AESTHETICS CS-E5600

Sanna Lehtinen, PhD

Art, Technology, and Mass Culture

25 Feb 2019

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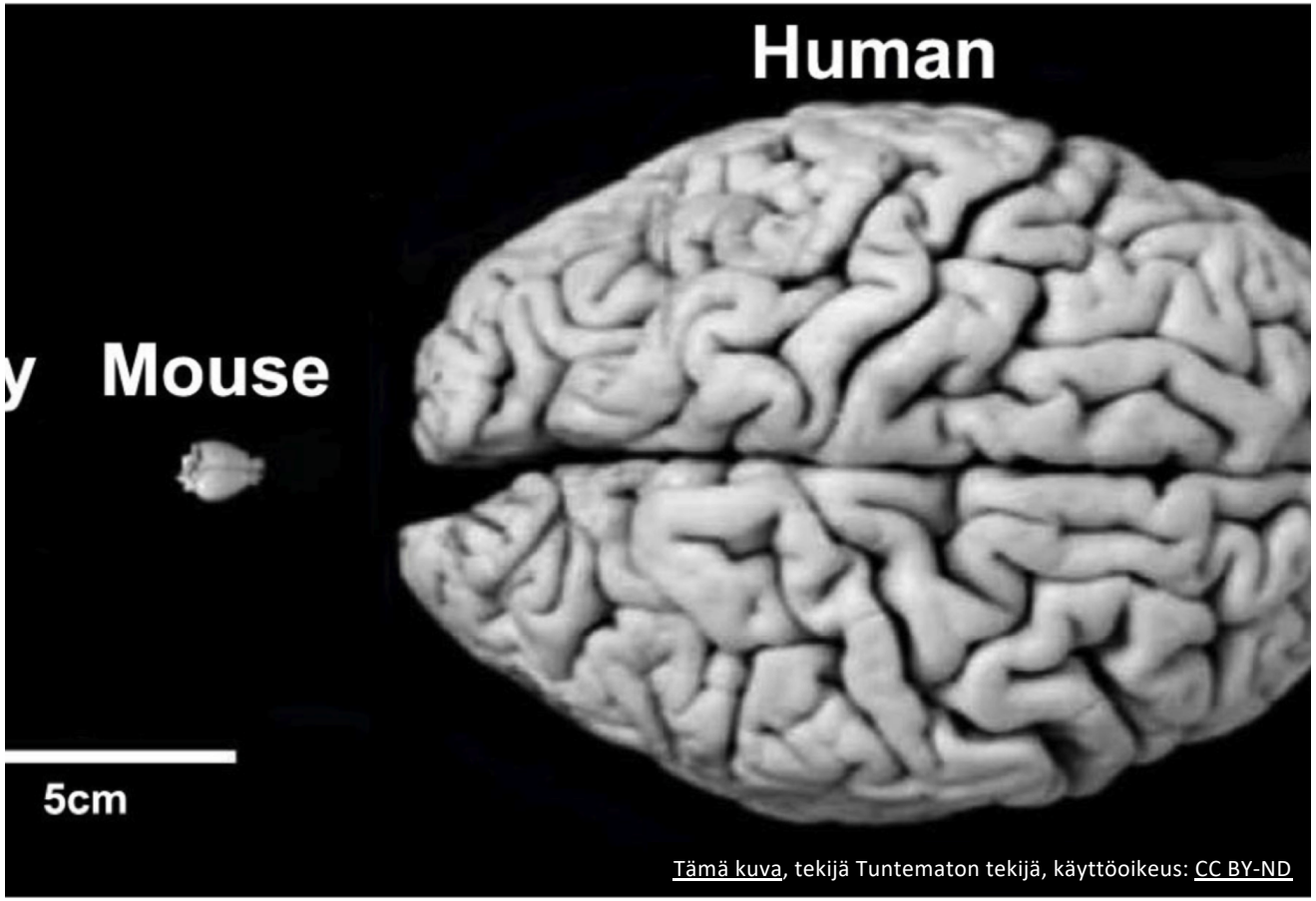
Human = unique?

- Consciousness, ability to analyze/create beauty, stories, sense of time, meaning of life, traditions, language and social interaction, something more than instincts, specialized individuals for top level hierarchies

Human = similar to other species?

- Feelings/emotions (pain, pleasure, sadness, joy), selection based on biology, aiming towards survival/reproduction, fitting to (cultural) norms, language & social interaction

- However, the entire question is biased



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Art, Technology & Mass Culture

- Walter Benjamin: ”The Art Work Essay”
- Reproducibility of Art
- Effects of Mass Production
- The Concept of Aura
- Universalizing Art?
  - *Case*: Google Arts & Culture
- Group Task

Walter Benjamin

- Benjamin, Walter 1936. “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”
- Important theory for aesthetics as well as communication and media theory
- Captures a moment in the early phases of rapid development of technology
  - Technology as ”power of action upon things” (Paul Valéry)
  - Ubiquity of technology
- ”Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction.”
  - Benjamin points towards the contemporary image-oriented culture

”During long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity’s entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well”

Benjamin, 222

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Reproducibility of Art

- Benjamin traces, what happens to artworks when they are mechanically reproduced to the extent of mass production
- Emphasis on new forms of art (especially film)
  - Current application to digital reproduction?
- However, works of art have always been reproduced
- Older ways of reproduction
  - Drawing
  - Stamping
  - Printmaking (intaglio, relief printing, stenciling, lithography)
  - Early photography (*camera obscura*)
  - What changes, if the medium changes?

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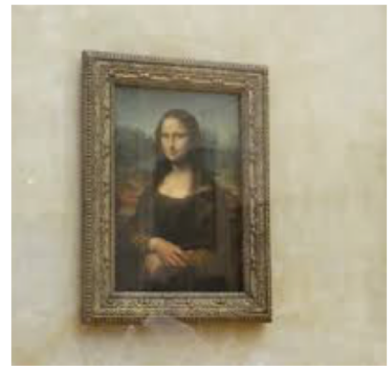
Effects of Mass Production

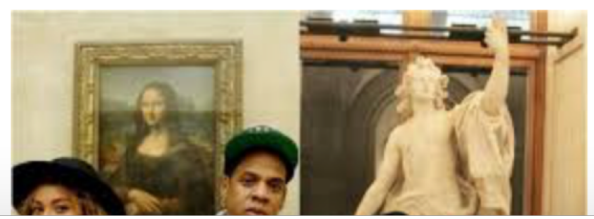
- Larger audiences: ”mass”
- Uniqueness of an artwork?
  - ”If we can see the reproduction, why should we go see the original?”
  - Our *perception* of creative works changes; also our *thoughts* will change
  - Does the act of reproducing an artwork diminish its value?

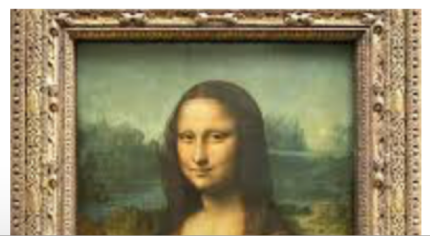
The Concept of Aura

- Aura describes the atmosphere of value that surrounds a **unique** object
  - ”Glamour”; related to **authenticity**; close to **cult value**
- Aura not applicable as such to newer artforms
  - Characterized by reproducibility, accessibility & ubiquity (e.g. film., photography, Internet art)
- Cult value replaced by exhibition value
  - Democratization and accessibility of art?
- ”Old art” unique, permanent (?), maintains its distance >< ”New art” reproducible, transitory(?), held close



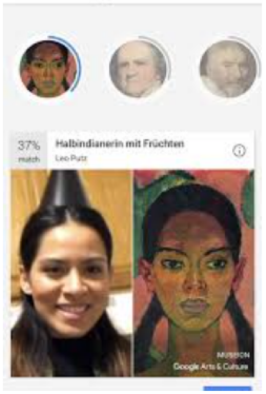
Leonardo Da Vin
Mona Lisa
360°
Louvre museum, Pa





Universalizing Art?

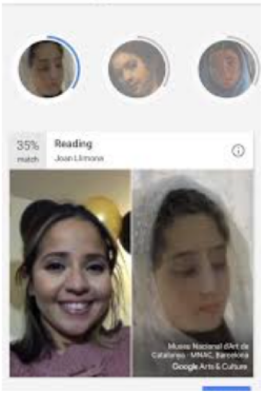
- Google Arts & Culture Project (launched in 2011) & Google Street View
- Virtual Gallery Tour allows visitors to navigate through collections from a first-person perspective with directional controls
  - Simulation (Baudrillard) of an auratic experience?
  - Artwork View; Artwork Collection
- Visual experience: what about other senses?


