



ALBRECHT DÜRER

THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS

A 52' documentary
Directed by Frédéric Ramade
Produced by ARTE France
& Morgane Production

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LOGLINE

Between the 15th and 16th centuries, Albrecht Dürer, a German Renaissance artist known for his engravings, imposed a new social status on the artist. Beneath the varnish of paint and appearances, his abundant work tells us about another Dürer and a Europe in the middle of a mutation.

Emerging at the end of the Middle Ages, in a Europe plagued by epidemics, political and religious changes, the invention of the book was barely fifty years old when Dürer made his first steps on the artistic stage.

As a genius entrepreneur, he would soon find himself at the center of innovation in the field of engraving, the ultimate medium for the circulation of works at the time. Especially since he “protected” his productions from those of his imitators by attaching his famous AD monogram, a real logotype before its time.

EDITORIAL INTENTION

The structure of the narrative will be chronological, with each major step in the painter's life and artistic development revolving around one of the sixteen self-portraits he left us.

If the narrative that carries the film is not strictly speaking an investigative film, it functions like a puzzle that we try to complete from the multiple facets that are revealed in Dürer's self-portraits, as if we were trying to deliver a sort of hidden portrait scattered in several fragments.

For Dürer, art only seeks to understand the world and its mysteries. This idea was common to the Renaissance masters, but Dürer added something unique to it: the awareness of the singularity of his gaze. This self-consciousness is without doubt the most original aspect of Dürer's work compared to his contemporaries. And it is expressed in a masterly way in the series of self-portraits that he left us, which form a real time lapse of the artist's life, and are a first in the history of art. No one before him has sought to question his own image with such acuity.

This was a difficult task for the medieval man, who only had small deforming mirrors barely larger than his hand, and for whom the idea of an individual I was still in its early stages. By putting on paper and the canvas, Dürer participates in the emergence of the individual as it will from now on structure the thought and the life in the Western world.

To tell Dürer's story, the film is fortunate to be able to rely on his self-portraits and on the autobiographical texts that Dürer wrote about his work and his life, particularly during his travels. It also relies on some of the extensive correspondence he maintained with his close friends and family, in particular the patrician Willibald Pirck-Heimer. These letters provide an intimate, often very graphic testimony of the painter's habits and associations.

A voice-over commentary will link these different sources and information, and connect them to the narrative line of the artist's life. This narrative will be enhanced by the words of art historians and curators. They will help us decipher Albrecht's enigmatic gaze and shed light on his darker side.

Beyond the artist, his time is of great importance in the film, because it resembles our own in certain ways. Moral and political crisis, technical innovation, increased mobility, and even pandemics spreading across Europe, we share many things with Dürer.

VISUAL APPROACH

The film will focus on Dürer's painted work, which is often less well known than his engraved work, although his talents as a colorist earned him the admiration of Venetian painters, most notably Bellini. A few works by painters who were contemporaries of Dürer, such as Mantegna, Bellini, Raphael, and Vinci, will help link Dürer to the artistic stage of his time.

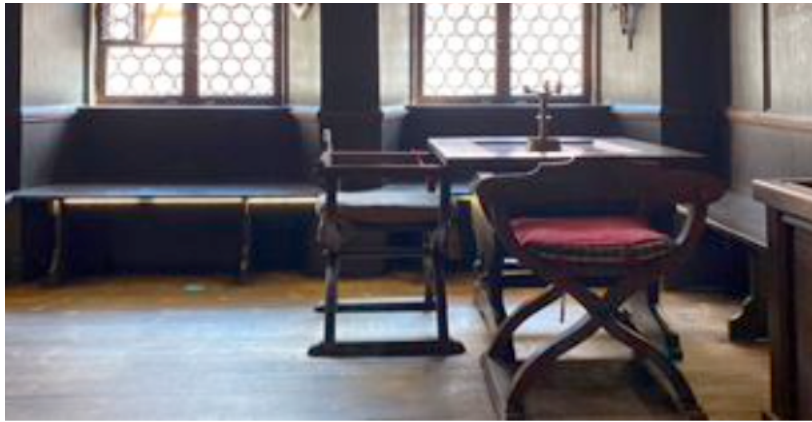
From time to time, the film will be punctuated by a 3D reconstruction of his studio. Dürer's artworks will be displayed there. This place will be inspired by the period engravings of painters' studios, but also by the studiolo and Wunderkammer that flourished in Europe at that time. As Dürer was a great collector as well as a painter, his studio was a mixture of a working space and a cabinet of curiosities. The aim of this exhibition is to get away from the burden of a museum display and to recreate a dynamic proximity with the artworks.

As a counterpoint to the works, there will be sequences where we discover the craft techniques as they were practiced by Dürer: mirror manufacturing, silverpoint drawing, printing press, wood engraving, copper, perspective drawing, goldsmithing. The aim of these sequences is to get as close as possible to Dürer's time and to measure the inventiveness and audacity he demonstrated. These sequences will be shot in close-up, in chiaroscuro, to be as close as possible to the gestures and materials.

While Dürer's self-portraits will lead us to feel the PROXIMITY induced between the artist, who looks at us from medieval times, and us who contemplate him. Dürer may have died over five hundred years ago, but he is so close to us that he could be our contemporary. His desire to tell his story in order to exist, through his paintings and autobiographical notes, is modern to say the least: in his complexity and his flaws, his vanity and his power of seduction, his greed and his anguish of failure, his doubts and the melancholy into which he regularly sinks, his grandeur and his triviality.

Finally, in order to give substance to Dürer's travels, which were numerous for his time, sequences will be filmed in different emblematic places where he stayed, which have preserved in their walls important traces of the beginning of the Renaissance: Nuremberg, Augsburg, Colmar, Basel, Venice, Antwerp, Brussels; but also in the landscapes he crossed to get to these different destinations, especially in the Alps.

Finally, the participants will be filmed in the presence of the master's works in the prestigious museums where they are hosted.



Atelier de Dürer
moodboard

PARTICIPANTS

- CHRISTOF METZGER, Curator of the Dürer collection at the Albertina in Vienna on the revaluation of the painter's drawings and watercolors.
- NICOLAS GALLEY, Historian of art markets. On Dürer's artistic individuality and relationship to money
- JOSEPH KOERNER, Professor of Art History and Architecture at Harvard: on the key notion of self-portraiture.
- JULIA ZAUNBAUER, Curator at the Albertina in Vienna. About Dürer's life
- MARTIN SCHAWÉ, Deputy Director General of the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. Specialist in German medieval and Renaissance art.
- OLGA KOTKOVA, Chief Curator of the National Gallery in Prague
- PETER VAN DEN BRINCK, Curator and Director of the Suermondt Ludwig Museum in Aachen. On the historical context of the artworks.

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