# human-intoface.net



Troy Bennett                                                    May 6th, 2003

# Introduction

Photographs of people span a wide gamut of intentions and contexts. There are pictures of people created for the purpose of recording scientific/medical information, sociological/historical documentation, commercial advertising, family snapshots, and portraits. It can be confusing to determine where a particular photo of a face fits into the taxonomy of people pictures. Some artists find this issue of uncertainty, ripe ground to explore. Artists such as Chuck Close and Thomas Ruff make images of people's faces that would typically be considered portraits. However, their works deny certain descriptions that we are used to seeing in portraiture, and we are challenged to define the work.

Artists have long deconstructed and subverted the typical use of images to force us to re-examine how powerfully we are both informed and manipulated by them. Since the birth of what we generally conceive as the personal computer, the photographic image has become destabilized as a "proof" of reality. Computer programs such as Adobe Photoshop™, allow us to manipulate and deliver images so convincing that they could rewrite history. We can no longer trust that any image we see is produced by the entirely mechanical process of light, lenses, and chemistry. The concept of photography as a non-proof of reality has become more widely understood because of computer programs and the work of tabloids such as the National Enquirer. The famous "Batboy" and other questionable characters, presented by the tabloids, appropriate the format of the newspaper, in order to cash in on the "trust" that the public puts into journalism. This forces us to reexamine our trust of photographic reality, and forces us to reconsider what we have previously believed as photographic truth.

The subject of this paper is the web-based artwork, human-intoface.net. The work uses faces and facial expression as subject of inquiry. It explores the relationship between expression, beauty, and context. The images are juxtaposed, decontextualized and codified in an attempt to explore the components of expression and the way they are perceived. It attempts to function on multiple levels and requires user interaction to fully experience the juxtaposition of faces. On one level, it is an enjoyable madhouse of randomization, where the viewer creates unique combinations of faces and expressions. These combinations drift in and out of states of recognition from humorous to hideous. On another level, it is an examination of how certain facial features and expressions interact in combinations unnaturally occurring. It asks the question, "Are there parts of the face that communicate more than others?"



*figure 1*
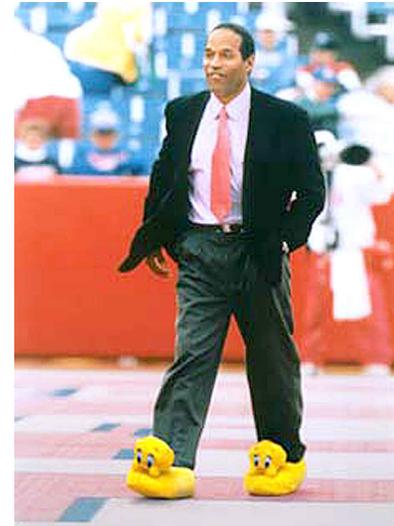


*Are those really Bruno Magli shoes?*

This attempt to explain human-intoface.net will require a better understanding of how the face and facial expression actually function physiologically, and socially. Out of all the many variations of facial configurations that are possible, approximately 10,000 (Ekman,1998) there are only six key emotional facial configurations found to be universal[1]. A smile or frown, despite the culture, is both appropriately expressed and decoded. This is in contrast to other body gestures, which could be either a sign of respect or a heinous insult, depending upon which culture you find yourself immersed. Facial communication is largely a language of symbolic gestures that denote emotional states. Some of these gestures appear to be automatic, while others seem to be learned[2].

The duality of expressions, instinctive and learned, makes for a highly complex, yet subtle messaging system. Several, medical conditions impair the learning of this skill and have significant effects on the socialization of individuals with these disorders[3]. If we consider the integral nature of the face in all spheres of communication, and its impact on healthy socialization, it is important for us to better understand the many subtleties that affect our perception of these messages. The face did not just happen. It is a part of evolution that makes us human.





figure 2

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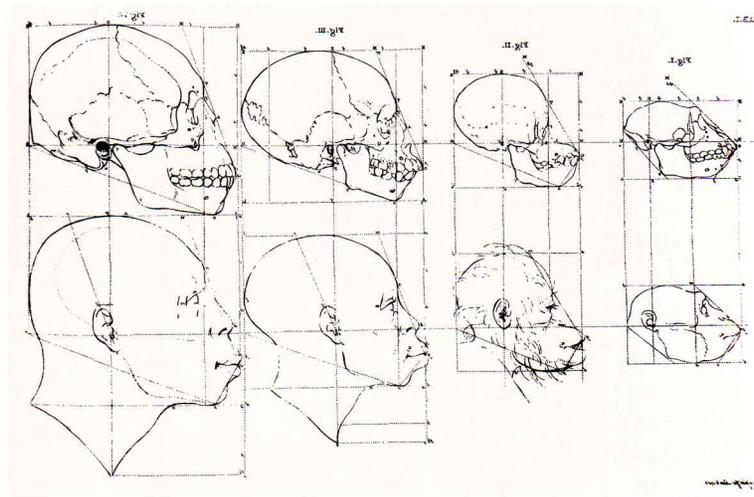
[1] Brian Bates and John Cleese, *The Human Face*.
   (London: BBC Worldwide Limited, 2001).

