SHOOTING SELF-PORTRAITS

Self-Portraits are pictures of you, shot by yourself. We are not looking for head shots or pictures that your mother would like. Nor are we looking for the typical '*selfie*' where people are obviously posing for the camera, or worse, making silly faces. We are looking for interesting character sketches of a person as seen by themselves. There is something about self-reflection in these photos. Something about self-image as well.

Don't try to avoid the camera. You do not have to be completely in the frame either, however. Pictures of just your feet or just your hands are not really self-portraits. Look on the Flickr site and see what the average idea of a self-portrait looks like. Then do something completely different. Those are all Photo Clichés.

There are numerous 'visual tools' that can be used to make new and different and interesting self-portraits. Use all the strategies already mentioned in other documents from this class. Here are some other considerations:

Control Focus

Touch the screen to set both the focus and exposure. Just be sure not to 'blow out' the highlights. If you don't get detail in the highlights when you shoot, you can never get them back with processing (because the camera doesn't know what was in the missing spaces).

Touching a dark area lightens the overall exposure, while touching a light spot darkens the exposure. Touching a face forces the camera to focus on it. If you touch and hold you get Auto-Focus/ Exposure Lock. The you can move the camera to a different subject while retaining the original focus and exposure. (This is also useful when shooting close up shots (aka Macro-Photo)).

Use the Self-Facing Camera (not)

Be aware that the camera that faces you, designed for selfies, is lower resolution that the rear-facing camera. It is also very wide angle that tends to distort your face when it is too close. Stick to the rear-facing high-quality camera when you can (not that the highest quality is always the best. Part of the aesthetic of the Smartphone camera (and this class) is low resolution).

Use a Different Grip

Be aware that there are other buttons on the camera that cans be used as a shutter release. On many cameras the Volume Up button can be used. You are still limited by the length of your arms in this case. Try something with more control.

Use a Tripod

There are 2 basic choices for tripods; there are the conventional rigid-legged types, and the new flexible-leg types, some made especially for Smartphones. A good place to look is Adorama.com, a professional photography shop in NYC that has the best prices, and you will get your stuff 2 days later,. Amazon is also a reasonable place to look for tripods but you pay more shipping and wait longer.

Tripod

There are many small tripods available at B&HPhoto.com, but you will need a Mount to attach a Smartphone to them. (check the last 2 in this list).

Gorilla - Stands and Mounts for iPhone and Android

Joby Gorilla Mobile Mpod Mini Stand with short bendable legs	$14.
Joby GripTight GorillaPod Stand with bendable legs	$20.
Joby GripTight Smartphone Mount to mount on regular tripod	$14.
Joby GripTight Micro Stand with small straight tripod legs	$20.

REMOTE TRIGGERING

Now that you have your camera up on a tripod you will need some way to trigger it. There are several ways of doing this:

Remote Control

With Film Cameras there is a device called a Cable Release. This is literally a cable that is screwed onto the top of your camera onto the shutter release. It has a button on the other end. You can buy one 6 feet long or 20 feet long. You set yourself up for the shot and then you press the button. The only downside is that you have to hide the cable where it comes into the camera's view. But that is not that hard.

With Digital Cameras we gained the electronic shutter and electronic shutter release. This makes it possible to have an electronic remote control to trigger the camera, like with your TV.

The current Smartphone manufacturers seem to have not included such a device on any platform. There is a device, however, that works like a shutter release cable, but is actually a bluetooth device that hits the Volume Up button, thereby releasing the shutter. It is available from Amazon.com for $40. It works with any camera app that allows using the Volume Button for camera control.

Muku Shuttr (Black or White) - iPhone, iPad, Samsung and Android Bluetooth Remote Control for Camera Shutter

The other way is using the Volume Button on your headphones. The length of your headphone cable is the distance you can get away from your Smartphone. You can also buy an inexpensive headphone extension cable. These come in 6 foot and 20 foot lengths as well. RadioShack is a good place to get one for $3. and $13. respectively.

Self-Timer Apps

There are yet other ways to trigger the camera. A self-timer app is another option. These apps will allow you to set a delay time and the camera will count down and take a shot. Some of these apps also have other features.

GorillaCam;   Joby Inc.   iPhone
        does self-timer shots or rapid-fire photo series
        creates stop motion videos, time-lapses...
Self Timer;   Apimac   iPhone
        delays the shutter release, shoots up to 4 photos in sequence
TimerCam;   Daisuke Yamashita   iPhone
        selectable timer delay (5, 10, 15 or 30 seconds),
        3 seconds countdown sound effect
Self Timer Camera;   paperboy&co.   iPhone
        set timer between 0-15 seconds, start with double-tap on screen
Camera Self-Timer;   identity, inc.   Android
        a simple camera with self-timer control
Self Timer Camera;   Takumi Tattiest   Android
        time delay form 1 second to 1 minute.
        take shot by pressing button or with sound trigger
Camera Trigger;   Busy WWW   Android
        set timer to 1, 5, or 10 seconds
        then the camera uses motion sensor to shoot
Sound Camera;   Mark Brinton   Android
        takes shot with countdown timer, sound activation
        or by touching the screen anywhere

Sound Trigger Apps
These apps let you trigger the camera by making a sound. A clap is the most common, but...

