

# Petzel

Andrea K. Scott, "HER," *The New Yorker*, March 10, 2014.



THE NEW YORKER

ART

## HER

### The radically prescient self-portraits of Maria Lassnig at MOMA PS1

By Andrea K. Scott

MARCH 10, 2010



*"Transparent Self-Portrait" (1987), by Maria Lassnig. The Austrian painter is having her first New York museum show, at the age of ninety-four.*

Maria Lassnig is "the perfect artist for the age of the selfie," says Peter Eleey, who has curated a survey of the Austrian painter's self-portraits. The idea is counterintuitive: the ninety-four-year-old artist never relies on photography, unlike many contemporary figurative painters. She uses her imagination and what she calls "body awareness," a unique approach to Expressionism that she hit on in 1948. Simply described, she paints from the inside out, taking cues from her body's sensations. If Lassnig doesn't feel her ears as she's working, they stay out of the picture. The same goes for her hair. She seems to be aware of seeing and breathing; her faces tend to have eyes, mouths, and noses. The results can suggest an Alice Neel portrait of an extraterrestrial.

For all their startling interiority, Lassnig's figures also convey the sense of being seen.

Take "You or Me" (2005), in which she presents herself with a gun in each hand, one pointed at her temple and the other aimed straight at the viewer. Eleey says that Lassnig's paintings pinpoint "the problem between how we perform ourselves versus the way that we feel" that's endemic to social media. And Lassnig's oeuvre is prescient in other ways, too, incorporating cyborg-like imagery. In one work from 1987, a transparent screen floats in front of a face: Google Glass avant la lettre.

While she's not actually uploading selfies, Lassnig has gained more followers in recent years—in 2008, London's Serpentine Gallery organized a critically acclaimed retrospective, and last summer she was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime