Lesson 5

PLANNING THE PORTRAIT

Lesson 5: Planning the Portrait

GRADE LEVEL: HIGH SCHOOL

DURATION: 90 MINUTES

OBJECTIVE:
Students will learn to develop a detailed plan for a commissioned portrait by exploring composition, background, and color schemes, creating preliminary sketches, and preparing for the project.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Sketchbook or drawing paper
- Pencils, erasers, fine liners, and colored pencils
- Reference photo examples (provided by teacher or students)
- Color wheel and examples of effective color schemes
- Rulers, grids, or proportional tools (optional)
- Digital devices (optional) for gathering or editing reference photos
- Materials planning worksheet

WARM-UP:
UNDERSTANDING COMPOSITION AND COLOR SCHEMES (15 MINUTES)
Goal: Introduce key considerations for planning a portrait.

Instructions:
- Discuss the three key planning elements:
  - Composition: How to arrange the subject, background, and negative space.
    - Show examples of portraits with different compositions: centered, rule of thirds, close-up, full-body, or dynamic angles.
    - Discuss focal points and balance in a portrait.
  - Background: How the background can complement or enhance the subject (e.g., simple solid colors, detailed scenes, abstract patterns).
  - Color Schemes: Explore ways to use color to convey mood, style, or harmony:
    - Monochromatic (variations of one color)
    - Complementary (colors opposite on the wheel)
    - Analogous (colors next to each other on the wheel)
  - Show visual examples to highlight these points and ask students:
    - "How does composition or color change the mood of a portrait?"
    - "What background styles work best for certain subjects?"

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PRELIMINARY SKETCHES AND FINAL DESIGN SELECTION (30 MINUTES)
Goal: Explore different ideas for the portrait and finalize a design.

Instructions:
- Step 1: Brainstorming Sketches
  - Students will create 3-5 small preliminary thumbnail sketches for their portrait:
  - Experiment with different compositions (close-up, rule of thirds, full figure).
  - Try varied background ideas (simple, complex, abstract).
  - Indicate rough color schemes with notes or light shading.
- Step 2: Peer Feedback
  - Pair students to discuss their thumbnail sketches. Encourage constructive questions:
  - "Which composition feels the strongest and why?"
  - "How does the background complement the subject?"
- Step 3: Final Design Selection
  - Students choose one thumbnail sketch to develop into a larger, detailed preliminary sketch.
- Include:
  - Clear subject placement and pose
  - Background design elements
  - Notes on color choices (with references to the color wheel)

ACTIVITY 2:

GATHERING AND ANALYZING REFERENCE PHOTOS (15 MINUTES)
Goal: Use accurate reference photos to inform portrait details.

Instructions:
- Step 1: Gathering References
  - If students are working on a real commission, they can collect reference photos from the client or use photos provided by the teacher (classmates, pets, family).
  - For students without access to client references, provide high-quality portrait examples for practice.
- Step 2: Analyze References
  - Ask students to consider the following when selecting photos:
    - Clarity: Are details of facial features and lighting visible?
    - Lighting: Does the light source create depth and dimension?
    - Expression: Does the photo capture the intended mood or personality?
- Students sketch quick studies (small) of key features like eyes, mouth, or hair from the reference photo to practice proportions and details.

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FINALIZING THE PLAN AND PREPARING A MATERIALS LIST (20 MINUTES)
Goal: Finalize sketches and outline materials needed for the portrait project.

Instructions:
- Step 1: Refine Final Sketch
  - Students complete a detailed sketch of their portrait design (8-10 minutes).
  - Emphasize proportions, facial features, and background placement.
  - Encourage students to write notes for colors, shading, and any key details.
- Step 2: Materials List
  - Provide a materials planning worksheet where students list all required tools and materials:
    - Paper/canvas size
    - Medium (pencils, charcoal, paint, etc.)
    - Color palette (specific paints, pencils, or pastels)
    - Any additional tools (brushes, blending tools, fixative spray)
- Students submit their final sketches and materials list to ensure they're prepared for the portrait creation phase.

CLOSING REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION: (10 MINUTES)
Goal: Reflect on the importance of planning in the artistic process.

Instructions:
- Facilitate a discussion:
  - "How did sketching multiple thumbnails help you choose a stronger design?"
  - "Why is gathering reference photos important for a successful portrait?"
  - "What challenges do you anticipate as you move forward with your portrait?"
- Reinforce that planning helps artists stay organized, meet client expectations, and create high-quality work.

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MODIFICATIONS FOR STUDENT NEEDS

FOR STUDENTS NEEDING SUPPORT:
- Provide printed examples of composition layouts and color schemes for inspiration.
- Offer guided steps for creating thumbnails and a simplified materials checklist.

FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS:
- Challenge students to experiment with unusual compositions (e.g., dynamic poses or unconventional angles).
- Require detailed notes on lighting, perspective, and texture in their final sketch.

ENRICHMENT ADD-ONS

DIGITAL PLANNING:
- Introduce software like Procreate, Adobe Photoshop, or Canva for creating digital thumbnails and testing color palettes.

LIVE DEMO:
- Conduct a live sketching session where you create a thumbnail and refine it into a detailed sketch in real time.

CLIENT COLLABORATION SIMULATION:
- Pair students as "artists" and "clients" to provide feedback on preliminary sketches before finalizing designs.