



**THE  
PORTRAIT**  
EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

## ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide is designed to accompany the NFB documentary *The Portrait*, which is included in *Celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee – Collector's Edition*, a special two-DVD set from the NFB in celebration of the 60-year reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The Guide offers in-depth background about the painting *Diamond Jubilee Portrait of Queen Elizabeth II – 2012*, a detailed glossary, an art history primer on figurative painting and a range of classroom activities for secondary-level students.

## RECOMMENDED AGE LEVEL AND SUBJECT AREAS

We recommend this film for ages 13 and up. It is most suitable for secondary and post-secondary Arts Education / Art History (Figurative Painting), although it could be used in Social Studies to engage students in discussion about Canada's constitutional monarchy.



## ABOUT THE FILM

It's the opportunity of a lifetime for portrait artist Phil Richards.

The renowned Toronto painter has been commissioned by the Government of Canada to create a portrait of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee. But this historic assignment also poses enormous challenges for Richards, who's accustomed to spending long hours with his subjects, in person.

This time, he must take a dramatically different approach.

Directed by Academy Award® nominee Hubert Davis, *The Portrait* follows Richards to Rideau Hall for a brief photo session with Her Majesty. Then, Richards sets about creating an amazing world of studies, maquettes, even doll-like sculptures, all to help him capture the Queen's likeness and spirit.

After months of solitary study and preparation, Richards travels to Buckingham Palace for an all-important meeting with Her Majesty to see if she approves of his vision and approach. She does, to his great relief, and work can now finally begin on the official portrait.

Director Hubert Davis tracks the artist's quest, letting us observe Richards as the many months of painstaking study and preparation come to fruition and Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee portrait takes shape before our very eyes.

## ARTIST PHIL RICHARDS ON DIAMOND JUBILEE PORTRAIT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II – 2012

*This original painting of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II by Canadian artist Phil Richards was created to mark the historic occasion of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee. The painting was unveiled by the Queen during a special ceremony at Buckingham Palace during the Diamond Jubilee week, on June 6, 2012. Following the unveiling, the Diamond Jubilee painting was displayed at the Canadian High Commission in London from June 8 to 14, 2012. It is now permanently installed at Rideau Hall. It is the third portrait of Her Majesty commissioned by the Government of Canada during her reign.<sup>1</sup>*

*The portrait is in the Ballroom, an official room where important events and ceremonies are held. The Ballroom, used primarily for ceremonial purposes, is the room in Rideau Hall most seen by the public. In the past, it hosted a brilliant succession of dances, costume balls and amateur theatricals. Here, in the light of a massive crystal chandelier, the Governor General swears in prime ministers, honours outstanding Canadians and receives visiting heads of state. Built in 1872, the Ballroom is a large hall with huge arched windows and doors.<sup>2</sup>*

## SETTING

The interior setting of the painting is constructed from architectural elements found in Rideau Hall in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. While there is no specific location in Rideau Hall that corresponds to the setting in the painting, the room has been reconstituted from recognizable elements found there, such as the panelled archway, the mouldings, the pilasters and the wall sconces. The colours and general disposition of Rideau Hall have been altered to enhance the mood and design of the painting.

## CARPET AND WALL SCONCES

The carpet was based on a French Aubusson design from the late 19th century. The decorative elements and colours of the carpet have been altered to suit the painting. For instance, the garland of green leaves in the original carpet has been altered to look more like maple leaves in order to establish a theme that is repeated in the painting and the frame. The French origins and feel of the carpet were a subtle reference to French-Canadian heritage, as are the wall sconces, which appear to be French provincial in origin. The overall architecture, however, has a more English feel to it.

1 The Governor General of Canada, news release, June 25, 2012.

2 From the office of The Governor General of Canada.

## STATE PORTRAIT OF QUEEN VICTORIA IN CORONATION ROBES

The painting seen through the archway on the rear wall is a version of the *State Portrait of Queen Victoria in Coronation Robes*. The original was painted in 1838 by Sir George Hayter and hangs in the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh, Scotland. A copy by J.H. Walker hangs in Rideau Hall. An 1863 replica painted by Sir George Hayter, now in the National Portrait Gallery in London, England (and recently cleaned), was used as a model for my version of the enthroned monarch. Queen Victoria is Queen Elizabeth's great-great-grandmother and the only other British monarch to celebrate a Diamond Jubilee, so the significance is obvious. Queen Victoria is depicted at the beginning of her long reign, while Queen Elizabeth is shown 60 years after her accession to the throne. The Rideau Hall archway forms a niche in which the image of Victoria is enshrined as the longest-reigning monarch in British history. Her distance from the viewer in a darkened room suggests the remoteness of the Victorian Era, but her proximity to the figure of Queen Elizabeth suggests a contemporary significance. Victoria appears to almost sit on the present Queen's shoulder, perhaps to give advice or pose a challenge.

