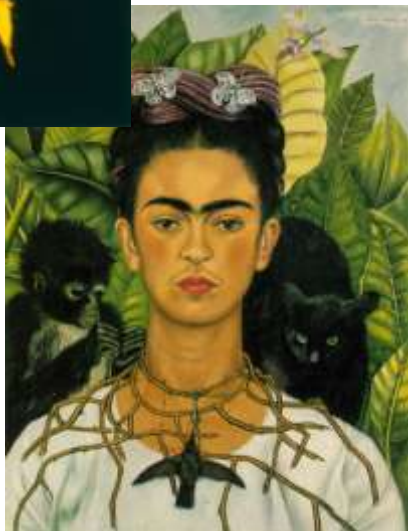


Self-Portraits



Fourths

Overview of Project

During this project students will learn about the theme of self-portraiture. They will analyse artists from different periods in history using different media and skills.

The first final outcome will allow students to develop skills in digital photography and manipulation, resulting in a printed T-shirt design on the theme of *self*!!!

The second final outcome will allow

Studying a single theme throughout the year will allow the students to develop appropriate working methods in preparation for GCSE and Advanced Level Art studies. It is anticipated that this will allow them to explore one topic in depth and give them appropriate time for development and evolution of ideas and skills.

Skills covered:

Drawing

Painting

Artistic analysis

Sketch book composition

Developmental studies

Photography and digital manipulation

Printing (fabric stencil)