[2] Bates and Cleese, 89.

[3] Bates and Cleese, 75-77.

# Evolution of a Gestalt

In evolutionary terms, each one of our facial features evolved for a specific task. However, the face as a gestalt also evolved to function as a unified tool of communication. The ability to detect emotion on another person's face proved to have survival value. If our early ancestors saw fear on their friend's face, it might indicate impending danger, and it was probably a good indication to run, hide, or prepare for battle. This quick, silent information, probably allowed those that were capable of evaluating facial expression a better chance of surviving surprise attacks from predators or enemies.

The power of the face as a communication "technology" is suggested by the success of early social structure in the development of our species. Before spoken and written language, non-verbal languages allowed us to survive through cooperation and sharing of key base emotional information. It is our abilities to communicate, highly complex and abstract concepts, that have allowed us to evolve to where we are today.

We have evolved technologically, to the point where, the face can be manipulated in ways only limited by the imagination. Plastic surgery has been available for years to help the unattractive or the facially disfigured to "improve" their facial features. Although, improving appearances does not necessarily improve facial communication, it can improve one's chances of being accepted into social interactions. Although having surgery on one's face for cosmetic reasons may appear vain, it has been shown that attractiveness does affect successful socialization[4]. Our need for acceptance is so strong that people change their appearances to improve acceptance and self-esteem. Actors and models make an occupation from their faces. Sometimes they resort to plastic surgery in hopes of extending their careers and improving potential earnings.

At the time of this writing, entire face transplants have become medically feasible[5]. This step from science fiction into science fact does not come without significant philosophical and ethical issues. Although researchers have found those whom medically require face transplants are not against doing so, it has been difficult to find individuals who are willing to donate their faces post-mortem. After all, for our entire lives, our face is the one thing that we consider as, "Me". We change our bodies in a variety of ways through bodybuilding, liposuction, and prosthetics, but our face is the "index" to our identity.
There is a deep fear of losing our identities, apparently, even after death. Imagine the emotional consequences of an acquaintance, unaware of our passing, which runs into your double, or "Doppelgänger". How would you react being on either side of this situation?

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[4]Baron and Byrn, *Social Psychology: Understanding Human Interaction Fifth Edition*.
   (New York: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1987).

[5]Charles Siebert, *Making Faces*. New York Times: 2003



*Although he denies having plastic surgery, Micheal Jackson's face has changed radically over the years.*

A worse situation would entail being the recipient of an International criminal's face. This fear of losing our identities has been the subject of literature, movies and television for quite some time. In Sir Thomas Mallory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485.) Merlin cast a spell and transformed Uther's face into his rival's appearance in order to seduce his rival's wife – thus Arthur was conceived. More recently, In the movie "Face Off" starring John Travolta and Nicholas Cage, Travolta and Cage play archenemies on either side of the law. In order to infiltrate each other's lives, they, secretly "steal" the other's face.

Not only is the face a powerful tool, but an *image* of a face can be emotionally stabilizing. In the film "Cast Away" starring Tom Hanks, the volleyball, "Wilson" is an example of the human need for emotional companionship and communication. In "Cast Away", Hanks requires two faces to stave off crushing loneliness, the picture of his fiancé and the blood-faced Wilson. Ultimately, Wilson becomes his alter ego and emotional anchor. Despite being a volleyball, Wilson evolves into an entire persona in part, because Hanks has given it a face. Despite the cognition of the artifice of Wilson's face, Hanks' character still needs to suspend his disbelief and accept Wilson as an icon of humanity.
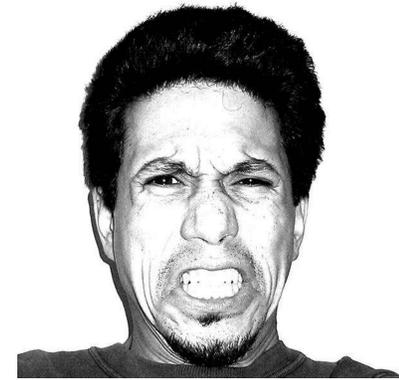




*figure 3*

# Communication of Expression

*Communication: the sharing of emotional and cognitive information in order to function within, and or belong to, social and cultural groups.*

The appearance and physical motions of the face, function as a major communication medium. Those that do much public speaking either benefit or are hindered by their facial expressions. If a politician's words say one thing and his/her face denotes another, public trust can be lost. Along the same lines, teachers rely on facial communication in both sending information to students and determining the effectiveness of said communication. Glazed eyes, blank stares, and furrowed brows are an instructor's nightmare. These facial cues denote that messages are being met with confusion or a total lack of comprehension. These are important cues to let the instructor know that he/she needs to use another approach to explaining the topic. Smiles and nodding heads denote both approval and comprehension of the message. According to communication theorist John Ciampa, more than half of the data traveling back and forth in a conversation can be in the form of "Tuning" [6]. Tuning can be defined as methods of communication used to clarify and denote the level of understanding. These methods not only include spoken or written language, but also body language and facial expression.

