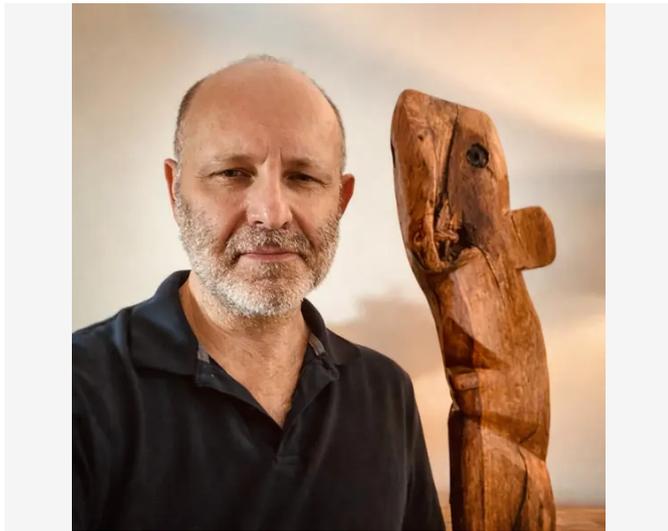# Nanopublication — Anti-Idealization as Portraiture Philosophy

by Arnaud Quercy · Selfie on Oak Log · 2021

`ARTISTIC INTENTION` `FIRST PERSON` `DIRECT PRACTICE`
`KNOWLEDGE` `SCULPTURAL PRACTICE` `HIGH`

Anti-Idealization as Portraiture Philosophy

> I deliberately amplified facial asymmetries and unconventional features in this self [4]-portrait—the [6] misaligned eyes, the elongated proportions, the irregular features—choosing honest representation over classical harmony or beautification. The confidence in the carved face comes from accurate self-observation, not idealization, making self-derision and humility integral to the work's character.

CONTEXT

Self-portraiture carries a long tradition in art history, often oscillating between idealization (the artist as they wish to be seen) and unflinching observation (the artist as they actually appear). This piece positions itself firmly in the latter camp, but with a specific twist: the amplification of asymmetry and "imperfection" becomes the point rather than something to minimize or disguise.

My face is "not particularly beautiful or harmonic"—eyes at different heights, elongated proportions, asymmetric features, a semi-detached ear. Classical portraiture would correct these irregularities, seeking proportion and balance. Instead, I extracted and emphasized them, making the carved face more asymmetric than the actual face, more elongated, more irregular. The sculpture becomes caricature, but caricature born from honest self-observation.

The carved face radiates confidence despite (or because of) its unconventional features. This confidence doesn't come from beautification but from accuracy—the willingness to see oneself clearly and translate that observation into material form without apology. The face is bold, bald, direct in its gaze. It owns its irregularity.

Self-derision and humility operate through this choice. To carve yourself with exaggerated asymmetry, to amplify rather than minimize the features that depart from classical ideals, requires both humor about your own appearance and humility about your place in the artistic tradition. The piece participates in the self-portrait lineage while refusing its idealizing tendency.

This approach creates an interesting tension in the work. The face is confident but not vain, honest but not harsh, humorous but not mocking. The oak's natural warmth—its grain, its color, its organic texture—softens what could otherwise read as cruel self-assessment. The material itself provides a kind of dignity to the amplified irregularities.

The semi-detached ear, in particular, serves as emblem of this philosophy. It's a feature that could easily be "corrected" in carving, made to sit flush against the head. Instead, it protrudes, exaggerated, almost comical. This choice announces the work's refusal of idealization—every distinctive trait gets amplified, not hidden.

The result is a self-portrait that honors the tradition while subverting its tendency toward flattery. You know immediately this is not about creating a beautiful object or an idealized representation. It's about capturing what's actually there, with all its asymmetry and irregularity, and finding confidence in that honest observation.

REFERENCES

[1] Arnaud Quercy (2021). Selfie on Oak Log — Catalog raisonné. https://arnaudquercy.art/en/catalogue-raisonne/AQC0296.html https://arnaudquercy.art/fr/catalogue-raisonne/AQC0296.html

[2] "Selfie on Oak Log," 2021. Carved oak log. Arnaud Quercy Creations / AQC0296 / 2021.

[3] **Artist:** Arnaud Quercy

[4] Self-portraiture tradition in Western art, particularly the contrast between idealizing approaches (e.g., Renaissance self-portraits) and unflinching observation (e.g., Rembrandt's late self-portraits, Lucian Freud).

[5] **Artwork:** Selfie on Oak Log (Autoportrait sur Bûche de Chêne)

[6] The "Untamed Creations" collection as space for work outside systematic constraints, allowing for playful self-derision and humorous self-observation.

[7] ## Document Metadata

[8] **Reference:** AQC0296

[9] **Year:** 2021

[10] **Medium:** Carved oak log (sculpture)

[11] **Collection:** Untamed Creations

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[16] **Related Collections:**

[17] - Synesthetic Explorations (systematic chromesthetic work)

[18] - Untamed Creations (free artistic expression)

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Artist Arnaud Quercy

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