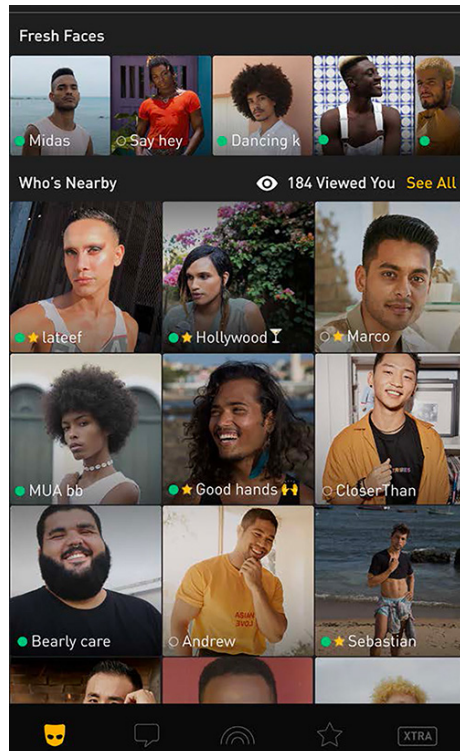


The Design of Grindr

Grindr is an online dating application geared towards gay, bi and, trans people. There are many different types of profiles designed by users based on a persons preferences.

A user doesn't expect that their profile is an authentic representation of their identity. Unlike other dating sites, where authenticity is central to one's profile building, Grindr profiles are minimalist and not expected to represent one's subjectivity. This is most evident in profiles that are left blank: no image and no profile data. But it is also true of profiles that use part of the body: I am not trying to convey who I am, I am trying to arouse others' desire or be open to encounters.

Grindr's interface encourages a limited textual profile: users can mark their age, height, weight, ethnicity, relationship status, what they're "looking for" (chat, dates, friends, networking, relationship, or "right now"), and their "Grindr Tribe" a series of identity markers like Bear, Clean-Cut, Jock, Poz, Trans, Twink. They can also provide a profile "name," a 70 character "headline," and a 255 character "About Me" description. Many, if not most, Grindr users leave much of this blank, leaving their profile mostly a picture with little contextual clues.



Self-editing and participation in others self-editing is what you do to be part of the app's society. According to Grindr, its mask logo shows how our social life is based upon constructed external versions of ourselves.



Breaking It Down

Roland Barthes explains the hidden messages behind images. In his reading "Rhetoric of the Image" he discusses important key ideas such as the linguistic message, the non iconic coded message, and the iconic coded message. Using Barthes methods, a person can break down and understand any image.

Linguistic Message

The linguistic message is simply just all the text that you can see in an image. In this case it would all the information the user sees on a profile such as, name, age, distance, and etc. This information also includes some coded terms.

Terms such DL and Masc 4 Masc refer to down low and masculine man interested in other masculine men.

Non Coded Iconic Message

The non coded iconic message is the message that you process based on the objects that you see in the image. These objects exist in the scene visually but could be read just the same as words. In this case the objects would be the shirtless man in the profile picture.

Showing the torso with the face cropped off acts as a sign on the app for men interested in a hookup but also represents a man on the DL trying to hide his identity.

Coded Iconic Message

The coded iconic message is what the image implies. Using the linguistic and the non coded iconic message we can put together what the image is trying to say to us. The coded iconic message also has a cultural message and this works into how we read and understand the image.

Using the information that we have we can put together who this person is and what they are looking for on this app. Many of the terms such as DL and the cropped face are gay cultural symbols and codes used to communicate.

