

# 3

# Me, myself and I

LA CRÉATION ET LE RAPPORT AUX ARTS

How have American visual artists  
portrayed themselves in their works?



## SCENARIO

Self-portrait is not a new artistic genre, but it seems to be more and more commonplace in our modern societies. Everybody takes selfies all the time, and our own image takes a central place in our lives. In the United States, some of the greatest artists have chosen this genre for their work.

## **FINAL TASK**

**Write an essay  
about an American  
self-portrait**



← Jean-Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child, Tamra Davis (2010)

**ANTICIPATE**

vidéo 08

- Look at** the still. Do you recognise the people on the painting? How would you describe the style of the painting?
- Watch** the scene from "The Radiant Child". **Sum up** the story in your own words.
- Explain** this quote by Basquiat in your own words: "I start a picture and I finish it. I don't think about art while I work. I think about life". How does it relate to the scene?

prof. 10  
élève 10

- bright = intense
- fresh
- honest
- unknown ≠ famous
- a masterpiece
- to become friends with
- to hang out with: traîner avec

## DOCUMENTS

### 1 Classic representations

PAINTING 1



↑ Edward Hopper (1930)

PAINTING 2



↑ Mary Cassatt (1878)

PAINTING 3



↑ John Singer Sargent (1906)

- a. To you, which one of these self-portraits is the most attractive?

**Justify** by giving your impressions.

**In my opinion, Cassatt's painting is the best because...**

**I guess Singer's portrait...**



- b. In groups, **choose** one of these artists. **Look for** some basic information about:
1. dates and places of birth and death,
  2. style and other paintings,
  3. personality or private life that may have influenced the technique and topics.

### 2 An original self-portrait

ANTICIPATE

- a. **Look at** Rockwell's painting closely.  
**Give** it a title.  
**Justify** your choice with visual elements.  
**Read** your text to two partners.  
**Decide** who has done the best job.  
**I would call it... because...**
- b. **Watch** the video.  
**Answer** the questions.
1. What is the difference between this self-portrait and his previous ones?
  2. Who are the other artists mentioned?
  3. Which are the “three selves” that Norman Rockwell is representing?

VIDEO

vidéo 09



Fiche  
Doc. support  
▼

↑ Norman Rockwell, The Saturday Evening Post (2017)

prof. 11  
élève 11

TRAIN YOUR VOICE



#### L'accent de phrase (2)

Écoutez cette phrase et répétez-la en accentuant les mots porteurs de sens (signalés en vert).

In 1960, Norman Rockwell produced one of the most famous self-portraits in American art.

### 3 The pop artist

ANTICIPATE

- a. **React** to Andy Warhol's self-portrait.  
Do you like it more or less than the other self-portraits? Why (not)?  
Can you imagine the artist's intentions?

I really like this piece, because...  
Honestly, I'm not a fan of Warhol:  
I think that...

- b. **Read** the quote from Andy Warhol.  
What do you think it means?  
I think he's trying to say that...
- c. **Read** the text.  
**Discuss:** Has the extract helped you to understand the artist's intentions?  
Do you agree with the description of his work?  
Personally speaking, it helped me to understand how...

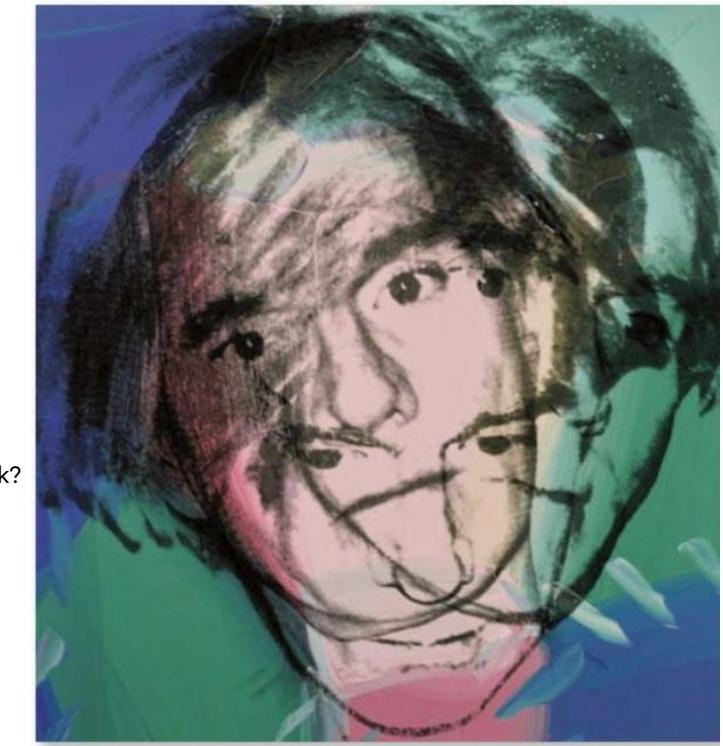


“If you want to know about Andy Warhol, then just look at the surface of my pictures, my movies and me and there I am; there's nothing in between.”

