

GARY SCHNEIDER
genetic self-portrait



THE WAREHOUSE GALLERY
guide #1

In genetic terms only one percent of you is you. This small fraction of your DNA contains all the necessary genetic information to define for shape; size; eye, hair, and skin color; and every other feature you recognize in the mirror as defining your unique identity. The remaining ninety-nine percent of your individual essence is exactly the same as every other human being.

Since 1953 when scientists James Watson and Francis Crick figured out the structure of DNA, the essential ingredient of all life, the potentials and pitfalls of their breakthrough has been anticipated and debated by everyone from farmers to politicians with varying degrees of hope and doom. In the late 1990s artist Gary Schneider entered the DNA dialogue and began a collaborative project with a number of scientists, resulting in the creation of a new kind of self-portrait that reached down to the level of his individual chromosomes.

Scientists work to establish facts in the process of discovery and artists work at illuminating ideas in the process of asking questions. In creating *Genetic Self-Portrait* Schneider moved beyond purely scientific diagnostic DNA records to create images that explore the emotional potential of knowing that our most intimate information of health and heredity can be revealed, or that our very presence can be traced to a specific location and time, from the smallest flake of ourselves that we leave behind.

Using a variety of printing techniques and a selection process that merges poetic resonance with scientific accuracy, Schneider presents us with a personal portrait and at the same time asks us to consider how we are unique and where we stand on common ground. No matter what human potential is uncovered by our future understanding and discoveries that for now remain hidden in our individual genes, *Genetic Self-Portrait* reveals that while we may always want to think of ourselves as more than the sum of our parts, our real promise might be found in looking at the ninety-nine percent of ourselves we share with everyone else.

Jeffrey Hoone
Syracuse, New York
October 2007

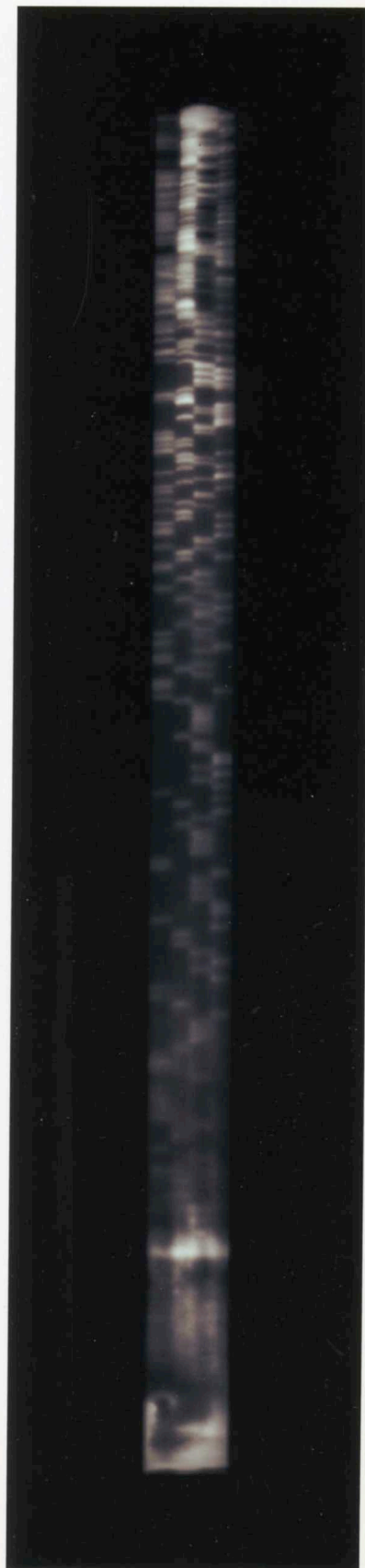
DNA SEQUENCE—THE TESTIS-DETERMINING GENE SRY, 1997