## DESK, CHAIR AND DESKTOP ITEMS

The “Carleton House” desk, on which Queen Elizabeth rests her left hand, is part of the Rideau Hall furniture collection. This writing table was made for the Prince of Wales, later King George IV, when he lived at Carleton House. The original design is by the English furniture manufacturer Gillow, circa 1796. It was given to Rideau Hall by the Duke and Duchess of Connaught. On the green leather inlaid surface of the table sits a pair of Victorian silver and glass ink pots, which can presently be found at Rideau Hall. Leaning up against the ink pots is a copy of the *British North America Act of 1867*, signed during Queen Victoria's reign and regarded as the official document proclaiming the birth of Canada as a country. On the upper level of the table is a flower basket full of wild roses. The silver flower basket is one of a set of three different-sized baskets given by the Canadian Government as a wedding gift, in about 1893, to Queen Elizabeth's grandfather, the future King George V, and his wife. The silver baskets are currently on loan from Buckingham Palace. The red and white wild roses in the basket represent the white rose of the House of York and the red rose of the House of Lancaster. After the War of the Roses, these were conjoined to form the Tudor Rose, which has become an enduring symbol of the monarchy. The red and white roses also repeat the colours of the Canadian flag. Adjacent to the flower basket is a small, carved, gilt-framed portrait medallion of Queen Elizabeth II at the time of her coronation. This is an invention whose image is based on a coronation coin minted in the Bahamas in 1953. This medallion coronation portrait provides a match to the Queen Victoria coronation portrait. Victoria looks to her right toward the light source, while Elizabeth looks to her right toward the lamplight. Straddling the right edge of the painting, on the desk, is a pink rose in a small vase. This is the Queen Elizabeth Rose, introduced in 1954, in honour of the new monarch. The small, tapered, silver flower vase is an invention. It is decorated with an elongated and embossed version of the Queen's Canadian Diamond Jubilee Emblem. This emblem is repeated in a sculptural form as a large gilt carving attached to the top edge of the frame.

The chair is an adaptation of a leather-covered 19th-century bergère, most likely of French origin. The feet of the chair are based on designs that I found in Buckingham Palace during my visit there in 2011. The Canadian flag, depicted with gold fringe and tassels, is topped by a polished brass maple leaf finial. The positioning of the flag behind the Queen's right shoulder follows flag protocol.

## QUEEN'S DRESS AND JEWELLERY

The skirt of the Queen's dress is made of layers of folded chiffon. The bodice of the dress is decorated with thousands of small crystal beads. The Queen is wearing two Canadian medals. One is the Canadian Insignia as Sovereign of the Order of Canada, and the other is the Order of Military Merit. The tiara worn by Queen Elizabeth in the portrait is the Queen Mary “Girls of Great Britain and Ireland” tiara, and the three-row necklace is the George VI Festoon Necklace. This necklace was a 21st-birthday gift for Princess Elizabeth from her father, King George VI. On her right wrist, the Queen wears the Prince Philip Wedding Bracelet, a wedding present from her husband.

## QUEEN'S POSE AND FACE

The Queen's figure is represented in a version of the classical counterpose (from the Italian term “contrapposto”), in which there is a subtle shift of weight onto her right leg. The right elbow is bent while the left is extended. The right hand is closed holding the gloves, while the left hand is opened resting on the desk edge. The forefinger is slightly lifted off the desk in a pointing motion, directing the viewer's gaze toward the BNA Act. The shoulders are turned obliquely to the viewer but the face is full frontal. The direct frontal gaze creates an area of stillness and repose within the surrounding visually active space.

