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I used to think that technique and technology were anything but art. They were just process and product, the means to an end, but never art itself. This class both challenged my concepts of art and technology, and furthered my understanding of creativity.

In this final project I sought to convey some of these thoughts through a self-portrait by utilizing some of the unique characteristics of photography. I fell in love with the pure chemistry of photography, so I knew I wanted to not only frame the image in its natural borders, but also to use a damaged negative. At the same time, I wanted to communicate a sense of "paused" time—this past year I have struggled through an intense one-year master's program in science writing, and the feeling of time has been in tumult since the beginning.

Methods

I started with a black and white photo print of myself. To obtain the natural borders of the negative, I placed the negative askew in the enlarger and made a couple prints of photo rinds. I put all these through a flatbed scanner at 400dpi (in case I wanted to enlarge later), and first built a frame for the original portrait print out of the negative edges.

I then lengthened the width of the photo and the frame, and moved the stains to different parts of the subject. Rough spots and fill-ins were accomplished with the Rubber Stamp tool in Photoshop 7. I sharpened and added a little contrast, as well as taking a white paintbrush to the eyes to bring out the reflected light and the dodge tool to lighten the top of the overexposed hair.

To make the main subject of the original print stand out as a chemical print, I added a "film grain" filter to give it even more the appearance of a photograph.

I then imported six new layers of strip proofs from another roll of self-portraits. I altered the Curve levels of each one so that the extreme darks and lights were reversed, giving the proofs a negative feel (without losing the detail seen easily in the middle tones). I then transformed and rotated each of these strips onto a final composite, trying to orient them in such a way as to not detract too much from the main subject.

Lastly, I made extensive use of the faded eraser between 8 and 30% opacity to let the details of the face and body escape the overlay of the strips. I also used this tool to attempt to give more sensation of passing time and fading memories by blurring the strips behind the subject more than those in the direction of the gaze.

Conclusions

I think the composition of this piece still has a ways to go. Also, there is a weird tension between the flatness of the strips and their going behind and in front of the main subject. In the future I would like to experiment more with scanned negatives and partly-printed proofs for the background, as well as playing more with the edges.