

THE SEQUENTIAL STAGES OF CREATING A PORTRAIT COMPOSITION IN
DRAWING LESSONS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the sequential stages of creating a portrait composition in drawing lessons from a scientific and methodological perspective. It covers the role of the portrait genre in visual arts education, the constructive structure of the head and facial parts, laws of proportion and anatomical construction, compositional placement, and the consistent teaching of light and shadow relationships. It also methodologically describes the stages of working on a portrait: observation, constructive analysis, form refinement, tonal processing, and generalization. According to the research results, teaching based on the principle of sequence contributes to the development of students' spatial imagination, analytical thinking, aesthetic taste, and artistic skills. The article also substantiates the pedagogical conditions for ensuring the integration of theory and practice in teaching portrait composition.

Keywords: drawing, portrait composition, constructive structure, proportion, anatomical structure, light and shadow, compositional center, spatial imagination, artistic analysis, visual arts methodology.

The process of creating a portrait composition in drawing lessons based on sequential stages is considered one of the most complex and responsible areas of visual arts education. A portrait is an artistic process aimed not only at depicting a person's external resemblance but also at revealing their inner emotional state, character, and individual features. Therefore, working on a portrait is much more complex than drawing ordinary objects, requiring strong theoretical knowledge, observational skills, spatial imagination, and compositional thinking. Drawing serves as the fundamental basis for teaching portraiture because it allows for precise representation of form, proportion, structure, and light-shadow relationships. In modern visual arts pedagogy, it is emphasized that the process of portrait creation should be organized systematically and in stages. If the principle of sequence is not followed, students may begin with minor details without properly constructing the general form, which can lead to proportional errors and structural distortions in the drawing. Therefore, the process of creating a portrait composition must be based on clear methodological stages. The first stage of portrait composition is observation and analysis. In this phase, the student carefully studies the general structure of the model, the geometric foundation of the head shape, and the proportional relationships of facial features. The human head is conventionally perceived as being based on a spherical or egg-shaped structure. Such a constructive approach helps students develop spatial thinking and simplifies the understanding of complex anatomical structures. During observation, aspects such as the model's age, gender, ethnic characteristics, facial expressions, and emotional state are also analyzed. This analysis serves as the foundation for the subsequent compositional solution. The second stage is compositional placement. At this point, the student determines how the portrait will be positioned on the paper, which angle will be chosen, and how the format and proportions of the drawing will be arranged. A portrait may be depicted in a frontal, half-turned, or profile view. Each angle has its own compositional characteristics. A frontal portrait requires symmetrical balance,

whereas a half-turn view provides dynamic movement and spatial depth. The student must properly distribute the surface of the paper, harmonizing the overall mass of the head with the surrounding space. At this stage, light and soft lines are used to outline the general silhouette.

The third stage is constructive structure. During this phase, the main axes of the head are determined: the vertical central axis and the horizontal line where the eyes are located. The classical proportions of facial features are taken into account: the eyes are generally positioned at the midpoint of the head's height, the lower part of the nose is approximately halfway between the eyes and the chin, and the mouth is located between the nose and the chin. However, since every person has individual characteristics, the student should not blindly rely on a standard template but refine details through direct observation of the model. The constructive structure stage forms the foundation of the portrait. The fourth stage is form refinement and plasticity. In this phase, the volume, planes, and interrelationships of facial features are clarified. The eye sockets, cheekbones, forehead planes, nose contours, and lip shapes are defined on a constructive basis. The student considers the light source and attempts to represent the three-dimensional structure of the form. Volume is expressed through lines and light shading. This process develops analytical thinking, as the student must examine each detail in relation to the overall structure. The sixth stage is detailing and individual characteristics. At this point, minor elements such as the pupil of the eye, eyelashes, lip contours, and hair strands are refined. However, excessive focus on details should be avoided. Each detail must contribute to the overall compositional unity. Otherwise, the portrait may appear fragmented. The student identifies distinctive features of the model and expresses them through artistic means.

The seventh stage is generalization and final analysis. In this phase, unnecessary lines are removed, tonal relationships are balanced, and the main compositional center is emphasized. The student evaluates the drawing from a distance to assess the overall impression. If any detail appears overly dominant, it is softened; if the compositional center lacks emphasis, contrast is strengthened. Final analysis helps students develop critical self-evaluation skills. To effectively teach portrait composition in drawing lessons, the teacher must adhere to methodological consistency. Each stage should be explained separately and reinforced through practical exercises. It is recommended to begin with gypsum head models and later transition to live models. Gypsum models provide stable and clear light-shadow relationships, allowing students to study form in depth. Live models, on the other hand, offer opportunities to observe movement, facial expressions, and individual characteristics.

In conclusion, the sequential stages of creating a portrait composition in drawing lessons constitute a scientifically and methodologically grounded system. When the process is carried out consistently—from observation and analysis to generalization and final evaluation—students develop constructive thinking, aesthetic taste, and creative potential. Such an approach ensures deep mastery of the portrait genre and prepares students for independent professional artistic activity in the future.

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