

Self-Portrait at the Easel



Picturing Me, Picturing Mary

Sofonisba Anguissola touted her virtues and talents in self-portraits by including books, musical instruments, and inscriptions. This painting-within-a-painting identifies her as an accomplished artist, equally adept at rendering portraiture and religious subjects.



Self-Portrait at the Easel, 1556

Take a closer look

Sofonisba Anguissola (ca. 1532–1625) expertly used implied and actual lines to guide viewers' eyes throughout the composition. After her gaze draws you in, follow the maulstick—used to steady her right hand—and paintbrush to her warm depiction of the Madonna and Child. This painting appears in several of Anguissola's self-portraits, suggesting such a work actually existed.

Something to talk about

The artist portrayed herself in the act of painting, a departure from typically static portraits of her day. Compare Anguissola's work to Alice Bailly's *Self-Portrait* on the third floor. How are these depictions similar? Different?

Who knew?

Anguissola and her siblings were named for relatives of the Carthaginian general Hannibal. Hannibal's granddaughter, Sophonisba, was known for her beauty, charm, and cleverness.

Sofonisba Anguissola, *Self-Portrait at the Easel*, 1556; Oil on canvas; 26 × 22³/₈ inches; Museum-Zamek, Łańcut; inv. 916MT

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