Project: Recursive Raytracer
Category: Programs
Completed: Spring 2011
Professor: Dr. House, CpSc 405

When this project came along, I was stumbling behind in the class. The point of the previous assignments before this was so that I could slowly build a simple ray caster to a more robust recursive ray tracer. Instead the previous projects turned out to be a mess, with wrong lighting, shadows, or something other. This was when I decided to dump the mess I had before and completely start over.

I rebuilt my class files from scratch, utilized the Matrix classes Dr. House had available, and followed the math more thoroughly. Although it was not the first time I built a ray tracer from scratch, this was still quite difficult. The older ray tracers I had for reference were in C, used different algorithms that I could no longer comprehend, or were just too complicated. Within a day, I had this ray tracer up to par with the last project's standard of shading. Another half a day's time ended with the final version of this project, fully working with reflections.   It honestly meant everything to me that I was able to get this particular project fully functional within a day and a half. It was proof that if I were to just concentrate and focus, I am able to complete tasks that I once thought were impossible.

Although this project is, by all means, complete, it really is not. I would have loved to be able to include refractions, but struggled with the math. A great addition would have been to include anti-aliasing so that my sphere's edges would not be so sharp. I could have also incorporated other shapes, infinite planes, or 'blobbies' that would have made more exciting, creative scenes.

However, the particular scene I did include with the project, even if it's only made of spheres, does have a meaning. I purposely placed them in the lower right corner, with the four other spheres looking down on the corner sphere. It was a play on the idea of bullying, but at the same time, made use of the reflections well. In the same idea that an eye can reflect what it sees to its audience if you look closely enough.

Project: A Sudden Surprise
Category: Personal 1
Completed: Fall 2009
Professor: Mrs. House, Art 420

A Sudden Surprise was supposed to be a turtle. I had planned to draw a turtle just swimming along, but stopped short when I realized I didn't have a good idea for composition. There would be no story; no fun to it. Therefore, when I saw mice in one of the books Mrs. House let us skim over, I fell in love with the idea of a mouse retiring to his lair, only to be stopped by the lovely scent of cheese. It was reminiscent of the old Tom and Jerry cartoons I grew up watching.

Personally, I'm very happy with the piece. It was the first time I worked with vine charcoal, and was able to utilize it to depict the texture of the mouse's fur. The facial expression turned out priceless, and so did the thought bubble. The cheese to mouse proportion was how I wanted it, in order to reinforce the cartoon-like image I wanted. Everything just came together, for a change.

Looking at it now, however, makes me wish I put a real background so that there would be more depth to it. Tiles underneath, kitchen appliances around, maybe expand further and have the cheese on a mouse trap. I'd also include that wretched cat lurking just behind a table leg, waiting to catch the oblivious mouse.   Figuring out where the actual light source is and creating the shadows would also enhance it, I feel.

Project: The Pyro (Team Fortress 2)
Category: Personal 1
Completed: Winter 2012
Professor: ------

This particular drawing is based off of a character class from a game called Team Fortress 2. I had not touched charcoal for more about half of the year, and wanted to make sure I was still able to utilize it. Therefore I decided to try drawing a character I would sometimes play.   It was done within an hour's time and mostly with medium vine charcoal.

One of the two hardest parts is composition. I could not decide on which 'action pose' to draw the character in, so I opted for a more menacing and static feel. I feel that it might have taken away from the idea of the character some, since Team Fortress 2 is an action based game, with most of its characters relishing in action, if not humorous, shots. I do not feel that keeping it static was detrimental to the composition itself, however. I wanted it to emit a creepy feeling, and it does.

The other difficult part was transferring a 3D character to a 2D medium and creating the same look for its materials. For example, its outfit is usually a bright red, shiny, rubbery/leather looking outfit. It was hard to convey that in charcoal for me, though I believe if I were to just add a bit more contrast in my shadows, it might have achieved that. The mask itself is also reflective in the 3D version, but the contrast does not exist as well as I would like it.

Overall, I am still proud of it. I would just also like to try a different technique for conveying the materials used for his outfit.

Project: The Essence of a Person Series
Category: Personal 2
Completed: Summer 2008 – Summer 2009
Professor: ------

This series is one of my most favorite of the photography section. It was a yearlong project in which I knew I would be travelling often and seeing friends that I normally wouldn't be able to see.

First off, I am a fan of snapshot photography, though I understand that there are biases against it, and that it is sometimes not considered 'real photography.' There are no lighting setup involved, no faked expressions, and lots of pictures that I would not include because they didn't express what I wanted to show the audience.

Summer 2008's subject is a friend of mine from California. We were at a Japanese festival, when I finally managed to take a picture of her that I felt expressed her best. Her gorgeous blue eyes barely peeking through her fingers, the same way in which I feel like she displays her artwork and creative side. There is so much to see from her and yet she chooses to hide it.

Fall 2008's subject is from Toledo, Ohio. The picture was shot in Toledo Park as she was looking over a fence. I purposely framed her photograph, knowing full well she does not enjoy her whole face in pictures, and made sure to take it while she was smiling. She's a girl who likes to act tough but I've known her long enough to know that she's a day dreamer. I wanted to capture her happiness and yet not break her tough image.

The next subject for Winter 2008 is a guy who came to visit from California. Since I met him, he has opened my eyes to other things that I would have otherwise never seen. This picture was meant to maintain his aura of, for lack of English words, 'kakkoii' (Japanese, loosely translated to 'cool'). As well as show that although he's in front of one of the prettiest sights in Greenville, SC, there was still something else that he felt lacking. Something else he was thinking about.

The last of the series (Summer 2009) is a younger friend who was still naïve to a lot of things at the time. He was romantic in ways that I no longer am, and thought of things without considering the consequences. I quickly took a snapshot while he was thinking of a response to a question I asked about his future.

If I could, I would love to visit my friends and re-take their photographs, just to see if I can capture the changes in the personalities. In addition to the snapshots that I take, I would like to be able to photograph them in a real studio setting just to see how different the two sets would be.