

Oh, baby face, you've got the cutest little...

By Sandy Mohr

What makes your face noticeable or attractive in a crowd of 22,000 students?

This question has been studied informally for seven years by Martin Peterson, associate professor of anthropology, who uses some of this information in teaching his Introduction to Anthropology class.

For instance, some university professors grow beards to make their heads look bigger, said Peterson, who himself sports a beard.

Peterson's reactions of a car's resemblance to a face sold cars and controlled their design in the 1950s and 60s, Peterson said. This theory was developed by Richard Coss, an architect and psychologist, at the University of California at Berkeley. Especially important to this theory were reactions to eyes, he said.

"We can be caught by eyes and never get away from them," Peterson said.

One thing students do to make their face more attractive is to make their eyes look bigger, Peterson said. He said this concept of wide eyes complements a theory by Konrad Lorenz, the German ethologist who won a Nobel Prize for his work.

Here's looking at you

Lorenz said that people react favorably to baby characteristics, Peterson said, and wide eyes is a baby characteristic.

Sometimes when this attracts men to women, it raises a protective instinct in them, Peterson said, just like the instinct to protect a baby.

Women try to make their eyes look bigger through the use of eye makeup or by shaping or coloring their eyebrows, he said.

"There is every reason to believe that eye makeup is important to people's reactions," he said.

Hair that is styled close to the face and the eyes also makes the eyes look bigger, Peterson said, because it cuts down on the shape of the face and the size of the eyes in proportion to it.

Men can make their eyes look bigger through hair styling too, or with sideburns, he added.

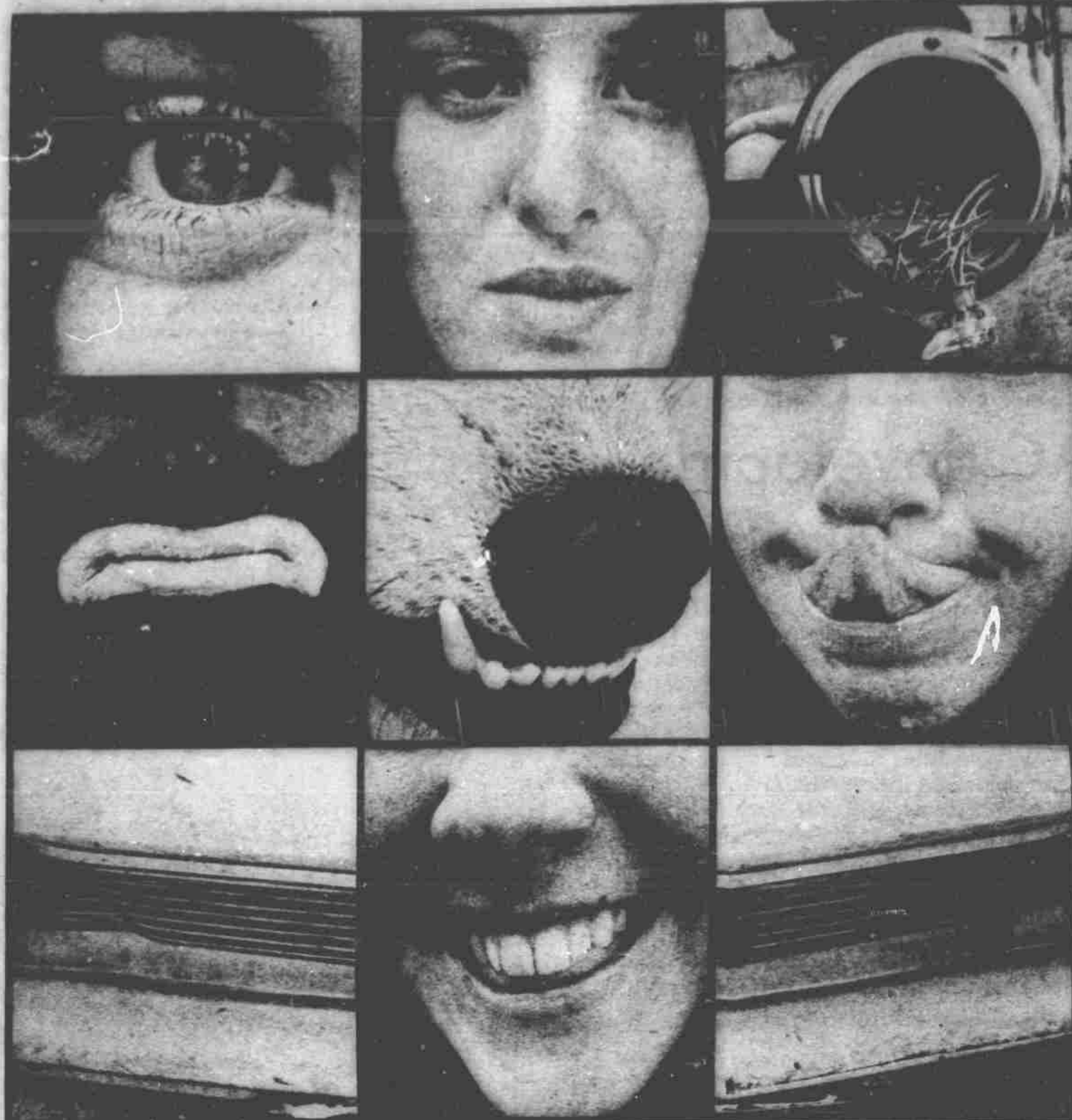
Lips also are important to the attractiveness of a face, Peterson said.

Faces grow on you

"We make decisions on how we're going to hold our lips," he said, adding that people learn how to smile and whether to show teeth when they smile.

Peterson said the face grows 10 per cent during its lifetime, and people can "reconstruct" their faces. This accounts for adopted children that look like their parents, and married couples that resemble one another, he said.

However, faces are not the only things that attract people's attention. Remember your mother telling



Photos by Ted Kirk

you to sit up straight and not to slouch?

From posture, Peterson said, an observer gets a certain perception of a person, and that person's perception of himself.

Posture can indicate they way the body feels, or the way the body feels can be controlled by posture, he said.

Enhancing characteristics

One gets a "sensation of pleasure and well-being from good posture," Peterson said.

Looking at posture, people also react to body size. Clothes are used to emphasize certain parts of the body, he said.

To emphasize the chest, women may wear tops with a strong-colored horizontal line at the breast, Peterson said. For instance, a dark sweater with a

white stripe, he said. A top with vertical stripes that diverge and converge or squares that are distorted may offer "some interesting optical illusions," he added.

A dress with circles around the waist indicates an hourglass figure, he said.

Long legs also are a desirable characteristic in women, he said. A woman can alter this with tall shoes and long pants. In addition, he said, long hair makes legs look longer.

For men, Peterson said the basic triangular figure is most attractive to women. Open collars give the effect of a "V"-shape and widen the shoulder appearance, he said.

Military uniforms with crossed belts and epaulets emphasize big shoulders, he said.

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