Portraiture

Discuss…

What do you think portraiture is?
Where did it begin?
Who started it?
What is it for?
Why is portraiture created?

What is a portrait?

A painting, drawing, photograph, or engraving of a person, especially one depicting only the face or head and shoulders.

We can find portraits in most homes, museums and art galleries. They can be paintings, drawings, sculptures, engravings or photographs. They are used to show someone's changing identify – I bet if you looked at a photograph of yourself from 3 years ago, you won't look the same now.



A brief history of portraiture

Where it all started

Portraits have been around since the beginning of time. They are used to describe and show physical features (how someone looks) and to show their power or status. Portraits have been around as early as Ancient Egyptian times. They created wall painting of gods and pharaohs.



The Ancient Greeks also liked portraiture. They used sculpture instead of painting to show their gods and important people.



Did you know:
The Greeks and the Romans were the ones who started using figure heads on coins.

The Roman followed suit: they borrowed images from the Ancient Egyptians and Greeks.



During the Middles Ages portraiture was not often used. They would only create pieces of art known as donor portraits. These portraits were of a whole person, and would only be painted if the person being painted had paid for it.





Portraiture as we know it today, was introduced during the Renaissance. The Renaissance period marks the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern world.

During this time portraiture was of royals, nobles and religious figures. The artists would often include hints to the personality of the person being painted. They might include a globe is the person is well travelled, or expensive clothing or jewellery is they were wealthy.



From the Renaissance period, portraiture grew and grew. In the 19th and 20th century many new art movements were introduced:

Realism



Impressionism

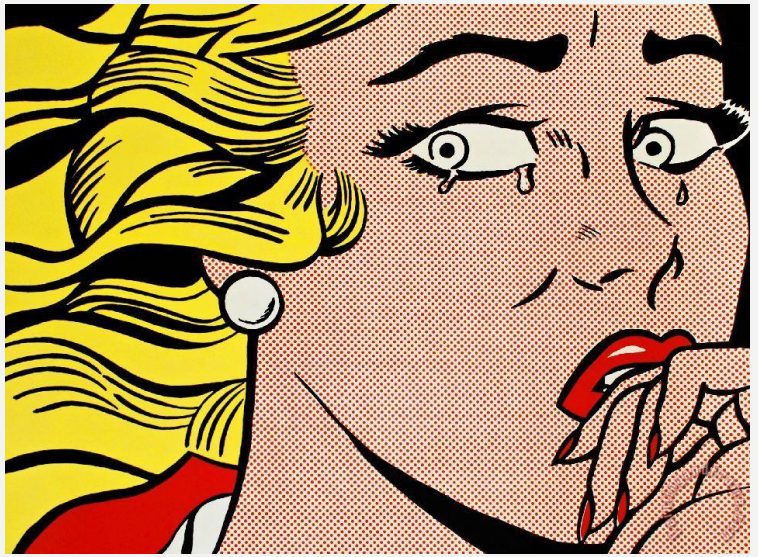


Cubism



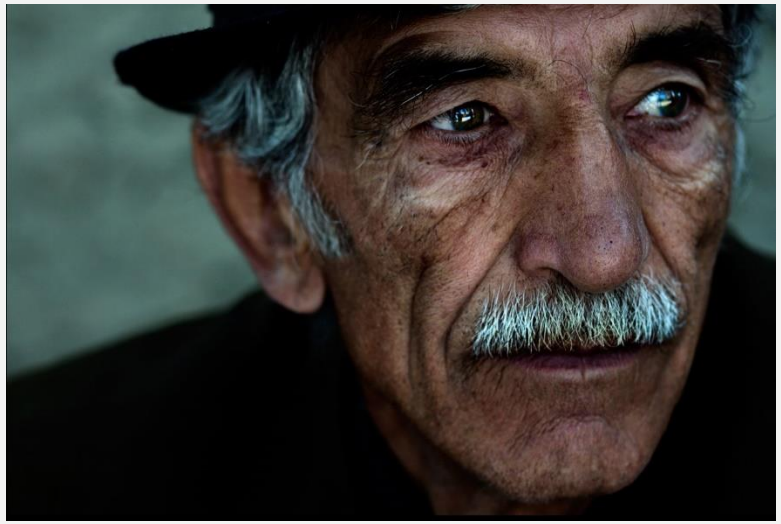
During the mid 20th century pop art developed, shining a whole new light on portraiture.







Portraiture in the 21st century (right now) is mostly dominated by photography.



Famous portraits

Do you know any already?
What are they called?
Do you recognise any of them?
Who painted or created them?



Mona Lisa
By Leonardo da Vinci
1503 - 1517



Queen Elizabeth 1
By George Gower
1588



Girl with the Pearl Earing
By Johannes Vermeer
Oil painting
1665



Blue Boy
By Thomas Gainsborough
Oil painting
1770



Marilyn
By Andy Warhol
1964