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# ART

## Albrecht Dürer Portraits

Working With Focal Points



SCHOLASTIC

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**COVER:** Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528).  
*Self-portrait in a Fur Collared Robe (detail).*

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**At the top of this drawing, 13-year-old Dürer wrote, "I used a mirror to draw my own likeness in 1484, when I was still a child."**

*Self-Portrait at 13, 1484, silver point on paper,  
10 3/4 x 7 3/4 in., Albertina, Vienna.*

are considered to be as significant as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling, or Leonardo's *Last Supper*. Italian artists did giant frescos—paintings that covered entire walls or ceilings. Albrecht Dürer also made some of the world's greatest images, but he created them in the form of prints. Size impresses people. And prints are small.

**A**lbrecht Dürer was born in 1471 in Nuremberg, the leading cultural center of Germany. It was an exciting time and place for a young person. A renewed interest in learning, science, and the arts was taking place in Italy to the south. And this new movement, known as the *Renaissance* (1400-1600), was headed north.

There were many opportunities for young men like Dürer, the talented

son of a goldsmith. He went to school while working in his father's shop. By 13 (above), he was a skilled artist. At 15, Dürer went into a local painter's workshop. A few years later his works, like this self-portrait (left), were far better than those of his teacher.

Dürer's next self-portrait (pages 8-9), done at 26, shows how the artist's life had changed. Wearing elegant clothing and curled hair, Dürer presents himself as worldly,



**The 22-year old Dürer painted this self-portrait before marrying a woman chosen by his parents. The artist wrote on it, "Things happen to me as is written from on high."**

*Self-Portrait at 22, 1493, Oil on parchment pasted on canvas. 22 1/4 x 17 1/2 in., Musée du Louvre, Paris.*



# Albrecht Dürer

the smallest features must be made skillfully, even the tiniest vein.”

—Albrecht Dürer

aristocratic, and successful. The landscape seen through the window in the background reminds the viewer that the artist had just returned from Venice—a leading center of the Italian Renaissance.

Through his woodcuts, engravings, and paintings, Dürer introduced Northern European artists to inno-

vative ideas. In his portraits, the artist used Renaissance **proportion** (size of one body part compared with another) and **modeling** (graduation of light and dark). He also used **perspective** (a way of creating the illusion of deep space on a flat surface). Dürer's ability to capture his subject's personality was illustrated by a popular story. His

work was said to be so life-like that after Dürer had finished this self-portrait, his dog began to bark at the painting.

**D**ürer's place as the most important artist in Germany is symbolized by his monogram—a square A with a D under the crossbar. Can you spot this signature in other works in the issue?

This self-portrait (near left) puzzles art historians. In it, the artist seems to portray himself as Christ. His **symmetrical full-face** image is **spotlighted** against the dark background.

The intense eyes that make **direct contact** with the viewer are the picture's **focal point**. One hand points to the sky or to his own face. Maybe Dürer is suggesting that artistic talent is a gift that comes from God. And it is the artist's duty to use this talent.

**Dürer inscribed on this controversial self-portrait, “I, Albrecht Dürer, depict myself with everlasting paints at the age of 28.”**

*Self-Portrait in a Fur Collared Robe*, (Self-Portrait at 28), 1500. Oil on panel, 26 1/2 x 19 1/4 in., Alte Pinakothek, Munich.





# Artist to the Rich and Famous

"I must have Dürer to paint my portrait. He is the only artist capable of capturing a person's soul on canvas."

—*Erasmus of Rotterdam*

**B**y the start of the 16th century, Dürer's fame had spread throughout Europe. He had created several important altarpieces as well as many prints that had received popular and critical praise. And he had been able to spend more time in Italy working with Italian Renaissance artists.

In 1512, Dürer was made court painter to Maximilian I (above, right), the king of Germany and \*Holy Roman emperor. To create his works, Dürer

used many Italian innovations—**perspective, proportion**, and rich colors. But instead of the idealized features seen in some Italian portraits, Dürer painted what he saw—even if his subject was an emperor. Although Maximilian wears priceless robes, the depiction of his features in this **three-quarter view** is hardly flattering. His hooked nose, sagging jowls, and lank, gray hair probably look just as they did in real life.

Maximilian's detailed figure **stands out** against the flat background. Dürer's **triangular composition** brings the viewer's eye to the **focal point** of the work, the emperor's face. Maximilian's features are **framed** by the graphic devices surrounding them. His coat of arms is on the left, the gold letters of his title float above him, and Dürer's monogram is on the right.



**A**s court painter, Dürer not only became portraitist to the rich and famous of his time, he also developed friendships with well-known figures such as the Dutch philosopher Erasmus of Rotterdam. Erasmus (below, far right), a priest and scholar, was an expert on the Bible. Dürer has made his subject's hands the **focal point** of this print. The hands are located in the **exact center** of the composition. Dürer's monogram even points to them. And the framed text links the scholar's face and hands. Everything in the composition—the books at the bottom, the desk, and the **diagonal line** of the pen leads the viewer's eye to the philosopher's hands and the scholarly page that he writes.

