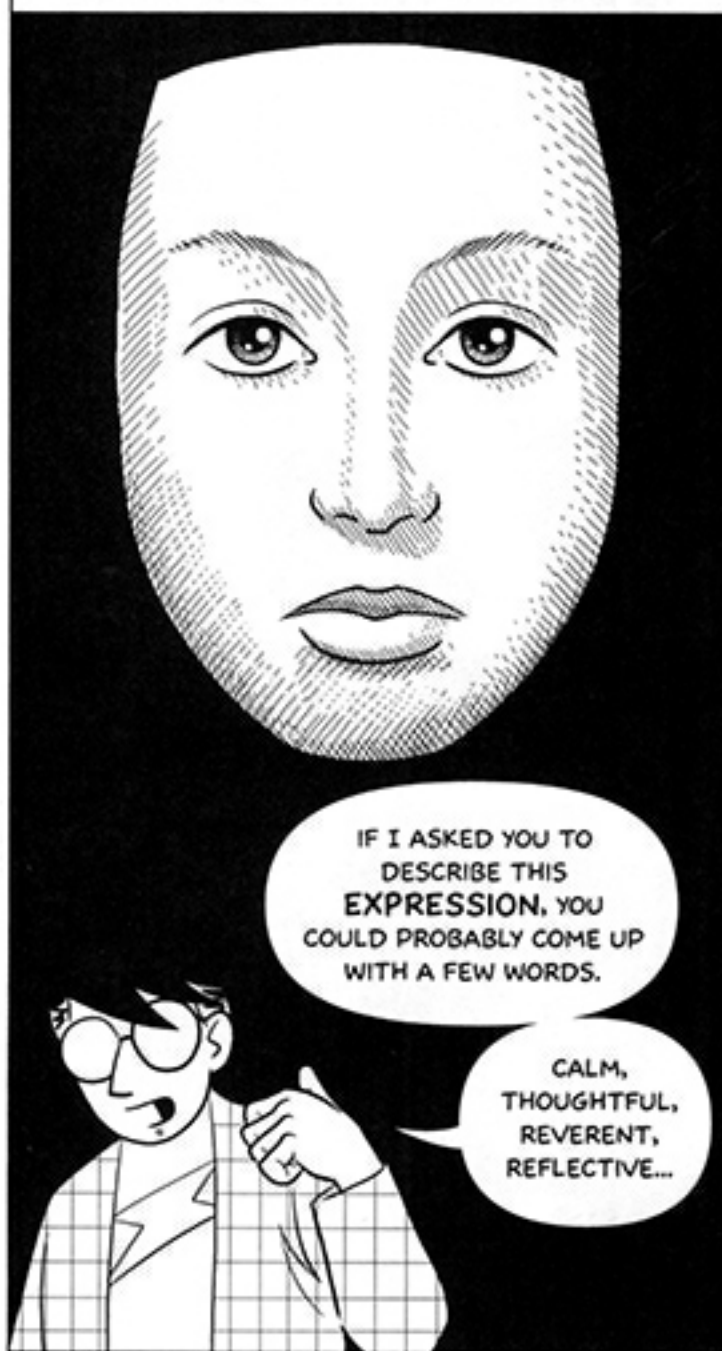


2. FACIAL EXPRESSIONS



IF I ASKED YOU TO DESCRIBE THIS EXPRESSION, YOU COULD PROBABLY COME UP WITH A FEW WORDS.

CALM, THOUGHTFUL, REVERENT, REFLECTIVE...

IT IS, IN FACT, A PICTURE OF NO EXPRESSION WHATSOEVER!

THIS IS A FACE IN WHICH NONE OF THE FACIAL MUSCLES ARE BEING USED, EXCEPT MAYBE THE EYELIDS KEEPING THE EYES OPEN.



THIS MIGHT BE THE MOST COMMON EXPRESSION OF ALL. PEOPLE DO IT OFTEN, EVERY DAY.



BUT YOU'LL ALMOST NEVER GET TO SEE IT HEAD-ON LIKE THIS --



--BECAUSE, AS SOON AS THAT OTHER FACE'S EYES MEET YOURS, YOU'LL PROBABLY GET A REACTION -- AND RESPOND IN KIND.



IN FACT, YOUR OWN EXPRESSION MAY HAVE SOFTENED A BIT JUST NOW, SIMPLY FROM LOOKING AT THIS PICTURE!



EXPRESSIONS AREN'T
SOMETHING WE CAN
OPT OUT OF EASILY,
AS WITH WORDS.