In the expression on the Queen's face, on which a great deal of time was spent, I have tried to evoke the qualities of character I drew from our meetings: intelligence, dedication, engagement and compassion. I have also tried to paint an “iconic” face—one that captures what is fundamental and unique and unchanging about the Queen's “look,” yet still seems age-specific. Queen Elizabeth II has the most recognizable face on the planet. Her image is the most widely disseminated image in human history. Over the decades of her life, the world has come to know, intimately, her changing image from very young princess to young wife, to mother, to Queen, to grandmother and now, to great-grandmother. To try to capture the history of a face in a single portrait may sound like an impossible task, but that was my ambition.

## STRUCTURE

The structure of this painting is based on the interaction of two geometric spatial systems. The first system is the Cartesian plane geometry of the painting surface, which is based on the vertical and horizontal edges of the canvas and right-angled corners. In the case of this 9' x 6', or 3:2, rectangle, a grid or “map” of the surface can be derived with the use of diagonal, vertical and horizontal divisions. Significant points, like half, third, quarter and eighth divisions can be exactly located and help define the surface.

The other system is radial geometry, which is based on centres from which lines radiate. This system is applied, in my case, with the use of linear (mechanical) perspective. This perspective system allows me to construct and plot objects in specific spatial relationships with regards to one another. For this portrait, a two-point perspective system was used, which means that parallel lines on adjacent walls will converge on two vanishing points, each one converging outside either side of the painting. Because the viewer’s station point (viewpoint) is at a 45-degree angle to the walls, the space seems to open up more through diagonal lines (such as through the angle of the baseboard), than through horizontal lines, which would be the case if using one-point perspective. The resulting effect is that the eye tends to zigzag through the space.

One interesting example of the interaction between the Cartesian and radial systems can be seen in the archway. The vertical plumb centre of the archway exactly coincides with the vertical centre line of the canvas. The station point of the viewer has been positioned exactly 16' from the archway centre. The centre of the Queen Victoria painting is also exactly 16' behind the archway centre. This means that the centre of the archway sits on the surface centre of the Cartesian system as well as on the illusionary spatial centre of the radial system. This creates, I believe, the illusion of spatial movement rotating around this vertical centre.

## COLOUR

This is fundamentally a red, white and gold painting. Lesser amounts of green have been used to complement the reds. The only touches of blue are tiny areas on Queen Victoria’s crown and Queen Elizabeth’s medal ribbon. The red and white of the Canadian flag was the genesis of the overall colour scheme. The red and white combination is repeated a number of times in the painting, for instance in the flowers, medals, carpet, BNA Act and in the Queen Victoria portrait. The gold is used as a “mother” colour, to tie together the architecture, carpet and the furniture, and to create the warm atmospheric glow that is the mood of the painting. The white of the painting is probably taken through more colour and tone permutations than any other colour. It varies from almost pure white in some areas to almost black in others. The white of the dress, in particular, goes through colour variations ranging from warm ivories and beiges, to green-greys and blue-greys. The reds in the painting are taken not only from almost pure red to light pinks, but also down to dark red-browns.

## LIGHTING

The lighting depicted in the portrait is quite complex. The integral architectural fixtures, in the form of the numerous wall sconces, fill the space with a warm yellow incandescent light and activate the pilaster and wall surfaces with complicated overlapping shadows. The small candlestick lamp provides a pool of light which adds some drama to the still-life arrangement of the flower basket and medallion on the desk. A strong, clear shaft of sunlight, entering through an unseen window to the left, sharply delineates the Queen’s figure. Lastly, cool blue light from the sky outside fills in some shadowed areas on the flag, trim mouldings and the dress.

From the beginning of the project, I wanted light to play a central role in conveying content and meaning. I wanted the figure of the Queen to be illuminated by a strong, separate light source. This effect would accentuate the whiteness and brightness of the dress, and almost turn her figure into a source of light itself. This symbolic idea is reinforced by the illuminated candlestick lamp, which becomes a miniature visual metaphor for the Queen.

The lights also provide for some numerical symbolism. There are six direct light sources visible in the painting, in the form of the bare sconce candle bulbs—one for each decade of the Diamond Jubilee.



