

The Triple self-portrait (1960) by Norman ROCKWELL (1894-1978)

The Triple self-portrait (1960) by Norman ROCKWELL (1894-1978) is to painting what autobiographies are to writers: a way of representing oneself. This famous painting deserves to be analysed because, while taking up the codes of a distant tradition, it also brings innovations in the genre.

The mirror seen in the background is a tool of the representation of oneself, a guarantee of authenticity. What we are being shown corresponds to reality. We are witnessing an abyss: the work repeats itself within itself. This is a painter painting himself.

All the necessary equipment is gathered: a large mirror, a palette, brushes, tubes of paint, a ruler to respect proportions.

Three representations of ROCKWELL are immediately apparent. The title is therefore justified. However, upon closer observation, we can find other sketches gathered on a small piece of paper, at the top left of the canvas. These are the painter's research and essays. The portrait is not simply triple, it is multiple.

Norman Rockwell represents himself from the back, in a funny attitude. His blue shirt cuts with the whiteness of the workshop which is only an empty space, as if this were the canvas on which the artist was preparing to paint. The red cushion on the stool shows that he is looking for comfort, he is leaning a little awkwardly.



The expression of his face shows that he is not quite comfortable and therefore cannot match what he wants to paint. The portrait is done before us in charcoal, before he applies his oil painting. The signature confirms that the one who paints himself is the author himself. Moreover, although it is worn on the drawn canvas, it applies to the whole picture that the public sees.

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