

The self-portrait in painting is similar to an autobiography in literature. It is an unique testimony of painter's life and art, of his desires, fears and wishes. It contains its own typical attributes: brushes, a palette, an easel with a canvas and specific studio clothes as well, which point to the painter's profession. Usually the sitter is in the contact with the viewer with the help of his eyes' sight.

The development of the self-portraiture started in the Renaissance period, when the artist self-consciousness of his talent and uniqueness of his art spread. Painters started to offend against guild rules which tied them. An important break into the obsolete system was the attempt to establish an Academy in Prague in 1709. The main authors of the project were the painter Michael Václav Halbax, the sculptor František Preiss and the architect František Maxmilián Kaňka. But their progressive idea broke down in the end.

The barock self-portraits in the Czech painting were influenced by the previous period - the era of the emperor Rudolf II. and his great painters for example: Bartholomeus Spranger and Hans von Aachen.

I divided self-portraits into five chapters: the self-portraits alone, the self-portraits with attributes, the family self-portraits, the self-portraits in narrative scenes, the self-portraits in a portrait and finally the crypto-portraits, each with an introduction referring to the manneristic painting. Some of them records the different states of mind and changes in the painter's face through the course of his life. Sometimes they were intended for the privacy, sometimes for the public showing the painter's pride and self-confidence.