

CHUCK CLOSE

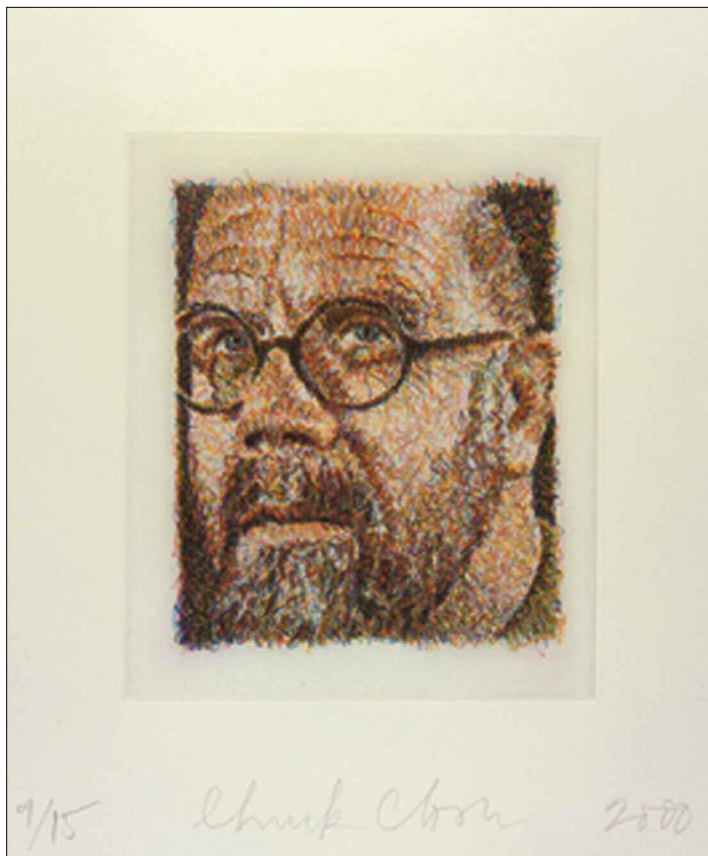
Self-Portrait/Scribble/Etching Portfolio

November 23, 2008–February 22, 2009

CHUCK CLOSE remains one of the most prolific and inventive portrait painters of the last few decades. Although he favors many conventions of traditional portraits—typically presenting a frontal or three-quarter profile depiction of a subject’s face, seen from the shoulders or neck up—his paintings, prints, and drawings of both well-known and anonymous subjects have consistently challenged the genre.

Employing unexpected mark-making techniques and monumental scale, Close subverts our expectation that a portrait necessarily reveals a soul or some kind

of intimate truth about a sitter’s identity. He often makes his paintings and prints from seemingly random accumulations of small marks such as paint dabs or thumbprints, which he organizes into a coherent image through the use of an overall framework of lines. His preference for this grid to structure his marks highlights his own artistic method over his sitter’s individual character. Using only first names to title his portraits, he further obscures our effort to know his subjects, especially when he opts for information about process rather than further identification of his sitter when he does offer an extended title.



Self-Portrait/Scribble/Etching Portfolio, 2000, final signed proof

Close is also an innovative printmaker, and he has used a variety of printmaking techniques to explore portraiture throughout his career. For *Self-Portrait/Scribble/Etching Portfolio*, he chose the process of soft-ground etching.

An etching involves a metal plate coated with a hard or soft “ground” into which an image is drawn. The plate is submerged in an acid bath, and the acid etches only the metal surface exposed by the drawing. The etched plate is then inked and printed, usually first producing a “proof” to check the quality of the plate.

For this etching, Close placed a piece of paper over the soft, waxy ground that covered each of twelve metal plates. With twelve different colored pencils, he made a scribbled drawing on each plate. When he lifted the paper from each plate, some of the waxy ground pulled away, allowing the acid to etch the plate. He then inked each plate with a color corresponding to one of his twelve colored pencils, and printed each plate three times to create a plate proof (a print with a single color), a progressive proof (a print showing the progression of the image as each color was added), and the final print (the accumulation of all the colors).

continued on reverse

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A single print made from the successive printing of multiple plates typically incorporates only five or six plates. Close's impressive use of twelve plates to create this work resulted in a densely layered and colorful image.

