UQ Art Museum Learning Resource

Continuing Professional Development Seminar (CPD)

Portraiture/Self Portraiture/Identity

Saturday 8 October 2011

Domenico de Clario 1947 – 2047 (The immortal) 2011, detail
Mixed media on canvas and found chairs
Courtesy of the artist and John Buckley Gallery, Melbourne
Winner of The University of Queensland National Artists’ Self-Portrait Prize 2011

Photo: Carl Warner
This Learning Resource was developed following our first Continuing Professional Development Seminar (CPD) on Portraiture/Self Portraiture/Identity at UQ Art Museum. Taking an interdisciplinary and intercultural approach the seminar provided a unique opportunity for high school teachers to learn about the history, meanings and ideas in portraits and self portraits from leading UQ scholars in the School of Classics, the School of English, Media Studies and Art History and the School of Social Science at The University of Queensland.

The presentations featured in this resource are:

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<th>Presentation</th>
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<td>How portraits of ancient men and women, both famous and unknown, were created and used in ancient Greece and Rome, with a special focus on coin and statue portraits in the UQ Antiquities Collection.</td>
<td>Dr Amelia R. Brown is Lecturer in Greek History and Language in the School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, Faculty of Arts with a special research interest in Late Roman portraiture.</td>
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<td>A discussion of some self portraits by Albrecht Dürer and Rembrandt, and their continued relevance for contemporary artists.</td>
<td>Dr Andrea Bubenik is an Associate Lecturer in Art History in the School of English, Media Studies and Art History, Faculty of Arts, whose research focuses on Northern Renaissance and Baroque art, especially Albrecht Dürer and his reception.</td>
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<td>Applications of studying portrait photography across the humanities, with special focus on surrealism, documentary and the digital era.</td>
<td>Dr Sally Butler is Senior Lecturer in Art History in the School of English, Media Studies and Art History, Faculty of Arts, with special research interests in Australian Indigenous art and photography.</td>
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Each Powerpoint presentation contains images, text and focus questions. Due to copyright restrictions we are unable to include Dr Diana Young's presentation What do objects want? The face of humanity in the UQ Anthropology Museum collection. Dr Diana Young is Director of the UQ Anthropology Museum and lectures in Anthropology in the School of Social Science, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences.

The seminar was followed by a panel discussion exploring the portrait/self portrait as a visual manifestation of a sense of self/identity in contemporary art, and an artist talk by the winner of The University of Queensland National Artists’ Self-Portrait Prize 2011, Domenico de Clario. The panel was chaired by Associate Professor Rex Butler, Lecturer in Art History, School of English, Media Studies and Art History, Faculty of Arts with Dr Anne Sanders, Curatorial Researcher, Inner Worlds: Portraits & Psychology, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra; Cherine Fahd, exhibiting artist and Domenico de Clario. A podcast of the panel discussion and artist talk is available at www.artmuseum.uq.edu.au/learning

Participants in the CPD seminar were able to engage in discussion and debate with the speakers and study the works on display in the exhibitions the National Artists’ Self-Portrait Prize and Inner Worlds: Portraits & Psychology and in the UQ Antiquities Collection. The seminar, panel discussion and artist talk complement the focus in the new Australian curriculum The Arts on developing and enriching student learning by providing professional development experiences for teachers that support reflective practice, value diversity and ongoing professional renewal.

Gillian Ridsdale
Curator Public Programs
Shifting Styles of Portraiture of Men and Women from the Archaic Greek to the Late Roman Eras, *circa 550 Before Christ* through *250 After Christ*

Dr Amelia R. Brown
Lecturer in Greek History & Language
The University of Queensland
In Archaic Athens, a sculptor named Aristion of Paros carved these two figures out of marble around 550 BC to be tomb markers. We don’t know the name of the youth, or kouros, but the name of the maiden, or kore, is Phrasikleia, as her epitaph says in Ancient Greek below.

(Athens, National Museum, inv. 4890-4889; found in Merenda, ancient Myrrhinous, Attica)

What differences do you see between Archaic Greek male and female portraits? What seems realistic to you? What is not?

Translation of Inscription on Phrasikeia’s base:
Marker of Phrasikleia: I will be called ‘maiden’ forever, given this name instead of marriage by the Gods. Aristion of Paros made me.
Lysippus of Sicyon: sculptor of Alexander the Great’s portrait, from youth to adulthood (Alex. died Babylon, 323 BC, at age 33)

Portrait of Alexander the Great in the Pella Museum, from the area of Giannitsa, Macedonia; dated circa 325 to 300 BC; marble, in the style of Lysippus.

Characteristics of Lysippus’ style, and other Late Classical to Hellenistic era portraits:

- idealized beauty of the human form
- realistic depiction of some individual facial and bodily features to aid identification
- twisting movement of head
- upward gaze, tousled leonine hair
- dead and living kings, aristocrats, athletes

Discussion Questions:

How did portraiture change between the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic Eras of Greek art?

What does Lysippus add?
One of our best sources for themes and changes in portraits in Antiquity is coins, with portrait ‘heads’ from the 6th C. BC onwards.

Coins of the Successors of Alexander the Great often bear his portrait, or a Successor portrait imitating Lysippus.

Discussion Questions:

*How are these portraits different from those in stone? What do they tell you about the person who is depicted?*

*How are they similar and different from modern Australian coin portraits?*
The Romans conquered Greece in the late Hellenistic era, and adopted many cultural traits from the Greeks, including traditions of portrait coinage and sculpture. Roman sculptors though, like the anonymous carver of this female head in the 1st C., introduced Roman ideas about clothing, realism, and family memorials.