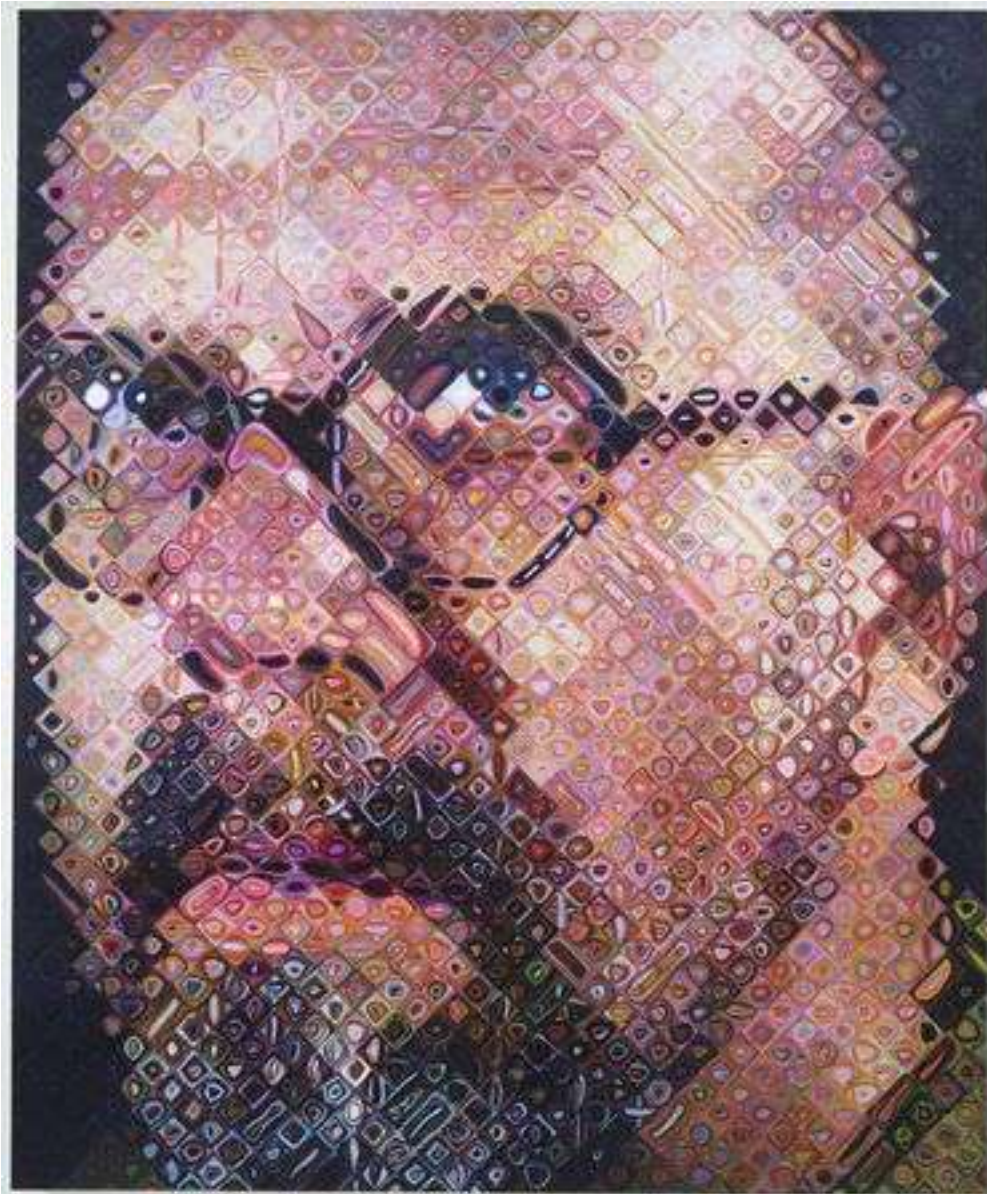
2D relief sculpture/3D sculpture

Chuck Close

1997

MOMA, NY

Self-Portrait



Montein Boonma

1982

A Man who admires Thai Art



David Bailly

1651

Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de
Lakenhal

Self-portrait with Vanity Symbols



Definitions and Notes

self-portraiture from Oxford Art online

The forms of self-portraiture are related to the forms of artists' portraits of others, but the motivation is likely to be experimental to an unusual degree and patronage is often absent. The evidence suggests that virtually every painter has at some stage in his career made a portrait of himself. This is certainly the case in the 20th century, including the recent past where many artists have moved away from traditional forms and into film, [video](#), manipulated photographic imagery, and a whole variety of conceptual forms. Here they have used their own likeness or their own body to deal with concerns not necessarily connected with self, but may tackle, for example, issues of gender or sexuality.

The experimental aspect of self-portraiture has usually concerned the processes of seeing and depicting. It has also involved attempts to extend the borders of the artist's place in society. One of the most emphatic statements of this sort is the series of self-portraits of Rubens, where he draws attention not only to his wealth but to his diplomatic and courtly status. So notable was this presentation of self that a number of artists painted self-portraits in which they attempted to make themselves look like Rubens.

This kind of testimony of society's relation to the individuality of the artist begins throughout Europe in the early 15th century when artists start to introduce themselves, perhaps surreptitiously, as players in the action of altarpieces and frescoes. Sometimes the artist is easily recognized as a highly individualized S. Luke at work within the work; in other instances the presence can be surmised where one actor draws attention to himself by the fixity of his stare into the eyes of the viewer. The presence becomes, in a sense, the signature. Corroboration is often provided by other portraits and sometimes by inscriptions. Perhaps the most famous example is [Raphael's](#) inclusion of himself in the fresco of the *School of Athens* (Vatican Stanze). It is a form that persisted well into the 17th century.

The portrait of the artist by himself with some of the accoutrements of his trade (see [studio equipment](#))—palette, brushes, easel, mahlstick, paintings by himself—may at one level have been little more than a shop sign, but at another it was an expression of the high seriousness of art. The most elaborate of all manifestations of this type is [Velázquez's](#) *Las meninas* (Madrid, Prado), where the Spanish royal family and courtiers are so orchestrated by the artist that they virtually become extensions of his existence.