**This powerful politician had been controlling the government of Nuremberg for over 25 years when Dürer did his portrait.**

*Portrait of Hieronymus Holzschuher, 1526, Oil on panel, 20 x 14 1/2 in., Staatliche Museen, Berlin.*

\*Holy Roman Empire (962-1806) included most of what is now France, Germany, and Italy.





**"If one does not create a memorial to oneself during one's lifetime, one will simply be forgotten."  
—Maximilian I**

*Portrait of Emperor Maximilian I, 1519, Oil on panel, 29 x 24 1/4 in., Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.*

Dürer's **engraved** portrait of his friend Philipp (below, left), a leading German educator and philosopher, is done in **profile**. The subject's high forehead suggests his intelligence, while the **dark background texture** made up of dense **parallel lines** behind his face emphasizes his alert features.

Philipp's philosophy was based on his belief that it is impossible to portray a person's personality. The artist has added a Latin caption underneath the print to sum up this philosophy—"Dürer was able to draw Philipp's features, but his expert hand could not capture his spirit."

**U**nlike the other portraits on these pages, Dürer has chosen to portray a contemporary politician (opposite page) by showing just his subject's head. Why do you think the **focal**

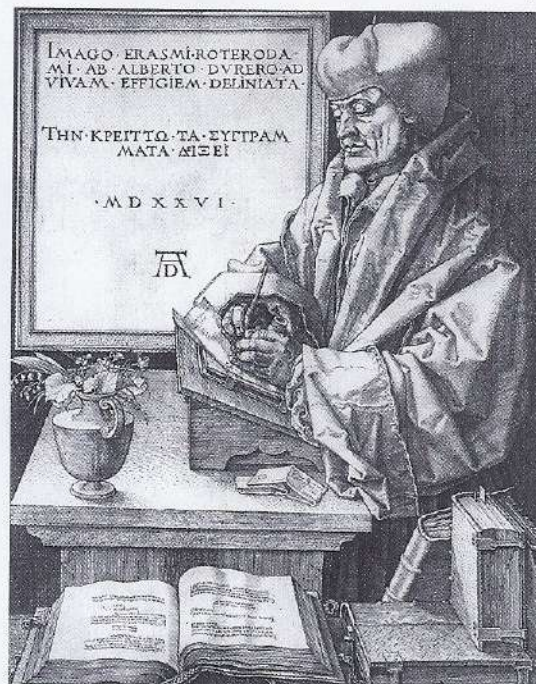
**point** of this commanding figure is his eyes? They are not the center of the composition. They are not staring back at the viewer like those in Dürer's self-portrait on the cover. Or are they?

The subject seems to be looking suspiciously to one side, but is he really looking out at us? His sharp gaze, **frame-filling face**, and the **dramatic spotlighting** Dürer uses to depict him, give this portrait a vivid sense of power.



**Dürer did this lifelike profile of his friend Philipp Melanchthon, a noted German humanist and philosopher**

*Portrait of Philipp Melanchthon, 1526, Copper engraving, 6 3/4 x 5 in., Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.*



**The subject of the engraving above is Erasmus of Rotterdam, one of the most respected scholars of all time.**

*Erasmus of Rotterdam, 1526. Copper engraving, 7 1/4 x 5 1/2 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Rosenwald Collection.*



# Focus on Faith

**D**ürer's paintings are important, but the artist is best known for the magnificent prints he created. During the "Northern Renaissance," several technological breakthroughs occurred. Movable type was developed; the printing press was invented; and inexpensive paper was first manufactured. By 1500, ordinary people were able to buy books, many of which were illustrated with woodcuts and engravings. Dürer was able to complete three or four paintings in a year. But by working in the print medium, the artist could produce and sell many copies of a single image.

Engravings are made by cutting lines into a metal plate, then inking the plate and printing the image on paper. Most engravings are linear, but Dürer was able to make engravings that looked almost like paintings. In the work on the opposite page, Dürer uses a range of tones to describe solid forms. The interplay of light and shadow describes an object's texture, but also shows its three-dimensional shape.

**D**ürer was fascinated by biblical stories. In one of his favorites, St. Jerome pulls a thorn out of a lion's paw and wins the lion's lifelong devotion. When he was a teenager, the artist created a woodcut (below) on the subject of St. Jerome and the lion. The painting *St. Jerome* (above) is a portrait done from life. Dürer's model was a 93-year-old man whom the artist painted holding a skull. One of the most important images Dürer ever made (page 7) was created in 1514, nearly a quarter of a century after he did his first St. Jerome.

*St. Jerome in His Study* can be read in many ways. It has an instant appeal as a depiction of a cozy room with pets, slippers, and built-in furni-



The biblical figure of St. Jerome was one of Albrecht Dürer's favorite subjects.

*St. Jerome*, 1521, Oil on oak panel, 23 1/2 x 19 in., National Art Museum, Lisbon.

