

Human Facial Perception

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Project Proposal

Concept

The face is one of the first points of identification on the human body. “Many psychologists have argued not only that facial information is usually the first that is available to the perceiver, but also that it is continuously available during social interaction” (Bull & Rumsey.1988;1). It can express a large amount of information about an individual, mainly their age, gender and race. It also contains receptors for all 5 senses and its sub dermal skeletal construction which performs an important role in protecting the brain which is the single most important organ in the body.

I propose to design and implement an interactive art piece to explore ideological beauty in the human face, with the purpose of investigating our perception of the ideological facial structure. The question I wish to raise and explore is what is perceived as the perfect face?

Is it a biological phenomenon or is it socio-cultural? Has post modernism changed our idea of beauty? Does consumerism and its throw away values influence our perception of one another and if so how? What are the underlying reasons for these changes in perception?

Factors that have a bearing upon this include plastic surgery and genetic engineering. Identity and beauty has always been transient and fleeting as we age we change.

With new medical technologies the ageing process can be delayed. Yet the possibilities are not limited to merely this but can extend to changing and altering the identity of the individual. There is less permanence in one’s physical appearance than ever before. This brings several issues to light. The perception of body modification and how it relates to societies perception of the individual and the relative values we attribute to it and also the perception of our self, there is now less fixity than ever before.

Research

This concept is relevant to technological and medical advances in the recent weeks after one of the world’s largest medical breakthroughs was announced. A team of UK doctors were given the go-ahead to proceed with the worlds first full face transplant. This follows the recent partial facial transplant in France carried out on Isabelle Dinoire in November 2005
(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/tvradio/programmes/horizon/broadband/tx/faces/>).

This radical change challenges the preconceptions of how we perceive individuals. According to recent research people judge the beauty of one another by the degree of symmetry and lack of imperfections as set down by the statistical norm, however is this really true?

Past research into the subject has been carried out by R Terry and J Davis (Terry & Davis.1976; 42, 918) who conducted an experiment which “asked male and female students to rate for attractiveness the faces of five males and five females, in full-face

form and in the form of isolated features. Correlations between the rating given to a full face and the rating given to its isolated parts revealed that mouth, then eyes, then hair and then nose correlated strongest with full-face attractiveness” (Bull & Rumsey, 1988; 279).

“For over two thousand years, man has been fascinated with the human face and has made innumerable attempts to reproduce the face in its most idealized form both in art and in life” (http://www.beautyanalysis.com/mba_historyandfacialform_page.htm).

Implementation

The system will be designed and created for the internet using Macromedia Flash and will ask the user to engage in interactive image selection. It will require the user to select 15 images from a database of 100 female faces. The next step will be to assign a rating to each image, similar to the Hotornot.com phenomenon. This will then assign a unique individual property to that image, to give it its relevancy to the final outcome. Once the image selection process has been completed the system will compile and arrange the images onto the centre stage, aligning the images to points specific to the eye, mouth and nose coordinates. This will be followed by the specified formatting previously done by the user based upon attractiveness rating. Once layered upon each other it will give the user there representation of the ideological facial structure. This method can also be applied in reverse to give the perception of the unattractive face.

Production timetable

	November	December	January	February	March	April
Research						
Experimentation						
Idea Development						
Image Capturing						
Final Review						
Hand In						

Bibliography

Bull, R., and Rumsey, N. (1988), *The Social Psychology of Facial Appearance*, New York, Springer-Verlag.

Terry, R., & Davis, J. (1976). Components of facial attractiveness. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 42, 918.

The World’s first Face Transplant, Website at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/tvradio/programmes/horizon/broadband/tx/faces/>, accessed 13 October 2006.

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