The Artist’s Studio: Paired Portraits

A portrait is an artwork that tells a person’s story. Portraits can show what someone looks like, but they can also highlight special characteristics about a person, anything from what they’ve accomplished to aspects of their personalities and beliefs.

What can we tell about artist Beauford Delaney from these two portraits of him?

Materials

- Colored markers, pencils, or crayons
- Paper
- A partner

Who gives meaning to a portrait: the artist, the subject, or the viewer?

Partner up with a friend or a family member. You will each create two portraits—one of yourself and one of the other person. What special characteristics about the subject will you share? How will you show these ideas in your drawing?

When you both have finished, swap the drawings that you made of one another. You should each have a self-portrait and the drawing made of you by the other person. What stories do your portrait drawings tell? Are they same or different?

Beauford Delaney. Self-Portrait, 1944. Purchased with funds provided by Alexander C. and Tillie S. Speyer Foundation; Samuel A. Marx Endowment.


The colorful painting on the left is a self-portrait, made by Delaney himself. The charcoal drawing on the right was made by artist Georgia O’Keeffe. What is unique to each portrait? What do they have in common?