"Using black lines only, the great Dürer can express light, splendor, revelation, and all aspects of the sublime."  
—Erasmus of Rotterdam

ture. It can also be read as a portrait of St. Jerome. The work is filled with religious symbols. Spirituality is suggested by the cardinal's hat on the wall and the cross on the desk. The lion and the faithful dog guard the study while St. Jerome translates the Bible from Latin into German so ordinary people could read it. The gourd hanging from the ceiling is an inside joke; it refers to a mistake in Jerome's translation. The skull and hourglass symbolize the passage of time.

Despite its complex technique and intricate details, everything in this work directs the viewer's eye to the saint. Dürer uses **exaggerated perspective** to zoom in on his subject. Saint Jerome is also identified by the halo of light around his head—the only untouched bit of **negative space** in the entire composition. And the **cast shadow** on the wall behind the figure is the darkest area in the picture, calling the viewer's attention to the work's **main focal point**—St. Jerome.

Although this work was meant to symbolize the contemplative life St. Jerome stood for, Dürer's dramatic composition gives the image a highly charged sense of action.

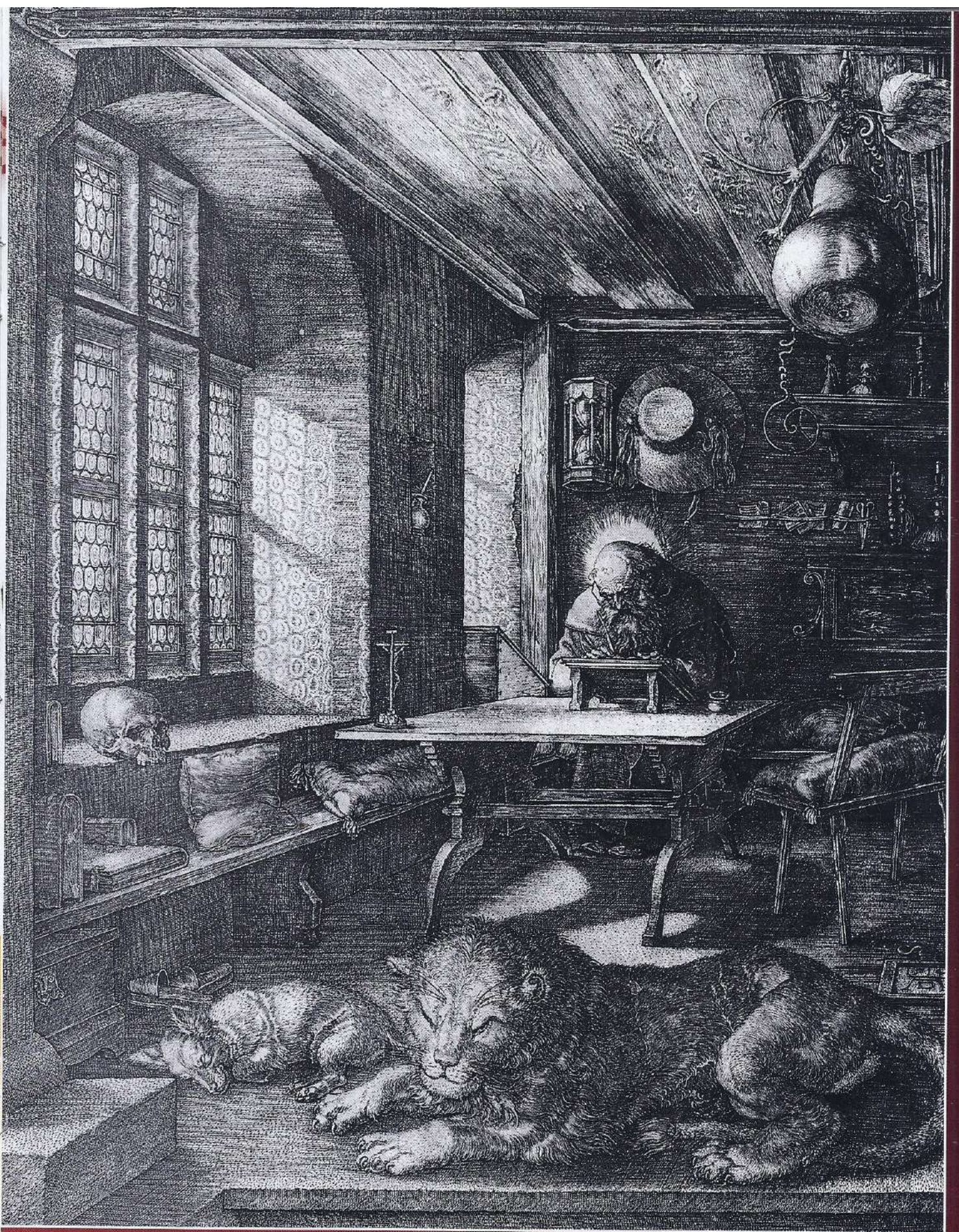
**B**y the time Dürer died in 1528, he was the most important artist in Northern Europe. Critics of the time praised the magical powers with which he could summon up—using only black lines on white backgrounds—not only landscapes, people, and animals, but "natural wonders such as clouds on a wall."