*Can you determine which expression this is?*

According to research, six main facial expressions are universally understood[7]. They are the smile, frown, disgust, anger, surprise, and fear. These expressions can be observed in all know cultures and appear to be wired into our very being. Located toward the base of the brain is an area known as the amygdala. This area is designed to trigger physiological responses in the body based on viewing facial expressions.

Whether you actually sense a response or not, the amygdala is stimulated as shown on MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scans. When the amygdala is damaged or not functioning correctly, it could indicate a disorder like, Asperger's Syndrome.
Asperger's Syndrome is associated with the individual either unable or partially able to detect and decode facial expressions[8].

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[6] John A. Ciampa, *Communication, The Living End.*
    (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1989).

[7] Paul Ekman, Emotions Revealed.
    (New York: Times Books, Henry Holt & Co., 2003).

[8] The Human Face, BBC video, John Cleese, Interviews

The face is something that we have complete control over on a conscious level. Simultaneously, the face also seems to be wired into the autonomic nervous system. The autonomic nervous system (ANS) is the same system that controls automatic processes such as digestion, breathing and blinking. These processes occur despite our consciousness of them. We can force a blink, but if an occurrence threatens our eyes, a blink occurs automatically. The same control exists for breathing. We can hold our breath, force it to speed up or slow down, but when we sleep, the ANS maintains the process automatically. In the process of a sneeze, it is physically impossible for us to keep our eyes open. In fact, the whole face loses control. We can often override and mask escaping signs of emotion, but not without significant effort. In many ways, we cannot entirely control our faces in light of strong emotions. Very minute signs escape our control in the form of "Micro expressions[9]" Paul Ekman has done extensive study on micro expressions and how they can be used to determine if someone is telling the truth or not. He uses a system of slow motion video playback to catch the fleeting micro expressions. The micro expressions do not pinpoint lies; they denote stress or masked facial expressions.

Studies have shown with infants, the brain has a "pre-wiring" or strong inclination to recognize and remember faces[10]. So strong is this wiring, that we often see faces where they do not exist. The pattern of facial features is a predisposed schema that makes it easy to see faces in things like rock formations[11].

In an interesting body of work by the photographer, Philippe Halsman entitled "Jump", Halsman photographed famous individuals including Richard Nixon and Marilyn Monroe. Halsman snapped his subjects in mid air as he instructed them to jump for the camera. One of the interesting things noted in these images is that the process of jumping activated an automatic facial expression in the subjects. As noted by Halsman, The process of jumping took the subjects thoughts off their immediate appearances as they concentrated on the physical act of leaping. This allowed the autonomic nervous system to take control of the face. Because of the activation of the ANS over Halsman's subject's faces, he was able to capture famous individuals, who were adept at masking facial expressions, with a more "real" expression.

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[9] Ekman, 220.

[10] Baron and Byrn, 126.

[11] The Old Man of the Mountain, Franconia Notch, N.H.
Unfortunately, this natural icon has crumbled into rubble and fallen from the face of Profile Mountain as of May 3, 2003.



*figure 4*



*The Old Man of the Mountain, N.H.*

# The Face and its Role in Establishing Identity

*For most of us, perhaps all of us, the images we most want to see rescued from their proper corruption in time are those of our loved ones, of us, of the parts of the world that we daily walk through or may on occasion actually travel to. At this basic human level, no one questions the authenticity of the photograph. At this level, then, we may find the photograph's most profound contribution to our lives.*

*(Levinson 1997)*

In a social group, an individual's identity becomes important in maintaining social order. This includes children and parents knowing who belongs to whom and groups being able to clearly identify their leaders. It also includes being able to keep track of which individual has certain knowledge or skills that may be of importance to the group. In being able to identify and keep track of specific individuals, we must be able to both identify and remember a person's identity. The face functions like a "key" field in an electronic database. In this way, an individual's face can point to a cognitive record of a personality.

## Photographic Documentation of the Face

The Industrial revolution was an era of key historic figures that were at the center of creating industries such as the railroads, shipping, electricity and telegraphy. In many ways, it was important for the history of this era to document those individuals largely responsible for these technological and industrial enterprises. The age of Invention was an era of great discovery in all areas. Two key uses of photography as documentation in the name of science come from Eadweard Muybridge and Charles Darwin. While Muybridge aimed his lens at the body and the mechanical process of locomotion, Darwin studied the face as the medium for expressing emotions. The 1872 publication of Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* uses photographs to explain the effects of electrical stimulation of facial muscles. This was done to better analyze the muscles involved with certain facial expressions.

