UNIT THREE: SPACE AND VOLUME

LESSON 17: SELF-PORTRAITS  
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art elements: line, shape, space  
design principles: proportion, contrast/value, unity, harmony,  
art skills: drawing  
perception skills: edges, spaces, relationships, light/shadow, gestalt  
national standards: 1a,b,c; 2a,b,c; 5a,

OBJECTIVES: Students will  
• review the general guidelines for facial structure  
• review guidelines for using a grid for accurate reproduction of a photograph  
• create a self-portrait using a grid method.

SCRIPTURE: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17  
• Copy this Scripture into your journal, meditate on it; write a brief response about what this means to you.  
• How does this scripture describe you?  
• What makes up the real you?

VOCABULARY: Write these in your journal with the definitions (see Appendix).  
• foreshortening  
• pupils  
• nostrils  
• iris

ART HISTORY - Go to the library with your journal and sketchbook.  
• Look for images by Rien Poortvliet (a remarkable contemporary Dutch artist). His titles include, He Was One of Us (my recommendation for this lesson), Dogs, Noah’s Ark, Daily Life in Holland in the Year 1566, In My Grandfather’s House.  
• Describe his technique. How does he use the lights and darks? What word describes this? How does the artist achieve this “sketchy” look in his paintings?

SKETCHBOOK  
Study faces of family and friends. Get them to pose for you and draw thumbnail sketches of just eyes, ears, noses, mouths, and hair. Begin with line drawings and add shading/modeling. Do many.

VISUAL MEMORY EXERCISES  
Go to the Visual Memory Section and practice the exercises for this lesson in your sketchbook.

INTERPRETATIONS OF SELF
Self-portraits do not have to be photographic to be believable. Many artists choose to symbolize or even to distort their likeness. Do some extra library research and find self-portraits by Vincent van Gogh, Norman Rockwell, Kathy Kohlwitz, Chuck Close. A student, however, should learn faithful, life-like rendering just to have the experience of doing it.

Some self-portraits include the whole figure. In these images there might be foreshortening in which a hand might be resting on the arm of a chair, but is coming toward you in the picture plane. A foreshortened image may grow larger as it comes toward the viewer, and it will have parts overlapping as in this hand. The fingers come forward as the palm recedes. Shading/modeling techniques provide highlights and shadows to produce depth.

It is important to study facial features carefully, and even to know the names and labels. For example, the pupil is the darkest part of the eye that becomes larger or smaller to adjust the amount of light entering the retina. The iris is the attractive colored part of the eye. When you are able to draw or paint the eyes accurately, you will have made major steps toward capturing the essence of a personality and making the image believable.
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SUPPLIES
• pencils, #2, #3, #4, #6
• erasers, kneaded and vinyl
• ruler
• good drawing paper
• CHOOSE FROM THE FOLLOWING:
  • 5”x7” or 8”x10” professional photo of yourself, OR
  • digital snapshot of yourself

ACTIVITY
Since the artworks on this page were created with Polaroid cameras (now virtually "extinct"), it has been necessary to adjust this lesson to the more recent development of digital cameras, therefore adjusting the size of the finished artworks.

PROFESSIONAL PHOTO:
• Use an 8”x10” professional photo of yourself if available. If you have only a 5”x7”, have it enlarged to exactly 8”x10”.

DIGITAL SNAPSHOT:
• Enlarge and/or crop the photo to obtain an 8”x10” with your image taking up most of the space.
• Using computer photo software, erase or paint out objects at the sides of your image. You may leave in, ignore, or paint out any objects directly behind you.

BOTH PROFESSIONAL AND DIGITAL IMAGES:
• Make at least 2 black and white copies.
• Use a very sharp pencil to draw a 1” grid over one of the copies. Be accurate in your measurements. The other copy is for reference while drawing, since grid lines obscure some details.
• Draw an 8”x10” rectangle on good drawing paper and measure a 1” grid in it. Draw lightly.
• Begin with the image outline and draw lightly. Reproduce the same proportions in each square that you see in the photo squares.
• Add shading/modeling, using the second black and white photo as reference.
• You may leave in or erase your grid lines on the finished self-portrait.

SAVE YOUR BLACK & WHITE PHOTO GRID FOR THE NEXT LESSON!