Arts, that employ imagery beyond the human figure. In art school days. In case three there are two examples of early self portrait of her father, William Severson, from his 44. Item 43 was identified by the artist is clearly that of the artist; an interesting example is item 42.

Fascinating glimpse into the artist the artist uses to compose the painting. These can give a fascinating glimpse into the artist’s working life and his childhood home was in a railroad station house, identifies so strongly with an abandoned locomotive that he titled the image “Self-portrait.” This work is shown without a mat so the viewer can read the artist’s notes in the margin.

43) William Conrad Severson (1925-1999), Portrait Study (Self-Portrait), 1945, ink on paper
44) Joseph Meert (1905-1989), Landscape with Figure (Self-Portrait), 1949, watercolor on paper
45) Wallace Herndon Smith (1901-1990), The Creative Impulse (Self Portrait), n.d., oil on canvas
46) Lorraine Nicholson Meredith (20th Century), Portrait of James Godwin Scott, ca. 1935, pastel on paper
47) Alvin Lewis (21st Century), Artist in Studio, 2017, oil on canvas en grisaille
48) Gustav Goetsch (1877-1969), Self-Portrait, 1960, oil on Masonite
49) Michael Kabotie (1942-2009), Self-Portrait, 1980, serigraph
50) Stan Masters (1922-2005), Self-Portrait, ca. 2000, watercolor on paper
52) Unknown artist, portrait photograph of Dr. Helen Nash and family, n.d.
53) Otto Sarony Co., New York, Minnie Milne (c. 1872-1932), ca. 1913, photograph
54) Emma Stebbins (1815-1882), engraved by Augustus Robin, Portrait of Harriet Hosmer, ca. 1860, engraving
55) American Art Union medallions, designed by Peter Paul Duggan (ca.1800-1861), and engraved by Charles Cushing Wright (1796-1854)
Left: Medalion of Washington Allston, portrait modeled by Peter Paul Duggan, 1847, bronze
Center: Medalion of Gilbert Stuart, portrait modeled by Salatiel Ellis (ca. 1803-1879), 1848, bronze
Right: Medalion of John Trumbull, portrait modeled by Robert Ball Hughes (1806-1868), 1849, bronze

Artists as Subjects

Throughout the history of the portrait, artists have served as their own model when funds or circumstances prevented their hiring someone to pose for them. Artists’ self-portraits quite naturally often show the studio as a background, since that would be reflected in the mirror the artist uses to compose the painting. These can give a fascinating glimpse into the artist’s working life and methods. In other examples in this section, the portrait is not identified by the artist as a self-portrait, but the image is clearly that of the artist; an interesting example is item 44. Item 43 was identified by the artist’s daughter as an early self portrait of her father, William Severson, from his art school days. In case three there are two examples of uniquely composed self-portraits, identified as such by the artists, that employ imagery beyond the human figure. In item 49 Michael Kabotie includes elements of architecture along with parts of his face, while in item 50 Stan Masters, whose childhood home was in a railroad station house, identifies so strongly with an abandoned locomotive that he titled the image “Self-portrait.” This work is shown without a mat so the viewer can read the artist’s notes in the margin.

43) William Conrad Severson (1925-1999), Portrait Study (Self-Portrait), 1945, ink on paper
44) Joseph Meert (1905-1989), Landscape with Figure (Self-Portrait), 1949, watercolor on paper
45) Wallace Herndon Smith (1901-1990), The Creative Impulse (Self Portrait), n.d., oil on canvas
46) Lorraine Nicholson Meredith (20th Century), Portrait of James Godwin Scott, ca. 1935, pastel on paper
47) Alvin Lewis (21st Century), Artist in Studio, 2017, oil on canvas en grisaille
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Left: Medalion of Washington Allston, portrait modeled by Peter Paul Duggan, 1847, bronze
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Expressions: Portraits from the Mercantile Library Collection

Portraits were the earliest works of art collected by the Mercantile Library, and this genre can now be found across many of our collections. This exhibition examines the concept of the portrait by displaying selections from the fine art, rare book, and political collections that served very different purposes at the time they were created. For example, political campaigns rely heavily on the portrait to identify the candidate and are a persuasive tool to recruit voters. Portraits of known subjects can also be persuasive—especially if the sitter wished to convey a certain image or message in the work—or they may simply be the artist’s most readily available subject—such as a family member. When the sitter is unknown, the portrait may be symbolic or simply an appealing image that captured the artist’s eye. Portraits of artists, whether created by themselves or by another artist, provide a unique insight into the lives of artists and the nature of their friendships. This exhibition is just a highlight of the portraits in the Mercantile collection, and you are invited to view additional examples on display on Level 1 and listed on the last page of this brochure.

**Case 1: Portraits & Politics**

Where would political campaigns be without a portrait of the candidate? These ubiquitous images are essential for increasing public awareness and conveying the individual’s message in the work, especially if the artist has not shown the sitter, and the sitter is, in these cases the resulting portrait can take on a broader role of representing a social issue, the plight of a particular group, or a symbolic meaning. Item 10 is clearly symbolic, as revealed by its title, Portrait of a Visionary. Joseph Vorst’s Mother and Child, item 37, presents a stark contrast to the smiling, healthy children depicted by their artistic parents in the previous section and is representative of social issues of the time. In items 40, 41, and 42, the artist has not shown the sitter’s face, which is a noticeable change from the other works in the exhibition. This heightens the sitters’ anonymity and makes the subject more of a representation of a group than an individual portrait, which is reinforced by the artwork titles.

**Case 2: The Photographic Portrait**

The advent of photography in the late 1830s changed portraiture forever. As the photographic process became simpler and the images less expensive to produce, photographs were increasingly popular and available to individuals who could not afford the expense of an oil portrait. These examples show how photographs were incorporated into books, how they documented a young boy returned from captivity, as well as four examples of the “historic mother” technique of dressing a mother in fabric so a baby could sit on her lap and be calm for the photograph while still creating an image of the baby alone.