## DIMENSIONS

### 1 The dimensions of the unframed Diamond Jubilee portrait are:

Height .....	108"
Width .....	72"

### 2 The dimensions of the framed Diamond Jubilee portrait are as follows:

Height (overall) .....	124"
Height (including the carved medallion) .....	129"
Width .....	88"
Depth (overall) .....	6"
Depth (with medallion) .....	8"

## MATERIALS – PAINTING AND FRAME

### 1 Paint

- Stevenson professional acrylic paints (manufactured in Scarborough, Ontario)
- canvas: #10 (14.75-ounce) cotton canvas
- ground: Stevenson acrylic gesso

### 2 Stretcher

- open-grid internal frame made of .5" x .75" clear pine slats
- sheets of .25"-thick virola plywood glued and nailed to both sides of internal frame
- two coats of Stevenson acrylic gloss medium used to seal the stretcher

### 3 Frame and Medallion

- solid basswood
- gesso ground made of chalk (calcium carbonate) and rabbit-skin glue
- red and yellow bole made of clay and gelatin
- 23K gold leaf (1,000 sheets, sized 3.5" x 3.5", were used on this frame)

## PRODUCTION TIME

The production period for the painting (but not the frame) extended from June 2010 to October 2011. Work on the actual final canvas began on June 24, 2011, and ended in October 2011, entailing about 3.5 months. I would estimate that the research and preparatory work (including travel, meetings, photography, sketches, drawings, maquettes, sculptures, models, etc.) would add up to another 3.5 months. That would bring the total to about seven months on the project.

The large gilt frame that surrounds the Diamond Jubilee portrait was designed and built by Elizabeth and Peter Porebski, proprietors of The Gilder, in Toronto, Ontario, with design input from Phil Richards and his son, James (Jamie) Richards.

The frame is a combination of two types of moulding: a "cassetta" moulding and panel on the inner edge, which is capped by a larger ogee moulding on the outer edge. Between these two parts runs a hand-carved bead moulding. This bead was inspired by the rows of round tack heads seen on the bergère chair in the painting.

The forward edge of the large ogee moulding is adorned with a continuous panel of carved interlocking maple leaves, which repeats the maple leaf theme that runs through the painting. Attached to the top front edge of the frame is a large carved medallion of the Queen's Canadian Diamond Jubilee Emblem. Jamie Richards adapted the emblem for high relief and carved the medallion.

Information about the painting was provided by Phil Richards.



### ABOUT THE ARTIST: PHIL RICHARDS

Philip James "Phil" Richards is a Canadian artist born in Toronto, Ontario, on March 12, 1951. Richards studied at the Ontario College of Art, graduating with his AOCA in 1973. Since then, he has worked full-time as a visual artist.

Richards works in a variety of genres including large-scale murals, figure paintings, landscapes, still life and portraiture. He also works in a variety of media: acrylic, casein, watercolour, graphite and sculpted relief.

# ART HISTORY PRIMER ON FIGURATIVE PAINTING

Portraiture, generally understood as the art of portraying an individual, is a general field of figurative painting, which is essentially the representation of forms that are consistent with the way they appear in life. Figurative, or representational, painting began in primitive form on cave walls. Some of the first paints are mixes that consist of a binding agent and a pigment. This combination has remained the standard since. Early examples of cave paintings include those found in Lascaux and Chauvet in France, and Altamira in Spain, but this listing should not suggest that painting began in Europe. In fact, representational or figurative works appear independently of one another the world over. Portraiture, on the other hand, arose during the European Renaissance (between 1400 and 1500), and involved the insertion of what were contemporary people of importance into the religious iconography of the day. An early example from the Proto-Renaissance (1200–1400) is Duccio's (c. 1255–1319) *Maesta*, of around 1311. It is an altarpiece that depicts the Virgin Mary and Christ child encircled by Saints and a choir of angels. Originally, it was housed in the Cathedral of Siena. The saints are representations of actual citizens of Siena who would have been recognizable to contemporary residents. In the film, Phil Richards refers to the work of Piero della Francesca (c. 1412–1492), a European Renaissance artist who based his composition (the art of arrangement on a canvas) on his own study of mathematics. Around 1482, he authored *On Perspective for Painting*, which is one of the first books to use geometry to work out how an image, in this case painting, should be structured. Structure is therefore intricately linked to composition. Generally, the artist will produce several sketches using a grid-like pattern so that all ratios and forms are mathematically unified. What this produces is an image that one could call realistic. Realism, in this sense, is the science of depicting something that is true to life.

