

Trends in Web sites

ABOUT FACE

Web sites let you make your own mug shots

By Randy A. Salas

Minneapolis Star Tribune

Playing with faces — yours and others' — is always popular online and with Web Search readers. The latest interactive feature, MushyGushy, lets users transplant their heads into animated e-cards. But there are plenty of other Web pursuits from the past and present that offer some fun face time.

Note: You will need the free Flash (www.adobe.com) or Java (www.java.com) plug-ins for most of these applications. The sites usually will prompt you if your Web browser doesn't have the proper set-up.

► www.mushygushy.com: The recently introduced MushyGushy lets you personalize e-cards (electronic greeting cards sent by e-mail) by adding your mug to the animated messages. Preparing a photo of your face for a message is a cinch, but there's a video demo if you don't get it. You can even match the skin tone of the cartoon body to your face. If you register (free), you can maintain a gallery of head shots to make creating future e-cards a snap. There are animated GushyGrams for every occasion. I liked the "American Idol"-themed one in which you can make a friend into someone who's auditioning

for the singing competition. After wrapping up Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," judges Randy Jackson and Simon Cowell pan the performance while Paula Abdul is off in La La Land. But then you appear as a fourth judge, saying, "I loved it!" Then the message appears: "You're my Idol. From your No. 1 fan." Aw.

► www.mono-1.com/monoface: Monoface is the wildly popular and remarkably clever creation of the Minneapolis ad agency Mono. Nominated in this year's Webby Awards, Monoface co-opts the visages of the agency's 15 employees and shuffles them to create goofy faces. Click on an eye, nose, mouth or head and that part of the image changes to that of a different person. The results can be hilarious, heightened by the seamless patchwork and the employees' expressions. There are 759,375 possible face mash-ups, and you can opt to see a gallery of them all.

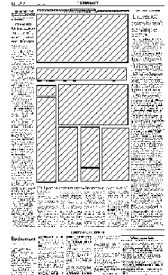
► flashface.ctapt.de: Become a police sketch artist with Max Ishchenko's Ultimate Flash Face. It's a powerful tool, with dozens of hairstyles, eye shapes and more to conjure a person's mug. The scaling tool, which changes the shape and size of features, is invaluable. And you can save your creations and print them out. Still, after playing around with it for a while, I'm left wondering if crime suspects ever really look like the sketches prompted by witness accounts. To see what I mean, you should check

out Police Guide's Computerized Sketch Artist (www.policeguide.com/cgi/sketch-artist.cgi), in which you detail facial features and the application creates a detailed likeness. You'll be surprised at the results.

More happy faces

The greatest hits among face sites previously covered by Web Search:

- Turn yourself into a child, an El Greco painting or a chimp with the Face Transformer: www.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/~morph
- Shake your head vigorously while posing for a photo and — voila! — you have a Jowler: www.jowlers.com
- Let MyHeritage analyze your facial features to see which celebrities you resemble: www.myheritage.com
- Create a talking-head e-card in this less-animated precursor to MushyGushy: veepers.budlight.com
- Give yourself a new look virtually with iVillage's Makeover-o-Matic: makeover.ivillage.com.





Monoface is the popular creation of the Minneapolis ad agency Mono in Minnesota, which co-opts the visages of the agency's 15 employees and shuffles them to create goofy faces.



MushyGushy lets you personalize e-cards by adding your mug to the animated messages. Preparing a photo of your face for a message is easy, especially with the help of a video demo.



Photos by Minneapolis Star Tribune

Randy A. Salas, a columnist for the Minneapolis Star Tribune, shows how you can turn yourself into a child, an El Greco painting, center, or a chimp, right, with the Face Transformer. (<http://morph.cs.st-andrews.ac.uk/>)