

FOUNDED IN 1825, THE **NATIONAL ACADEMY** IS THE ONLY INSTITUTION OF ITS KIND THAT INTEGRATES A MUSEUM, ART SCHOOL, AND ASSOCIATION OF ARTISTS AND ARCHITECTS DEDICATED TO CREATING AND PRESERVING A LIVING HISTORY OF AMERICAN ART.

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THE IMAGE OF ARTISTS IN THEIR ABSENCE: THE SELF-PORTRAIT

ON VIEW JANUARY 29–MAY 3, 2015

Opening reception on Wednesday, January 28, 6–8 PM

New York, NY—The National Academy is pleased to present *The Image of Artists in Their Absence: The Self-Portrait*. The exhibition is an exploration of the relationship artists have with their own image, and how prevailing cultural norms have influenced and transformed the conventions of self-representation over time. *The Self-Portrait* calls on the Academy’s extensive and significant collection of artist portraits, including self-portraits by Asher B. Durand, Thomas Eakins, Cecilia Beaux, George Grosz, Will Barnet, Andrew Wyeth, Jacob Lawrence, Wayne Thiebaud, Robert Rauschenberg and Howardena Pindell, among others, as well as works on loan by such artists as Umberto Boccioni, Marcel Duchamp, Meret Oppenheim, Piero Manzoni, Shirin Neshat and Ai Weiwei, among others.

A section of the exhibition will include self-portrait works on paper submitted through an open call by artists 35 years or under working in the United States, selected by the curators Maurizio Pellegrin, Filippo Fossati and Diana Thompson. In addition, a photo booth station will allow visitors to snap their own self-portraits to contribute as part of the show.

“We are particularly pleased to present a self-portrait-focused exhibition at the National Academy,” says Director Carmine Branagan. “Since its founding in 1825, the Academy’s esteemed roster of artist and architect members have been contributing works to the permanent collection, most often gifted to the institution upon their election. This includes a significant number of self-portraits and portraits submitted to fulfill one of the original requirements of membership as a National Academician, which remained in place from 1839 to 1994. As a result, the National Academy boasts one of the largest holdings of artist portraits in the country, comprised of more than 1,200 works in a variety of media and spanning more than 150 years of artistic styles and conventions. We are delighted to bring a selection of self-portraits from our collection together with works on loan to explore the age-old practice of self-portraiture that continues today.”

Self-portraits are part of a longstanding artistic tradition, with some of the first known self-portraits dating as far back as the 14th century BC. Self-portraiture gained particular interest and attention during the Middle Ages before flourishing as a widely popular genre during the Renaissance, and has continued to change in style, content and approach ever since. While self-portraits in the 19th century favored formal poses and would commonly be devoid of the familiar trappings of an artist, self-portraits from the Gilded Age and early

20th century reflect greater freedom of form and a growing interest in the psyche and inner life of the artist. With an increasing tendency toward informality, artists began to show themselves at work, often in a studio space surrounded by their tools and materials. The emergence of new artistic techniques and technologies has also impacted the diversity of self-portraits over time, particularly with the advent of photography and video.

The self-portrait is not only an opportunity to observe and study one's outward appearance, but an occasion to confront one's inner thoughts, personal identity and emotions as well. For many artists, it can also be a deeply cathartic experience. *The Self-Portrait* offers a unique glimpse into the process of self-representation and presents a progression of artistic conventions in every medium, including painting, drawing, photography, sculpture and video. In addition to tracing an historical overview of self-portraits over the last two centuries, the exhibition also shows how in today's age of compulsive self-celebration, the contemporary self-portrait provides another distinct interpretation of one of the most enduringly popular artistic genres.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ACADEMY

Founded in 1825, the National Academy is the only institution of its kind that integrates a museum, art school and association of artists and architects dedicated to creating and preserving a living history of American art and architecture. To learn more, please visit www.nationalacademy.org.

LOCATION

1083 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10128

MUSEUM HOURS

Wednesday – Sunday 11 AM – 6 PM

ADMISSION

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