

Nellie T.

Napa, California

Untitled

Acrylic on wood + charcoal drawings

One aspect of my research that informed my piece was the exploration of clowns. Their personae are to portray false emotions and personalities, which contradicts my concept of subconscious self representation through facial expressions. I was very inspired by the bold and loud aspects of Cindy Sherman's work. I incorporated it through the colors and slightly off-putting portions of the figures in my painting. My process was very disorganized, allowing me to try out multiple courses until I landed on one that motivated me. However I had the same base plan throughout the experimenting to have large-scale painting with charcoal portraits. The process started with the charcoal drawings and then I sketched different possibilities onto the wood. For the materials, I used vine charcoal for the first sketch of the portraits and then went in with compressed charcoal to create shadow and dimension. I used acrylic paint on the wood.

How Our Subconscious
Portrays Our
Personalities Through
Facial Expressions



Nellie T.

The Oxbow School OS45

We are constantly subconsciously portraying our most honest sides of our personality through facial expression. This concept represents the idea that we are incapable of fully covering ourselves up for people to judge. I have found that people want to represent their own unique personalities but only to a certain amount. We are afraid of judgment from everyone no matter the relationship. The structure of this paper will consist of three sections, each belonging to a certain person- one of my family members. I will describe their personality along with the facial expression that I subconsciously represent them with. These will be tied together with the evidence of how they attempt to portray themselves but inevitably fail due to the subconscious control of honesty that the facial muscles have.

We constantly take actions towards hiding parts of ourselves but there is an extent to how far we are capable of going. “Micro-expressions are often connected with emotions that a person is trying to conceal,” says Arlin Cuncic in *How to Read Facial Expressions*. Our facial expressions have power over our conscious minds, being able to show what we are truly feeling. It is similar to the saying, “eyes are the window to the soul.” We will always have contradictions, working towards portraying what's truly there. Personally, this concept excites me because I find myself regularly stressing that I am putting up a wall to hide from people. However, I have never been one to change my personality drastically based on who I am interacting with. This does not mean I have never done so. In fact, everyone has. I believe no one has been able to go their entire livelihood constantly portraying what the subconscious wants. Humans have taught themselves to mask it as much as possible, but not enough. In the scientific article, *Hiding true emotions: micro-expressions in eyes retrospectively concealed by mouth movements*, Miho Iwasaki and Yasuki Noguchi say, “Because actions of several facial muscles, especially ones strongly related to

emotions, cannot be controlled voluntarily, deceptive expressions often involve a leakage of true emotions as a momentary change in facial parts.” Our faces are the only part of our body that we can't fully conceptualize. We will never be able to contort our bodies into a certain position to see our faces. That's why it is the most honest part. Our consciousness has little control over the facial muscles, thus giving it the freedom to do what the mind inside is thinking.

I. Hannah

The first personality I want to explore is my mother's. She is someone who is always paying attention to her surroundings. When interested, she will come up with the most captivating prompts, questions, contradictions, and ideas. She is passionate about the work she wants to do in the world. She stands up for people who can't do it themselves. She is emotional and helpful. She has brought four healthy children into this world. The expression that I have resonated with her my whole life is a concentrated look. She is so clearly present and focused. Her gaze is piercing you in the most gentle way possible. Her lips are tight with a slight curve in the smile lines of her cheeks. She is wanting to do more for herself but holds back because she feels that the people she cares for need her more than herself. These characteristics are writing out the traits collected from the past. As if they have become a cousin to a scar. The strong gaze paired with the tight lips portrays the bravery needed to be a woman. The eyes show sacrifices made. The tight lips showing the rough emotional experiences. While the smile lines say the sternness brought by them. They are more than the use of facial muscles; it is the internal portrayal of experience and self.

II: Frances

The next personality is my older sister Frances. Frances is the most independent person I have ever come across. She never seems to need someone. Always understanding herself she has figured out how to take care of herself in every way possible. She is straight to the point and harsh. She is hilarious yet concerningly tense. I have never been able to truly read what she is thinking at times due to how nonchalant she is. Frances has a cool demeanor yet in many social situations is bubbly and excited to meet everyone. The facial expression that I resonate with her is a relaxed face, no enthusiasm or tight muscles, just relaxed and there. Her cheeks sit softly above her sharply curved lips. Her eyebrows are still like they are painted on. But her eyes seem tense. She isn't squinting, there is just a story being told through them. Slightly wide-eyed, her gaze is intense and strong. She has so much to share and give. The eyes show that sense of saying more. With the still eyebrows concealing that.

III: Henry

Henry is quiet and sensitive. He still carries an immaturity of wanting the praise. He is an antagonizer only to get you frustrated. He is unintentionally funny. He is good at making people love him. And he is a horrible liar. Henry's facial expression is his infamous lying face. When he lies he can't keep a straight face. You can see the frustration in his eyes, wanting so badly to tie his pushing smirk down. His eyebrows go into a defending stance and his subconscious is winning.

“They occur whenever we are alone or with family and close friends,” says David Matsumoto and Hyi Sung Hwang about Micro expressions. I chose the examples of facial representation because of the association I have with them. My relationship with these people is close and comfortable. Thus creating a strong understanding of their subconscious minds. However we are still able to see these things with someone we aren't as close with but because of

the close relationship, I have made an association. Our faces are our one true pathway to understanding people. It is the window to the subconscious mind. If we were to focus more closely on them we would be able to understand someone more than we think is capable.

Works Cited

Cuncic, A. (2021, March 30). *How to better understand facial expressions*. Verywell Mind. Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://www.verywellmind.com/understanding-emotions-through-facial-expressions-3024851>.

Matsumoto, D., & Hwang, H. S. (n.d.). *Reading facial expressions of emotion*. American Psychological Association. Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2011/05/facial-expressions>.

Iwasaki, M., & Noguchi, Y. (2016, February 26). *Hiding true emotions: Micro-expressions in eyes retrospectively concealed by mouth movements*. Nature News. Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://www.nature.com/articles/srep22049>.

