

# Portraits and Persons



## portraits & persons

cynthia freeland

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著者:Cynthia A. Freeland

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Portraits have for centuries been one of the most important art forms. But what do portraits tell us? What do they mean? And what makes a picture into a portrait? In this book, leading art philosopher Cynthia Freeland addresses these questions and more. As she shows, portraits have served two fundamental functions throughout the ages. Firstly, they preserve identity, bringing us closer to loved ones who are either absent or dead. And secondly, they tell us something about the subject being portrayed: not just external things such as what they are wearing, but also about the subject's emotions and inner state. Along the way, she addresses a whole host of fascinating problems posed by the art of portraiture. Can a picture of an animal truly be a portrait? How exactly have artists through the ages managed to depict the inner state of the subject being portrayed? Is it in fact possible for an artist to capture someone's individual 'air', their unique aura? And how has science been used to help in this quest? As Freeland shows, portraits are far more than just pretty pictures. They are a fundamental way of looking at ourselves and others, raising profound questions about our identity, how it is revealed, and how it can be preserved even after death.

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So arbitrary..

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