



Self-Portraits by Women Painters

Kathleen Russo

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In this volume, the authors trace the development of women's representation of themselves as artists from antiquity to the present day. Identity and beauty are two of the most difficult and unstable concepts in art history and this account articulates many of the issues related to the portrayal of women's bodies. Arranged chronologically by chapter, each period is described by a specialist author. Beginning with recorded accounts of the work of artists such as Marcia Timarete and Eirene, the authors take their examination through to the present day and the work of Louise Bourgeois, Howardena Pindell and Paula Rego. Self-portraits can disclose fascinating details about the painters' lives, their studios, their education, their ability to travel, and their relationship to past artistic accomplishments. The setting, the posture, the activity of the sitter can all express confidence, or the lack of it, in the artist's own professional status. They are also interventions in contemporary debate on the representation of women and notions of beauty. In the 20th century in particular, the self-portrait becomes a strategic site in which women artists challenge notions of womanhood and beauty.

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