

# See and Do Introduction.

## WELCOME TO PALM SPRINGS ART MUSEUM

### **Welcome to Palm Springs Art Museum!**

We are excited to share with you works of art and architecture from our collection and hope you enjoy creating your own pieces inspired by what you learn.

Each Art Portfolio is divided into two lessons. In the first lesson, you will be introduced to an artwork from the collection and the artist who created it. This is followed by questions where you can share your ideas about what you have learned.

In the second lesson, you will create a work of art using similar processes and supplies as the artist.

We hope you have fun exploring the museum's collection and would like to encourage you to get creative! Then come visit us at the museum where you can see these works in person and share what you learned with friends and family.

### **Land Acknowledgement.**

Every community in the United States owes its existence and vitality to people from around the world. Some were brought here against their will, some were drawn here in hope of a better life, and some have lived on this land for more generations than can be counted. Recognition of the many layers of our history is critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and differences.

Palm Springs Art Museum respectfully acknowledges the ancestral homelands of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and the other sovereign Indian Nations of Southern California. We recognize their ongoing cultural and spiritual connection to this land—past, present, and future.

**See and Do.** Lesson 8, Portraits.

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**Above:** Diane Arbus (American, 1923–1971), *Mrs. T. Charlton Henry on a couch in her Chestnut Hill home, Philadelphia, Pa.*, 1965, gelatin silver print, edition 20/75, 19 7/8 × 15 7/8 inches. Gift of Joe and Pamela Bonino, 89–2010.

# Lesson 1: Art and Identity.

What is identity and what does it have to do with art? Identity is who you are. It is made up of many things, such as your interests, family ancestry, and beliefs. Identity is also shaped by how you see yourself, how others see you, the people who surround and influence you, as well as your experiences throughout life. It grows as you grow.

Many artists use their work to express, explore, and question ideas about identity. This Art Portfolio focuses on showing identity through *portraiture*, which is the art of making *portraits*. Portraits are representations of a person's likeness and are typically a realistic close up of a person's face. You may have had your portrait taken by your school for picture day.

Early portraits were typically realistic paintings or sculptures (meaning a three-dimensional work of art) that resembled the person being depicted as close as possible. A person's clothing, posture, expression, or something they are holding can provide important clues about their identity, such as their job or interests.

However, much like photographs in magazines or on the Internet that try to make a person look their best, it is important to keep in mind that portraits do not always tell the whole story. Those seen in museums are often edited versions of the *subjects* who had the artists improve features or include objects to express certain ideas about their identity, much like what today's photo editing software can do.

While there were many reasons why portraits were commissioned (meaning someone paid to have them made), one of the most important reasons is that they were used as historical reference so that future generations

could know what people from the past looked like. More recently with the development of photography, portraits have been used to document the subject at certain moments in their lifetime. Photographs are also able to create more realistic portraits than painting or sculpture.

*Mrs. T. Charlton Henry on a couch in her Chestnut Hill home*, by Diane Arbus is an example of this kind of photographic portrait. In this dimly lit image commissioned for the magazine *Harper's Bazaar*, the sitter provides a glimpse into her life. Mrs. Henry displays her wealth and status by wearing her fine jewelry, beaded dress and styled hair in her home surrounded by luxurious décor. She gazes directly at the camera with a careful posture, yet her narrow figure appears fragile and almost overpowered by her surroundings. In many ways, the elements within the image, as well as the sitter's clothing and features document the subject as she really is, a well-dressed widow weighted down by the appearance of luxury. Arbus was one of a wave of new documentary photographers to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s. She is known for this distinctive way of capturing the often unseen realities of everyday life and for using the classic portrait tradition to create emotional response and social critique.

There are also other ways of depicting people besides what their faces look like. For example, the set of brown squares below each represent a portrait of an individual even though they do not immediately appear to represent people. Let's consider this.

When first looking at Byron Kim's artwork titled *Synecdoche*, the grid of small panel paintings looks abstract (images not based on reality). However, each beige, brown and pink panel represent a portrait of someone's skin color.

Each person would sit for fifteen to twenty minutes for the artist, who closely examined a patch of his or her skin before blending an assortment of paints to copy the exact shade.

