

Yale Portraits - Thesis Statement

For this reason, I say among my friends that Narcissus who was changed into a flower, according to the poets, was the inventor of painting ... What else can you call painting but a similar embracing with art of what is presented on the surface of the water in the fountain?¹

Players and painted stage took all my love
And not those things that they were emblems of ²

... one of the heresiarchs of Uqbar had declared that mirrors and copulation are abominable, because they increase the number of men.³

Although the narcissist can function in the everyday world ... his devaluation of others, together with his lack of curiosity about them impoverishes his personal life and reinforces the "subjective experience of emptiness."⁴

Solipism and nihilism are only two of the ironic themes of recent portraiture.⁵

The photograph presents a precise moment documentarily.⁶

To take pictures is simultaneously to confer value and to render banal.⁷

... whereas the snapshot stole a life it could not return, the time exposure expresses a life that it never received.⁸

The following pictures are portraits of art, architecture and drama graduate students.

SL

New Haven, 1983

Notes

1 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. John R. Spencer (London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul, 1956) p.64.

2 W.B. Yeats, "The Circus Animals' Desertion." *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1956) p. 335.

3 Jorge Luis Borges, "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertis." *Labyrinths* (New York: New Directions, 1962) p. 3.

4 Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979) p. 85.

5 Ben Lifson, introduction *Faces Photographed* exhibition catalogue Grey Gallery (New York: New York University, 1982.)

6 Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Against the Synthetic Portrait for the Snapshot, 1928" in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde* trans. and ed. John Bowlt (New York: Viking Press, 1976) p. 251.

7 Susan Sontag, introduction to Peter Hujar, *Portraits in Life and Death* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1976.)

8 Thierry DeDuve, "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox," *October* 5 (1978) p. 116.