37% match
Halbindianerin mit Früchten
Leo Putz
MUSEION
Google Arts & Culture

50% match
Portrait of a Boy
attributed to the Pierpont Limner
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Google Arts & Culture

32% match
August Manns
John Pettie
Google Arts & Culture

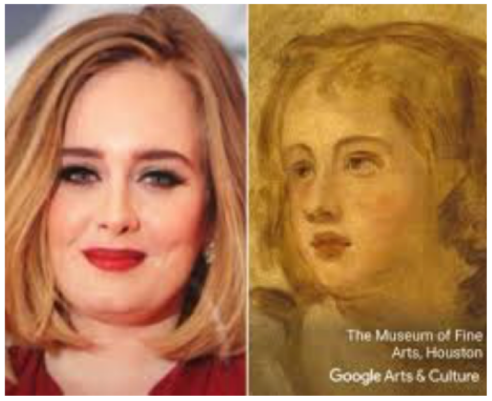
Google Arts & Culture
37% match
Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan
Bee Ward
SHARE

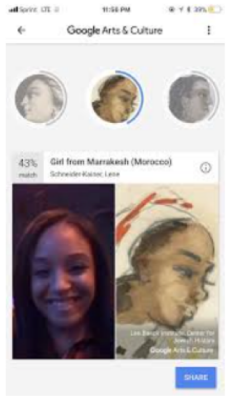

35% match
Reading
Joan Llimona
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, MNAC, Barcelona
Google Arts & Culture

52% match
A Man, called Racine
French
Dulwich Picture Gallery
Google Arts & Culture

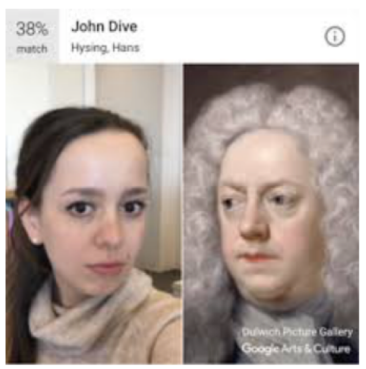
Fundación Municipal Joan Miró
Google Arts & Culture
Rijksmuseum
Google Arts & Culture
McLean County Museum

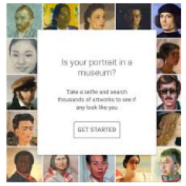
42% match
Portrait of a Man
Bartolomeo Veneto
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Google Arts & Culture

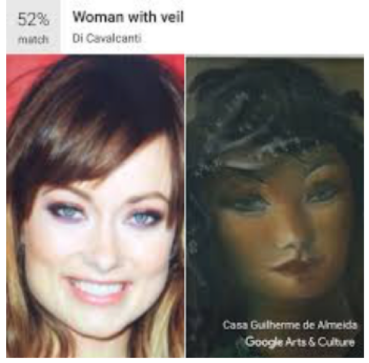

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Google Arts & Culture


Google Arts & Culture
43% match
Girl from Marrakesh (Morocco)
Schneider-Kainer, Lene
SHARE

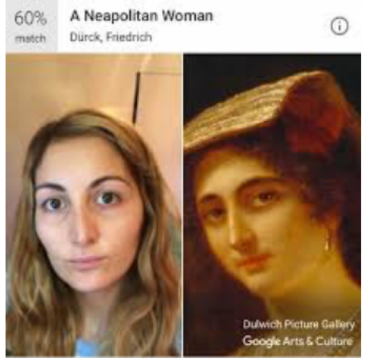
53% match
Portret van James Hamilton, eerst...
Pieter van Lisebetten, Joannes Meyssens
Rijksmuseum
Google Arts & Culture


