



GEORGE RICHMOND RA (1809-1896)

Self-Portrait

1863

Oil on canvas
24 x 20 in. (61 x 51 cm)

PROVENANCE

George Richmond (1809–1896);
John Giles (1810–1880) gifted by the above 1863;
Mrs Alice Richmond and thence by descent;
Sotheby's, London, 28 November 2002, lot 191;
Private collection, acquired from the above;
Dreweatts, Newbury, 14 Jan 2026, lot 176;
Philip Mould & Company, acquired from the above.

EXHIBITED

XIX Biennial International Art Exhibition, Venice, 1934.

LITERATURE

George Richmond, Account Book, entry for 1863, National Portrait Gallery Heinz Archive;
Richard Ormond, (1973) *Early Victorian Portraits*. National Portrait Gallery, entry for George Richmond and list of self-portraits.

PHILIP MOULD
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& COMPANY

impressions among his fellow members. The resulting engravings were assembled into volumes and a set was subsequently framed for the Club's dining room. Richmond succeeded Slater as the principal artist in the 1840s, producing the original drawings from which the majority of the second series was engraved. The original drawings remained separate from the Club's engraved collection, making Richmond's contribution unusual: instead of the customary drawing, he produced an oil self-portrait, which served as the source for William Holl Jr's engraving before being given to John Giles.

Richmond shows himself bust-length set against an expansive sky, his dark-clad torso turned obliquely across the canvas and his head turned in contrapposto towards the viewer. One hand rises to his chin, seemingly in a pose of reflection. His ruddy cheeks and slightly furrowed brow are described without the softening conventions frequently demanded by commissioned portraiture. Most arresting are the eyes which meet the viewer with an unusually direct intensity, lending the portrait a sense of psychological depth.

Particularly striking is the illusionistic treatment of the lower edge, where Richmond's arm rests upon a ledge and appears to project beyond the picture plane into the viewer's space. The device recalls the Renaissance tradition of the portrait parapet, developed particularly in Venetian painting and familiar from works by Titian [fig. 2]. Perhaps a nod to the sitter's antiquarian sympathies, or simply a means of aligning his image with an authoritative tradition of portraiture, the allusion is intriguing.

Richmond returned to his own likeness repeatedly throughout his life, though this feels arguably the most romantic. The National Portrait Gallery records a sequence of his self-portraits extending from a miniature of 1830, painted at the close of his association with the Ancients, through paintings and drawings of the 1840s and 1850s to more formal self-portraits of the later 1860s.[2] Painted in 1863, the present work occupies a revealing middle position between the youthful self-image of 1830 and the more official portraits of 1867–68, in which Richmond appears clad in a formal doctoral cap and gown.



Fig. 2 | Titian, Portrait of Gerolamo (?) Barbarigo, c.1510
The National Portrait Gallery, London

[1] George Richmond, *Account Book*, entry for 1863, National Portrait Gallery Heinz Archive.

[2] 'Early Victorian Portraits Catalogue: George Richmond', <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitExtended/mw05326/George-Richmond>.