When Dürer was 19, he did this woodcut of St. Jerome and the lion.

*St. Jerome*, 1490. Woodcut, 7 1/2 x 5 1/4 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



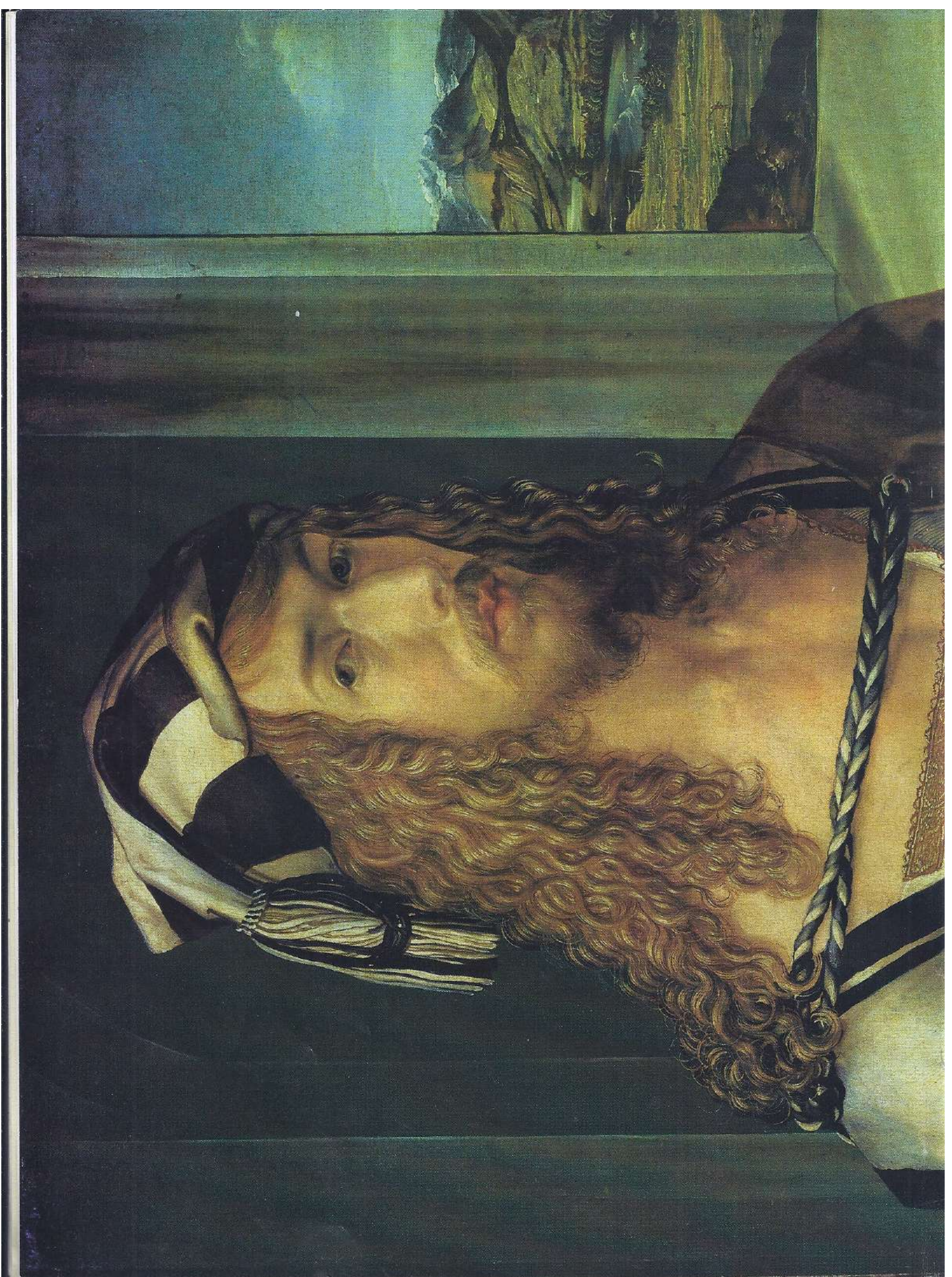




**This engraving is one of Dürer's most complex and important works.**

*St. Jerome in his Study*, 1514. Copper engraving, 10 1/4 x 8 in., Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe











# Artists See Themse

Revealing self-portraits by three important 20<sup>th</sup> century artists



## Painting Emotions

**A**frican-American artist William H. Johnson did many powerful self-portraits that express the difficulties he faced as a black artist in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in South Carolina, Johnson left when he was 17 to study art in New York City. He then lived and worked in Europe for several years. When he did this self-portrait (left), the artist had just returned to the U.S. His pained expression suggests the contrast between the freedom he had felt in Europe, and the prejudice he was encountering in America.