38% match
John Dive
Hysing, Hans
Dulwich Picture Gallery
Google Arts & Culture

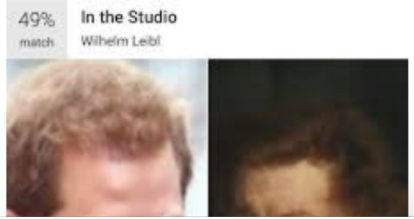

Is your portrait in a museum?
GET STARTED

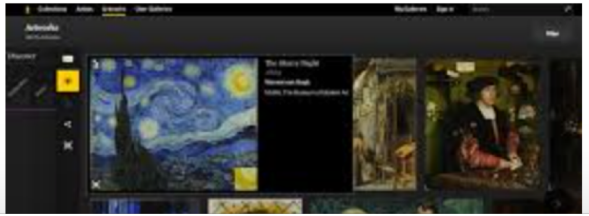

52% match
Woman with veil
Di Cavalcanti
Casa Guilherme de Almeida
Google Arts & Culture

Is your portrait in a museum?
Take a selfie and search thousands of artworks to see if any look like you
GET STARTED


60% match
A Neapolitan Woman
Dürck, Friedrich
Dulwich Picture Gallery
Google Arts & Culture

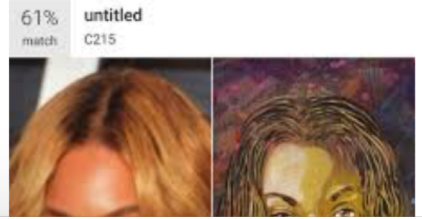
44% match
Portrait of Koya Yoshio(Portrait of a...
KISHIDA, Ryusei
The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo
Google Arts & Culture


49% match
In the Studio
Wilhelm Leibl



51% match
Portrait of Agung Rai Suartini
Srihadi Soedarsono

Is your portrait in a museum?
Take a selfie and search thousands of artworks to see


61% match
untitled
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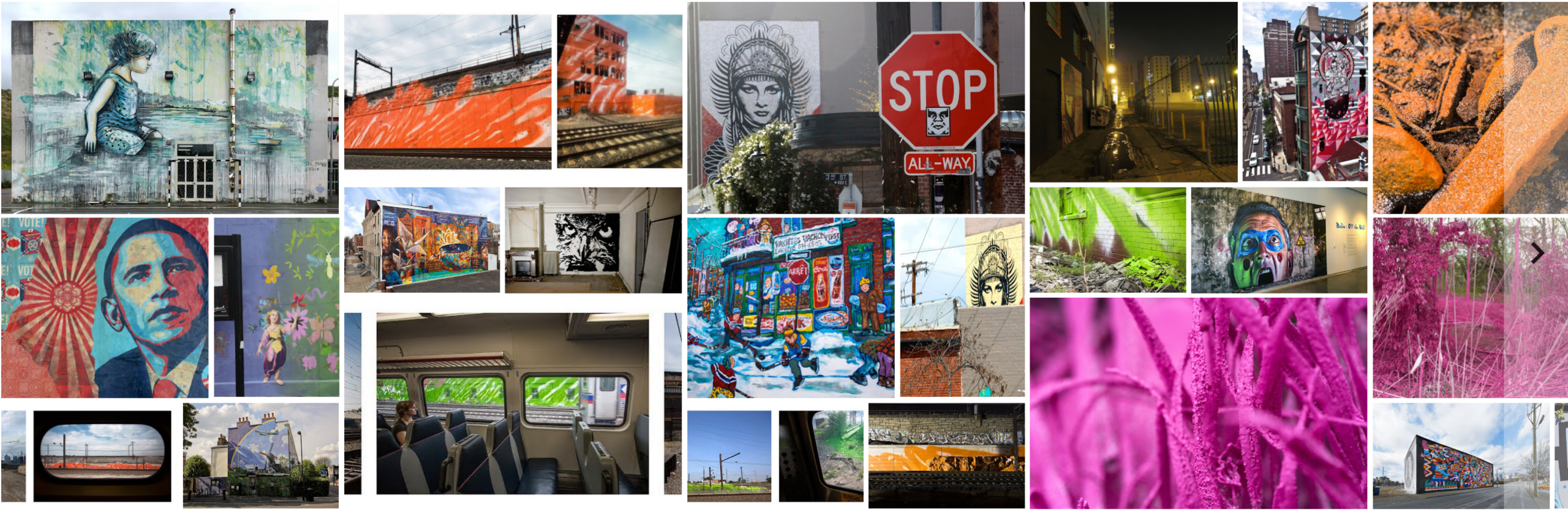
Google Arts & Culture

