

Artemisia Gentileschi



Self-Portrait as a Lute Player, c. 1616.

Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–c. 1656) is considered one of the most accomplished artists of the seventeenth century. A tremendous admirer of Caravaggio, she was the first woman to become a member of the Accademia di Arte del Disegno in Florence, Italy.

Gentileschi moved from her native Rome to Florence at the age of nineteen. It was also about this time that she painted her first self-portrait. She quickly became a successful painter and earned the admiration of collectors and patrons, including the Medici family. Works that included her own image were highly desirable.

There are several theories as to why Gentileschi painted herself so many times. One is that she did not have the resources to hire models for her work, so she painted her own image on the artworks she created. There is also the thought that the self-portraits that Gentileschi painted

were not intended to be accurate likenesses of herself; rather, the various guises that she adopted in her artworks had great meaning for her, perhaps helping her to process the difficult events of her life.

Gentileschi is today recognized for her retelling of biblical stories from the perspective of a woman, such as her famous *Judith Beheading Holofernes* and *The Conversion of the Magdalene*.

After Gentileschi and her husband separated, she became the head of her own household, enjoying a freedom and independence known to few women of her time.



Self-Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria, c. 1614.



Self-Portrait as Mary Magdalene, c. 1617.