Self Portrait Assignment

There are many ways to view a person and many facets to every person. In this “Multiple Me” assignment, you are asked to look at yourself in relation to your life, past, present and future, and those around you.  What is important to you?  Who is a part of your life?  What do you read, think, listen to, look at, dream about, want to do?  Where are you now as a high school junior or senior today?

Begin by  assembling some words that speak about you and your interests.  A journal or diary you keep, poetry, words from a song, movie dialogue, quotations from famous or infamous persons--all these are possible sources for these words.  These carefully chosen words will be woven into your plan--an important  and integral part of your multiple self portrait.  You will have to pick and choose, being selective (no more than 7 may be included) so that your words really count.  They must add information about you to the finished piece of artwork.  They may be metaphorical (describing yourself by comparing you to something else) or symbolic (choosing something that stands for you to be a part of each piece).

Incorporate one or more words from the sources mentioned above.  Be creative in the way the words are designed into your piece.  Could they be woven around you?  Will they be a “frame” for you?  Will they be written on a book you are holding? The careful craftsmanship of your lettering will be just as important as your drawing of yourself and any background and/or props you include.  What style of alphabet will you choose or invent (absolutely no “bubble lettering”)?  How will your words add to the total visual impact of your piece?  Professional calligraphers use guidelines--you should too!

Self portraits are tough for a number of reasons; you can’t see yourself to know how you look until after the fact (tip don’t forget to suck that gut in). Setup can be more time consuming due to the running back and forth setting timers. Focus is difficult because again you can’t see where that focus point is resting and if you are using a timer mode there is a chance you weren’t in the frame when the camera found something to focus on.

Another benefit is you can move your lights, angle you camera, and just do plain crazy things a subject such as friends, family or a client might not have the patience for (unless you pay them well).

So what to do? Well here are some ideas (tried and tested) to increase your chances for getting that self portrait to look like what you had planned in your mind (or close to it). Of course everything might not apply to you, but there are sure to be a few tips that you could apply and benefit from, and no matter how well you prepare there is always room for improvement.

Equipment:

The DPS crowd seems to be a group of DSLR owners for the most part so I will assume you are using a DSLR, but everything discussed is applicable to other digital cameras (and some of the discussion can be applied to film).

Pick up a tripod. Nearly any tripod will do so I won’t go into much detail, but the tripod is essential as it gives a flexible yet sturdy mount for the camera.

Pick up a remote; if you are using a Nikon or Canon camera there are wireless remotes available for the less expensive DSLR’s that cost about $20. These things are a real time saver and make it easier to fine tune your self portrait without looking all sweaty by photo number 20.

Shoot tethered; most digital cameras have a mini video if not a HD video out. I borrowed my son’s DVD player (the one he watches movies in the car with) on multiple occasions for the sole purpose of shooting self portraits. This is where the remote comes in great; you can fine tune the composition by watching that little monitor, without having to run back and forth. If you have a newer DSLR with an HD out then you could hook up your laptop or HD monitor.

Lighting, a single flash can do wonders for your portraits. I won’t go into any lighting details, but photography is about capturing light. You don’t need to buy a flash, I first started learning lighting using work lights. You can pick up a small but powerful work light from home depot for around ~$15.

Coming up with ideas:

Time to talk about technique. I think where most people get stuck on self portraits is the coming up with ideas (I know I struggle here). What really got me going was thinking about what I own and how I could use it in a photo. Now I am not just talking about props, but I am talking about features also. One of my prominent features is my bald head. So could I work that to my advantage?

Read more: <http://www.digital-photography-school.com/self-portrait-photography-tips#ixzz17LftWFay>

Just thinking about my hobbies and past times, inspired all sorts of photo themes. In fact when I sat down and listed items, I quickly had more self portrait ideas than I could shoot in a single month (shooting a theme a day)

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