In this very intense work, Johnson has used **angular, broken planes** and **slashing, wedgelike brushstrokes** to express his emotions. Upset by the way he was being treated both as an artist and a person, his large, wounded eyes stare out at the viewer. The shapes that make up his face and body are **elongated and distorted**—visual indications of his state of mind. The artist has broken up the background into **fragments**; the red, brown, and blue slashes make the viewer's eye move restlessly through the painting. In this work, Johnson describes his inner feelings, not his outward appearance.

**"In painting a portrait, I try to capture all the things that make the subject the person we know."**

**—William H. Johnson**

William H. Johnson (1901-1970). *Self-Portrait*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 23 1/4 x 18 1/4 in., National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.

## Profiles in Courage

**E**arly 20<sup>th</sup> century German artist Käthe Kollwitz lived through some of the most difficult periods in history. The changes in her life and outlook as she managed to survive two world wars are reflected in her many self-portraits. She recorded her features from her peaceful early life through her attempts to exist in Nazi Germany. In addition to her self-portraits, Kollwitz is best known for her political posters and prints. The artist identified closely with her subjects and gave her own features to nearly all the women in her prints.

This quiet self-portrait **profile** shows the artist deep in thought. She worries about the effect her approaching marriage will have on her artistic career. The artist's strong, **highlighted face** is the **focal point** of this **lithograph**. Her features stand out against the background, done in a technique called **stippling** (creating a dot pattern). The composition is **balanced** by the dark shapes as well as the **cast shadow** behind the head.

**"I have to create images about which I feel strongly."**—Käthe Kollwitz

Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945). *Self-Portrait*, 1898. Color lithograph, 6 1/2 x 6 1/2 in., Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.





# elves

"My object is to tell stories to other people through pictures."

