

THE INSIDER

Expert Insights . Ideas to Try . What to Buy

PHOTOGRAPHERS ALISON GOOTEE/STUDIO D, GREENE: GALLERY HENOCH; ANDERSON-STALEY: CATHERINE EDELMAN GALLERY, CHICAGO. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES



buzz Here's Looking at You

Let's face facts: With a photo studio inside every smartphone, snapping a selfie and scrutinizing the results has become a national pastime.

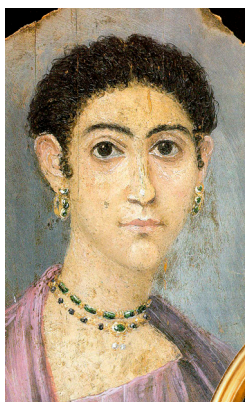
Because of that ubiquity—or in spite of it—portraiture is back in a big way. More creative and edgy than what your mother hung on her walls, today's portraits cater to a generation able to view themselves over and over, and one that wants a new way of seeing. How visionary is that? >>

Clockwise from top left: *Sophie-Spring St.* Daniel E. Greene. Oil on linen. galleryhenoch.com. *Gloria, Do Tell.* Rory Gevis. Oil on canvas. rorygevis.com. *George, 2011.* Keliy Anderson-Staley. Tintype. edelmangallery.com. *Goodness.* Brenda Bogart. Collage. blueprint-gallery.com. Frames, Brentano's. Graffiti wallpaper in Teal/Pearl, Kelly Wearstler for Groundworks through Lee Jofa.



Ahead of Their Time

A backward glance at some of art's most provocative, groundbreaking portraits.



100-120 A.D.

MUMMY PORTRAIT
UNKNOWN

Like many citizens in Roman-held Egypt, this woman's mummy included a lifelike, wood-panel portrait that was affixed to her shroud.

1524



SELF-PORTRAIT IN A CONVEX MIRROR
PARMIGIANINO

Long before Beauty-Cam selfies, this was a witty reflection on how we show a distorted version of ourselves to the world, and how presentation can become performance.



1940

SELF-PORTRAIT WITH THORN NECKLACE AND HUMMINGBIRD
FRIDA KAHLO

Kahlo explored issues of identity and ethnicity by revisiting her own likeness again and again—she did 55 self-portraits in all—and depicting herself in symbolism-rich, surreal backdrops.

1965



© THE RICHARD AVEDON FOUNDATION

HARPER'S BAZAAR COVER, RICHARD AVEDON

Capturing far more than what was in front of the lens, Avedon's intimate studio portraits—like this magazine cover of Jean Shrimpton—revolutionized fashion and art photography.

1434

THE ARNOLFINI PORTRAIT
JAN VAN EYCK

Although the symbols and subjects of this Flemish work are still debated, Van Eyck's eye for perspective and true-to-life details aren't in dispute.



1884

MADAME X
JOHN SINGER SARGENT

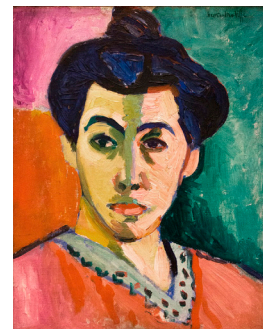
This then-scandalous image of a sultry, fame-seeking beauty outraged critics, derailed Sargent's career, and presaged our celeb-obsessed culture.



1905

THE GREEN STRIPE
HENRI MATISSE

Matisse's flat composition and radical use of color transformed his wife Amélie's face into an abstract mask—and turned realistic portraiture on its head.



2018

BARACK OBAMA, KEHINDE WILEY
MICHELLE LAVAUGHN ROBINSON OBAMA, AMY SHERALD

Unlike the starchy renderings of past commanders-in-chief, these nontraditional portrayals of the 44th president and the first lady reflect the couple's singular place in American history.



FOR PHOTO CREDITS, SEE RESOURCES

Head in This Direction

Adding a portrait makes a room come alive with personality—yours, a relative's, or the handsome stranger's you snagged at the antiques shop.



1. CREATE YOUR OWN FAMILY
For a cheeky take on the ancestor portrait galleries in venerable English manors, chef Alex Hitz lined the library of his Los Angeles home with bookcases—then hung a likeness of his late friend, socialite Nan Kempner. Says Hitz of the room, which also includes stately paintings of 19th-century Italian officers: “It’s ridiculous but fun.”

2. PLAY WITH PROPORTION
When Jeffrey Bilhuber reinvigorated a fifth-generation New Jersey farmhouse with gutsy hues and equally bold modern art, he also integrated the client’s traditional boyhood portrait into the mix. His strategy for contemporizing

the heirloom: Place it above a mammoth ceramic floor urn and between robin’s-egg-blue curtains, so the art’s color and size—and not its subject matter—become the focus of attention.

3. CLUSTER A COLLECTION
In the corner of a dining room in a 1700s Virginia home, designer Janie Molster gave her client’s inherited art a fresh twist by ignoring historical precedent. “Three centuries ago, a single portrait of the family patriarch would have dominated this room,” Molster says. “So we did a cluster of women instead. The grouping isn’t symmetrical, but it’s balanced, and all the female faces give it cohesion.”

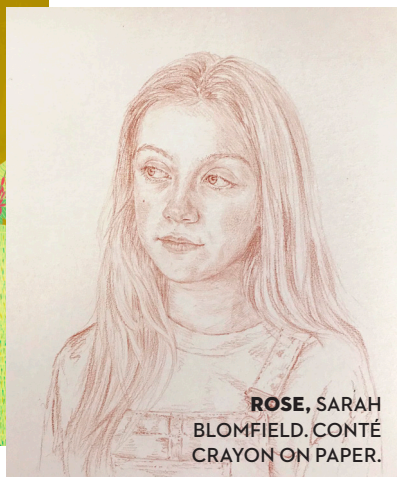


PHOTOGRAPHERS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LISAROMERIN; THOMAS LOOF; LUKE WHITE

CHARLIE, VINCENT J. MUSI.
PHOTOGRAPH.



ALICE, LUCY
FRADKIN.
ACRYLIC
GOUACHE
ON PAPER
WITH PENCIL
AND METALLIC
THREAD.



ROSE, SARAH
BLOMFIELD. CONTÉ
CRAYON ON PAPER.

Self-Preservation

What you should know before commissioning a portrait of yourself or a loved one.

**MINIATURE
OF GEORDIE,
FLORENCE
HOUSTON. OIL
ON CANVAS.**



OSCAR REYNOLDS,
DOUG MEYER.
MIXED MEDIA OF
STONES, WOOD,
PLASTER, RESIN,
AND PLEXIGLAS.



EVENING TWILIGHT, CHRISTINA
BURCH. ACRYLIC ON CANVAS.

WHERE TO FIND AN ARTIST

A portrait that captures elusive qualities requires a thoughtful artist, like those whose works are shown here. All accept commissions, either directly or through their galleries. You can find artists through a local gallery or on the site of Portraits, Inc., which works with portrait artists and handles the commission details. Once you've chosen a portraitist, communicate—about the mood, pose, setting—before the work starts, and understand the artist's aesthetic. Says Lucy Fradkin (top): "I'm not doing a likeness per se, which is why every person has the same non-smiling expression. Rather, I'm representing something essential about that person."

THE PROCESS

Many artists travel to you for a sitting: You hold a pose as they work. But Sarah Blomfield, who does Conté crayon and pencil drawings of children (top right), works from photos snapped at your home. "Have you tried asking a child to sit still for three hours?" she says. Some artists send you updates as they work; others won't do a reveal until they're finished, which could be weeks or months later.

WHAT IT COSTS

Fees vary, depending on the size of the work and the medium; drawings usually cost less than paintings. At Portraits, Inc., pastels start at \$2,000 and oil portraits go for \$3,500 and up.

PHOTOGRAPHERS: FRADKIN, CIBELE VIEIRA; BURCH: VOLTZ CLARKE GALLERY. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES