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Task: Curate an exhibition = 1,437 words

Self.

My exhibition has been curated to evoke feeling and understanding in the viewer about person and self-image. Entitled 'Self,' this exhibition will be a collection of different portraits and expressions of artists. The viewer will be immersed in the vast differences of identity and what that can mean for the portrayal of themselves. Located in a circular building with sectioned rooms, this space allows to isolate each artist/artwork so that it is observed on its own with no other influences on the meaning. Each section progresses to artworks that evoke deeper thought, increasing through the experience

Self-portraits are very powerful, it is an attempt to see inside the artists mind through how their art is depicted and what techniques are used. Making a self-portrait requires the patience and commitment of being observed through the reflection of a mirror. It is recognised that this exposure can sometimes result to a tainted state of perception which can overcome and be represented into the portrait itself. "Since these should be captured in the completed picture –either because the picture is expressive of the artist's psychological state or because the artist copies an adopted pose, facial expression, etc., which communicates a negative emotional state." (Crozier and Greenhalgh, 1988, p. 29). Not only this, but artists also utilise their self-depiction to show issues and tell stories through art. When being able to observe the portraits of artists, the viewer will deduct their own point of view and even see themselves in the artwork. This exhibition will be a display of self-image and identity that the viewer will be able to navigate and reason through.

Pablo Picasso



Fig 1

Pablo Picasso is a notable artist for the portraits that he produced. These have been created throughout his career and clearly demonstrate how his self-image differed over time. Through Picassos many different periods of art the difference in the self portraits produced are evident to show development and maturity. Picasso himself states that his change in style doesn't mean evolution but just a change in expression. "Different themes inevitably require different methods of expression. This does not imply either evolution or progress; it is a matter of following the idea one wants to express and the way in which one wants to express it." (*Biography.com*, 2014)

There will be showcased the progression of Picassos self-depiction for the start of the exhibition. Being quite recognisable, it will give the viewer a sense of comfort in seeing familiar artwork. When looking at the progression of these portraits side by side, it will evoke the viewer to deduct and take away what they think the meaning of the art is or what they would interpret it as from their own sense of self. David Hockney had written about the deductions of Picassos art in 'That's The Way I See It' (1999, pg.102). Hockney had figured out that "there is no actual distortion in Picasso". This chapter mainly references Picassos realism however this idea can be applied to Picassos artwork as a whole, "once you begin to realize this, it becomes a very profound experience, because you begin to see that what he is doing is not distortion, and slowly it then begins to look more and more real."

Vincent Van Gogh- Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear



Fig 2

This self-portrait was painted in January 1889 after Van Gogh had cut off part of his left ear after arguing with fellow artist Paul Gauguin. He painted this a week after leaving hospital which expresses his personal struggles. There is more to this portrait than just the obvious mutilated ear. The harsh working conditions he endured are symbolized by the fur cap. His ambition is portrayed with objects behind him being representative of his life as an artist and his use of colour and brushwork is captivating. Van Gogh had written on 28 November 1885 “painted portraits have a life of their own, which springs straight from the painter’s soul and which no machine can approach” and “Still, I would sooner paint people’s eyes than cathedrals, for there is something in the eyes that is lacking in a cathedral – however solemn and impressive it may be. To my mind a man’s soul, be it that of a poor beggar or of a streetwalker, is more interesting.” (Van Gogh, De Leeuw, Pomerans, 1997, pg.437 [D]). Although showing his passions as an artist being focusing on life and humanity, Van Goghs depiction of himself is solemn and distant and give a sense of loneliness and fragility. He paints with emotion, depicting himself in such an obvious form of sorrow.

