

I am interested in “the selfie” and how it is viewed in our society. I came across this phenomenon when I was scrolling through social media; the sheer amount of selfies I witnessed within five minutes was ridiculous. With that in mind, I started researching how the selfie represents us as a society, and whether or not this representation is a negative or positive reflection.

This is a self-portrait that best represents me. Rather than using photography as my primary medium, it was more fitting to turn to clothing as a vehicle of self-expression. I designed an outfit made from canvas with images embroidered onto it. I used canvas for its stiff quality, because I feel restricted and awkward when I am around people I do not know. Each image represents some part of me. I embroidered my face in multiple places to represent vanity...the constant need to look in the mirror before I leave the house. I also embroidered a dinosaur on the skirt to represent childhood memories. The hand signs on the back of the garment indicate the obsession with social media. Lastly, plants represent my connection with nature.

Zoe F.

I scroll through my Instagram feed. It's 11:34pm. I scroll past a selfie of Kim Kardashian. I then scroll past another selfie, this time it was of my friend. It's now 11:40pm and I've scrolled past at least ten selfies, each from different people. I started thinking of all those selfies, I ask myself, are selfies self-portraits? Do they show us what society is about? Do I like what they say? The selfie is very present in our society these days, whether you decide to participate in it or not. This led me to my next question; could selfies be considered an art form? And could it be called a self-portrait? Because the traditional self-portrait has gone "out of style", people are now finding new ways to bring self-portraiture back into society, and one of those ways may or may not be through the selfie.

The selfie is a fairly new term in our society. Ever since November 19th, 2013 when the Oxford Dictionaries announced the word "selfie" as the International Word of the Year, the selfie phenomenon has grown ever more. Jenna Wortham, technology reporter for The New York Times, wrote, "Selfies have become the catcall term for digital self-portraits abetted by the explosions of cell-phone cameras and photo-editing and sharing services. Every major social media site is overflowing with millions of them. Everyone from The Pope to the Obama girls have been spotted in one (selfie).

The definition of a selfie is a photo taken by one's self on a smart phone or web camera, which then is typically shared through social media. While the definition of a self-portrait, is a portrait of the "artist" made by the artist. I feel like both of these definitions are really similar, especially if you are looking at a photographic self-portraiture. When taking a self-portrait in photography, you have to take the picture yourself (usually using a remote), while when taking a selfie you just press the button on the phone. Personally, I believe the selfie is a self-portrait, but a self-portrait may or may not be a selfie. I think this because I don't think a portrait of Van Gogh is a selfie. A selfie of me is self-portrait but only if it truly shows who I am. An article from The Getty, said, "a self-portrait is not a selfie. A self-portrait is beautiful and revealing"(Annelisa Stephan). I disagree with this statement; I think a selfie can be revealing, but we don't see a lot "deep" selfies around, because people are too caught up in creating this fake self-image, and selfie that shows who they really, are could be social suicide for the image that they have created for themselves.

The definition of "art" is constantly changing. "In the 19th century, art emerged as an expression, a pure form, no longer duplicative. The 20th century marked a decline in objectivity and rise in subjective truth; art was whatever artists, the art world, and audiences said it was — rap music, comedy, dots on a canvas, even pornography. Today, the selfie is part of a world in which our public selves — the ones we showcase on the social web — are carefully articulated versions of who we choose to be on any given day, at any given moment. The selfie is the ultimate representation: "the way we want the world to see us now."(Jones, 2013). Abigail Jones is trying to tell us that art is whatever we say it is, even though others may disagree. I believe that anything can be art, but I feel like saying that is so broad. I prefer to say that anything with a good meaning, and some creativity behind it is considered art. Hugh Dornbush, the founder of selfie.com, said "I think the selfie has to be considered art, accepting that not all art is great and is very bad, but it's a deliberate act of self-expression. So far it's been easy to equate that self-expression with narcissism (which it often is), but the selfie is fundamentally a self-portrait using modern technology. And of course that is art." I disagree with Dornbush. I

think the selfie doesn't have to be considered art; it's only art if the creator wants it to be viewed as art.

I have always been drawn to the face. When I'm in a gallery or a museum I am always drawn to portraits. I find it interesting how people perceive and portray either themselves or someone else in a portrait. To me, a self-portrait is something that represents an individual. I feel that a self-portrait could even be of an object, as long as that person identifies with that certain object. For example, if some one feels like a soccer ball is an accurate depiction of whom they are, because they play soccer or soccer is a big part of who they are. Then that is a self-portrait. I also feel like a self-portrait could even be portrayed through someone's clothing, because clothing allows for self-expression I feel like a self-portrait should have some sort of connection to the individual.

