

### The Portrait of Miss Anonymous

Link: <https://youtu.be/ul01l2vO42g>

When I was doing research for this assignment, a photo sequence by Duane Michals inspired me. It is 'Andy x 4', which captured four body parts of his friend Andy Warhol. If one of the photos in the sequence is removed, the viewer may not notice who was this person. Therefore, one picture is an exploration of other pictures and the fragments tells the whole of Andy Warhol.



Fig. 1.

In my photo sequence, it narrates a story of a girl who addicts to outer beauty. She does several cosmetic surgeries to improve her facial feature. But after her changes of appearance, is the girl still the original one? The question is just like the thought experiment in 'Ship of Theseus'. When the wooden parts of a ship are replaced by new ones, whether the 'restored' ship is still the same object as the original. I would like to look into the meaning of 'identity' and reflect the necessity of outer beauty through the photo sequence.

For the vertical aspect, I used collage to create a surrealistic atmosphere. The cross media includes photographic fragments, hand-drawn lines and texts in image. Images of flowers and diamonds appear repeatedly in the sequence. They are symbols of the chase of charm. Candies represent the external of the girl is only sugar-coated. She dresses up herself to cover her unpleasant parts. The text in the 6th image implies cosmetic surgery is a one-way road and it is difficult for the girl to stop once she addicts to it.

For the horizontal part, I drew dotted lines on the first four images to raise the curiosity of viewer to guess what the next potential image is. After the four close-up photos of face features, the viewers can finally see the whole face of the girl and it is the peak of the narrative. The dynamic also changes in order to build up tension. The duration of the two full portraits becomes shorter and shorter. The fast conversion between two images shows the insaneness when the girl gets lost in her identity. Rhythm is shaped

by the clash between two adjacent images: one is decent and in cold tone, while another one is messy and in warm tone. At the end of the sequence, the girl with a question mark appears gradually. It provokes viewer to think about what constitute our identity.

The sequence is timelessness. It does not state a specific period of time. But the experience of time can be measured as the time when viewer explores in each single image. In most of the time we only view one photograph instead of an image sequence. We focus on the vertical line and try to figure out the story behind a single photo. An image sequence builds a flow of the narrative. Apart from the composition of the image, the arrangement of photograph order also needs to be taken into consideration. An image sequence provides more space for us to imagine what has happened between the gaps of photos.

### **References**

Figure1; Michals, D. (1980). Andy x 4 [Gelatin Silver Print]. Retrieved from <https://photosociology.photography/2018/02/22/review-duane-michals/>.