

Welcome to Blake's Online Portrait Bust Class!

The purpose of this course is to serve as an introduction to the craft of portrait sculpture. Portrait Sculpture is a technically demanding art. This course is meant to get you going in the most sure-footed way I can imagine; it's a traditional approach that's been around for generations. What can you expect to get out of the class? If you are diligent, you will learn how to create a physical likeness and how to make a plaster waste mold. With what you take from this class, I hope that you move on to making creative and beautiful applications of portrait sculpture. And, I hope you'll send me pictures of these pieces of fine art!

Your first portrait will be a study. Your goal isn't to be Michelangelo; it's to get a physical likeness. The "art" comes with practice. The first thing you'll need is a model. I **strongly** recommend doing a self-portrait first. It's very convenient. Do save flattering your handsome or beautiful lover with a portrait for your second bust, after you have the process nailed down some. In any case, for your first bust, you will need a living person who is quite accessible to you. You're going to want to measure their head, get additional pictures, and look at them occasionally through the process.

You will also need a workspace. You don't need a studio, but a floor that mops up is a must, unless you want to live with a tarp on your carpet for a few months! You will also need a sturdy turntable. I have a design for one posted online here: <http://www.portraitbust.com/TurnTablePlans.html> . Don't use a lazy Susan. They are invariably too wobbly and you DON'T want wobbly. Even if it doesn't start out wobbly, after having 25 pounds on it for several weeks it will become wobbly. You want to work with the head at eye level, so you'll need a table and stool that work with your turntable to be the correct height. Make sure that your workspace has adequate light. The best light is that of an overcast day. Essentially, you want good ambient lighting with some directionality. If you have an overhead light, add a lamp near your work area for sidelight.

There's nothing chemically toxic in the sculpture materials you will be using, but dust is the major concern. You should be particularly aware of this if you are a smoker. Smokers are at greater risk of silicosis, the build up of silicate minerals in the lungs. If you or someone in the house has lung issues, take extra care to clean up after your work with a damp sponge. That will prevent the dust from spreading throughout the house. Another concern is dry skin. I hate sculpting with gloves on, so I use copious amounts of oil-based moisturizers. The oil prevents the clay and plaster from wicking the moisture out of your skin. Plain old petroleum jelly works. Eucerin makes a good one that's petroleum based. If you like all natural, Burt's Bees has a few such moisturizers in their product line such as their Hand Salve. With dry skin, clay and plaster, an ounce of prevention (greasy moisturizer) is definitely a pound of cure.

Lastly, do know that I've worked hard on these course materials. I encourage you make comments and suggestions, and to share the materials with your family and friends. However, I do ask that you do not copy these materials to distribute them. This is how I make my livelihood and it'd be devastating to see this material up for grabs on the Internet. Thanks so much. Let's get to work!