



How to Take an Artist Portrait

While it can seem like a chore, having a well taken artist's portrait on hand is as important as an artist statement. Galleries may need your photo for a myriad of reasons and they often need them on a moments notice. Instead of scrambling at the last minute to try and find someone to take your photo or looking through stacks of candid pictures. Plan ahead and contact a local photographer for their portraiture rates or set aside a few hours with a friend.

Ideally you should have two different types of portraits for the gallery to choose from. The most versatile option is a simple three-quarter (waist up) portrait against a neutral backdrop. Using a three-quarter composition as opposed to a head and shoulders photo, offers more options for editing and cropping the image later on. If feasible you should have a portrait taken in your studio as well. When shooting these types of portraits make sure have some photos of yourself engaged in your work and a few where you are simply in the space alongside your work and looking at the camera. Studio portraits are a great way to give potential customers further insight into your process as a craft artist.

While an artist portrait should reflect a fun and creative personality, it must also represent you as a professional. Here are a few basic dos & don'ts as well as general tips on how to take an appropriate artist portrait at home.

Laura O'Connor

Dos and Don'ts of a Good Artist Portrait

- Update your photo every 5 years.
- Convey a relaxed, warm, and sincere image.
- Wear a simple top without any distracting logos, text or overly-bold patterns.
- Tidy your studio before taking any photographs.
- Set your camera to its highest resolution setting.
- Limit Photoshop use to basic touch ups and cropping.
- Submit a colour image, colour can be easily converted to black & white if need be.

Don't (do believe that we have seen all of these don'ts)

- Don't attempt to take a hand-held self-portrait.
- Don't take a photo against a cluttered background.
- Don't take a photo with non-related people in the background.
- Don't take a photo taken with another artists work in the background.
- Don't settle for an out-of-focus or slightly blurry image.



Meghan Wagg (Edmonton, AB) - Jewellery Artist
This is a good example of an artist portrait because she is against a neutral background and is displaying and example of her work by wearing the piece.

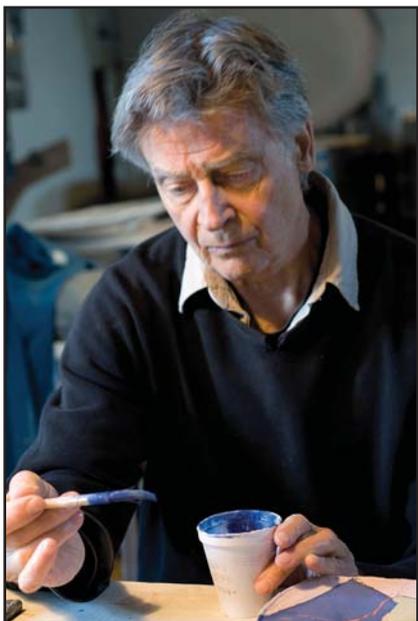
Tips on how to take a good portrait

Composition

- If you don't have access to a tripod, find a friend with a steady hand to take the photo.
- Position yourself on a slight angle to the camera to add dimension.
- Make sure you are in a natural and comfortable pose.
- When looking through the camera lens find a good composition and then take two steps back. This will give more options for cropping the photograph later.
- Once you've set up the composition, take a few minutes to look around and make sure there are no distracting elements or unnecessary clutter.



Linda McBain-Cuyler (Edmonton, AB) - Fibre Artist
The viewers eye is drawn to Linda first because she centred in the photograph. The background and the foreground tell the story of what type of artist she is.



John Chalke (Calgary, AB) - Ceramic Artist
This portrait works because he is working in the studio where there is good lighting which causes the focus to be on the subject and not the background.

Lighting

- Using natural lighting can take more planning but almost always yields better results than on-camera flashes.
- The entry hall to any home can be an ideal place to open a door and use the light
- Keep an eye out for harsh shadows and bright highlights.
- When shooting outdoors position yourself in a way that the sun light hits you from the side rather than directly in front or behind you.
- Make sure to shoot during the morning or later in the afternoon when the light is warmer and softer.
- Overcast days are the best if taking an outdoor shot.



Here are two other good examples using natural light are Kari Woo (Canmore, AB) - Jewellery Artist and Bee Kingdom (Calgary, AB) - Glass Artists