**Andy Warhol**

In the latter part of the 20th century, Andy Warhol solidified his place amongst the most important and influential self-portraitists in the history of art. Throughout his career, Warhol turned to his own visage to create works such as the present painting, filled with immediacy, vivacity, and simultaneously with a strong sense of mystery and intrigue.

More than any artist before him, Warhol's identity and constructed public persona were inextricably bound to his art. The self-portraits thus became the richest and most fertile sites for his own invention.



↑ Self-portrait, Andy Warhol (1978)

In “Self-Portrait”, Warhol presented himself as a complex, constructed fiction. As historian Robert Rosenblum has noted about Warhol's portraits: “We end up knowing everything and nothing. So it is that artist's self-portraits, whether intended as disclosure or as concealment, remain as fictional as their other work... Andy Warhol's self-portraits constantly shift back and forth between telling us all and telling us nothing about the artist, who can seem, even in the same work, both vulnerable and invulnerable, both superficial and profound”.

↑ Andy Warhol's Disguises, Robert Rosenblum (2004)

- energetic = vibrant
- realistic ≠ abstract
- sad = somber
- superficial /su:pə'fɪʃəl/ ≠ profound
- vulnerable /vʌlnərəbl/
- mood /mu:d/ = atmosphere

- a self-portrait
- in the foreground ≠ in the background
- in the top / bottom corner
- to convey: transmettre
- to show = to disclose ≠ to conceal

prof. 12  
élève 12

- L'expression du goût → p. 224
- I (really) like the way she uses color.
- I'm fond of this style.
- I prefer his more abstract work.
- I'm (not) a fan of modern art.

## 4 The Chameleon



Works by Cindy Sherman (2016)

I give Cindy Sherman the once-over. Then the twice- and thrice-over. I know I'm staring more than is right but I can't help myself. I'm looking for clues. She is one of the world's leading artists—for 30 years, she has starred in all her photographs—and yet the more we see of her, the less recognisable she is.

She's a Hitchcock heroine, a busty Monroe, a corpse, a Caravaggio, a Botticelli, a man in a balaclava, a cowgirl, a desperate clown, and we've barely started. In front of me, though, is an elegant woman with long, blond hair and soft features. She looks much kinder than in many of her photographs.

"I'm good at using my face as a canvas... I'll see a photograph of a character and try to copy them on to my face. I think I'm really observant, and thinking how a person is put together, seeing them on the street and noticing subtle things about them that make them who they are", she says.

In her new work, she is more exposed than she has ever been before. There are no prosthetics, no make-up, not much in the way of disguise. And yet, with her subtle digital manipulations, it is still hard to find the real Sherman in these pictures. And she wouldn't have it any other way.

In fact, she says, it's not since her student days that the work has been about Cindy Sherman. Then, she photographed herself nude. "For the project I had to confront something difficult. Something I'd never want to do." And ever since, she says, she's managed to star in her pictures without giving anything away. She pauses and smiles. "I'm not about revealing myself," she says.

↑ Cindy Sherman: *me, myself and I*, The Guardian (2011)

ANTICIPATE

- Read** the title and **look at** the photograph closely.  
Why do you think Cindy Sherman is called "The Chameleon"?
- Read** the first two paragraphs. **Check your ideas.**  
What strikes you?
- Read** the rest of the article.  
**Discuss:** What do you know about the "real" Cindy Sherman?
- Explain** the differences between her old and her new technique.
- In** your opinion, what is Cindy Sherman's intention when she creates her photographs?

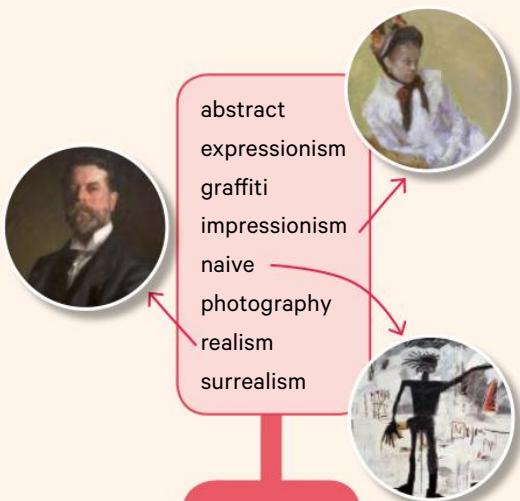


prof. 13  
élève 13

- **nude** = not wearing **any clothes** /kluoðz/
- **recognizable** ≠ **unrecognizable**
- **a canvas**: une toile
- **features** /fɪʃərз/: les traits (du visage)
- **make-up**: le maquillage
- **to disguise** = **to dress up** = **to put on a costume**
- **to expose oneself**
- **to give away** = **to reveal** ≠ **to hide**
- **to star in**: jouer dans

# VOCABULARY

→ Banque d'exercices p. 179



## COLOR

bright = intense

dull = flat

## COMPOSITION

(in the) background

(in the) foreground

## MOOD

calm

energetic = vibrant

happy = cheerful

sad = somber

## VIEWER'S IMPRESSION

bold	boring
------	--------

emotionally charged	conventional
---------------------	--------------

evocative	flat
-----------	------

fresh	lifeless
-------	----------

honest	pretentious
--------	-------------

revealing	
-----------	--

subtle	
--------	--

thought-provoking	
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unconventional	
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## SELF-PORTRAITS

## DESCRIPTION

Blockbuster 2<sup>de</sup>

### Make your own mind map

Make a mind map with the words and expressions that best describe the work of the artist you will write about in the Final Task.