### The Mugshot

Another use of facial documentation comes in the way of the infamous mugshot.
Photography of the face as documentation of physical identity, gave the area of law enforcement the ability to record the face of crime. The law enforcement photo databases enhanced the government's ability to track down repeat offenders much more efficiently than relying solely on the memories of victims and the skills of
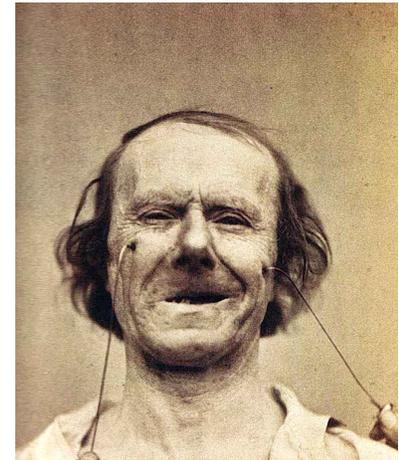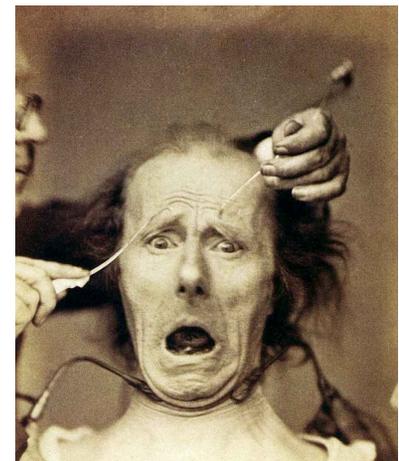


*figure 5a*



*figure 5b*

sketch artists. Wanted posters with detailed photographs of criminals could allow citizens to more accurately identify and report the whereabouts of criminals. In order for the "mug shot" to function accurately, there needed to be a standard protocol for recording the criminal's likeness. At this level, the photograph is intended only as a purely descriptive image of the objective physical appearance. Because the images are all shot in the same manner, it makes it much easier to compare photos for differences of particular attributes.

Along similar lines, the Department of Motor Vehicles maintains a photographic database of headshots of all Americans who hold, or have maintained, a driver's license. In most normal circumstances, the driver's license is another type of facial photography used specifically for verifying one's identity. There is no other purpose or value to the image of one's face on a driver's license. In one way, we can consider it a portrait, but its intended use and audience is predefined. It's value is entirely pragmatic and its creation is without any consideration of aesthetics.



figure 6

## Portrait Photography

One of the first things early photographers pointed their cameras at was people. The need to capture and record the likeness of loved ones and ourselves shows in the body of early photography. After the daguerreotype, the tintype and carte-de-visite democratized the photo portrait. Due to the relative inexpensive and ease of creation, people of most socioeconomic classes were having portraits made.

*"And what of photographs of people? Surely, few of us prefer them to the real thing. And yet most of us see in them elements of humanity which might otherwise not be available. I mean this quite literally. Several yeas ago, at a flea market in Stanfordville, New York, I picked up an old photograph, likely from the 1870s. It was of a young woman, I would guess to be in her twenties, looking straight into the camera - and thus straight into my eyes, across more than a hundred years of time. What had she been thinking when that photograph was taken? Had it ever entered into her wildest speculation that more than a century later, when she would be long dead, some student of the media would be holding it, looking into her face, her eyes, on a summer's day on a meadow in upstate New york? Not very likely.*

*"Meanwhile, whatever we might call my contemplation of those possibilities, it was surely a subjective experience of a kind not usually found in daily life on our planet. To be in touch with someone a hundred years in the past, even if that communication was one-way, is something rare. Another genre of that experience could be had by reading any book written in the last century or earlier. But the iconic power of the photograph is, not surprisingly, far more personal – breathtaking in a way no text could be."*

(Levinson 1997)

Like the police mugshot, portrait photography is concerned with rendering a likeness of the subject in a manner that is typically recognizable to others. However, it is not enough to represent the subject realistically. The portrait unlike the mug shot, has the additional function of evoking an aesthetic experience. The photographer has the burden of representing the subject such that it also portrays the subject's personality. How does one use a mechanical apparatus to render a lifetime of internal thoughts and behavioral patterns? In short, you do not. It is true that the subject's facial expression can denote a particular behavioral characteristic. Nevertheless, any such facial configurations amount to a caricature. There are techniques to work around the inherent shortcomings of representing a human being on a two dimensional plane. Most are similar to the following, found at:

(http://www.photographytips.com/page.cfm/3206)

### Capturing character & personality in a portrait

1. *Lighting plays a part in revealing character in a portrait by its ability to emphasize facial features.*

2. *Insight into a subject's personality and character can be contained in a photograph of that person, and is in fact a primary objective of the portrait photographer …*

3. *Personality is revealed by a combination of ten prime factors - lighting, camera angle, lens choice, framing, pose, background, the subject's apparel, condition and expression, and the photographer's observation …*

4. *A pose that is appropriate can aid in defining the character of your subjects …*

5. *What your subjects wear for a portrait can be revealing of character, especially if it is radically different from normal clothing …*

6. *Including the surroundings when photographing a portrait can sometimes strengthen the picture's message about the subject's personality. An artist, for example, may be photographed next to his work, which might reveal some of the artist's character and temperament. A business executive may adopt a revealing pose and expression when photographed in an office…*

7. *Expression is the most character-revealing factor in portraiture. …*

8. *We all have characteristic expressions that show our mood and personality. Personalities are complex, and each of us has more than one expression that those who know us will recognize as being characteristic. It is the portrait photographer's task to closely observe the subject to quickly trip the shutter and capture that magic moment when pose, expression and all the other factors are just right. Missing the moment by failure to observe your subject or by not being ready to take the picture is tragic, since it often cannot be repeated in the same portrait session… "*





Can you determine anything of the above two individual's personalities?

