

Self-Portrait

Macintosh G4 Powerbook
2003
This is my first Mac in about 10 years. I'm still getting used to its idiosyncrasies, but it's growing on me. I bought it because my wife wanted to see me at home occasionally. A funny sight is me walking around my house, holding the laptop above my head as I try to pick up a wireless signal.

Qualcomm 3G CDMA Cellular Phone
2003
This phone sucks. The usability of it is terrible. It took me a month to figure out how to get my voice mail. I still forget which button sends the call and which hangs up. It doesn't ring half the time. A vast majority of its features I never use. Since my watch broke, the main thing I use it for is the clock on its display.

Glasses Case and Eyeglass Cloth
2002
I've never worn contacts. Putting something into my eye every day is not my idea of a good time. Besides, glasses look good on me; they give my round face a little definition. Plus, people think you're smarter when you wear them. I can never remember whether I'm near- or far-sighted, but my right eye is much weaker than my left. I didn't start wearing glasses until I was in college and had to read all those footnotes in the Norton Anthologies of English Literature. Strangely enough, after college, I went to work for Norton, the people who made me blind.

Pencils, Eraser, and Sharpener
2003
Alongside a thinking brain, a feeling heart, a skilled hand, and a good eye, these are the designer's tools. These and a laptop.

Assortment of Pens
2003
I take class notes on my laptop. I do all my sketches in pencil. I pay bill electronically, so I don't have to sign anything. So you tell me why I carry so many pens around with me.

Tea Bags
2003
It's rumored that my mother put tea into my bottles. I've never been a coffee drinker, always tea with lots of milk and sugar. Invariably when you go somewhere they only serve coffee, so I carry my own tea bags. Typically Earl Grey, but also sometimes Prince of Wales and the unfortunately-named Plantation Mint. It's sometimes months before I use them, so they tend to get really beat up in my bag. They are for emergency use only, when I really need caffeine.

House Key
2003
Finding a place to live from 500 miles away isn't easy. I was lucky to have found my historic townhouse in Squirrel Hill.

Guinness Key Chain
2000
I bought this keychain in Dublin, at the Guinness Brewery. We went to Ireland for my 30th birthday. It was also days after we found out my wife was pregnant with my daughter. The keychain is broken, but I don't want a new one because I'm attached to it. Plus, the bottle opener comes in handy. Often.

Giant Eagle Club Card
2003
A man's gotta eat.

Graduate Design Studio Key
2003
I got this key on my first day of graduate school. The studio is now my home on campus, a source of wisdom and friends.

Emergency Thermal Blanket
2001
On September 11, 2001, I was in Manhattan and saw the World Trade Center towers fall from blocks away. In the weeks afterward, several emergency items made their way into my bag: power bars, batteries, a radio, a Leatherman utility tool, a flashlight, and this small, lightweight blanket. Everything else has slowly been eaten or taken out, but probably the least useful item still remains.

Honda Element Key
2003
Some people think my car is ugly, but I really love it. It's like a plastic room on wheels, and it's chock-full of nicely-designed tidbits.

The Club™ Key
2003
I'm also paranoid about my Element getting stolen.

Management Company Promotional Keychain
2003
Calling that number will put you in contact with the modern-day counterparts to the witches from Macbeth.

Dan Saffer

Hankerchief
1990
The oldest item in my bag by far. Stolen from a former girlfriend, this well-worn piece of cloth has been all over the United States and to England, France, Mexico, Canada, and Ireland. I've had it with me skiing and camping, as well as on Manhattan subways. It has been, at various times, a mask, a doo rag, a sweatband, a snot rag, a shield, a necklace (human and canine), a glove, a dish towel, a towel, a dust cloth, and probably a dozen other things besides. But I wouldn't feel sad if I lost it. It's a thing, and all things are transient. They aren't who we are.

Altoids Breath Mints
2003
"I'm not embarrassed. Fresh breath is a priority in my life." — Farmer Ted (Anothony Michael Hall) in Sixteen Candles

Aiwa HP-J370 Headphones
2002
My last workplace was in a large, open room. So to tune out the world, I got these headphones. Currently playing on them: Liz Phair, Fountains of Wayne, and The Weakerthans.

Wallet
1997
The third wedding anniversary is traditionally the "Leather" anniversary, and although I was hoping for some chaps or a riding crop, my wife got me this wallet instead. It's a little frayed at the edges, but still works. It holds an assortment of credit cards, receipts, and ID cards. Not usually much money though, especially now that I'm in grad school.

Business Cards
2002
The high turnover rate of the dotcom years, combined with the cost-cutting of the dotcom burst, has seemingly made employers hesitant about giving out business cards anymore. So when I got an offer for 500 free business cards, I jumped at it.

Crumpler Very Busy Man Bag
2003
Obviously I carry a lot of crap around with me every day. So a good bag is essential. So far this one isn't bad, but I've only had it two months so it's hard to tell.

Sketch Pad
2003
Before I came to Carnegie Mellon to get a Master's Degree in Design, I figured I should learn how to draw. This sketch book is a relic of the course I took at Bloomfield Adult School on basic drawing. I never did learn how to draw well, but the pages are starting to fill with drawings and sketches for all my school work. Including a rough sketch of this poster. How meta.