The element of self-portrayal in *Las meninas* is bound up with the problems and mechanics of depiction, and the frequency of much self-portraiture is a consequence of the visual artist's obsession with these problems. Since scrutiny is, as it were, the reason for his being, the act of scrutiny assumes a special significance—so that the scrutineer becomes the subject. Where there is no clear practical function for a self-portrait, both this concern with the nature of scrutiny and a consequent urge to experiment are likely to be present. One of the most intriguing examples is [Parmigianino's](#) self-portrait of c.1523 (Vienna, Kunsthist. Mus.), where the image represents the artist reflected from a convex surface, his right hand (or is it his left?) at the bottom limit of the image enormously enlarged. This has no doubt been done to emphasize that a mirrored surface is required to make a self-portrait and that the reflection—all the artist will ever know of his own appearance—is not lacking in ambiguities: the image is the reverse of reality, right becoming left, and is always reduced to 50% of perceived reality, so that it has a more condensed quality. Reversal can, of course, be 'corrected' by the use of a second mirror, so that the resultant image is of a reflection reflected. This kind of 'correction' has always been common and would obviously be of most importance if the artist's hands, brushes, and palette were included. Self-portraits done in order to be engraved do not, of course, require this kind of correction. Apart from questions of identity, status, and technical challenge, self-portraits may be seen as analogous to a writer's journal—either as a form of relaxation or as a means of releasing energy that external demands may have stultified. There is a good deal of evidence that artists' portraits of themselves are often of a higher quality aesthetically than their portraits of others. This self-indulgence leads to the notion of self-portraiture as visual autobiography, not necessarily as clear intention, but as the result of grappling with the problems described. This is illustrated in the portraits of Albrecht Dürer and, perhaps most remarkably, in those of [Rembrandt](#). In Rembrandt's case it is virtually possible to follow the progress of his life from the cheerful optimism of youth through various statements of mid-life accomplishment to the profound resignation of old age. This kind of confrontation, not only with a reflected image, but with states of mind and the core of existence, has been a significant theme in recent art, notably in the series of self-portraits by [van Gogh](#), [J.M.W. Turner](#), and [Avigdor Arikha](#). They all raise the unavoidable, but virtually unanswerable, question of how much information the portrait can convey about the inner individual.

Definitions and Notes

Vanitas,

a title given to a type of [still-life](#) painting which warns against the transience of worldly pleasures and of earthly power and glory; it derives from the pessimistic sentiment of Ecclesiastes 1: 2: 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' All still lifes, of flowers, fruit, and food, carry overtones of transience, but in 17th-century Leiden, a university town, the dense symbolism of still lifes which gather together a variety of objects suggesting both transience and the insubstantiality of wealth and knowledge became popular; characteristic is [Harmen Steenwyck's](#) Vanitas (c.1640; Leiden, Stedelijk Mus.) with its flickering candle, burned-out pipes, its history book and precious shell, and, dominating all, the skull. The type was also popular in 17th-century Spain, where such artists as [Antonio Pereda](#) and [Juan de Valdés Leal](#) created grander and more menacing works; in Valdés Leal's two epic Vanitas paintings for the Hospital de la Caridad in Seville (1670–2; in situ) threatening skeletons and maggot-infested corpses were intended to inspire fear and encourage acts of charity.

vanitas

[Latin, 'vanity'] taking its inspiration from *Ecclesiastes* 1: 2 ('Vanity of vanities'), a 'vanitas' was an [allegorical still-life](#) painting in which the objects, such as an hour-glass or a human skull, were meant to be reminders of the transience of human life. This type of still life was especially popular in 17th-century Holland.

Relief Sculpture definition

Frida Kahlo

1940

Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair



Literary Examples

"Artists wish to be honoured after their death. Did not Phidias include a likeness similar to his own on the shield of Minerva, since he was not allowed to inscribe his name?"

Cicero, Tusculanae Disputationes Liber Primus

"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

Ecclesiastes 2: 11

"When you look at the colour of your face and its lines, do you then have reason to admire and marvel at yourself, to flatter and amuse yourself? Are you not frightened by the story of Narcissus?... Are you satisfied with the appearance of the external shell? Don't you want to let your mind's eye penetrate deeper?"

Petrarch, Il secreto, 1342/43

"For the more we can do, the more we are compared to the divine image."

Albrecht Dürer, c. 1512

"Every portrait in the two rooms is a self-portrait of the painter. In every painting there thus is a depiction of the artist and at the same time a convincing example of his style."

Luigi Lanzi on the self-portrait gallery of the Medici in Florence, 1789

"Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident... It is not he..., it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself."