Frida Kahlo- The Broken Column

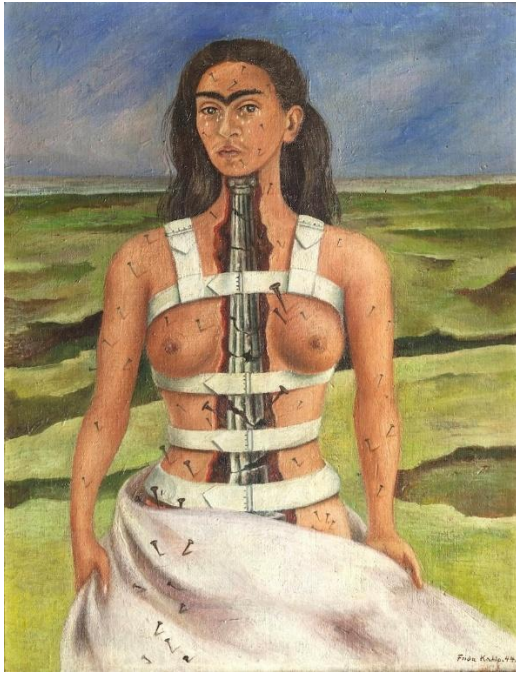


Fig 3

Frida Kahlo is a very influential artist in history. She created her art using her raw emotions to do with her physical and emotional pain. Kahlo has suffered from many difficulties throughout her life from a debilitating bus crash leading to chronic illness and immense pain which was the influence on this portrait. Although her portraits illustrate pain and agony, Kahlo's work deeply resonates a feeling of power and resilience which has become an outlet for other women who are going through their own. When understanding the portrait, you can see that Kahlo is covered in pain, shown through the pins impaled in her body, her expression and the composition of the piece itself. Although the main perception of this piece being the physical implications of the accident, Kahlo's psychological and sexual health were affected. During the accident a steel rod pierced Kahlo's vagina, which is symbolised by the column through her abdomen, however doubt was cast upon her, "In a letter written during her recovery, Kahlo remorseful that "Nobody at home believes that I'm sick.... And they say that it's my fault, that I'm very imprudent" (Lindauer, 1999). Her work always has a meaningful connection such as illustrating her hardships and emotional strength. These portraits are Kahlo using art as empowerment.

Egon Schiele- Self-Portrait with Raised Bare Shoulder



Fig 4

Egon Schiele was well known for his portrayal of intensity and raw sexuality. Schiele rejected conventional ideals of beauty and instead painted what was considered as ugly. He explores concepts that humans tend to worry about most ranging from the fear of death to depression and isolation. Schiele had encountered incidents throughout his life influencing his interest into Sigmund Freud's teachings, which he drew inspiration from to compose artwork that reveals the nakedness of human desire, suffering, and tenderness to the audience. Schiele experimented with form, sexuality and identity during this time and in this portrait, he is staring at the viewer with a shoulder lifted, often seen as a provocative pose. Nudity is a prominent theme in Schiele's work, it isn't to expose or embarrass instead it is to open the eyes of the viewer. "The vague image it projects into the mind is not of a huddled and defenceless body, but of a balanced, prosperous, and confident body: the body re-formed." (Clark, 1990, pg.3). Schiele paints with a deformed and exposed image of self with a sickly appearance, skeletal bones, and sunken eyes. His posture is both protective and welcoming, creating a visual dynamic of vulnerability and ego. This portrait acted as a mirror of the psyche rather than a record of appearance and is a representation of Schiele's trauma. However, observing through paintings is not enough to understand what someone is going through, "trauma related art is best understood as *transactive* rather than *communicative*. It often touches us, but it does not necessarily communicate the "secret" of personal experience" (Bennett, 2005, pg.7), which is why his art is up for interpretation and evaluation.

Salvador Dali- Soft Self-Portrait with Fried Bacon

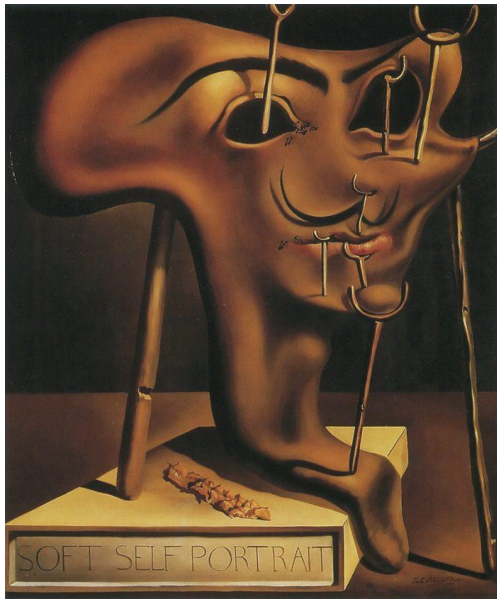


Fig 5

Although Salvador Dalí's work often gives insights into the psychological, Dalí has denied any psychological content in this portrait. However, an artist who continually paints his thoughts, fears and fantasies could have, even subconsciously, added meaning to this piece. This being the penultimate portrait is purposeful as the viewer would be able to deduct their own perceptions of this artwork with no correct answer. Surrealist Dalí blurred the line between reality and imaginary. It was important for Dalí to insert small detail and wide optical effects into his work "He speaks of his 'hypervisuality', dependent on the powerful lenses of his eyes – amplifying an object in a limited field of vision, and its emotional effect." (Caws, 2009, pg.93). There are few symbols to this art that you can take away with meaning; ants, bacon and crutches. Ants can be taken as representing death and decay, the bacon can be looked at as either sustenance or flesh that will rot, the crutches suggesting weakness or fragility.

Olafur Eliasson- Concentric Mirror



Fig 6

Ending off this exhibition will be space full of mirrors made by Olafur Eliasson that will get the viewer to look at themselves in distorted views and from different perspectives. The mirrors will be wall mounted as well as positioned in the middle of the room. After experiencing the deep and emotional self-depictions of other artists, this mirror would give the viewer an opportunity to sense what it is like to see oneself in a distorted view. This is a chance of self-evaluation, but having the pre-distortion will block the viewer from seeing themselves with clarity. Received from this, they will be provoked into looking inwards, see themselves in the mirror and analyse their own identity. "For indeed, in the social jungle of human existence there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity." (Erikson, 1968, p. 131). This space can also be a relief from the deep themes of the portraits beforehand and can instead be interpreted in a way of understanding that these some of the artworks are a form of distorted reality.

