

Illinois State Museum – MuseumLink Art
Cast of Characters Lesson Plan: Three Chicago Painters - Self-Portraits

Purpose: Students will understand the different ways that artists present themselves in their self portraits.

Objectives: Students will analyze portraits in the Self-ish Subjects Web exhibit http://webdev.museum.state.il.us/muslink/art/htmls/cc_self.html as they view them, telling how artists paint self-portraits and present themselves to the world. Also students will be able to discuss how artists use line, color, shape, form, value, and perspective to achieve effects such as mood or personality.

Grade Levels: 5-7

Time Required: two 50-minute class periods

Motivation: Ask students to think about and talk about possible answers to the questions below as they view the self portraits of the three artists.

- How do the artists present themselves and their world?
- Do they have a positive or negative attitude toward themselves? What makes you think this?
- What kind of clues do they give you about who they are? Through objects, expressions, postures?
- From viewing their portraits, what can you learn about the artist?
- What do you think is on the artist's mind?



Looking at ourselves.

- When we consider doing a self portrait, we ask ourselves, “What do we see in the mirror? Who are we? Why do we look a certain way? Do we ever change? How do we feel inside?”
- The objects, clothing, and background of a portrait can also be clues or symbols revealing information or feeling in a portrait.
- The materials that artists use to make a portrait can give a certain feel to the portrait, too. For example, for strong color impact, an artist might use oil or chalk pastels; for fine line detail an artist might use pencil.

Procedure: Create a self-portrait that expresses something about who you are and how you view yourself.

- Choose any objects you want to include.
- Choose the mood or feeling that you want to capture in your portrait. What medium would best capture that feeling?
- Try a few sketches of your portrait to decide on the best composition. You will want to consider the placement of yourself in the composition, the background, and the placement of objects. You may want to use a mirror for a realistic portrayal.

- When you have a sketch you like, transfer it to the final paper or canvas, and paint your self portrait.

Publication and Closure: The portraits can be hung in the classroom or elsewhere for viewing. The class can discuss the portraits in regard to style, image, mood. (Talking about Student Art by Terry Barrett is a source of guidance for a critique.)

Possible topics for discussion might include:

- Compare your self-portrait to the artists discussed on the Web site. In what ways is yours similar? In what ways is it different?
- How did the student artists use their objects to give clues to their personalities?
- How did they use their chosen medium to do this?
- What mood or feeling did they portray?
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Assessment: Assessment is based on the appearance in their portraits of the elements students discuss as being evident in their self portraits (mood, setting, medium).

Illinois State Board of Education Goals and Standards addressed:

Fine Arts Goal 27B: Understand how the arts shape and reflect history, society, and everyday life.

Late Elementary: 27.B.2: identify and describe how arts communicate the similarities and differences among various people, places, and times.