TEN THOUSAND FACES
A Living Memorial for victims of Covid-19
created with GAN technology

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> "The doctor remembered the plague at Constantinople that, according to Procopius, caused ten thousand deaths in a single day. Ten thousand dead made about five times the audience in a biggish cinema. Yes, that was how it should be done. You should collect the people at the exits of five picture-houses, you should lead them to a city square and make them die in heaps if you wanted to get a clear notion of what it means. Then at least you could add some familiar faces to the anonymous mass. But naturally that was impossible to put into practice; moreover, what man knows ten thousand faces?"

> Camus, Albert. *The Plague* (p. 44). GENERAL PRESS. Kindle Edition.

01. Description

The intersection of forensic aesthetics and computational photography. In Camus's *The Plague*, Dr. Bernard Rieux is overwhelmed by the increasing death toll, and recalls the anecdote of ten thousand deaths occurring on a single day during the plague at Constantinople. When the Doctor asks "...for what man knows ten thousand faces', his rhetoric is an effort to humanize the scale of the loss and counter the lack of empathy inherent in the bureaucratic systems through which he operates.

At the time of this writing, the Covid-19 pandemic has claimed more than one million lives worldwide, with statistical peaks surpassing ten thousand deaths per day. Using GAN networks, I will generate photographic portraits which stand as referents to victims of the virus, creating a digital memorial. The initial dataset used to generate the portraits will be populated using portraits of actual victims, adding "some familiar faces to the anonymous mass", as Dr. Rieux suggests, while composing a base of digital 'DNA' which injects a trace-of-truth into the piece; It's fragments, however microscopic, will be contained in all subsequently generated portraits. Both the initial data set and the generated images will be representative of the actual statistical makeup of Covid-19 victims and by doing so will point to the disproportionate rate at which minorities currently suffer from the disease.

The generated images will be displayed in black & white, extremely small in scale, and organized in a grid, creating an abstracted typology(geneaology) of those who have succumbed to the disease. By blurring fact and fiction via traditional and computational photography, the piece will answer Dr. Rieux's question, but will it humanize the loss?

02. Software

Generated Adversarial Networks, Photoshop, Lightroom
https://thispersondoesnotexist.com
https://github.com/NVlabs/stylegan2
https://github.com/lucidrains/stylegan2-pytorch

03. DataSet Makeup

Statistics from CDC and APM Research (independently funded organization):
https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#demographics
https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race

04. Ethical Considerations

Avoiding bias in neural network data sets:

Trevor Paglen and Kate Crawford, *ImageNet Roulette*
https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/art-project-exposed-racial-biases-artificial-intelligence-system-180973207/
https://news.artnet.com/art-world/imagenet-roulette-trevor-paglen-kate-crawford-1658305

Regarding permission to use photographs of those who succumbed to the virus:

Legally, the dead have no rights. Images are sourced from NYTimes archive of covid-19 obituaries.
https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/obituaries/people-died-coronavirus-obituaries.html?action=click&algo=random_desk_filter&block=editors_picks_recirc&fellback=false&imp_id=419513850&impression_id=cfba2162-f567-11ea-8e6f-fba9a8276e90&index=2&pgtype=Article&region=footer&req_id=620509723&surface=home-featured