THIS IS A PORTRAIT IF I SAY SO: Identity in American Art, 1912 to Today

Bowdoin College Museum of Art
June 25 — October 23, 2016

FOR KIDS

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Welcome to
This Is a Portrait If I Say So: Identity in American Art, 1912 to Today!

This Is a Portrait If I Say So is an exhibition that explores how artists from 1912 to today represent themselves and other people. Every piece of art in this exhibition is an unconventional portrait made by artists who influenced the development of modern American art. This means that the portraits are not paintings or drawings that look like a specific person.

Instead, the portraits that you will see today are artistic experiments that emphasize conceptual and symbolic links between the artist and their subject. This exhibition brings together portraits made in various media, including photography, print, drawing, video, sculpture, text, music, painting, and collage.

This activity booklet is designed to help you interact with the artwork you see.
Did You Know?

• The oldest portrait in the Museum’s collection is nearly 3,000 years old.
• The newest portrait in the Museum’s collection was made in March 2016.
• A portrait does not need to look like a person.
• You can use any material to create a portrait.
• James Bowdoin III’s family portraits are installed in the Bowdoin Gallery upstairs.
Key Terms

Abstract art: Art that uses shapes, colors, forms, and textures to emphasize its message(s) rather than to emphasize visual reality. What the art is trying to show is not always clear.

Conceptual art: Art in which the idea behind the work is more important than what the artwork looks like.

Identity: How someone sees and defines themselves.

Medium: Material(s) used to make a work of art. Examples: oil paint, pen, pencil, fabric, wood, etc.

Mimetic art: Art that imitates the world as we see it.

Non-mimetic art: Art that does not imitate visual reality.

Portrait: A representation of a person or object.

Self-Portrait: When someone makes a representation of themselves.

Subject (in relation to portraiture): The person or object represented in an artwork.

Symbolic: Something that represents something else. Example: A heart can symbolize love.
"This Is a Portrait If I Say So"

Word Search


ABSTRACT
BOWDOIN
COLLAGE
CONCEPT
DRAWING
IDENTITY
MIMETIC
PAINTING
PHOTOGRAPH
PORTRAIT
REPRESENTATIVE
SCULPTURE
Match the portraits on the left with . . .
the photographs of the people they represent on the right.

Alfred Stieglitz (1864—1946)

Marcel Duchamp (1887—1968)

Mel Bochner (1940—Present)
Scavenger Hunt

Can you find the following things in the exhibition?

1. A teacup
2. A light bulb
3. Three portraits made of words
4. A mirror
5. A rainbow
6. Two spoons
7. A handprint
8. A fingerprint
9. Musical notes
10. How many flowers can you find?

**BONUS**

1. Find a portrait that will change over time
2. Find a portrait that contains a map
3. Find a portrait of an artist and a portrait by the same artist
Draw a portrait of someone you admire!

Create a non-representational portrait by drawing something that reminds you of the person OR create a representational portrait by drawing what that person looks like.
What is your favorite portrait in the exhibition and why?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How would you want an artist to represent you? What would be in the portrait? What medium would the artist use?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Dear _________,

I cannot thank you enough for your __________ of ___________. It really is a __________. You are very ____________ for representing my ____________ with ____________. I do not think that I/he/she/they look like ____________, but you are the artist!

Do you make many portraits of ____________, or do you mostly ________________ ________________? The portrait will look fantastic next to my _____________ in my ______________.

My _____________ will all want you to _____________ portraits of them, too!

Thank you again for the portrait!!!

All the best,

_______________________
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Page 8: Marsden Hartley (1877–1943), *Portrait*, ca. 1914–1915, oil on canvas. Collection of the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, bequest of Hudson D. Walker from the Ione and Hudson D. Walker Collection. Image courtesy Collection of the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.


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