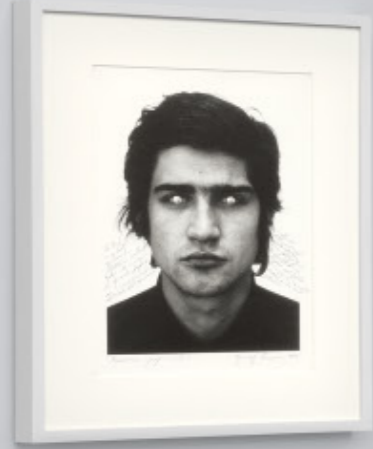


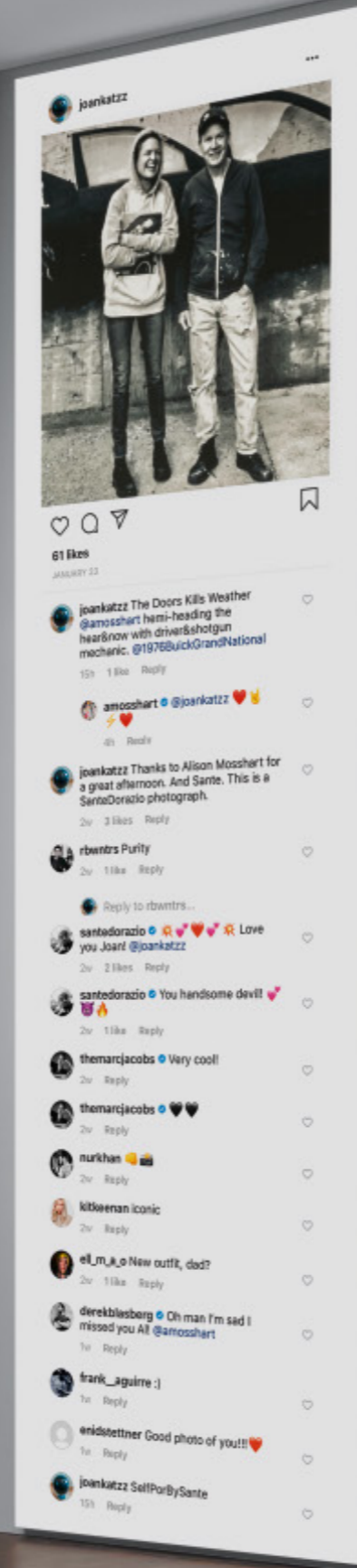
Visions of the Self Rembrandt and Now
Grosvenor Hill, London, April 12–May 18, 2019

Gagosian in partnership with English Heritage





















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The vocabulary of painting is all in this picture. And for me, it's the most exciting moment of being at Gagosian, because I never in my life thought I would share a space with this picture.

Jenny Saville

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Experimentation and Reinvigoration

Wendy Monkhouse

Creating a show looking at Rembrandt's impact on self-portraiture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries allowed English Heritage and Gagosian to interrogate—and cast in a new light—a well-known, lauded, and familiar work.

We wanted to take Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Two Circles* out of its customary habitat, a historic house museum curated by English Heritage, and place it in a completely different environment—at Gagosian in Mayfair. Context changes any reading of a work of art; at Kenwood House, where the painting typically resides, it is viewed as the star of Lord Iveagh's spectacular 1928 bequest to the nation. It hangs in a room with crimson damask walls and oak-grained woodwork, rubbing shoulders with works by Frans Hals, Joshua Reynolds, and Vermeer. At Gagosian it was to be freed from these surroundings and presented within cool, high-ceilinged rooms in the company of very different works. And that process allowed it to speak in a different way.

The rest of the exhibition pulled together extraordinary loans in a very short space of time, showing artists' peripheral or central awareness of Rembrandt's contribution to—and this particular work's impact on—self-portraiture. No other show in the 350th anniversary year of Rembrandt's death addressed his legacy in the modern period and answered the question “Is his work still relevant to artists?” with an emphatic yes. This joint curatorial view was expressed implicitly through the way we hung the show, and explicitly by the living artists who spoke eloquently during its run and whose perspectives are captured in this volume.

The curatorial partnership was successful and stimulating. For us at English Heritage, working at a fast pace creatively and experimentally was a great pleasure. It was liberating to exhibit works without interpretation, and to give visibility to the fundamental tropes of the show—depth and superficiality, reflection and obscurantism, viscerality and abstraction—through the hang. Viewers were not asked to measure modern masters against Rembrandt, but to consider how these artists had reacted to his technique, his humanity, and his honesty. For us this felt like experimentation and gave us the opportunity to reinvigorate the work.

We spent much time in the gallery, meeting lenders, collectors, and curators who were mixing with students, English Heritage members, and international visitors. The atmosphere was one of excitement and critical appreciation, and then, at the culmination of the show in front of the Rembrandt, of genuine awe and emotion. We are deeply grateful to Gagosian for making the show happen, for their intellectual and practical contribution, and for breaking new ground with us.

Rembrandt's O's and Rembrandt's I's: Rembrandt and Contemporary Self-Portraiture

David Freedberg

I

In this essay I want to describe the ways in which Rembrandt may be regarded as a precursor—perhaps even the founder—of all modern painting. Others might dispute these designations and offer alternative candidates—Dürer, say. But the scale and radical nature of Rembrandt's innovations in painting are without precedent.

It would probably be too bold to claim that every one of the artists in *Visions of the Self: Rembrandt and Now* was influenced by him, whether consciously or unconsciously, but I will argue that in his approach to painting, Rembrandt anticipated the very core of modernism.

II

Standing before Jeff Koons's *Gazing Ball (Rembrandt Self-Portrait Wearing a Hat)* (2015; p. 111), you see the world around you mirrored in the shining blue orb in front of the painting. You see yourself there too, even if dimly and slightly distorted. The painting is a self-portrait made by Rembrandt in 1642–43, when he was at the very height of his powers, just after the completion and successful installation of the work that secured his already strong reputation for all time, *The Night Watch* (1642), now the most famous of his many works in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. It is as if Koons were saying, "In this work you can see everything—and you are in it too."

III

Visions of the Self: Rembrandt and Now was a rich show, carefully and wisely hung. The cross-connections were abundant. In one way or another, every work could be referred back to Rembrandt in one way or another. But does this mean that all of the artists in this show were influenced by Rembrandt, or derived their approach to painting from him? This would be too banal, too general, or just too unlikely. We may think that we have had enough of the anxiety of influence and of the art historian's search for traces of one artist in another. But could it be that in his work Rembrandt touched the very core of what it means to make a self-portrait, so that everyone else's inevitably reveals something of what is already present in Rembrandt?

This would be a large claim, both empirically and philosophically; but the show offered plenty of evidence with which to test it. This evidence teaches us how to read other portraits through Rembrandt, and how to read them better. It demonstrates how a selection constrained by chance and availability, if well put together, can be deeply instructive and enhance our understanding not just of art, but of the history of art. Every work in the show cast light on the many meanings of portraying the self, perhaps even its essential meaning.

At the heart of *Visions of the Self* stood Rembrandt's great *Self-Portrait with Two Circles* from Kenwood House in London, the refined Robert Adam house at the top of Hampstead Heath, in which the Rembrandt seems an uncompromising intruder (c. 1665; p. 161). In its contained grandeur it is matched only by the *Self-Portrait* in the Frick Collection in New York (1658; fig. 1). These are perhaps the greatest of all Rembrandt's forty or so painted self-portraits (to say nothing of the many etchings, large and small, that he made of himself). Both represent him as a mature artist at the very height of his powers. Of course, there are many other self-portraits by Rembrandt that could also be described as great and moving works, most notably those that show him marked by the visible signs of his old age: sagging flesh, furrowed brow, face riven with melancholy and sadness, with the experiences of life, of financial setbacks and personal loss. In almost all of them paint becomes flesh, first pasty and soft, then crisscrossed and furrowed with the corrugations of experience, and long-borne emotion and trial. Many pages have been written—and more undoubtedly will—about how Rembrandt depicts the flesh and feelings of old age. He is the consummate master of showing in paint the qualities of proud senescence, as his shaking hand becomes sure in its un pitying representation of the aging self. We see him thus, over and over again, and realize that no one until then had made a living out of portraying an old man's self with features that if described in words alone would add up to a mere fraction of the nobility they reveal in paint—however bulbous the nose, however reddened, wrinkled, and baggy the eyelids.

First Rembrandt lays down the features of the face and the aging body; then, swiftly, he adapts them to the truth of what he sees. The Italian word for making such changes to the surface of a painting, for altering a brushstroke or contour, is the same as the word for “repentance”—*pentimento*. But when Rembrandt makes changes of this kind, he does so unrepentantly and with no hesitation. He glories in the epiphanies they bring forth, making them all too apparent, and directing the viewer's attention to the visible traces of his genius. He does this with ever thicker layers of impasto that in some places directly show the effect of the bristles of the brush, in others reveal the granularity of pigment and paint, in yet others—particularly in the whites, as in the cap of the Kenwood picture where the thick paint is as smooth as can be—“lashings of thick white lead,” as Simon Schama put it in his eloquent description of this painting. In all these late self-portraits you see the strokes as if they were made before you; they are not subject, for the most part, to smoothing out and elimination of the traces of brushwork, as in so much other Dutch painting of the time. Rembrandt shies away from no *pentimento* and has no qualms about showing both what constitutes and what lies beneath the effects of his painting. He is as little afraid of changing his mind or heart as he is of changing his paint surface. He is not ashamed of showing the roughness either of his declining flesh or of his paint.

When he was young—twenty-three, to be exact—Rembrandt painted a small self-portrait of himself in his studio. Now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, it shows the young painter as a comparatively small and unpretentious figure with the deeply shadowed eyes typical of many of the portraits he made of himself in his twenties. In the plainest of rooms, gathered up in layers of clothing—presumably to keep him warm in his cold studio—he stands at a distance from his easel, here seen from behind. We don't know what will go on the panel it supports. His hand could hardly be farther from it.



Fig. 1
Rembrandt van Rijn
Self-Portrait, 1658
Oil on canvas
52 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 40 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches
(133.7 x 103.8 cm)
Frick Collection, New York



Fig. 2
Rembrandt van Rijn
Self-Portrait at the Age of 34, 1640
Oil on canvas
40 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
(102 x 80 cm)
National Gallery, London



Fig. 3
Raphael
Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione,
1514–15
Oil on canvas
32 ¼ × 26 ¾ inches
(82 × 67 cm)
Collection de Louis XIV,
Musée du Louvre, Paris



Fig. 4
Rembrandt van Rijn
*Drawing of Raphael's Baldassare
Castiglione*, 1639
Pen on paper
6 ¾ × 8 ½ inches
(16.3 × 20.7 cm)
Graphische Sammlung
Albertina, Vienna

A palette hangs on the wall beside him, a kind of badge of his calling, not much more. The floorboards are worn and bare, the plaster peels from the walls. It is a work that could scarcely be more different from the late self-portraits, with or without an easel. But he's clearly ready to go.

At the age of thirty-six, Rembrandt produced the self-portrait that is perhaps his most coolly self-confident of all (1640; fig. 2; London National Gallery). While it does not explicitly show him as a painter (the tools of his trade are absent, and he is certainly not in the parsimoniously equipped studio of the Boston picture), no one with any knowledge of painting at the time—and by then the Dutch were more enamored of easel painting than any other nation in Europe, perhaps even more, indeed, than Italy—would have failed to recognize what he was trying to demonstrate. He was showing himself as equal to the two greatest masters of Italian painting, Raphael and Titian—the first the acknowledged Roman master of drawing and of line, the second the great Venetian exponent of color. Painting at the time was divided into two camps: those who excelled at *disegno*, drawing and line, and those who excelled in *colore*, color. *Disegno* stood for the work of the mind, the supreme basis of art, while *colore* stood for the material work of the hand and produced texture and light, shade and even darkness (of which Rembrandt, following Caravaggio too, became a master as well). *Disegno* was more conceptual and imaginative, color obviously more sensual. These two qualities, usually thought of as polarities, as distinctive areas and the prerogatives or distinctive excellences of one school over another, came together in Rembrandt—and he knew it, and wanted to show it.

A month or two before Rembrandt began painting the National Gallery portrait, Raphael's masterpiece, the 1514–15 portrait of Baldassare Castiglione now in the Louvre, was sold at auction in Amsterdam in April 1639 (fig. 3). It went for the princely sum of thirty-five hundred guilders to Alfonso Lopez, a Portuguese-Jewish diamond merchant and arms dealer. Rembrandt was there and drew it in a swift pen-and-ink drawing that happily survives (fig. 4), shifting Castiglione's pretty squarely placed hat to one side, so that it sits at a more rakish diagonal, and turning his body slightly toward the left. All this was much more in keeping with his own style—one might call it his own more baroque style—at the time. Then, seeing one of Titian's greatest portraits that was also in the Lopez collection—the one that was said to be a portrait of the Italian poet Ludovico Ariosto (c. 1510; fig. 5), where the sitter's body is turned entirely away from the face that looks out at one in the manner of the Italian *contrapposto*, he combined these two great images. He preserved the basic pose of Castiglione, but turned his own body away from the viewer, as in the Titian, while at the same time making turning his neck in the opposite direction, so as to look still more directly at the viewer. In so doing, Rembrandt ensured that his elbow projected directly into the viewer's space, engaging him or her even more directly, just as in the Titian.

As if to exemplify his command of drawing, he first did an etching of this spectacular and meaningful combination. And then, one year later, in 1640, he demonstrated his mastery, both of Raphael's unusual gray-brown palette and of Titian's more painterly handling. Raphael's sitter, Castiglione, as Rembrandt certainly knew, was the renowned author of the famous guide to courtly behavior known as *The Book of the Courtier*, *Il Cortigiano*. The picture is the very epitome of courtly cool, of elegant nonchalance, and what Castiglione himself called *sprezzatura*. Yet this ultimately self-confident work—painted just before he received his greatest public commission, *The Night Watch*—places himself squarely in the great tradition of the masters of Renaissance Italy (which, unlike many of his peers, he never visited). Though it has little of the sheer tactility of his later works, it conveys (as Simon Schama also noted) a palpable sense of fleshy presence—as much through the strong gaze as anything else. Still, no one could have predicted what was yet to come.

The period of calm confidence that followed produced the uncomplicatedly proud self-portrait—fur collar, rich tabard, double gold necklace, the usual plain and unremarkable face with the keenest and most profound eyes gazing directly out at one—before which Koons placed his gazing ball (p. 111). This period begins, I think, with the succession of quietly penetrating portraits that came after the London self-portrait of 1640 and the wonderfully benign and assured portrait, executed in the same year, of his frame maker Herman Doomer in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; it weathers the death of his wife, Saskia, in 1641 and the tempestuous relationship with his maidservant Geertje Dirckx, and it sees his turn to inwardness in the landscapes of this period and in the ever more reflective mode of the portraits of himself and of others. Experimentation with his etched and engraved surfaces and in the tactility and boldness of his brushwork continues with ever-greater intensity, culminating in the blazing golds and reds of the 1654 portrait of his friend and creditor Jan Six (fig. 6). It is the boldest of all his portraits in terms of painterly swagger. Six's red and gold cloak—and in particular the upper collar, the buttons and the braid—are painted with a bravura and swiftness unparalleled in his own work. There could be little more confident than the loaded strokes of the brush here, the smoothness of the rich gray tunic below it, or the creamy impasted treatment of the cuffs and gloves. But already the skin of the sitter's face exhibits the slightly sagging puffiness of incipient age—those marks of decline that will soon will turn into sites of the most minute pictorial analyses of the unstoppable effects of time on physiognomy.

