Here’s Looking at You Kid
Portraits in the visual arts/discussions on how we see ourselves

Purpose: In this seminar we will look at a variety of portraits and self-portraits by well-known late 20th century artists. We will examine and discuss how visual artists have met the challenge of how to represent ourselves and others.

Description: This past year we have been immersed in watching faces. Our social lives have been dominated by images of heads fitted neatly into Zoom boxes. We create our own self-portraits, curating an image of how we want to present ourselves, perhaps adjusting lighting or background. In our Zoom meetings we are presented with a gallery of heads that we focus on for hours at a time. We are free to look at each other in a way that we don’t do in person -- more intently, like looking at portraits in a gallery. The fascination with how we represent ourselves and how we want to be seen is an age-old one. Visual artists such as Andy Warhol, Annie Leibowitz and Lucien Freud have been creating images of individuals that attempt to show not just the physical appearance of a person but also to reveal something of their character or personality.

Role of participants: Seminar members will select a portrait from the list we provide, give a brief background on the artist and lead a discussion with everyone, looking closely at the person represented, and talk about why the artist may have chosen to represent them in this way. For a final project, each participant will create a self-portrait in any media.

Resources: Information about specific artists and portraits can be found online.

About the Moderators: Ellen Kosmer is an art historian and an artist. Betsy Siersma is a museum curator.