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I Know You Are but What am I?

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How well do we know ourselves? The image we project to those around us may or may not correspond to the perception we have of ourselves. Like businesses, people have a brand, whether they are aware of it or not. In my MFA thesis exhibition, I will explore others’ perceptions of my own personal brand.

Introspection has played a major part of my graduate school experience. Thinking about the significant changes I’ve experienced over the last two years got me wondering what friends and family thought. My hypothesis is that what we think of ourselves is just one part of who we really are and that there can be stark contrasts between self-perception and how others perceive us. To represent people’s perceptions in an effective, visual way, I will use myself as the subject.

In order to get a better idea of what makes up my personal brand, I constructed a survey of various questions selected to gain a better understanding of the identity I project to others. I researched several personality tests, including the Myers-Briggs, and collected a large pool of possible questions. The criteria used when selecting questions was that each would potentially reveal a distinct personality trait based on the collective responses. The purpose being to have several unique characteristics from which to produce designs. Similar to the traditional process of problem solving in graphic design, I will be creating art based on collected data. What makes it unique is that I am both the subject and collector of the data, as well as the creator of the work.

The resulting survey includes questions initially chosen by me, then reviewed and selected by my thesis committee. I have administered the online survey of thirty questions to seventy-five friends and family members. From the fifty-nine responses, I will create a series of twelve posters based on twelve questions selected from the survey that exhibit a significant and compelling conclusion among the respondents. I will also create additional material with detailed information on each question represented and the respective responses that will be available in the exhibition space.

I would like the viewer of this work to make interpretations based on their own perceptions. I want to visually communicate in my thesis exhibition an appreciation of the differences between how we see ourselves and how others see us. The contrast between individual realities: theirs and our own. The intent is to strive for objectivity in visually representing elements of my outward personal brand, whether I like them or not.
These are the survey questions and responses selected to be visually represented. The intent was to choose questions which yielded results closest to a consensus. Survey respondents were asked to make choices along a continuum and the statistical results are illustrated below.

1. I think of this person as someone who
   - plans far ahead: 27%
   - plans at the last minute: 39%

2. I think of this person as someone who
   - is easily hurt: 11%
   - is thick-skinned: 24%

3. I think of this person as someone who
   - works hard: 27%
   - plays hard: 31%

4. I think of this person as someone who
   - sees the glass as half-full: 10%
   - sees the glass as half-empty: 29%

5. I think of this person as someone who
   - is more organized: 39%
   - is more chaotic: 42%

6. I think of this person as someone who
   - bases morality on compassion: 19%
   - bases morality on justice: 36%

7. I think of this person as someone who
   - listens more: 32%
   - takes more: 44%

8. I think of this person as someone who
   - wants to believe: 31%
   - is skeptical: 25%

9. This person is someone who stands firmly by their principles
   - strongly disagree: 9%
   - strongly agree: 54%

10. Where does this person fit on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing someone who is deeply spiritual and 7 representing someone who is very earthbound?
    - 1: 0%
    - 2: 5%
    - 3: 17%
    - 4: 13%
    - 5: 34%
    - 6: 29%

11. Where does this person fit on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing someone who takes a lot of risks and 7 representing someone who takes very few risks?
    - 1: 2%
    - 2: 10%
    - 3: 8%
    - 4: 32%
    - 5: 19%
    - 6: 22%
    - 7: 7%

12. What actor would play this person?
    - Elijah Wood: 1 mention
    - Paul Rudd: 1 mention
    - Bill Murray: 2 mentions
    - Neil Patrick Harris: 2 mentions
    - Tom Hanks: 4 mentions
    - Ricky Gervais: 5 mentions
    - Jeremy Davies: 5 mentions
    - Bette Davis: 5 mentions
    - Andy Dick: 5 mentions
    - Cary Grant: 5 mentions
    - John Cameron Mitchell: 5 mentions
    - Gary Oldman: 5 mentions
    - Jim Parsons: 5 mentions
    - Peter Lorre: 5 mentions
    - John Malkovich: 5 mentions
    - Eric McCormack: 5 mentions
    - Michael Keaton: 5 mentions
    - KITT from Knight Rider: 5 mentions
    - Hugh Laurie: 5 mentions
    - Anthony Michael Hall: 5 mentions
    - Anthony Hopkins: 5 mentions
    - Dustin Hoffman: 5 mentions
    - Philip Seymour Hoffman: 5 mentions
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    - Philip Seymou
Vampire bats regurgitate blood to feed members of their group who are sick or weak.

With loud alarm calls, vervet monkeys put themselves at risk by warning fellow monkeys of predators.

Dolphins will swim under injured members of their pod, pushing them to the surface so they can breathe.
I walk slowly into myself through a forest of empty suits of armour

Tombs Traistromer