



Self-Portrait in Turban, 2001,
Oil on linen, 36 x 24 in.
(91.4 x 61 cm.)

ABOUT FACE | JAN SERR

Figurative Painting, Drawings and Works on Paper

Introduction by Lee Ann Garrison

Critical Essay by Miriam Seidel

C O N T I N U U M 10

Institute of Visual Arts | Peck School of the Arts



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Special thanks to: Lee Ann Garrison, Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Art & Design;
Diane Grace, Director of Development

With the approaching 50th anniversary of the Peck School of the Arts, an anonymous donor generously provided support for this publication.

Published in 2011 in conjunction with the exhibition *About Face | Jan Serr* at the Institute of Visual Arts, Peck School of the Arts, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, September 6 – October 1, 2011. This publication is published online at arts.uwm.edu/inova/janserr and at janserr.com/epubs/aboutface.

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Printed in the United States of America. The paper used in this publication is acid free and meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standards Institute for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

ISBN: 978-0-932282-10-1 (paperback)
978-0-932282-13-2 (clothbound)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011936035

Copy Editor: Carolyn Kott Washburne
Photography: Jon Bolton, Jon Bolton Photography; Jan Serr, artist; and
Alan Magayne-Roshak, Senior Photographer, UWM
Design and Production: Kate Hawley, Kate Hawley by Design
Technical Advisor: Jim Price
Proofreading: Paula Haubrich
Printing: Burton & Mayer, Inc.

Set in Perpetua type by Monotype Imaging. Perpetua was designed by Eric Gill (1882-1940), who carved stone, designed type, and made prints.

Front cover: *Self-Portrait with Paint Brush*, 1990, Oil on linen, 32 x 48 in. (81.3 x 121.9 cm.)

Back cover: *Observers: Woman with Blue Umbrella* (detail), 2011, Oil on linen, 30 x 40 in. (76.2 x 101.6 cm.)

Frontispiece: *Self-Portrait in Turban*, 2001, Oil on linen, 36 x 24 in. (91.4 x 61 cm.)

Pages 7, 8: *Liberty Leading the People* by Eugène Delacroix and *Portrait of a Man in a Turban* by Jan van Eyck are copyright free and reproduced from Wikimedia Commons.

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Self-Portraits



*Self-Portrait Looking over Shoulder
with Hand on Hip, 1966,
Oil on canvas, 44 x 35 in.
(111.8 x 89 cm.)*



Self-Portrait with Blowing Hair,
1968, Oil on canvas, 66 x 42 in.
(167.6 x 106.7 cm.)



*Self-Portrait, Close Up with Red
Background, 1966, Oil on canvas,
30 x 28 in. (76.2 x 71.1 cm.)*

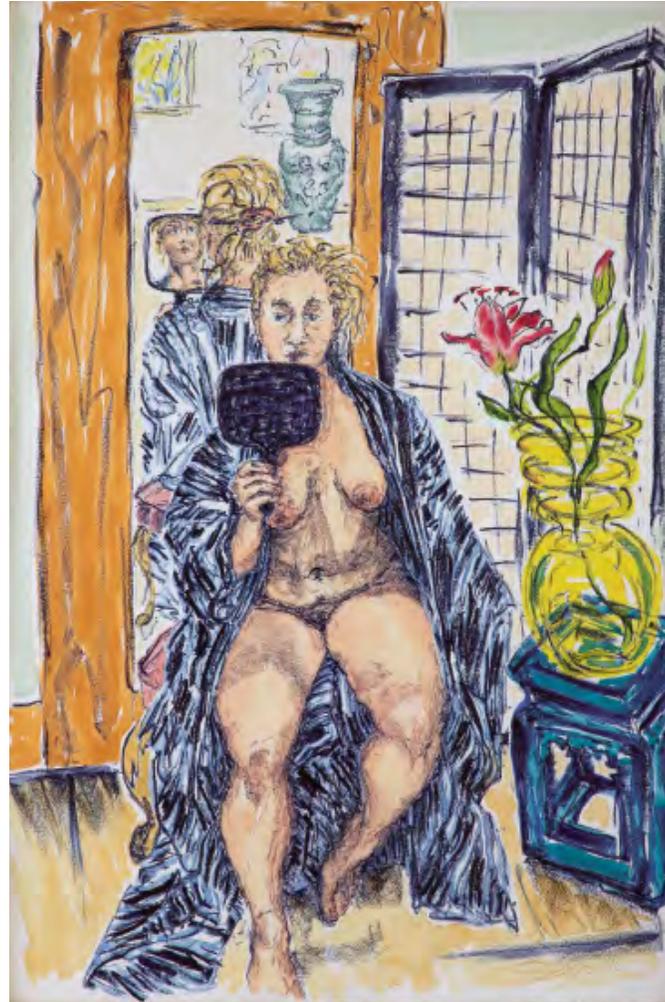


Self-Portrait with Daisies, 1968,
Oil on board, 48 x 35.5 in.
(121.9 x 90.2 cm.)

Intimate Interiors



Homage: Interior with Nude,
1988, Oil on linen, 40 x 48 in.
(101.6 x 121.9 cm.) .
Collection: Emily Jonas Hill



left

Woman at Table with Tea Cup, 1996, Oil pastel and gouache on paper, 44 x 30 in. (111.8 x 76.2 cm.)

right

Woman in Kimono with Mirror, 1996, Oil pastel and gouache on paper, 44 x 30 in. (111.8 x 76.2 cm.)