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY 1: VIEWING THE FILM

There are several ways that you can discuss the film, both before and after you screen it. The following are suggestions for questions to be discussed with your students and ways to integrate the questions. Brainstorm four or five reflective discussion questions in advance, and create at least four or five copies of each question. Distribute discussion questions to the class before watching the film. Ask students to try to answer their question while watching the film. Provide them with time after viewing the film to write down their responses. Then, ask students to form groups based on their questions. In groups, encourage students to discuss their responses and record them on large sheets of paper. Once each group member has had a chance to share their responses with their group, invite each group to share their responses with the larger group.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Sample questions include:

- 1 Why do you think it was important to commission this portrait of the Queen? What does such a commission accomplish, in your opinion? Many famous pieces of art were commissioned by wealthy patrons; one of the most famous examples of this is the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, painted by Michelangelo for Pope Julius II and completed in 1512. The portrait of Her Majesty the Queen was commissioned by the Government of Canada to commemorate her Diamond Jubilee. How do you think commissions impact the work and process of the artist?

- 2 Phil Richards tells us that there is discussion within the art community to the effect that figurative painting is “dead.” Why do you think this has become a discussion? What do you think about this art form—is it “dead” or not? Please explain your answer, using specific examples.
- 3 In many ways, this is a film about accomplishments. Point to instances in the film where we learn about Phil Richards’ accomplishments. Now, reflect on some of your own accomplishments. If you are comfortable doing so, share them with your class.
- 4 Phil Richards tells us about some of his idols and heroes in the film and why they hold an important place in his life. Who are some of your heroes and inspirations and why?
- 5 One of Phil Richards’ most important rules in creating art is “it really doesn’t matter what you do, but how you do it.” What do you make of this rule? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
- 6 Phil Richards talks about “tiny, little moments” as times when real art exists. Do you agree with Richards? Can you think of any such “tiny, little moments” that have perhaps inspired you to be artistic?
- 7 As we learn in the film, the approval process for this portrait was quite extensive. Phil Richards had to get approval from many different people and agencies. Have you ever experienced a similar situation of seeking approval for a project that was very important to you? Share your story and its outcome.
- 8 What did you think when you saw the final version of the portrait at the unveiling? How did the unveiling scene make you feel? Was the final painting what you were expecting to see?
- 9 Having now watched this film, how do you think it will influence your viewing of the painting in person, should you ever get the opportunity to see it?
- 10 Visual art and film are full of symbols. When creating the 2012 commission, artist Phil Richards included many symbols in the painting. Examine the painting closely and see if you can identify the symbols the artist chose to include. What is Her Majesty wearing? What is on her desk? What is behind her?
- 11 Did you know that Her Majesty the Queen has sat for 129 portraits during her reign? If you were asked to paint a portrait of Her Majesty, what symbols would you put in the painting? What would she be wearing? Where would she be sitting or standing? Why?
- 12 Imagine Phil Richards were to paint a portrait of you. What symbols would surround you? What room would you be standing in? Why?
- 13 Why do you think that we still rely on portrait painting like Phil Richards’ in the 20th century, when photography is able to capture an exact likeness of the person as a portrait?
- 14 What other famous portraits have been painted of Her Majesty the Queen? There have been certain portraits that are more controversial than others. Contrast Phil Richards’ portrait with that of Lucian Freud,<sup>3</sup> painted in 2001 as a gift of the artist to the monarch.

<sup>3</sup> [theglobeandmail.com/news/world/photos-famous-portraits-of-the-queen/article4236898/](http://theglobeandmail.com/news/world/photos-famous-portraits-of-the-queen/article4236898/)

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY 2: WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY?

While watching a film with your students, it is important to not only examine the content of the film but also its construction. The following provides a bit of background about media literacy:

Media literacy is concerned with the process of understanding and using the mass media. It is also concerned with helping students develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques. More specifically, it is education that aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organized and how they construct reality. . . . Media literacy is a life skill. (Ontario Association for Media Literacy, *Ontario Media Literacy Resource Guide*)

Media literacy education in Canada incorporates the following key concepts:

- 1 All media are constructions. The media present carefully crafted constructions that reflect many decisions and are the result of many determining factors.
- 2 The media construct versions of reality. Much of our view of reality is based on media messages that have been pre-constructed and have attitudes, interpretations and conclusions already built in.
- 3 Audiences negotiate meaning in media. Each of us finds or “negotiates” meaning according to individual factors.
- 4 Media messages have commercial implications. Most media production is a business, and so must make a profit. Questions of ownership and control are central.
- 5 Media messages contain ideological and value messages. All media products are advertising in some sense, proclaiming values and ways of life.
- 6 Media messages contain social and political implications. The media have great influence in politics and in forming social change.
- 7 Form and content are closely related in media messages. Each medium has its own grammar and codifies reality in its own particular way.
- 8 Each medium has a unique aesthetic form.

