style will be similar to my previous work. A heavy emphasis on lighting, focus, and quality imaging is placed on the photographic process. The image manipulation that follows will have a softer, ethereal, dreamlike quality. Below is a selection of illustrations that represent my artistic style and will serve as a reference.
Methodological Design

The project will be a set of four time lapse animations of the progression of a digitally altered image from its photographic beginning to its manipulated end. One animation will be made for each of the Four Investigatory Keys: lighting, reflection, proportion, and texture. Each animation will demonstrate a slow evolution of the image, through retouching processes that target the specific Investigatory Key. Techniques that will be used include clone, patch, paint, blur, sharpen, liquify, blend, mask, and transform. The changes to be made are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video Factor</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Lighting</td>
<td>Shape</td>
<td>Highlight\n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Reflection</td>
<td>Image</td>
<td>Eyes\n</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementation Strategies

In order to implement this thesis, the first step is making the photographs. This requires the use of four models, lights, a camera, and a seamless backdrop. The lighting and background will be the same across all four images; I will use a four light system, as noted below, on a dark grey seamless. If possible, I will acquire access to the RIT SPAS Cage. This will allow me to use a Phase One P65+ medium format camera, Broncolor strobe lighting, and the studio space in Building 7. If this plan fails, I will need to use my own equipment supplemented with friends’ equipment and studio space as well.

I will do my retouching in Camera Raw and Photoshop with my Wacom Intuos XL tablet. I will work on my 27” monitor to allow for fine tuning of details at a very small level. Every 2 minutes, I will save out a current version of the image, which will later become a frame in the animation. If I spend 20 hours on each image, this will amount to 600 frames per animation, creating a motion piece that will last 50 seconds at the animation standard of 12 fps. Four animations will total around 3 minutes and 20 seconds. The final animations will be assembled in After Effects.

The RIT Thesis Show will function as the showcase exhibit, where I will create an encompassing environment in which to view the videos. By constructing a miniature room out of four theatre flats, I will create an engaging space that surrounds the viewer with these time-based transforming images, as shown in the diagram below. Each video will be set to loop, but started at a different time, so the progression of manipulation is offset from its peer animations. The result will be a slightly disorienting exhibition that demonstrates the cumulative impact of the imperceptible alterations that occur around us in the media on a daily basis.

Subconscious Visual Perception: Detecting Manipulated Imagery
Blayke Mackenzie Morrow
**APPENDIX I: ORIGINAL THESIS PROPOSAL**

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**Subconscious Visual Perception: Detecting Manipulated Imagery**
Blayke Mackenzie Morrow

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**Dissemination**

**RIT Thesis Show**

Imagine RIT

This campus-wide event showcases the innovative and creative spirit of RIT students, faculty and staff. Visitors experience the breadth and depth of RIT through interactive presentations, hands-on demonstrations, exhibitions, and research projects set up throughout campus. Multiple performance stages with live music and entertainment are also a hit with visitors of all ages.

**Communication Arts Award: Photography**

With winning entries published both in print and online, artists find these competitions a priority for worldwide promotion and a valuable resource for potential clients and colleagues. Over 200 photographs from both well-known photographers and rising stars emerge from this competition. Categories include advertising, editorial, for sale, motion and unpublished.

**Adobe Achievement Awards**

These awards celebrate student achievement reflecting the powerful convergence of technology and the creative arts. The competition showcases individual and group projects created with industry-leading Adobe creative software.

**RAF ADDY Awards**

The American Advertising Awards, formerly the ADDYs, is the advertising industry’s largest and most representative competition, attracting over 40,000 entries every year in local AAF Club competitions. The mission of the American Advertising Awards competition is to recognize and reward the creative spirit of excellence in the art of advertising.

**The Lumen Prize**

This not-for-profit competition and global tour celebrates the very best art created digitally. Our goal is to focus the world’s attention on this exciting genre of art through the selection of works submitted from artists worldwide and chosen by our eminent panel of judges.

**Saatchi and Google+ Motion Photography Prize**

With the rise of smart phones, photographers from all backgrounds worldwide are embracing new technology to tell their stories in innovative ways. Motion photography has emerged as a new trend, but until recently required special tools and know-how. As part of its wider mission to enable people to pursue and express their interests, Google+ allows anyone to automatically animate a series of still photographs and turn them into motion photography. In recognition of the exciting potential of this new technology, the Saatchi Gallery and Google+ present the Motion Photography Prize, the first global open entry competition celebrating this new creative art form.
Evaluation Plan
The possible implications of this project make it crucial to test against multiple demographics. Members of Generation X, who have experienced the transition from an analog to a digital society, will have a different sensitivity to manipulated imagery than the Millennials, who were raised in a digitized world. A medical professional, who has spent years studying anatomy and physiology, will perceive slighter imperfections than a computer scientist, who spends more time interacting with HTML. Creative professionals should be familiar with the capabilities of modern imaging technology, and are more likely to perceive the use of these manipulation techniques.