—Norman Rockwell

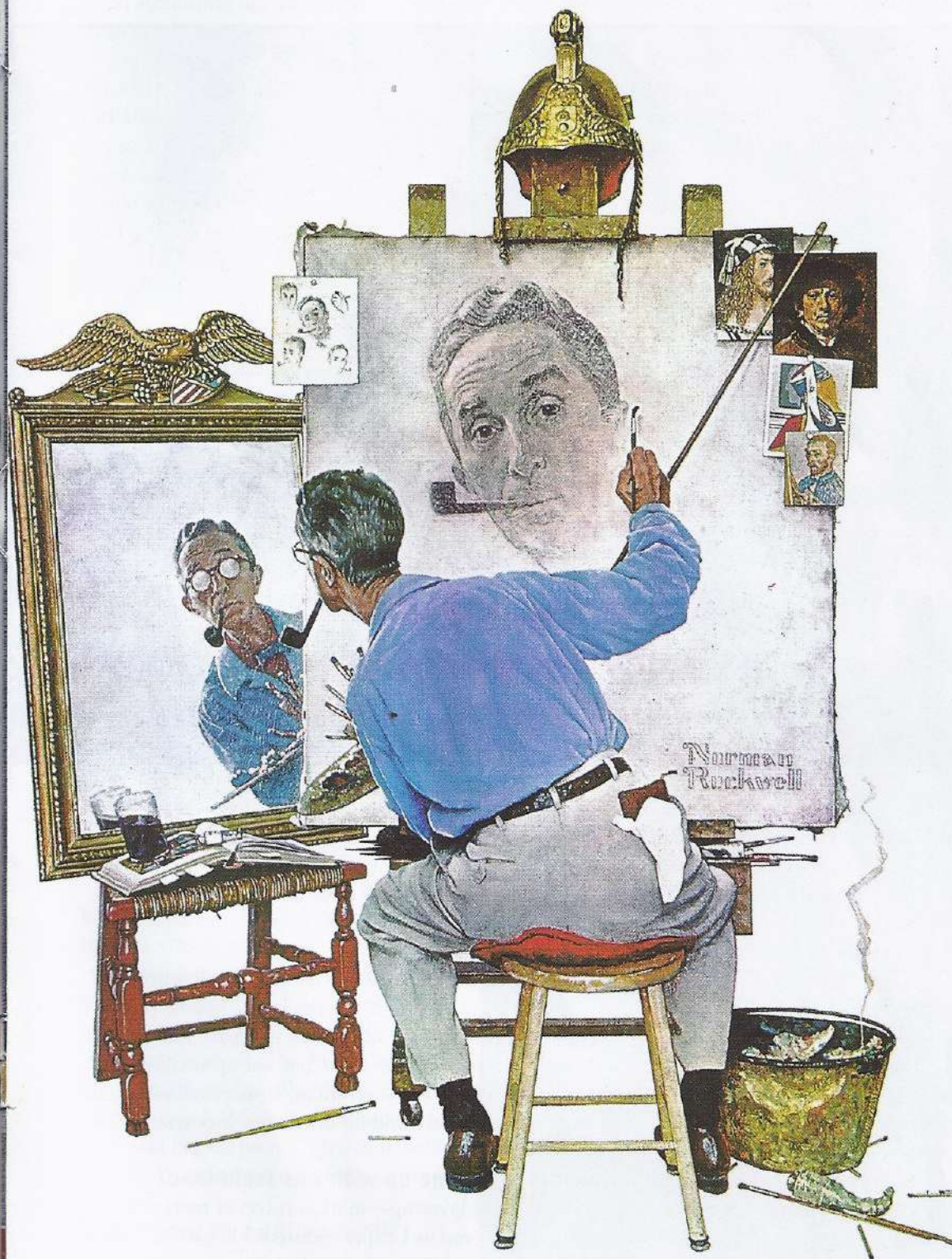
## Stories in Paint

During the 1930's and 1940's, before the Internet or even TV, weekly magazines were a vital source of entertainment. All the stories in these magazines had pictures, many of them done by the most important and popular illustrator of the time, Norman Rockwell.

For over 50 years, Rockwell told visual stories. His *Triple-Self-Portrait* (left), rather than being a simple likeness, tells how he painted this work. By using mirrors, the artist has shown himself from many points of view.

Do you recognize the great artists who inspired Rockwell? Their self-portraits are pinned to his canvas. There is one by Rembrandt, others by Picasso, Van Gogh, and Dürer. Rockwell has used these works, and the mirror on the left, to frame the portrait's focal point—the face. The diagonals of the paintbrushes point to the painting's eyes, staring out at the viewer.

Like Dürer, Rockwell developed a distinctive signature that appeared at the bottom of all his paintings. This portrait has barely been started, but Rockwell's monogram has already been put in.



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978).  
*Triple-Self-Portrait*, 1960.  
Norman Rockwell Museum.  
© 1960 Curtis Publishing Company.



# Matthew Farina

## Painting a Self-Portrait



**W**hen 19-year-old Matthew Farina first visited the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia, he knew it would be a good fit for him. "It's a very classical school. Most of my work is portraits. And I always try to look at the old masters for inspiration."

Matthew did the dynamic Scholastic Award-winning self-portrait (opposite page) during his junior year at Waukesha (Wis.) South High School. For the artist, the style of his work symbolizes the act of painting and the creative process.

Matthew also figure skates, plays the viola, and does some writing, all of which he feels helps with his art. His dream is to become a fine-arts painter and sell his work through art galleries.

### How did you first get started in art?

I've always liked to draw, but I got serious in middle school. I was sort of shy, so I could create something by myself, then put it out there for everyone to see.

### How did you do this award-winning self-portrait?

Looking through an art-history book, I came on a self-portrait that got my attention. It wasn't full-face, or a three-quarter view. The artist had set up two mirrors, and stood sideways between them. It inspired me to use mirrors the same way and do my own self-portrait.

### How did you come up with this technique?

I did a lot of layering—marks on top of marks. The technique evolved as I experimented. I began by paint-



**"I enjoy doing self-portraits because I learn more about myself. With each mark, you're putting more about yourself out there."**

ing the hand with the paintbrush, but I abandoned it when I couldn't do it well enough. I liked the way it looked, so I left it and kept going. You can see another hand stretching up, and another extended. I kept them in to symbolize the act of painting myself.

**What is the portrait's focal point? How did you get the viewer's eye to go there?**

I would say the face is the focal point. The rest is much looser than the head. I made the face lighter so it would stand out. And I created texture at the top of the painting to bring the viewer's eye up there.

**How did you paint this portrait?**

First, I set up mirrors. I didn't want a straight profile view. My head is tilted away from the viewer. To get that angle, I taped a small mirror to the wall on my left. I set the canvas in front, then placed a larger mirror to my right, and tilted it upward. I could see myself in both mirrors, so I was really working off a double reflection.

**Then what did you do?**

First, I toned the canvas with burnt umber. When it dried, I outlined the figure in pencil. Then I started to paint. With oils, I felt like I didn't have as much control, so later I went back in with colored pencil and pastel to render the face more precisely. There's an unfinished quality to this painting. It shows the process.

**Why did you choose the colors and textures that you did?**

I wanted my painting to evoke thoughts of the past. That's part of who I am, and I wanted to reflect that in my self-portrait. The brown tone gives a feeling of another time. It's an oil painting, but I used other mediums—oil pastel, pencil, charcoal—that give it a contemporary feeling.