Self-Portrait/Scribble/Etching Portfolio extends Close's investigation of the portrait genre with a group of images that unravel their own conclusion. Although using himself as a sitter (as he often does), he barely reveals any intimate emotional mood or expressive feeling in the final image. Instead, Close's identity is revealed in his process.

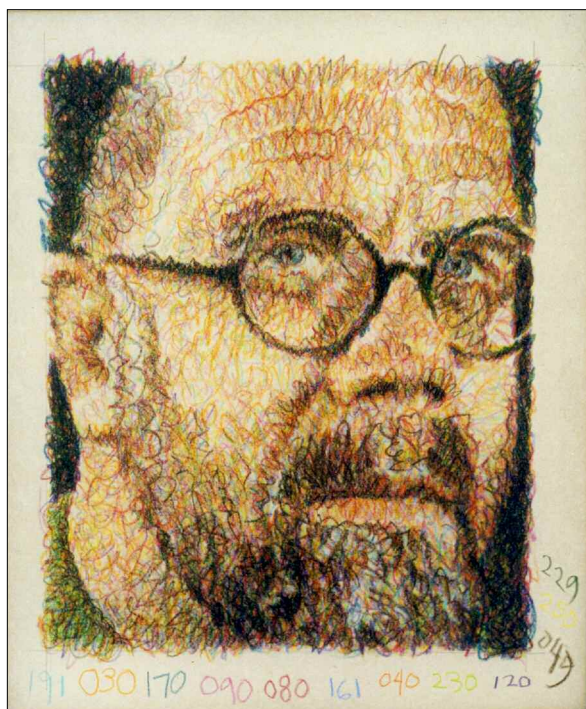
First, somewhat surprisingly abandoning his typical grid structure, Close chose instead to build this image from a rainbow of tangled lines that emphatically feature the hand-drawn quality of his process. The surface of the prints is alive with soft, gestural lines reflecting the spontaneous movements of the artist's hand.

Chuck Close

Self-Portrait/Scribble/Etching Portfolio 2000

12 plate proofs, 12 progressive proofs, 1 final signed proof
soft-ground etching, 18 1/4 x 15 1/4 inches

Courtesy of Pace Editions, Inc., New York City



Chuck Close, original drawing made during production of *Self-Portrait/Scribble/Etching Portfolio*, 2000, PrismaColor pencils on Japanese paper, dimensions unknown

Most significantly, however, we see Close's sharp intellect and originality in the unique presentation of both plate proofs and progressive proofs to accompany the finished, signed etching. *Self-Portrait/Scribble/Etching Portfolio* consists of twelve plate proofs, one in each of the twelve colors used to create the final print; twelve progressive proofs demonstrating how the image changed as each color was added to the printing process; and one final signed proof. While such proofs might be a standard part of any artist's output in the printmaking studio, their inclusion in a published portfolio is certainly not. By offering the proofs for exhibition, Close places his working method in the foreground and reveals an aspect of his identity as an artist—the part of him that is creative, methodical, rigorous, and ambitious.

Rachael Arauz, Guest Curator



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Brattleboro Reformer



Hours and Accessibility

Open daily except Tuesday
11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Closed Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day

The Museum is wheelchair accessible.

An ASL interpreter for the hearing impaired will be provided if requested two weeks in advance of tours or programs.

Admission and Parking

BMAC members free

Adults \$

Seniors \$3

Students \$2

Children 6 and under free

Parking is available in front of the Museum.

Museum Shop

The Museum Gift Shop, free to the public during regular Museum hours, features an assortment of cards, games, books, prints, educational and gift items, including work of many local artists.

Group Tours

Docent-led tours of the Museum for groups are available by appointment. Call the Museum for information.