

# ARTINFO

## Philip Akkerman at Turin's Guido Costa

TURIN, Italy—[Guido Costa Projects](#) presents "Philip Akkerman: Self-Portraits," through April 28.

Almost unique in the panorama of contemporary painting, **Philip Akkerman** has dedicated himself unerringly to the self-portrait in all its myriad forms.

Observing sequentially the 2,314 self-portraits Akkerman has created, the viewer is faced with broad possibilities of interpretation. The most immediate concerns external physical changes due to aging and the tide of fashions; a more studied approach sees the influence of other artists. The most complex readings are guided by the slow alchemy of the pictorial material.

Delving into the work as a whole leads the viewer to discern fleeting sentimental revelations, or subtle mood twists. In contrast, the dimensions have over the years remained immutable from one painting to the next as the artist explores the possibilities inherent in a limited selection of formats.

This rigorous attention to method is also applied as the drawing on paper develops into the finished oil painting on board, with an occasional excursion into egg tempera.

The facial expression in these invariably three-quarter portraits is always slightly enigmatic. The resemblance is not always clear, and neither is the compositional balance within the picture plane. To date, neither a smile, nor expressions of sadness or anger have ever crept onto Akkerman's face. His self-portraits could perhaps best be defined as "pensive"—if not for the donning of a mane of hair, calottes, turbans or any of a vast assortment of other headwear.

Akkerman leads us into parallel worlds, where we come across exotic, grotesque and psychedelic imagery, occasionally rubbing shoulders with a style reminiscent of the old Flemish masters.