

Portraits: More than Paint



5. The View in the Mirror

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WHY DO SO MANY ARTISTS PAINT SELF-PORTRAITS? For economic reasons: they do not need to pay a model. For educational ones: it is a convenient way to experiment. For professional ones: to sign a larger picture; to attract future commissions; and to sell to a growing market among collectors. Over history, we see a gradual change in the status of the artist from modest artisan working in the shadows to master asserting genius in his own right. Or *her* own right; much of the first hour will be devoted to self-portraits by women claiming the respect commonly accorded to men.

The latter part of the class will focus on individual artists who, for one reason or another, have made self-portraiture a significant part of their *oeuvre*. Most obviously Rembrandt, but also more recently Vincent Van Gogh, Edvard Munch, Lovis Corinth, and Frida Kahlo, dealing increasingly with normally-private feelings.

Unlike other classes in this course, this session will be devoted almost entirely to painting, with little or nothing in other media. Only a few sample works are listed below. *rb.*

A. Why Do They Do It?

Four self-portraits by Dürer, plus a few others, considered as to intent.

Gumpp: *Triple Self-Portrait* (1646, Uffizi)

Parmigianino: *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1524, Vienna KHM)

Dürer: *Self-Portraits* at 13, 22, 26, and 28

B. No Longer Invisible

From modest self-portrait “signatures” by **Masaccio** and **Raphael** to bold assertions of status by **Velázquez** and **Courbet**.

Ghiberti: *Gates of Paradise* (1437, Florence Baptistery)

Velázquez: *Las meninas* (1656, Madrid Prado)

Courbet: *The Painter's Studio* (1855, Paris Orsay)

C. Her Hand at the Easel

A brief history of self-portraits by women...

Anguissola: *Self-Portrait Being Painted by Campi* (1550s, Siena)

Gentileschi: *Self-Portrait as La Pittura* (1630, Royal Collection)

Vigée-Lebrun: *Self-Portrait in a Straw Hat* (1782, London NG)

D. Private Made Public

...and one woman in particular: Mexican surrealist **Frida Kahlo**, whose private physical and mental pain became the subject of public art.

♪ **Video:** *The Two Fridas* (James Payne)

E. Rembrandt's Eyes

A few of the almost 100 self-portraits drawn, etched, or painted by **Rembrandt**, and the vast range of moods they encompass.

Rembrandt: Self-portraits around 1630

Rembrandt: *Belshazzar's Feast* (1636, London NG)

♪ **Video:** *Rembrandt's Moods* (rb.)

F. Alone Among Friends

Another prolific Dutch self-portraitist, **Vincent Van Gogh**. How far do his portraits reflect the mental anguish that led to his death?

Gauguin: *Les Misérables* (self-portrait, 1888, Van Gogh Museum)

Van Gogh: *Self-Portrait* ("Vincent in the Flames," 1889, Paris Orsay)

G. Norwegian Moods

Edvard Munch, a depressive alcoholic genius who made his personal issues the entire subject of his work

♪ **Grieg:** *Peer Gynt*, Solveig's Song, with Munch paintings

Munch: *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* (1895, Oslo NGA)

Munch: *Self-Portrait under a Female Mask* (1893)

Munch: *Self-Portrait with Wine Bottle* (1896, Munch Museum)

H. The Birthday Painter

Finally the German painter **Lovis Corinth** who did a self-portrait every year on his birthday, plus many others besides. Life dealt him many blows, but also granted an access of happiness in later years.

Corinth: *Self-Portrait with his Wife* (1903, Zurich)

Corinth: *Self-Portrait as the Blinded Samson* (1912, Berlin)

Sofonisba **Anguissola** (1530–1625, *Italian painter*), Émile **Bernard** (1868–1941, *French painter and critic*), Lovis **Corinth** (1858–1925, *German painter*), Gustave **Courbet** (1819–77, *French painter*), Albrecht **Dürer** (1471–1528, *German painter and printmaker*), Paul **Gauguin** (1848–1903, *French painter*), Artemisia **Gentileschi** (1593–1653, *Italian painter*), Théodore **Géricault** (1791–1824, *French painter*), Lorenzo **Ghiberti** (1378–1455, *Italian painter*), Edvard **Grieg** (1843–1907, *Norwegian composer*), Johannes **Gumpp** (1726– , *Austrian painter*), Frida **Kahlo** (1907–54, *Mexican painter*), Adélaïde **Labille-Guiard** (1749–1803, *French painter*), **Masaccio** (Tommaso di Ser Giovanni, 1401–28, *Italian painter*), Paula **Modersohn-Becker** (1876–1907, *German painter*), Edvard **Munch** (1863–1944, *Norwegian painter*), **Parmigianino** (Francesco Mazzola, 1503–40, *Italian painter*), **Raphael** (Raffaello Santi, 1483–1520, *Italian painter*), **Rembrandt** (Rembrandt Harmenz. van Rijn, 1606–69, *Dutch painter and printmaker*), Peter Paul **Rubens** (1577–1640, *Flemish painter*), Richard **Strauss** (1864–1949, *German composer*), Vincent **Van Gogh** (1853–90, *Dutch painter*), Diego **Velázquez** (1599–1660, *Spanish painter*), Elisabeth **Vigée-Lebrun** (1755–1842, *French painter*)

The course website is www.brunyate.com/portraits
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