The selfie can be viewed as either a negative or positive. An article from The Ohio State University, states that, "people who post more online photos of themselves, scored higher on the measures of narcissism and psychopathic behavior... in addition, people who edit their selfies before posting them scored even higher in narcissism and self-objectification. These people also scored higher for anti-social personality trait."(Grabmeier, 2015). This article had more of a critical position on the act of taking and posting a selfie. In a radio interview with digital artist, Molly Soda, told NPR "I think the selfie is a really positive thing, whether or not it's art, it s super positive affirmation of self love. And the act of putting it on the Internet for the world to see is an act of positivity" (Soda, 2015). I feel like what Molly Soda is telling us is just her trying to protect the image of the selfie, because she is a "selfie taker" and she doesn't want people to think that she is narcissistic for taking a lot of selfies. Sarah Purewall from NPR, said "I think that selfies really give a lot of the younger generation a platform to express themselves without being incredibly judged- because the selfie is such a casual form of expression, no one is going to expect you to look absolutely perfect"(Purewall, 2015). It's reasonable to think that social media could help one's self-esteem. The Internet allows individuals to select how they present themselves on social media, and it opens them up to positive social feedback. Although posting a selfie could also lower self-esteem, due to negative feedback or no feedback at all. After hearing what other people had to say about the selfie, I have come to the conclusion that I believe the selfie has become negative in our society. I think that it's pretty much useless to society, and it is making everyone more worried about how they look. I also think that in most cases, the selfie used to get the attention of others, and although it may make someone happy, it won't make them happy for a long. Take a look at Kim Kardashian; she has posted hundreds of selfies on Instagram. Why? Because she feeds her self esteem with getting attention from others. It's the only way she is able to feel like she is worth something. Posting multiple photos of herself on Instagram gives her the attention that she longs for. Kim Kardashian has become this social media monster, and not in a good way. Because of people like her, abusing the power of social media for their own personal self-esteem needs.

The selfie can create this façade when it's posted on social media. A person can create any aesthetic for themselves through social media. In a way, clothing is like the more physical version of the selfie. Like the selfie, you can express your individuality, but you can also create a "fake physical appearance" that isn't true to who you really are, just by altering the clothes you wear. Mark R. Leary, Professor of Psychology and

Neuroscience at Duke university and author of The Curse of the Self: Self-awareness, Egotism, and the Quality of Human Life states, “By posting selfies, people can keep themselves in other people’s minds. In addition, like all photographs that are posted online, selfies are used to convey a particular impression of one self. Through the clothes one wears, one’s expression, staging of the physical setting, and style of the photo, people can convey a particular public image of themselves, presumably one that they think will garner social rewards.”

After much research, I didn’t see any articles on how the selfie represents us as a society, and if it’s accurate or not. Because the selfie is so common with the younger generations, I decided to ask the selfie experts. Teenagers. I asked them what they thought of the selfie, and how it represented our society. Ella Sinskey, a high school student from San Francisco, told me in a interview, “ I am not a selfie person. I don’t feel the need to post a selfie, only when I get a hair cut I will post one, just to see if people like it”. It seems to me that the reason why some people take selfies is to get some sort of conformation on their physical appearance. When I asked her how the selfie represents our society, she said “(the selfie) shows that humans are full of themselves, but as long as they’re not harming anyone else, they can do what they want.” While Ella felt that the selfies is just another way for us to show how self-centered humans really are, Brenna Massey from Sacramento California said othewise. She told me “I think the selfie is very representative of our generation, it’s like our thing. It has consumed us. Although, the selfie may look narcissistic, a little self-centeredness never hurt anyone.” She believes that the selfie is like the symbol for our generation, and instead of shaming it we should embrace it.

Whether or not you feel the selfie is art and should be displayed in museums next to the old masters, or if the selfie should just be kept on social media. The selfie is what you make it. In this new generation we are surrounded by technology. We now have the power to connect with people from all corners of the world, and we are able to get some sort of exposure to cultures that we have never even heard of, all thanks to social media and the Internet. Selfies are away for people to expose themselves on social media, even if they aren’t exposing who they really are. Before you go judging people who take selfies, I would suggest that you take one for yourself, maybe it will change your view of the selfie.

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