

# Autoportraits



**From Rembrandt  
to the selfie**

MUSÉE  
DES BEAUX-ARTS  
DE LYON



Until June 26th 2016

Press Kit

The Fine Arts Museum of Lyon has formed a partnership with two major European art museums – the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe, Germany, and the National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh, United Kingdom – to create an exhibition on the theme of self-portraits. The exhibition consists of almost 150 works from the joint collections, including paintings, sculptures, drawings, engravings, photographs, videos, and until selfies by Ai Weiwei. These works, dating from the sixteenth century to the present day, represent a history of this artistic genre.

Rather than opting for a chronological tour, the exhibition studies through its seven sections, the typology of self-portrait art and puts the accent on the individual approaches of the artists. Self-portraits come in a wide range of forms, such as close-ups of the artist either in the context of their working environment or in the company of friends and family, but they can also feature the artists playing a role within a composition and can even depict them in an allusive manner in still-life form. Going beyond aspects of style from each period, the works also reflect the entire personalities of their creators as well as the historical and social contexts of their time.

At a time when the selfie has become a veritable societal phenomenon that is characteristic of the digital era, studying the traditions and techniques of the self-portrait has taken on particularly modern-day relevance.

The exhibition is completed by the interactive media artwork *Flick\_EU / FLICK\_EU Mirror*, designed by our cooperation partner ZKM / Karlsruhe, inviting visitors to reflect on their own image. *Autoportraits, from Rembrandt to the selfie* has been exhibited at the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe until January 31st 2016, and will be presented at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh from July 16th to October 16th 2016.

The exhibition is sponsored by the European Union within the framework of the Creative Europe program which is coordinated by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission.

# EXHIBITION CURATING

## MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, LYON

**Sylvie Ramond**, conservator in chief, director, in charge of paintings and sculptures of the twentieth century and cabinet of graphic arts.

**Stéphane Paccoud**, conservator in chief, in charge of paintings and sculptures of the nineteenth century.

**Ludmila Virassamynäiken**, conservator in charge of ancient paintings and sculptures.

## STAATLICHE KUNSTHALLE, KARLSRUHE

**Pia Müller-Tamm**, director

**Alexander Eiling**, conservator, in charge of modern paintings and sculptures

**Dorit Schäfer**, conservator, head of cabinet of graphic arts

## NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND, ÉDIMBURGH

**Michael Clarke**, director of the Scottish National Gallery

**Imogen Gibbon**, assistant director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

# A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THREE MAJOR EUROPEAN MUSEUMS

## THE STAATLICHE KUNSTHALLE KARLSRUHE – GERMANY

The Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, with its three buildings on Hans-Thoma-Strasse – the main building, the Junge Kunsthalle, which is devoted to young visitors, and the Orangery, for modern and contemporary art – is one of Germany's most important and representative museums of art. The main building, opened in 1846 and decorated with frescoes by Moritz von Schwind, is conceived as a global work of art.

The museum's rich collection provides the basis for its exhibitions and educative proposals. These holdings have their roots in the collecting activities of the margraves and later grand dukes of Baden, which can be traced back to the sixteenth century. Today, 3,500 paintings and sculptures and 100,000 drawings and prints offer visitors a multifaceted view of Western art which is constantly being expanded by means of an active acquisition policy. Among the collection's main strengths are German painting of the Middle Ages and Renaissance as well as Flemish and Dutch schools of the seventeenth century and French and German art from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.

The Kunsthalle contributed to this exhibition with ancient paintings, drawings and prints, but also through the loan of many works by German artists from the first half of the twentieth century belonging to Expressionism and New Objectivity.

## THE FINE ARTS MUSEUM OF LYON – FRANCE

The Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon is one of the most important museums in France. Located on the Place des Terreaux, in the heart of the city, in a former Benedictine abbey of the seventeenth century, it was one of the first museums to be created in Europe as it opened in 1801. Its five departments, seventy rooms and their encyclopedic collections reveal a panorama of the civilizations

and artistic schools from Antiquity to the present day, inviting the visitor to revisit 5,000 years of art and history. The painting collection, specifically highlighted by this project, gather works from the thirteenth to the twenty-first century, among which are masterpieces by French, Italian, Spanish and Nordic artists.

An active acquisition policy regularly offers the museum the opportunity to increase its collections, thanks to the support of the City of Lyon, the State, the region Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and its circles of patrons.

This exhibition includes a selection of works representative of the richness of the collections of the Fine Arts Museum of Lyon, bringing together ancient paintings of the highest importance as well as significant modern pieces. Special attention was paid to Lyonnais artists from the nineteenth century, testifying to the local creation vitality at that time and its particular identity.

#### NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND, EDINBURGH - UK

The National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh constitute one of the most important museum groupings in Europe. Each of the three galleries has its own distinctive and complementary collection profile: the Scottish National Gallery offers an outstanding collection of European painting from the end of Middle Ages to Post-Impressionism; the Scottish National Portrait Gallery with its focus on portrait painting and photography in Scotland, which, enhanced with objects of cultural-historical significance, provides a means of retracing the country's history, and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, which is devoted to Scottish and international art from 1900 onwards, with a particular emphasis on Dada and Surrealism. Each of the galleries has its own building, and all three regularly stage exhibitions that attract international attention.

The National Galleries of Scotland invite you to discover more specifically in this exhibition a set of important works realized by Scottish artists, from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century, as well as ancient and modern paintings, drawings and prints. Together with the Tate, a major London museum, they oversee an important collection of contemporary art, the Artist Rooms. Both institutions exceptionally agreed to lend several works from this collection within the framework of this project.

## The artist's gaze

Sight is the most crucial of the five senses for artists, and studying their own features by concentrating on their gaze constitutes one of the commonest approaches in self-portraits. Often avoiding all special contexts in favor of neutral backgrounds, they mainly consist of a close-up composition of their faces only, as well as the use of shadow and light to create different moods that reflect changes in the preoccupations of the artist.

From the Renaissance to the seventeenth century onwards, the works reveal an uncompromising search for truth that gradually gives way to a quest to capture a certain naturalist spirit during the Age of Enlightenment. The nineteenth century saw the introduction of romanticism, as is witnessed by the works of Louis Janmot and Anselm Feuerbach, and it reflects the idea that creative genius can be seen in the facial expressions of the artists as an influence of pseudo-sciences such as physiognomy\* and phrenology\* that were very much in vogue at that time. At the end of the century, Henri Fantin-Latour, Eugène Carrière and Lovis Corinth attempted to show the evolution of their facial expressions as the years went by. In the twentieth century, expressionism introduces an exaltation of an increasingly present inner torment that influenced the work of generations of artists to come.

\*Physiognomy – the assessment of a person's character or personality based upon their outer appearance, especially the face.

\*Phrenology – the study of character and the dominant faculties of a person according to the shape and measurements of the skull.



**Simon Vouet**  
*Autoportrait*  
**Self-portrait**  
 Vers 1626, huile sur toile  
 Lyon, musée des Beaux-Arts  
 © Lyon MBA - Photo Alain Basset



**Erich Heckel**  
*Portrait d'homme*  
**Portrait of a man**  
 1919, gravure sur bois en couleur.  
 Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe  
 © ADAGP, Paris 2016  
 © Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe,  
 Foto: Annette Fischer/Heike Kohler



**Joseph Vivien**  
 Autoportrait  
**Self-portrait**  
 Vers 1715, huile sur toile  
 Lyon, musée des Beaux-Arts  
 © Lyon MBA - Photo Alain Basset

## The artist as a man of the world

The art academies which flourished in Europe during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries helped to establish a separate statute for artists, who began to be distinguished from craftsmen during the fifteenth century. Their rank in society was progressively re-evaluated and the intellectual content of their art began to be acknowledged by theoreticians, amateurs and those who commissioned works.

The self-portrait was the genre par excellence via which artists expressed their newly-found pride, sitting as they did with an imposing presence and wearing their finest clothes instead of the clothes they usually wore whilst at work in their studios. During the eighteenth century, Lyonnais artists Joseph Vivien and Antoine Berjon wore wigs and finery, with Joseph Chinard even going so far as to drape himself in long overcoats reminiscent of those worn by antique period sitters. Distinction, intelligence and gravity characterized the self-portraits of David Wilkie and Henry Raeburn, both of whom were Royal Academy members and official portraitists of the King in Scotland. A similar style was adopted by Lyonnais artists Fleury Richard and Michel Dumas, both of whom had just completed their training in the studios of Jacques Louis David and Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres. In the twentieth century, Lucien Simon, Alexander Kanoldt, Max Beckmann and William Strang rivalised for elegance, wearing plastrons, bow ties, ties and bowler hats.



**David Wilkie**  
 Autoportrait  
**Self-portrait**  
 1804-1805, huile sur toile  
 Édimbourg, Scottish National Portrait Gallery  
 © National Galleries of Scotland - Photography by A. Reeve

# In the studio

Artists at work was a specific and expected form of self-portrait, and examples go back as far as the Middle Ages. There were several approaches to this genre. In its simplest form, the painter, the drawer, the engraver or the photographer is represented face-to-face with the spectator and holding the tools of their trade such as canvas and brushes, paper and pencils, a plate of copper and engraving chisels, or photographic film and camera. They give the impression of being represented in a spontaneous manner opposite a mirror which allowed them to study their own facial expressions, in the manner of Scottish artist Duncan Grant.

