

TWO FACED - THE POINT FIVE PROJECT:
AN EXPLORATION OF BEAUTY,
MAKEUP, AND THE MEDIA
CREATIVE THESIS

by

Shelby H. Tsuji

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for Departmental Honors in
the Department of Film, Television, and Digital Media
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, Texas

December 15, 2014

TWO FACED - THE POINT FIVE PROJECT:
AN EXPLORATION OF BEAUTY,
MAKEUP, AND THE MEDIA
CREATIVE THESIS

Project Approved:

Richard Allen, M.F.A.
Department of Film, Television and Digital Media
(Supervising Professor)

Gregory Mansur, M.F.A.
Department of Film, Television, and Digital Media

Daniel Williams, Ph.D.
Department of John V. Roach Honors College

ABSTRACT

The Point Five Project is a collection of uniform visual and written works that represent a commentary on beauty in today's media. The series consists of photographs of women with one half of their face natural, without makeup, and the other half of their face made up heavily and Photoshopped. The photographs include a personal statement from the women about how today's media world and makeup have affected them. This Project is a photographic series that reflects the expanding conversation about how the increasing numbers of media platforms in the world are impacting people on a social and psychological level.

As the digital realm continues to adapt and grow, the transformational capabilities of today's media have reached unprecedented levels. Not only can people's bodies, faces, and features be completely altered, but also the mass nature of the Internet has increased the number of impressions those images can have on the public. The Point Five Project is intended to draw attention to the more serious effects of the media and digital manipulations on the way people perceive themselves, others, and the world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
POINT FIVE PROJECT.....	2
Early Inspiration and Intentions.....	2
Goals.....	3
Process.....	4
Statements.....	5
STUDIES.....	7
Media Science.....	7
ETHICAL ADVERTISING.....	8
Campaigns.....	9
Consumerism.....	10
PRESENTATIONS.....	10
Blog.....	11
TEDxTCU.....	12
Love Your Body Day Gallery.....	13
FINAL THOUGHTS.....	14
APPENDIX A: CREATIVE WORKS.....	15
REFERENCES.....	20

INTRODUCTION

The Point Five Project is a photographic, visual, and textual exploration of beauty, makeup, and the media in today's society. It is made up of photographs that mirror each other in size, structure, and design, while representing a range of female subjects. This collection of artistic works was originally the result of my own uncertainty, and the insecurities of countless other women I have met throughout my life. The Point Five Project eventually developed into both a series of artistic pieces, and a way to increase awareness and consideration of representation and manipulation in the media. Through the Point Five Project I set out to provide a visual stimulus that would encourage people of all ages, races, genders, and creeds to recognize what a personal, while simultaneously universal, issue this is.

While conducting the project I studied media literacy and followed a variety of articles and findings on gender roles, beauty, and the media. I also observed current advertising trends and campaigns in the media to see how various companies are working to challenge the status quo of beauty and gender depiction. I presented my works in a variety of settings and maintained a blog for the project. Through my research and cultural awareness, I developed a better understanding about my position on the representation of beauty and diversity in the media. I believe conscious consumerism and ethical advertising are two of the best ways to minimize the negative effects of media on body image, beauty perception, and individuality. I want my project to serve as a conversation starter that will allow more people to challenge cultural representation and be more aware of the ways the media can impact them.

THE POINT FIVE PROJECT

Early Inspiration and Intentions

We are all-two faced. Each of us has an inner and outer story that is molded by genetics and outside forces. These forces are both within and beyond our control: choosing to say hello for the first time, family at a Thanksgiving dinner, a billboard by a highway, a viral article posted on Facebook. However, knowledge and understanding of these forces equip people to think critically and choose, to an extent, how they will react to and be affected by various stimuli.