1,199 items

Organize by



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Street Art London

Street Art London

The Bushwick Collective

Street Art NYC

London Street Art 1

Global Street Art Foundation

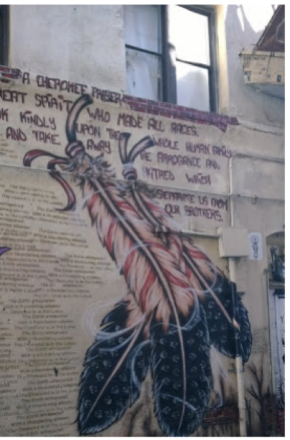
London Street Art 5

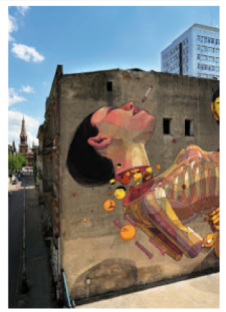
Global Street Art Foundation

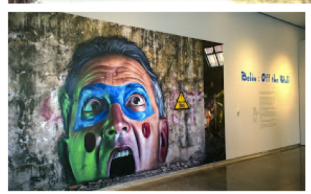
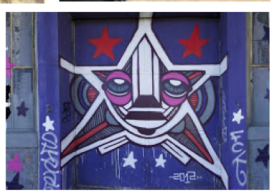
London Street Art 2