The above text comes from the Ontario Association for Media Literacy (AML).

## MEDIA LITERACY QUESTIONS FOR *THE PORTRAIT*

The following questions will assist students in understanding how the film *The Portrait* is constructed. These questions can be addressed in several ways using various teaching methods—the brainstorming approach described above is also a suitable method to discuss media literacy questions.

- 1 This is a documentary film about the commissioning of an art piece. Why is it important to document the commissioning of this painting in a documentary film?
- 2 *The Portrait* opens with the voice of the artist Phil Richards and a shot of a blank canvas. What do you think went into the choice to open the film this way?
- 3 Why do you think so much time is spent in the film showing us Phil Richards' artistic process?
- 4 There is quite a lot of archival footage—both in the form of audiovisual and newspaper clippings—featured in the film. Why do you think this footage is included in the film? What does it add to the telling of the story?
- 5 While Phil Richards is contextualizing the history of figurative art, we are shown some examples of historically important figurative paintings, as well as some paintings drawn by children. Why do you think the filmmaker chose to show us both?
- 6 Phil Richards tells us that art-making can be a lonely process and that artists are almost always “outsiders”—spectators observing and recording the world around them. Why do you think the filmmaker chose to include this particular description of art-making? How does it help us to understand Phil's character and his art process?
- 7 There are many moments in the film where we watch people looking at art (for example, when we visit the gallery along with Phil Richards). Why do you think it was important for the filmmaker to show us this act of watching many times over?
- 8 As spectators, we are not permitted to be present while Phil Richards presents his portrait ideas to Her Majesty the Queen. Can you imagine how this meeting might have unfolded?
- 9 Why does the filmmaker spend so much time showing us the physical process of creating art? How does this filmmaking choice enhance your understanding of this particular piece and this particular artist?
- 10 The film's soundtrack is fairly consistent throughout. Do you think the filmmaker chose appropriate music for this film? Why or why not? If not, describe the music you might have chosen for this film.
- 11 We primarily only hear Phil Richards' voice throughout the documentary. Why do you think that is? Are there any other voices you would have liked to hear in addition to Phil's?
- 13 Why do you think the director, Hubert Davis, focused more on the artist who painted Her Majesty, rather than on Her Majesty the Queen herself?

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY 3: CREATE A VIDEO PORTRAIT OF YOUR CLASSMATE

### What is a portrait?

A portrait is an image of a person, created in any media, that is a record of what they look like and who they are. Visual portraits exist in all media from paint and photography through to pencil and stone. A portrait is the result of a deliberate encounter between an artist and a sitter. Not all portraits are painted nor are they always of famous people.<sup>4</sup>

Have your students work in pairs and create a video portrait of each other. In this activity, students will act as both the filmmaker and the subject. The first major component to creating a documentary about a person is research. You want to ensure that you are gathering truthful information about the person you are documenting. Students can begin by doing a Google search on their subject—they might find the person has a social media site or a blog with information about themselves. Students can also interview the subject's friend(s) or teacher. Then have your students prepare pre-interview questions, such as *What are some things you would want to share with people that they might not already know about you?*

Have students do a pre-interview with their classmate. The pre-interview is normally not documented; it is used to prepare the subject for questions that will be asked when the actual video portrait is created. It will also help the filmmaker find out more information about their classmate. Have your students find one or two interesting facts about their classmate and focus on those facts for their final interview. For example, a student might be born in Canada but their parents are from Vietnam. If this is one of the interesting facts, have them explore that fact further by asking why their parents immigrated to Canada. Keep the videos short (two to three minutes). Here are some interview tips from the NFB website:

[blog.nfb.ca/blog/2010/02/05/interview-tips-for-documentary-filmmaking](http://blog.nfb.ca/blog/2010/02/05/interview-tips-for-documentary-filmmaking)

Have students shoot the video on any digital video recorder and edit the videos in Moviemaker or iMovie, then put the videos together to create a “Class Portrait.”

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY 4: CREATE A DIGITAL PORTRAIT OF A CANADIAN ARTIST

Have students research a Canadian artist and compile both information and images using the Internet. The artist can be a painter, sculptor, photographer, illustrator, filmmaker, etc. Create a digital online portrait using a blog or a website.

