

Pet Portraits

Lesson plan prepared by Adam Graham, Regional ArtReach, ArtsSmarts, and Autism Arts Coordinator, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Western Branch Yarmouth

Suggested Grade/Age Levels

Suitable for P-12. Younger students will need more assistance.

Subject Areas

- Visual Arts
- Photography

Introduction

Taking inspiration from Shari Hatt's dog portrait *Untitled (Sophie)*, students will learn basic photography concepts in the process of making their own pet portrait.



Shari Hatt

Untitled (Sophie), 2001-2002

Chromogenic print (Fujicolour) on paper, AP (Ed. 10)

38.4 x 38.3 cm

Collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Gift of the Artist, Montreal, Quebec, 2006 with assistance from The Art & Pearl van der Linden Foundation

Set Up:

- Look for a spot with good light to take your pet portraits. A nice bright area with a window behind you is best!
- It's great if your location has a clean background of all the same colour. You want your pet to really stand out! If not, you can create one with paper, a pillow from a couch, a bedsheet, etc. Try to use something without distracting patterns or designs.
- You will probably need something to keep your pet's attention. Treats or toys can be a big help!

Materials:

- Camera (smartphone or digital camera)
- Background material (if necessary)
- Pet

Process:

- The lighting is the most important thing for your portrait. If the light is coming from behind you, you will have an easier time getting the detail on your pets that you want. If your pet is in a window with the light behind them, you will end up with more of a silhouette and it will be harder to see details.
- It is great if your location has a clean background of all the same colour. You want your pet to really stand out! If not, you can create one with paper, a pillow from a couch, a bedsheet. Something without patterns or designs will be less distracting.
- If you have a portrait mode on your camera it can ensure your pet is the focus of your photo. It will blur the background, helping your pet to be the center of attention.
- It can be easier if you have someone to help keep your pet where you want them. Use treats or toys to get them interested!
- Try to capture your pet looking right into the camera. This will make your result feel more like a portrait. Getting closer to your pet is also better than taking the picture from further away. Fill your frame with your subject.
- Keep the Rule of Thirds in mind. If you use imaginary lines to divide your photograph into 9 rectangles (make thirds vertically and horizontally), you want to keep your main point of interest on one of those lines. It can be even stronger to put your point of interest where two of those lines intersect.

- Be patient and take lots of pictures! You can try different angles and points of view to capture different emotions from your pet. Taking pictures at different times of day might also give you different results.

Resources:

- Shari Hatt, artist website - <https://sharihatt.ca/>
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