# PREPARE THE FINAL TASK

## How to write an essay about a work of art

Vous devez rédiger un texte à partir d'un autoportrait que vous avez vu pendant une visite au musée. Suivez ces conseils pour que votre production soit complète et réussie !

### • Choisissez votre artiste

- Choisissez l'autoportrait qui vous parle le plus, que ce soit parce que vous vous identifiez à un élément de l'œuvre ou simplement parce que vous aimez son style et ce qu'elle vous fait ressentir.
- Effectuez des recherches sur l'artiste et son travail. Cela vous donnera une idée de ses techniques et sujets habituels. Trouvez les événements marquants de sa vie : ils pourraient avoir eu une influence sur sa production artistique.

### • Structurez vos idées grâce à une carte mentale

- Observez attentivement les éléments constitutifs de l'œuvre : composition, format, couleurs... Comment expriment-ils des idées ou donnent-ils des informations sur le portrait ? Comment influencent-ils les émotions de celui ou celle qui regarde l'œuvre ?
- Pour organiser vos idées, vous pouvez réaliser une carte mentale. Écrivez le titre de l'œuvre au milieu de la page. Dessinez des branches qui partent du titre et écrivez vos idées principales sur ces trois thèmes :
  - l'auteur(e),
  - l'œuvre : style, composition, couleurs...
  - les sensations que l'œuvre vous procure.

**Associez** ces adjectifs à l'un des deux tableaux.



cool conventional fresh realistic  
dark dynamic unconventional classic  
colourful boring static modern

### • Organisez vos paragraphes de façon logique

- N'oubliez pas : une seule idée par paragraphe !
- Énoncez clairement votre idée en début de paragraphe, pour qu'on vous suive facilement.
- Développez votre idée principale et donnez des exemples détaillés pour appuyer votre propos.
- Changez de paragraphe à chaque nouvelle idée.
- Utilisez des connecteurs logiques pour mettre en évidence les liens entre vos paragraphes.

### • Faites des comparaisons

- Choisissez l'un des autoportraits de l'unité et comparez-le avec celui que vous êtes en train d'analyser. Pensez aux similarités et aux différences : style, couleurs, techniques...
- Exprimez votre opinion sur les deux œuvres : laquelle préférez-vous ? Pourquoi ?

### • Ajoutez votre touche finale

- Relisez votre texte. Pouvez-vous y inclure des expressions originales ou imagées pour le rendre plus attrayant ? Y a-t-il des formules qui décriraient mieux vos idées ?

Laquelle des deux descriptions suivantes vous semble la plus attrayante ? Pourquoi ?

- 1. In my opinion, this self-portrait has very beautiful colors.**
- 2. In my opinion, this self-portrait conveys the idea of intensity. The colors are emotionally charged and the texture is unconventional.**

- Relisez les étapes de la tâche finale ainsi que votre texte et répondez aux questions suivantes :

- Avez-vous oublié quelque chose ?
- Vos idées sont-elles bien développées ?
- Y a-t-il des fautes ?
- Avez-vous bien exprimé un ressenti personnel et expliqué quels éléments du portrait vous menaient à ce ressenti ?
- Les lecteurs apprendront-ils quelque chose en vous lisant ?

Si l'une des réponses est non, revoyez votre texte pour l'améliorer !

# FINAL TASK



## WRITE AN ESSAY ABOUT AN AMERICAN SELF-PORTRAIT

MEDIATION

You have just visited an exhibition called "American self-portraits". Share what you have learned with other students in your high school by writing a 250-word essay that you will upload to the school's website.

- a. **Select** your favourite self-portrait from the ones your teacher will give you. You can also **choose** a self-portrait by another American artist.
- b. **Present** the artist. You can **look for** further information online. Write a description of the work; from the most global to more detailed elements. **Mention** the style, the composition, the mood, the colours, etc.
- c. **Give your opinion.** What do you like or dislike about this work of art? **Justify** your opinion.
- d. **Compare** your painting with another American self-portrait that you have studied in this unit.
- e. **Make sure** you have written at least 250 words.
- f. **Hang** all your creations on a school wall.



**Self-portrait, by Jean-Michel Basquiat**

Jean-Michel Basquiat was an American artist who achieved great success in...

In "Self-portrait" he depicted himself in a naive style...

To me, the image is fresh, evocative and...