**Was it hard to paint yourself?**

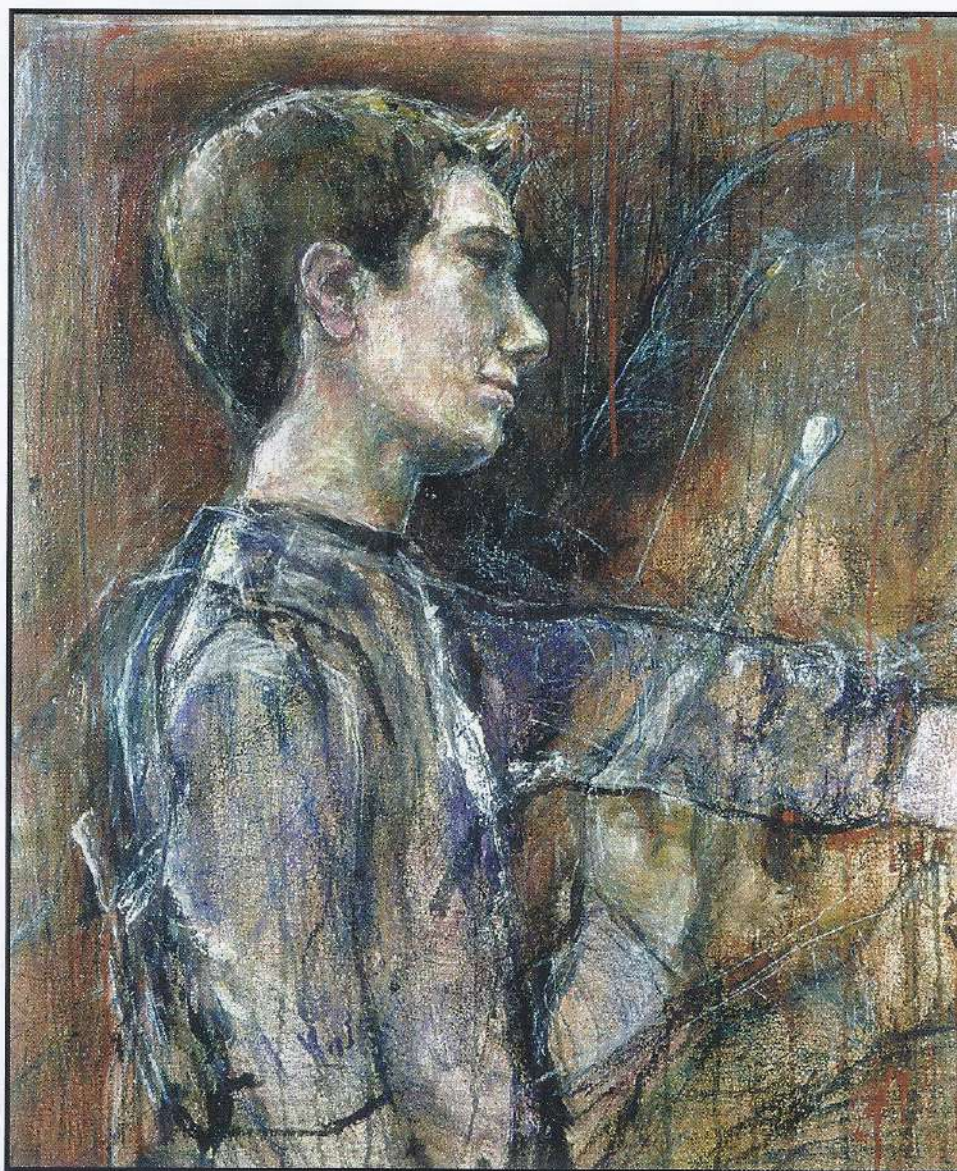
I enjoy doing self-portraits because I

learn more about myself. With each mark, you're putting more about yourself out there. Self-portraits are easier. You know who you are. And, of course, you're always available to model.

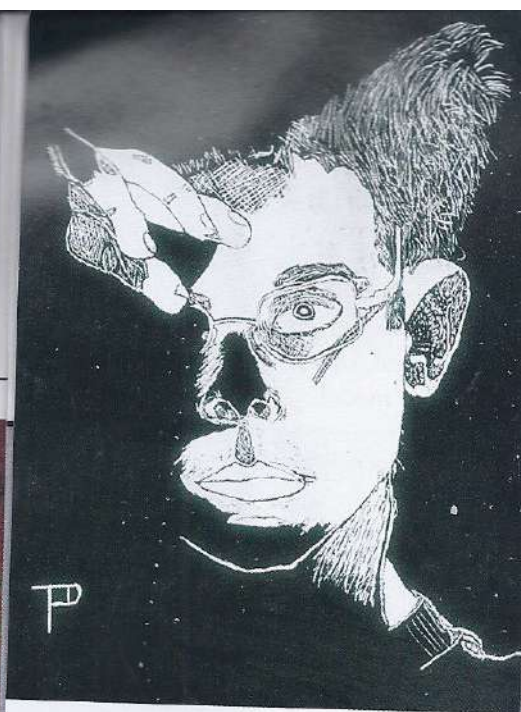
**What would you say to other artists?**

Study art history! I do. It allows me to see what others have done before me. If you love a certain style or period, stick with it. You may feel you should follow conceptual trends, but create the work you love. You need to have passion to be successful. You need to be happy.

