

A PORTRAIT TELLS A STORY

GRADE: 6-12

TIME: Three 40-minute Sessions

Portrait photographers have a unique skill set that includes not only artistic skills, but the ability to connect with their subjects. Frank Lloyd Wright had a decades-long relationship with photographer Pedro Guerrero, who not only photographed Wright in posed and candid photographs but also photographed Wright's architecture. In this lesson, students will learn about Guerrero and other famous portrait photographers, determine what makes for an exceptional portrait, and collaborate with a classmate to create a portrait that conveys a message or feeling.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Social Studies, Social-Emotional Learning, Media Literacy

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Internet access for independent student research

Samples of photographs taken by famous portrait photographers

Background information on Frank Lloyd Wright and Pedro Guerrero resources below)

Samples of Pedro Guerrero's photography (resources below)

Digital cameras, tablets, smartphones, or Polaroid cameras

Photo editing software (optional)

1. Define portrait photography.
2. Analyze work from famous portrait photographers and identify the photographer's intention behind the work.
3. Collaborate with a partner to create an original work of art which pleases both artist and subject.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the keys to successful collaboration?
2. How can a photographer communicate a message through their work?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- **Discuss the term “portrait” and identify different examples of photographic portraits such as school pictures, driver’s license photos, and wedding photos. Discuss candid vs. formal portraits. Ask: What might be a photographer’s goal when capturing someone’s portrait?**
- **Display portraits by at least two different famous photographers, such as Annie Leibovitz, Yousuf Karsh, Dorothea Lange, or George Hurrell. Direct a discussion comparing the photos, discussing details such as location/background, body language, facial expression, clothing, hair/makeup, etc. The following optional questions may help lead the discussion. What might the artist be trying to communicate with this photograph? What is the mood of the photo? Do you think the photographer directed the shoot or captured something already taking place? Why might a photographer choose to capture candid vs. posed photos? What do you think makes this photographer famous/popular?**
 - **Optional Extension:** To further discussion, have students identify a portrait of themselves that they like, noting what they like about it. Encourage students to focus on all aspects of the photograph rather than simply their facial expression. Have them consider: Did the photographer provide any direction when this photograph was taken? What was the setting? Is this a candid or formal portrait? Does it express some aspect of my personality? How? What did the photographer know about me before taking the photograph?
- **Introduce the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, focusing on his most famous buildings, including the Robie House, Taliesin, Fallingwater, and the Guggenheim.**
 - **Optional Extension:** Have students research these and other buildings independently, selecting one favorite building to present to their classmates.
- **Tell students about portrait photographer Pedro Guerrero, who maintained a close working relationship with Frank Lloyd Wright for 20 years.**
 - The following articles provide background information about their creative partnership: <https://franklloydwright.org/a-friendship-in-photographs-pedro-e-guerrero-frank-lloyd-wright/> and <https://www.wired.com/2015/09/photog-captured-frank-lloyd-wrights-epic-buildings/>.
 - Optionally, have your students view American Masters – Pedro E. Guerrero: A Photographer’s Journey. There is a preview on the PBS website: <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/pedro-e-guerrero-preview/4930/>
- **Discuss the idea of a creative partnership. Ask students:** What challenges do you think might occur when two creative visionaries attempt to work together? How do you think people overcome these challenges?
- **Highlight the fact that some of Guerrero’s subjects were famous. Display the photographs in Appendix A, which shows Guerrero’s work photographing Wright, and Appendix B, exhibiting Guerrero’s photographs of other subjects. Ask students to imagine they know nothing about the people in the photos. Ask:** What do these photos tell the viewer about these subjects? What was Guerrero attempting to communicate to the viewer?
- **Have students view a collection of Guerrero’s photographs of architecture and candid streetscapes. Samples can be found in Appendix C. Have students discuss the similarities and differences between architectural photography and portrait photography. The following optional questions may help lead the discussion.** What might be the goal for a photographer when capturing a photo of a building or streetscape? What challenges might the photographer need to overcome? What are the pros and cons of including people in a photograph of a building or streetscape? How would weather or time of day impact this type of photography?

