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My finished work of art will take the form of a looped animation, created from a series of several hundred paintings. The piece is the video animation, not the paintings. The animation is comprised of several looped actions that are cut up and recombined to create new actions and movements that may not resemble the elements from which they were taken. My goal is to combine traditional portraiture with multimedia technology to create a hybrid work of art that is still understood as a portrait.

MOVING PORTRAITURE

by

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Approved by

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## MOVING PORTRAITURE

I am a portrait artist. In order for an image to be considered a portrait, it must represent a specific person and it must also refer to that person's unique likeness. In my art practice I only paint myself, my closest friends, and my family. It is essential that my objective decision-making be in the service of creating a more complete documentation of how I understand my relationship to my subjects. Most drawn and painted portraits strive to capture multiple moments in a single image. My work attempts to preserve these moments as a documentation of time without the use of contextual or narrative devices. The painted stills represent time spent and the decisions that added up to the final images. By animating these stills I am able to reinterpret these moments.

My thesis project consists of a collection of several hundred paintings that have been photographed and animated on the computer. The drawings are all images of my head and shoulders and are silhouetted on a neutral background. Each painted frame attempts to communicate various aspects of the figure and touches on subtleties that are hard to convey in a single image.

The sequence of these painted images creates the completed portrait. The individual frames are meant to be understood as part of a whole and the viewing of the images in time is essential to the understanding of the piece. In creating

multiple images that are read as one I both preserve and combine the steps I go through in my attempt to capture a likeness.

Most of my time invested in this project has been devoted to drawing and painting the individual frames. While the effects I achieve in this animation are dependant on my treatment of the painted objects, the true shape of the piece comes from the organization of these images. Frame editing has been the most important aspect of my process.

The reading of this work is dependant upon the viewers' willingness to accept the requirements of the piece's duration in understanding the role of repetition and rhythm in the creation and reading of the work. The animation is comprised of several looped actions that are cut up and recombined to create new actions that exist independent of their origins.

In the organization of frames, I am attempting to create a wide variety of unique actions that are malleable and able to produce different feelings with the same material. The number of frames I combine to complete an action and the rate at which the frames pass both effect the level of clarity the motion provides the viewer and also create a distinction between motions that are understood as being realistic or not. The frame rate and organization of the images will in this way influence whether a repetitive motion is read as mechanical and controlled or natural and organic. The more recognizable and regular rhythms that are

orchestrated through motion will contrast the more spastic and unpredictable actions that show no visible pattern and are understood as out of control by comparison.

The finished animation will hopefully be understood in terms of its contrasting elements. Throughout the video, the rhythms of the smooth head and body movements are interrupted by unnatural quick head ticks that come from the isolation and repetition of short loops of the same video. These small ticking movements are meant to be understood as being involuntary- like a spasm. The small head ticks are meant to swell and build to a point where they either calm down or explode into a much larger and more dramatic movement. These movements are meant to be a release but they are also subject to the irregular effects of the video loop's own cyclical rhythm. The more dramatic parts of the video are followed by longer sections of rest. What I hope is that the various levels of drama in the organization of the video will be understood as internally natural or strange in the context of the places I choose for the video to be active or calm.

I want the motions contained in the animation to seem out of the control of the person pictured in the video. It is this aspect of the video that I hope the viewer will concentrate on and understand to be either disturbing or entertaining. The animation is constructed from hundreds of self portraits, so I also hope that

viewers who are aware of this fact will make the connection between this figure which bears a resemblance to me and the implied meaning of the chaotic dramatic action.

The finished work of art will take the form of a seamless animated loop, which will be run from a dvd player and viewed on a television monitor. The piece is the video animation, not the paintings. It is important to the understanding of the finished work of art that the parts remain separate, but that they are actually perceived as a unified work that is understood in time. The finished animation is the result of the organization of a finite amount of material into a new form where the parts are not as easily recognizable and therefore impossible to separate from the action of the larger choreographed animation.

My thesis project is a marriage of traditional two-dimensional representations of self-portraiture in art and my interests in multimedia work. I began this project as a way to combine previous studio work that dealt with multiple images and movement with my recent video work that deals more with actual movement and time. The resulting animation takes advantage of my previous investment in portrait painting while opening up to the possibilities of movement thanks to the inclusion of the computer as a tool for readdressing the work in a new form. The way I am presenting my work allows for a retelling of these individual moments in various combinations that allow for multiple



variations in meaning. These variations are understood as being unique to their individual place in the linear timeframe of the animation. Through these variations I convey feelings such as distress, fatigue, unrest, happiness, and pain. I want the viewer to make these connections, and I hope the video is received as being both unnerving and funny as an expression of how I view the connections between my own physical and psychological experiences.

## CATALOGUE

Farrell, Nicholas. *Untitled*. Digital video. 2006.