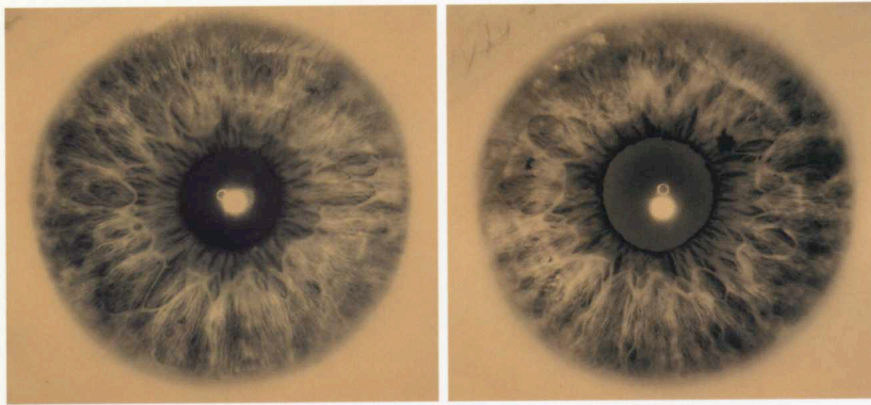
PLATINUM/PALLADIUM PRINT, 16 1/2 x 4"

NO MAGNIFICATION WAS USED TO PRODUCE THE PRINT.

SPECIMEN PREPARED BY STEPHEN BROWN, M.D.

IMAGING PROCESS—AUTO RADIOGRAM





IRISES, 1997

SILVER GELATIN PRINTS, 29 X 31" EACH

SIZE OF ORIGINAL OBJECT— $\frac{9}{16}$ X $\frac{5}{8}$ "

SPECIMEN PREPARED BY DENISE HESS.

IMAGING PROCESS—FUNDUS CAMERA

A fundus camera is a 35mm camera adapted to photograph the interior of the eye with a light source projected through the lens of the camera. I asked to use this camera to photograph my irises because the light source, seen here reflected off the lenses of my eyes, would not interfere with the images of my irises.



HANDS, 1997

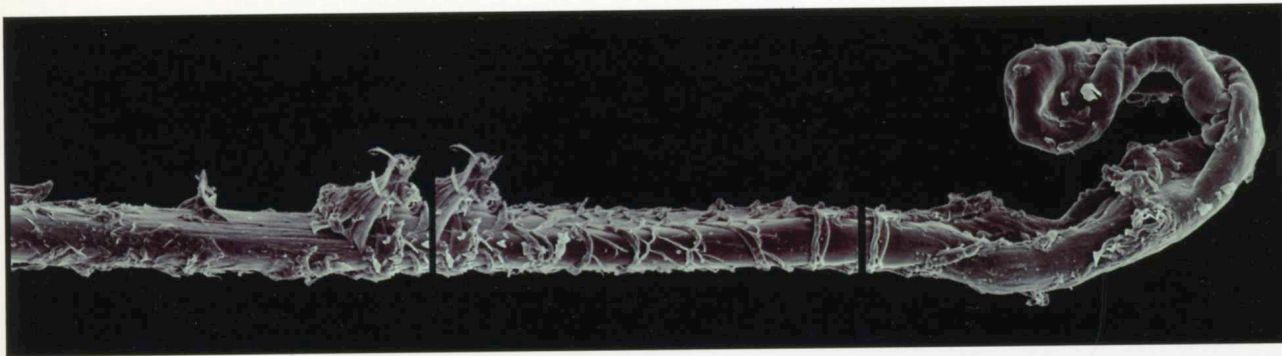
SILVER GELATIN PRINTS, 36 X 29" EACH

NO MAGNIFICATION WAS USED TO PRODUCE THE ORIGINAL NEGATIVE.

IMAGING PROCESS—PHOTOGRAM

These photographs were made by imprinting my hands onto 10 x 8" film emulsions. The images occur through the deposit of heat and sweat onto the emulsions, a process described by John McElhone, conservator, and Lori Pauli, assistant curator of photographs at the National Gallery of Canada as "autothermohydrograms."

