

## SELF PORTRAIT WITH

'There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all.'

– Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*

'Sometimes it seems like it is only possible to love the past if you know it is definitely never going to return.'

– Maria Stepanova, *In Memory of Memory*

'Memory is an unloyal boomerang.'

– Stephen Cramer 'The Disintegration Loops'

### *Self Portrait with Mirror*

Which one is me and which one a wrong way round reflection? Too clever an idea, it reminds me of those pictures within pictures within pictures, endless reductions and repetitions. But there I both am, regardless.

### *Self Portrait with Woolly Hat*

The doctor said it was the only thing that saved my skull from splitting as I went over the bonnet of the car. For years there was a bloodstain on the road where the accident happened. It felt like my leg was broken and I couldn't understand why the medic was more concerned about my head. I wore that hat everywhere: sailing in Norfolk, on my paper round, and to gigs; lost it one night in Covent Garden. Can't even remember which band I saw.

### *Self Portrait with Skateboard*

Quarter pipe under the flyover, concrete cushion with rollover edge and an angle to grind. Had the place to ourselves most nights, spent most nights there. Soft orange neon, summer dusks and sunsets. Sprayed graffiti and writing on the walls. A forgotten corner of London, but not as forgotten as the snake run where we first learnt to skate: not a single mention of it online.

### *Self Portrait with Gout*

The comedy disease that isn't funny. It isn't red wine or red meat, it is excruciating pain and hobbling down the stairs. Is feeling old before one should, is finding it hard to focus on something else. It is painkiller and anti-inflammatories, is not knowing why, is reading endless lists of possible causes and foods to avoid. It is another reason to ignore one's self and focus outwards. But the mirror is always there.

### *Self Portrait with Bittern*

I wouldn't recognise a bittern if I saw one, got the title from a book I am reading, which discusses Rembrandt's self portraits and notions of memory and self. How old do we think we are, even as we remember our childhood and things that happened to us, what we've done, where we've been and how we used to live? There are no dead birds in my past.

### *Self Portrait with Volvo Estate*

Rust and lichen, dents and mismatched paint. The power to eat up miles if we were allowed to travel, space for all the luggage we never take. Trips to the dump, five miles to work, the best stereo I own. And underseat heating.

### *Self Portrait with a Paintbrush*

Unrivalled connections and high quality storytelling: this is where you'll find the man you seek. A new study reveals that although we love to see and play with colours, children are more likely to dream in greyscale. Although not everything is as black and white as it seems, we cannot deny the attractiveness of monochrome. Colour is still the only game that makes me feel like a god, a simple and stylish way to keep my favourite memories on display.

### *Self Portrait with Depression*

Sleepy as hell, slow moving absence, emotions topped and tailed. The endless worry of pandemic, politics and money. How far away we live, how pointless it all seems. I write the future in water and air, can't even finish a sentence or phrase.

### *Self Portrait with Cat*

Asleep with her paws in the air, she slowly rolls against my leg then spreads if I dare to move. She wants attention and food, wants to be left alone. We share an antipathy toward the cold outside, prefer the snagged blankets and quilt.

### *Self Portrait with Absence*

Am falling through absence into disappearance. Overcome by emotion and forgotten memories, I still do not know all the places I have been and am missing from what I recall. Am just out of shot, should have been in the team photo; my name is not on

the list because I left early. I had tickets but went abroad that summer; they never played again. There is some kind of trick being played: I only have someone else's version of the past, no-one has noticed that I'm gone.

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