Have students research information on the artist. Have them think about the layout and design of their blog or website. This may involve researching a variety of artists' websites in order to develop and visualize their final site or blog. Ask them to discuss blogs/websites that have inspired their own site.

### Categories can include:

- Bio
- Work of the artist
- Legacy
- References
- “About me” page

### Questions that they should be asking themselves during their research:

- What year was the artist born?
- What kind of life did the artist live? Or is currently living?
- Where did he/she receive their training, if any?
- What inspired them to become an artist?
- What type of work did/do they produce?
- How did their work evolve?
- Who were/are their peers?
- Were/are they affiliated with a group or movement of artists?
- Describe their work in your own words.
- Where can you see their work?
- What do you like/dislike about their work?
- Why did the student choose the artist?

<sup>4</sup> This is taken from the National Portrait Gallery Teacher's Resource Portraits:  
GCE AS Level Art History Resource

## Gather images of the artist and their artwork.

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### Use free sites such as:

#### Wordpress

- [wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com)
- [fr.wordpress.com](http://fr.wordpress.com)

#### Blogger

- [accounts.google.com/ServiceLogin?service=blogger&passive=1209600&continue=http://www.blogger.com/home&followup=http://www.blogger.com/home&itmpl=start#s01](https://accounts.google.com/ServiceLogin?service=blogger&passive=1209600&continue=http://www.blogger.com/home&followup=http://www.blogger.com/home&itmpl=start#s01)

### Or use Wix to create your own website:

#### Wix

- [wix.com](http://wix.com)
- [fr.wix.com](http://fr.wix.com)

Lastly, have students create an “About me” page on their blog or website. For example, they could tell the reader about themselves, why they chose the artist and what the assignment involved.

Take the project a step further and have each student create a piece of work in the same style as the selected artist.

## GLOSSARY

### Terms and Definitions:

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**Composition:** Composition is the way in which an image is composed. It can refer to much more than painting, as photographs or even interior design contain elements of composition. It is the science of the arrangement of forms as they may appear in life from a specific vantage point, or perspective, that produces an image that is aesthetically pleasing.

**Constitutional Monarchy:** Canada is a constitutional monarchy. Since 1534, when the King of France claimed possession of what is now Canada, the history of our country has been marked by the reigns of an uninterrupted succession of monarchs, both French and British, who have had a significant influence on our country’s development. Under the Crown, Canada developed first as a colony of two empires, originally the French and subsequently the British, then as an independent dominion, and now exists as an entirely sovereign nation.<sup>5</sup>

**Figurative Painting:** Figurative painting is the opposite of abstract painting. The paint will imply some kind of figuration and will be representational, in the sense that it will represent a form that is true to life. While abstract painting is an invention of the 20th century, figural painting (in archaic forms) is prehistoric.

**Portraiture:** By definition, a portrait painter will paint either families or individuals. Prior to the invention of the photograph, the portrait was used for identification purposes as well as to evoke the status of an individual. An interesting market for portraiture existed in the Dutch Art Market of the 16th and 17th centuries.

**Realism:** Realism can also be referred to as naturalism. It implies that the painter or artist attempts to realistically or naturalistically portray a scene, landscape or person. The closer a painting is to the way we see the subject in life, the more realistic it is.

**Sketches:** Sketches are the preliminary drawings that an artist will compose prior to working on a final work of art. Generally, the sketch is drawn during the test period or initial sitting of the artist’s model. The artist will test out different poses, configurations and compositions so that a comparison may be made between sketches in the production of the finished work of art.

**Structure:** Structure is intricately tied to composition but will also include the physical size of a work of art. For example, in *The Portrait*, the final structure of the painting is very large. The structure of this work aligns it with the history of monumental portraiture, which is generally defined by the size of the painting. In addition, structure can also denote the structure of the image space, where arrangement and the composition of forms work together to create an image that is believable.

### People featured or referenced in the film:

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**Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II:** The Queen is Head of State of the U.K. and of 15 other Commonwealth countries, including Canada.<sup>6</sup>

**George W. Bush:** Bush was the 43rd President of the United States and is the former Governor of Texas.<sup>7</sup>

**Bill Clinton:** William J. Clinton was the 42nd President of the United States.<sup>8</sup>

**Hubert Davis:** Canadian filmmaker who made his directorial debut in 2004 with the Oscar®- and Emmy®-nominated NFB documentary *Hardwood*. His most recent project is the NFB documentary *The Portrait*.