According to the previous techniques used to "draw out" a subject's personality, the personality is signified by a series of things in addition to the face. The sum of the above effort is for the benefit of those who actually know the subject. The portrait, when viewed by anyone who does not know him, will learn only the most superficial aspects of the subject's personality. For those who do know the subject, in the instance of a typical high school senior portrait, it functions as an emotional icon of the subject for his family.

## Family Photos

Perhaps the most treasured form of photography are those images of our families.
Our mother's face is the first image to imprint upon our minds. The most personal of photographic contexts lasts only as long as we are in possession of the images. Once out of our hands, they cease to exist in our personal world and take on a life within a greater public context. Regardless of the powers of observation, No stranger can fully appreciate the image, as it once existed. It's original purpose can no longer be fulfilled. In the case of antique family photos that end up in a quirky antiques boutique, its original emotional value is replaced by the aura of the original. It is an image whose unique qualities include the mystery of its content.

Nevertheless, the face of another person in the context of a family portrait strikes an emotional chord. In many cases with family photographs, one could replace the faces in any particular photo with those of our own family members. Often the structure is the same only the details are unique. Sibling rivalry is revealed through the rabbit fingers above the head and the silly faces made for the camera.



*figure 7*

# Humans into Faces

If there is anything we have learned from the painter Magritte, it is that an image of a face is not the same as an actual flesh and blood face. The image of the face as rendered photographically is replete with invisible manipulations that have significant effects on the decoding and interpretation of the image. Issues such as lighting, field of view, depth of field, shutter speed, included or not included background information, color, grain structure, sophistication of production values, physical size, cropping, camera angle, pose, facial expression, gaze, and exposure, are all included bits of information that have an impact on how the image is interpreted. These are all aspects of the image that are controlled by the photographer. A photograph of a face is at best, a predigested slice of human experience, offered as a compressed and encapsulated pointer to the significance of the original moment. In the case of the found image, it is a piece to an unknown puzzle. It is a "crystal-seed" inserted into the mind's super-saturated mixture of meaning.

In human-intoface.net, faces from different contexts are intertwined and unified by formal aspects of contrast and cropping. The focus is on the face. Despite the original contexts of the faces, the combination of juxtaposition, image treatment, and animation, decontextualizes the faces in a way that denotes a quasi-scientific analysis. Aspects of documentary photography, such as the hi-key black and white mug shot, are appropriated. The unified treatment forces comparison between faces.

## Influences of the Media

Mass media has evolved the face from an individualized mode of communication to that of a cultural language of emotional hieroglyphics. Facial expression, race, and gender are arranged like loops in a techno track to harmonize with emotional chords in its intended audience. We are surrounded by images of people we do not know. These faces are exposed to us through all media forms including television, film, magazines, and billboards. Countless advertisements sell us products with the assistance of beautiful faces, sometimes not even human. The face as a mode of communication morphs from being a personalized message to a corporate ad. In psychological and sociological circles, the phrase, "Familiarity breeds liking"[12] would sum this phenomenon up nicely. The concept states that if exposed to the same person over time, eventually we come to develop more than mere habituation, but rather an emotional attachment or liking.

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[12]Baron and Byrn, 132.
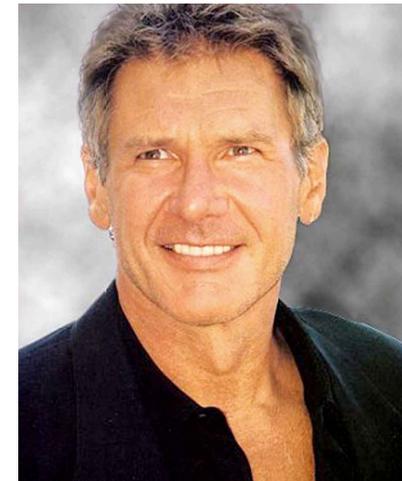
Famous faces permeate our consciousness and sub consciousness to the point where individuals develop feelings of liking, even to the point of pathological obsession. Of course, this is not entirely based on still images, or necessarily sane minds, but it *is* sometimes difficult to *not* think that, at some level, we know an actor/actress due to constant exposure to their media images.

The concept of the face as subject, is not confined to the sciences and advertising alone. As long as there have been artists, there have been aesthetic interpretations of the human visage. Some of the techniques and thoughts, of the following artists, have been influential on the development of human-intoface.net. There are differences, in fundamental concepts, but the human face is still used as the main vehicle for exploration.

