



Commissioning A Portrait Painting

Guide

Discover the importance of selecting the right artist
and communicating your vision effectively



Example of a concept portrait.

Original photo shot as reference by the artist



Introduction

Commissioning a custom portrait is a meaningful and exciting journey. Whether it's to commemorate a loved one, celebrate an achievement, or capture a cherished memory, selecting the right artist and clearly conveying your vision are essential for a successful collaboration. This guide offers insights to help you navigate the process, ensuring a final piece you will treasure for generations.

Why Choose a Custom Portrait?

A custom portrait is more than just an image; it's a timeless keepsake that encapsulates emotions, stories, and character. Unlike photographs, painted portraits add depth, texture, and artistry that create a unique connection to the subject. Oil portraits, in particular, offer vibrancy and longevity that outlasts photo prints by hundreds of years, preserving your memories in a truly special way. A painting and a gifted artist can pull off a miracle that no photo can quite do: make the subject appear as they see themselves.

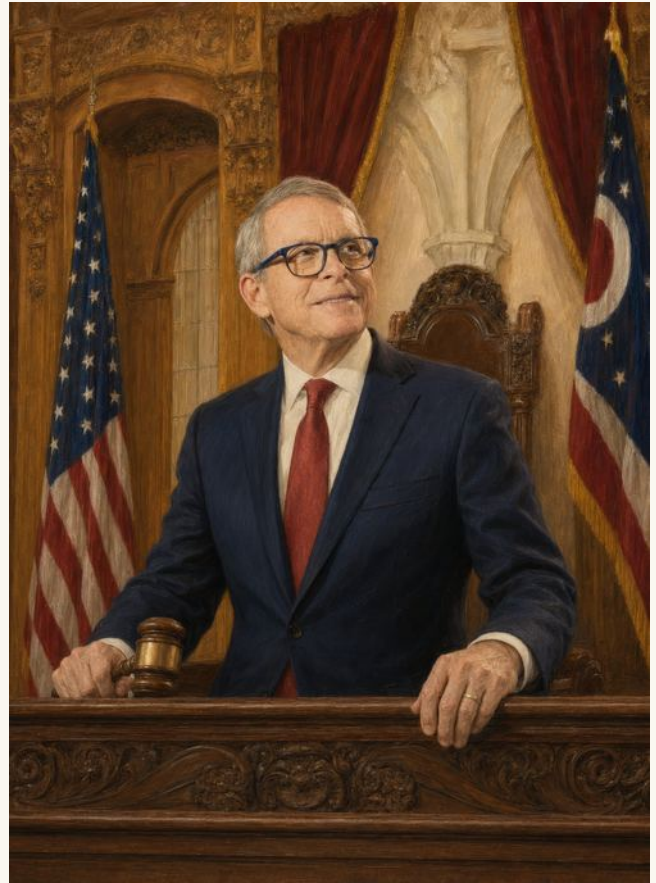
Selecting the Right Artist

Review Their Portfolio

Ensure the artist's style aligns with your vision. Do they specialize in realistic portraits, or is their work more impressionistic? Some people prefer realism, some don't and value a more painterly look. Either is fine and is a personal preference.

Ask Questions

Find out about their process, timeline, and materials.



Painting



Reference Photos

Look for Reviews or References

Past clients can provide valuable insights into the artist's reliability and professionalism. Most artists today usually have a website where you can see past work, and there may be testimonials that are useful to read and give clues as to whether this is the right artist for your painting. Remember: artists are not photographers; they curate their references to get exactly what they need to transform the reference into a memorable painting.

Communicating Your Vision

Be Specific

Share details such as the size of the painting, the number of people or elements to include, and the mood or theme you'd like to capture. If you're unsure, the artist can guide you by offering suggestions and examples. Consider whether there are specific color motifs you'd like to match, especially if you know where the painting will hang, as this may also determine the appropriate size. These decisions should be finalized upfront, before any sketches are created. If circumstances change, the artist can adjust accordingly.



Provide Visual References

Photos, color preferences, and examples of the artist's previous work can help clarify your expectations. If the budget allows, the ideal approach — and what most artists prefer — is to visit your location to create sketches, observe the environment, and photograph subjects in optimal circumstances.



The artist begins by sketching on location or gathering photographic references, then develops preliminary studies before creating the finished painting.

Example of a "Memorial tribute" portrait.



Example of deceased parents portrayed together with their living family.

Final painting.

Lighting Conditions

If you wish to include a deceased family member in the painting, old photos will be essential. The artist will carefully select poses and lighting that harmonize with the references of your loved one to achieve the best results.

Discuss Limitations

Collaborate with the artist to understand what is and isn't feasible for the portrait's size and medium. For instance, if you plan to frame the artwork under glass, a water-based medium may be more appropriate. Oils, on the other hand, are never placed under glass because the canvas needs to breathe to ensure its longevity.