To find out more about The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, ask your teacher to write to: The Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, Inc., 555 Broadway, New York, NY 10012-3999 or phone 212-343-6892. [www.scholastic.com/artandwriting](http://www.scholastic.com/artandwriting)







## SCHOLASTIC ART WORKSHOP

# Drawing Yourself

Create a self-portrait that tells others something about you.

**A**lbrecht Dürer used his self-portraits to present himself to the world in a number of different ways. In one, he appears as a young man reluctantly obeying his parents. In another, he is a successful and self-confident aristocrat. In one of his most famous works, the artist gives himself the haunting and intense gaze of a religious figure.

In this workshop, you'll observe your own features. You'll then use them as the basis for a self-portrait that expresses the way you see yourself, or the way you'd like others to see you.

Prepared by Ned J. Nesti, Jr., Art Instructor, Morrison (IL) Junior High School. Assisted by Andrea D. Beveroth, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL.  
Photos by Larry Gregory

### MATERIALS

- Ebony or No. 2 school pencil
- Drawing board
- 11 x 14 in. 30lb. newsprint
- Masking tape
- Mirror (hand held, magnification, wall or door)
- 11 x 14 Un-inked white scratchboard or pre-inked scratchboard (15 point or thicker works best)
- Waterproof India ink
- No. 9 watercolor brush
- Straight and curved scratch knives, long needles, and push pins
- Pen holder
- Paper towels

### STEP 1

Bring in a mirror from home. Consider its characteristics—size, proportions, shape. Before working on your scratchboard drawing, you'll do some preparatory drawings. Do one or two 15-minute *blind contour* drawings by imagining your pencil







Scratchboard drawings by: Tony Damhoff; Adam K. Jevne; Paul S. Meiste; Katie Bunt; Tyler L. Britt; Shana L. Dephuis.

is actually touching the edge of your face. Move your eyes slowly along a contour, moving your pencil at the same time. Look down once in a while to avoid overlapping lines. Select the best drawing. Spend 40 more minutes indicating form/mass/volume by showing areas of highlights and shadows. On a separate piece of paper, practice drawing textures. You can use **thin/thick** lines that are **parallel** and either **close together/far apart**; **straight/curved**; **continuous/broken**; **scribbles/crosshatching**.

## STEP 2

For your final scratchboard drawing, develop an interesting composition. Will your face fill **the whole page** or just a **part**? Will you show yourself **full-face** or in **profile**? Will your self-portrait make **eye contact** with the viewer or look out of the picture frame? Consider **point of view**—

high, low, eye level. You might wish to include a hand and/or the mirror. Having a hand pull hair, rest on the chin, or having an exaggerated expression will add to the drawing's expressive quality. Your composition should be balanced and have a dominant **focal point/center of interest**.

## STEP 3

If you are using un-inked scratchboard, paint it with an even coat of ink. View board at an angle to locate streaks and overpaint. Avoid applying ink too heavily. Before drawing, practice crosshatching on a piece of scratchboard. Try working with different tools—straight/curved knives, needles to experience different line qualities. You can correct errors by overpainting. However, too much paint will result in a spotty drawing surface.

This scratchboard drawing should be original, not a copy of your contour drawing. When done, you may wish to add the kind of signature used by Dürer. Try combining two or three initials in various ways, using many typefaces. Place the final monogram on your self-portrait.

## SOME SOLUTIONS

Which artists used the shape of the mirror to **frame** their self-portrait? Which self-portraits are made up mainly of **lines**; which of **shapes**; which are a combination? Has the subject's hand been incorporated into any of these compositions? Which works emphasize **highlights and shadows**; in which is the face relatively **flat**? Do any of these faces tend to **blend into the background**? Do any contrast with the background by **standing out** against it? Which of these compositions is **asymmetrical**? Are any **symmetrical**? Did anyone use **negative/positive space**? Which line techniques did each artist use—**parallel lines**, **crosshatching**, **scribbles**, **curves**, **dashes**, **stippling**? Which, if any, of the monograms do you like best and why?





# Focusing on Portraits

Throughout history, artists have done their best portraits by looking in the mirror.

**A**lbrecht Dürer did some of the most important self-portraits in the history of art. To accomplish this, he used a number of artistic techniques and mediums.

Many later artists, like the three included in this issue, also portrayed their own features. As one of them—Käthe Kollwitz—said, “I am my own best model.”

On the right are details from some of the portraits you’ve seen. Below, you’ll see a list of concepts, terms, techniques, and artists’ names. Next to each word or phrase, write the letter of the visual that best applies (each visual relates to a minimum of three of the words or phrases).



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Dense parallel lines  | <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Stippling          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Profile               | <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Self-portraits     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Eye contact           | <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Oil painting       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Albrecht Dürer        | <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Three-quarter view |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Slashing brushstrokes | <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Linear             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Engraving             | <input type="checkbox"/> 15. W. H. Johnson      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Spotlighting          | <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Lithograph         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Norman Rockwell       | <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Distorted shapes   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Full face             | <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Käthe Kollwitz     |