The artist's studio was also significant in various ways. For Jean Marie Jacomin it was a place in which the pooling of knowledge took place, it is where George Jamesone displayed his artistic talent, and for Fleury Richard it was where he affirmed his artistic program. The studio could also be situated in a natural setting from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when working in this context became a generalized working practice for landscape painters such as Antoine Duclaux and Johann Wilhelm Schirmer. Finally, the studio was used as a modulable theater stage in the twentieth century and a place in which the mysterious genesis of the art form occurred.



**Antoine Duclaux**  
*Halte d'artistes au bord de la Saône*  
**A Gathering of artists on the banks of the Saône**  
1824, huile sur toile  
Lyon, musée des Beaux-Arts  
© Lyon MBA - Photo Alain Basset



**Henri Matisse**  
*La Séance de peinture ou La leçon de peinture*  
**The Painting session or The Painting lesson**  
1919, huile sur toile  
Édimbourg, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art  
Bequeathed by Sir Alexander Maitland 1965  
© Succession H. Matisse, 2016  
© National Galleries of Scotland / Photography by A. Reeve



**Ernst Ludwig Kirchner**  
*Le Peintre (autoportrait)*  
**The Painter (self-portrait)**  
1920, huile sur toile  
Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe  
© Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Foto: Annette Fischer/Heike Kohler



## Family portraits and portraits of friendship

Numerous artists' portraits included those with whom they shared a strong relationship such as lovers, partners, family and friends. From Gabriel Metsu to Rembrandt and Gustave Courbet, portraits of couples were a celebration of their happy relationships, and this genre was conducive to artistic creation. In the works of artists such as Daniel Chodowiecki, Fleury Richard and Guido Philipp Schmitt, the activity of the painter co-exists with those of family members. It is common to see the artist's children painting or drawing: this evokes the question of succession, with the *métier* of painter being handed down from generation to generation for many years. Cecile Walton was first of all depicted as a mother in her self-portrait in a scene which brings to mind the pictorial representation of the Christian theme of the Nativity that was used for centuries, and the iconic image consisting of the Severini family reminds us of a Byzantine Holy Trinity.

Other self-portraits reveal the friendship between the artists and their colleagues. The allusion to this may be discreet in the portrait of the engraver Pierre Drevet by his friend Hyacinthe Rigaud, but the work depicting Pierre Révoil and Fleury Richard clearly demonstrates the depth of their friendship. Other self-portraits, such as that of Wilhelm Schnarrenberger in the company of his architect friends sharing a progressist conception of art with him, can be considered to be veritable aesthetic manifestos.



**Gabriel Metsu**  
*Jeune couple au petit-déjeuner*  
**Young couple at breakfast**  
1667, huile sur bois  
Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe  
© Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Foto : Annette Fischer/Heike Kohler



**Gustave Courbet**  
*Les Amants dans la campagne, sentiments du jeune âge, dit aussi Les Amants heureux*  
**The Lovers in the country, youthful sentiments, also known as The happy lovers**  
1844, huile sur toile  
Lyon, musée des Beaux-Arts  
© Lyon MBA - Photo Alain Basset



Gino Severini  
*La Famille du peintre*  
*The Painter's family*  
1936, huile sur toile  
Lyon, musée des Beaux-Arts

© Lyon MBA - Photo Alain Basset © ADAGP, Paris 2016



**Rembrandt**  
*La Lapidation de saint Étienne*  
**The Stoning of Saint Stephen**  
1625, huile sur bois  
Lyon, musée des Beaux-Arts  
© Lyon MBA - Photo Alain Basset



**Jacob Marrell**  
*Vanité*  
**Vanitas still life**  
1637, huile sur toile  
Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe  
© Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Foto : Annette Fischer/Heike Kohler

## Role plays

Artists from all eras have played around with the frontiers that are supposed to separate artistic genres, and many of them have derived pleasure from inserting portraits of themselves into genre and historical scenes and, in some cases, still life scenes.

Some, such as Albrecht Dürer and Rembrandt, used their works to convey their spiritual engagement, and others, including Alexis Grimou, David Wilkie, Claude Bonnefond, Claudius Lavergne and Jean Carriès, have used them to declare their artistic filiation over the centuries by including subtle references in their works.

When self-portraits address still life scenes, they can sometimes represent a form of vanity which aims to denounce the vacuity of existence and human preoccupations with respect to dying.

From Rembrandt to Warhol, artists can also be seen assuming another character or grimacing in order to interpret roles that defy all contexts. Decors and backgrounds no longer permit the viewer to situate the scenes in which the artists find themselves, and they attempt to reflect the different facets of their personality, real or imagined. The multiplicity of attitudes, moods and even identities that they depict are testimony to the complexity of the human soul.