VI

We have seen Rembrandt as a brash young man, establishing from very early on his independence when it came to the handling of his tools and the application of paint. Once he'd gotten over his need to show smooth and glistening textures, gleaming metal and striking light effects (all of which he succeeded in continuing when necessary), his willingness to take chances with paint only increased. More and more he seemed to relish leaving the physical traces both of his workmanship and of chance effects on the canvas. Almost from the beginning he made use of tough and unidealizing models, from old and stooping men to women squatting to piss, from wrinkled and furrowed sages to women whose beauty does not reflect the canonical models of ancient art and sculpture, but whose plump fleshiness showed the very garter marks which Rembrandt was incessantly condemned for painting even during his lifetime (by the critics; the market seemed to appreciate him more). Right from the beginning he seems to have been intent on ensuring that people never forgot that he was not only as great as Raphael and Titian but equal to the legendary painter of antiquity, the very greatest of all, Apelles—who could divide the finest line longitudinally in two with one perfectly placed stroke, like the one that runs along the edge of the picture on the easel in the small early self-portrait in Boston (or failing him, Zeuxis, his constant rival, who painted the most beautiful picture of a woman ever by combining the features of the five loveliest young women in the town of Crotona). But this, of course, is not what Rembrandt sought to emulate, nor, indeed, did he model his work on the even better known stories about the rivalry between Apelles and Zeuxis for the palm of the most capably mimetic, the prize for being the most realistic and the best imitator of nature. The parallels he chose were more pointed than that.



Fig. 5
Titian
Portrait of Gerolamo (?) Barbarigo,
c. 1510
Oil on canvas
32 × 26 1/8 inches
(81.2 × 66.3 cm)
National Gallery, London



Fig. 6
Rembrandt van Rijn
Portrait of Jan Six, c. 1654
Oil on canvas
44 1/8 × 40 1/8 inches
(112 × 102 cm)
Six Collection, Amsterdam



Fig. 7
Rembrandt van Rijn
*Aristotle Contemplating
a Bust of Homer*, 1653
Oil on canvas
56 ½ × 53 ¾ inches
(143.5 × 136.5 cm)
Metropolitan Museum
of Art, New York



Fig. 8
Rembrandt van Rijn
The Conspiracy of the Batavians under Claudius Civilis, 1661–62 (detail)
Oil on canvas
77 ⅞ × 121 ⅝ inches
(196 × 309 cm)
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

In the 1650s Rembrandt applied paint to his canvases to show both the softness and tautness of flesh, sagging here and there or stretched tight across tendons and bones (as in *Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer* [1653; fig. 7] in the Metropolitan Museum of Art; increasingly into the 1660s he left traces of coarseness, granularity, and texture in the paint itself, no rendering it longer shiny and perfect as in his portraits of the '30s, nor luminous, confident, and ruddy as in the '40s; instead, he was uncompromisingly honest not only in painting the rough, aging, and patinated surfaces of things, but in conveying the very feel of morbid flesh itself. It would not be incorrect, nor any blasphemy, to say that in his old age as a creator, Rembrandt showed the physical decline of the flesh with marks on the canvas that are as unsparing as those left by the Creator himself on the face of the artist.

But in the self-portraits in the Frick of 1658 and Kenwood of perhaps a decade later, there is still more. They reveal more of the essence of the artist than any of the others. Of course the others also show him as Rembrandt the artist, especially in the many ways in which paint becomes the literal sign of life, of vitality, and the particular vitality of old age. In these two works, however, he shows himself, confronts himself, as in no other—except one outlier, to which we will come shortly.

In both these paintings, Rembrandt is clearly a painter of a certain age. And in both of them he shows himself with a maulstick, that instrument that is almost as essential to the easel painter as the brush itself, particularly as age begins to assail the hand. It is this instrument on which he now rests his hand as he paints, the old wizard applying his magic to the surface of the canvas (for these works are always on canvas, as was de rigueur in the Netherlands at this time). Canvas enhances the texture of a surface, much more so than panel, which is more suitable for the smooth surfaces that Rembrandt disdained for most of his life (though not always). By now he was indeed the old wizard—or rather, as he was called during his lifetime, the old heretic, the old heretic of painting, the painter who seemed to turn his back on the rules of his art, the old heretic whose one grand commission for the city of Amsterdam, the painting of the blind Claudius Civilis (1661–62; fig. 8) taking an oath to defend his fatherland against the colonizing Romans, was rejected by the city authorities, despite its marvelous luminosity. It was rejected as too rough and ready, too modern, too avant-garde (there is no need to shy away from these descriptions as anachronistic, for they, indeed, best convey what works such as all these paintings of his last decades were).

The Frick picture, painted less than two years after the ignominy of Rembrandt's bankruptcy and the sale of his house and his most precious possessions—from his artworks to the very costumes in which he loved to dress himself up—is the grandest of all his self-portraits, so grand it can rightly be called imperial. It scorns defeat. The painter as potentate, one wants to say, calm in the face of turbulence and adversity. As the maulstick that looks like an imperial scepter suggests, he is now the emperor of painting, and is dressed accordingly, in golden robe, ermine cloak, and red sash. The picture is a reassertion in paint of what his real self consists of. His eyes are deeply shadowed, but the gaze is confident—even though, in worldly terms, the work could not have been painted at a more disastrous time. His possessions were still being sold off, and his estate and future profits made over to his ailing son. He was more bereft than ever before. But in this picture he reveals no doubt about who he is. Nothing could be more magnificent than this painting, nothing more poignant. And what it shows above all are those grand hands, painted with the boldest of rich and impasted strokes (not dissimilar to those of Aristotle as he assays the mind of Homer), in which the materiality of his work becomes still more apparent.

It is in these that his mastery lies—and he knows it, and announces it. His eyes are tired but the hands strong. Nothing will defeat them, this picture seems to say, nothing, at least, in the realm of pictorial creativity.

Two years later, in his 1660 self-portrait now in the Louvre (fig. 9), it is almost as if he has regained his self-confidence. The gaze is open and steady, and he is back in his workshop, wearing a smock (though he is a little too gussied up to be wearing one, it is true); he holds his brushes and palette in hand, ready to paint on the easel right before him. Rembrandt the painter is back, with the hands as large and as broadly painted as ever; face patchy, striated, and ridged; the garments more cursory yet pictorially full of aesthetic interest; and the same white cap he would later wear in the Kenwood picture keeping his hair, fluffier than ever, more or less in place (or just hiding its unkemptness).

Just a year later, however, Rembrandt painted a picture of himself looking much more tried and under stress. It shows him as the Apostle Paul, with book in hand, one of his favorite motifs (1661; fig. 10). The lines over his eyes and on his forehead are deeper than ever. It is not difficult to understand Rembrandt's lifelong attachment to this most human and most humble of the Apostles (as Perry Chapman has put it in her excellent lines on this painting). Tried by his conflicting emotions, and by the tensions between flesh and spirit, intensely aware of his responsibility to convey Christ's mission across the world, and yet bold in the promulgation of His teachings, St. Paul embodied much of the agony and triumph of Rembrandt's own life: the one indomitable in his commitment to his beliefs, the other undefeated in the face of rejection. It may be that Rembrandt saw himself as an artist who, like St. Paul, transcended individuality to become all things to all men, as Gary Schwartz has long suggested. But both surely knew, on the basis of their life experiences, that one could not be that and still remain true to oneself.

It was probably in the same year that Rembrandt received his commission for *The Conspiracy of the Batavians Under Claudius Civilis* for the brand-new and sumptuous town hall of Amsterdam (fig. 8). It is a masterpiece of apparently spontaneous uncontained brushwork and brilliant nocturnal illumination—and yet it was swiftly rejected, almost certainly for the audacity of its brushwork. There would be one more undoubted public triumph, that of the 1662 group portrait of the cloth assayers of the Amsterdam guild of drapers, known as *The Syndics of the Drapers' Guild*, one of the most profound and complex of all Dutch group portraits, that genre which set the gold standard for group portraits ever since. But by the next year—the year in which the beloved partner of his old age, Hendrickje Stoffels, died—it was almost over in terms of public recognition. But in terms of Rembrandt's conception of the relationship between medium and message and the revelation of character and emotion through paint, it most certainly was not.

He may well have barely finished his portrait of himself as St. Paul when he switched emotional gears once more; and this time he did so by making an unexpected turn.

There is a self-portrait (fig. 11) in Cologne painted on gold ground, showing him as he looks out at the spectator, laughing. A great gold shawl, sumptuous and tactile, is draped over his shoulder; his eyebrows are arched, his head cocked at an angle as he turns away from the business of painting the profile of an old woman to look at us and share his mood. Whether this is laughter or mockery or some combination of both is unclear. His maulstick rests on the canvas in front of him.

For many years the painting was a bit of a puzzle, and resisted interpretation. Some were even a little disturbed by the slightly manic gaze in Rembrandt's eyes, as if he were indeed about to collapse from laughter. Of course, it was more complicated than that.

The puzzle was resolved when Albert Blankert noted that the painting was but a fragment of a larger work that was in turn copied twenty years later by one of Rembrandt's students, Aert de Gelder. This work survives, and it shows the artist painting what was

in fact an old woman (of whom only the profile remains on Rembrandt's now cut-down canvas in Cologne). Blankert pointed out that that painting, like Rembrandt's, referred to the myth of the ancient painter Zeuxis, who was said to have died while laughing at the ugliness of the woman he was painting. Not an edifying tale, it is true, but it is as if Rembrandt were triumphantly saying here, through his smile and raised eyebrows and amidst the sadness of old age, defeat, and rejection, "See, out of ugliness, out of the ugliness of old age, I can still make art. And that ugliness is here in the picture of my subject, of me—my true subject, after all—in all the roughness of my visage and the impasted, granular, smudgy coarseness of my paint. That is where my art lies, that is where I paint myself, not in the lines and weakness of old age, but in what my hand can still achieve, even in those patches and dabs and drips of paint—for those are the very signs of my life in my work." It is as if he were saying, "Take it or leave it"—but saying that in the full knowledge that that, the work of the hands, in all its glorious and honest traces of experience and experiment, is precisely where his art lay.

VIII

In his final years, some of this fire is gone. Resignation eventually replaces focus—but not entirely. To judge from the three last portraits, in Florence, London (fig. 12), and The Hague (fig. 13), probably all painted around 1669, Rembrandt seems to have regained his confidence after the losses of the preceding years. His gaze is at once secure and penetrating, tender and content (especially in the very last picture of all, the self-portrait in The Hague). As always, his skin is pouchy and painted with the crumbly texture that seems so particularly fitting for these years at the threshold of death. The sadness is gone and his eyes seem to register calm acknowledgment of his fate.

No one ever painted eyes like Rembrandt, from beginning to end. Though always luminous and clear, they betray depths without melodrama. They are either shrouded in shadow or shine out with unmatched clarity and luminosity as they gaze out at one. Kind, troubled, determined, proud, or tender, they allow one to gather the feeling they contain, and the history of what they have witnessed. Eyelids and the skin surrounding them are painted with such finesse and with such minute attention to every accident and bump of flesh that they exhaust description. It is impossible to understand how such seeming realism could also contain such feeling, or convey so strong a sense of the limitlessness of such tenderness, emotion, and penetration.

IX

Much of what I have said about Rembrandt's approach to painting could be applied of the works by Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Georg Baselitz, and Jenny Saville in *Visions of the Self*. Like Rembrandt, none of them reveals any hesitation in showing either the vagaries of the self or those of the paint that embodies it. Paint, like flesh, is as labile as the self. The actual movements involved in the application of paint become an essential, unabashed part of the meaning of the work itself. The art of these works consists of the material ways in which their makers reveal both their bodies and the actions that produce their representations of themselves. In the illuminated parts of the face in the Kenwood picture, as the foremost scholar of Rembrandt's technique, Ernst van de Wetering, has noted, there are countless fine indentations and scratches along with the fine traces of the stiff hairs of a brush, all suggesting the irregular wrinkles and pores of aging skin.

Baselitz retains not only the impasted variations of flesh in his picture from the *Grosse Nacht* series of 1962–63 (p. 89) but also does not hesitate to leave the globules and scratches that the brush can make on the surface of a work. He knows that these give a vivid sense of the ways in which the revelation of the very grit of the materiality of paint itself can add still further to the visceral effects and artistic interest of a work (to say nothing of the grossness of the penises that sprout from his body). Both he and Jenny Saville know how to use juxtaposed patches and strokes of reds and pinks and light touches of yellow to convey a sense of the vulnerable fleshiness of their bodies, in ways that make their indebtedness to Rembrandt all too clear.

Like Rembrandt, none of these artists has any shame in showing ugliness of feature (though few paid as much as he for the accusations of ugliness, or for not conforming to current standards of beauty, which Rembrandt's own contemporaries increasingly accused him of). The traces left by Bacon, Freud, Baselitz, and Saville of brushstroke, of actual application of paint, of the reluctance to smooth out their surfaces, of the decision to leave in all the visible effects of bristle, of soft and hard brush, of uneven patches of paint, and of the many bits and pieces of undissolved pigment or scraps of alien materials that find their way into the surface of things—let alone the initial elements of their design that they leave on the canvas for the viewer to figure out: all this may be found in Rembrandt too. These are works that convey the impression of unabashed spontaneity and candor, as if to say, “These imperfections before you, these visible brushstrokes, these distortions, these blots, these spots, and patches—all these are what make this work, and all these are me.”

In the works by many of the younger painters the surface may at first sight seem less grainy, less rough, but even so, in works such as Nathaniel Mary Quinn's *Self-Portrait after Rembrandt* (2019; p. 67; commissioned, like Saville's, especially for the show), Rembrandt's hold not only on their pictorial imagination but on their very handling of paint remains clear. Take Quinn's modulations—and the more delicate impastos—of his mouth, and of his slightly sad eyes, the features that are always the most significant attractors in a portrait. They are significant because they reveal so much and provide so much opportunity for the painter's and colorist's arts of nuance and for the potential subtleties of brushwork. More obviously, Quinn has noticed how rare, especially in the mature Rembrandt, is the self-portrait that does not show some kind of hat or cap that adds flair, finality, and self-confidence to a picture of the self. Like Bacon, Quinn distorts all these features in such a way as to draw still more attention to them.

At first sight Howard Hodgkin's *Portrait of the Artist* of 1984–87 (pp. 63) seems not to be a portrait at all. It seems too abstract, a deeply nonfigurative work in which geometric form predominates. Upon closer inspection, however, one suddenly notices a pair (or maybe a trio) of lively eyes deep within the work, right at the epicenter of the central box. They call to mind one of the floating eyes that Rembrandt painted at the back of works like *The Night Watch* or put into some of his earliest etchings, where there is a similar abandonment of the eye to the vagaries of surface. All of these works by Rembrandt may seem, in their fundamentally mimetic quality and in the complex emotional qualities the eyes within them entail, to be the direct opposite of the Hodgkin. But although on the surface it appears to be a smooth performance, a moment spent with it reveals the opposite. In it we find exactly the same traces of crumbliness, smudged areas, impasted patches, dribbles, and the scratching of the bristles of a brush as in the more figurative works in this show as well. They make us realize that in this surface, too, paint becomes as critical for the spectator as form itself. It is a self-portrait not because it looks like Hodgkin, but because it reveals the very self Hodgkin wishes to display. One might well miss this in looking at a reproduction of the work, but if ever there were an installation where one could plainly tell the necessity of seeing the painting firsthand, of seeing its physical materiality, it was here.



