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Final Project

My piece is a humorous take on the sexual selection of bowerbirds, using an online dating profile as a tool to illustrate and explain their sexual selection to a general audience. In my own work, I often reference the internet. In the past, I have created projects inspired by Facebook and Skype, so this direction was interesting to me. I consulted different sources including scientific research papers and books to provide myself with general information on the bowerbirds, as well as specific details to answer the questions asked in the profile in a way that describes the bowerbird sexual selection.

The male bowerbird is an artistic and fascinating bird that goes to great lengths to impress a potential female mate. The male not only creates, but beautifully decorates a bower in attempt to court a female bird. This bower is used only for the purpose of attracting and for copulating with females, which is done inside [1]. A bower is a structure composed of sticks consisting of two parallel walls atop a clearing made on the ground [1]. The outside of the bower is decorated with colorful objects in which the male collects, hoards and displays to impress a female. Objects range from man made materials, snake skins, feathers, and flowers [1]. The male bowerbird does not stick around after, and the female is left to go off and make their own nests and to raise their offspring by themselves [5].

The male bowerbirds bowers are considered by humans to be so beautiful, that David Rothenberg wrote a book claiming bowerbirds to be great artists [7]. The male bowerbirds, specifically satin bowerbirds, don't just build a beautiful bower but customize it with entirely blue objects (man made, natural and even objects stolen from other bowers), line the bower floor with grasses and some even paint the interior with crushed berries applied by soft pieces of bark [1]. The bowerbirds does all of this work and collecting to attract a female mate.

To create this project, I first used a template from an online dating site called OkCupid. I created a faux profile for a bowerbird, filling out the questions in a way I believed a bowerbird may answer them, explaining different elements of their sexual selection. I also browsed other profiles on the site, trying to understand how others fill out their profiles so that I could add a humorous and human element to the profile. Surprisingly, I even received a few messages for potential dates from some Australians. I must have the best bower on OkCupid!

After filling out my faux profile, I took several screenshots of it to make sure I captured it in it's entirety. This turned out to be several different images. Using photoshop, I attempted to edit the pieces together and format them so that they could be printed on one sheet of 11x17 paper. Being a fine arts major, this simple task proved to be very difficult. Eventually I managed to get the pieces printed and pieced them together by hand. I taped the pieces down onto a cutting board. I chose to trace the entire profile onto a sheet of mylar with black ink to give the piece an illustrative quality. Mylar was chosen for it's transparent quality along with a sheet of acetate on top. This gave the piece layers and a more screen quality. I painted parts of the back of the mylar blue to make it more recognizable as an OkCupid profile and also because blue is a popular color choice for satin bowerbirds decorations.

The idea of trying so hard to attract a female mate coupled with the idea of bowerbirds as artists, caused me to think of them in a more human way. This led me to think about online dating, where people build their profile to attract a mate, in the same way a bowerbird builds their bower to attract a mate. Having had an online dating profile myself in the past and speaking to people who have also had them before, it seems that it is also mostly the women doing the choosing with the men trying to impress them with their profile and messages. Giving animals human qualities is always something that provides humor, and this take on bowerbird sexual selection not only provides information on their sexual selection to a general audience, but also a provides a good laugh.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Borgia, Gerald (1985). Bower quality, number of decorations and mating success of male satin bowerbirds: an experimental analysis. *Anim. Behav.*, 266-271.

This source was used as an outline of bower characteristics preferred by female bowerbirds to better write a proper faux dating profile. It was also used as research to support the pieces claim that females choose male bowerbirds based on the quality of the bower and informed the main theme of the project, bowerbird sexual selection.

2. Borgia, Gerald (1995). Complex male display and female choice in the spotted bowerbird: specialized functions for different bower decorations. *Anim. Behav.*, 1291-1301

This source explains different types of bower decorations, some which were talked about in the bowerbird OkCupid profile. This source provides specific examples of bower decorations as well as general information.

3. Borgia, Gerald & Coleman, Seth (2000). Co-option of male courtship signals from aggressive display in bowerbirds. *The Royal Society*, 1735-1740.