THEY'RE A COMPULSIVE
FORM OF **VISUAL**
COMMUNICATION
ALL OF US USE.



WE ALL KNOW HOW
TO "READ" AND
"WRITE" THEM
WITH OUR FACES --



-- BUT FEW OF US CAN
CONSCIOUSLY **REPRO-**
DUCE THEM IN **ART**
WITH AS MUCH **STYLE**
AND **GRACE** --



YET, AS
COMICS ARTISTS, WE NEED TO DO
EXACTLY THAT IF WE WANT THE EMOTIONS
OF OUR CHARACTERS TO COME
THROUGH ON THE PAGE.



ALMOST ANY STORY CAN BE EVALUATED BY ITS
ABILITY TO **PROVOKE EMOTION** IN THE READER,
EVEN IF EMOTIONS AREN'T ITS PRIMARY FOCUS --



-- AND THERE'S NO STRONGER CONDUIT TO YOUR
READERS' EMOTIONS THAN THROUGH THE EMOTIONS
OF THE **CHARACTERS** YOU CREATE FOR THEM.



AND
WITH FOUR
SENSES, MOST
NOTABLY **SOUND**,
UNAVAILABLE TO
YOU --

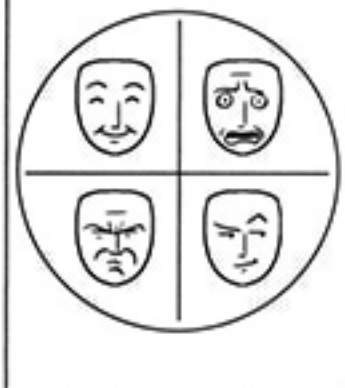


-- YOU'LL
WANT TO GET
THE MOST OUT OF
THE ONE YOU
HAVE.



PUTTING FACIAL EXPRESSIONS TO USE IN COMICS REQUIRES YOU TO TACKLE FOUR SUBJECTS:

THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND WHERE THEY COME FROM.



HOW THOSE EXPRESSIONS ARE FORMED BY THE MUSCLES OF THE FACE.



THE VARIOUS STRATEGIES FOR RENDERING THOSE EXPRESSIONS GRAPHICALLY.



AND HOW FACIAL EXPRESSIONS WORK IN COMICS-STYLE SEQUENCES.



THE HUMAN FACE CAN TAKE ON ANY NUMBER OF SHAPES IN THE COURSE OF A DAY.

SOME INDICATE PHYSICAL STATES SUCH AS PAIN OR EXHAUSTION.

SOME ARE MEANT TO COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS DIRECTLY.

BUT THE LION'S SHARE OF THE FACE'S POWER TO MOVE US LIES IN ITS ABILITY TO CONVEY BASIC HUMAN EMOTIONS.

THE RESULTS OF THAT PROCESS CAN BE VARIED AND COMPLEX, BUT AT ITS SOURCE ARE A FEW SIMPLE BUILDING BLOCKS.



IN 1872, DARWIN WROTE THAT SOME EXPRESSIONS MIGHT BE UNIVERSAL, A VIEW SHARED BY MODERN EXPRESSIONS EXPERTS LIKE PAUL EKMAN.*



THESE ARE THE BASIC EMOTIONS WHICH ALL HUMAN BEINGS EXHIBIT, REGARDLESS OF CULTURE, LANGUAGE OR AGE. A SMALL HANDFUL OF "PURE" EXPRESSIONS FROM WHICH OTHERS ARE DERIVED.



SIX OF THEM, TO BE EXACT.





ANGER



DISGUST



FEAR



JOY



SADNESS



SURPRISE

NOW, SOME OF YOU MIGHT BE THINKING: "THAT CAN'T BE IT! THERE ARE FAR MORE EXPRESSIONS THAN THOSE."



AND THERE ARE! BUT JUST AS THREE PRIMARY COLORS CAN BE MODIFIED OR MIXED TO ACHIEVE EVERY COLOR OF THE RAINBOW --



-- SO TOO CAN THESE EMOTIONAL PRIMARIES BE MODIFIED AND MIXED TO CREATE MANY OF THE EXPRESSIONS WE SEE EVERY DAY.



FOR EXAMPLE, BY VARYING THE INTENSITY OF OUR PRIMARIES YOU CAN SEE OTHER FAMILIAR EMOTIONS EMERGE.