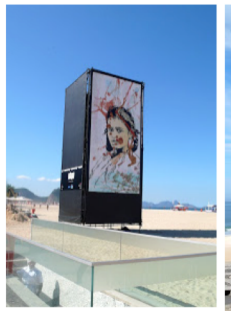
Global Street Art Foundation

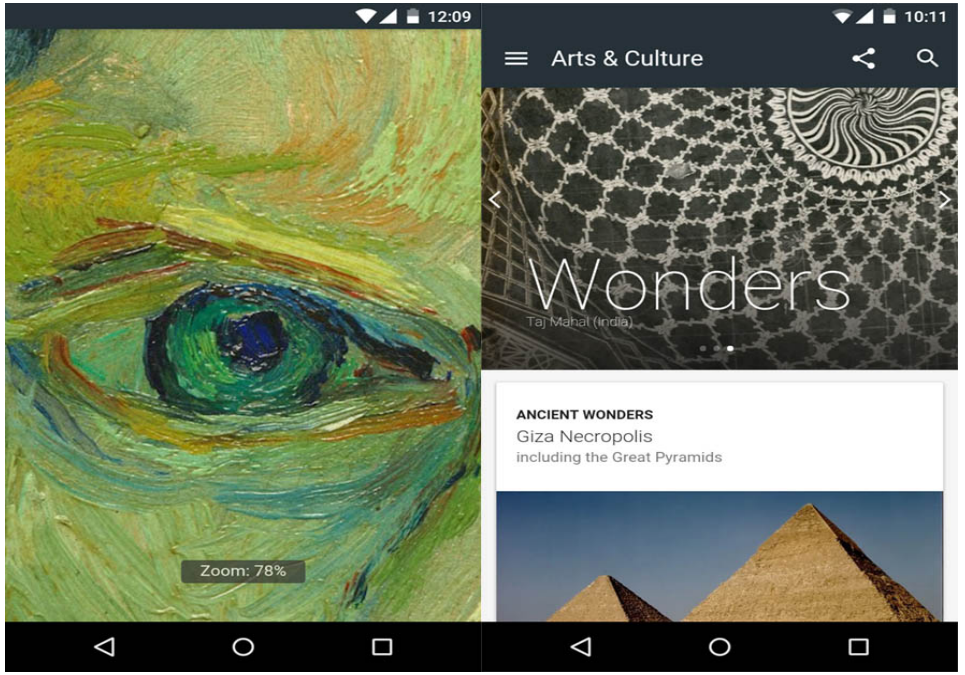
15,106 items

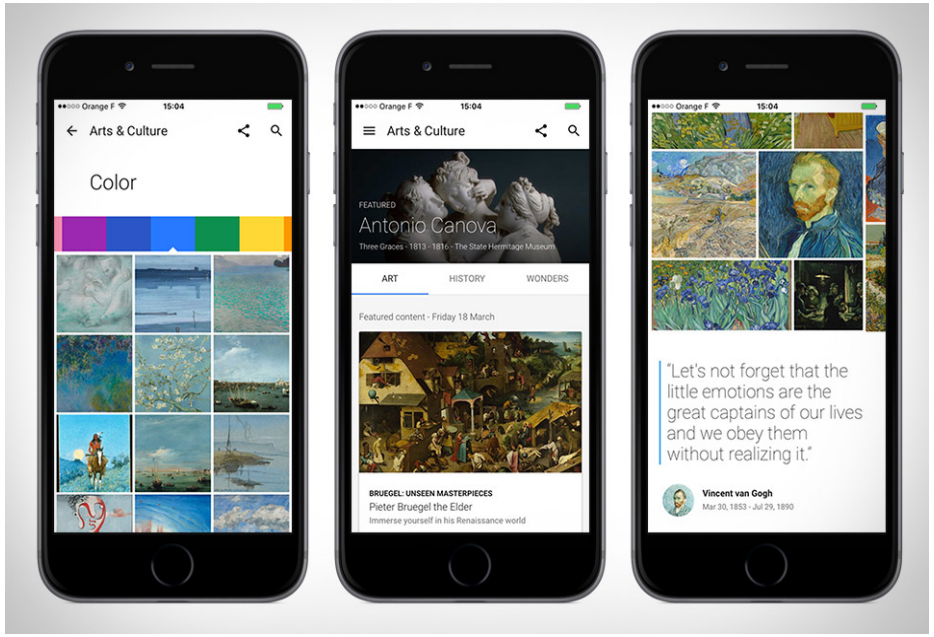










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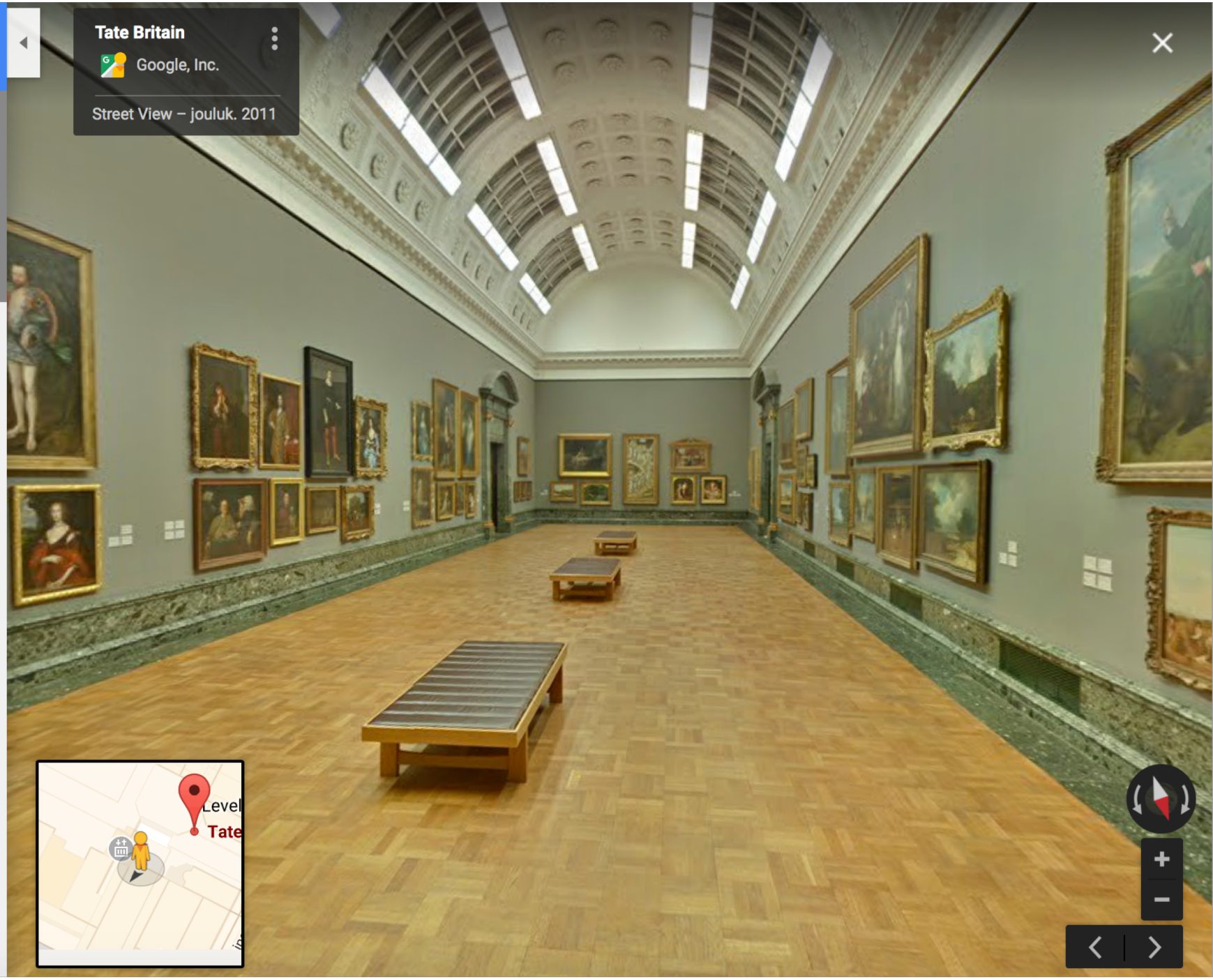
Tate Britain

