

Selecting a photograph for a portrait.

When selecting photographs to be developed into portraits, care is necessary in choosing or taking an appropriate photograph, as **what makes a good photograph does not always make a good portrait.**

An uninteresting photo will result in an uninteresting portrait. By this I mean one that does not have much of a range in contrast or tonal values. A great photo, with a good light source, contrast range, tonal values and level of detail has the potential to be a great portrait.

Guidelines to get the most effective portraits:

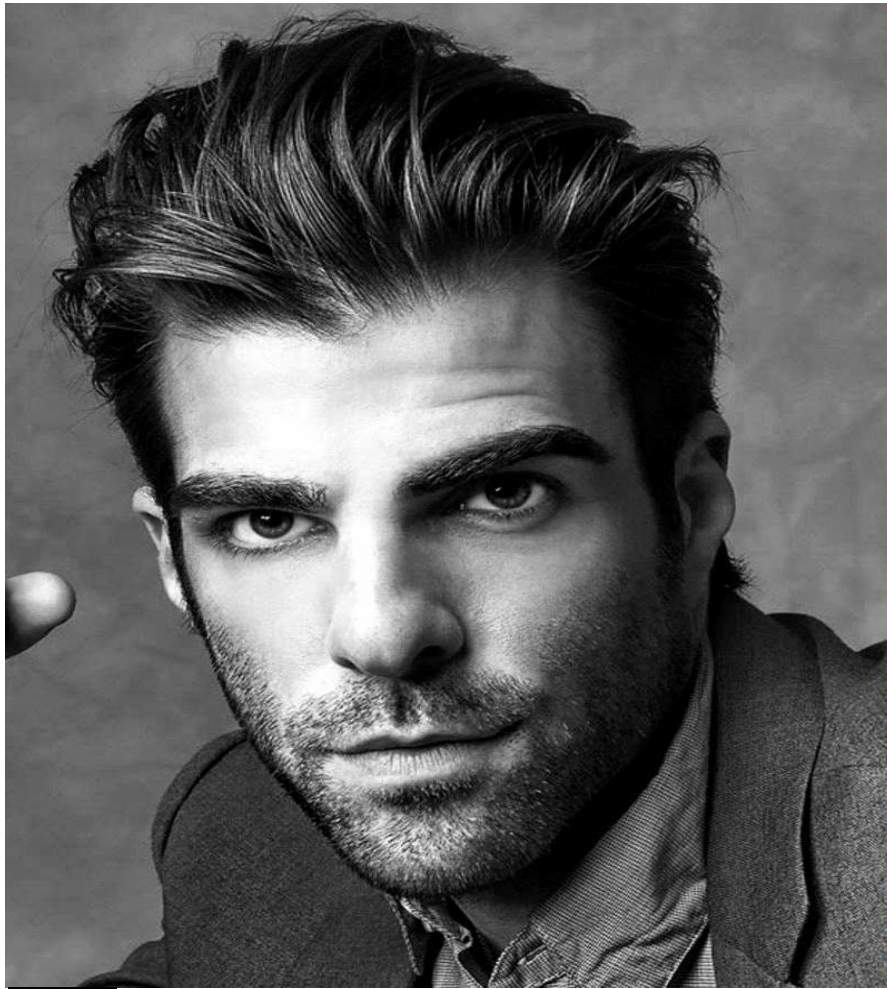
- **Pose:** The subject should be facing slightly off to the side, but not full profile and the face should be as relaxed and natural as possible.
- **Smiles:** Smiles are certainly allowed, but take care that they do not look like forced grins, held too long. Remember people expect that photographs are of a fleeting instant, but expect portraits to be slower, so they will not necessarily expect the same expression. They will also (hopefully) be on the wall a long time, so try to make sure the subject is likely to be happy with their expression.
- **Eyes:** The eyes can be looking directly at the camera, but this is really an issue of what you would like most for your particular portrait. Eyes that look directly at the camera result in a portrait that looks in your direction no matter what angle you look at it from, it 'follows you' around the room.
- **Light:** *Flash* may be acceptable depending on the effect required - but remember the use of a flash tends to bleach out photographs so as not to show all the imperfections, however **in many cases it will create a flat and lifeless portrait.**

Natural light coming from **straight behind the camera or from where the subject is looking is best.** This will light up the main features and give good shadows. The light should **not** be coming from behind the subject, nor should it be reflected light coming from everywhere as this will make the image very flat. **Shadows are good**, they give depth, but **only in contrast to light** so please make sure the whole face isn't in shadow.

A small / poor quality photograph will not show enough detail, bear in mind the size of your finished portrait and how much the original picture will be enlarged. If you really have nothing suitable some artistic licence will be required especially on the smaller details for example eyes, eyelashes, hair detail etc.

Remember the better the reference photo the better the finished portrait!

If you are still unsure on your choice of photograph please contact me for help.



GOOD: Nice wide range light-dark tones, good details



BAD: Small & poor quality – no details (e.g eye, hair detail)



BAD: Full (face on) profile, white washed, no expression

Composition

- **Background:** If you are happy with the background in your photo it will be done as supplied, however it is no problem to remove undesired elements e.g: a person, light fitting, flying duck! etc. The majority of backgrounds will be blurred to varying degrees to give focus to the main subject in the foreground or if you wish the background can be completely replaced with a blended colour allowing complete focus on the subject(s). The subject(s) in your photo may be moved horizontally and/or vertically in relation to the original photo in order to achieve the best composition on the canvas.
- **No. of subjects:** The more subjects the higher the cost due to the increased amount of work required. A subject refers to a person, animal, vehicle etc anything which is not classed as a background, for example two people with a dog in front of a house would be 3 subjects (the house being the background), a person standing in front of car would be 2 subjects. For the best results smaller sized paintings are more suited to a small number of subjects.