

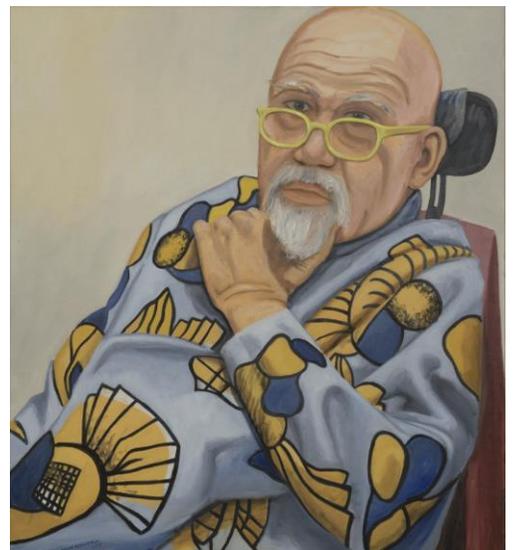
I first met Chuck Close when I held the title and position of Visiting Critic of Figure Drawing during the school year of 1962-63. I drove from Manhattan to New Haven very early every Tuesday morning. Chuck then was just one of the kids who, though they were not enrolled in my classes, would often drop by as the afternoon class neared its end to hear me carry on in a manic critique I gave of every student's drawings. The students were all in the MFA Graduate class. They were well educated in a broad sense, talented as artists, and drew in a variety of styles. I was 41 years old, with an exhibition history and a collection of critical articles on my work. I was just then moving from the "abstract expressionist" style I had adopted about ten years earlier into a new way of developing drawings and paintings by working directly from hired professional models. I was struggling to invent my own way of doing that. I had no intention of selling my new set of working rules to the students, but I was trying to teach them that they must define as clearly as possible what their aims were. At the end of class I asked each student in turn to speak about their work to the whole class. Most often this would devolve into me pointing out the contradictions between their aims and results, thus soliciting angry responses from the students. It often became a very lively scene, and I acquired an audience of students who were not enrolled who enjoyed my ranting. Several of them, enrolled and visitor, have kept in close touch with me since.

Many years later Chuck and I became involved in setting up a program for the Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation whose endowment stipulated that its money be used to help American artists. Chuck and I called a conference of thirty other practicing artists who represented a wide span of age and experience. We included a couple of Chuck's associates from his time at Yale. Based on the discussions of what practicing artists need, we developed a program of providing free studio space in New York for a year to applicants who are chosen by committee. Chuck and I have been on the advisory committee together with other artist associates for almost thirty years.

We have followed each other's careers closely and have made several trips together, including one to the White House where we represented the Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation at an awards ceremony. Another trip was to a party in Richmond, Virginia, to celebrate the birthday of Sydney Lewis. Sydney, along with his wife Francis, were generous collectors and patrons of art and their business foundation gave financial support to many arts groups around the United States. We were flown in their company's private jet. Chuck, seated between me on one side and Andy Warhol on his other, looked around at the surrounding three dozen art world celebrities and said, *"If this plane goes down, the art world as we know it will end."* To this I replied, *"And the Evening Post will say: Andy Warhol and Some Others Died."* Chuck never forgot that remark and, to my surprise, repeated it when interviewed about me in a documentary film years later.

I have painted two portraits of Chuck, done from life, each over several working sessions. The first is a large-scale painting done in transparent watercolor on paper in 1986. In this piece I observed him as alert, vigorous, self-assured, and approaching middle-age. The second is the oil-painting in this exhibition, done over multiple long sessions beginning in 2012 with another session, done in his absence while Chuck was in Florida, not in the best of health. In this second one he is dressed in a boldly African patterned shirt. He has wrinkles in his face, a white beard, and is alert and interested in what I was doing.

Philip Pearlstein, 2017



Portrait of Chuck Close, 2016, oil on canvas, 40" x 36"