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Disruption Report

MY AIM(S)

My aim during this project was to explore the fakeness of selfies, and how we often represent an untrue or aspirational version of ourselves.

WHY I CHOSE THE METHOD(S)

I chose the method of using AI generated faces for a few reasons.

Firstly the faces often have distortions or parts of the picture don't physically make sense. Occasionally one feature on the face will be shifted to the side in a way that's unnatural, often times when generating a face that's not quite facing the "camera" but also not in profile the AI seems to struggle with the proportion and angle of features, putting a camera facing mouth on a face that's looking more to the side. There are sometimes random blotches that look nothing like an ordinary blemish because they're too severe in colour or have hard edges. Hair can also be difficult to generate convincingly, often looking like locks may not be totally connected to the head. These discrepancies between real humans and generated faces serve as a metaphor for how we change the features of own own faces either through how/where/when we take the photo or how we manipulate it after it's taken when we take pictures but they can be a bit more noticeably weird and even unsettling.

Secondly the use of AI generated faces has the advantage of not having to get permission from individuals for using their photos.

WHAT I DID

Initially I gathered several hundred royalty free images of generated faces from a library on google drive (there are actually a lot of them). After that I began to search through them looking for images that were incorrectly generated or had weird glitches or flaws in them.

After this I made an image sequence of all the faces I had downloaded and made a video of it to use as the bulk of the video seen above. The reason I chose to make a fast, flickering sequence of the images was to show how similar they all are, they nearly blend into one heterogenous face because the AI generates them staring straight at the 'camera'.

I freeze framed the video in three places to place text on top. The first still is of the most glitched out face I could find in the bunch. The idea behind this is that without pausing you don't notice the flaws in these pictures, and without pausing on selfies we see online we can be convinced that everyone is beautiful and lives a thrilling life non-stop. I chose to add the words at the three freeze frames based on feedback that the message of the video was unclear but the choice is ill-considered and it only makes me cringe.

The second still actually shows two faces and the image is split horizontally. The idea behind this is that it's an illustration of duality and the split between how we represent ourselves and how we really are.

The third freeze frame is on a totally distorted face, after the second frame I gradually ramped up two 'glitch' effects in after effects until the final frame in the video was totally distorted.

The idea behind this is simply that we are gradually distorting ourselves and others perceptions of who we are.

HOW I DID IT

My methods consisted of finding a large amount of images, downloading them and then importing them into after effects as an image sequence.

After importing the image sequence I began some time remapping on it so that I could bring the video to a freeze frame gradually, because initially the freezes were just too jarring.

For the text I used the typewriter effect so that it looked as though the text was being typed onscreen by someone and also used rgb green for the colour to fit in with a digital aesthetic.

After the first freeze frame I duplicated the image sequence in another layer, masked off the top half and moved it on the timeline so that I was left with the top and bottom of faces that didn't match.

For the final third of the video I used a chromatic aberration effect to split colours in order to make the video look glitchy. I then added another glitch effect on top to maximise the effect.

FINDINGS

My main finding was that it's really hard to convey this message without overt bits of text in the piece, which really feels like a bit of a failure because the imagery should be able to stand on it's own without the aid of explainer text. With the text added the imagery takes a back seat in expounding the message and feels almost redundant.

REFLECTION ON HOW IT COULD BE IMPROVED

I feel that there are a number of ways this could be improved as it's my weakest project.

I would like to find a way to get the message of the video across without having to rely on using text in the video. There are a few ways I think I could go about this, mainly use of other assets in the video and more experimentation with the juxtaposition of faces in the video.

Using assets like a phone in the video would probably be a good start, without seeing anything like this it's hard to tell that the images are supposed to be selfies, or that they're even images posted online and this left me with only the option of putting in text to explain the purpose of the piece.

I didn't explore how the faces were placed in the frame enough, there is a wealth of ways that one or more faces can be juxtaposed and they can all have different implications. For example there could be two faces in frame but one is upside down, they could be facing each other or facing away, I just should have done a lot more experimentation.

Another thing I would definitely change is the glitch effects. They are really obviously fake 'glitches', no broken file ever really rearranges itself in weird concentric rings or splits the image into three overlapping rgb images. The effect I should have gone for is made by deleting or corrupting individual P (progress) or I (image) frames, breaking the compression of the video and making an

effect you've probably seen where bits of static image or blocks of colour move around the screen, the practice of doing this on purpose is called Datamoshing, unfortunately I'm using an apple computer so I have a very limited range of software to use but undoubtably there is some way to make it if I do enough research.