Chapter 23
Metaphorical Portraits

ABSTRACT

Telling stories verbally and visually involves structuring the data toward different metaphorical representations of a person. Creating metaphors for a set of factors that make up a profile or a portrait will allow showing individual features of a portrayed person. This text encourages the readers to apply their visual literacy and exercise their cognitive processes related to imaging.

INTRODUCTION

This text provides a good occasion to apply our visual literacy skills and exercise our cognitive processes related to imaging. It may serve well to enhance our confidence about both passive and active familiarity with art, as we will act in this project both as the perceivers and the creators. We may be aware that examining art related concepts and discussing the qualities of works of art without looking at the artwork on a computer screen or in a book could restrict our task and make it demanding. Art images are available in abundance at the Internet-based sources such as the online museum websites. Those who prefer published reproductions of art may choose any art book, for example "The Art Book" (Editors of Phaidon, 2012).

In order to portray an imaginary character, one may want to depict a person in a literary way, the artistic way, or in the both ways. One may write a profile (verbal portrait) or convey graphically a

mental image (visual portrait) of the chosen person. Imaging mental and emotional processes is truly important in creating visual communication. Depending on the kind of a profile one is working on, whether it would be a personal, cultural, social, political, or psychological portrait, one has to cope with a different set of variables that must be taken into account.

SURFING THE WEB

When we work on creating a visual and literary portrait of a person, we have to begin with gathering information, whether personal, social, anthropological, cultural, or historical, related to people we want to portray. Searching the web is a method of choice to collect information, initiate communication, develop collaboration, and then to use it as a social medium in virtual environments. However, we may encounter large amount of complex information, as there are currently billions of pages available and this number is increasing by millions pages per day. With the

use of search engines we scroll through results displayed in a single window and load multiple pages. In spite of the fact that the Commissioner of the U.S. Office of Patents supposedly said in 1899, "Everything that can be invented has been invented," something new is done every day about the web data organization and the web architecture, by enhancing cloud computing, new kinds of search machines, managing a large database of documents, and creating web interfaces in keeping with the concept of the semantic web – the use of visualizations providing metaphors for web navigation and communication. When surfing the web, some techniques might be useful, such as visualizing and manipulating data in multiple dimensions, using Java, interaction techniques, 2D and 3D interaction metaphors, glyphs, and data mining. We may accept 'data' as the raw material, and then computers process and transform the data into information.

PRESENTING THE DATA ABOUT PEOPLE IN TERMS OF THE TYPES OF ART

We may want to present the data about people in terms of the types of art used in fine arts: as a portrait, a landscape, a still life, an abstract, a time based, and an interactive art.

1. Portrait: Visual and Literary

A 'portrait' approach will result in creating a visage of a person we have just selected. A paper-and-pencil drawing or a computer graphics will show a pictorial profile implying the inner mental state, a psychological, social, historical, or professional portrait that may tell more than a sole account of facts. With the use of symbols, metaphors, and mental shortcuts, synthetic signs, humor, caricature, grotesque, or even doodles we may make a message even sharper.

A portrait usually shows a likeness of a person, especially showing the face, but the background, clothes on a person, objects, possessions, and fads that attract our attention may be also important. For example, in "The Ambassadors" painted in 1533 by Hans Holbein the Younger (http://www.oneonta.edu/faculty/farberas/arth/ARTH214/ambassadors_home.html, also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ambassadors_(Holbein) elaborate collection of musical, astronomical, and scientific instruments symbolizes the ambassadors' learning and power. Hans Holbein's "The Ambassadors" is the famous example of the use of anamorphosis in an artwork. In this double portrait, there is a vague image placed between the two men that can be recognized as a skull when viewed from one side of the painting. Anamorphosis (described in the Chapter 14 Mathematics Related Visual Events) is an optical illusion in a painting. After the rediscovery of perspective in the Renaissance period, this game in art applied a distorted perspective in a drawing or painting, so an image could appear meaningless until viewed from a particular angle. Leonardo da Vinci made anamorphic drawings in the 1470s.

Art Concepts about Portraying People

Portraits may serve various purposes, so we can discern quite different kinds of portraits:

- Social criticism, for example, those painted by William Hogarth (Breakfast Scene, from Marriage á la Mode, c. 1745, http://www.myeport.com/published/u/hs/uhse002/slideshow/7/index30.shtml) or Portrait of the Duchess of Alba (1797) by a Spanish artist Francesco Goya (1746-1797) http://www.friendsofart.net/en/art/francisco-de-goya-y-lucientes/portrait-of-the-duchess-of-alba

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