STERNNESS



INDIGNATION



ANGER



RAGE



DISDAIN



AVERSION



DISGUST



REVULSION

SO INGRAINED ARE THESE INTERMEDIATE EMOTIONS THAT EACH ONE CARRIES A SPECIFIC MEANING --



CONCERN



ANXIETY



FEAR



TERROR



SATISFACTION



AMUSEMENT



JOY



LAUGHTER

-- AND EACH GETS ITS OWN NAME.



DEJECTION



MELANCHOLY



SADNESS



GRIEF



ALERTNESS



WONDER

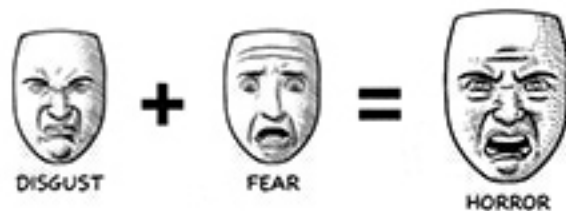
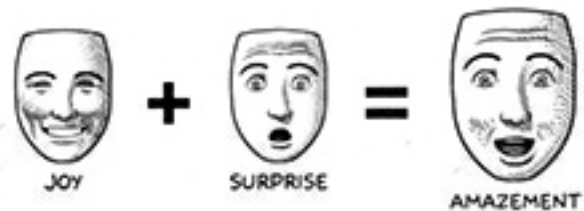
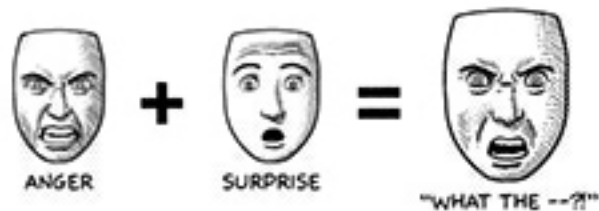
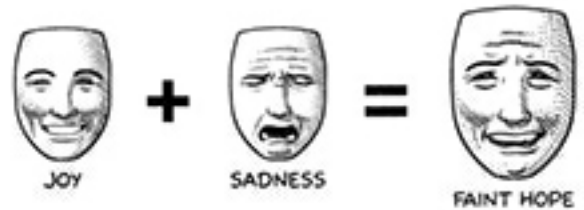
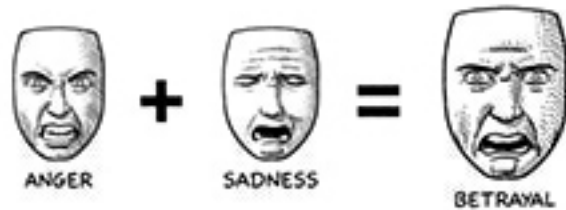
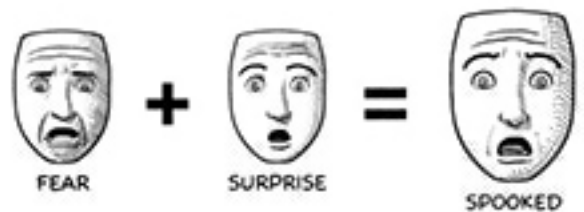
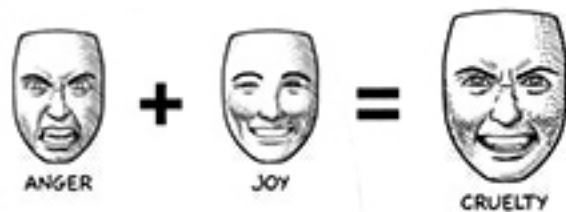
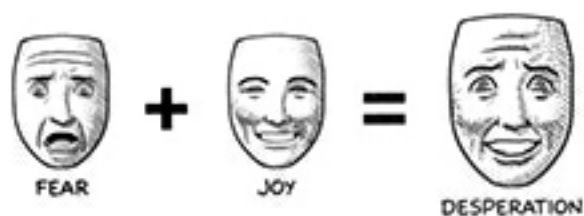
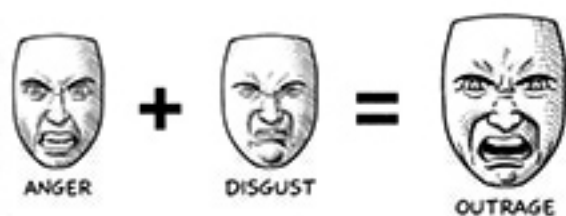
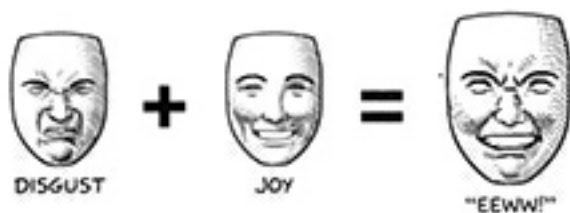


