

Identity

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I feel that in today's society, physical appearance acts as a deciding factor on whether we choose to accept, respect, or interact with a person. It is my belief that it is personal identity which defines a person, not their physical appearance. I have observed that people identify in countless ways but because of physical appearance, many do not get the chance to be understood. Your personal identity is a label you can only give yourself, not a label society can place upon you. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines that personal identity "refers to certain properties to which a person feels a special sense of attachment or ownership. Someone's personal identity in this sense consists of those features she takes to 'define her as a person' or 'make her the person she is'". I feel is all too common in our society to judge a person's identity based off their physical or audible appearance.

My body of art fights against this notion of prejudice based on appearance through consisting of portraits in the form of silhouettes, of people varying of all shapes, sizes, colors, and textures. Each image is photographed with black and white medium format film and printed onto a circular tree ring. This was in attempt to create a unifying background and style, but also to point out individuality, for each ring of a tree is unique, like a human fingerprint. I treated the wood with a light sensitive material that prepared the wood to produce an image as if it were traditional photo paper in a darkroom. Silhouettes were used in attempt to make the participants unidentifiable. I felt that if the person were just an outline or shadow, it would give them a chance to be seen for who they personally identify as, rather than a preconceived label that society has given them. Furthermore, I asked each participant to write a few sentences on how they would prefer to be or known for, if given the chance to be looked at without prejudice. I then traced their statements onto a bleached leaf which are scattered amongst the portraits. The bleached leaves represent the delicacy and individuality of each statement while again emphasizing unity. In theory, each participant's statement can be paired with any portrait. My goal with this body of artwork is to express that "you cannot judge a book by its cover".