

The Children's Fine Art Portraiture Guide

How to Choose the Right Artist to Capture Your Child's True personality!

by M Theresa Brown and Stephen Filarsky of PortraitsNC.com



Lydia Pastel Portrait by Theresa 24 x 36

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Wonderful! You're ready to have an artist create your child's portrait!

Fine Art Portraits, unlike photography, can capture the subtle expressions and personality of your child in beautifully creative colors and textures. A camera and its resulting print simple cannot capture all the colors that the human eye sees! But how do you find the perfect artist for you?

ARTIST'S STYLE

Perhaps the most important aspect to consider first when selecting an artist to create a fine art portrait of your child is whether you like the artist's STYLE. Every artist is human and thus different. Some are very realistic and some are very abstract. Some may be very colorful and others may be very traditional. When viewing the work of an artist, does that artist's style appeal to you? If the styles and the examples that you see appeal to you online, does the artist have a studio where you can see other actual examples of his/her work? An artist's style is his personal style and technique. It cannot be altered to suit the client's expectations. So it is best to select based on the idea that what you see, is what you get!

ARTIST and CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

That brings us to the next step when selecting an artist and that is the relationship between you and the artist. Here are some important aspects to consider:

Can you talk comfortably with the artist? And does your artist speak in a manner that you can understand? There are no rules that says an artist must speak in lots of vague "art talk!"

If your child is with you, does the artist interact with your child? After all, many fine art portrait artists will be taking the photographs of your child!

If your child is not available personally and you need to provide the photographs of your child, and no session will be necessary, will the artist work from your supplied photographs?

Do you feel as though the artist is professional and experienced?

Does the artist treat your questions courteously?

Does the artist have testimonials or references from other clients he/she has worked with?

Do you feel that you could work comfortably with the artist if little changes needed to be made to your portrait after its completion? This is an important consideration as your portrait will be displayed in your home for many years and you want to engage an artist who will work for you and with you!

This is where the necessary experience separates the professional artist from the unprofessional!

The ARTIST'S Preferred MEDIUM

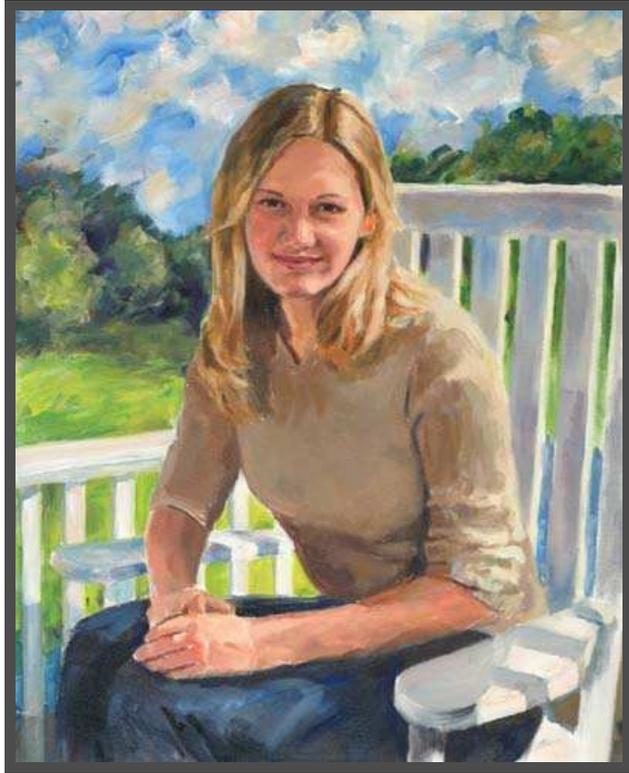
Many people do not have a clear idea of what the differences are with the assorted mediums that artists use. If you like the style of the artist, do you like the medium that the artist uses the most when creating a child's portrait? Your artist should be willing to explain to you what he/she uses and the reasons why they enjoy that particular medium. All of today's materials are designed to bring you many, many years of enjoyment so longevity of your artwork is no longer the issue it once was in some of the mediums.

Artists all handle the fine art mediums differently and can alter the normal look of a medium but here are the basics of the most commonly used:

OIL-a traditional oil based pigment used in all styles of portraiture. The colors can be very rich. A oil portrait can be subdued like an Old Master's painting or bright and vibrant. Normally worked on a canvas or linen stretched surface.

Here are two oil portraits, the same subject, a young woman. One is formal and traditional, the other is casual and impressionistic. The third painting is casual yet traditionally painted.





WATERCOLOR - A water based pigment that is usually a looser style than many of the other mediums. The traditional use is lighter and more transparent than the other mediums. Usually worked on traditional watercolor paper.

