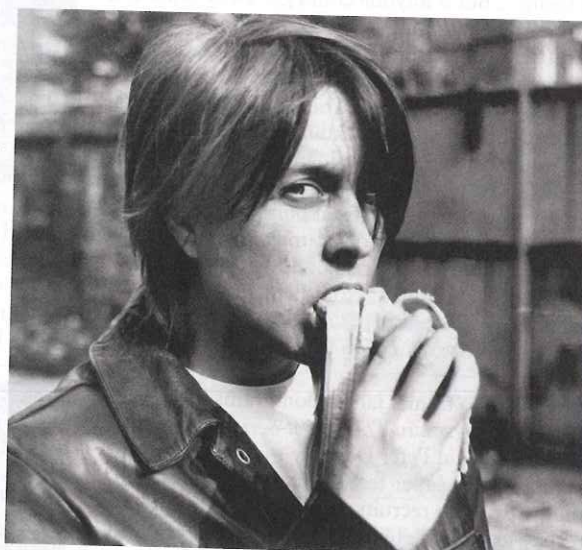


## Exhibition of the week **Self: Image & Identity**

Turner Contemporary, Margate, Kent (01843-233000, [www.turnercontemporary.org](http://www.turnercontemporary.org)). Until 10 May

This curate's egg of a show "marks the start of a victory tour", said Rachel Campbell-Johnston in *The Times*. Two years ago, the final self-portrait by the Flemish master Anthony van Dyck, principal painter to Charles I, came up for sale – and "looked set to leave our country forever". But after a dramatic race against time to find the money to save it for the nation, the National Portrait Gallery was able to acquire it. Painted in 1641, just a few months before van Dyck died, it is "a hauntingly enigmatic image" that "makes a compelling addition to our national collections". This year, the painting will be displayed in museums across the country, starting at Turner Contemporary in Margate. Here, it provides the "focal point" for an exhibition that takes in over 100 self-portraits by more than 70 artists – from Peter Lely to Frank Auerbach and Damien Hirst – made between 1554 and the present day, in a "giddy array of forms", from oil painting to photography to video. "What this show lacks in calibre of works or coherency of presentation it more than makes up for in multifaceted variety."

This is "an on-trend show for our selfie-obsessed times", said Alastair Sooke in *The Daily Telegraph*. There are certainly moments when the "cards feel randomly shuffled". What, for example, is a "sober" self-portrait by the 17th century painter



*The van Dyck (below) and Sarah Lucas (Eating A Banana), 1990*



Mary Beale – the earliest self-portrait by a woman in the National Portrait Gallery's collection – doing next to one by David Hockney, of himself in "zinging red braces"? Even so, it is an "exhibition of pleasing variety". There are some "amusingly eccentric self-portraits", such as John Constable's "early, prissy, pencil-and-chalk number" with "rouged lips and cheeks". Irrespective of the work's date, a self-portrait is nothing "without a palpable sense of temperament". You see it in the "polished poise" of van Dyck, just as you see it in Sarah Lucas's "punkish" selfies.

Self-portraits come "with a lot of baggage", said Adrian Searle in *The Guardian*. "Some artists want to disguise themselves." Gillian Wearing is dressed up as her mother; Louise Bourgeois has drawn herself as a five-legged cat. Others seem in love with their self-image. There is a lot to enjoy here; "even the bad stuff is fun". I was particularly impressed by Auerbach's "juddering" charcoal self-image, and an 1825 drawing by Francis Leggatt Chantrey which depicts the artist suffering from mumps. There is also a "brave, candid and heartbreaking" video by Ian Breakwell documenting his last days, as he battled with terminal cancer; he died before finishing it. All in all this is an "engrossing, sometimes alarming, baggy show of self-portraiture. You get all sorts here."

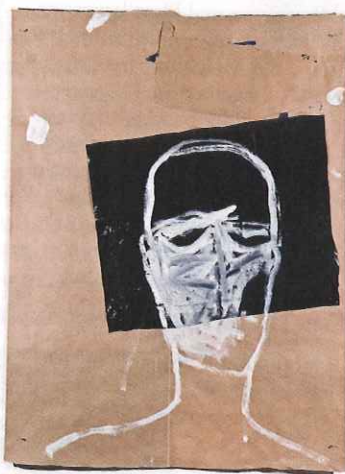
### Where to buy...

The Week reviews an exhibition in a private gallery

#### Marek Szczesny

at *l'étrangère*

It is appropriate that a gallery named in honour of the classic existentialist novel by Albert Camus should choose the Polish artist Marek Szczesny for its inaugural exhibition. Szczesny was born in 1939, and his formative years coincided with the most dramatic political and social upheavals in recent European history. In 1978, he escaped communist Poland for Paris, where he has lived and worked ever since. Given his background, it is perhaps unsurprising that Szczesny's paintings are terrifying, alienated things. They are peopled by spindly, nightmarish figures against bleak backgrounds. Make no mistake – this is not art for the faint of heart. But there is an extraordinary power to it, and a healthy sense of absurdist gallows humour. Think surrealist-period Mark



*Emigrant 3: 160 x 120cm, £4,800*

Rothko on a particularly gloomy day, or Alberto Giacometti, had he worked behind the Iron Curtain. Either way, you get the feeling Camus would have approved. Prices range from £4,800 to £14,000.

44a Charlotte Road, London EC2 (020-7729 9707). Until 13 March.

### The lost Michelangelos

Two statues of naked men riding on panthers were proclaimed this week as "probably the only surviving bronze sculptures" by Michelangelo, says *The Guardian*. A team of Cambridge academics has produced compelling evidence that the "mysterious" metre-high pieces, known as the *Rothschild Bronzes*, are by the Renaissance master. They have detailed, for instance, many similarities to other nudes by Michelangelo, while a neutron scan has revealed that they were made in the early 16th century. "Crucial to the attribution" is a tiny sketch by an apprentice of Michelangelo, showing "a muscular youth riding a panther". The *Rothschild Bronzes* are thought to have been made between 1506 and 1508. They were attributed to Michelangelo in the 19th century, when they were owned by the Rothschild family, but since then have been loosely linked to Cellini. Now owned by an unnamed British collector, they went on display at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge this week.