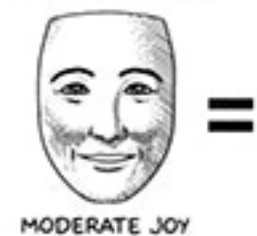
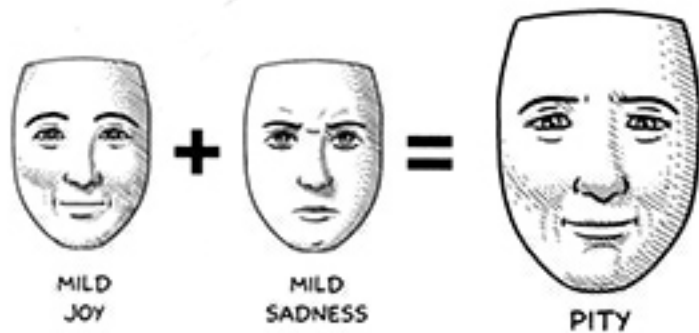
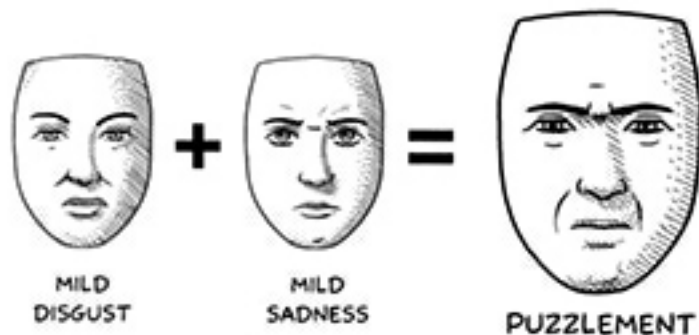
SURPRISE



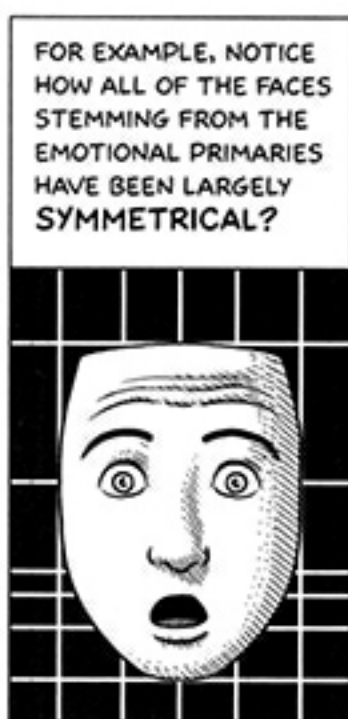
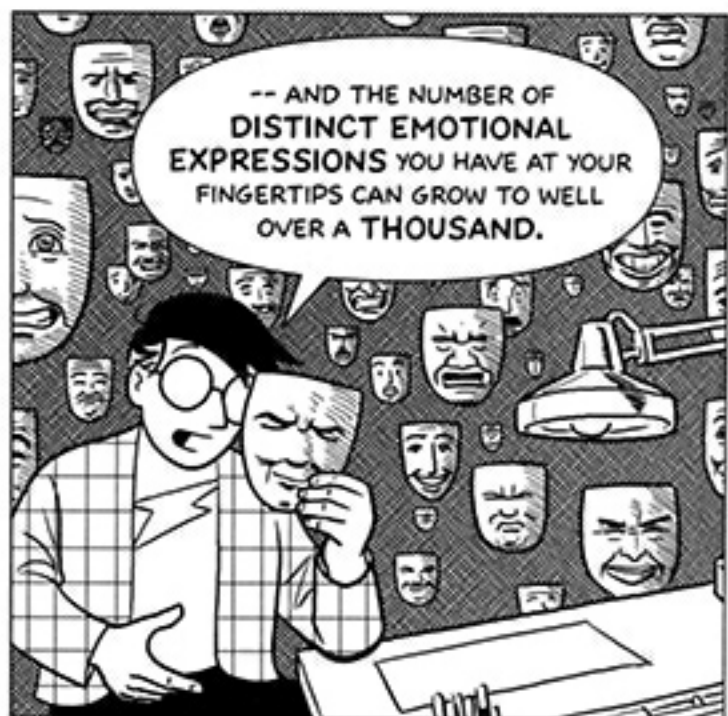
SHOCK

AND BY MIXING ANY TWO OF OUR EMOTIONAL PRIMARIES, WE CAN PRODUCE A THIRD EXPRESSION -- WHICH, IN MANY CASES, IS ALSO DISTINCT AND RECOGNIZABLE ENOUGH TO EARN ITS OWN NAME.