Fig. 9
Rembrandt van Rijn
Self-Portrait, 1660
Oil on canvas
43 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 33 $\frac{1}{2}$
(111 × 85 cm)
Musée du Louvre, Paris



Fig. 10
Rembrandt van Rijn
Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul, 1661
Oil on canvas
35 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 30 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches
(91 × 77 cm)
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Fig. 11
Rembrandt van Rijn
Self-Portrait, 1668
Oil on canvas
32 ½ × 25 ¾ inches
(82.5 × 65 cm)
Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation
Corboud, Cologne



Fig. 12
Rembrandt van Rijn
Self-Portrait at the Age of 63, 1669
Oil on canvas
33 ¾ × 27 ¾ inches
(86 × 70.5 cm)
National Gallery, London

The same is true of Basquiat's *Thinker* of 1986 (p. 100), where the contrasts between a brush at work with paints that in parts are dry, in others much oilier and wetter, only emerge upon closer inspection. This profound awareness of the importance of including the facture of work extends from the abstraction of Hodgkin to the strongly depictive quality, both in feel and feeling, of a work such as Rudolf Stingel's darkly shadowed, melancholic, and deeply Rembrandtian *Untitled* of 2012 (pp. 111–12). It is Rembrandtian not only in the emotional drama of the head but in the leavings of paint and brush on its surface, and perhaps above all in its embedment in a space that goes from vaguely lit gloom to almost impenetrable darkness. All this combines to give great emotional power to the work. And in the superimposition of what seem like somehow residual circles—but residues of what?—the painting draws us back to the geometric accompaniments of that classic expression of intellectual emotion, Dürer's famous 1514 engraving *Melencolia II*.

X

If ever there were an artist famous for showing emotion in a face and for suggesting the hidden-most depths of feeling in a work, it was Rembrandt. They are depths that we perceive but fail to plumb, and our struggle to get to their core is part of the hold of his pictures, and of his portraits in particular. But the profundity of their emotional content did not come automatically. In his youth Rembrandt studied incessantly how best to convey emotion in a head, whether using his own or one of his assistants'. It became one of his major projects, both inside and outside the studio. He painted what at the time he and others called *tronies*, small studies of heads, mostly of men; these were vehicles by which—on which—he could explore how most effectively to convey emotion on a face. Most are small and intense works, often more like sketches than finished paintings.

Jenny Saville's much larger self-portrait (p. 134) has the same qualities of Rembrandt's experimentation with the relationship between paint and expression of emotion as his *tronies*. Several other works in the show, like the Schiele and the late Picasso drawing, could clearly be classified in the same category. Indeed, it may well be that Bacon's spellbinding three studies for a self-portrait (pp. 144–45)—which are based on a strip of three photo booth pictures of himself—come closest to Rembrandt's intense exercises in conveying emotion in a head through the medium of paint, for all their clear reference to African masks as well.

XI

The largest and most striking picture in the show was Warhol's *Self-Portrait* of 1986 (p. 127). It was certainly the most alarming. Warhol's red face and electric hair strike terror into one's heart. There is little nuance of color and no coloristic magic as in Rembrandt or, for that matter, in the self-portraits by Saville and many of the other contemporary artists in the show. If ever there were a purely red and black picture, it was this. Since it's a silk screen with acrylic, there's no impasto in it. It's certainly not a *tronie*, since it's too large for that, and it lacks the kind of experimentation with paint that we find in almost all of Rembrandt's pictures. But it's a work full of stark emotion, especially an emotion that was perhaps too obvious and thus largely avoided by Rembrandt: fear: blatant, chilling, fear. It elicits terror in the beholder and reveals the terror of the sitter, the self. You see this in the eyes, the mouth, and, most bluntly of all, the hair.

From beginning to end, it is not only Rembrandt's eyes, mouth, and nose that convey emotion in his portraits. From the earliest works right until the very end, his hair (and often that of others) stands as an emblem of infinite freedom as well as of the pictorial energy that never abated, from the wonderful painting of himself aged about twenty-two, now in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 14), to the very last portraits in London and The Hague that he made at the age of sixty-three (figs. 12 and 13). Already in the painting of around 1628, he uses not only the tip of the brush but also its pointed wooden end, incising and scratching into the paint itself, through to the ground, to show the rich abundance of his fine mass of reddish-brown hair (fig. 14). One can scrutinize the painting and never see the end of the manifold strokes that make up his hair, of every little scratch, every curlicue, every dry stroke and every smooth one, each full of expressive content and aesthetic interest. Almost every strand seems to charge the work with both energy and softness, until inevitably the softness becomes more wiry with age. All this Rembrandt manages to convey like no other.

But soon he contains the waywardness of his hair with his caps and hats. He always loved painting these, and they are almost always present in his self-portraits, especially in the later ones. In all the self-portraits his hair becomes an accessory to emotion, unlike the hair in the Warhol, the Schiele, and the Basquiat, where it is clearly a protagonist; but in the great *Blinding of Samson* (1636; fig. 15) in Frankfurt—perhaps the most obviously dramatic of all his pictures—it carries a powerful emotional charge as well. In Delilah's treacherous hands, the hair that was the marker of Samson's strength is like the hair of the maenads, those drunken followers of Bacchus, amongst whom she might seem rightly to belong.

For the great art historian Aby Warburg, following ancient poets like Ovid, the movement of wild hair, as exemplified by that of the maenads, was always an index of emotional agitation. We may say the same not only for Basquiat, where the combination of bared teeth and hair standing on end occurs in many of his most forceful works, but for Warhol's *Self-Portrait* here and above all Schiele's self-portrait of 1910 (p. 65). His fiery eyes look distressed, his brow deeply furrowed. Is his expression one of pity, anger, or thwarted desire? His spiky shock of hair seems to emit flames and smoke, or so the thick reds and whites are painted to suggest. Together they make clear the extraordinary emotional tension within.

It is worth recalling at this point how much importance Rembrandt himself attached not only to the overlap between movement and emotion but also to the kinds of complex emotions that a head like Schiele's suggests in its powerful implication of the combination of both sorrow *and* anger. One rarely sees a single basic emotion in Rembrandt (and he generally avoids unidimensional depictions of anger and fear, for example, or if he tries these, he fails); more he aims for dense and complex combinations of divergent feelings that emerge not only on the face, but in the whole body and in the very movements it seems capable of either unleashing or restraining.

If Warhol's silk screen dispenses with the kinds of textures and surface irregularities that are so critical to Rembrandt's expressions of feeling in a picture—and indeed to the revelation of his self—what, then, are we to make of the work of Glenn Brown? His copy—or better, his version—of El Greco's portrait of an elderly gentleman from the Prado,



Fig. 13
Rembrandt van Rijn
Self-Portrait, 1669
Oil on canvas
25 ³/₄ × 23 ³/₄ inches
(65.4 × 60.2 cm)
Mauritshuis, The Hague



Fig. 14
Rembrandt van Rijn
Self-Portrait, c. 1628
Oil on panel
8 ⁷/₈ × 7 ³/₈ inches
(22.6 × 18.7 cm)
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

which Brown turns into a kind of ironic portrait of himself with a red nose, offers a perfect example of his approach (p. 81). At first his paintings look as deeply impasted as those of any old master, and almost as richly so as those of Rembrandt; their surfaces seem furrowed, patchy, and scumbled. But upon closer inspection we see that they are all perfectly flat, with no ridge or wrinkle whatsoever. Each stroke turns out to be done with great finesse, and as smoothly painted as it could possibly be. It is as if Brown is enquiring into the very nature of painting as both an optical and a tactile art.

He does so in both the El Greco portrait titled *Sex* (2003; p. 81) and in the work painted especially for the show, *The Hurdy Gurdy* (2019; p. 140). While relatively frequent in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century painting, the subject of the latter work is never to be found in Rembrandt. And Brown's approach to pentimento, to a change in direction as he paints, is also quite different from his. Whereas Rembrandt and most of the painters in the show charge their changes with tactility, Brown emphasizes their optical dimension. In this work, he begins by painting a copy of a drawing by Andrea del Sarto and then decides to copy one from the school of Van Dyck. Neither is obscured (as Rembrandt's initial ideas often are) by a superimposed layer of paint. Both are visible. Your eyes switch compulsively from one head to the other, finding each equally intact. Brown seems to be saying that painting is fundamentally an optical art—even if it can, by optical means alone, convey a sense of tactility and texture—as in *Sex* (and in most of Brown's work), but not in the *The Hurdy Gurdy*.

We should be careful, therefore, not to think of Brown's work as a rejection of the effect that Rembrandt—or any who paint in his manner—sought to achieve. On the contrary. Brown realizes the importance of conveying a sense of the tactility of a painted surface, but he shows, appropriately for someone so involved in the optical effects of making a picture, that the sense of an encrusted, scraped, and impasted surface can be conveyed by the eyes alone. He knows perfectly well that the eyes themselves are capable of evoking and stimulating the sense of touch. In this lies one of the fundamental creative paradoxes of vision. It is also where one of the most basic elements of Christian theology meets with art, in its claim that even though Christ was made incarnate, belief did not rest on embodiment alone, but on imagination. For why else would Christ have reminded St. Thomas that he did not have to feel—or even see—the wound in his side in order to believe in his reincarnation after death.

But in his painting after El Greco, Brown is not yet done with the paradoxes afforded by the multimodality of sensory perception, such as a sense of tactility achieved through vision alone. After all, this is as much a fact of life as it is a matter of faith. We live by it and are thwarted by it. So he does something still more critical. He must have noticed that as Rembrandt grew older he gave ever more prominence to his bulbous nose (for Rembrandt had never shirked from showing ugliness, as his critics were swift enough to notice); perhaps he realized that for Rembrandt it offered almost unlimited opportunities to represent the multifold forms of the incarnation of the flesh. He must have puzzled, as we all do, over the ways in which Rembrandt manages to convey the feel of flesh through the eyes alone. So Brown takes the infinitely more refined and much less salient nose in the El Greco portrait that was his model in the portrait here, and applies the coloristic lessons he learned from Rembrandt to it. For a start, of course, it's a red nose, but one that is as coloristically nuanced as it might have been in a Rembrandt. In this way he complicates the central paradox of vision, the tension between vision and tactility, and reminds us of the multifold possibilities that underlie the relationship between the senses and the hopes of art. Then he takes the clear eyes in the El Greco and covers them with a milky film or cataract, as if this were the impediment not just to seeing the colors he does paint, but to seeing the details of texture and roughness he does not, as if to argue out—but not

argue away—the notion that sight could ever equal tactility. But he also knows that touch is not taken away from the blind. After all, have we not long known that our sense of touch does not require sight at all but is, in fact, enhanced by its absence?

XIV

No wonder that one of Rembrandt's great themes was that of blindness. He frequently illustrated it with subjects from the Bible and from ancient history. In the stunning and yet terrifying painting of the blinding of Samson at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt (fig. 15), he shows how the Philistines chain Samson and punch out his remaining eye with a sword, as blood spurts from it and Delilah rushes off into the light with his hair in her hands, thus depriving him of all his strength and leaving him in tragic darkness. In his many drawings and etchings of the story of the blindness of Tobit—which is presumably due to a cataract—Rembrandt emphasizes both the helplessness of Tobit and the joy of his family once his sight was restored to him by his son Tobias (helped, of course, by an angel). For Rembrandt, sight was always associated with touch, and when you see the most striking of his impastos, as, for example, in the hands, sleeves, and gold tunic of the *Self-Portrait* in the Frick Collection, it is hard to resist reaching out to touch the picture yourself; indeed, in the stories like that of Tobit, it is tempting to associate relief from blindness with the satisfaction of the gifts of both sight and touch in personal relationships, as Rembrandt's drawings and paintings recall to us over and over again. In the 1653 *Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer* in the Metropolitan Museum, Aristotle seems to access the wisdom of the blind Homer by lightly placing his right hand on the head of the poet's bust, while his left hand fingers the great gold chain, as thickly painted as any in the history of art, draped from his neck to his waist.

The association between all-too-tactile brilliance and sight reaches its apogee in the last of his public works, the painting commissioned for the Amsterdam town hall and rejected as being too radical (and presumably not smooth enough!) by the town government, the *The Conspiracy of the Batavians Under Claudius Civilis* (fig. 8). The deeply moving irony of this picture is that such utter visual splendor should occur in a work about a national leader who is old and one-eyed—and all the more heroic for that. One sees the glinting swords, the shimmering embossed fabrics and the costume jewelry, and one wants to touch them all, as if to join the conspirators in their oath. Nothing could have been more important to Rembrandt, nothing more visionary than these exemplifications of the fundamental relationship between sight and touch. It is of course in this that much of his legacy lies, as *Visions of the Self* demonstrated over and over again, in picture after picture.

XV

Is it just by coincidence that the other work in the show that was painted with extraordinary smoothness, all impasto omitted, was the wonderful double portrait of Gerhard Richter and Benjamin Buchloh, the art historian who was Richter's Boswell (p. 78)? In its composition the work is related to the many double portraits of Titian and his school in which brushstroke was prized and the texture of the surface was generally rather pronounced. But that is about as far as that relationship goes, for there the surface is almost tactile; here we seem to want to feel our way in. For here the surface is as smooth as anything in Glenn Brown, and is entirely covered by a milky layer as if seen through a cataract once more. It was a wise and pointed choice to include in the show Richter's later work (2008;

p. 131) depicting a mirror with a similarly milky surface, obliging the viewer engage in an elusive visual search for the definition of whatever figure it might reflect—including, of course, the self.

How different, then, though equally compelling, are Giuseppe Penone's rebarbative eyes in the photograph of himself titled *Rovesciare i propri occhi* (*Reversing One's Eyes*, 1970; p. 75). They are as chilling as the eyes of Medusa, threatening to freeze one to stone. They turn one away, just as do the startling glass or crystal eyes of some ancient statue, or the sockets or dead pupils of a blind man. . . . But then we see that we, his viewers, are reflected in them, and Penone's inscriptions tell us that no, they are not mirrors, but contact lenses acting as mirrors, as a kind of parallel for the photographic lens. They are not transparent and do not reveal the soul of the artist; instead, they reflect the viewer and make her aware of her own role in constituting the subject. "The contact lenses," he writes on one side of the photograph, "mirror and reflect the images which are put together by the movements of the observer." On the other side of the photo, Penone notes that "they entrust to the uncertain outcome of a photographic recording the possibility of seeing in the future the images assembled by the eyes of the past."

Photographs may mirror what is before them, but despite the appearance of faithfulness they are not reliable. What they show, like the contact lens, depends on your position—both literal and psychological. We know that from experience. What they record depends as much on what you, the beholder, bring to them as on the maker's role in creating the image. What you see in Penone's eyes—or rather his contact lenses—are mirrors reflecting what you want to see; they offer no accurate sense of what is beyond them.

We may thus take this work as a statement about a central problem of art: the maker's ability to evoke a response that is both adequate to the mystery of the represented self and goes beyond it. Its evocativeness depends almost entirely on the extent to which it allows us to sustain the search for innermost depth, and then, when that search is thwarted, to know that we will never fail to return to it because each next gaze will reveal something further.

All this may help us understand why it is only rarely that we can say with certainty that this or that in a modern or contemporary portrait derives from Rembrandt; to do so would be to scant the processes that go into making a work. What we could say, however, is that this or that is an aspect of self-portraiture that is similar to Rembrandt because it worked for him just as it works for x, y, and z. An exhibition like *Visions of the Self* invites viewers to measure, by way of comparison, the effectiveness of precisely such processes, techniques, and devices.

XVI

Take Damien Hirst's portrait of himself at age twenty-three while working in a mortuary with the head of a dead man (1991; p. 84). It's altogether too vivid, too realistic, with those screwed-up eyes, the fleshy grimace, the entrails emerging from the severed head. And then Hirst's cheeky and immature grin, his head topped by spikily cropped hair, just as in some of Rembrandt's youthful self-portraits, hair not yet constrained by cap or hat. But in only one or two of Rembrandt's unsparingly frank drawings does the artist portray himself as insolently or cheekily as Hirst. For the most part, as we have seen, he uses these early drawings and paintings of himself as *tronies* with which to study every kind of emotion. Indeed, in the greatest of these, such as his own self-portrait at the age of twenty-three, most of his face is deeply shadowed, and the eyes most of all. They suggest gravity and maturity, not cheekiness or immaturity, and in them the areas that are lit are precisely those in which he can show off his technique *as a painter* to best effect (though the drawings, at least

at this point, testify to the brilliant spontaneity of his line and his skill in the use of wash, that halfway point between drawing and painting, as a means of showing the subtlety with which he is capable of rendering contrasts between light and shade.