Growing up I was what many would have called, a “tomboy.” My childhood dream was to become a naturalist like Jane Goodall. I imagined my hair in a thick messy ponytail and face as natural as the surrounding world. For me, the idea of makeup was foreign and terrifying, stuffed animals were far more appealing than Barbie dolls, and a long afternoon reading *The Magic Tree House* sounded far less intimidating than bra shopping or the glossy magazines that line grocery store checkout lines. I was simple, stubborn, and secure, and I honestly believed I would never change. However, something *did* change. I grew up and, like many men and women, the words of my peers and the media began to take effect on me. Makeup became an “accessory” I hated to go without. I became self-conscious and insecure with my appearance, with my body, with my social status, with my femininity. As I have grown and evolved as a human being and an artist, I have continued to struggle with the rollercoaster that is self-identity and confidence. In spite of the unwavering love of family and friends, there have been times over the years that I have lost to fear and uncertainty. This internal battle is one I have seen many people, women, and friends struggle against.

I developed my idea for the Point Five Project while playing around with makeup one day. I was trying out a smoky-eye look based on a picture in a magazine. I lamented that even if I had a professional applying my makeup, I would never look like the beautiful model on those pages. As I compared my natural features to those enhanced by powdery palettes, I thought about what beauty meant to me. Even though I knew that model had been Photoshopped to unattainable perfection, I still found myself reaching to physically become more like her. It saddened me to know that even with my media knowledge, the fabricated pictures that litter today's advertisements and magazines could affect my body image. Looking in the mirror at my face, half caked with makeup, I thought about how interesting it would be to do a series of photographs with women only half made-up. This was the start of what eventually grew into my final project.

After taking more time to think about how I would develop the series, I decided that not only did I want to have my subjects wear makeup, but I also wanted to physically enhance them through Photoshop, just like the magazines. I referenced other portrait photographers and drew inspiration from photographer Kip Fullbeck's The Hapa Project and corresponding portrait book, "Part Asian, 100% Hapa." This project calls into question the identity of people who are mixed raced (Fullbeck). Each individual who was photographed for the project was asked to answer the question "what are you?" This inspired me to ask my own subjects how makeup and the media have affected them.

Goals

Through the Point Five Project I set out to combat my own insecurities along with the struggles of countless other women to be at peace with their body image. I believe that media education is becoming more necessary as the viral age grows and multimedia

becomes a dangerous mix of indiscernible truths and lies. Without understanding just how transformational and unrealistic photos can be, women and men alike do not stand a chance in creating realistic expectations for themselves and others.

I want the Point Five Project to provide a visual stimulus that people of all ages, races, genders, and creeds can identify with. While my project is femme focused, the media does not only affect women, it affects how we see everyone and molds the lens through which we view the world. Anyone and everyone can be digitally enhanced, so I believe it is valuable for people to get a small taste of how transformational today's media can be. I hope the Point Five Project helps draw attention to the more serious effects Photoshop, media, makeup, and other digital manipulations have on the way people perceive themselves, others, and the world. I want to help men and women understand how unrealistic the images we are bombarded with today are, and how it takes more than Photoshop and makeup to be beautiful.

My objective is, that by looking at these photos, people will be challenged to think critically about the media they consume instead of simply being consumed by the media. I want this Project to encourage conversation about how people and women are portrayed in the media, and the unrealistic standards for beauty that have been fabricated. My use of photography and personal statements helps to create a direct and startling impact that people can connect with on a human and emotional level.

Process

For this project I photographed women with a 50mm lens on a Canon EOS7D DSLR camera. Before taking the photographs I would put a piece of painters tape down the center of the women's faces. Then either the woman or myself would apply heavy

makeup on the right half of their face. The other half of their face was left completely natural, without any form of makeup. I would then remove the tape, leaving a clear line down the middle of each woman's face from the transition between bare skin and heavy foundation.

Each woman was photographed against a white backdrop using an external flash as the main light source. After taking the photographs, I would load the images to my computer and choose the best image to Photoshop. I then applied basic color corrections, completely whited out the background, and cropped each photo to be 8"X10".