At a certain point in my exploration of a genetic diagnostic self-portrait I realized that the images seemed too generic to me. It was with the addition of my hand prints that the portrait moved from a harvesting of my biological information to an emotional response to the Human Genome Project. I wanted the portrait to be an act of faith inside my anxiety of stepping into the unknown of future biology. So, from the most clinical representation, *DNA sequence*, to the most intimate of images, *Hands*, lies the full range of this multi-layered self-portrait.



HAIR, 1997

SILVER GELATIN PRINTS, 20 x 24" EACH

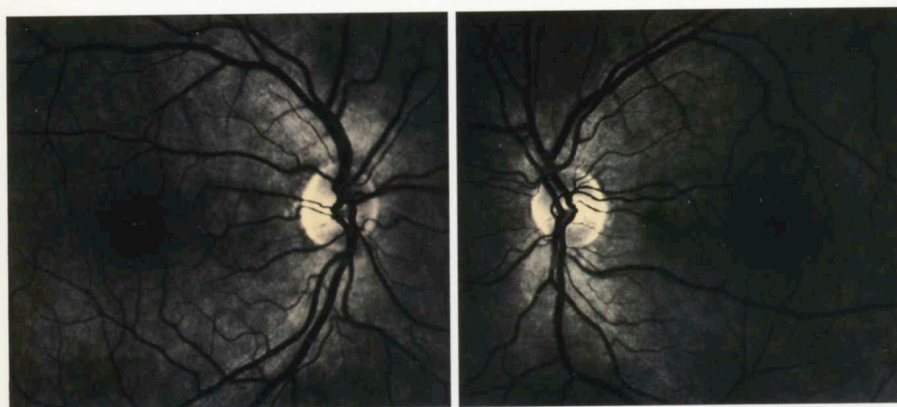
SIZE OF ORIGINAL OBJECT—HAIR THICKNESS IS 100 MICRONS.

SPECIMEN PREPARED BY PROFESSOR STEPHEN BECK.

IMAGING PROCESS—SCANNING ELECTRON MICROSCOPE

This specimen is not very enlarged by comparison to some of the other images in this self-portrait. The hair was attached to a metal nub with double-sided tape. The nub and hair were then placed inside a vacuum chamber and coated with platinum. This plating conducts the electron beam when the specimen is scanned. I made a 4 x 5" negative off what appeared to be a television screen. The image looks very much like a classically-lit still life. The difficulty was finding the right microscopist with the right microscope. The specimen I chose was seen as an inappropriately bad example—I had chosen a grey hair for its character. I was enlarging these negatives beyond what is normal for scientific illustration. Small shifts in the resolution of the image, although critical to me, seemed redundant to the microscopists. Thank you Professor Beck for indulging me.

Hairs store an enormous amount of historical information about their host. The hair follicle is a source of mitochondrial DNA.



RETINAS, 1998

SILVER GELATIN PRINTS, 29 x 31" EACH

SIZE OF ORIGINAL OBJECT— $\frac{9}{16}$ x $\frac{5}{8}$ "

SPECIMEN PREPARED BY DENISE HESS.

IMAGING PROCESS—FUNDUS CAMERA

The fundus camera is built specifically to photograph the retinas. My pupils had to be dilated in order to photograph the inside of my eyes. These images show the bright optic nerves surrounded by blood vessels. They also include the macula, the shadowy area looming in each print.

All the images together are my most private parts.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

DNA Sequence—The Testis-Determining Gene SRY, 1997

Platinum/Palladium print, 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 4"

Imaging process—Auto radiogram

Hands, 1997

Silver gelatin prints, 36 x 29" each

Imaging process—Photogram

Tumor Suppressor Gene (MLL) on Chromosome 11 and on the Nucleus, 1997

Silver gelatin prints, 29 x 31" each panel

Imaging process—Fluorescent-light microscope

Irises, 1997

Silver gelatin prints, 29 x 31" each

Imaging process—Fundus camera

Chromosomes, 1997

Platinum/Palladium prints. This series of 46 chromosomes range in size in descending order from chromosome 1 which is 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ " to the Y chromosome which is 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{13}{16}$ ".

