

PRESS RELEASE

‘SELF & PORTRAIT’ – NEW CLOSE UP IN THE COLLECTION OF CONTEMPORARY ART

DIGITAL APPLICATION IN THE MUSEUM AND AT HOME // GUIDED TOURS

Frankfurt am Main, 8 August 2023 Artists have been preoccupied with the human image since antiquity: under the title ‘Self & Portrait’, the new CLOSE UP is dedicated to an examination of the perception of the self in art. Four works by Maria Lassnig (1919–2014), Francis Bacon (1909–1992), Jonathan Meese (b. 1970), and Gabriele Stötzer (b. 1953) from the collection of the Städel Museum show how artistically diverse the preoccupation with the self can be. With sensitivity, playfulness, and abstraction, they explore the question of who or what the self actually is. Between an inside and outside view, artistic skills, external features, and the underlying self-image become visible to the viewer in the (self-) portrait. The works of art on display focus on the exploration of the self, the analysis of social role models, and the sounding out of the artistic representability of the self. The artists selected represent different positions in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

CLOSE UP is exactly that – a closer take on a core theme in the Städel’s collection of contemporary art, as an on-site art and mediation space and as a digital application. In the museum, CLOSE UP offers greater access and opportunities for in-depth research with a concentrated selection of works and relies on the interplay of original works of art, wall texts, and a [digital application](#). Through various research possibilities, visitors can engage intensively and interactively with the theme of ‘Self & Portrait’ and thereby develop their visual skills and information literacy.

“Me, Myself, and I” – in the new presentation of CLOSE UP, we focus on the artistic exploration of the self. Who am I? What do I want? How do I present myself to others? Presenting oneself in the right light is ubiquitous through social media, yet it is not a phenomenon that only emerged in the twenty-first century, not even in art. The works of the selected artists impressively show how artistically diverse the preoccupation with one’s own self-image can be. With the digital application and further possibilities for in-depth research, visitors can use CLOSE UP to independently explore broader contexts and discover interesting facts,’ explain the

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two project managers Anne Dribbisch (Education and Mediation) and Maja Lisewski (Collection of Contemporary Art).

The Digital Application

The digital application of CLOSE UP can be used not only in the Städel Museum on tablets and on one's own device but can also be conveniently accessed from home. Visitors can immerse themselves in the theme of 'Self & Portrait', without any time or spatial restrictions.

A special feature is the individually selectable entry into the application via activating and varied questions. These lead to four different modules that can be freely explored, drawing attention to details in the works of art and providing valuable background information. In addition to gamification elements, two of the artists themselves talk about their works in videos. The aim of the digital application is to encourage independent exploration of the respective theme.

The digital applications for the previous CLOSE UP themes – 'Painting & Photography' and 'Art & Politics' – are also available online.

About the Works

The portrait is one of the oldest genres in art and is strongly influenced by the general conception of man at the time of its creation. In the self-portrait, on the other hand, the work and the artist are inextricably linked. The four selected artists deal with the theme of the self-image in their work in very different ways. In *Selbstporträt mit Affen (Geliebte Vorväter)* (Self-Portrait with Monkeys [Beloved Forefathers]) from 2001, **Maria Lassnig** portrays herself with an animal as a companion who becomes her external point of reference. What is intrinsic, what is foreign? She paints what she feels in and with her body, sometimes in an abstract manner. For centuries, self-portraits have expressed the respective artist's identity and his or her relationship to the world. Characteristics and feelings are reflected, as well as social, cultural, and historical contexts.

In *Three Studies for a Self-Portrait* (1979) by **Francis Bacon**, the various facets of the self are visualised for the viewer in the form of a triptych. The distorted contours, twisted nose, and smeared mouth give Bacon's face a powerful dynamic. In photography, one would speak of blurring – in Bacon's painting, it results in the deformation of facial features. In this way, the artist emphasises the transience and inconsistency of human existence.

In his paintings, as well as in interviews and performances, **Jonathan Meese** consistently presents himself as a quasi-fictional persona, wearing a black Adidas training jacket, black trousers, long hair, and a beard. Through this alter ego, he focuses not on himself but on art, provocatively drawing attention to social and political issues. Throughout his work as an artist – as in his self-portrait *DER*

ANTINOSTALGISCHE KNÜPPEL AUSM SACK Die DIKTATUR der Kunst tickt of art is ticking, 2008 – Meese repeatedly uses the power of symbols, both political and pop-cultural. In his self-portraits, he takes on various roles, including warriors, devils, and mythological figures. The aim is to defuse symbols and myths by playfully undermining them.

In *Schwingungskurve (Performance Birgit Bronnert)*, 1982, **Gabriele Stötzer** guides the viewer through the course of a performance in eight individual photographs. Each image shows a specific moment within a movement. It is not the artist herself who is seen here; Gabriele Stötzer stages Birgit Bronnert's movements and captures them on camera. In doing so, she combines elements of photography, painting, and performance. In her work, Stötzer consistently uses her own body as well as the bodies of other women to vividly process the reality of life and the experience of being a woman in the former GDR and beyond.

Programme in CLOSE UP

In CLOSE UP, a special programme of guided tours is offered on a regular basis.

All information on the programme is also available at <https://www.staedelmuseum.de/en/digital/close-up>.

Thursday, 21 September, 7:00 pm

Städel Dialogue: Self-Portraits – The View of the Self

Self-portraits are as varied as they are complex. Throughout the twentieth century, artists found new ways to explore the self artistically. In this guided tour, two art educators discuss the many ways in which self-portraiture and staging have been used in art.

16 EUR (incl. admission)

Tickets available in the online shop at shop.staedelmuseum.de/en

Meeting point in the Garden Halls in the CLOSE UP art and education space

Thursday, 28 September, 6:30 pm

Me, Myself, and I

The guided tour with the project manager, Anne Dribbisch, explores the artistic examination of the representability of the self and all its facets.

Participation is included in the admission price.

Tickets available in the online shop at shop.staedelmuseum.de/en

Meeting point in the Garden Halls in the CLOSE UP art and education space

Guided tours for school classes

Experience CLOSE UP in your own group: we are happy to adapt the guided tours to suit your lessons.

Registration by e-mail to info@staedelmuseum.de

The Städel Museum's Collection of Contemporary Art

Starting from the central space of the approximately 3,000 m² Garden Halls, a history of art since 1945 unfolds, beginning with major works of younger and more recent contemporary art. Some 230 works by 170 artists from various schools, styles, and groups allow for surprising comparisons, perspectives, and visual axes between the present and its roots in past decades. With a wide variety of narrative strands, the presentation provides access to art after 1945, making it possible to experience the collection thematically rather than chronologically. In CLOSE UP, references are repeatedly made to the works from the Garden Halls and placed within the larger context of the collection.

NEW CLOSE UP ON THE THEME OF 'SELF & PORTRAIT' IN THE COLLECTION OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Project management and concept: Anne Dribbisch (Städel Museum, Research Assistant, Education and Mediation) and Maja Lisewski (Städel Museum, Curatorial Assistant, Contemporary Art)

Digital support: Alexandra Reißer (Städel Museum, Project Manager, Digital Culture)

URL of the digital application: <https://closeup.staedelmuseum.de/selbstundportraet/en/>

Technical conception, design, and implementation: Zum Kuckuck GmbH & Co. KG

Interior design and implementation: buero.us and very, Frankfurt am Main

Visitor Services: +49(0)69-605098-200, info@staedelmuseum.de

Opening hours: Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun + public holidays 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, Thu 10:00 am – 9:00 pm

Tickets: Tickets available online at shop.staedelmuseum.de/en. Regular ticket prices: Tue-Fri, Sat, Sun + public holidays 18 EUR, concessions 16 EUR; free admission for children under 12. Groups of 10 or more regular paying persons: 16 EUR per person. Registration is generally required for all groups: phone +49(0)69-605098-200 or info@staedelmuseum.de.

Location: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

Information: www.staedelmuseum.de

@staedelmuseum on social media: #staedel on Instagram / YouTube / TikTok / Facebook / LinkedIn / Twitter / STÄDEL STORIES: Even more stories and background information on the collection and special exhibitions to read, see, and gear available at blog.staedelmuseum.de