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Marc Quinn

1991

Self



Literary Examples

Sylvia Plath

Mirror

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see, I swallow immediately.
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike
I am not cruel, only truthful –
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me.
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.
I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman

Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

Joyce and His First Self-Portrait **By JAMES T. FARRELL**

his race and this country and this life produced me," declares Stephen Dedalus--artistic image of James Joyce himself--in "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man." "A Portrait" is the story of how Stephen was produced, how he rejected that which produced him, how he discovered that his destiny was to become a lonely one of artistic creation. It is well to look into the life out of which Stephen came, to discuss the social and national background of this novel. In Ireland a major premise of any discussion of her culture and of her literature is an understanding of Irish nationalism. And it is at least arguable that Joyce was a kind of inverted nationalist--that the nationalism which he rejects runs through him like a central thread.

Prep sheets: Self-Portrait

Autumn Term

wk	Description of Prep Activity
1	<p>Draw a self-portrait using a mirror and pencil in your sketch book. The emphasis of this activity is to concentrate on drawing accurate proportion and composition. Use a variety of tones whilst drawing to show the direction of light and the shape of the face. (The picture should fill a complete page, it can either be drawn direct in your sketchbook or on paper and stuck in.)</p>
2	<p>In reference to the theme of Vanitas you are to find and photograph objects or images that you associate with your own personality eg a sports medal, glasses, old photos, your interests. The photos should be taken against a plain black or white background and be sharp (use macro setting for closeups). Bring the images on a USB stick or email to yourself and put into your art folder. You will need these images to create your final piece so it is imperative that they are available when needed.</p>
3	<p>Research one of the following artists (only find images of relevance to self-portrait theme): Andy Warhol; Rembrandt Van Rijn; Caravaggio; Max Beckmann; Adélaïde Labille-Guiard.</p> <p>Collect together as many self-portrait images as you can. Word process a series of annotations explaining your interest in these images. Print out all this work and display in your sketch book, ensuring it is clear to read and the presentation is dramatic</p>
4	<p>Select one image from last week's research and make a drawing that fills a sketch book page. Emphasis should be placed on trying to create an exact copy of this work, ie accurate composition, brushstrokes etc. If you select a very complex image you may choose a small section to illustrate. (Check with your teacher when making this decision).</p>
5	<p>Referencing your week 1 self-portrait you are to develop this picture in the style of the artist and image you selected in week 4. Do not change your original self-portrait, use it as a guide to draw your developing idea. Colour must be used, either paints or pastels for preference.</p> <p>Write a paragraph adjacent to your image explaining what features of the artist's work you are using to develop your own self-portrait.</p>
6	<p>Research one of the following 3D artists (only find images of relevance to self-portrait theme): Anthony Gormley; Marc Quinn; Ron Mueck</p> <p>Collect together as many self-portrait images as you can. Word process a series of annotations explaining your interest in these images including the materials used by the sculptors. Print out all this work and display in your sketch book, ensuring it is clear to read and the presentation is dramatic</p>

Prep sheets: Self-Portrait

Spring Term

	Description of Prep Activity
1	Over the next two homeworks you are to create a 2D relief sculpture using found objects. This sculpture is to be based on the self-portrait from week 5 (Autumn term). The idea will be to create a face that comes out of the page using any household objects you can find eg newspaper, plastic bags, string, waste packaging (washed!) etc. Make sure you take a series of photos of the final piece in case it is damaged in transit. If you have any difficulties finding materials you can use art dept. stores, however this is to be done in your own time and permission must be sought.
2	Add colour to your piece in the style of the artist you chose in week 5 (NOTE go over your final piece with a layer of paper and watered down PVA (papier Mache). When this is dry it will form a good surface in order to paint on.
3	Draw your 2D relief sculpture from at least 2 perspectives, front and side using two different media (pencil, charcoal, biro etc). Print out the photos of your sculpture and stick into your sketchbook. Create at least one paragraph documenting the activities and your feeling on the outcome. Presentation and composition are key to gaining high marks so plan your pages before you start, Bring in your sculptural work clearly labelled along with your sketch book and photos on a USB stick. You may be asked to present you ideas in class.
4	Find and research into the work of the artist Archimbaldo. Locate images and print out to create a double page spread relating to the artist and his work, including your personal thoughts on his work.
5	Relief sculpture research
6	

Prep sheets: Self-Portrait Summer Term

	Description of Prep Activity
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

Checklist for Assessment – in Lessons

	Title	Description
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Checklist for Assessment – Homework

	Title	Description
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		