*Chuck Close*

Chuck Close is known for his many variations on ways to represent the face. The sitters for his works are his friends, which so happen to predominately come from the world of art. At the time of the initial painting, many of his sitters were for the most part, unknown. Close does not consider his painting portraits per se. Instead, he considers the subject to be the face and process of painting itself. The face as subject is not necessarily the person in this instance. Close is not painting his friends as much as he is painting their faces.

The process that Close describes begins with photographing the face of a friend. From the photo, he creates a grid of arbitrary size over the photograph. From this grid, he translates the grid section one by one into an enlarged interpretation. Once all of the sections are complete, the painting is finished. While painting he does not back away to see how the entire piece is unfolding. Rather he methodically paints each section as a painting in itself.

He also describes his use of photography as being a requisite of his process for practical reasons. Since his painting take as long as a year to complete, it is not practical to paint from life. He prefers the spontaneous yet complete rendering of a 100/th of a second slice of time. Additionally, the vestiges of the photographic process have appeal to him in the way things like depth of field end up translated in his paintings.
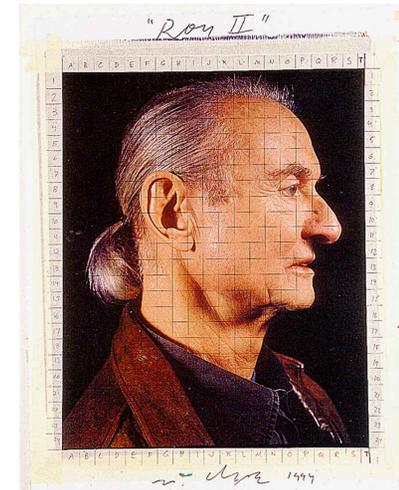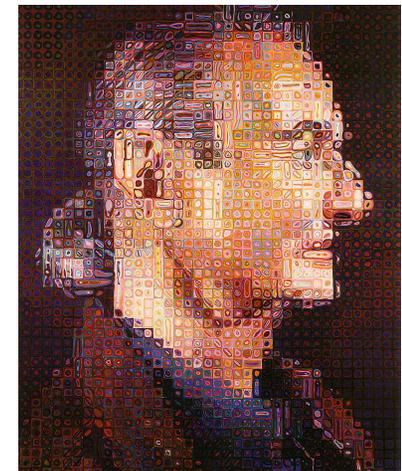


figure 8a



figure8b

*Nancy Burson*

Another artist, Nancy Burson works with photography and digital imaging.
Nancy Burson's work has centered on the human face for decades. Her work does a wonderful job of applying computer technology to a very human problem. Technology does not take center stage in the work. Instead, It brings about an emotional response to the condition of being human in a massively complex world. A response that makes us question what we value about our humanity. A photo-geneticist, she manipulates gender, politics, beauty, and race. Her pieces force us to re-examine our social values. Burson's exploration into the face has led her to computer as a tool because of its ability to manipulate, morph, and combine images. Her work in computer-enhanced aging of faces has been used extensively by law enforcement agencies in helping to find abducted children. Like Close, Burson's career long preoccupation with the face is not one of creating portraits of individuals, but of removing the individual from the equation. She uses the face as a way that represents all of us. Her most recent piece, "The Race Machine", brings her previous efforts full circle. By taking an image of a viewer's face, the "Race Machine" morphs the image in such a way that it transposes through different races. One can see themselves as Black, Asian, Caucasian, Middle Eastern, and Hispanic.



*figure 9*

*Andy Warhol*

Andy Warhol is one of the most deceptively influential artists of the 20th century. It would be difficult to find a current artist that has not been influenced in some manner by his work, writings, or personae. His explorations into the concepts of mass media, and mass production, always seem to come back to how it all affects the human condition. At the center of his explorations are the use of photography, and the human face. This makes a good deal of sense, considering how central both things are to the concept of mass culture. In this regard, the technique of using highly repetitive, images of products and faces "crafted" using mass production methods is only more closely related to the very center of the "box" most artists attempt to escape. The concepts of multiplicity and fame are from this perspective, only reflecting the very condition that he seems so bent on critiquing. It is unfortunate that he never got a chance to experience what the Internet and World Wide Web have become. We can only suspect that the phenomenon of "spam mail" and "pop-up" ads would have appealed to his sensibilities. One can only wonder if Warhol's "15 minutes" would have been extended or shortened in the context of the Internet.
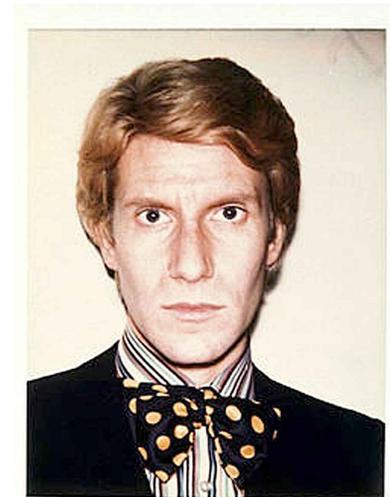
*figure 10a*

In Mark Francis' essay, "Still Life: Andy Warhol's Photography as a Form of Metaphysics", in *Andy Warhol Photography* (Edition Stemmel 1999, pp. 21), Francis describes Warhol's methods of photographing his subjects.