Rembrandt himself was extraordinarily interested in the representation of old men, especially in his youth. Typically he shows them as dignified, despite all the signs of senescence that he loved to depict. Insolence and cheekiness were not part of his playbook, whatever opportunities they may have offered for virtuoso physiognomic representation. And in the end, of course, there were few other painters in the history of art who were able to express the decline even of unpromising features and flesh, in all their sagging and wilting patchiness, with such tenderness and nobility.

XVII

I do not wish to suggest that every work in the show relates to or could be related to Rembrandt in one way or another. But his legacy was present in almost every picture, even when the evidence is less clear or less direct than I may seem to have been claiming. There are many lessons to be learned from the similarities in style and approach between his work and those of the modernists and our contemporaries, however accidental or coincidental those similarities may seem to be. Often it seems as if Rembrandt's handling of paint and his masterful use of light and shade has filtered across time to our era. His work offers an almost unparalleled prism through which to view not only all the artists in the show but also the entire history of painting and printmaking. The multigenerational comparisons *Visions of the Self* afforded give one much pause for thought about the participating artists' relationship not only with Rembrandt, but with each other. Whether in his case or in theirs, the fundamental question is about the meaning of style, and its relationship with the message the artist wishes to convey. It turns out that even in the works that appear to have no direct or purposeful relationship with Rembrandt, the similarities and comparisons that emerge provide hooks for connecting the modern and contemporary paintings and drawings amongst themselves too.

XVIII

Picasso's drawing of himself aged ninety-one, done the summer before his death in 1973, was one of the most compelling works in the show (p. 137). The line that runs straight down on the left side of his forehead could hardly be more decisive in its finality. In its use of chalk it comes close to Rembrandt's own chalk drawings. The spontaneity of handling, the granularity of each line, the brisk and often emphatic use of hatching, the highlighting with white, all this appears in Rembrandt too, not only in his late drawings, but from the very start. Like all Rembrandt's self-portraits, Picasso's late drawing also makes clear the essential role of eyes, mouth, and nose—as bulbous as anything in Rembrandt!—in establishing the emotional tenor of the portrait. The jagged and unruly eyebrows play a similar role in this respect as do the furrowed brow lines in Rembrandt's paintings of himself. The sense of movement not only within these features but also in the contour that defines Picasso's face (and shoulders) reminds one of the inseparability of movement and emotion, an inseparability that Rembrandt himself acknowledged when he spoke of the need to invest his *Entombment* and *Resurrection* of 1639 with “the greatest and most natural movement”—by which he meant the way in which the movement of the body expressed the movements of the soul.



Fig. 15
Rembrandt van Rijn
The Blinding of Samson, 1636
Oil on canvas
81 1/8 × 108 3/8 inches
(206 × 276 cm)
Städel Museum, Frankfurt

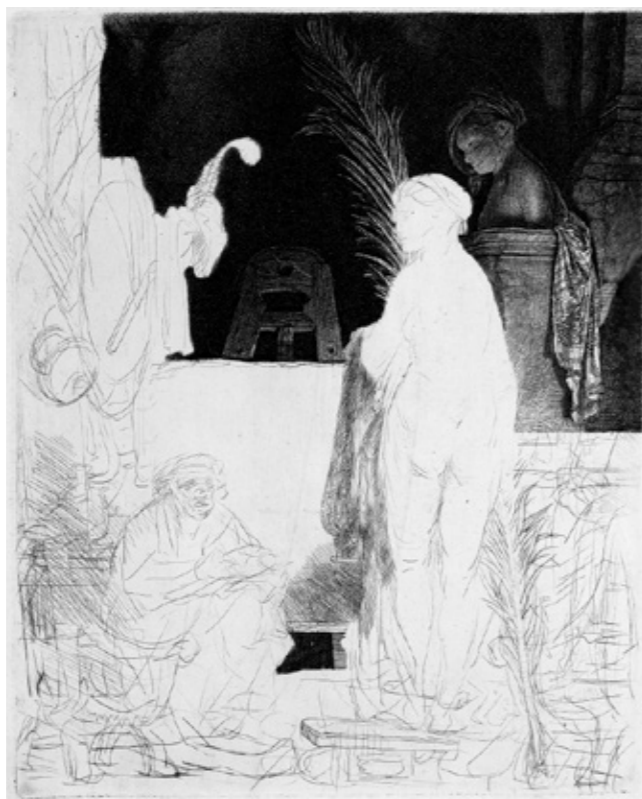


Fig. 16
Rembrandt van Rijn
The Artist Drawing from the Model, c. 1639
Etching and drypoint on paper
9 1/8 x 7 1/4 inches (23.2 x 18.4 cm)
Morgan Library & Museum, New York

But then we look more closely, and we see it: no—this is less a living face than a skull. The nose may suggest fleshy bulbousness, the eyebrows hair, but for the rest—the eye sockets, the hollows of the face, and the mouth that seems all teeth—these are the chilling features of the head of death.

The circuit closes. To portray the self is to seek to defy mortality. And yet, in the end, to do so is nothing less than to testify to one's awareness of the inescapability of death. Is that why, as Robert Mapplethorpe so firmly clutches his walking stick topped by a death's-head in his last self-portrait, he seems to affirm the parallel between his own visage—staring eyes, perfectly frontal gaze, the rest all black—and that of death itself? In the seventeenth century and for long after, one could always find a death's-head in what were called *vanitas* paintings, paintings that testified to the sheer vanity of the things of this world. Beautiful objects, fine clothes, paintings—all must die, including the subjects of self-portraits. A skull was often included as a simple *memento mori*: *remember you must die*. But Rembrandt was no emblematicist; he did not need such obvious devices or symbols. Who, in seeing the only other en fleshed part of this work, Mapplethorpe's beautifully photographed hand, more clearly in focus than the slightly blurred head, would not wonder whether Mapplethorpe was here not recalling the way in which Rembrandt's own hand, the very vehicle of his immortality, clutches his maulstick in the painting in the Frick Collection?

XIX

And so the parallels continue. They remain instructive, however coincidental, however aleatory they may be. But like the roll of the dice, they are fateful, too. The eyes in Man Ray's 1924 portrait of himself aged thirty-four (p. 97) have the same hooded watchfulness as Rembrandt's in some of his earlier self-portraits, but for the rest it seems much more conventional than any of Rembrandt's (and, indeed, than much else in the show). The slicked-back hair and bourgeois outfit make him appear almost like an alert if skeptical banker, or an assessor or examiner of some kind or another: spy, judge, interrogator—who knows? But like Rembrandt—and Dürer too—he places his own stylized signature prominently in the foreground of the work, thus proclaiming its status as a work of art. And then we notice the artful blur of light and shade in the background that contrasts so strikingly with the much more clearly focused marks of damage to the plate that Man Ray deliberately chose to leave on the print. There it is again, the commitment to the aesthetic dimension of the error, the technical happenstance of production, the confusion between the deliberate and the accidental, the enigma left to the spectator, the essential tension in the work of art between control and the roll of the dice—the tension, in other words that both enables and underlies the creative results that emerge. The artist is master of that play, to a greater or lesser degree; we who are not are indeed mere spectators.

If Man Ray's self-portrait shows a self closed within itself, despite the intensity of the gaze, Diane Arbus's of 1942 has a frank, almost invitational openness about it, despite the fact that she shows herself almost nude (p. 92). Indeed, she is quite naked, save for the briefs she wears. In its tender representation of young female carnality and the modest benignity of the expression on her mouth, it calls to mind Rembrandt's painting of Hendrickje Stoffels now in the National Gallery in London. It must have been painted when she was just a few years older than Arbus when she made the portrait of herself in early pregnancy. The briefs she wears for modesty cover what Hendrickje almost reveals as she lifts her shift, just as Hendrickje's shift hides what Arbus so plainly shows. But in the tenderness and sensuality of the treatment of flesh and in the way both artists so

lovingly attend to the other elements within the work, one cannot but help wonder whether in her imagination as she composed this picture of herself Arbus also recalled Rembrandt's painting of Hendrickje.

All these are works that not only imply their beholders but also implicate them. Ellen Gallagher is knowing about this, and in her appropriation of a famous Man Ray photograph of Matisse drawing an odalisque model in the luxurious setting of a harem, she substitutes her head for the model's, and that of Sigmund Freud, here apparently taking notes, for the artist's. Indeed! In both Gallagher's work and Matisse's, the model seems to interrogate the man—whether painter with brush in hand, or psychoanalyst with pen in hand—with her gaze; she challenges their presence and their roles. Then Gallagher takes charge, adding gold leaf to the background and seeing to it that lighting effects slowly change as one looks at the work, so that the background shimmers and scintillates almost like the gold on the tips of Rembrandt's brushes in the Kenwood picture and the great tabard he wears in the Frick self-portrait.

But there is more to all this yet. This is a Pygmalion scene, a scene about the way in which the artist desires his creation so much that he eventually believes her to be alive, indeed *makes* her alive. Of course it is always a male artist and a female model at stake, the sexuality of the latter never far from the surface. Here the model—the Gallagher-odalisque—looks out at the painter-psychoanalyst almost too aware of the use to which she can put the Pygmalion effect. In becoming alive, in fact, as a living person, she knows what the man is up to, or what his thoughts are up to. It is not as if Rembrandt himself was unaware of this—perhaps not overtly so in pictures like that of his beloved Hendrickje, but he certainly is, for example, in the great etching he made in the late 1630s of the artist sketching his model but left unfinished (fig. 16). In it he shows himself looking up all too eagerly at her but still incapable of bringing his creation to the life and sensuality he desires. The only things Rembrandt completes in this most abundantly textured of all his etchings (insofar as a print can have texture) are the easel and the studio accoutrement of the half-length sculpted bust of a woman, over which he has cockily placed one of his hats. But the easel is right in the center and arguably the most finished element of all. The truth will lie in the making, not in the similitude.

Gallagher has learned all too well that the meaning of a work lies less in its relationship with the traditional subject to which it may allude than in the way it is painted—though here there is no question of its political relevance, in the placing of Freud as the voyeuristic painter with the significant pen-needle-brush. And when we consider Rembrandt in this light, we realize that he transcends his subject matter as often as Shakespeare: in their work, their universality transcends their specific sources. And both retain their acute political relevance, just as Gallagher does in her work here.

xx

Charles Ray's portrait is of another order altogether (1990; p. 123). Like Gallagher's, it is decidedly appropriative. It takes as its model not the artist himself, but rather the very essence of a model: a mannequin—the ultimate stand-in for anonymity, with no clothes even to individualize it. Who would make a *portrait* of a mannequin? And why? Normally and principally we rely on the features of the face to assign individuality. There is none of that in this bland portrayal. In fact, there is only one clue to individuality here—and even that would be elusive were it not for the notes to the exhibition. Ray provides his shop mannequin with a hyperrealistic fiberglass cast of his own genitalia (it forms part of a series of such works with genitalia made in the same way). It is ostentatious but

it is not individualizing. We don't normally identify and judge an individual from her or his genitalia. But in taking a generic male mannequin as his model, in other words, as perfect and boring a specimen as Pygmalion's Galatea, Ray ironizes mimesis (as do many other contemporary artists—perhaps more in the past than we realize). He makes clear that perfect imitation can neither be a criterion of excellence in a work nor give it any of the substance or resonance that all portraits surely require. The work is the perfect example of how even the most perfect mimesis fails to convey the true self. Even the closest resemblance, as Nelson Goodman so clearly set out in *Languages of Art*, remains purely denotative; for the rich connotations of character, we need more.

xxi

A good demonstration comes from Dora Maar's *Portrait de femme (autoportrait)* of 1929 (p. 143). It's by any reckoning an abstract and unpretentious work. Yet it succeeds in conveying an impression of warmth and character, even with the comparatively limited means at Maar's disposal. It's a good-humored work; there's sensuality in the mouth, irony in the eyes, and jauntiness in the hat. It seems to lack a nose, unless we read one into the upper part of the wedge containing the mouth. Thus Maar completes her depiction of the chief attractors of the face, those features that primarily claim attention in any possible physiognomy. As rudimentary and as relatively nonmimetic as they may be, they contain just enough to allow a viewer to project character into them. And by setting this face against a background that seems, like so many of Rembrandt's, to be lit from the left, she mitigates its darkness and endows it with aesthetic interest by making the viewer attend, as does he, to the traces of facture—of *manufacture*, of making by hand. This is a work that offers a significant clue to the importance of moving away from pure mimesis in the direction of conveying the texture of personality and the feel of flesh. For this we need both direction and the possibility of projection. The salvation of art lies in the ways it manages the renunciation of pure resemblance, and in its unambitious plainness, Maar's self-portrait exemplifies this as well as anything else in the show, with charmingly little ado.

This is not how one would describe Roy Lichtenstein's self-portrait of 1979 at all (p. 146). Here there's much ado. It's an intricate, self-conscious cubist endeavor, but in its bewildering complexity of linear, flattened, and abstract form, the usual indicators appear: hair and jutting brow, nose, mouth, bow tie, collar, and pocket handkerchief. These are just the features and elements of clothing that might draw our attention in a Rembrandt. But here they are barely mimetic—and yet the suggestion of features of face, body, and clothing, however geometricized and abstract, is sufficient to unleash the imagination and to allow us to project the signs of richly living form onto an image with which we may begin to imagine we could interact.

xxii

Cindy Sherman's portraits and self-portraits stand at the very opposite pole to Lichtenstein's. In addition to reducing the mimetic element in this work, Lichtenstein also moves away, as in all his art, from the kinds of surface texture that we see so profusely in Rembrandt, especially late Rembrandt. So too does Sherman. But the photograph of the artist posed and dressed up to look pretty much like the Amsterdam merchant Nicolaes Ruts in the wonderful 1631 portrait of him by Rembrandt in the Frick Collection is in every other respect the opposite of Lichtenstein. While the surfaces in the Rembrandt

are much smoother than later on, and texture is as much suggested as actually present, Sherman nevertheless emphasizes the works printed photographic status by smoothing out the collar, for example, to eliminate even the suspicion of roughness or graininess of surface. But for Sherman mimetic precision is central, to such a degree that in her adaptation of the portrait of Ruts, she engages in her habitual play with dressing up, as if to say, “Look at me! I am present in all my referentiality.” The indebtedness here is more straightforward than elsewhere, at least on the surface of things. Hers is an art that consists almost entirely of asserting, “I am me, however much I dress up, however much I impersonate others.”

Perhaps one could say this about Rembrandt too. One recalls Gary Schwartz’s suggestion that Rembrandt’s *Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul* (fig. 10) was a veiled reference to himself as being “all things to all men,” just as St. Paul declared himself to be. Maybe. But is it not one of the most moving of the ironies that I have identified in this essay that in hardly ever painting himself as someone else—and certainly not as a member of the bourgeoisie—Rembrandt became as accessible as any great artist has ever been?

XXIII

If any social medium of our time shouts, “Look at me,” it is the selfie. Richard Prince’s Instagram work, such as that of 2019 commissioned for this show, exemplifies this perfectly (p. 105). Wearing slightly tattered paint-stained clothes, the young Prince stands next to Alison Mosshart, the lead singer of the rock bands the Kills and the Dead Weather. Beneath the photo comes the usual string of Instagram responses, in this case by some of the big names in American popular culture. “You handsome devil,” writes Sante D’Orazio, the maker of the photo itself. “Very cool,” says Marc Jacobs. Just as Prince places himself within a milieu that shows off his social status, so too did Rembrandt insert himself into *The Night Watch* (though significantly not in front; those were different times). The photo of Prince and Mosshart is indeed a cool twenty-first century equivalent of Rembrandt’s great double portrait showing himself carousing with his first wife, Saskia, in 1636, both dressed to the nines. “New outfit, Dad,” “very cool.” How Rembrandt would have delighted in such responses to his own outfits!