REMEMBERING A DECEASED LOVED ONE.



PHYSICAL STATES ARE AS INBORN AND ANCIENT A FACTOR IN FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AS BASIC EMOTIONS --

-- BUT BECAUSE THEY INVOLVE OUR CHAOTIC INTERACTIONS WITH THE PHYSICAL WORLD, THE SHAPES THEY TAKE CAN BE LESS BALANCED AND PREDICTABLE.



PAIN



DROWSINESS



NAUSEA



PLEASURE



RELAXATION



EXERTION



TICKLING



INTOXICATION



LIGHT OVERLOAD



SOUND OVERLOAD



HEAT OVERLOAD

GRAVITY, BODILY SENSATIONS AND THE EXTERNAL SOURCES OF STIMULATION ALL COME INTO PLAY.

AND NATURALLY, THESE EXPRESSIONS CAN BE COMBINED WITH THE VARYING INTENSITIES AND COMBINATIONS OF THE EMOTIONAL PRIMARIES.

ARE YOU OKAY?!

>NNH!
I'LL LIVE...



THIS LEADS TO AN EVEN GREATER NUMBER AND VARIETY OF EXPRESSIONS -- YET IT'S STILL JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG --





THESE ARE THE VISUAL SIGNALS WE SEND TO EACH OTHER **DIRECTLY**, OFTEN IN COMBINATION WITH **BODY LANGUAGE** SIGNALS LIKE **HEAD AND HAND POSITION** AND **GAZE DIRECTION**.



-- BECAUSE WHEN YOU THROW IN ALL THE MANY WAYS WE USE OUR FACES AS A FORM OF **DIRECT SPECIALIZED SIGNAL** --

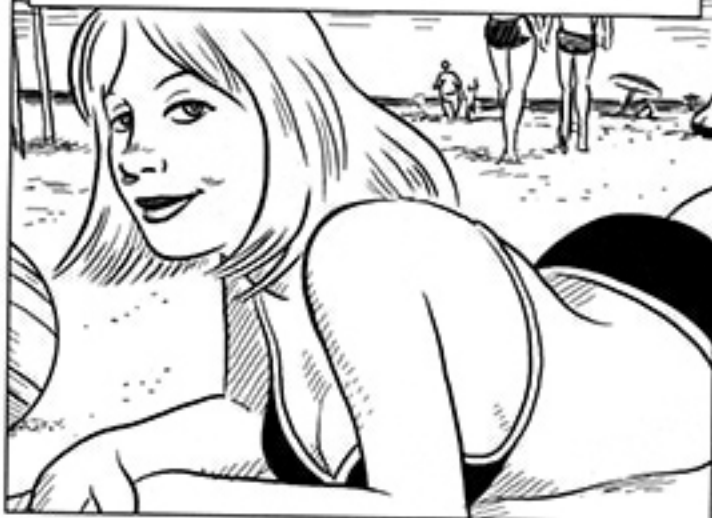


-- NO SYSTEM OF ANALYSIS COULD EVER BEGIN TO **CATALOG** ALL THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF **FACIAL EXPRESSIONS** YOUR CHARACTERS COULD WEAR!

THEY'RE DEEPLY ROOTED IN OUR **INBORN EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS** AND STILL AFFECTED BY **PHYSICAL STATES** --



-- BUT THEY ADD AN **EVER-CHANGING GLOSSARY** OF **CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC SIGNS** AND **SYMBOLS** UNDERSTOOD BY BOTH **SENDER** AND **RECEIVER**.



THEY ARE, FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, A **LANGUAGE** -- THOUGH A LANGUAGE ONLY PARTIALLY UNDER OUR CONSCIOUS CONTROL.



SOME OF THESE SIGNS HAVE BECOME AS FORMALIZED AS TRAFFIC SIGNALS.



THE WINK.



THE OUTSTRETCHED TONGUE.



THE "OH, MOM...!" LOOK.



BUT MOST ARE MORE SUBTLE AND IDIOSYNCRATIC, TAILORED TO SPECIFIC PEOPLE IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS, AND SUBJECT TO THE INDIVIDUAL STYLE OF THE SENDER.