For the final testing, I will use a group of test subjects of various ages and careers. I will incorporate subjects, ages 20-60, from the visual arts, sales, technology, and business industries. They will watch a Testing Set of the animations that includes a timecode at the bottom corner of the frame. It is important that the user has no control over the playback of the animation; the test will be based on an instinctive reaction, not an analytical frame-by-frame assessment. When they feel that something has become surrealistic, abnormal, or manipulated, they will record the time from the timecode. This data will be plotted and evaluated to verify the effectiveness of the project, and thus the success of the thesis.

Pragmatic Considerations
My main pragmatic consideration, aside from time, is access to the proper equipment to make the photographs. If I am unable to use RIT for facilities and equipment, I will need to contact friends and past employers. Hanlon-Fiske has a studio near my apartment, and Myers Creative Imaging has an extensive amount of space and equipment to use. However, this may result in having to pay a fee for the use of their property.

My other prominent consideration is how to devise a system to keep my image exports on time and accurate. Saving over older files is an easy mistake to make, so I need to develop a pattern or mechanism to avoid these accidents. I will do research to determine if there is existing technology in the form of an application, plug-in, or program to assist me.
Survey of Literature

My research phase has been constructed to support the importance of understanding how we perceive reality in visual imagery. Elements that alert the subconscious of manipulation, methods of producing an image that blurs the line of reality, and the way the brain interprets visual imagery are the key pieces of my exploration. Resources in book form will be supplemented with digital catalogues of the work of many leading retouchers to provide a visual assessment of what constitutes a successful manipulation.

Visual Literacy: Image, Mind, and Reality
Paul Messaris
Messaris wonders how, in a society that has been overwhelmed with media, we are supposed to interpret the millions of images we confront on a daily basis. He seeks to understand the process that takes place when we respond emotionally to specific devices like close-ups, camera angles, and flashback sequences. Messaris works to attack the question from four points: developing “visual literacy” as a tool to comprehend visual media, imparting awareness of cognitive sequences that allow us to make decisions about what we see, creating a sensitivity to manipulated imagery, and encouraging a strong appreciation for aesthetics.

The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era
William J. Mitchell
This book targets the ever-blurring line of truth in photographic imagery, citing the development of new technology as the primary instigator. In this industry, synthetic representations dominate over photographic veracity. In order to promote understanding of how we comprehend, reason with, and use these altered images, Mitchell provides a systematic analysis of the digital imaging revolution. He describes the technology as well as the processes it is used in, and ultimately communicates how designers leverage manipulative techniques to ideate and create.

Art, Perception, and Reality
E. H. Gombrich, Julian Hochberg, Max Black
N71.G64 [3]
Through the conflicting opinions of an art historian, a psychologist and a philosopher, this book looks at the nature and function of representation in art. How we recognize likeness in facial features, why caricatures are effective portraits, and other topics are addressed from multiple perspectives to allow for maximum understanding of how we perceive reality in art.
APPENDIX I: ORIGINAL THESIS PROPOSAL

Subconscious Visual Perception: Detecting Manipulated Imagery
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Perception and Imaging
Richard D. Zakia
Through technique, history, visual perception, philosophy, and psychology, Zakia tackles the fundamentals of photographic sight. The importance of emphasis and how we convey meaning through photography is a main topic in this book. Although it is often used as an educational tool for novice photographers, the underlying reasoning for the way we perceive imagery provides an elevated level of concept for the true inquirer.

Photo Fakery: The History and Techniques of Photographic Deception and Manipulation
Dino A. Brugioni
Photography has always been susceptible to forgery, from the first double-exposure to the invention of pixel-based doctoring programs like Photoshop. Brugioni, a former CIA Senior Photo Interpreter, examines the entire history of photographic fakery. This book examines the history of all types of photographic fakery. Through the presentation of hundreds of photographs, it becomes apparent how altered imagery has been successfully integrated into society, and how it has even left a mark on history. Brugioni describes how these deceptions were accomplished, as well as how to detect them at a glance.