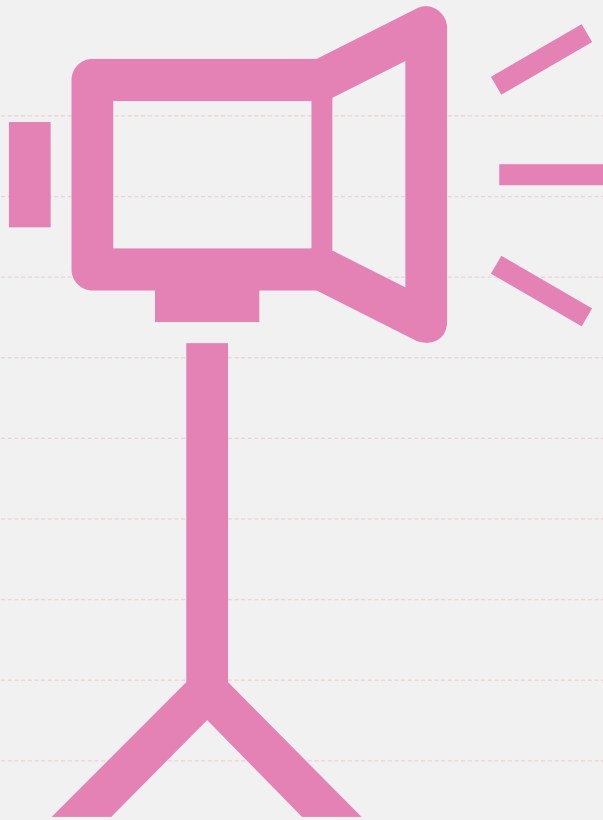
The panels are ordered alphabetically according to the person's last name, resulting in *Synecdoche* as a sort of abstracted group portrait. *Synecdoche* is an ongoing series that collectively produces a project of portraiture. The work at the Palm Springs Art Museum is just a part of this larger project. Kim is a Korean-American artist, and part of the strategy of this work is to invite us to think about what exactly skin color means. The word *Synecdoche* is a figure of speech in which a part stands in for a whole, or where the whole is represented by the part.

In terms of identity, the work points out the absurdity of reducing identity to skin color, while also celebrating that which makes up our society and community.



Above: Byron Kim, *Synecdoche*, 1991-present, oil and wax on panel, 8 x 10 inches each. Collection of Mihail Lari and Scott Murray, L2020.10.



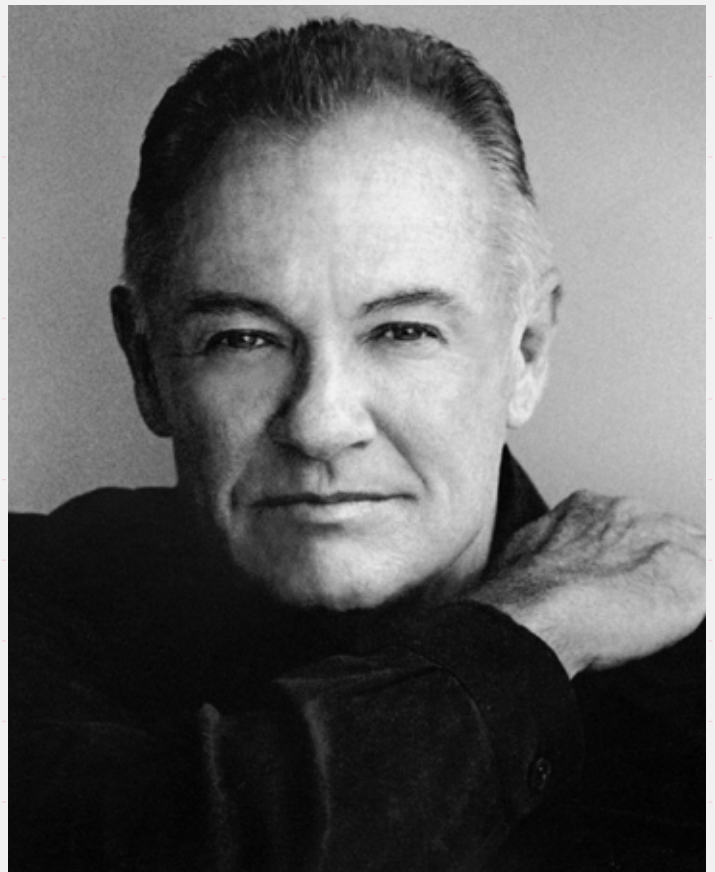


# ABOUT THE ARTIST

## Michael Childers

Since the 1960s, Michael Childers has been photographing famous people within the genre of portraiture. His long connection to the world of celebrity has given him access to many iconic film stars, artists, actors, and writers of our time—particularly those who make up the creative culture of Southern California and those with ties to Palm Springs. His subjects have included Andy Warhol and David Hockney, artists in the museum's collection, as well as E. Stewart Williams, the architect of the Palm Springs Art Museum.

