



A Face to the World: On Self-Portraits

Laura Cumming

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Focusing on the art of self-portraiture, this effortlessly engaging exploration of the lives of artists sheds fascinating light on some of the most extraordinary portraits in art history. Self-portraits catch your eye. They seem to do it deliberately. Walk into any art gallery and they draw attention to themselves. Come across them in the world's museums and you get a strange shock of recognition, rather like glimpsing your own reflection. For in picturing themselves artists reveal something far deeper than their own physical looks: the truth about how they hope to be viewed by the world, and how they wish to see themselves. In this beautifully written and lavishly illustrated book, Laura Cumming, art critic of the Observer, investigates the drama of the self-portrait, from Durer, Rembrandt and Velazquez to Munch, Picasso, Warhol and the present day. She considers how and why self-portraits look as they do and what they reveal about the artist's innermost sense of self -- as well as the curious ways in which they may imitate our behaviour in real life. Drawing on art, literature, history, philosophy and biography to examine the creative process in an entirely fresh way, Cumming offers a riveting insight into the intimate truths and elaborate fictions of self-portraiture and the lives of those who practise it. A work of remarkable depth, scope and power, this is a book for anyone who has ever wondered about the strange dichotomy between the innermost self and the self we choose to present for posterity -- our face to the world.

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