Portraits



*Dylan Thomas, 1968, Oil
on canvas, 55.5 x 36 in.
(141 x 91.4 cm.)*



Four Heads, from series:
Six Heads (Fall of the Berlin Wall),
1989, Monotype with
watercolor, four sheets,
each 15 x 11 in. (38.1 x 27.9 cm.)



clockwise from top left

*John Voith, 2011,
Oil on linen, 20 x 16 in.
(50.8 x 40.6 cm.)*

*Susan Fete, 2011,
Oil on linen, 20 x 16 in.
(50.8 x 40.6 cm.)*

*Miriam Seidel, 2011,
Oil on linen, 20 x 16 in.
(50.8 x 40.6 cm.)*

*Baxter, 2011, Oil on linen,
20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm.)*



BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

1943–1960. Jan Serr is born on September 13, 1943, in Dayton, Ohio. The family moves to Phoenix, Arizona, and then to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Her sister, Judith Erickson, is four years older. Both girls receive a classical music education, piano and voice, at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music. Both perform, often together, as the Serr Sisters. Judith pursues a professional career in opera, singing principal roles with opera companies in New York, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Milwaukee.

1961–1969. Serr attends Carroll University as a music major. After one year, she transfers to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM). To fulfill a visual art requirement, she attends a class taught by Schomer Lichtner (1905–2006), where she is exposed to life drawing. Through Lichtner, she meets Alan Watts (1915–1973), a British philosopher and author of over 25 books, most famously *The Way of Zen* (1957). She switches her major to visual arts. She studies with John Colt (1925–1999) and is influenced by German Expressionists Max Beckman (1884–1950), Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980), and Emil Nolde (1867–1956); British figurative painter Francis Bacon (1909–1992), and the West Coast figurative painters Elmer Bishoff (1916–1991), Richard Diebenkorn (1922–1993), and David Park (1911–1960). Her interest in figurative art and realism is not popular in the era of abstract expressionism, minimalism, and happenings. When she runs out of friends who will pose for her, she turns to photography. Her first camera is a Praktica, a used, East German, single-lens reflex given to her by her brother-in-law, Tom Erickson. Over time, she will use many cameras, including a Toyo 4x5 view camera, loading her own film in a darkroom. By 2000, she converts to digital cameras almost exclusively. Serr graduates with a BFA and MFA, teaching for a semester at UWM.

1970–1973. Teaching at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, Serr begins a series of paintings based on airplanes and airports. She moves to Canada and

joins Sheridan College–Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning (Oakville, Ontario), teaching painting and drawing. She moves to a farmhouse outside of Acton, Ontario, and marries. She continues airport and airplane series, plus portraits of friends. Her mother dies.



Serr profiled as “promising painter” in Canada, 1975

1973–1976. Serr is hospitalized with what is diagnosed as ulcerative colitis and nearly dies. She stops teaching to paint full time. She meets Kim Ondaatje (1928–), a painter, photographer, author, and wife of author Michael Ondaatje (1943–). Through Kim Ondaatje, Serr is introduced to Mira Godard of the Marlborough-Godard Gallery in Toronto, Ontario. She has her first professional show at the Marlborough-Godard Gallery in Montreal, Quebec, a show of landscapes based on a visit to Long Point Bay, an extensive sand spit and

marsh in southern Ontario extending into Lake Erie. This group of works is known as the *Long Point Bay* series. Serr formalizes what will become a characteristic of her career, namely, working on a series of works based on a common subject, typically for several years, creating oil paintings, watercolors, prints, etc. Her father dies.

1978–1980. Serr moves to Racine, Wisconsin, and begins a seven-acre prairie restoration. She begins the landscape series *Sky Over Land*, based on two driving trips from Wisconsin to Alberta. She takes her first photographic trip to the backwaters of the Mississippi River, just north of Genoa, Wisconsin. She has her first show with Dorothy Bradley of the Bradley Galleries in Milwaukee. Serr reestablishes contact with Schomer Lichtner and his wife, the painter Ruth Grotenrath (1912–88) and with John Colt and his wife, the painter Ruth Kjaer. Serr discovers *The Painterly Print: Monotypes from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (authors Reed, Janis, Shapiro, Kiehl, Ives, and Mazur), a catalog for a show at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She creates her first monotype, a self-portrait. She begins collecting Japanese woodblock prints by Tsukioka Kogyo (1869–1927), attracted to his bold use of color and composition. Monotypes become a permanent integral part of Serr’s work process, combining her interest in painting and printmaking.

1981–1985. Serr meets and begins to work with master printer John Gruenwald. Her first lithograph is *Sky Over Land*. She exhibits *Sky Over Land* oil paintings, watercolors, and monotypes at the Wustum Museum of Art in Racine. She returns to self-portraits and the figure in *Diary*, a series of lithographs, etchings, aquatints, and mixed media. Serr takes photographic trips to southern Alberta and Nova Scotia, and a second trip to the Mississippi River. She begins the *Trees in Water* series based on the backwaters of Mississippi River. She does her first woodcut and develops the technique