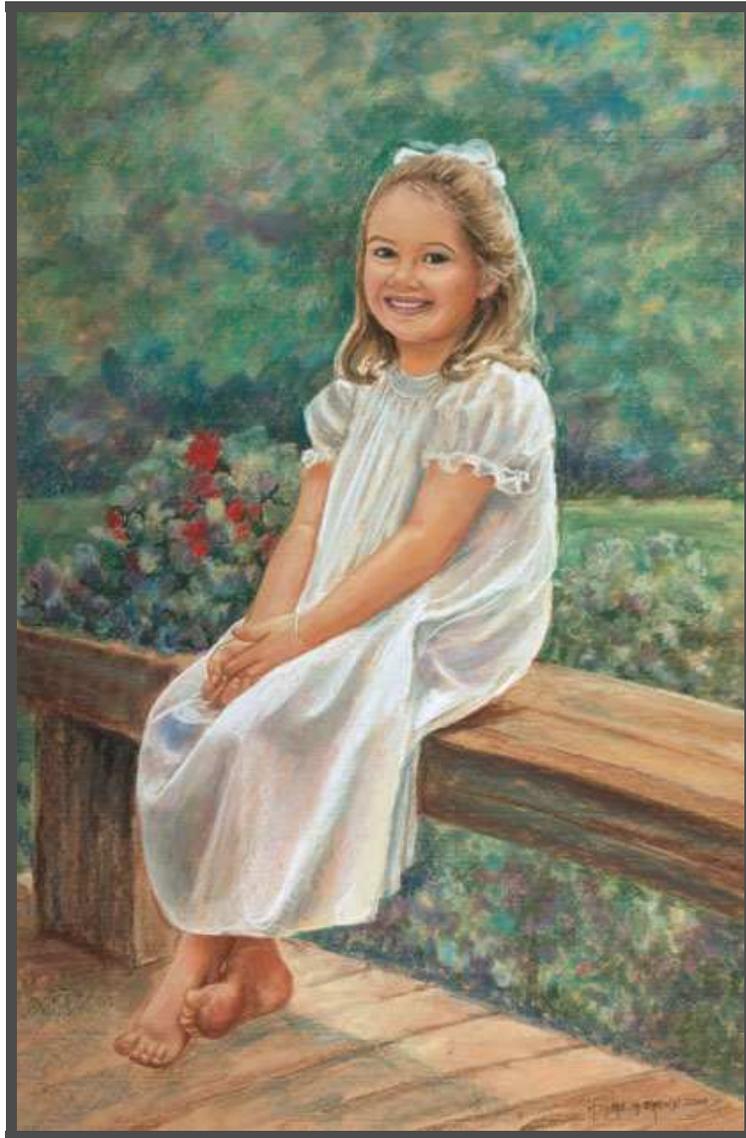


Watercolor Portrait



Watercolor – Casual and Impressionistic

PASTELS- Soft pastels are the most often used pastels rather than oil pastels. The results vary greatly by the paper surface as well as the skills and techniques of the artist. The colors can range from very light to rich darks.



Pastel Portrait

ACRYLICS- a water based pigment that is more opaque than watercolor. Acrylics can be applied to many surfaces as well as having special additives that can create varied surface textures. Acrylics can be painted thinly on paper for the look of a watercolor or thickly on canvas for more of an oil painting look.

PENCILS- Both colored and traditional black and white pencils enjoy a following among their admirers and need little explanation.



Pencil Portrait

YOUR CHILD

There is no one "perfect age" to have your child's fine art portrait created! All ages are appropriate ages. Many people don't stop with just one portrait. They may have a smaller one created for a gift, a large one for the livingroom. Perhaps another portrait with all the children together. Perhaps a sports collage or an 18th birthday portrait. The combinations are endless. There are traditional portraits of course, but there are no rules as to when, how and what your portrait must be!

Most artists today will schedule a photography session to gather the reference photos necessary to create your fine art portrait. When you have spoken with your artist, he/she will share with you everything that you need to know to have a fun, relaxed photography session either at your home, the art studio or a particular location.

Many parents forget that the end result is not the photograph, so if there is a smudge on a dress, a crooked bow, or a loose strand of hair ,don't panic. Let the artist do his/her job!

It is nice to select clothes for the sitting that are timeless and not too trendy. Have your child wear the clothes whose style endures the test of time! Keep in mind that a colorful dress, shirt, bouquet of flowers, etc. will be an intergral part of the reflected light around the subject so provide clothing that you want your child to be painted in without trying to later alter the colors! Remember that your home decor will change over the years. Have your portrait created with the portrait in mind, not your livingroom couch!

The BACKGROUND

A background in a fine art portrait is always secondary to the subject. Your child is the focal point and the background simply provides a setting. It could be near a favorite play area, a pet, the family home in the background, or any place that adds meaning to your overall image. You do not want it to overwhelm your subject. Keep it simple and in keeping with the character of your family. By now you would have discussed with the artist whether or not the feel of your portrait is going to be formal? Casual? Playful? Let your original discussion with the artist be your guide.





Three different treatments of the background. The first, an oil portrait is a detailed and place specific background of three boys and their cat on their back porch steps. The second is a pastel, head and shoulders of two girls, the background is indistinct but definitely conveys the feeling of their backyard. The third portrait, another pastel has basically no background and all the focus is on the subject.

The PHOTOGRAPHY SESSION

Very few artists today create fine art portraits from live sittings. Most families are too busy to devote the hours and days required for such work. Your artist will schedule a photography session around your schedule but you may have to give and take a little. Weather does play a role in the lighting and it is important to the final portrait to have reference photos with an enhancing light.

