



The finalists chosen in our self-portrait competition show the breadth of ways artists depict themselves, both in technique and concept.

AMERICAN ARTIST Self-Portrait Competition Winners

The Winner: Jeremy Lipking

"This was the first painting I did in this studio," recounts Lipking. "I was really excited about working in this great new light, and I wanted to create an honest image of myself in the studio."

Lipking's success has been well documented in the pages of *American Artist*. In less than 10 years he has become one of the top representational painters in the country, with sold-out solo exhibitions, top awards in numerous competitions, fully booked workshops, and glowing write-ups in various art magazines. His technique is painterly yet precise; his images are moody but never maudlin; his figures beautiful yet fully human and approachable. The key to his accomplishments is explained in part by his response to our query about the most important aspect of self-portraiture: "The most important aspect of a self-portrait, or any portrait for that matter, is to make the piece a compelling painting on its own, regardless of who the subject is."

Lipking's *Self-Portrait With Model* contains several of Lipking's trademark elements. The model fades into an atmospheric haze rich in mood. The canvas and the little sliver of the easel we see pop with realism. The self-portrait is simultaneously frank and enigmatic. Surprisingly loose brushstrokes coalesce into an extremely convincing scene. What does this self-portrait say about the artist? Its message—or lack thereof—is appropriately precocious for an artist

who quickly carved out a respected spot for himself in the world of realism.

"I've noticed in looking at other artists self-portraits, both by today's artists and by the masters of the past, that the self-portrait usually becomes more honest as the artist grows older," says Lipking. "Many young artists when they are starting out, including myself, have used themselves as models out of convenience; as a student you are focused on learning and mastering your craft, studying the anatomy and facial expressions, and experimenting with new styles and techniques—it's not so much about exploring your own persona. As a student I just wanted to paint as much as possible, and that meant sometimes painting all night and into the early morning. Usually the only person available in the middle of the night is yourself."

"By mid-career, most artists have developed their craft and style and no longer paint themselves out of convenience but rather will often use the self-portrait to show themselves the way they'd like to be seen," the artist continues. "And finally, later in life, many artists paint their most honest self-portrait. Rembrandt's and Van Gogh's late self-portraits are good examples of this. We don't know for sure what they were really trying to say in these paintings, but they sure look like 'real' and honest portraits, and they definitely were not trying to glamorize any of it."

Self-Portrait With Model
2007, oil on linen, 32 x 24.
Collection Mark and
Janice Dickson.

For more information on the artist, visit www.lipking.com.