Each artwork in this exhibition has a specialty; many have obvious issues, and many are difficult to grasp without more thought. Creating art has the potential to broaden our perspectives and provide us with the space to find and experience our true selves. Even if we were fully aware of who we are, it would be impossible to depict in a painting. Although faces are rarely transparent and no one understands what is going on behind the surface, a self-portrait is an opportunity to convey much more honestly and without a mask, though some artists play with it. “art is not conceptual in itself but rather an embodiment of sensation that stimulates thought” (Bennett, 2005, pg.8) The viewer should walk away from this exhibition understanding on a deeper level about self and the uncertainty of it all.

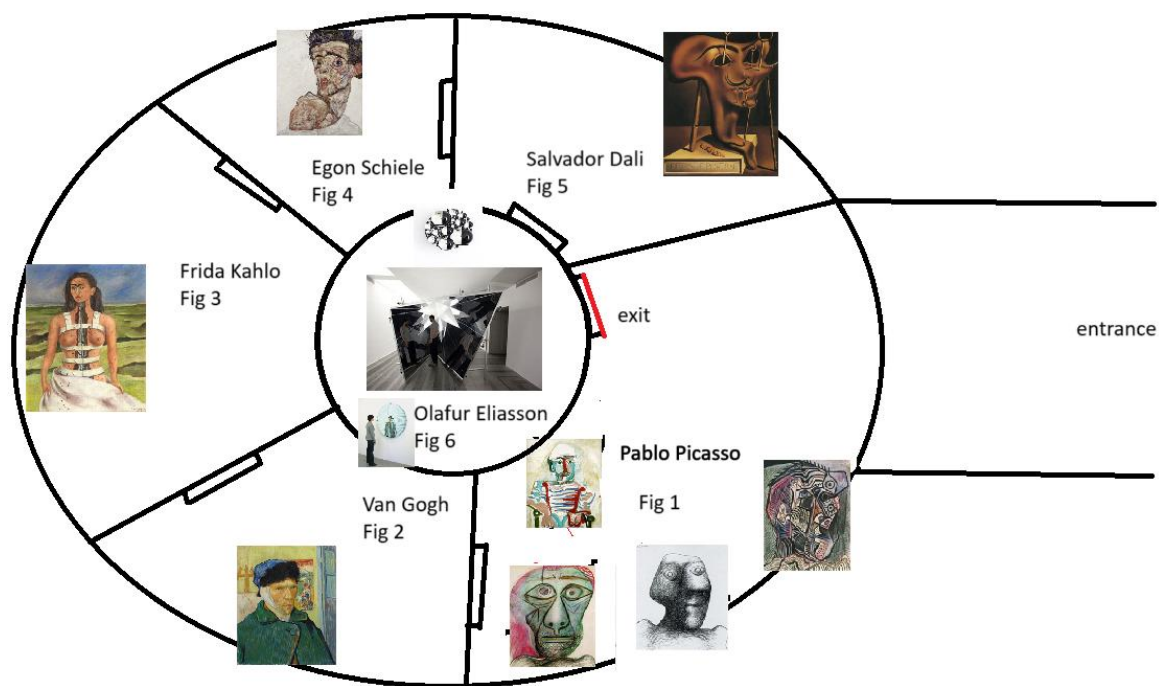


Fig 7

Figures

Figure One: Rare Historical Photos (2022), *Picasso's self portrait evolution from age 15 to age 90*. Available at: <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/picasso-self-portraits-photos/> (Accessed: 2 May 2025)

Figure Two: Van Gogh Museum, *Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear, 1889 by Vincent van Gogh*. Available at: <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/F0527#details> (Accessed: 3 May 2025)

Figure Three: Frida Kahlo, *The Broken Column, 1944 by Frida Kahlo*. Available at: <https://www.fridakahlo.org/the-broken-column.jsp> (Accessed: 3 May 2025)

Figure Four: Artchive, *Self-Portrait with Raised Bared Shoulder (1912) by Egon Schiele*. Available at: <https://www.artchive.com/artwork/self-portrait-with-raised-bared-shoulder-egon-schiele-1912/> (Accessed: 3 May 2025)

Figure Five: Art Theoria (2018), *Soft Self-Portrait with Fried Bacon*. Available at: <https://www.art-theoria.com/painting-of-the-month/soft-self-portrait-with-fried-bacon/> (Accessed: 3 May 2025)

Figure Six: Olafur Eliasson (2004), *Concentric mirror*. Available at: <https://olafureliasson.net/artwork/concentric-mirror-2004/> (Accessed: 3 May 2025)

Figure Seven: Khan, Z (2025) Exhibition Map (Digital Generate Image)

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