**Discussion Questions:**

*How is this woman similar to Phrasikleia? How is she different?*

*What techniques has the sculptor used to make a realistic portrait?*
UQ Antiquities Museum 09.001: Palmyrene Youth’s Tomb Marker

This tombstone of local stone comes from Palmyra, Syria. It was carved by an unknown sculptor in the 3rd century AC.

How does this young man from the Eastern Roman Empire compare to the Greek youths you saw earlier?

All images reproduced courtesy of the R.D. Milns Antiquities Museum and Dr Amelia R. Brown
Some background on self-portraiture:

- Self-portraits extremely rare prior to the 15th century
- During the Renaissance, an increased focus on the concept of individualism: think of Shakespeare’s play Hamlet (“to thine own self be true) or Michele de Montaigne’s essays
- For visual artists, emancipation from guilds and increased independence
- German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) and Dutch Baroque artist Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) are exceptional in the history of art for the number of times they depicted themselves: they are the first to explore self portraiture as a genre
- Dürer and Rembrandt’s self-portraits motivated by social ambition, pride in artistic profession, preparation for posterity, experimentation, medical diagnostics, and self fashioning
Dürer and Rembrandt: The relevance of Early Modern Self-Portraiture

The Varieties of Early Self-Portraiture: Dürer as a case study

- Dürer’s earliest self portrait created when he was just 13
- Pride in his artistry as an adolescent indicated by the inscription
- Difficulty in depicting the right hand – hands are one of the hardest things to depict accurately in self portraiture

- One of the earliest nude self portraits
- Artist is a handy model – readily available (no need to hire someone to sit for you)
- Unflinching realism in his approach to the human body

- Dürer’s so-called ‘sick drawing’
- Inscription reads: ‘There where the yellow spot is and the finger points, there it hurts me’
- Self-portrait as a diagnostic tool, reference to the doctrine of the four humors
Auto-biography in Paint: Dürer’s Self-fashioning

– 22 years old - Dürer presents himself as a young courtly nobleman, suitable for an elevated marriage, wearing fine clothing and the eryngium (a type of thistle thought to be an aphrodisiac)

– 26 years old - Dürer presents himself as an artist/gentleman, he has just returned from Venice with a renewed pride in his profession, his elegantly gloved hands a prominent indication of success

– 28 years old – Dürer presents himself in a pose traditionally reserved for Christ – fully frontal with forceful symmetry – an artist to be reckoned with in the present, as well as being in preparation for posterity
Dürer and Rembrandt: The relevance of Early Modern Self-Portraiture

Experimentation in Self-Portraiture: Rembrandt as a case study

After Dürer, the next artist to fully explore self-portraiture as a genre was Rembrandt. He created about 40 paintings of himself, 32 etchings, and 7 drawings.

For the variety and quantity of self portraits he created, this was and continues to be a unique achievement in the history of art,

These self portraits can be interpreted in terms of

- social ambition
- experimentation
- increased sense of individualism
- artistic theories of the emotions
- pride in northern heritage
- self-fasioning
- emulation of Albrecht Dürer
- unflinching realism
- interest in old age...
Dürer and Rembrant: The relevance of Early Modern Self-Portraiture

Questions for discussion:

Do self-portraits offer unmediated access to an individual?

To what extent do you think Dürer and Rembrandt were engaged in ‘self analysis’?

What were some of the pragmatic motivations behind these early modern self–portraits?

What is meant by ‘self-fashioning’?

How are contemporary self-portraits different from those created by Dürer and Rembrandt over three centuries ago?
Applications of studying portrait photography across the humanities, with special focus on surrealism, documentary and the digital era

Dr Sally Butler
Lecturer Art History
The University of Queensland
Applications of studying portrait photography across the humanities, with special focus on surrealism, documentary and the digital era

Philippe Halsman (1906-1979) (Latvia)

Jumpology

These three artworks all represent photographic portraits that are more concerned with the concept of a person rather than their visual likeness.

Focus questions:

Surrealism was an art movement that considered the ‘real world’ is located in our unconscious, rather than our conscious awareness. How does Jumpology help to tap into the unconscious subject rather than the conscious subject?

Can you think of other ways that might make the photographic subject of a portrait forget their self-image whilst taking their photograph?

What are the special photographic features that makes these portraits ‘special’?

What photographic techniques have the artists used, and how do these techniques say something about a person’s character or personality?
Applications of studying portrait photography across the humanities, with special focus on surrealism, documentary and the digital era

Liu Xiao Xian

Focus questions:

Liu Xiao Xian’s artwork looks at what constitutes his own identity by using ‘icons’ of Chinese identity. What is an icon and how does it work as a visual message?

What other kinds of ‘icons’ could the artist have used to represent Chinese identity?

What kind of ‘icons’ could you use to represent your own identity as a young Australian?

Xiao Xian Liu 1963 –
Reincarnation – Mao, Buddha & I version II 2003
coated Lambda photographs, edition 1/3 300 sheets, each 30 x 21 cm, overall 3050 x 7100 cm
Collection of The University of Queensland, purchased 2005
Reproduced courtesy the artist
Applications of studying portrait photography across the humanities, with special focus on surrealism, documentary and the digital era

Tracey Moffatt
1960 –


Collection of The University of Queensland, purchased 2008

Courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
Tracey Moffatt

Focus questions:

Tracey Moffatt creates a portrait of an era in this series of photographs. What features of the images convey a particular sense of time?

What features of the images convey a particular state of mind?

Does this series of images come together as a story about someone’s past?

What other ways could you create a portrait of an era from your past, or create a story about your childhood?