This source provides information about skraa calls and other aggression used in courtship by the bowerbirds. This information was used in the bowerbird OkCupid profile as well as used as general information to inform the project.

4. Boria, Gerald (1995). Why Do Bowerbirds Build Bowers? *American Scientist* Volume 83, 542-547.

This source provided general information about bowerbirds and bowers used in the bowerbird OkCupid profile. This source provided descriptions of bowers, information on where bowerbirds live, and information on the bowerbird sexual selection asking the question, why do bowerbirds build bowers?

5. Gail, P., Albert, J., & Borgia, G. (2003). Multiple male traits interact: attractive bower decorations facilitate attractive behavioral displays in satin bowerbirds. *The Royal Society*, 2389-2395.

This source provided information on the male satin bowerbirds which was specific to the project. It explained the bowerbird sexual selection and also provided general information about that. It also provided specific information and descriptions of bowers and decorations.

6. Robsen, T.E., Goldizen, A.W. & Green, D.J. (2005). The multiple signals assessed by female satin bowerbirds: could they be used to narrow down females' choices of mates? *Biology Letters* 1, 264-267.

This source provided information about other aggressive behaviors used by the satin bowerbirds and informed how they are done without startling the female. This source provided direct and indirect information used in the project.

7. Rothenberg, David (2011). *Survival of the Beautiful: Art, Science and Evolution*. New York: Bloomsbury.

This interesting source provided information on bowerbirds as artists, which gives them a sort of human quality. This informed the project greatly and also provided general information about their bowers, how they're created, materials used and bowerbird sexual selection.

8. [Untitled photograph of bower]. Retrieved November 10, 2012, from: http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3251/3063476368_389de2a9c2.jpg

This photo was used as part of the faux bowerbird profile. This photo was uploaded as the user photo on the actual OkCupid profile, and was also used as a reference for the final bowerbird user picture illustration.



Blueboy123

08 / M / Straight / Single
Australia

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Personality

My self-summary

yo! i'm just a bowerbird lookin' for love.

What I'm doing with my life

you know. courting the ladies, passin' on them genes! I spend most of my days collecting objects (i normally collect man made blue objects, shells, berries, etc) to display around my bower. my bower is made up of small uniform sticks I find. I decorate the outside of my bower with the objects (check out my pics). then I wait for the ladies to come and be impressed. 8-)

I'm really good at

building stick bowers, collecting, decorating, dancing, courting the ladies.

The first things people usually notice about me

ladies usually notice the impressive display of decorations I've collected and placed around my bower then usually my stick bower. then usually my big blue eyes, bright male plumage, dance moves and skraa call. guys usually notice my sweet collection of decorations and attempt to steal them for their own bower 9_6 ugh.

Favorite books, movies, shows, music, and food

umm for tv i dig Hoarders. love berries...

The six things I could never do without

blue stuff (love blue anything!), collecting, dancing, sticks, lady birds, sex.

I spend a lot of time thinking about

courting the lady birds, sex.

On a typical Friday night I am

out collecting, or hanging around my bower.

The most private thing I'm willing to admit

I'm not going to help you raise the babies lol

I'm looking for

- Girls who like guys
- Ages 21-30
- Near me
- For casual sex

You should message me if

you think I have the most impressive bower. if you do message me, I'll invite you inside where you'll be safe to watch me dance and sing my skraa calls for you from outside. once you're thoroughly impressed, we can get it on and you can get all those good genes you know i have! then you can go off and raise those babies!

My Details



Last Online	Online now!
Ethnicity	Satin
Height	30cm
Body Type	Athletic
Diet	Mostly vegetarian
Smokes	Trying to quit
Drinks	Not at all
Drugs	Never
Religion	Other
Sign	Gemini
Education	—
Job	Artistic / Musical / Writer
Income	Less than \$20,000
Offspring	Has kids, and wants more
Pets	Dislikes dogs and dislikes cats
Speaks	English



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