Imaging process—Light microscope

Retinas, 1998

Silver gelatin prints, 29 x 31" each

Imaging process—Fundus Camera

Dental Panoramic Radiograph, 1997

Silver gelatin prints, 29 x 31" each

Imaging process—X-ray

DNA DYZ3/DYZ1, 1998

Silver gelatin print, 36 x 29"

Imaging process—Fluorescent-light microscope

Dried Blood, 1997

Silver gelatin print, 20 x 24"

Imaging process—Microscope slide, photogram

Hair, 1997

Silver gelatin prints, 20 x 24" each

Imaging process—Scanning electron microscope

Buccal Mucosa Cell in the Oral Cavity to Show a Nucleus and Mitochondria, 1997

Silver gelatin prints, 36 x 29" each

Imaging process—Transmission electron microscope

Sperm, 1997

Silver gelatin print, 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ "

Imaging process—Nanoscope atomic force microscope

Ears, 1997

Silver gelatin prints, 36 x 29"

Imaging process—Photogram

Mitochondrial DNA Sequence from a Hair Follicle Showing the Respiratory Chain Energy Producing Gene ND1, 1997

Silver gelatin print, 23 $\frac{5}{16}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Imaging process—Auto radiogram

Gary Schneider was born in South Africa in 1954. He received a BFA from the University of Cape Town and an MFA from Pratt Institute in New York. In the 1970s and 1980s he worked in the theater of Richard Foreman and Robert Wilson making films. Schneider has been exhibiting his photography since 1991. He completed his *Genetic Self-Portrait* installation in 1998, and since then it has been exhibited across the US, including the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Mass MoCA, and The International Center of Photography. The installation has also been exhibited internationally and continues to travel. In 1999 *Genetic Self-Portrait* was published in book form by Light Work, and in 2000 the work received an Eisenstadt award.

Schneider's work has been exhibited internationally, and recent exhibition venues include the Sackler Museum at Harvard College in Boston, and the National Portrait Gallery of Scotland. A major retrospective of his work will open at the Museum of Photographic Arts in San Diego in 2008. Schneider's photographs are included in the permanent collections at The Whitney Museum, The Guggenheim Museum, and The Metropolitan Museum in New York City; The National Gallery of Canada; The Musée de L'Elysée in Lausanne, Switzerland; The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; and The Art Institute of Chicago.

GARY SCHNEIDER *genetic self-portrait*

13 NOVEMBER 2007-26 JANUARY 2008

THE WAREHOUSE GALLERY ♦ SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

350 West Fayette Street, Syracuse, NY 13202 ♦ (315) 443-6450 ♦ www.thewarehousegallery.org

Cover image: *Chromosome #11*, 1997. Silver gelatin print 8 1/2 x 6 3/8".

The work in the exhibition was borrowed from Joy of Giving Something, Inc., a non-profit organization, www.jgsinc.org.

THE WAREHOUSE GALLERY

Syracuse University
350 West Fayette Street
Syracuse, NY 13202

The Warehouse Gallery is an international contemporary art venue of the SUArt Galleries at Syracuse University. The gallery's mission is to present exhibitions and programs by artists whose work engages the community in a dialogue regarding the role the arts can play in illuminating critical issues of our life and times.

GALLERY STAFF

Frank Olive—Designer/Preparator
Elaine M.S. Quick—Programs Coordinator
Rosemary O'Sullivan—Graduate Assistant
Crystal McKenzie—Work-study
John Wolf—Intern
Elizabeth Gorfaine—Intern
Jeffrey Hoone—Interim Curator

Information—info@thewarehousegallery.org
Voice (315) 443-6450 Fax (315) 443-6494