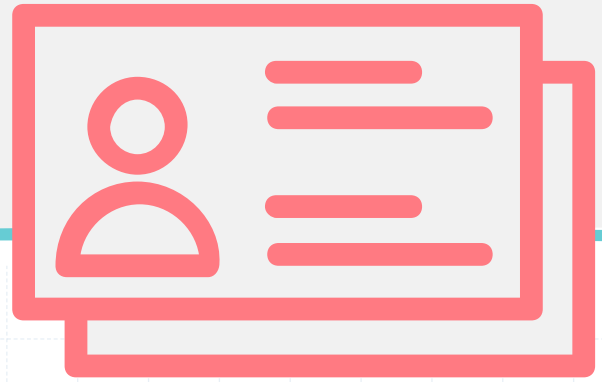
Childers' father gave him his first camera at age 14. He began to create portraits of his friends, provided photographs for his high school newspaper, and early on showed an interest in fashion and film photography. In 1962, he moved to Los Angeles and began studying at the University of California, Los Angeles, which at that time had become a major center for art and photography.



*Above:* Michael Childers. Photograph by Jay Jorgensen.

To support himself, he began photographing friends, musicians, and actors, and, over time, he met Hollywood golden era film stars, including Norma Shearer, Agnes Moorehead, and Rosalind Russell (actors who were in films from around 1929 to 1959, which was the end of the silent films time period).

## Think About Your Own Identity and Answer the Questions Below:



**1**

Define identity to show your understanding.

**2**

How would you describe your identity? Think about what qualities make you unique, and then write a few sentences or list your items. For example, do you like to play sports or music? What grade are you in?

**3**

Besides museums, where else can you find portraits?

# Glossary

**ARTIST STATEMENT** A written or spoken explanation by the artist that helps deepen our understanding about their work of art. It might include details about the artist, background information for the artwork, a description of the process, what was learned while creating it, stories, thoughts or other information.

**GENRE (IN VISUAL ART)** Refers to categories of art that have similar subject types, forms, subject matter, content, or techniques.

**IDENTITY** Describes who a person is. It is made up of many things, such as interests, family ancestry, and beliefs. Identity is also shaped by how a person sees themselves, how others see them, the people who surround and influence them, as well as experiences throughout their life. It grows as a person grows.

**PORTRAIT** The representation of a person's likeness.

**PORTRAITURE** The art of making a portrait.

**SELF-PORTRAIT** A portrait of and created by the artist.

**SUBJECT (IN VISUAL ART)** The topic, theme, and, or meaning of an artwork.

**SUBJECT MATTER** The recognizable elements in a work of art, such as people, place and things.



## Lesson 2: Create a Portrait About Your Identity.

There are a number of ways to create portraits. Usually, they show a person's face, which is drawn, painted, sculpted, or photographed. Portraits can also be made up of words, images, or objects that represent a person, such as personal items.

Draw, write, or collage a portrait to represent the identity of a friend, a family member, someone you admire, or yourself. Choose from one of the Options in the instructions, or mix and match the type of portrait with the medium (the style of art).

To finish your project, go to the Final Step and learn how to write an artist statement that explains your work.

### Supplies

- You decide!

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### Option 1: Draw

If you are interested in exploring more traditional portraits, try drawing your subject.

Think about the most important things that are unique to your subject (the person you are creating a portrait of), such as glasses, eye color, clothing, tattoos, or hair. Include them in your drawing. Depending on who you select, you may need to ask permission first.

Catherine Deneuve is a famous French actress and singer who gained recognition for her films in the 1960s and 1970s.



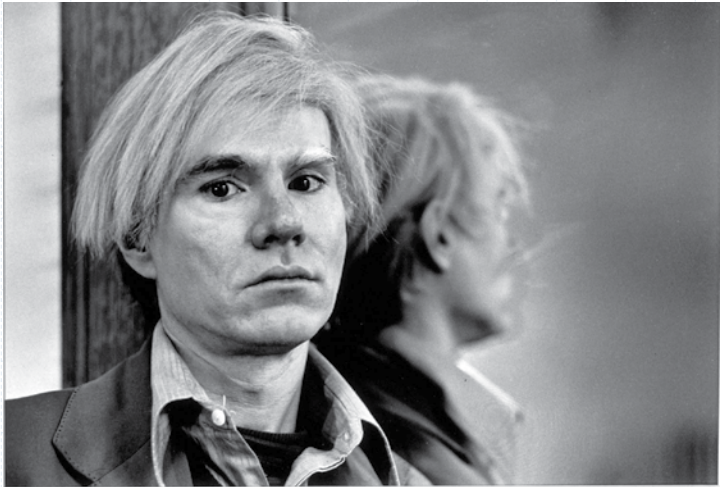
Michael Childers, American, *Catherine Deneuve*, 1981, gelatin silver print, 14 × 10 7/8 inches. Gift of Michael Childers, 2016.69.