Next, I would Photoshop the made-up sides of the women's faces. I added more eye makeup, emphasized the line down the center of their faces, and increased skin clarity and evenness all on the made-up side. Then I used the "liquefy" tool in Photoshop to physically change the structure of the made-up side. Some of the main changes I made include lip plumping, moving eyebrow structure, enlarging eyes, increasing cheekbone prominence, and changing nose shape. No feature altering Photoshop was applied to the natural side of the women's faces.

After completing work on a photo, I would ask the women for a corresponding, personal statement about how today's media world and makeup have affected them. I asked them to keep the statement fairly short and to focus on their perceptions of beauty as a result of digital manipulations and how women are represented in the media. Upon receiving their statement, I would consider each piece completed.

Statements

The statements provided by the women I photographed were often surprising and powerful. Each unique perspective broadened the impact and meaning of my works.

Some comments I found especially representative of the issues I hoped to convey through my art. Through conversations about my project, I discovered an incredibly diverse number of women, each impacted differently by society and the media. Among these people were women who struggle with anxiety, women who have battled eating disorders, women who had found peace with their bodies, and women who are still working to be comfortable with who they are.

A recurring theme I noticed among some of the statements was that many women were able to or wanted to find beauty in their distinct features and uniqueness. I discovered in this way, that the pursuit of perfection actually results in a confiscation of individuality. If everyone succeeded in attempts to look a certain way, act a certain way, and dress a certain way the result would be a mass of clones. These comments took me back to my early concept of the Point Five Project, and how at the time I had been attempting to look like the model in the magazine. I hated that I wasn't more like her, when all I had to relate to was a two dimensional picture. I had no way of knowing the character, accomplishments, beliefs, values, or actions of this woman and yet I found myself emulating her. This fact makes the statement aspect of the Point Five Project all the more valuable. The content and imagery together create a dynamic powerhouse. Having the testimonials gives each picture substance, identity, and a name. One of my favorite statements within the series came from a woman named Niki (Appendix A). She wrote:

Personally makeup doesn't affect me much, it's the girls wearing it and selling it that do. Girls that are selected for their height, weight, and look are done up in the best clothes and make up for advertisements, not only

representing a small portion of what the actual population really looks like, but they also aren't good enough. After picking the prettiest, thinnest girls, the media introduces Photoshop: making the girls prettier, thinner, and even more unrealistic. These are the "girls" I have to compare myself to.

The ones I'm supposed to aspire to look like, and they're not even real.

I found Niki's last comment particularly relevant to my cause. It is no longer a secret that the media we are exposed to on a daily basis is retouched and altered. However, these altered images truly do have the power to influence us into worshiping a type of beauty that does not even exist in real life.

STUDIES

Media Science

The effects of the media are hard to measure and still widely unknown, but studies have been conducted observing the impact of various media forms. A study was conducted in 2013 observing the short-term effects of media exposure. The study was specifically comparing the effects of just one minute looking at underweight models, versus one minute looking at models of a healthy weight (Stephen). After being exposed to the images, men and women were asked to review a series of computer-altered images of one woman, whose body mass index (BMI) had been slightly varied from image to image (Stephen). There was a clear discrepancy when the female subjects were asked to choose which image of the woman they found most attractive (Looking). Those who had been exposed to the images of underweight models chose a 16.9 BMI as attractive. This number is 1.5 points lower than the 18.4 BMI chosen by those who had been exposed to the images of healthy models. Even with this disparity both groups' chosen images of

beauty were below the lowest healthy BMI of 18.5 (Looking). This means that only 60 seconds of exposure to underweight models is enough to change how someone perceives beauty. If that's just from short-term exposure, there are vast implications of long-term media exposure endured by today's society. However, this also means that a change in the media's representation of beauty can also help reverse these effects.