> "Warhol concentrated on a standardized head and shoulders shot, which was common to both the high school yearbook and the police mugshot. However, because Poloroids reproduced a full range of tones in color, the artist was obliged to introduce various studio embellishments, such as pancake make-up and dramatic lipstick, which functioned both to prolong and fetishize the process of being photographed for the subject, while paradoxically flattening and bleaching out any variety individuality or 'difference'. "

Warhol's methodology for creating portraits suggests that he found pleasure in turning systems inside out, and using them to comment upon themselves. He seemingly challenges us to, "Pick a subject, any subject" for him to reprocess like baby food, for the media's fetishization of the spectacle. For Warhol, the face is both medium and message, but more importantly, a product for mass consumption.



*figure 10b*

*Orlan*

Defining the face as a medium for expression is taken quite literally by the artist, Orlan. Through a series of plastic surgeries, Orlan's face is treated like a canvas. Her goal is to reconfigure her face to become a composite of several famous historical subjects in painting. Aside from her actual face, the work is manifested in an exhibition of a series of photographs that exist in a flux between documentation and self-portraiture. Orlan's bruised and disfigured face slowly heals and undergoes another round of abuse. In one particular surgery, Orlan has the procedure broadcast to the public, as she stayed awake for the process and reads selected texts. After the reconfiguration, analysts discuss the event and its philosophical repercussions before a televised audience. Interestingly, Orlan's attention to the face is only matched by the musical artist, Michael Jackson.
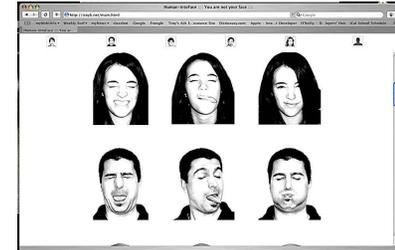


*figure 11*

# human-intoface.net

human-intoface.net is an exploitation of facial expression as a clear means of communication. It is an exploration into faces that we make for fun, on command, and for the camera. The web was chosen as a vehicle for the piece because of its mass distribution, lack of specific context to the physical body, and its simple mode of interaction with the work. Interaction is a form of communication and as such, the idea of reestablishing a connection between the viewer and the faces is hoped for. The site incorporates approximately 1300 individual images of the face that have been personally created, found in facial recognition studies, gleaned from the New York most wanted criminals website, and compiled from google.com searches for images with the filename containing the word "face" in the filename. The development of the piece is such that images can be continuously added with ease. The idea is to allow the site to continually evolve with new images and new grid structures.



*figures 12 - 17*

The viewer's perception is challenged through the juxtaposition of faces from different contexts. Unlike "still" photography, time has a direct bearing on the unfolding of meaning, as the pieces change with time. Additionally, direct manipulation, alters the predefined progression through time, and changes the work through the viewer's free "will". Randomness, memory, and expectation, all come into play as the viewer dismisses faces and parts of faces. Some images disappear, never to return, while others return in various ways. Like life, the faces come into our lives quickly, and fade slowly. human-intoface.net, models the way faces influence our perception of time and memory as we say "hello" and "goodbye" to a sea of faces.



The beginning of this inquiry focused upon, the idea that through the subject's limited choice of specific facial expressions, that there could be some method of determining a bit more information about an individual's personality. It is through "choice" that perhaps something internal could be revealed. After all, what is it that makes up who we are, other than a lifetime of choices and decisions?

Perhaps, we could determine if the initial personality trait was one of humor or contemplative reflection. If the choices were limited to only three "faces", would the subject more carefully determine who they were?



In the midst of this study, I came across the work of Paul Ekman. Ekman is one, of a handful of people, considered supreme authorities on the science of the human face. In his studies, he has determined that the human face is capable of creating approximately 10,000 different physical configurations. The question arose,
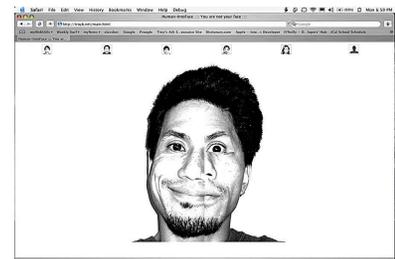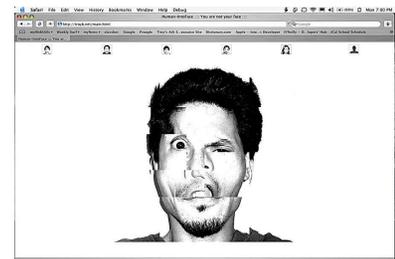
in contrast to the previous hypothesis, "If a compilation of 10,000 images of a single subject were to be compiled, how would this function in light of choice as subject?" In addition to the triptych of subject choices, a series of facial expression from a single subject were created for comparison and contrast to the original effort. Nine thousand seventy-four configurations short of Ekman's magic number, it was determined that a complete database would ultimately void the previous notion. This is because a complete set would reveal even less than a limited set, because almost no subjective choice would remain. Perhaps the specific order would reveal something? However, with 10,000 attempts, it becomes almost impossible for the viewer to keep track of any variations in order after the first one thousand images. The decision was made to limit the number to thirty-six variations; a number that is integral to the photographic community.