## Option 2: Write

Think about someone you admire, maybe a superhero, a family member, or someone in your community. Are there words that come to mind when you think of them? Using words to make a portrait of their identity, write five or more words that describe them.

Andy Warhol was a friend of Michael Childers, who made many portraits of the artist that are now in the Palm Springs Art Museum collection. Warhol is famous for creating Pop Art, an art movement from the 1950s and 1960s that used images and material from popular culture. His work is also in the museum's collection, and you can learn more about him in the lesson 4 Art Portfolio titled *The Who, What, Where, When, and Why in Art Subjects*.



Michael Childers, *Andy Warhol in his New York Studio No. 2* (from the *Lost Warhols Portfolio*), 1976, gelatin silver print, 11 x 14 inches edition 16/20, portfolio edition 7/10. Gift of the artist, 3-2002.2.

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## Option 3: Collage

Are there certain images that remind you of your subject? Create a collage using old photographs, magazines, or other found items. A collage is a work of art made from pieces of material, including images such as photographs and prints, arranged to create a new image.

People are often shown in familiar places such as their homes or work spaces because these spaces show important parts of their identity. Artist Robert Graham, whose work is in the collection of Palm Springs Art Museum, is shown here in his studio along with several of his sculptures.



Michael Childers, *Robert Graham in his studio, Venice, California, 2003*, C-type print, 11 x 14 inches. Gift of the artist, 38-2004.

## Final Step: Artist Statement

- Explain your work by writing an artist statement.

An artist statement is a written or spoken explanation by the artist that helps deepen our understanding about their work of art. It might include details about the artist, background information for the artwork, a description of the process, what was learned while creating it, stories, thoughts or other information.

**In your artist statement, write a few sentences or list your answers for at least two of the following points:**

**1 Create a title of your portrait.**

For example *Portrait of My Best Friend*

**2 Describe your subject.**

For example, "This is a portrait of my best friend. They are tall with brown hair, brown eyes, and they wear glasses. They are also very funny"

**3 Explain how you chose to show your subject.**

For example, "I chose to make a collage of my subject using images from an old magazine that reminded me of them."

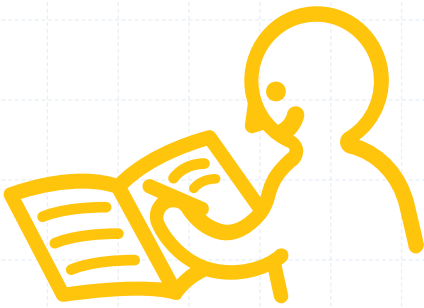
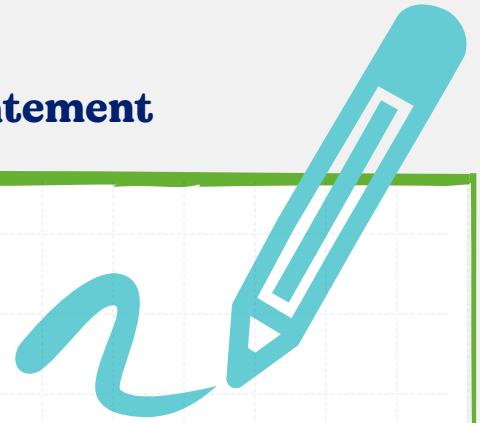
**4 Describe how your portrait reflects your subject's identity.**

For example, "The subject of my portrait is very funny, so I showed them wearing a t-shirt of their favorite funny movie."

**5 Explain where your portrait will be shown, such as at a museum, outside, or somewhere else.**

For example, "I will give my portrait to my best friend. I hope they hang it in their room so that they are reminded of me when they see it. I hope it stays there for as long as we are friends."

**Use the space below to work on your Artist Statement**



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**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER FOR CONVERSATION**

- How did you make your portrait and why did you choose to draw, write, or collage it?
- How does the portrait of your subject describe their identity?
- Do you think all portraits are accurate representations of the subject?

**See and Do.** Lesson 8, Portraits.

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**Palm Springs  
Art Museum**

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**California Arts Standards for Visual Arts**  
**(Lessons also integrate the**  
**Common Core State Standards)**

**3.VA:Cr2.1; 4.VA:Cr2.1; 5.VA:Cr2.1**

**3.VA:Cr3; 4.VA:Cr3; 5.VA:Cr3**

**3.VA:Pr5; 4.VA:Pr5; 5.VA:Pr5**

**3.VA:Cn10; 4.VA:Cn10; 5.VA:Cn10**

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