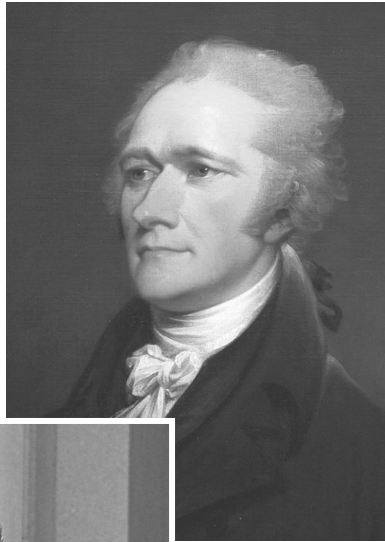
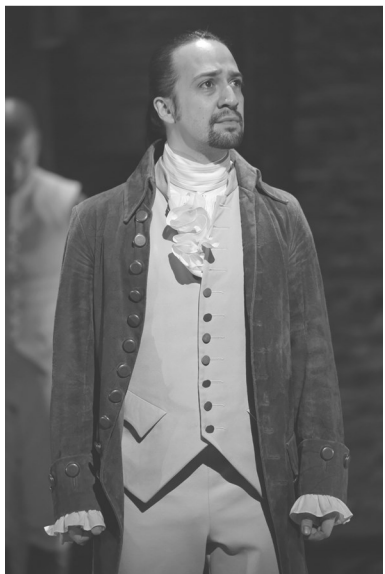


Portraits: More than Paint



Representations
of Alexander
Hamilton



Baltimore Campus

Osher at JHU

Winter Semester 2024

Portraits: More than Paint

Can portraits lie—or conversely, what makes a portrait *true*? Simple fidelity to outward appearance, or revelation of an inner truth? What should a picture show of the sitter's social position? How far may the artist flatter, or indulge his or her own pictorial vision? One aim of this class is to consider the aesthetics and *idea* of the portrait, its many purposes, and this far-from-simple question of *truth-to-life*.

On the other hand, the painter at the easel is not the only person privileged to convey a sense of someone else. There is the photographer, the film-maker, the dramatist, the writer of biography or biographical fiction, even sometimes the composer or choreographer. Some subjects may also choose to present their own image, whether in painted self-portraits, memoirs, or poetry—yet even here the question of truth-to-life is not automatically answered.

It is a complex concern. Even the six classes primarily devoted to painting will contain some examples of other kinds. Interwoven with them will be others with a **Media Focus** (stage, screen, written word, and photography) and three **Portraits of Power**, looking at ways of representing national leaders (English Queens, French Emperors, and American Presidents) in multiple media. I am still juggling all the pieces, however, and the tentative syllabus below may change as I work through it. *rb*.



1. Catching a Likeness (February 20)

What precisely *is* a portrait? A preview of the entire course, looking at the nature, purpose, and problems of portraiture, mostly in paint, but also considering other possible media.

2. Her Royal Majesty (February 27)

Portraits of Power 1. How English Queens have been depicted in paintings and numerous other media to promote their role as the embodiment of national identity.





3. Famous for What? (March 5)

Negotiating the balance between depicting the sitters as individuals and in terms of status: young, old, privileged, professional, celebrated, or little known.

4. Treading the Boards (March 12)

Media Focus 1. From Shakespeare to the present, how real people have been depicted on the stage, whether in straight plays, musicals, opera, or ballet.



5. The View in the Mirror (March 19)

Throughout history, artists have painted themselves: to experiment, to save money on models, to serve as a sample of their work, even to track the ravages of age.

6. *L'état, c'est moi* (March 26)

Portraits of Power 2. Louis XIV of France and the Emperor Napoleon, arising out of very different circumstances, but both taking great care in the promotion of their own image.

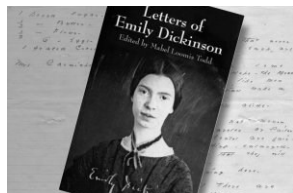


7. People in Groups (April 2)

The painted equivalent of the institutional group photograph, surprisingly still continuing even in the age of the camera. What happens when the group consists of artists themselves?

8. The Written Word (April 9)

Media Focus 2. How a writer may juggle fact and invention in depicting a living person in words, even in the case of memoir. One hour will focus on the famously elusive Emily Dickinson.



9. Living in Art (April 16)

Two fascinating types of 18th- and 19th-century portrait are those of persons of privilege painted to highlight their style, and artists, performers, and writers for whom style is a profession.

10. Candid/Composed (April 30)

Portraits of Power 3 / Media Focus 3. Photography, with special emphasis on how both quasi-intimate shots and posed portraits have been used in the promotion of American First Families



11. Realism, really? (May 7)

What happens to the painted portrait once the camera has taken over the task of providing a likeness? One approach is to jettison realism, but another is to take on the camera at its own game.

For more detail, color illustrations, artist bios, and suggestions for further reading, see the class website:

www.brunyate.com/portraits/

- Artists represented** (*mostly in details*): 1. Lorenzo Lotto; 2. Federico Zuccaro; 3. John Singleton Copley; 4. Frederick Ashton; 5. Élisabeth Vigée le Brun; 6. Antonio Canova; 7. Rembrandt; 8. [Emily Dickinson]; 9. John Singer Sargent; 10. Mark Shaw; 11. Otto Dix.