But let us not delude ourselves. There is little that is embodied and enfolded here. For Rembrandt the question of embodiment transcended all questions of labeling. There are, of course, philosophers—above all Nelson Goodman—who claim that even the most mimetic works are just labels for what can never be conveyed through resemblance alone. But let us not delude ourselves with this either.

Take Christopher Wool’s untitled silk screen of 2016 (p. 117), the latest of his many series derived from Rorschach blots or made to look like them. His fixation on this theme is an expression of his commitment to the notion that in the end we only project—that is, that what we see in an image is nothing more than what we project onto it. This notion is clearly critical for the way we look at all self-portraits (indeed at all works of art), allowing us to take something away from the artist and give something to the viewer. Even here, even in this apparently abstract image, which seems diagrammatic or like some kind of scan with lines crossing it vertically and horizontally, we see a kind of head, or search within the field for something that approximates to an organic form, a pattern that resembles something that is alive. We cannot help our biological selves. And so we return, irrevocably, to the flesh, and to the simulated flesh, and—finally—to the flesh we project into the image.

XXIV

One of the most striking aspects of both the Frick and the Kenwood self-portraits is their presence, the sheer sense of physical presence they are able to convey, difficult as this may be to define. They dominate the rooms they are in; they draw you unequivocally to them. Almost all the works in this show, some more so than others, strive to convey a sense that they command both the room they’re in and your attention. Perhaps the most obvious of these works is Urs Fischer’s remarkably realistic wax sculpture of a man seated at a table. It’s provided with wicks, as if to acknowledge the fact that this kind of mimesis is for burning, for melting the work to a formless residue, to nothing.

You walk into the room with the Basquiat, the Prince, the Stingel, the Wool, and the Koons—and there he is, Fischer’s man in an anorak and scruffy pants sitting, leaning forward, hands clasped, with a couple of bottles in front of him (p. 106). A slightly smug man, one might think, a nice still life on the table. He hampers your passage from the paintings to the window where you want to go reflect, in the light, upon what you have seen. “What’s he doing there?” you ask yourself. He’s in the way, and you feel compelled to walk around him, as if by doing so you can somehow try to ignore him, try to come to terms with his presence. But then when you return, there he is again, irritatingly still there, disturbing the peace, just by sitting there stolidly but somehow powerfully.

All this, of course, may have to do with the sheer three-dimensionality of the work. It has these effects on you, you realize, precisely because it is so tactile and so sculptural.

While much of today’s two-dimensional art (whether painting, photograph, drawing, print, or other media) plays consciously with its distinctive and distinguishing *inability* to achieve these qualities, let us not forget that it is the tactility (both real and suggested) of Rembrandt’s work that gives it so much of its presence. But the fact of the presence of works such as Richter’s gives one pause. Is it then the idea of the work, or of the still subtle physical presence conjured up by the image behind the cataract that gives it its presence? Is this the final hope of painting? We must wait for the answer to this puzzle.

XXV

And so we return again to the painting from Kenwood, probably completed a few years before the final portraits of 1669. Some scholars have supposed the Kenwood picture to be unfinished. We cannot be sure. But could it be that this is exactly how Rembrandt intended to finish it and that it is precisely this that makes it so prophetic a work? The issue has been overshadowed in almost all discussions of the painting by the obvious questions about its iconography and the meaning of the symbols within it.

What are the circles on the wall at the back of the painting, what do they stand for? Everyone who sees the picture asks this question, and scholars have not shied away from discussing them. Rembrandt stands proudly before them, confident despite the heavy signs of tiredness in his eyes, with brushes, maulstick, and palette (some scholars, slightly improbably, have called it a mirror) in hand. At the very right edge of the picture one can just discern the side of an easel. It’s easy to miss as one scans the remarkable surface of the painting and gazes into its depths, gripped by the variety of brushstrokes and textures of paint, from creamy cap to the lightest of touches to his golden-gray hair, from the scarlet of his smock to his fur shawl, draped over a dryly painted collar and the darks of his overgarment, and the touches of gold at the end of his brushes. In his earliest portrait of himself in his studio he showed the entire easel and its support (fig. 4); but it is not for Rembrandt now to show what supports his work, however mysteriously. What he wants

to make clear is the work of the hands and the brushes and, if anything, the support for those hands against the canvas itself.

Above all, though, he must show the perfection of his art. And he does so both by embodiment and by emblem, the first by means of paint, the second by means of a simple sign—the perfect circles behind him. Some scholars have argued that they are less than perfectly round, but that would be a quibble in the face of what it is hard not to believe Rembrandt intended: an allusion to the skill of his craft and the universality of his art.

From the very beginnings of painting on, and certainly in the art literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the ability of the artist to draw a perfect circle, unaided by compasses, was an emblem of artistic excellence. It was epitomized by Giorgio Vasari's story of how the Pope recognized the superior talent, indeed the ultimate greatness of Giotto through nothing more—or less—than the perfectly drawn circle the painter presented him with. It has also been noted that these circles could allude to Rembrandt's skills as a draftsman, and not just as a painter. This seems fitting enough, since Rembrandt does not fall as readily as one might think on one or the other side of the Renaissance divide between painting and drawing; he is champion and exemplar of both. Gary Schwartz has proposed that in fact the placement of Rembrandt's head between these circles may allude to the lesser-known story about the greatest painter of antiquity, Apelles, who demonstrated his skill not only by bisecting a single fine line with a yet finer one, but also by making a third circle between two others, thus bisecting each one perfectly.

Other scholars have also suggested that these circles may be abstract representations of the maps of the globe that often feature in the background of other Dutch paintings of the time (and, of course, in atlases). However abstract they may be, and however lacking they may be in both the cartographic and pictorial detail that characterize such maps, Rembrandt's circles are surely an expression of his claim for the universality both of his art and his understanding of art. It makes sense, I think, to take these twin orbs as signifying both technical excellence and the idea that his art goes beyond the Netherlands to include and embrace the entire world. And in the very way he stands before these grand circles—whose abstract presence adds immensely to the formal satisfactions of the picture (here we might recall Cézanne's famous recommendation to deal with nature by means of the cylinder, square, and cone)—Rembrandt shows himself as the calm master of his transcendent art, at once perfect in his skills and universal in his reach.

But to reduce a portrait by Rembrandt to its symbolic iconography, to the meaning of its symbols alone, would be a mistake. In a way, the claim for universality is also the message of Jeff Koons's work in *Visions of the Self*—but it is also profoundly different. Rembrandt's paintings go beyond the symbolic and the purely referential; their meaning lies in the way they embody, not just symbolize, their meaning. It is not just a matter of bodily embodiment, but aesthetic embodiment. They carry within their representations of the physical body their entire meaning. In the Koons and to a lesser extent the Mapplethorpe, the meaning of the work lies entirely or largely in its referentiality. They function almost exactly as seventeenth-century emblems or emblematic illustrations do.

Emblems at the time, usually to be found in printed books but often also in pictures, were key visual symbols that might at first seem puzzling, but turn out to mean something quite specific and to reveal the meaning of the representation. Thus an orb or circle could symbolize perfection, a skull mortality, a bubble vanity (or the vanity of earthly things, of which Rembrandt must surely have been as conscious as anyone), a dry tree infertility, a caged bird virginity, a bird flown from the cage lost virginity, a couple seated near a burning fireplace the dangers of passion, and so on. These emblems very often provided the crucial clues to the meaning of seventeenth-century Dutch paintings. But not for Rembrandt. This would have been too literal for him. He was always engaged in something larger.

It may be tempting to think of Rembrandt's self-portraits in the way suggested by Koons's work: namely, that you see yourself and the entire world in them, just as in the shiny blue ball within the Koons. But Rembrandt turned his back on such emblems, on the very idea that a cryptic sign could stand for something so much larger. For him the key to his pictures lay not in a single symbol, such as a circle or an allusion to one of the great painters of antiquity. Their meaning lay in their substance—indeed, in their very subsistence. It lay in paint itself and in how the painter was able to convey feelings both of portrayer and portrayed.

“Every painter paints himself,” ran the Renaissance dictum (*Ogni pittore dipinge se*). Rembrandt's self-portrait perfectly exemplifies it all over again. It is not, of course that every painter paints a portrait of himself or herself, nor even a matter of what many have called automimesis, the notion that the painter represents himself in his pictures in any kind of literal way; rather, it is that the true self-portrait lies precisely and completely in the way in which the artist paints, whether in actual self-portraits or in any other painting he makes. The subject matter of the work is irrelevant. It is the paint and the paint alone that counts. The Kenwood picture perfectly exemplifies this. In the end, Rembrandt is not merely Apelles or Zeuxis and his greatness is not to be signified by some emblem like a pair of circles or an orb. Iconography, the hunt for subject matter, must fall by the wayside, for what his self-portraits really mean is conveyed solely by the work of his hands. This, Rembrandt, is the true signifier of the self.

The art is in the paint, and in that very materiality, that scorning of smoothly depictive and mimetic representation, lies the idea of art itself. Design and drawing meet concept, and here become painting not as *an art*, but as *art itself*. In showing us how concept can reside in pure materiality, the work of Rembrandt resolves one of the key puzzles both of modernity and contemporaneity.

Plates

Howard Hodgkin
Portrait of the Artist, 1984–87
Oil on wood
30 ³/₄ × 35 ³/₄ inches
(78.1 × 90.8 cm)



Egon Schiele
Self-Portrait, 1910
Gouache, watercolor,
and charcoal on paper
16 ³/₄ × 11 ⁵/₈ inches
(42.6 × 29.6 cm)



Nathaniel Mary Quinn
Self-Portrait after Rembrandt, 2019
Oil paint, paint stick, gouache,
soft pastel, and oil pastel on linen
20 × 20 inches
(50.8 × 50.8 cm)





Many years ago, when I was a teacher, I feasted my eyes on Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Monumental it was, viewing and studying the work of a great master. I never fathomed the day when I would make a painting specifically related to a Rembrandt—and that such a painting as mine would hang in the same space as his: my feet, covered in dirt, were allowed to walk along streets of gold.

Nathaniel Mary Quinn

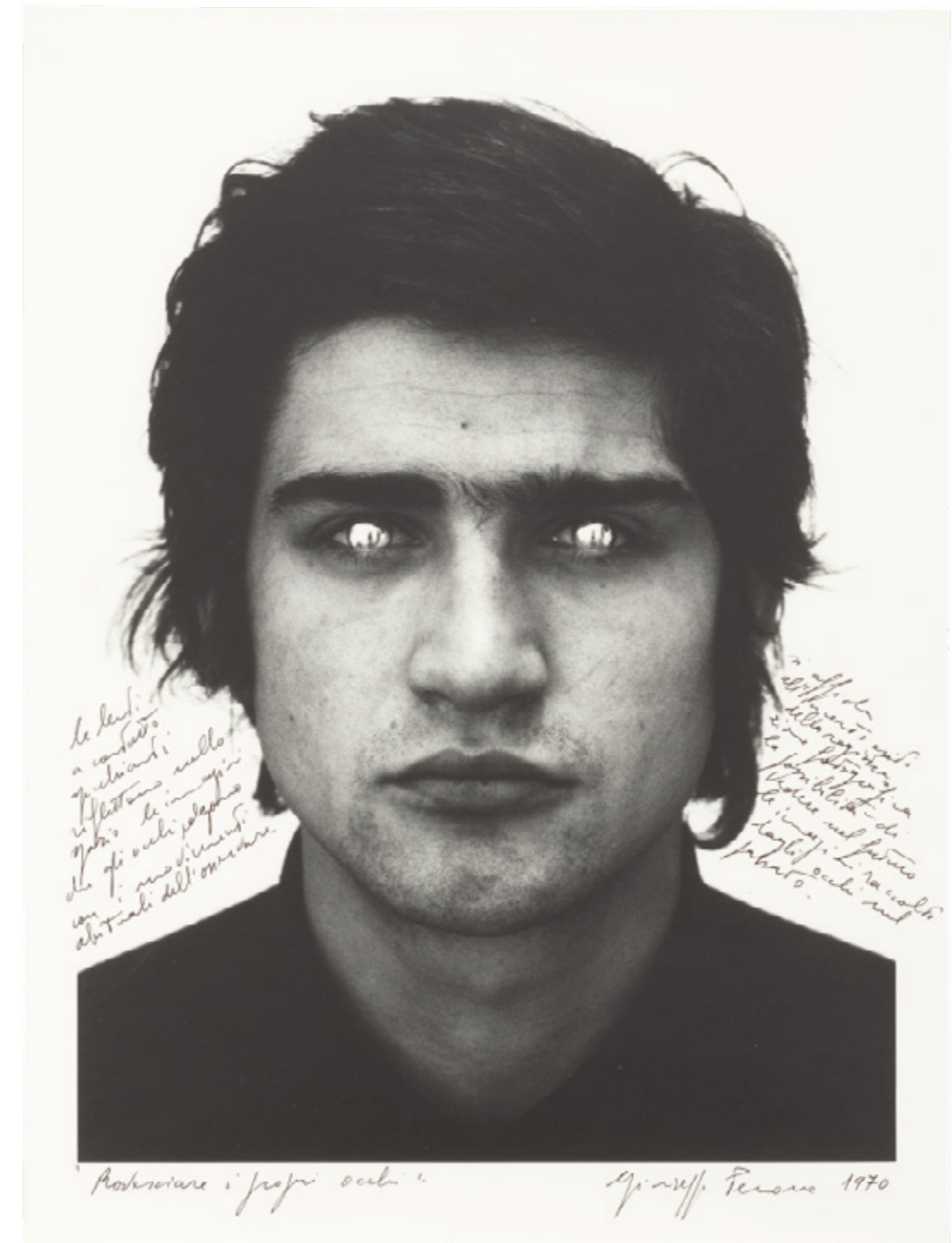
John Currin
Self-Portrait, 2002
Graphite on paper
10 × 6 ½ inches
(25.2 × 16.5 cm)