**Jean Antoine Watteau**  
*Fêtes vénitiennes*  
 1718-1719, huile sur toile.  
 Édimbourg, Scottish National Gallery  
 © National Galleries of Scotland / Photography by A. Reeve



**Andy Warhol**  
*Autoportrait avec perruque à faire peur*  
**Self-Portrait with Fright Wig**  
 1986, photographie polaroid sur papier  
 Artists Rooms, National Galleries of Scotland and Tate.  
 Acquired jointly through The d'Offay Donation with  
 assistance from the National  
 Heritage Memorial Fund and the Art Fund 2008.

© The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / ADAGP, Paris 2016  
 © Photography TATE and National



**Georg Scholz**  
*Autoportrait devant une colonne Morris*  
**Self-portrait by a Morris column**  
 1926, huile sur carton  
 Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe  
 © Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe,  
 Foto : Annette Fischer/Heike Kohler



**Lee Miller**  
*Autoportrait*  
**Self-portrait**  
 1932, épreuve gélatino-argentique  
 Édimbourg, Scottish National Gallery  
 of Modern Art  
 Detail of 'Self-portrait with headband, New York Studio, New York,  
 USA c1932' by Lee Miller (12-1-C)  
 © National Galleries of Scotland / Photography by A. Reeve  
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 www.leemiller.co.uk



**Oskar Kokoschka**  
*Autoportrait en artiste dégénéré*  
**Self-portrait as a degenerate artist**  
 1937, huile sur toile  
 Collection privée, en dépôt à Édimbourg,  
 Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art  
 © National Galleries of Scotland / Photography by A. Reeve  
 © Fondation Oskar Kokoschka / ADAGP, Paris, 2016

## The artist in the context of the world

The reality of the world in which the artist lived was relatively absent from self-portraits before the twentieth century, and they mostly contained just a few details and objects. However, the major changes that occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century with the introduction of realism and then impressionism, amplified by the successive vanguards, resulted in a need to represent modern life and depict, in the artistic field, the social and technological changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution. In the 1920s and 1930s, artists began to be seen in the company of iconic symbols of the time, as can be seen in the work of Georg Scholz. This triumphant modernity was also accompanied by a certain form of anguish which can be seen in the work of Edvard Munch and Karl Hubbuch.

Contemporary history imposed itself more than ever in self-portraits during the twentieth century, and the two World Wars resulted in unprecedented trauma in European societies. Although the First World War was initially welcomed with enthusiasm when it began in 1914, as is shown by Max Beckmann and Francis Cadell, who painted himself wearing a military trench-coat and ready for mobilization, it would descend into horror that deeply affected a whole generation. There followed the rise of fascist and Nazi ideologies, which led to numerous artists being dismissed from their professorships, and many works of art being removed from art museums. This inspired Oskar Kokoschka to entitle his self-portrait 'Self-Portrait as a Degenerate Artist' in a gesture of derision.

## The body of the artist

The depiction of one's own body was a relatively marginal phenomenon before the second half of the twentieth century, with the striking nude self-portrait by Jean-Baptiste Frénet being one of the rare examples from previous periods.

Starting from the 1960s, the body imposed itself as both the subject and the object of artistic creation and its representation took on several aspects. The evocation of the passing of time and the changes in expression that come with age is one of them, and it is intimately linked to the fear of death. The image of a suffering body allowed artists to free themselves of their trauma and it played a cathartic role of personal therapy, as was the case for John Bellany, who pictured himself on his hospital bed, and for Tracey Emin and Max Schoendorff with their expressions of an interior world. Questions of gender, which have particularly fascinated numerous female artists since the 1970s, are also a central element in these themes and are often expressed via the medium of video, as was the case for Marina Abramović. Finally, and via metonymy, the image of the body can take the form of a specific feature of the human body, such as the hand or the brain, which, along with the eyes, are essential parts of the body for artists that symbolize the act of creation.



**John Coplans**

*Figure allongée, deux panneaux, n°1*

**Reclining Figure, Two Panels, No. 1**

1996, épreuves gélatino-argentiques, deux panneaux composés chacun de trois parties

Édimbourg, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

© The John Coplans Trust

© National Galleries of Scotland / Photography by A. Reeve



**Ai Weiwei**

*Selfies*

2009

Courtoisie Ai Weiwei Studio

© Ai Weiwei

## **PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

### **EXHIBITION CATALOGUE**

Autoportraits, from Rembrandt to the selfie

288 pages (German, French)

39,80 €

Snoeck Editions

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Exhibition and Collections: 12 € / 7 €

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Daily between 10am and 6pm except tuesdays  
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Visual resources for the press

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# MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE LYON



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