

Zara's Guide to Capturing Character: The Art of the Portrait

Step into the studio! Let's turn a blank canvas into a story.

- A portrait is more than just a face; it is a visual biography that reveals a person's mood, status, and personality through their posture and gaze.
- The rule of thirds suggests that placing the subject's eyes slightly above the centre line of the page creates a more natural and engaging composition.
- Artists use tone and shading to create three-dimensional depth, helping the face to appear rounded rather than flat on the paper.
- Exaggerating specific features, such as a wide smile or furrowed brows, helps the viewer understand the emotion the artist wants to communicate.
- Choosing the right medium—whether charcoal, watercolours, or soft pastels—changes the texture and 'feeling' of the final portrait.

Did you know? Did you know? Before the invention of the camera, portrait painting was the only way to record exactly what a person looked like. Many famous historical figures sat for hours—sometimes even days—without moving, just so an artist could capture the precise twinkle in their eye or the texture of their clothing!

Key vocabulary: Composition · Feature · Expression · Proportion · Medium · Perspective · Contrast · Tone