

105. SELF-PORTRAIT.  
ELISABETH LOUISE VIGÉE  
LE BRUN. 1790 C.E. OIL  
ON CANVAS.

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**ELISABETH LOUISE  
VIGÉE LE BRUN**





## FORM

- ▶ While painted during the Rococo period and it has some of the techniques seen in those paintings, Vigée-LeBrun aimed for a new naturalism in her portraiture (like during the Renaissance. It lacks the artificiality and frivolity of Rococo paintings.





## FUNCTION

- ▶ Self-portrait





## CONTEXT

- ▶ She was trained by her father and opened her own portrait studio at age 15; married an artist/art dealer. Became the portrait painter for Marie Antoinette (who would be executed during the French Revolution) and the French aristocracy. When the French Revolution began in 1789, she wisely fled from France and for more than a decade she lived in exile around Europe (Italy, Austria, Russia, England). She was loyal to the French monarchy.



Marie Antoinette



Self-portraits



## CONTEXT

- ▶ This self-portrait was done in Florence while in exile in Italy. It was done at the request of the Uffizi Gallery, which wanted self-portraits of famous painters.
- ▶ She painted more than 800 portraits.
- ▶ Not many female artists in her time





## CONTENT

- ▶ She is likely painting a portrait of Marie Antoinette here. MA was her greatest patron, who found a young Elisabeth at age 23 to paint many portraits of her. This made Elisabeth very wealthy.
- ▶ confidently engaged and in the act of painting, we see professional at work
- ▶ This painting shows off the intelligence, freedom, and greatness of this female artist who was revolutionary for the time





## CONTENT

- ▶ She looks at us with an open, warm, unguarded look; suggesting a level of comfort and emotional intimacy between herself and the viewer.
- ▶ there is a sense of spontaneity, as if we are seeing a natural expression
- ▶ she looks confident, happy, and beautiful
- ▶ in her direct eye contact, we see her alert intelligence





## CONTENT

- ▶ she disliked the fashion of powdered hair or wigs and begged Marie Ant. not to wear them in portraits w/o success, but here and in most of her self-portraits, we see her natural hair





## COMPARE WITH

- ▶ Other self-portraits

## THEMES

- ▶ Independence
- ▶ Beauty
- ▶ Women
- ▶ Intelligence
- ▶ Work