**Piero della Francesca:** Italian painter born in 1417. He was later recognized as an important contributor to the Italian Renaissance for his use of perspective in his paintings.

**George Frideric Handel:** German Baroque composer best known for Messiah and Water Music.

**Stephen Harper:** Current Canadian Prime Minister (Conservative).<sup>9</sup>

**Alfred Hitchcock:** British film director and producer who was considered a master of suspense and thrillers.

**Jasper Johns:** Contemporary American artist most famous for his paintings of the American flag.

**His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston:** Canada’s 28th (and current) Governor General.

**Philip James Richards:** Contemporary Canadian visual artist.

**Frank Lloyd Wright:** Prominent American architect, with a career that spanned over 60 years.

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5 Parliament of Canada – Senate, “Canada: A Constitutional Monarchy,” [parl.gc.ca/About/Senate/Monarchy/SenMonarchy\\_00-e.htm](http://parl.gc.ca/About/Senate/Monarchy/SenMonarchy_00-e.htm).

6 The official website of The British Monarchy, [royal.gov.uk](http://royal.gov.uk).

7 The White House – Presidents, [whitehouse.gov/about/presidents](http://whitehouse.gov/about/presidents).

8 The White House – Presidents, [whitehouse.gov/about/presidents](http://whitehouse.gov/about/presidents).

9 Prime Minister of Canada, [pm.gc.ca](http://pm.gc.ca).

## Landmarks:

**Rideau Hall:** The official residence and workplace of every Governor General since 1867, located in Ottawa, Ontario. This heritage site is a national gathering place where the Governor General lives, honours Canadians for their excellence, hosts foreign dignitaries and performs the functions of Canada's Head of State, as the representative of the Queen in Canada.<sup>10</sup>

**Buckingham Palace:** The official headquarters and residence of the reigning British monarch.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### English

The official website of The British Monarchy  
[royal.gov.uk/HMTheQueen/HMTheQueen.aspx](http://royal.gov.uk/HMTheQueen/HMTheQueen.aspx)

The Office of the Secretary to the Governor General  
[gg.ca](http://gg.ca)

*A Crown of Maples: Constitutional Monarchy in Canada* educator's resources  
[canadiancrown.gc.ca/eng/1331816592817/1331816264571](http://canadiancrown.gc.ca/eng/1331816592817/1331816264571)

Monarchy in Canada  
[pch.gc.ca](http://pch.gc.ca)

Government of Canada, The Canadian Crown  
[canadiancrown.gc.ca](http://canadiancrown.gc.ca)

Cave of Altamira  
[whc.unesco.org/en/list/310](http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/310)

Duccio  
[britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/172850/Duccio](http://britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/172850/Duccio)

Lucian Freud's portrait of the Queen  
[theglobeandmail.com/news/world/photos-famous-portraits-of-the-queen/article4236898](http://theglobeandmail.com/news/world/photos-famous-portraits-of-the-queen/article4236898)

## OUR PARTNERS

The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and partners [Canada Post](#) and the [Department of Canadian Heritage](#) have released *Celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee – Collector's Edition*, a special two-DVD set from the NFB in celebration of the 60-year reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The centrepiece of this collector's edition is *The Portrait*, documenting Toronto artist Phil Richards' creation of the Diamond Jubilee portrait of Her Majesty, commissioned by the Government of Canada.

In collaboration with Canada Post and the Department of Canadian Heritage, *Celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee – Collector's Edition* was distributed to Canadian secondary schools, colleges, CEGEPs, universities and public libraries, as well as Canada's embassies worldwide in October 2012.

In *Celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee – Collector's Edition*, the NFB, Canada Post and the Department of Canadian Heritage have come together to celebrate Canadian history and help share Canada's culture and legacy with younger generations.

 Canadian Heritage  
Patrimoine canadien



## CREDITS

This guide was produced by NFB Education team members Tey Cottingham, Jessie Curell, Anne Koizumi and Claudia Sicondolfo, with assistance from Canadian visual artist Phil Richards, art historian Michael Rattray and Annabelle Cloutier, Director, Public Affairs, Office of the Secretary to the Governor General.



<sup>10</sup> The Governor General of Canada, [gg.ca](http://gg.ca).