In the United States, 53% of 13-year-old-girls are unhappy with their bodies. At 17-years-old, that number jumps to 78% of girls (Body). This amount of body shame so early on is a horrible forecast for the next generation's self-image. While some may argue that insecurity is just a part of growing up, there are some serious issues within the media contributing to this. Comparisons have been made showing that female characters in G-rated movies often wear the same amount of revealing clothing as those in R-rated films (Ettus). Wonder Woman is one of the few female superheroes and a powerful role model, yet the idea of a young girl wearing her "sexy" costume is unsettling. It is in this way that both children and adults are continuously being exposed to the sexualized female body and bombarded with contradictions about what they should look like and who they should be. While these studies and statistics are startling, they represent a potential opportunity for change, not fixed facts of the universe.

ETHICAL ADVERTISING

As one of the most highly circulated and highly manipulated forms of media, advertising is an impactful place to begin change in media representation. With billboards, magazines, television ads, and posters all over America, it is nearly impossible to prevent younger children from being exposed to Photoshopped and unrealistic imagery. While the majority of advertising media continues to represent a very narrow

variety of appearances and body types, some companies in the past few years have begun to engage in more diverse and empowering advertising. While these campaigns still have their flaws, they represent the beginning of what could become industry wide change.

Campaigns

Dove (a brand owned by Unilever) has received a lot of publicity for its Campaign for Real Beauty. Much of the advertising related to this campaign features women of all colors, shapes, heights, and sizes. The company claims to encourage self-esteem for all women and girls, while widening the cultural definition of beauty (The Dove). In a similar fashion, American Eagle created the Aerie Real Campaign. This campaign features women who have not been retouched or Photoshopped in any way (Aerie). Many of their advertisements display the slogan “the real you is sexy,” and emphasize that the women in their pictures “have not been retouched.”

Some argue that these companies are leading ethical campaigns not because they care about the end consumer, but because they want to make more money. Unilever, for example, also owns Axe, which is known for its very sexualized and often objectifying ads. While there is truth in this concern, capitalist America exists to make money, and that is not something that is going to change. However, advertisements that support a diverse beauty have the power to affect millions of people and change the way we perceive what is attractive and what is beautiful. The study of 60 seconds of media exposure supports the idea that realistic and healthy representation can have an impact. Sincere or not, the success of these campaigns and others like them could encourage more companies to consider changing their approach to advertising as well.

Consumerism

As consumers we have power, the power of choice. Companies will always work to sell their products; after that, it is all up to the buyer. Ethical consumerism applies to many different types of purchases, from supporting better working conditions to sustainability to diverse beauty. People make a statement when they choose to buy something or react to an ad. By supporting the companies that embrace diverse beauty, it encourages their competitors and industry to follow in their footsteps. So long as underweight models and Photoshopped images continue to sell products and magazines that is what America will continue to receive. However, by supporting and consuming diverse representation, consumers enable the potential for a change in advertising and how the media represents beauty.

This is the kind of long-term exposure I want to promote, the kind of variety that will help future and current generations embrace their bodies and relate positively with the media, instead of worshipping underweight bodies and unrealistic figures. I believe that by expanding and encouraging the media conversation, people can be more conscious of the choices they make and start inciting changes that will create impact. This mindfulness can help lead to advertisement with faces, models, and personalities that represent the wide range of shapes, sizes, skin colors, and weights that are the true face of America.

PRESENTATIONS

Throughout my work on the Point Five Project I strived to share the project publicly, engage in open conversation about my work, and gain both public and academic feedback. I referred to media studies and campaigns on multiple occasions as inspiration

for my own work and to delve deeper into my discussion about media representation. In order to share the Point Five Project I maintained a blog about my works and women in the media, I presented my project at TEDxTCU, and I displayed my work at TCU's Love Your Body Day gallery. Each experience brought me new perspective on the Project and how people relate with the media.