BY ADDING HEAD POSITION AND GAZE DIRECTION TO THE MIX, AND ALLOWING FOR ASYMMETRY, THEY ACHIEVE FAR MORE VARIETY THAN THE BASIC EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS --

SUSPICIOUS



COY



SELF-RIGHTEOUS



-- BUT THEY'RE ALSO HARDER TO PIN DOWN, OR MAKE UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZABLE, SO CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT WHEN SEPARATING "PLEADING," SAY, FROM MERELY SAD, OR "REGRETFUL" FROM FORGETFUL.

SELF-SATISFIED



PLEADING



REGRETFUL



EACH EXPRESSION HAS TO MATCH A FEW KEY FEATURES TO BE RECOGNIZABLE.



HEAD
TURNED
AWAY

PLUS



NARROWED
EYES & EYE
CONTACT

PLUS



LOWERED BROW

EQUALS



SUSPICION



BUT, ONCE THOSE KEY FEATURES ARE IN PLACE, THE SENDER CAN SPIN THAT EXPRESSION IN ANY NUMBER OF DIRECTIONS.

FOUR VARIATIONS ON SUSPICION:



MISTREAT MY
DAUGHTER AND
I'LL HAVE YOU
KILLED.



OH, C'MON. YOU
DON'T REALLY
EXPECT ME TO
BELIEVE THAT?



WE CATCH YOU
MAKING PERSONAL
CALLS AGAIN,
YOU'RE FIRED.



YEAH, YOU'RE A
LIAR... BUT YOU'RE
MY KIND OF LIAR!

A BIT OF AN EMOTION
LIKE DISGUST CAN BE
ADDED, FOR EXAMPLE,
TO GIVE SUSPICION A
DISDAINFUL AIR.

BUT IF THAT EMOTION
BECOMES THE FACE'S
DOMINANT VISUAL
STATEMENT, THE
EXPRESSION CAN BE
HIJACKED.

IN REAL LIFE, WE
ACHIEVE THESE KINDS
OF PRECISE EFFECTS
WITHOUT MUCH
CONSCIOUS KNOWLEDGE
OF HOW WE DO IT.



YET, WE MUST
UNDERSTAND ON
SOME LEVEL HOW
OUR FACES ACHIEVE
THESE LOOKS --

-- BECAUSE WE CAN ALSO CONSCIOUSLY IMITATE ANY OF THESE EXPRESSIONS, AND EVEN ADD AN ELEMENT OF STYLIZATION OR EXAGGERATION TO PRODUCE A MOCK VERSION OF EACH ONE.



IN SOME CASES, AN ATTEMPT TO STOP SHOWING EMOTION CAN ACTUALLY BE ONE OF THE KEY FACTORS THAT MAKE A GIVEN FACIAL EXPRESSION RECOGNIZABLE.



EMBARRASSMENT:

AVERTED, FEARFUL GAZE.
MOUTH EXPRESSIONLESS.



RESENTMENT:

AVERTED, ANGRY GAZE.
MOUTH CLOSED TIGHTLY.

IN FACT, ADULT SOCIETY RELIES, IN LARGE PART, ON THE SUPPRESSION OF BASIC EMOTIONS. THE WAYS IN WHICH WE SUPPRESS AND REDIRECT THEM ARE THE SOURCE OF MUCH OF OUR EXPRESSIONS' VARIETY AND DEPTH.



LOOK AT THE SMILES IN SNAPSHOTS AND EACH WILL SEEM AS UNIQUE AS A SNOWFLAKE.



BUT UNDERNEATH THEM ALL ARE THESE SAME BASIC PRINCIPLES PLAYED OUT AGAIN AND AGAIN.

AS PART OF HUMAN SOCIETY, WE ALL WANT TO SEE PAST EACH OTHER'S FACES TO THE PERSON WITHIN.



-- WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE HUMAN FACE IS A MACHINE OF SORTS, FOR ALL ITS BEAUTY AND SUBTLETY.



WE DON'T WANT TO DECONSTRUCT THEM TO THE POINT WHERE THE HUMAN FACE SEEMS LIKE A MACHINE.



BUT AS ARTISTS HOPING TO REPRODUCE THOSE INNER PERSONALITIES IN THE MINDS OF OUR READERS --



AND THE ONLY WAY TO UNDERSTAND THAT MACHINE IS TO GO BENEATH THE SURFACE --

-- AND SEE ITS PARTS IN ACTION.