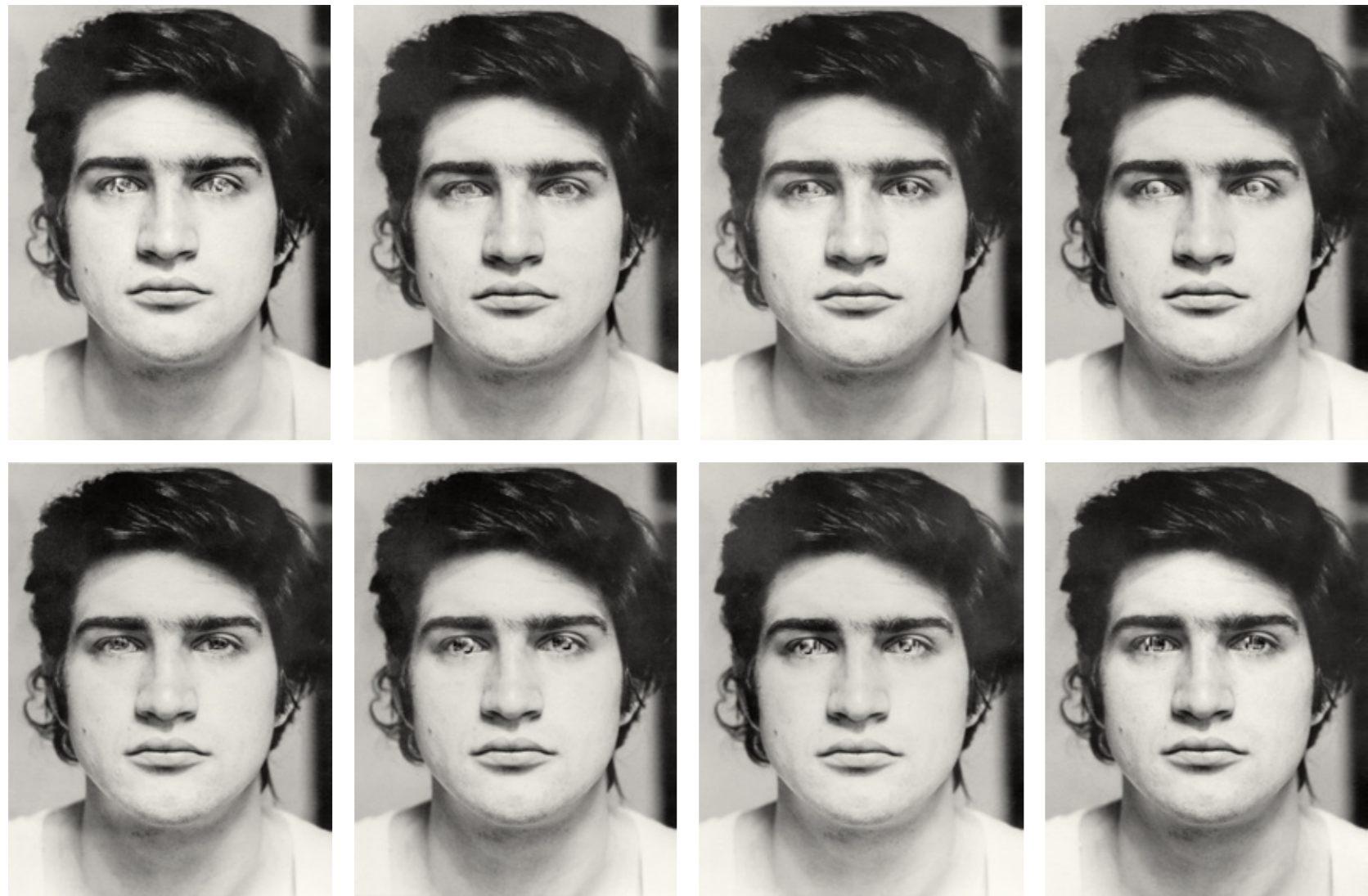


Cindy Sherman
Untitled #220, 1990
Chromogenic color print
70 × 46 inches
(177.8 × 116.8 cm)

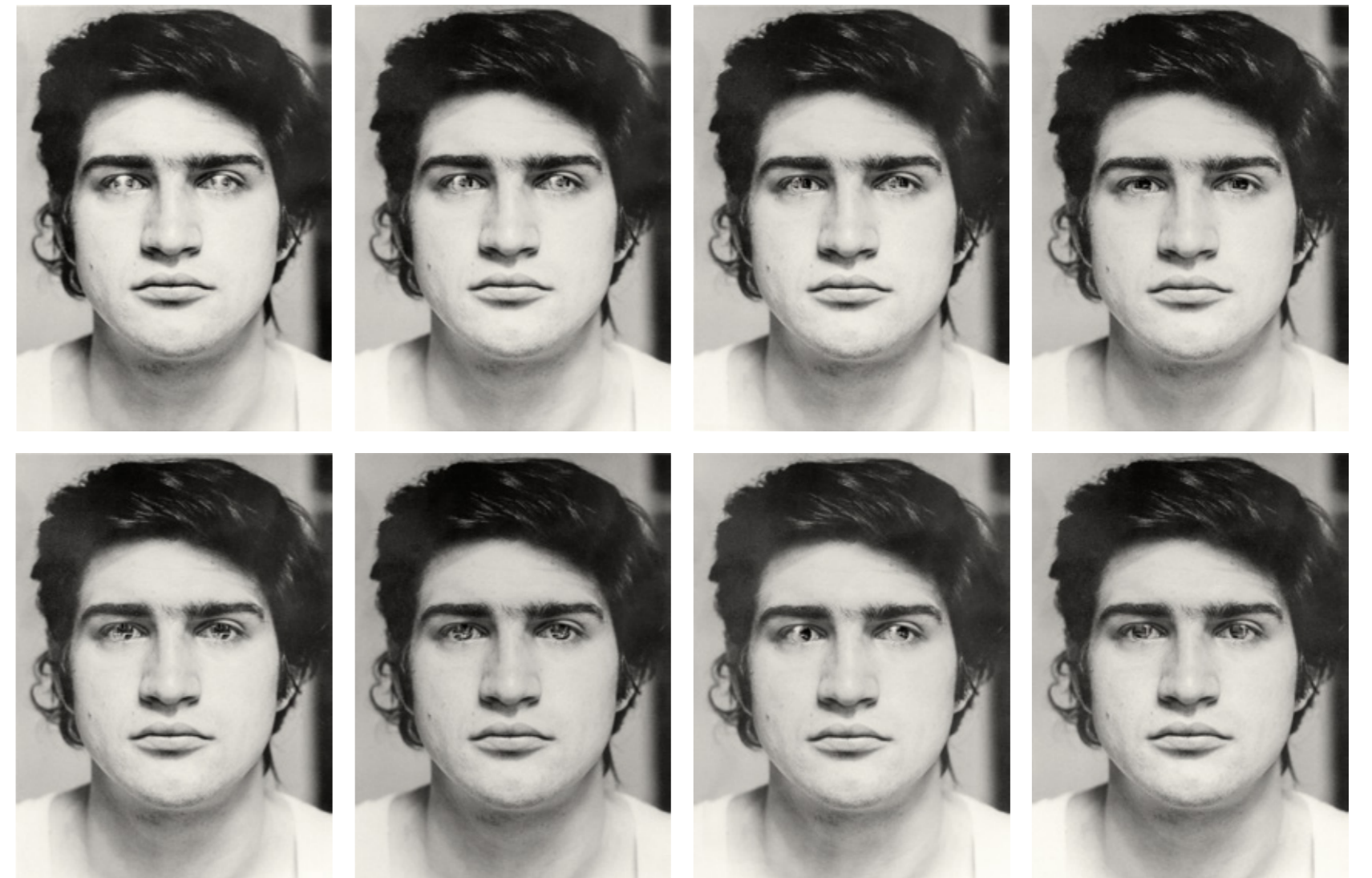


Giuseppe Penone
Rovesciare i propri occhi
(*Reversing One's Eyes*), 1970
Gelatin silver print
15 5/8 x 11 5/8 inches
(39.6 x 29.6 cm)





Giuseppe Penone
Rovesciare i propri occhi
(*Reversing One's Eyes*), 1970
Gelatin silver prints, in 16 parts
Each: 10 3/4 x 8 inches
(27.1 x 20.1 cm)





Gerhard Richter
Hofkirche Dresden
(*Court Chapel Dresden*), 2000
Oil on canvas
31 1/2 x 36 5/8 inches
(80 x 93 cm)

Glenn Brown
Sex, 2003
Oil on panel
49 5/8 x 33 1/2 inches
(126 x 85.1 cm)







Damien Hirst
With Dead Head, 1991
Photographic print on aluminum
22 ½ × 30 inches
(57.2 × 76.2 cm)
Edition 15/15

I began the self-portraits the same way I began the other portraits, with just the head. I used the hand mirror because it was easy to work with, but also because I wanted to make it clear that I was looking in a mirror. It put me in the distance, as it were, almost in the background.

Lucian Freud



Lucian Freud
Hand Mirror in a Chair, 1966
Oil on canvas
8 7/8 x 7 1/8 inches
(20.6 x 18 cm)

Georg Baselitz
Grosse Nacht (Big Night), 1962–63
Oil on canvas
57 7/8 × 41 inches
(147 × 104.1 cm)





Diane Arbus
Self-portrait, pregnant, N.Y.C., 1945, 1945
Gelatin silver contact print
10 × 8 inches
(25.4 × 20.3 cm)
Edition 46/75





Sally Mann
Self-Portrait, Untitled (Star), 2005
Gelatin silver print
16 ³/₈ × 15 inches
(41.6 × 38.1 cm)
Edition 1/6



Sally Mann
Self-Portrait, Untitled (Profile), 2005
Gelatin silver print
16 ³/₈ × 15 inches
(41.6 × 38.1 cm)
Edition 1/6

Man Ray
Self-Portrait, 1924
Gelatin silver print
9 1/2 x 7 inches
(24.1 x 17.8 cm)







If you wanna talk about influence, man, then you've got to realize that influence is not influence. It's simply someone's idea going through my new mind.

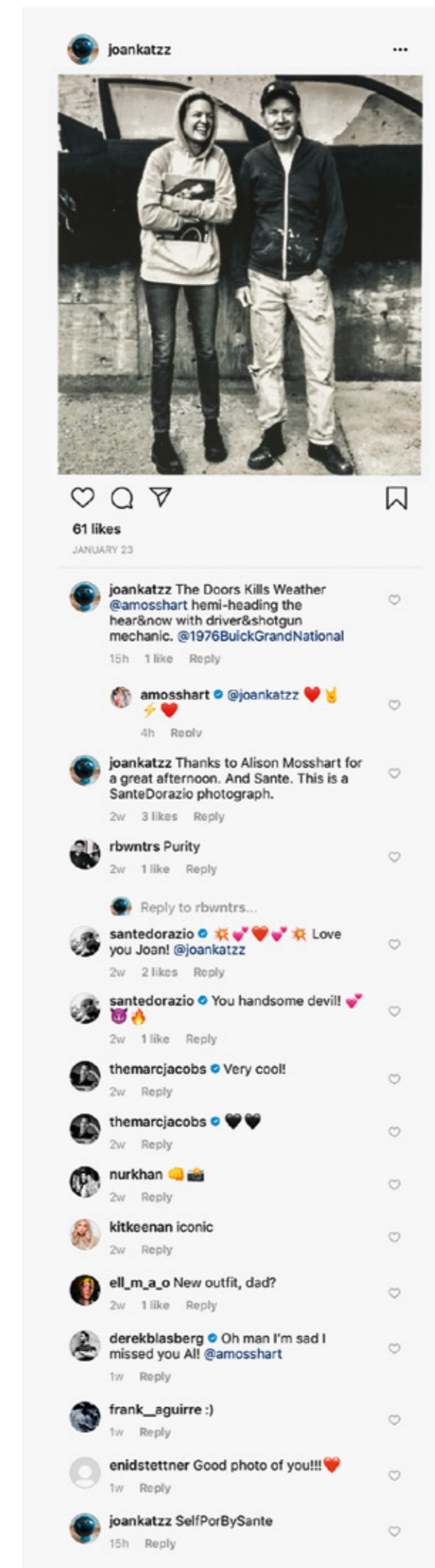
Jean-Michel Basquiat

Jean-Michel Basquiat
The Thinker, 1986
Acrylic on canvas
84 × 52 ¼ inches
(213.4 × 132.7 cm)

Richard Prince
Untitled (Portrait), 2019
Ink-jet on canvas
22 ¼ × 17 ¼ inches
(56.4 × 43.8 cm)



Richard Prince
Untitled (Portrait), 2019
Ink-jet on canvas
177 ¼ × 49 ¼ inches
(450.1 × 125.1 cm)





Urs Fischer
Untitled, 2011
Paraffin wax mixture, pigment,
steel, and wicks
53 ⁷/₈ × 46 ³/₈ × 75 ¹/₄ inches
(136.8 × 117.8 × 191.1 cm)
AP + edition of 3



Jeff Koons
*Gazing Ball (Rembrandt Self-Portrait
Wearing a Hat)*, 2015
Oil on canvas, glass, and aluminum
64 ½ × 52 ¼ × 14 ¾ inches
(163.8 × 132.7 × 37.5 cm)



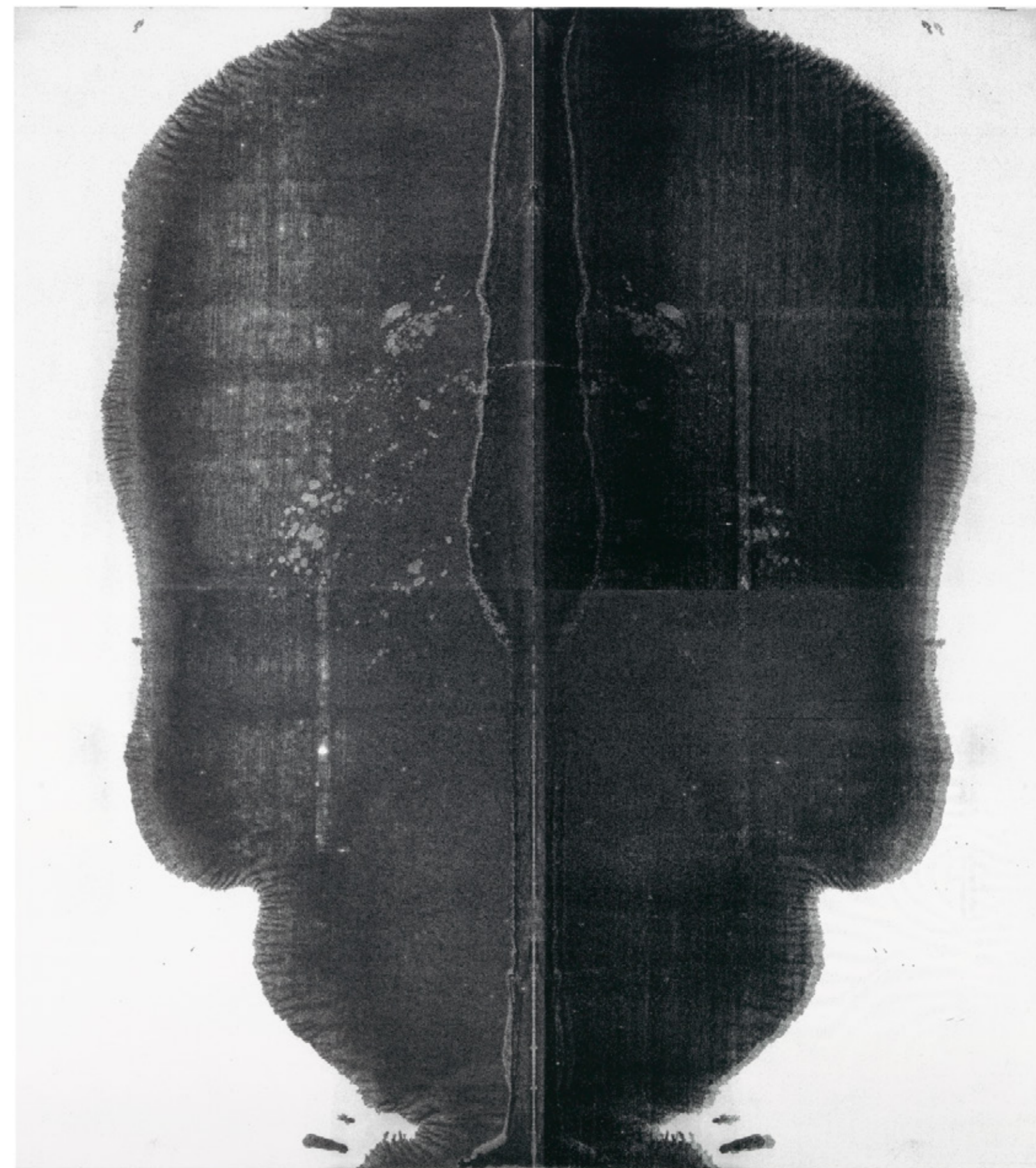
Rudolf Stingel
Untitled, 2012
Oil on canvas
132 × 180 inches
(335.3 × 457.2 cm)





Christopher Wool
Untitled, 2016
Silkscreened ink on linen
108 × 96 inches
(274.3 × 243.8 cm)

Overleaf:
Ellen Gallagher
Odalisque, 2013
Slide projection, penmanship
paper, and gold leaf
Dimensions variable







Charles Ray
Male Mannequin, 1990
Mannequin and fiberglass
74 × 21 5/8 × 27 1/4 inches
(188 × 55 × 69 cm)





If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface: of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it.

