

Gabriella Axelson

BISIA 350

Professor Ted Hiebert

10 March 2017

Conceptual Project Artist Statement

For my final project, I wanted to try and incorporate all of the philosophies and ideas we had read about throughout the quarter. What has stuck with me most is the idea that photography serves as a representation, which is dependent on the punctum. Throughout this class, I have tried to find out how a photograph can stand out and be remember- able. Another thing that stood out to me is the importance of eyes in the photograph, and how it can be considered the “gateway to the soul” of the person being photographed. This is part of the reason why I think portraits can be so successful and powerful—although the audience may not personally know the subject, there is still a sense of intimacy. Therefore, I wanted to create a final project that not only caught the audience’s attention, but represented the different ways one can communicate. I decided to Photoshop the subject’s mouth out to emphasize the idea that communication can be something other than words, but to also draw attention to the subject and let the eyes speak for them. I decided to incorporate an item to represent each way of communication to add character to each subject, and to hopefully allow the audience to make a personal connection with each item. While exploring this topic, I was also reminded of Barthes metaphor of photographs to death. I wanted to see if I could challenge this philosophy through my representation of communication. Unlike photographs, words (whether spoken or written) can exist in the past, present or future. The same thing can be said with sign language, music, or paintings. By having portraits with

subjects whose mouths were removed, I hope to convey the idea that, while photographs may be of something from the past, the idea they represent does not have to be in the past.











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Project #1 – Something Eccentric

We live in a day and age where photographs surround us. We can go through an entire day and see hundreds of photographs, and yet how many of them do you actually remember? In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes explains what and how an image will capture our attention, and when we pay no attention to an image. Essentially, Barthes explains that it all boils down to one word: *punctum*. Punctum is explained as the personal reaction one has with a photograph; in other words, the emotions a photograph can create for an individual. Through these readings, I decided I wanted to experiment with seemingly ordinary photographs (ones that would not catch the audience's attention), and see how I could photograph it in eccentric way, that would create a punctum. This is how I decided to photograph the same girl in various locations, through a magnifying glass that makes her appear upside-down, and almost unrecognizable (and therefore eccentric). My thought was that by having her image upside down, it would make the audience wonder who she was, and pay closer attention to her surroundings. We live in a world where we almost become numb to photographs, and don't pay attention to the details hidden inside them. Through the reflected image of the magnifying glass, I hope to change this. Furthermore, I wanted to use the magnifying glass as a sort of symbol for how many people in today's society, create a certain persona and "act" in front of the camera. Because a magnifying glass is not typically seen or used in photographs, it would not only re-enforce the idea of eccentricity, but also allow the audience to become aware of the "lens" that is created when posing for

photographs, and choosing which ones to post. Although photographing a girl in various locations through a magnifying glass is a simple idea, it is one that represents what Barthes was trying to explain in *Camera Lucida*—it creates a punctum, through representing an ordinary image in an eccentric way.









