Is Your Online Search History Art?

By Lila Thulin

November 5, 2018

Photograph of "Internet Cache Portrait" by Max Schreier.

To mark its 50th anniversary, the Portrait Gallery is celebrating the selfie, collecting more than 75 works in which artists depict themselves in its latest exhibit, "Eye to I: Self-Portraits from 1900 to Today." We were particularly taken with "Internet Cache Portrait," created by University of Maryland grad **Evan Roth**, which uses images auto-stored by his computer to form a uniquely 21st-century self-portrait.

How the internet inspired this work:

"I started the [cache] series in 2012, and that's when we were coming to understand how much of our interactions with the internet were being tracked and monetized. We were learning that those cat videos had some more malicious things embedded underneath them."

Which images he decides to use:

"I try to not censor. That's part of the point of the work: As soon as you realize all of your data is being stored, it's kind of like living with a security camera [pointed at you]."

Does what we surf define who we are?

"I like that debate: What Google knows about me from reading my e-mail and tracking my browsing habits in an effort to try to serve up advertisements to other companies—is that an accurate portrait?"

"Eye to I: Self-Portraits from 1900 to Today" is showing at the National Portrait Gallery through August 18, 2019.

This article appears in the November 2018 issue of Washingtonian.

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Lila Thulin
Editorial Fellow