      ioShutter Cam   Enlight Photo Limited   iPhone
           shoot sequences of photos, use countdown timer,
           schedule timer photo triggering, shoot time-lapse films,
           trigger camera with sound, trigger camera with movement.
      Vapp   O Street   iPhone + Android
           trigger the camera by making any sound, levels adjustable
      Sound Camera   Mark Brinton   Android
           take shot with sound activation, countdown timer,
           or by touching the screen anywhere

Face-Recognition Apps
Some people would like to be able to know that they are actually in the frame. However, having
      one's face cut at some strange angle is half of the beauty of Self-Portraits! But if you want
      a little bit more control you can use a Face Recognition app that tells you when you are
      in the frame.
      SelfPhoto   Space Lama   iPhone
           self-portrait app with face detection
      SelfCamera   Nekomeshi   Android
           self-portrait app with face detection

Remote Trigger Apps
This list of apps starts out with two apps that let one Smartphone trigger another Smartphone.
      The others use various techniques such as movement, vibration, changes in light or even
      changing the electromagnetic field to trigger a camera.
      Remote Shutter   i-App Creation Co.   iPhone
           allows one iPhone to trigger another
      Camera Remote   Busy WWW   Android
           allows one Android Phone to trigger another
      ioShutter Cam   Enlight Photo Limited   iPhone
           shoot sequences of photos, use countdown timer,
           schedule timer photo triggering, shoot time-lapse films,
           trigger camera with sound, trigger camera with movement.
      Camera Trigger   Busy WWW   Android
           set timer to 1, 5, or 10 seconds
           then the camera uses motion sensor to shoot
      Camera Trigger Shot Krugism Development LLC Android
           EMF Trigger - trigger the camera based on Electro-Magnetic Field values
           Vibration Trigger - take pictures when phone senses vibration
           Light Trigger - trigger the camera whenever light values change.
                e.g. a picture can be taken when a light is turned on...

It is possible to focus on something other than yourself to set up a shot and then use any of
      these Remote Tigers to actually take the shot. You can stand or sit next to a wall and
      focus on that. Or go into a corner. Or use some other object that can stand in your
      location on which you can focus. Do whatever you can to set the focus the way you want
      it. Or use intuition to capture whatever you can and go with it.

ADDITIONAL SHOOTING STRATEGIES

Environment
To make interesting self-portraits place yourself in some environment that makes sense. Create a
sense of **SPACE**. Then include the possibility for something to happen or provide
evidence that something has already happened in that space. This creates a sense
of **TIME**. Time can extend into the past as memories, or extend into the future
as dreams and desires. It can even be a feeling of timelessness, suspended time.

The next element is great **LIGHT**. Shoot at times when sunlight is extreme. Or shoot in places
where the artificial light is also extreme. One convenient tool for self-portraits is a desk
lamp at 3 feet. That can produce a strong side lighting from a 'one point source'. Find
things that either reflect or refract light in unusual ways. The other end of the spectrum
is shadow. Look for places where things are hidden or emerging from shadows.

The final step is to inhabit that spatial and temporal environment with relations of the personal
kind, or it can even be about the absence of people. As long as it exudes a **PRESENCE**.
You almost have to set a stage (or find a location that can be a stage) and then you
become an actor upon that.

All of these should just be hinted at, however. There has to be a sense of **MYSTERY**. This can be
achieved using closeness, angle of view and other visual tools we have already learned
about. Please refer to the handout 'Framing & Composition' for a full list of visual tools
for shooting.
Basically the things to do are:
- get close enough to remove all unwanted background   [PROXIMITY]
- shoot from an unusual angle, never from eye-level   [ANGLE OF VIEW]
- look for dramatic light/ deep shadows   [LUMINANCE]
- push things into the corners, or cut them   [CORNER POWER]
- align things with the edges of the frame   [EDGE POWER]

If too much is revealed and the photo's content is too easily readable, your viewers will not stay
long. Singular objects in a static space with no 'feel' are not interesting. You have to give
your viewers something to ponder, to evaluate. Present a set of clues for them to chew
on. If they get something that is even somewhat close to your intention, then there is
COMMUNICATION. Communication indicates that there is a **RESONANCE** between
you and your viewer, an overlapping relationship between both your lives. This
sometime taps into the concept of the 'Collective Unconscious'. [Carl Yung]

Who's Picture
One question that arises is: Is it still a self-portrait if someone else pushes the button on the
camera? The response is that if the photo is composed and framed by you, and you are
only using another person as a remote trigger, then it is your photo. If you hand your
camera over to someone else and say, "Take a picture of me.", then it is their photo and
no longer a self-portrait. The really important factor is the challenge of *making* the self-
port, more that even the product of the exercise.

Interaction

There are people who take a self-portrait every morning when they wake up and again just
before they go to sleep. Sometimes it is about consistency, and sometime about variation.
Some people pick a time where they tend to be in different place, or in the same place
regularly, and they set a timer in their Smartphone. When the timer goes off, they do a
self-portrait. Sometimes it is about the time, sometimes it is about the place. It can be a
SPATIAL concern, considering locale. It can be a TEMPORAL concern, about regularity or
consistency. In all of these cases it is about the INTERACTION between the subject of the
Self-Portrait and their environment.

Examples

Please look at these slides from another group of students in their quest to make interesting
portraits and self portraits and see how they have used:

closeness (proximity),
angle of view (attitude),
a sense of place (space),
a potential for activity (time),
exuding presence (relationships),
in great light (luminance).

http://www.berk-edu.com/RESEARCH/studentWork_5b_people/

*p.s. that last photo is extraordinary... both the text and the photo present
complimentary images, neither competing with the other for attention.*