

Sunday Life

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Sunday 12-6-2009 E

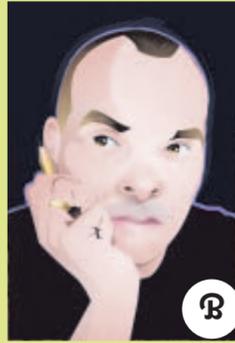
Technology } Tech Test Drive



A



Looking to distinguish your Web 2.0 personality? Take your social-media strategy to the next level: Hire an avatar artist.



B



A Face in the Crowd

e



D



E



Seven avatar artists provided their drawn versions of themselves and adapted a Pioneer Press staff photo of Julio Ojeda-Zapata (above).

- A. Shalimar Luis
- B. José Ramos
- C. Gerardo Obieta
- D. Paul Sahner
- E. Len Peralta
- F. Dennis Calero
- G. Liza Schmalcel

The avatar, a cartoon or stylized likeness of an Internet user, has been around for years. The images typically have been used in instant messaging and other kinds of online communication. The age of Twitter and Facebook, though, has fueled an appetite for these personal renditions. Every social-media fanatic, it seems, wants to be shown in a unique and engaging way within a small, square-shaped avatar window. Enter the avatar artist. Such doodlers-for-hire have stepped in to help Internet users who lack the skill to fashion a unique and professional-looking avatar. There are artists available for all budgets — fees range from \$10 to nearly \$200 — with a dizzying array of styles, from standard cartoons to zombie imagery.



Julio Ojeda-Zapata

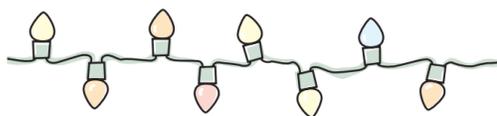
AVATARS, 6E >



F



G



Holiday Lights

It's that time of year, and people all over the Twin Cities are getting into the holiday spirit. If you're heading out to see the lights, grab your sunglasses and our list of submitted holiday displays. You can also print out a map of these addresses at twincities.com. New this year is our **Griswold Family contest**. Page 4E

Relationships } Family Outings

Hill House and its history come to life during holidays



PIONEER PRESS: CHRIS POLYDOROFF

A view of the St. Paul Cathedral through an arch at the James J. Hill House.

By Maja Beckstrom
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"You ladies are a little underdressed," our guide teased as she led our tour group into the main hallway of the James J. Hill House. She swung open the massive inner doors and showed us how female guests at the mansion's Gilded Age parties would slip upstairs through a side passage to take off coats and arrange dresses before making a grand entrance down the main staircase behind us.

We stood under six large chandeliers and gazed at the façade of stained glass, the two ornate fireplaces, silver wall sconces and intricately carved wall panels and pillars.

"It's just like a princess's house," whispered a girl on the tour.

The Summit Avenue mansion was a railroad magnate's house. (Or a robber baron's house, depending on your point

FAMILY OUTINGS, 12E >