The Uncertainty of Self

The necessity of uncertainty within self-identity is the conceptual center of my work. My interest in this topic started with my personal reaction against our cultural obsession with the *selfie*; the candy of self-meaning. The emergence of the *selfie* as a cultural phenomenon has caused the meaning of self to become narrow, thin and confused. As an artist, I want to address this issue and put forward the argument that the journey into understanding our personal identity is through the path of uncertainty.

The constant viewing of *selfies* is a destructive cultural force because these images have become the source from which individuals create meaning. It is derived and discovered only in circumstances of happiness. Happy moments, although true and necessary, occur only in thin layers of time. These are not the only layers in which identity can be formed. In the image of the *selfie* there is an unconscious propaganda statement that emphasizes momentary time as the foundation of self-identity; the necessity of self-reflection becomes irrelevant because it takes too much time. The viewer is taught through the *selfie* that the ego can be constructed as a concrete truth of self because *the photo told me so*. Therefore, the more *selfies* that are taken, the more real a person becomes. In other words, the more times that a *selfie* is sent out, the more valid self-identity becomes; the image becomes the self.

Once the *selfie* becomes meaningful in momentary time, a person can constantly instantaneously change the values and beliefs within their identity. For example, if *selfies* are always taken with other people, the belief is "I will only be happy when **not** alone". If all of my *selfies* are taken on vacations, the source of my happiness is travel; in order to travel I need money, therefore I may place my self-value on my ability to make money. Self-identity is based on a quick smile, therefore values and beliefs change all the time. As the individual views other people's *selfies*, they compare their values with others. This constant comparison with others drives this ability to constantly rearrange values, creating anxiety within self-identity.

To combat the image of the happy *selfie*, I have decided to take photographs of myself in a state of discomfort. The inside can be painful at times; it is often endless, deep and unforgiving. Pain is part of our humanity. The expression of inner pain has always been a dominant subject matter in art throughout the ages. I follow that tradition. In order to construct inner pain in a photo, I created the anti-*selfie.* In creating the anti-*selfie* photo, I wanted to remind ourselves that some of our identity is embedded in our suffering, and if we are brave enough to visualize and see its structure, we can create a more realistic and true self-identity. Therefore, our self-identity is a construction of both the *selfie* and the anti-*selfie.*

The sources of deep emotional, psychological or spiritual pain are often complex and difficult to identify. This pain can be seen in our repetitive daily habits, patterns and behaviours. These become the elements that shape our identity. Paradoxically they become our comfort and strength, an agent of conformity.

In order to demonstrate the point, I decided to use coloured strings as a representative of negative patterns. They are coloured, denying their negative responsibility in my behaviour; I let them play a role in the construction of my self-identity. The photographs were constructed to twist the form of my face to illustrate that I was internally deformed by some of my negative habits. The anti-*selfie* therefore asks the viewer to think about their negative habits and patterns, and how they function within the construction of their self-identity.

What then does our self-identity at a specific moment in time look like? In my view, it is an abstraction that can be represented by a colour. What colour do I *truly* think I am; even though I know the love of my *selfie,* am I being honest in the understanding of my anti-*selfie*? This question forced me to drop a colour on the anti-*selfie* photo. Therefore, my true self-identity lives in a complex world between the *selfie*, the colour, and the anti-*selfie*. Self-identity contains a deep element of uncertainty.

Self-identity is not solely based on our present reality; it is contained within the layers of our personal time: past, present and future. This movement creates a

degree of uncertainty, making it difficult to have an absolutely concrete definition of self. The *Uncertainty of Self* art project attempts to demonstrate that the movement of self-identity is a normal drama that lives within the element of uncertainty.

Uncertainty is a complex beast; it always plays with our identity. How we construct, see and deal with uncertainty is something that we have to ask ourselves. Uncertainty needs to be accepted, looked at, and lived with; it is a force that can either destroy us or give us hope for the future. The mental encounter between the *selfie*, the anti-*selfie,* and a colour image of self is perplexing. Our true identity must learn to live with some degree of uncertainty.

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