Introducing the Portrait Project

In this activity, you will plan and create a portrait in oil pastels on canvas. This project will be marked according to two important criteria: how well you convey your impression of the portrait subject, and the implementation of oil pastel techniques.

The first element of this assignment is to conduct some online research about one Indigenous Australian leader or activist — active in the past or present. You will need to choose the person you’d like to be your subject. To do this, read through the following list of activists. You can find some preliminary information about each of these activists in *The Little Red Yellow Black Book — an introduction to Indigenous Australia* pp. 142 to 176.

Activists from the early days of the colonial invasion
- Pemulwuy — a Bidjigal warrior active at the turn of the 18th century. *Note: there is only one known image of Pemulwuy*
- Tarenorerer — (or Walyer) a Tasmanian Aboriginal woman who engaged in guerilla warfare against her oppressors

Activists from last century
- Fred Maynard — founder of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (1924)
- Faith Bandler — NSW campaign director for the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement
- William Cooper — founder of the Australian Aborigines’ League (1920s)
- John Patten — a leader of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (1930s)
- William Ferguson — a leader of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (1930s)
- Charles Perkins — Freedom Rides activist (1965)
- Eddie Mabo — Mer Islander plaintiff in the historic *Mabo* Native Title case against the Crown (1980s)

Indigenous Australian leaders and politicians working in recent times and/or today
- Professor Mick Dodson — Yawuru man, former Chair of the AIATSIS Council and Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University
- Jackie Huggins — Co-Chair, National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples
- Noel Pearson — lawyer, academic, land rights activist and founder of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership
- Neville Bonner - former Liberal Senator for Queensland and Australia’s first Indigenous Member of Parliament
- Ken Wyatt — the first Indigenous Australian parliamentarian to hold office as a Minister of the Cabinet
- Linda Burney — the first Indigenous Australian female member of the House of Representatives
- Nova Peris - the first Indigenous Australian female Senator

After you have chosen the person who will be your portrait’s subject, you will need to find out about the person’s life and accomplishments. You will conduct online research to achieve this. You may choose to focus on a certain event or just on the feelings evoked when you look at images of that person. The important thing is that you should create a work of art that represents that individual to you. In order to achieve this, you will need to know quite a bit about your subject.
Assignment Sheet 2

Part 1
First, conduct some online research about some of these people and choose one person to be the subject of your portrait. You should aim to learn about their life and their accomplishments. Try to find as many different pictures of that person as you can.

Make sure you note down the source of each picture. Open an MS Word document and as you visit each online source page, copy and paste the URL from your browser bar into your document. This is the easiest way to keep track of your online sources.

Write your notes on this sheet.

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Part 2
The second element of the assignment is to create a work of art that tells the viewer something about the person. The message you communicate about this person could have something to do with their life story, their achievements, their personality or their relationships. Think in symbolic terms about these aspects of the person.

Focus Questions
• What three descriptive words summarise your impression of this person?
• What colours, lines, shapes and forms and other features and techniques will best represent the ideas you wish to express?
• Think about the medium of oil pastel on canvas. What features are peculiar to this medium?
• How can you manipulate this medium to best reflect your ideas and communicate your impression of the person to the viewer?
• What title will you give to the portrait?

Focus Activities
• Closely observe the details of the appearance of the subject. Look at your collected images with the goal of becoming familiar with their features, their facial expressions, their style of clothing and so on.
• Make some small ‘study’ sketches in your sketch book to try to capture some of those unique details. The image need not look realistic or photographic, but it should convey an impression about the subject as an individual.
• Make some preliminary sketches roughing out scale, composition, lines, shapes and forms in your sketch book, using pencil or charcoal.
• Select a colour palette. Make samples on a new page of your sketch book and work on colour combinations until you have settled on a specific palette.
• Plan the light direction for your painting and mark areas of shade on your sketch.
• Get to work on the sketch for your final portrait.
• Complete the colour work of your portrait.

Your teacher will set the deadline for the portrait project to be completed.