Blog

My blog (www.pointfiveproject.wordpress.com) was one of the best resources for sharing the Point Five Project and developing my thoughts and knowledge about media representation. In addition to posting new photos and statements for the series, I reported on a variety of other projects, studies, and advertising campaigns. These posts were intended a source of empowerment for people to think for themselves. The blog made me realize that while a lot of people are talking about women in the media, it is a long and winding road to change. Taking small victories is necessary and instead of getting up on a soapbox all the time, I tried to incorporate humor and realism into my posts whenever possible. Between Barbie Dolls, Disney princesses, and demeaning music videos, there are a lot of mixed messages being fed to the younger generations of the millennium. The online community often gets caught up on the he said, she said, and ends up demanding an array of ridiculous solutions for everything. The blog was a great way to learn how to pick and choose my battles. While there is a lot on the Internet and in the world worth getting up in arms over, I believe identifying where there is realistic room for change is a better way of getting it. One way I did that was by pointing out overlooked flaws in media representation, the princess culture, and advertising. Instead of reacting in outrage, I tried to present at least two facets of every situation. I then

provided my personal thoughts and opinions while challenging the audience to consider their awareness of the material more deeply. My goal was to give people a chance to mindfully discover their own thoughts and opinions instead of forcing a scathing argument down their throats.

TEDxTCU

Participating at TEDxTCU was by far the most exciting moment in the process of my creative thesis. The event was held April 22, 2014 and the theme was “change.” After being chosen to participate and present the Point Five Project, everything became a lot more real. Preparing for my speech required me to critically think about how to articulate and describe my art and research. It required me to consider the ways people could relate to the topic beyond images and statements. Working with the other speakers and having a captive audience added weight to the work I was doing. I felt responsible to those who organized the event and those who took the time to come listen. In addition to my Project, I also discussed ethical advertising and consumerism as a catalyst for change, throughout my speech. During the time for questions at the end, an audience member asked about the use of diverse representation simply as a way to make more money. This challenged me and allowed me to increase the strength of my own argument. I immediately acknowledged the likeliness of this statement. Then, I pointed out that even if better representation were coming from a less honest place, it would still be decreasing the negative impact of underweight and “photocopy” models. During my speech, it was especially gratifying to watch people’s physical reaction to my works. Many audience members used their hands to cover one half of the picture then the other, comparing each side of the women’s faces. It was important to me that people became more engaged in

what I was saying and presenting as a result of my physical works. Reaching that level of audience engagement was a rewarding and humbling accomplishment.

Love Your Body Day Gallery

Love Your Body Day was an especially unique experience because it was my first time seeing the works displayed in a formal gallery setting. The gallery was a one-night event October 15, 2014 that featured a variety of projects relating to women and gender studies. Having the photographs and statements arranged on the wall at the entrance of the Moudy Gallery was unreal. While I enjoyed working primarily on digital platforms, seeing the material works had a different impact. There was an added shock value to walking up and seeing all those faces staring you straight in the eye. Being able to share the works online and in print was an important counterbalance to the physical and virtual worlds of advertising. I was especially proud when Devon Nowlin, the gallery manager, praised the strength of the works as a cohesive whole. I feel that each unique piece is an important individual representation on its own, but having the works displayed as a unit added power, meaning, and impact. The professor who organized the gallery, Dr. Jeannine Gailey, told me that many of her students approached her afterwards and mentioned that seeing my works and the gallery challenged them to think more critically about the media and their class lessons. Several people attending the gallery also approached me to say how impactful and thought provoking the photos and statements were. For me, this was an important confirmation that the aesthetic choices I made in developing my works were creating the impressions I wanted. Watching the groups of students and faculty walk through and interact on a physical level with the images was a satisfying final way to share my creative thesis. Given the opportunity, I would love to

continue to share the Point Five Project on the web and in physical form in the future.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Being naturally or artificially thin or curvy does not make someone a “real woman.” Being muscular, tall, or having chest hair does not make someone a “real man.” We must embrace and support everyone in the battle for a more representative and realistic media, because by tearing others down we all lose. Photoshop and the Internet are still in their infancy. Now is the time to encourage media education, awareness, understanding, and literacy. The Point Five Project is a small step in the right direction, and a way to encourage serious thought and conversation. I feel that these creative works are unlike the many other campaigns promoting natural beauty. While each of those is special in its own way, The Point Five Project is intended to give women individual voices and stories that people can connect with on a personal level.

