

Pose for a Portrait

In 1902, Irene Peacock and her husband, Alexander, asked artist Raimundo de Madrazo to paint their *portraits*. To make sure Madrazo got all of the details just right, he required his *subjects* to sit for him while he painted, which meant they needed to sit very still for several hours at a time. The Peacocks wanted the paintings to show off their wealth and elegance, so Mrs. Peacock chose to wear a fancy gown and a pearl necklace for her portrait. She's seated next to a pair of gloves and a fan, which is meant to show that she is a well-to-do lady. Madrazo posed her on a nice sofa, and he painted a garden in the *background*.

If you were going to have your portrait made, what would you want it to say about you?

What would you wear?

What objects would you have included and why?

Art Terms

Portrait: A representation of a particular person.

Subject: The main focus of the artwork, also called the "sitter."

Background: The part of a picture that serves as a setting for the main figure, and appears farthest away from the viewer.



Raimundo de Madrazo y Garreta (Spanish, 1841-1920). Portrait of Mrs. Alexander R. Peacock, 1902. Frick Art & Historical Center.

Give it a Try!

Ask someone in your home to pose for you, and create their portrait using whatever art supplies you have around the house. Choose a place for them to sit or stand, and ask them to pose. Make sure you capture all of the details! When you're finished, switch jobs and let them create your portrait.

Bonus Time Challenge: Sitting for a portrait can be hard work. Use a timer to see how long your subject can sit without moving, then see if you can do it longer!