The Image and the Eye: Further Studies in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation
E. H. Gombrich
N7445.2.G62  [3]
In another volume of art versus science, Gombrich extends his inquiry to the psychological component of pictorial representation. Elements such as the central problems of perspective, visual discoveries, representation of movement and gesture, the role of imagery in communication, and the standards of truth in representative visuals are addressed with the exacting perspective of a clinical psychologist and the experimental approach of the art historian.

Principles of Visual Perception
Carolyn M. Bloomer
While the majority of this book addresses standard issues of visual imagery, one portion contains information based on how the brain processes photographic information. Through psychology, art theory, and cultural studies, Bloomer takes a chapter to explain how the use of a camera effects our perception of reality and the way we think about the world.
Appendix II: Self Portraits

- Mania
- "Do you know what tomorrow is, Kitty?"
- (dis)appear animated GIF
- (You Will) Set The World On Fire

- 20,000 Dreams Under The Emerald Tower
- All Of Your Ghosts
- All The Same
- All The World Is Staged animated GIF

- An Awesome Wave
APPENDIX II: SELF PORTRAITS

Balanced

Apologies For The Noise
(In My Head)
video

Around The Fur

Buckets & Strings

Change

Back in Twenty-Six

DEMCO No. 38-246

f*

Does It Matter?

Emotions Fuel My Future States,
But Everyone Is Psychotic Anyhow.
Free-Falling From A Page, Letter By Letter, Into Emotional Mud

ff» video

Fraction In The Binary

God Bless The Daylight, The Sugary Smell Of Springtime

Good Morning, Good Evening, Good Night.

Good Night, Witness Light. Gravity

Healing Topography animated GIF

Homogenize video

Humanplants
APPENDIX II: SELF PORTRAITS

I Am Your Chair

I Hope You’re Happy (Making Me Unhappy)

I Think I’m Dying, But I Can’t Because I Have House Guests Arriving In Three Hours

It Wants What It Wants

It’s A Process

Lacquerskin
APPENDIX II: SELF PORTRAITS

Let Me Be Your Oxygen

M-Eye-Grain Sauvignon

Metaselfie

Murky

Nothing More

Oakwood

Pour.

Prismatically

Rineke

Run, X-Man Finn
Sandcastles and Summer Dreams

TH&TH

Thank You For Loving Me

The Floating 14 Dream Sequence (Frame 1)

Stuck In Rush Hour Traffic While Driving Home From Work After Getting Dumped Through A Casual Text Message

That’s Basically It

The Other Side (And What Is Waiting There)

Summit Street

The Reassuring Constance of Warm Black Velvet (a.k.a. You Are My Curtain Comfort)

Surface
APPENDIX II: SELF PORTRAITS

Thirty Bulb-Exposure Rends In The Dark animated GIF

This Mess

Thursday

Tidal

Undulate.Absolve animated GIF

V.C.R.E.C.H.

Your Birthday Party
Appendix III: Folksonomy Composites

Chaos

Emptiness
APPENDIX III: FOLKSONOMY COMPOSITES

Pain

Comfort
APPENDIX III: FOLKSONOMY COMPOSITES

Eyesclosed

Eyesopen
# Appendix IV: Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>A measurement of the inherent quality of Truth in its most essential form; something that is fundamentally intrinsic in nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebral Lateralization</td>
<td>The difference in the functional specialization of the hemispheres of the brain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Quotient</td>
<td>The factor of a person's emotional intelligence; also known as EQ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Experience</td>
<td>The aggregation of the essential elements of human existence, including reasoning, behavior, emotion, and belief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infinite Realities</td>
<td>The concept of the unrepeatable alignment of circumstances surrounding a given experience, particularly exemplified by the limitations of contemporary science on the human ability to navigate within the space-time continuum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portraiture</td>
<td>An artist's representation, in any medium, of the apparent qualities of a subject; a portrayal of the way an object or idea is perceived by the mind or physical senses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>The progression of an action or event through multiple distinct stages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality</td>
<td>The general terminology used to represent any manifestation of truth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality (capitalized)</td>
<td>Perception of one's existence at any given point as a result of the combination of the substance and four-dimensional location of one's singular experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singularity</td>
<td>Regarding the unique, inimitable, and fundamentally incomparable nature of any given event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllogism</td>
<td>A system of logic comprised of three propositions, in which a conclusion is derived from the relationship of a major premise and a minor assertion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transience</td>
<td>The ephemeral, eternally transitional nature of existence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>truth</td>
<td>Verifiable statement concerning a particular aspect of one's nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth (capitalized)</td>
<td>Genuine intrinsic nature; the raw essence of something or someone; the most basic unadulterated point of origin of an idea, characteristic, or quality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography


