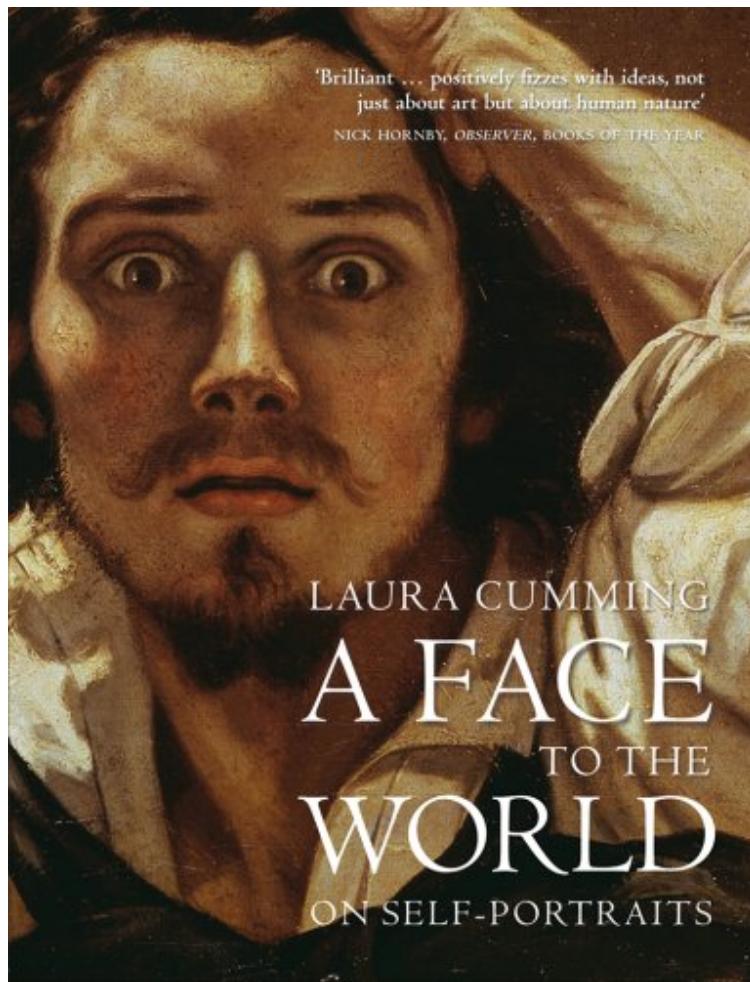


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## A Face to the World: On Self-Portraits

*Laura Cumming*  
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**Laura Cumming : A Face to the World: On Self-Portraits** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Face to the World: On Self-Portraits:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A treasure of knowledgeBy ElaThis book is a treasure of knowledge about art and artists. Laura Cumming writes well and enthusiastically about a subject she loves. Every chapter reveals new angles even of familiar paintings. I recommend reading this book with Kindle on the Ipad, since then you can enlarge the paintings and go for a search on the Internet of those self-portraits that are not shown. A pleasure.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This is a wonderful book. It is well written and very informativeBy jkThis is a wonderful book. It is well written and very informative, providing an interesting perspective on the subject. There are many illustrations, often large and in color. A number of reviewers have commented that some of the paintings the author discusses are not in the text. This is in fact true but I was able to find all of them on the internet without any difficulty1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great reading and very informativeBy P. BarrettShe's not only a good writer, she has a wonderful eye for the art. As she described the art works, I kept looking back and forth

from her description to the photos to look for all the details I missed. I learned so much. I had no idea all these artists were putting themselves in their works, often without even identifying themselves.

Focusing on the art of self-portraiture, this effortlessly engaging exploration of the lives of artists sheds fascinating light on some of the most extraordinary portraits in art history. Self-portraits catch your eye. They seem to do it deliberately. Walk into any art gallery and they draw attention to themselves. Come across them in the world's museums and you get a strange shock of recognition, rather like glimpsing your own reflection. For in picturing themselves artists reveal something far deeper than their own physical looks: the truth about how they hope to be viewed by the world, and how they wish to see themselves. In this beautifully written and lavishly illustrated book, Laura Cumming, art critic of the *Observer*, investigates the drama of the self-portrait, from Durer, Rembrandt and Velazquez to Munch, Picasso, Warhol and the present day. She considers how and why self-portraits look as they do and what they reveal about the artist's innermost sense of self; as well as the curious ways in which they may imitate our behaviour in real life. Drawing on art, literature, history, philosophy and biography to examine the creative process in an entirely fresh way, Cumming offers a riveting insight into the intimate truths and elaborate fictions of self-portraiture and the lives of those who practise it. A work of remarkable depth, scope and power, this is a book for anyone who has ever wondered about the strange dichotomy between the innermost self and the self we choose to present for posterity; our face to the world.

'Intelligent, humorous, swinging freely between erudition and colloquialism. I immediately found myself at home in this book, feeling as though I'd been reading and thinking about this subject all my life.' Jonathan Coe 'Positively fizzes with ideas; just about every single paragraph contains a fresh observation' Nick Hornby, *Observer*, Books of the Year 'A literary as well as an artistic triumph' David Cox, *Evening Standard*, Books of the Year 'Laura Cumming combines great clarity of style with a wide range of taste. All aspiring critics of any art form should take a look at how much she can say in a short space.' Clive James 'A beautiful and intriguing book! though Cumming's book is stacked with visual masterpieces, it is her writing that most claims admiration. She notices every detail in a painting, the way a carpet folds, the varying textures in a dog's fur, and registers them with a poet's precision! she relies on keen observation, linguistic power and lots of knowledge. It adds up to the most enjoyable art book I have read for years' John Carey, *Sunday Times* 'Books that combine scholarship, insight, knowledge and a beguiling prose style are as rare as hen's teeth. But this book is one of them. Cumming writes like a dream, making sharp, revealing observations about artists and their work! I have read nothing better on art this year' Frank Whitford, *Sunday Times Books of the Year* 'A vivid, insightful, superbly illustrated study! the most enthralling thing about "A Face to the World" is that Cumming writes about paintings as if they are alive' Jackie Wullschlager, *Financial Times* 'Thought-provoking! excellent! authoritative! the most informative and entertaining art book you are likely to read this year' TLS 'Excellent! Cumming is firmly on the side of the expressive as opposed to the scholarly: she herself is an intense and passionate writer! in an important sense she is showing the way towards a new, civilian discourse of art. This way passes confidently and purposefully through the lives of the artists themselves, and hence liberates the language of art from its unease, its fusty atmosphere of suppression.' Rachel Cusk, *Observer* 'Well informed, extremely well written, and laced with a broad knowledge of the history of art and the lives of artists! Cumming's book is informed by looking at paintings, rather than reading about them, and by a strongly literary attitude towards her subject. Enjoyable to read and elegantly written' Charles Saumarez Smith, TLS 'Original and thought-provoking' *Evening Standard* 'Her intelligence and humanity is used less to impress us with theories than persuade us, with sumptuous superlatives, how great her subjects are. I closed this delightful book inspired by genuine insights into how some mostly long gone but very brilliant talents "chose, as we all must choose, to present themselves"! Cumming has achieved her own modest telescoping of time' *Daily Telegraph* 'Marvellous! that the narrative of this book is consistently coherent despite its episodic character is due to its resemblance to an unusually perceptive self-portrait! it is an entirely engaging and convincing portrait, vivid and human! Cumming reanimates self-portraiture so that! these pictures "act upon you with the full force of vitality"' *Sunday Telegraph* 'Irresistibly engaging! her writing is precise, personable, perspicacious! unforgettable vivid! delightfully fresh! compelling! The book swarms with startling characters and remarkable incident: it is art history made as vivid and vivacious as a giant canvas executed by a master! gorgeous' Simon Callow, *Guardian* 'positively fizzes with ideas; just about every single paragraph contains a fresh observation' Nick Hornby, *Observer*, Books of the Year 'a literary as well as an artistic triumph' David Cox, *Evening Standard*, Books of the Year 'Richly thoughtful, perceptive and well written, it's that rare item: an art book where the text is so enthralling that the pictures, however necessary, almost seem like an interruption' Julian Barnes, *The Guardian*, Books of the Year 'a clever collection of thoughts on what artistic self-representation has meant down the years' *Daily Telegraph*, Books of the Year 'This intelligent, insightful book discusses self-portraiture's formal games and celebrated images across six centuries' *Financial Times*, Books of the Year 'the perfect Christmas present for anyone with an interest in art history! an intensely readable book' Jonathan Coe, *New Statesman*, Books of the Year 'a lively, thoughtful and extremely interesting book on the autobiographical art of the self-portrait' Hermione Lee, TLS, Books

of the Year Books of the Year, Independent Selected 10 times as through Books of the YearAbout the AuthorLaura Cumming is art critic for the Observer. Previously, she was Arts Editor for the New Statesman and Arts Producer for the BBC.