Depending on the age of the child, many children do better one on one with the artist. Occasionally it may be tempting for parents or grandparents to "make the child behave". But a professional artist will know intuitively what to do and say to build the necessary rapport with your child whether you have a 3 year old or an 18 year old! Let him/her do her job!

The length of the photography session will vary according to how the artist likes to work overall. A sensitive, intuitive, professional artist may capture what he/she is seeking in the reference material of your child in the space of a few hours. Others may prefer to come stay at your house for several days in order to gather the same knowledge. There is no "right" way. Always know ahead of time what is

involved in the way your artist handles the photography session

Most artists nowadays can sit down with you after the photography session and share the images with you the same day. It is possible that a sketchpad can be used by the artist to sketch out various sizes to help you visualize the completed portrait size better. Many clients have an idea of what they want in a subject pose but that can change when they see the photographs! An experienced artist will also recommend certain poses. A skilled artist will be able to bring the best elements of different photos together to create the perfect look that you are seeking!

YOUR INVESTMENT

As in all things, what you invest in your portrait can vary greatly! In selecting an artist, price is usually a consideration to most people. Regardless of what you invest in your portrait, think of how much you have invested in say, your car. Where will it be in 10 years? Your portrait will still be displayed on your wall! And as the years pass, it will become one of the most valuable emotional items that you own.

But all the other factors must also come into play to have the perfect artist for your particular needs.

All artists have different fee schedules. Regardless of what you will invest in your actual portrait and depending on what is involved, your artist will give you a breakdown of any additional fees. Your artist may charge a creation fee, many artists collect a separate fee for the photography, all will add travel and mileage outside a certain circumference. Framing is usually not included in the final investment but always ask the artist whom they would recommend. Some artists can do the framing as well for an additional cost.

Most artists will collect a deposit at the photography sitting upon an agreement as to size, medium and any additional considerations. A professional artist will give you a time frame and also any information you may need. Some artists will let you see your portrait before it is completed, some do not.

Always ask questions if you are in doubt!

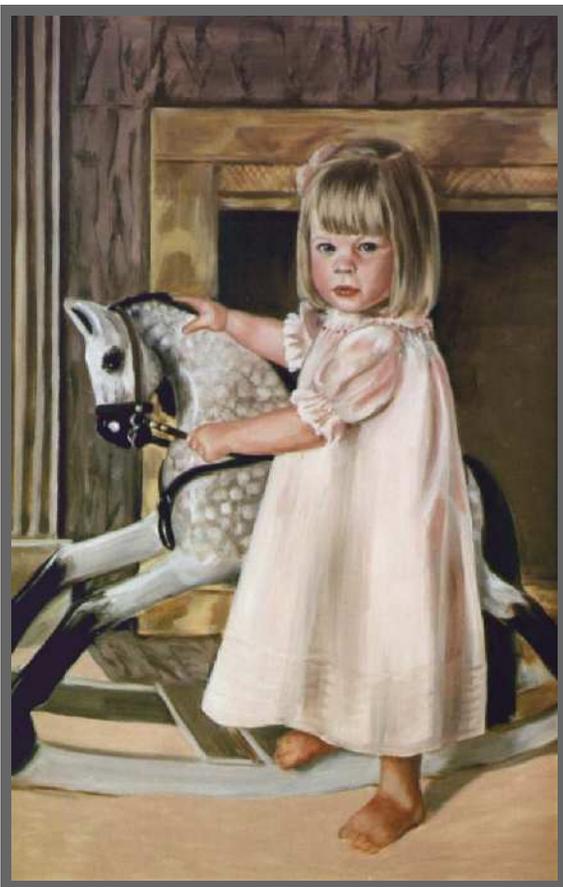
Every artist will create a one of a kind original for you. But beforehand you must have already looked at style, compatibility, testimonials and mediums to then see if what you invest in your artist is compatible with your needs.

Every artist will create a one of a kind original for you. But If you have researched your artist beforehand you will have already looked at style, compatibility, testimonials and mediums to then see if what you invest in your artist is compatible with your needs and your finances.

SUMMARY

Remember that although your artist will be a creative professional, he/she is also working for you. Don't be afraid to ask your questions. If you have a deadline, let the artist know well in advance. Be reasonable in your expectations. Some artists will only create a few pieces during the year. Others are more prolific. But a good fine art portrait artist is always professional, courteous, skilled and willing to walk you through the creation process for having a beautiful portrait created for your child! And that same artist should be easy to talk to if you have any concerns, questions or suggestions about your fine art portrait.

In every original work of art, a piece of your artist goes into the creation of the art! That is the nature of the human element in art and in the beauty of a fine art portrait. If you like your artist's style, medium and investment range, then the knowledge that you are having a beautiful, one of a kind, fine art portrait created of your child, by an artist whom you like and respect, is a perfect match in harmony! And that alone, is priceless!



REMEMBER, WE ARE ALWAYS HAPPY TO CHAT WITH YOU ABOUT YOUR PORTRAIT. SO FEEL FREE TO CALL OR EMAIL US. *Theresa and Steve*

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