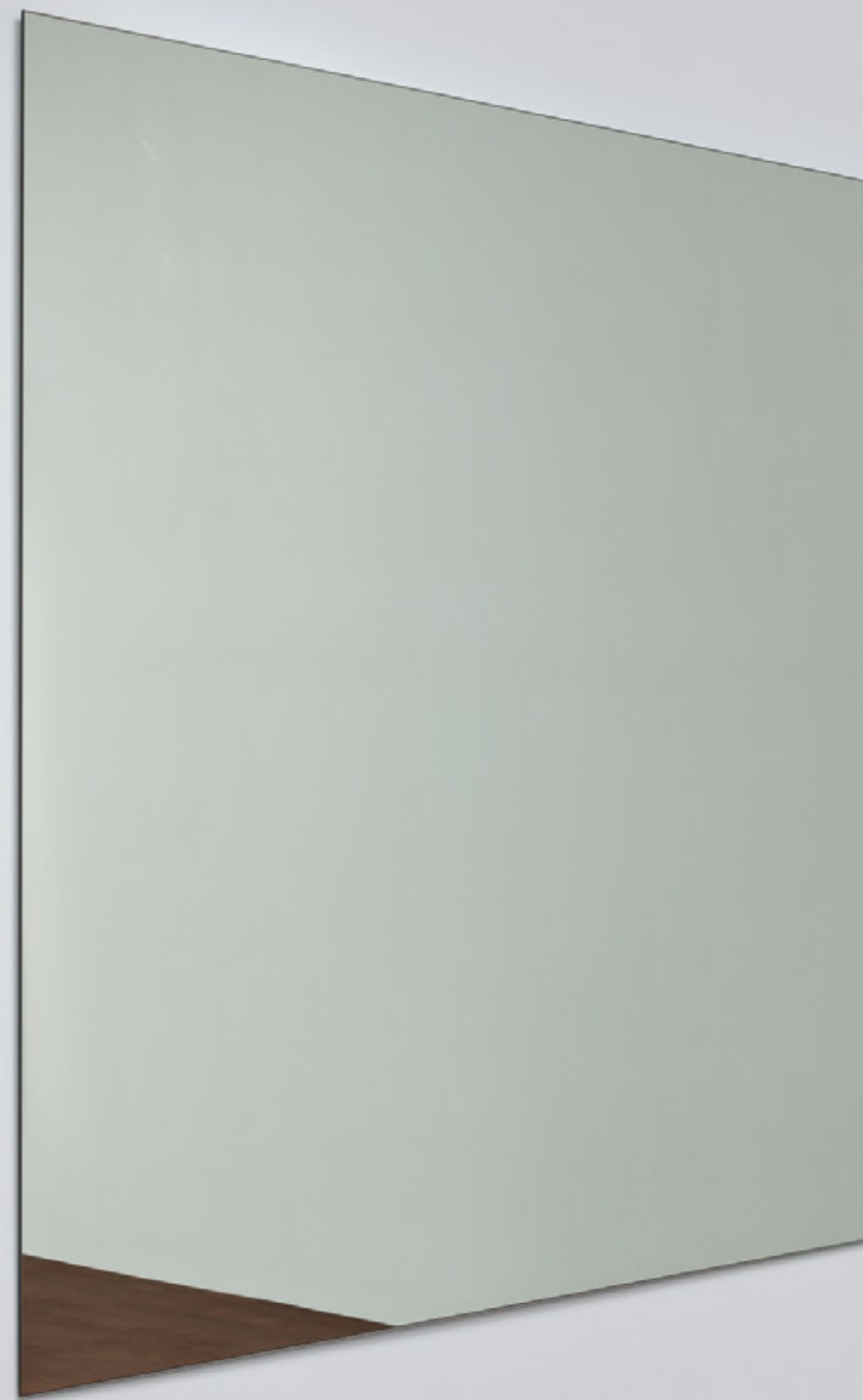
Andy Warhol

Andy Warhol
Self-Portrait, 1986
Acrylic and silkscreened ink on canvas
80 × 76 inches
(203.2 × 193 cm)





Gerhard Richter
Spiegel, 2008
Mirror
59 1/8 x 59 1/8 x 1/4 inches
(150 x 150 x 0.6 cm)
Edition 5/8



Jenny Saville
Self-Portrait (after Rembrandt), 2019
Oil on paper
54 3/8 x 40 inches
(137.5 x 101.5 cm)



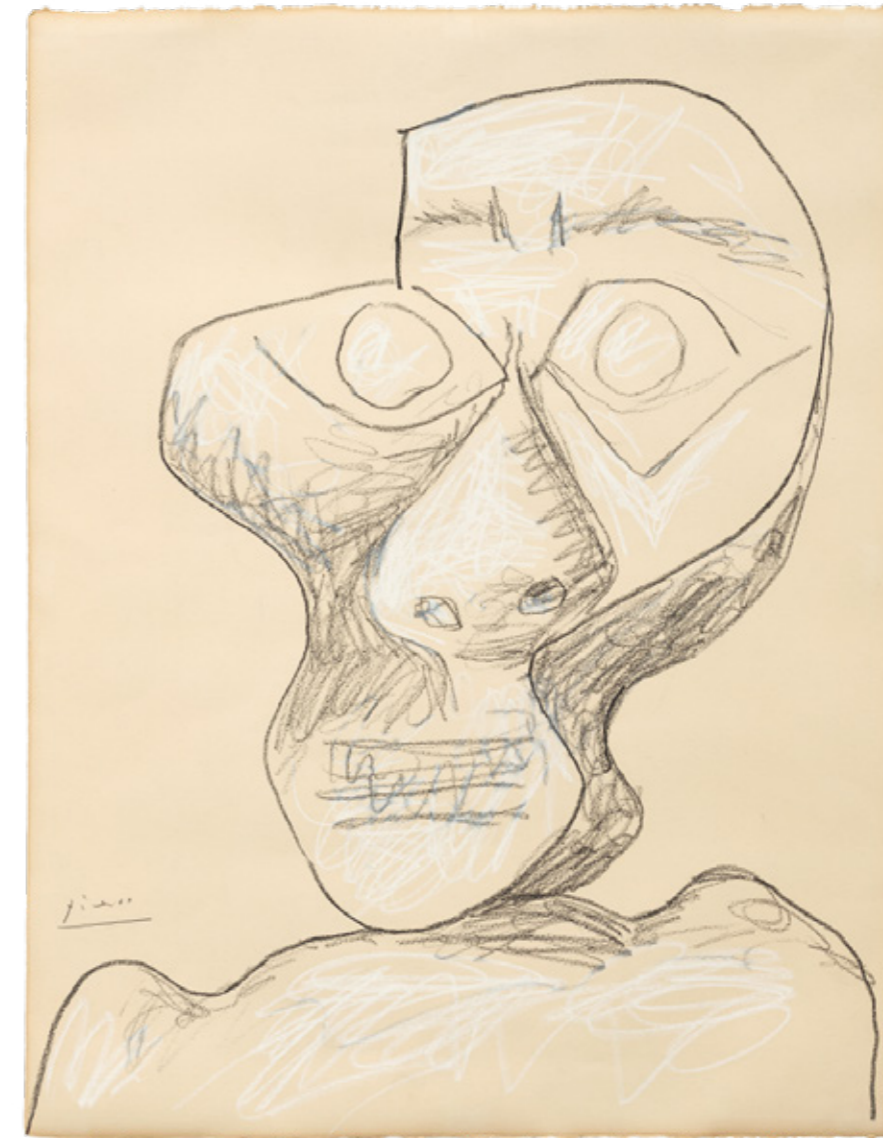


Just look at *Self-Portrait with Two Circles* and you can see so much modern painting. If you think about [Francis] Bacon, who uses a limited ground with impasto paint . . . that comes directly out of Velázquez and Rembrandt. And this picture in particular, it's one of the best pictures we've got in Britain. Other than the Velázquez pope, it's the best portrait ever painted. I've learned how to paint a nose from this picture, how to do reflected light, the use of impasto, the difference between having sagging daylight skin and the virtuoso of the way he's painted the hat—the use of contradiction within pictures, how that creates poetry in paint.

Jenny Saville

Every painter takes himself for Rembrandt.

Pablo Picasso



Pablo Picasso
Self-Portrait (July 2, 1972), 1972
Crayon on paper
10 ¼ × 7 ¾ inches
(26 × 19.6 cm)





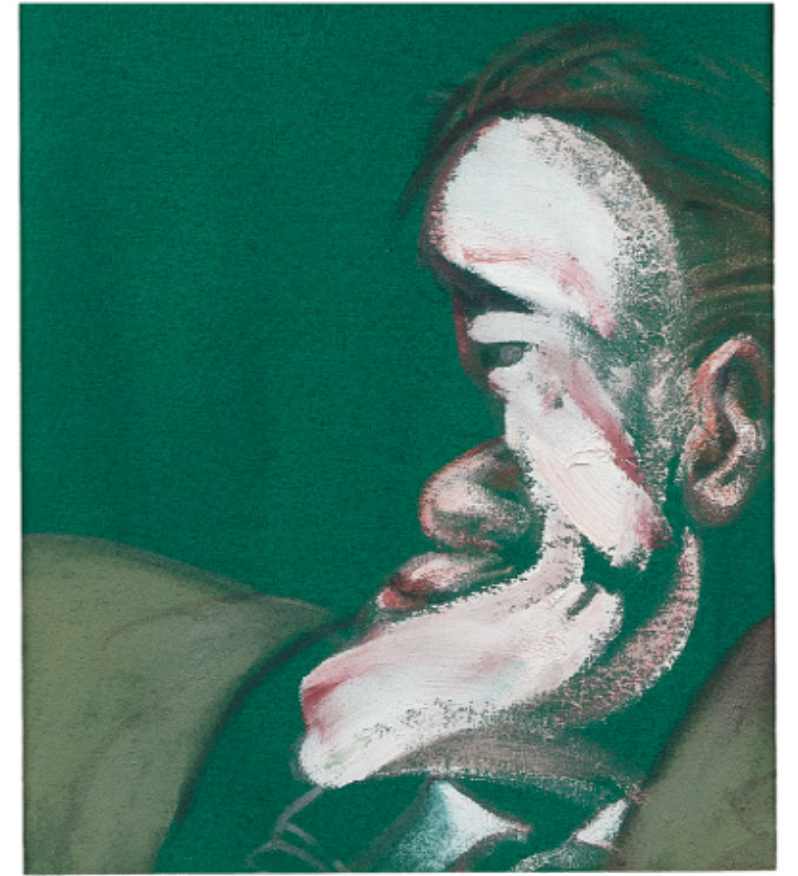
Although portraits have been my main subject for the past twenty-five years, I had not made a self-portrait since I was eighteen. To create *The Hurdy-Gurdy* (2019), I used four source images: drawings by Andrea del Sarto and Anthony Van Dyck and two posed photographs of me. I hope the painting describes my psychology—an amalgamation of cultural history, a curious puzzle.

Glenn Brown

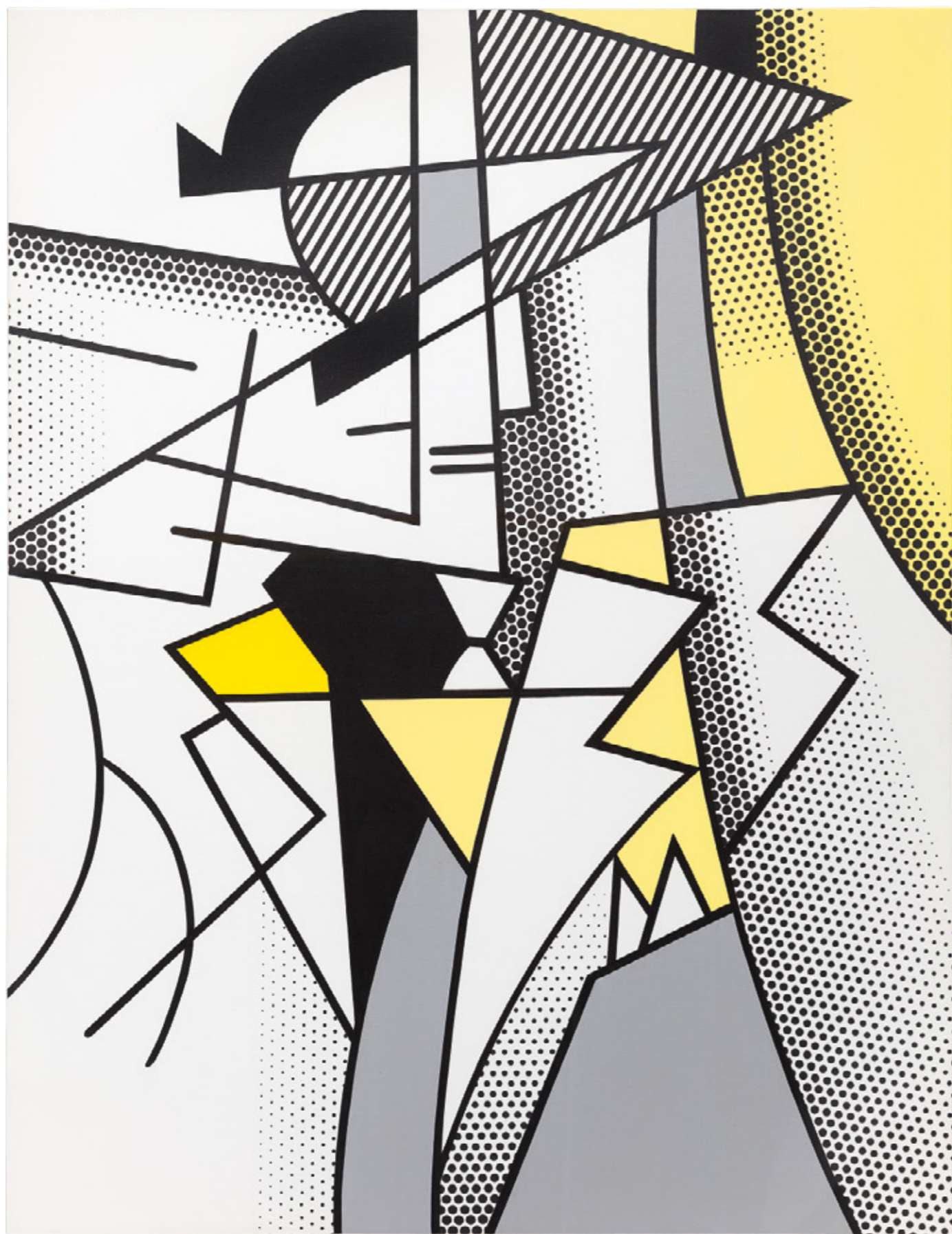
Glenn Brown
The Hurdy-Gurdy, 2019
Acrylic on panel, in antique
(c. late 16th/early 17th century) Tuscan
frame painted with black lacquer
and decorated with gilded floral and
geometric elements
Panel: 70 ½ × 38 ⅞ inches
(179.2 × 98.2 cm)
Overall: 78 × 59 ⅞ × 2 ⅞ inches
(198 × 150 × 5.5 cm)

Dora Maar
Portrait de femme (autoportrait), 1939
Oil on wood panel
28 ³/₈ × 19 ³/₄ inches
(72.1 × 50.2 cm)





Francis Bacon
Three Studies for a Portrait
Including a Self-Portrait, 1967
Oil on canvas, in 3 parts
Each: 14 × 12 inches
(35.6 × 30.5 cm)



Roy Lichtenstein
Self-Portrait II, 1976
Oil and Magna on canvas
70 × 54 inches
(177.8 × 137.2 cm)



Lucian Freud
Man's Head, 1963
Oil on canvas
21 × 20 inches
(53.3 × 50.8 cm)

