

OVERTURE

AN EXHIBITION OF SELF PORTRAITS BY SLOMA/OPAG ARTISTS

OPAG takes pride in bringing together paintings from over 30 artists working in the genre of self-portraiture in this exhibit. Self-portraiture has been practiced from antiquity to the present day. The earliest surviving verifiable example is a self-portrait of Bak, the pharaoh Akhenaten's chief sculptor, dated at 1365 BCE.

While it may be humorous to suggest that the artist may find no less expensive model than him or herself, the most memorable self-portraits communicate aspects about the subject ranging from that of the deepest transcendental introspection to expressions of the most superficial narcissism.

Phidias, the Fifth Century Athenian sculptor is noted for including his self-portrait within the work he created on the sculptural frieze of the Parthenon.

Post-antiquity, the earliest surviving self-portraits include those from the Northern Renaissance: Jan Van Eyck, Clara Peeters, Jean Fouquet, Mary Beale, Albrecht Durer, to identify a few.

During the Italian Renaissance, convention dictated that artists avoid formal self-portraits, but they frequently inserted their images into frescoes, murals and paintings: Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, Botticelli, Michelangelo, Raphael, Tintoretto, Vasari and Titian are notable examples, while Mantegna, Gentileschi and Leonardo da Vinci seemed to pay little attention to this rule.

The advent of easel painting and the widespread use of oils on canvas saw the return of formal self-portraits, with El Greco, Zurbaran, Poussin, Van Dyck and Rembrandt being exemplars.

Nineteenth Century artists such as Goya, Delacroix, Manet, Whistler, Morisot, Courbet, Lautrec, Van Gogh and Gaughin are but a few of the many artists who produced significant works of self-portraiture.

The Twentieth Century witnessed Matisse, Sargent, Renoir, Cassatt, Chagall, Klee, Beckman, Schiele, Munch, Kahlo, Rivera, Neel, Rothko, Gorky and Picasso creating a prolific outpouring of self-portraits.

The late Twentieth and early Twenty-first Century has shown us diverse works by Warhol, Bacon, De Kooning, Richter, Freud, Hockney, Close and many others in the realm of self-portraiture.

Regrettably, this brief outline ignores the contributions to this genre made in India and China.