

ART from the PAST

PROJECTS

FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

People & Portraits

Ancient artists created portraits of famous kings, mythical gods & beloved family members. They tried to capture a likeness, memorialize a memory & portray an inner spirit in their paintings & sculptures.

Egyptian Mummy Portrait

During the second century B.C., mourners put wooden portrait panels on Egyptian mummies. Startlingly realistic, these portraits seem alive. Using Greek painting techniques, the artist makes the boy gaze directly at us, his likeness preserved forever.

- ◆ Look in a mirror to draw a self-portrait. Look closely at the proportions & shapes of your face.
- ◆ Sketch large shapes first with chalk or pastels. Add details. Blend colors with fingers or a twist of tissue.

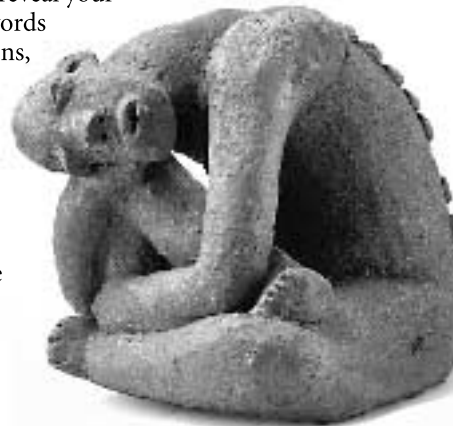


Portrait of a Boy, 2nd century C.E.; Roman period Egyptian, Encaustic on wood; H. 15 3/8 in. (39 cm), W. 7 1/2 in. (19 cm); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Edward S. Harkness, 1918 (18.9.2)

Ancient African Figure

Huddled & still, this African clay figure seems sad. The dropped head & bent knee convey its mood. Though created 700 years ago in Jenne-Jeno, near present day Mali, the mood of this portrait still touches us today.

- ◆ Learn more about the Mali Empire & Djenné figures at: www.nmfa.si.edu/exhibits/resources/mali.
- ◆ Your posture can reveal your mood. Without words or facial expressions, show tiredness, anger, excitement & fear.
- ◆ Model moods for each other. Draw your poses.
- ◆ Make a clay figure whose posture shows a mood.



Seated Figure, 13th century; Mali, Inland Niger Delta Terracotta; H. 10 in. (25.4 cm); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Buckeye Trust and Mr. and Mrs. Milton Rosenthal Gifts, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, and Harris Brisbane Dick and Rogers Funds, 1981 (1981.218)

Greek Portrait Bust

Greek portraits showed perfection, balance & beauty. This bust shows Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, powerful in war & wise in peace. Her portrait is classic, well proportioned & smooth, with a serene, timeless look.

- ◆ Cut a paper portrait of a mythical face. Score, bend & fringe for 3D contours & curls.
- ◆ Sketch shapes. Cut & attach large shapes first. Add nose, eyes, hair, etc.
- ◆ Mount on black paper & display in a gallery of gods.



Head of Athena, late 3rd-2nd century B.C.; Hellenistic Greek; Marble; 19 in. (48.26 cm) The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1996 (1996.178)

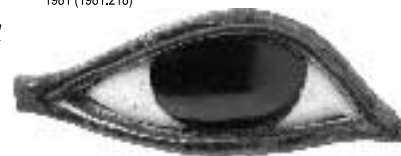
Photos of Native Americans

Edward Curtis (1868-1952) spent decades photographing Native Americans, their tribal culture & character. He paid close attention to lighting, background, shadows, poses & expressions of those he photographed. His photos are artistic & informative.

- ◆ Look at Edward Curtis photos in the Library of Congress: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/curthome.html>.
- ◆ Take a photo portrait of a friend. Plan the clothing, pose & background. Experiment with expressions & poses.
- ◆ Change the lighting. Create shadows. Take close-up shots & ones from afar.
- ◆ Evaluate your pictures. Try again with techniques that worked.



Edward Curtis, American
Chaiwa-Tewa (The North American Indian; v.12), 1922
Photogravure. The Hopi (portfolio); plate no. 414
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division,
Edward S. Curtis Collection, cp12015



Eye from a Coffin; Egypt, Late Period (724 - 333 BCE)
Glass; Length: 2 3/4 in. (6.99 cm); Los Angeles County
Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. William Leon Graves, 45.23.55
Photograph ©2006 Museum Associates/LACMA

Egyptian Eye

This eye amulet from an Egyptian coffin provided magical protection. Look at its shape. Notice how the eyelid covers the eye. If the whole iris circle shows, the person looks wide-eyed & surprised. Try it & see!

Early American Portrait

Portraits can show how people want to appear. The Mason children, David, age 8, Joanna, age 6, & Abigail, age 4, posed for this painted portrait in 1670. Details hint about their wealthy, privileged life in the Boston Puritan Colony. What do you notice?

- ◆ Draw your family portrait as you know them—not in a pose!
- ◆ Is your brother always on the go? Your sister buried in her books? How can you show that? Include many details to tell about your family.
- ◆ How will you draw yourself?



The Freake-Gibbs Painter, American, active 1670
David, Joanna, and Abigail Mason, 1670
oil on canvas; 39 1/2 x 42 1/2 in.; Frame: 42 3/4 x 45 1/2 x 1 1/2 in.
The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd, 1979.7.3

Look in the Mercury News

Look at pictures & portraits of people in the newspaper. What do their expressions & postures tell you?

Cut out half of a large face from the newspaper. Glue it to a paper. Can you draw the other half?