

Self-Portrait – A Journey into the Self

By: Ruth Dorot

Dr. Ruth Dorot, a lecturer in art history at the Department of Architecture in Ariel University and is involved in various enrichment programs for the general public. She has served as curator of exhibitions and sits on the editorial board of professional journals. Dr. Dorot is a member of the Ministry of Culture's "Museums' Council" as well as of the Committee for the Evaluation of Museums. She is the author of numerous articles in her field and of several books among which are: *The Art of Time*, *The Art of Place*; *Symbolic Allusions*, *Temporal Illusions*; *The Hand in Art*.

Abstract

The self-portrait as a representation of the artist in drawing, painting or sculpture began in the mid-15th century with Jan van Eyck's *Man with Turban* (1433), which is thought to be the first of the self-portraits. Artists who turned the self-portrait into a "way of life" include Albrecht Dürer, Rembrandt van Rijn, Pablo Picasso and Vincent van Gogh who all appear on the canvas on the easel in Norman Rockwell's *Triple Self-Portrait* on which this article is based.

Alongside the documentary foundation in a story, the author controls the presentation of the biography, omitting matters, enhancing them or detracting from them as he or she sees fit. Like the author, the artist will also add or subtract to create the "right" look. This option contributes to the interest and freedom in exploring the "self" in order to reach the absolute truth. Focusing on the self-portrait enables an artist to know himself, his worldview and how he views life. The process also constitutes acceptance or the healing of tears and cracks in the human spirit. In the self-portrait the artist engages in introspection and delves into the deepest corners in order to bring it out into the open in a rather Socratic manner of asking "Who am I"? This inward penetration enables the artist to reconcile with himself, understand and have empathy for others. It puts the artist in touch with his deepest desires, dreams or image in his own eyes in and the eyes of his viewers.

Dealing with art has a curative value that contributes to mental wellbeing and the exploration of the self. The self-portrait simultaneously presents a mirror reflection and an emerging image. It thus constitutes a form of sublimation of deeply concealed emotions that might be damaging, were they to remain concealed. In the self-portraits, the artist peels back the layers and straightens out the folds of the soul that mask the 'false self", the hidden turmoil, the pain and suffering of the "authentic self" exposing and shaping the sadness so that it can reconcile with reality, as well.

Keywords: Exploring the ego, Introspection, Self-portrait, Mask, Image, Therapeutic, Self-awareness.

Corresponding author: Ruth Dorot n450124@netvision.net.il