

## LISA'S TIPS FOR GREAT PORTRAITS

### Photos

With most portraits you will be working from photos, especially if you are creating a head and shoulders (vignette) painting. Here are a few things to keep in mind that have worked for me:

- Use a tripod!
- Get slightly above eye level with the subject. Do not shoot from below chin level. It may work for a photo but doesn't translate well to artwork...and it's very unflattering.
- Consider having the body slightly turned but have the subject looking at the camera. That way your reference won't look like a much shot
- Use natural light. A built-in flash will ruin a photo. I love window light. It is best to have more light on one side of the face to make your portrait more visually interesting and to reveal the form of the face.
- Avoid a busy background. Simple is best and a contrasting color is optimal. Nothing is more difficult than trying to find the edge of black hair against a black background.
- Take tons of photos. With digital cameras, there is no cost so why not be on the safe side?
- Become familiar with editing software such as Photoshop, Photoshop Elements, or a free online tool such as Gimp or Pixlr. There are lots of free ways to edit photos. Do some editing before you print and save yourself a lot of trouble.

### Page placement and size

- Plan your drawing so eyes are located at least 1/3 of the way down from the top of the paper (head and shoulders).
- For traditional portraits, try to work slightly under life-size. A good rule is the subject should be between 2/3 and actual size.

### Other random helpful tips

- Avoid painting distracting patterns. They distract from the subject matter. The same is true for vivid and dark colors.
- Measure the subject's face from the hairline to the bottom of the chin so you have an idea of what is life-size. Write that measurement down somewhere.
- Always print your reference on glossy photo paper or use a tablet (like an iPad).
- Paint hair in the direction it grows. Carefully look at your reference for this.
- The highlights or catch lights in the eyes should be the brightest, lightest value in your whole painting.

Need some assistance?

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