The use of multiplicity, and series from the previous exploration came together in the approach to use the square grid as a vehicle for dissecting the images into discrete sections.
The face is fragmented and sliced into small sections. From a pool of images, the corresponding section of each face can be interwoven and recombined with other sections of different faces. This act of shuffling the components of the face can create a negative emotion in the viewer. At times, it can have a humorous effect. The face loses its structure and the overall gestalt is lost. However, the reconfiguration can at times suggest a recogninizably complete face and the gestalt reappears.

The fading in and out of a section pulls our attention to the disappearing piece as it is replaced by a new part that may or may not maintain the structure. There is both structure and randomness working with or against each other. Our "pre-wiring" to recognize faces becomes stretched in and out of activity. This disturbance generates an emotional dissonance that forces us to attempt to reestablish a totality.

Slicing up the face into a series of squares, effectively alters the amount of information in each section. This systematic alteration of resolution changes how the pieces fit together when pieces of other faces are replaced in the relative grid positions. Sometimes they fit together such that the structure of the face is not distorted, other times they create physically impossible configurations. The face is treated like a sentence, where a madlibs sensibility is applied in an effort to create a recombined emotional statement. The effect of changing the size of the pieces increases the potential for losing overall recognition. As sections are enlarged, it becomes easier to maintain an emotional tone in the image, but it is further denied by the forced changes through programming, time, and randomness.
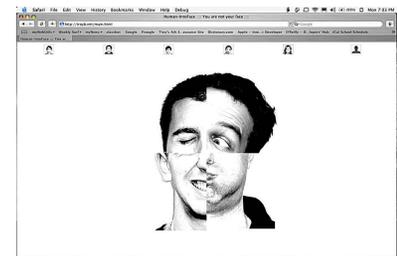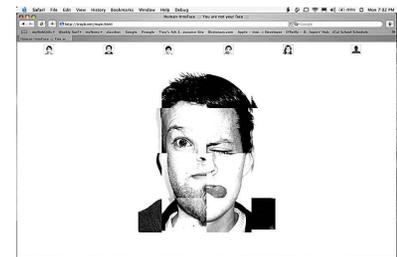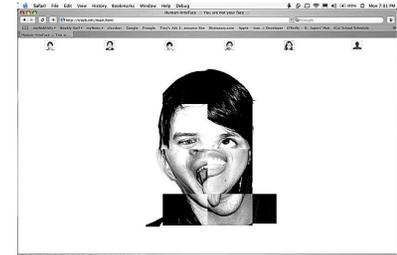
# Conclusion

The face is a medium which we use either willingly or unwillingly to communicate our emotions to others. This medium has the potential for almost 10,000 variations. Currently, of the many faces we can make, only six emotional faces have been proven universal in understanding. They are the, smile, frown, disgust, anger, surprise, and fear expressions. As a medium, the face's perceived aesthetic value has an impact on our level of social acceptance. Because of this, people have enhanced their appearance through surgery, cosmetics, or jewelry. Although this does not enhance effectiveness of the face to communicate, it does improve the chances of having people attend to your face. Expression seems to come in two forms, willed and automatic. The automatic nature suggests that we are built, to send and receive expressions as an evolutionary adaptation for survival.

However, we are also able to create and learn expressions based upon cultural influences. When the brain's "pre-wiring" for facial recognition or reading is short circuited, there are serious repercussions on the ability to pick-up unspoken cues that lead to healthy socialization. As a result, individuals with disorders such as Asperger's Syndrome, find it difficult to be accepted socially by peers. Asperger's Syndrome, among other symptoms, affects an individual's ability to "read" a person's face for emotional information.

The face as a subject of inquiry is a crossroad of epistemologies. It is rooted in our very language and thus, central to defining whom we are as both individuals and as a species. The ground is so trodden that the topic is it's own cognitive franchise. However, as both a science and a subject of art, the depth and breadth of the topic is both limitless and fascinating. Thankfully, the number of 20 $^{th}$ and 21$^{st}$ century artists who have built their careers, entirely on the face, is much smaller. Each artist arrives at this multidimensional gateway we call the face, with a different perspective.

This attempt is to capture and manipulate images of faces such that one can see through or past the illusion of totality and down to the granular aspects of a base emotional language.
human-intoface.net is an experiment in the development, distribution, and reception of photographic images of faces. The viewing of static photographs on a gallery wall brings with it an array of historical, contextual, and sociological influences. In contrast, the Internet, or more specifically, the World Wide Web, is a dynamic ever-unfolding "event" with far less history and a far greater possible range of contexts. It is the epitome of post-modern phenomena.

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