LESSON PROCEDURE (Continued)

EXPLORE

- Optional Extension: Give students time and resources to research the history and best practices of architectural photography. The following article is a good resource: <https://www.format.com/magazine/resources/photography/architecture-photography>

ENGAGE

Session Two

- **Pair students up for a portrait photography project.** (*Tip: We recommend assigning partners who do not know each other very well so that student photographers need to get to know their subjects, which mimics the role of professional portrait photographers!*)
- **Explain that students will submit two final photographs for this project: one portrait of their partner, and one photo of a building that communicates the same story, message, or mood as the portrait.**
- **Instruct students to draft interview questions that will help them get to know their subjects better.** (*Tip: This could be assigned as homework prior to Session Two.*)
 - Differentiation: Have students work in small groups or as a whole class to write interview questions.
 - Differentiation: Provide the interview questions in Appendix D.
- **Give students time to interview their subjects. Encourage students to discuss how to represent one another in a portrait and ensure that both the photographer and subject are happy with the composition and mood of the portrait.**
- **Direct students to make 2-3 thumbnail sketches of their planned portraits.** (*Tip: this could be assigned as homework prior to Session Three.*)

DESIGN

Session Three

- **Have students discuss their thumbnail sketches with their partners before settling on a final composition for the photograph.**
- **Direct students to conduct a photo shoot with their partners and a second shoot with a building of their choosing.** (*Optional: Assign the architectural photo shoot as homework.*) **Remind students that the two photographs should communicate the same story or mood. Encourage students to name the photographs.**
 - Optional Extension: Give students time to edit their photos either using filters on their smart phone or tablet or by using photo editing software such as Photoshop.

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Three

- **Display student work around the classroom, placing photo pairs together.**
- **Lead a discussion about the process of creating portrait and architectural photography. Discuss any challenges students may have faced, particularly regarding working in a creative partnership and their level of success in communicating a mood, message, or story through photography.**

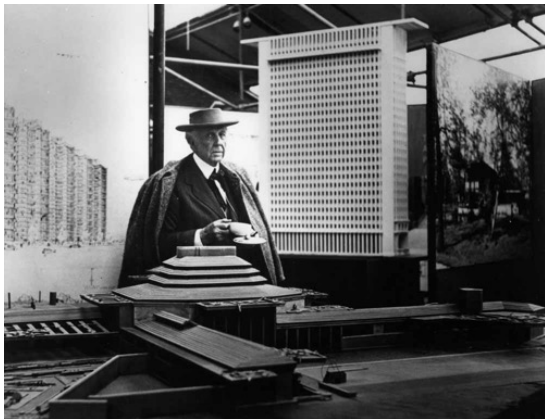
Appendix A



Farmer, Architect, Collector, Taliesin,
Spring Green, WI. © The Estate of Pedro E. Guerrero



Hat, Cane & Hand #094, Pleasantville, NY.
© The Estate of Pedro E. Guerrero



Teabreak #2, NYC, 1953. © The Estate of Pedro E. Guerrero



Wright and Construction Worker, NYC, 1953.
© The Estate of Pedro E. Guerrero

Appendix B



Calder's Roxbury Studio. © The Estate of Pedro E. Guerrero



Calder Reshaping Spring.
© The Estate of Pedro E. Guerrero



Louise Nevelson, Black Table/Black Wall.
© The Estate of Pedro E. Guerrero



Louise Nevelson Working at Desk #1.
© The Estate of Pedro E. Guerrero

Appendix C



High Noon at Taliesin. © The Estate of:
Pedro E. Guerrero



Dana Thomas House, Springfield, IL
© The Estate of Pedro E. Guerrero



Charlie Green, New York City, 1940s.
© The Estate of Pedro E. Guerrero



Luke Field Airplane X607, World War II, 1940s.
© The Estate of Pedro E. Guerrero



FRANK
LLOYD
WRIGHT
TRUST

Appendix D

1. Describe yourself in 3 words.
2. If we were to look at all the photos on your cell phone, what would we most likely see?
3. What type of music do you like to listen to?
4. What's the best experience you had this past summer?
5. If you could be on the cover of any magazine, what would it be and why?
6. Describe something that brings you joy.
7. Name 3 of your top qualities that help you succeed in school.
8. What was the best gift you ever received?
9. What do you want to be when you grow up?
10. What is your Patronus?