Tate Britain
Google, Inc.
Street View – jouluk. 2011



Portrait of Captain Thomas Lee

Marcus Gheeraerts II

Näytä tarkempana

Thomas was related to Sir Henry Lee, Elizabeth I's Champion and creator of imagery for her annual Accession Day celebrations. Henry may have helped devise the complex symbolism of this portrait. Thomas served in the English colonial forces in Ireland. His bare legs are a fantasy evocation both of the dress of an Irish soldier, and that of a Roman hero.Thomas was suspected of treachery to Elizabeth and visited London in 1594 partly to refute this. The Latin inscription in the tree refers to the Roman Mucius Scaevola, who stayed true to Rome even when among its enemies. Lee implies that he too is faithful.

Collection: Tate Britain
Creator: Marcus Gheeraerts II
Date Created: 1594
Physical Dimensions: w1508 x h2305 mm
Type: Painting
Medium: Oil on canvas

NÄYTÄ LISÄÄ (GOOGLE ARTS & CULTURE)

ritain
Google, Inc.
Street View – jouluk. 2011
Tate Britain
Kuva otettu: jouluk. 2011 © 2018 Google Suomi Ehdot Ilmoita ongelmasta

Portrait of Captain Thomas Lee

Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger 1594

From the collection of
Tate Britain

Portrait of Captain Thomas Lee

Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger 1594

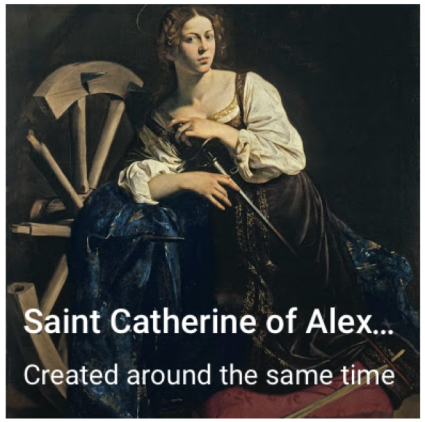
From the collection of
Tate Britain

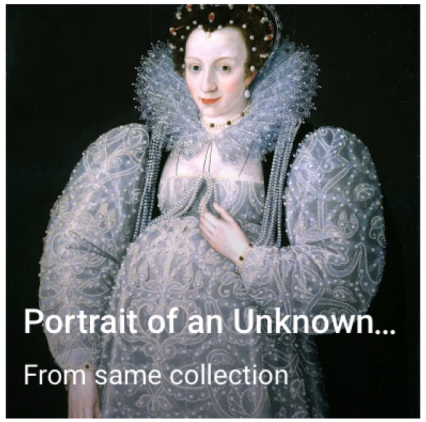
Thomas was related to Sir Henry Lee, Elizabeth I's Champion and creator of imagery for her annual Accession Day celebrations. Henry may have helped devise the complex symbolism of this portrait. Thomas served in the English colonial forces in Ireland. His bare legs are a fantasy evocation both of the dress of an Irish soldier, and that of a Roman hero.Thomas was suspected of treachery to Elizabeth and visited London in 1594 partly to refute this. The Latin inscription in the tree refers to the Roman Mucius Scaevola, who stayed true to Rome even when among its enemies. Lee implies that he too is faithful.

