DATA VISUALIZATION BLOG POST

<http://feltron.com/FAR14.html>

I am very interested in this Nicholas Felton guy, who released some annual “Feltron” reports. These reports are aesthetic representations of personal data, such as sleep, heart rate, and activities he recorded. From 2005-2014, he released a report like this every year. Each report has a different style to it and utilizes different methods of measuring. I really like these pieces because it becomes a complete body of work – you can more or less understand this guy’s lifestyle over the course of a decade. I think it’s part analytical, part aesthetics, and part personal. It is an interesting notion to quantify everything about an individual. While it is interesting to see different manifestations of personal data, I think this piece raises greater questions. Can a human life really be broken down into data? It will be difficult to create a true representation of a life with statistics and data – life exists in a chaotic world with immeasurable confounding variables while statistics exist in a controlled environment. This disparity makes it very difficult for compatibility, but I think Felton blurs the distinction with his use of aesthetics. He blends data with palatable and personal visuals that make it understandable and relatable. He makes data more human, and when this data is supposed to accurately portray a human’s activities, I believe he is very successful at what he is trying to do. It makes me think about the ways my life could be reduced down into data.

<http://www.bewitched.com/windmap.html>

Martin Wattenberg’s Wind Map is really interesting to me – I appreciate the blend of practicality and aesthetic. It is a map of the United States that projects current national wind patterns throughout the country. The result, aesthetically, is a cool, smoky, and swirly pattern across the US. It’s hard to visualize wind besides seeing the walls of a hurricane or tornado, but the aesthetic makes wind very tangible. The complexity and breadth of wind patterns throughout this country is striking – we often forget about the power of nature and global environmental dynamics. I think this piece works well for whatever you want it to – wind is used metaphorically in many environments. As detailed in the piece description, people also use the wind data for practical reasons, such as bird watching or cycling. I like this piece because of its versatility and simple but appropriate aesthetic.