What to Expect

When you commission a portrait, here's what you'll receive:

The Painting:

A masterpiece tailored to your specifications, made with high-quality materials to ensure durability.

Certificate of Authenticity:

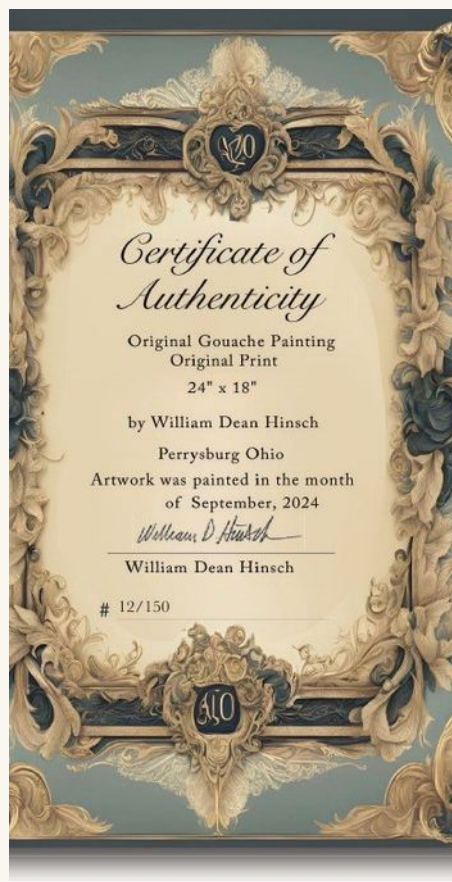
A document verifying the origin of the artwork.

Multiple Size Prints:

Perfect for sharing with family and friends. There is only one original, but replica copies can be provided.

Creation Video:

A unique keepsake, professionally produced, showcasing the process behind your painting.



What NOT to Expect

A Photographic Replica

A painting is not a photograph. Artists interpret details through their unique lens, blending technique and expression to create depth and emotion.

Instant Turnaround

Quality takes time. Expect a thorough and meticulous process to ensure the best result. A large painting can take several months to complete, while a smaller piece may take a few weeks. Although faster turnarounds are possible, allowing the artist sufficient time will result in a masterpiece rather than a rushed job.



Why a Painting is Better Than a Photograph

A photograph captures a single moment. A painting can bring together different times, places, and people — refining the composition, emphasizing what matters, and creating a deeply personal image that no photograph could capture.



The reference is at service of the idea and the artist's vision.



Rich Teerlink, CEO Harley-Davidson. An example of a “Concept Portrait”.

Courtesy of Harley-Davidson Corp.

Tips for Optimal Results

Consider the Size:

Larger portraits can accommodate more detail and additional subjects. For smaller sizes, limit to one or two people.

Trust the Artist:

Once you've selected an artist, trust their expertise and creative instincts.

Stay Engaged:

Regular updates ensure the final piece aligns with your vision while allowing room for adjustments.



Bill at work in his studio

About the Artist

William Dean Hinsch is widely regarded as one of the finest portrait artists in the United States. His passion for art began early, showing remarkable talent as a child. He started working professionally at sixteen, then apprenticed at a Toledo illustration studio at eighteen. At twenty-one, he joined the Toledo Blade, where a 19-year career eventually led him to Creative Director and Magazine Art Director. In his late twenties, a mentorship with painter Harley Copic set him on the path to painting professionally, a pursuit he built alongside his newspaper career for decades. In 1986, he began creating portraits for the Pentagon and U.S. Air Force, producing 25 works over two decades. These include portraits of Chief of Staff of the Air Force Merrill A. McPeak, displayed in the Pentagon's Joint Chiefs wing, and World War II fighter ace Clarence "Bud" Anderson.

William's achievements extend beyond military subjects. In collaboration with renowned aviation artist Harley Copic, he created a tribute to Ohio's aviators, from the Wright Brothers to Neil Armstrong, displayed at the Dayton Air Force Museum. More recently, in 2024, he completed a monumental painting for the Ohio Statehouse Rotunda, honoring Ohio's legendary astronauts. His portfolio also features high-profile figures such as Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, First Lady and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and General Merrill McPeak. Despite his distinguished clientele, William remains connected to his roots, living and painting daily in his Perrysburg, Ohio studio. He lives with his wife, Carol, and their three children live nearby, keeping family at the heart of his life.

Final Thoughts

Commissioning a portrait is a collaborative process that celebrates artistry and personal connection. By following the tips and insights in this guide, you'll be well on your way to creating a one-of-a-kind piece that tells your story. Reach out today to get started on commissioning your own dream portrait.

William Dean Hinsch

WilliamDeanHinsch.com

Email: Bill@Bill-art.com

Phone: +1 (419) 819-8338

134 W. South Boundary St, Ste. EE

Perrysburg, OH 43551



A happy customer