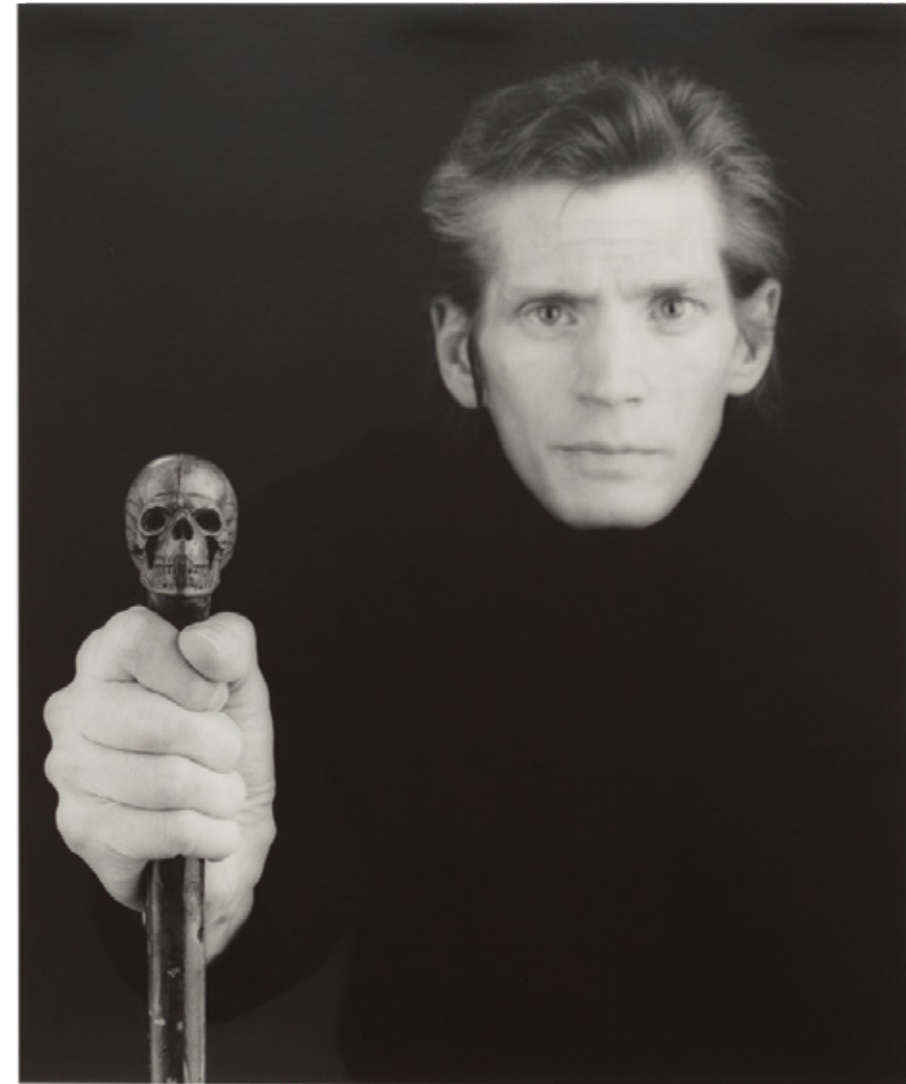




Francis Bacon
Self-Portrait, 1972
Oil on canvas
14 3/4 x 12 1/4 inches
(36 x 31 cm)



Robert Mapplethorpe
Self-Portrait, 1988
Gelatin silver print
24 × 20 inches
(61 × 50.8 cm)



Andy Warhol
Self-Portrait, 1966–67
Acrylic and silkscreened ink on canvas
22 × 22 inches
(55.9 × 55.9 cm)



Rembrandt van Rijn
Self-Portrait with Two Circles, c. 1665
Oil on canvas
45 × 37 inches
(114.3 × 94 cm)





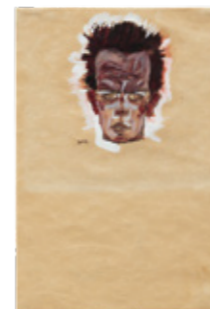
Life etches itself onto our faces as we grow older,
showing our violence, excesses or kindnesses.

Rembrandt van Rijn

List of Works



p. 63
Howard Hodgkin
Portrait of the Artist, 1984–87
Oil on wood
30 3/4 × 35 3/4 inches
(78.1 × 90.8 cm)
Private Collection



p. 65
Egon Schiele
Self-Portrait, 1910
Gouache, watercolor,
and charcoal on paper
16 3/4 × 11 3/8 inches
(42.6 × 29.6 cm)
Private Collection



pp. 67 and 68 (detail)
Nathaniel Mary Quinn
Self-Portrait after Rembrandt, 2019
Oil paint, paint stick, gouache,
soft pastel, and oil pastel on linen
20 × 20 inches
(50.8 × 50.8 cm)
Private Collection



p. 71
John Currin
Self-Portrait, 2002*
Graphite on paper
10 × 6 1/2 inches
(25.2 × 16.5 cm)



p. 73
Cindy Sherman
Untitled #220, 1990
Chromogenic color print
70 × 46 inches
(177.8 × 116.8 cm)
Private Collection



p. 75
Giuseppe Penone
Rovesciare i propri occhi
(*Reversing One's Eyes*), 1970
Gelatin silver print
15 5/8 × 11 3/8 inches
(39.6 × 29.6 cm)



pp. 76–77

Giuseppe Penone
Rovesciare i propri occhi
(Reversing One's Eyes), 1970*
 Gelatin silver prints, in 16 parts
 Each: 10 3/4 × 8 inches
 (27.1 × 20.1 cm)



p. 78

Gerhard Richter
Hofkirche Dresden (Court Chapel Dresden), 2000
 Oil on canvas
 31 1/2 × 36 3/8 inches
 (80 × 93 cm)
 Promised and fractional gift of Donald L.
 Bryant, Jr. to the Museum of Modern Art



p. 84

Damien Hirst
With Dead Head, 1991
 Photographic print on aluminum
 22 1/2 × 30 inches
 (57.2 × 76.2 cm)
 Edition 15/15
 Private Collection



pp. 81 and 82–83 (detail)

Glenn Brown
Sex, 2003
 Oil on panel
 49 3/8 × 33 1/2 inches
 (126 × 85.1 cm)
 Teiger Foundation



p. 87

Lucian Freud
Hand Mirror in a Chair, 1966
 Oil on canvas
 8 1/8 × 7 1/8 inches
 (20.6 × 18 cm)
 Private Collection



pp. 89 and 90 (detail)

Georg Baselitz
Grosse Nacht (Big Night), 1962–63
 Oil on canvas
 57 7/8 × 41 inches
 (147 × 104.1 cm)
 Private Collection



p. 93

Sally Mann
Self-Portrait, Untitled (Star), 2005*
 Gelatin silver print
 16 3/8 × 15 inches
 (41.6 × 38.1 cm)
 Edition 1/6



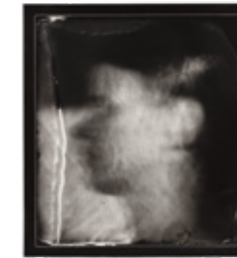
p. 97

Man Ray
Self-Portrait, 1924
 Gelatin silver print
 9 1/2 × 7 inches
 (24.1 × 17.8 cm)
 Private Collection



p. 92

Diane Arbus
Self-portrait, pregnant, N.Y.C., 1945, 1945
 Gelatin silver contact print
 10 × 8 inches
 (25.4 × 20.3 cm)
 Edition 46/75
 Fraenkel Gallery and David Zwirner



p. 94

Sally Mann
Self-Portrait, Untitled (Profile), 2005*
 Gelatin silver print
 16 3/8 × 15 inches
 (41.6 × 38.1 cm)
 Edition 1/6



pp. 98–99 (detail) and 100

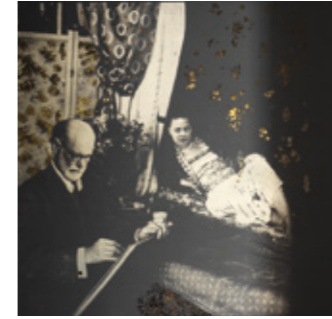
Jean-Michel Basquiat
The Thinker, 1986
 Acrylic on canvas
 84 × 52 1/4 inches
 (213.4 × 132.7 cm)
 Private Collection



p. 103
Richard Prince
Untitled (Portrait), 2019*
Ink-jet on canvas
22 ¼ × 17 ¼ inches
(56.4 × 43.8 cm)
Collection of the artist



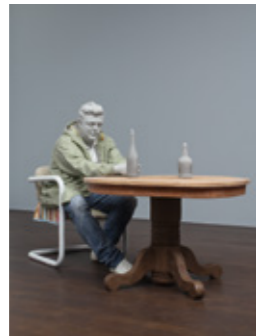
p. 105
Richard Prince
Untitled (Portrait), 2019
Ink-jet on canvas
177 ¼ × 49 ¼ inches
(450.1 × 125.1 cm)
Collection of the artist



pp. 118–19 and 120–21 (detail)
Ellen Gallagher
Odalisque, 2013
Slide projection, penmanship
paper, and gold leaf
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist



pp. 123 and 124 (detail)
Charles Ray
Male Mannequin, 1990
Mannequin and fiberglass
74 × 21 ⅝ × 27 ¼ inches
(188 × 55 × 69 cm)
Astrup Fearnley Collection, Oslo



pp. 106 and 109 (detail)
Urs Fischer
Untitled, 2011
Paraffin wax mixture, pigment,
steel, and wicks
53 ⅞ × 46 ⅜ × 75 1/4 inches
(136.8 × 117.8 × 191.1 cm)
AP + edition of 3
Private Collection



p. 111
Jeff Koons
*Gazing Ball (Rembrandt Self-Portrait
Wearing a Hat)*, 2015
Oil on canvas, glass, and aluminum
64 ½ × 52 ¼ × 14 ¾ inches
(163.8 × 132.7 × 37.5 cm)



pp. 127 and 128–29 (detail)
Andy Warhol
Self-Portrait, 1986
Acrylic and silkscreened ink on
canvas
80 × 76 inches
(203.2 × 193 cm)
Private Collection



p. 131
Gerhard Richter
Spiegel, 2008
Mirror
59 ⅞ × 59 ⅞ × ¼ inches
(150 × 150 × 0.6 cm)
Edition 5/8
Private Collection



pp. 111–12 and 113–14 (detail)
Rudolf Stingel
Untitled, 2012
Oil on canvas
132 × 180 inches
(335.3 × 457.2 cm)
Private Collection



p. 117
Christopher Wool
Untitled, 2016
Silkscreened ink on linen
108 × 96 inches
(274.3 × 243.8 cm)
Private Collection



pp. 133 and 134 (detail)
Jenny Saville
Self-Portrait (after Rembrandt), 2019
Oil on paper
54 ⅞ × 40 inches
(137.5 × 101.5 cm)
Private Collection



p. 137
Pablo Picasso
Self-Portrait (July 2, 1972), 1972
Crayon on paper
10 ¼ × 7 ¾ inches
(26 × 19.6 cm)
Private Collection



pp. 138–39 (detail) and 140

Glenn Brown
The Hurdy-Gurdy, 2019
Acrylic on panel, in antique (c. late 16th/
early 17th century) Tuscan frame painted
with black lacquer and decorated with
gilded floral and geometric elements
Panel: 70 1/2 × 38 5/8 inches
(179.2 × 98.2 cm)
Overall: 78 × 59 1/8 × 2 1/8 inches
(198 × 150 × 5.5 cm)
Private Collection



pp. 144–45

Francis Bacon
*Three Studies for a Portrait Including
a Self-Portrait*, 1967
Oil on canvas, in 3 parts
Each: 14 × 12 inches
(35.6 × 30.5 cm)
[CR 67-01]
Private Collection



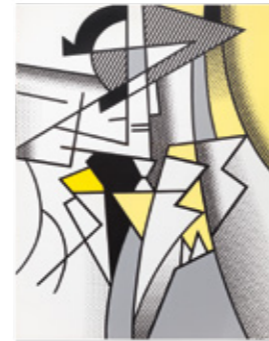
p. 151

Lucian Freud
Man's Head, 1963
Oil on canvas
21 × 20 inches
(53.3 × 50.8 cm)
The Whitworth, The University
of Manchester



p. 143

Dora Maar
Portrait de femme (autoportrait), 1939
Oil on wood panel
28 3/8 × 19 3/4 inches
(72.1 × 50.2 cm)
Private Collection



pp. 146 and 148 (detail)

Roy Lichtenstein
Self-Portrait II, 1976
Oil and Magna on canvas
70 × 54 inches
(177.8 × 137.2 cm)
Private Collection



pp. 152 and 155 (detail)

Francis Bacon
Self-Portrait, 1972
Oil on canvas
14 1/4 × 12 1/4 inches
(36 × 31 cm)
[CR 72-11]
Private Collection



p. 156

Robert Mapplethorpe
Self-Portrait, 1988
Gelatin silver print
24 × 20 inches
(61 × 50.8 cm)



pp. 161 and 162 (detail)

Rembrandt van Rijn
Self-Portrait with Two Circles, c. 1665
Oil on canvas
45 × 37 inches
(114.3 × 94 cm)
English Heritage, The Iveagh
Bequest, Kenwood, London



p. 159

Andy Warhol
Self-Portrait, 1966–67
Acrylic and silkscreened
ink on canvas
22 × 22 inches
(55.9 × 55.9 cm)
Private Collection

*Not exhibited

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Texts on p. 23: Jenny Saville, speaking with Gagosian on the occasion of the exhibition's opening, April 12, 2019; p. 69: Nathaniel Mary Quinn, speaking with Gagosian on the occasion of the exhibition's opening, April 12, 2019; p. 86: Lucian Freud, interviewed by Michael Auping, in *Lucian Freud Portraits*, ed. Sarah Howgate (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 215; p. 101: Jean-Michel Basquiat, in *Basquiat-isms*, ed. Larry Warsh (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), p. 28; p. 126: Andy Warhol, "Nothing to Lose: An Interview with Andy Warhol" (1967), by Gretchen Berg, in *Andy Warhol: Film Factory*, ed. Michael O'Pray (London: BFI Publishing, 1989), p. 56; p. 135: Saville, speaking with Gagosian; p. 141: Glenn Brown, speaking with Gagosian on the occasion of the exhibition's opening, April 12, 2019; p. 136: Pablo Picasso, quoted in *Life with Picasso*, by Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake (London: Virago Press: 1990), p. 43; and p. 163: Rembrandt van Rijn, quoted in "Rembrandt: Self-Portrait with Two Circles," by Louise Cooling, English Heritage, accessed October 21, 2019, <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/kenwood/history-stories-kenwood/rembrandt-self-portrait/>

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Rembrandt and Now

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Gagosian
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T. +44 20 7495 1500
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Curators: Richard Calvocoressi, Wendy Monkhouse, and Otilie Windsor
Director of publications: Alison McDonald
Managing editor: Brett Garde
Gagosian coordinators: Serena Cattaneo Adorno, Cristina Colomar, Tom Cox-Bisham, Isabelle Edwards, Maddie Estey, Andrew Fabricant, Anita Foden, Hannah Freedberg, Olga Henkin, Donald Christopher Hyde, Melissa Lazarov, Pepi Marchetti Franchi, Kenneth Maxwell, Miriam Perez, Stefan Ratibor, Rebecca Sternthal, Ashley Stewart, Simon Stock, Putri Tan, Robin Vousden, Gary Waterston, and Millicent Wilner

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Dust jacket: installation view of *Visions of the Self: Rembrandt and Now* at Gagosian London, Grosvenor Hill, including Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait with Two Circles* (c. 1665, front); Pablo Picasso, *Self-Portrait* (1970, front inside flap); and Jenny Saville, *Self-Portrait (after Rembrandt)* (2019, back)

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