We are all two-faced: inside and outside, mind and body, beautiful and real. Within each face is the potential to become a media clone, but when we live in a country wrought with eating disorders, warped body images, and skinny worship, it is time to move away from the unreal side. Being healthy, embracing life, loving yourself, and not only that but loving others – that is what real beauty is for me.

APPENDIX A: CREATIVE WORKS**Natalie**

“Society and the media vastly warped my perception of beauty growing up. Because **the industry had fabricated an image of the untouchable woman as a vehicle to sell products**, which in turn cast societal standards of beauty, my entire life I evaluated myself through a screen of false images and perceptions. It has taken me a long time to see beautiful aspects of myself that are wonderfully unique to me.”

Niki

“Personally makeup doesn’t affect me much, it’s the girls wearing it and selling it that do. Girls that are selected for their height, weight, and look are done up in the best clothes and make up for advertisements, not only representing a small portion of what the actual population really looks like, but they also still aren’t good enough. After picking the prettiest, thinnest girls, the media introduces Photoshop: making the girls prettier, thinner, and even more unrealistic. **These are the “girls” I have to compare myself to. The ones I’m supposed to aspire to look like, and they’re not even real.”**

Shelby (Photographer)



"I grew up as a tom boy, sworn off makeup, magazines, and anything too girly. I started wearing makeup for horse shows and soon found that I felt ugly whenever I wasn't wearing makeup. By my senior year of high school I found that I had broken all my tom boy rules, comparing myself to the girls all over the media and completely dependent on makeup if I had any desire to show my face in public. I had the idea to do this project one day when I did heavy makeup on one side of my face to see what the difference would look like. **I can honestly say it still disgusts me how fabricated pictures can still affect my body image. I hope this project helps people create an emotional connection with this problem, not of makeup, but rather the way altered media affects women.** There are many campaigns highlighting this problem, but this brings a completely new perspective I hope other people can see."

Jasmin

“The way women are retouched and portrayed in the media is so unrealistic. Not only does it set a standard of beauty that no human can achieve, **it actually makes you feel inadequate because you think that's how every normal woman should look.** They shave away at the human female until she's no longer a woman, but a product.”

Tori

“Like most young women, positive self image has been a personal struggle growing up. I remember being at my lowest body-image wise at around December of my junior year of high school. But from that dark place, being completely vulnerable with all my walls of insecurity broken down, I discovered that hiding my own natural beauty was not healthy for me physically or emotionally. **I had no reason to hide my true, natural beauty because that is what truly makes us stunning.** Beauty isn’t about what you look like, or even how you act. A truly beautiful person is one who accepts his/her self as beautiful and truly believes it. We don’t need to change who we are, especially on the outside, to be beautiful.”

REFERENCES

- "Body Image Concerns." *Rowan University*. Rowan Counseling & Psychological Services. Web. <<http://www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/counseling/Eating/body.html>>.
- Ettus, Samantha. "25 Alarm Bells for Women: Sounds from Miss Representation." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 21 Oct. 2011. Web. <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/samanthaettus/2011/10/21/25-alarm-bells-for-women-sounds-from-miss-representation/2/>>.
- Fullbeck, Kip. "The Hapa Project - About." *Kipfullbeck.com*. Web. <<http://kipfulbeck.com/the-hapa-project/hapa-about/>>.
- Looking At Models Changes Your Brain!* Perf. Laci Green. Discovery News, 2014. YouTube. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2zUYoBCi4k>>.
- Stephen, Ian, and Andrea Perera. "Judging the Difference between Attractiveness and Health: Does Exposure to Model Images Influence the Judgments Made by Men and Women?" *PLOS ONE*. PLOS. Web. <<http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0086302>>.
- "The Dove® Campaign for Real Beauty." *Articles and Advice*. Dove. Web. <<http://www.dove.us/Social-Mission/campaign-for-real-beauty.aspx>>.