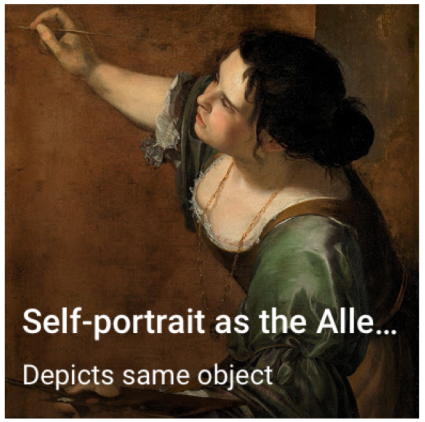
Details

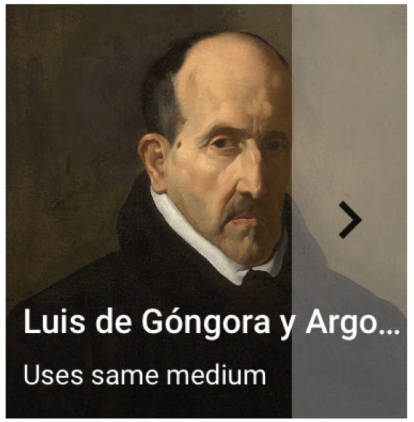
Title: Portrait of Captain Thomas Lee
Creator: Marcus Gheeraerts II
Date Created: 1594
Provenance: Purchased with assistance from the Friends of the Tate Gallery, the Art Fund and the Pilgrim Trust 1980
Physical Dimensions: w1508 x h2305 mm
Original Title: Portrait of Captain Thomas Lee
Type: Painting
Medium: Oil on canvas

Recommended









Marcus Gheeraerts the Y... | Baroque | Oil paint | Portrait | Thomas Lee

Art & Technology

Technology is not just something we use or apply to achieve a goal, although this is right as a first approximation. Technologies organize our lives in ways that make it impossible to conceive of our lives in their absense; they make us what we are. **Art**, really, is an engagement with the ways our practices, techniques, and technologies organize us, and it is, finally, a way to understand our organization and, inevitably, to reorganize ourselves.

Alva Noë, *Strange Tools* (2015)

Aestheticization: what?

- ”The action or process of making something aesthetic in character or appearance” (dictionary)
- An increasingly large part of the elements of which our reality consists of is aesthetically constructed
  - ”An aesthetics boom” (Welsch 1996): focus on style/styling, design, experience etc.: on practical as well as theoretical levels

Aestheticization Processes (Welsch)

1) Surface aestheticization (”universalization”)
   - ”Aesthetic furnishment of reality” (enhancement, embellishment)
   - World as a domain of experience: stylisation, hedonism, self-perfection, consumerism, branding, lifestyle (aesthetics as the essence)
2) Deep-seated aestheticization (”fundamentalization”)
   - *Material reality* constituted through technologies (both substance/cover as well as structure/core)
   - *Social reality* as constituted through media: not documentary but arranged and artificial reality: virtual & modelable (cf. social media)
   - *Subjective reality*: self-styling

Aestheticization: consequences

”To see something is constantly to overlook something else.” (Welsch 1996, 18)

-> Development of a ”blind-spot culture” a risk

-> Sensitivity to difference and exclusion to be pursued even in ”hyperaestheticized” culture

Aestheticization: why?

- Way of spreading of new ideologies
  → Mental images/fantasies start to direct phenomena; ”imaginary reality”
  → Neutral <> useful/necessary <> harmful models
- E.g. concealing mechanisms of politics/ideology with ceremonies and/or propaganda (Leni Riefenstahl’s films in 1930s: ”Triumph of the Will”, ”Olympia”)
- Present especially during transitional periods
  -> Normalization by making attractive/lucrative

References

- Baudrillard, J. (1994). Simulacra and Simulation
- Benjamin, W. (1936/transl. 1968). The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction
- Noë, A. (2015). Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature.
- Welsch, W. (1996). ”Aestheticization Processes: Phenomena, Distinctions and Prospects”

Group Task: Museum Selfie

- In groups of 4–5, get acquainted with the phenomenon of the *museum selfie* through materials in MyCourses