

Chuck Landvatter
Artist Statement
May 2013

“I am not what I think I am. I am not what you think I am. I am what I think you think I am.” - Charles Horton Cooley

I'm interested in how, as social creatures, we see and present ourselves to others. My recent work explores image and identity, how they form, and how we tailor them to meet social standards and expectations. I look at the inaccuracies that arise from seeing ourselves through the lens of other people, and the consequential manipulated presentation of the self to these very same people - “The Looking-Glass-Self”.

My imagery is inspired by, reflective of, and mostly taken from, social media. The enormous platform the internet provides is a new and uncharted territory which directly effects the way participants build and display their identity. The ramifications of how we are presented online are quite daunting, causing what's known as “presentation anxiety”. This anxiety prompts us to painstakingly curate ourselves, which can result in flattering, but dishonest profiles of what we are. My work attempts not to correct the mendacity, but to illuminate it.

Being that our identity revolves largely around our appearance, I use the person to illustrate the looking-glass-self. Using various methods, the individual is then distorted by way of fracturing, blurring, exaggerating and embellishing, pixelating, obstructing, and any other means to obfuscate real substance. This is accomplished with a range of mediums varying from aerosol to graphite pencil, to sculpture. My process is laden with uncertainty, often yielding an outcome very different from what was intended, which lends itself to the idea of the construction (and deconstruction) of the self.

This work is relevant to contemporary art because of the ubiquity of this contemporary tool which is social media - the megaphone for image. It is relevant because we are all affected by the concept of the looking-glass-self to an astonishing degree. I believe my work is particularly germane to local Utahns because the focus is on Utahns and how their identity is shaped by local political, religious, and other social aspects. As a self identified liberal Mormon artist, I often see bifurcations and uneasy tensions in other's and in my own self-perception. My work is meant to expose these internal dilemmas in an external fashion, antithetical to the externally self-managed manifestation we're bombarded with everyday.