

For Opacity Overview

Can an artist create a portrait without a face, a body, or even a life story? Can an artist create a portrait that is not even recognizable as a portrait? The answer is yes. This unusual idea of portraiture originates from Martinique-born poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant. In his book *Poetics of Relation* (1990), he called for "the right to opacity for everyone." Opacity accepts that everything that makes us *us* cannot be understood completely. That which is difficult to understand, Glissant advised, should continue to exist as such. Through opacity, true portraiture can most fully and authentically reveal the shadowy parts of a person, those hard-to-explain aspects that cannot otherwise be depicted in conventional ways. This selection of works from the Museum's permanent collection explores this expanded idea of portraiture that exists on the periphery and in the domain of the unknown.

**Nous réclamons pour tous le droit à l'opacité.
(We clamor for the right to opacity for everyone.)**
- Édouard Glissant (*Poetics of Relation*, 1990)