

# Maud Taber-Thomas

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## PORTRAIT PAINTING PRICES AND PROCESS

	OIL PAINTING PRICES	CHARCOAL DRAWING PRICES
<b>Portrait Miniature</b> 2 x 3 inches	\$1500	
<b>Head and Shoulders</b> 16 x 20 inches	\$5800	\$950
<b>Half Figure</b> 30 x 40 inches	\$7800	\$1500
<b>Three-Quarter Length</b> 36 x 48 inches	\$11,700	\$2200
<b>Full Length</b> 44 x 96 inches	\$16,500	\$2800

\*For each additional figure, add 50%

\*\*Painting sizes are approximate and can vary depending on the composition. Pricing is based primarily on the content of the painting.

I am an artist specializing in oil paintings and charcoal drawings. Trained in classical drawing and painting at the New York Academy of Art, and with a background in the liberal arts from Bowdoin College and Oxford University, I draw inspiration for my evocative portraits, interiors, and landscapes from the narratives and characters of classic literature and history. My works, which range in scale from miniature to larger than life, capture the vibrant light and color of far-off places and distant time periods. I live in Silver Spring, Maryland and teach drawing and painting classes at the National Gallery of Art and the Yellow Barn Studio at Glen Echo. My drawings and paintings have been shown at a number of galleries in the Washington, DC area and in New York. My work is represented by Susan Calloway Fine Arts, in Washington, DC and can be viewed on my website, Maudtaber-thomas.com.

In my commissioned portraits, I like to create a meaningful representation of my subject by suggesting a story or era of history, playing with costumes or symbols of the sitter's interests, or creating a sense of atmosphere by replicating a particular historical painting style. I enjoy discussing ideas with clients, and I value the process of getting to know my subjects so that I can find a unique way of capturing each person's character.

## THE COMMISSIONED PORTRAIT PROCESS

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The creation of a commissioned portrait is an exciting process involving consideration, creativity, and commitment on the parts of both the buyer and the artist. We will work together throughout the process to create a meaningful work of art that will capture and immortalize the presence of the sitter.

It is important for all parties involved to remain open-minded throughout the portrait process. Often the client has a preconceived image in his or her head of what he or she expects the portrait to look like. Through setting up poses, looking at compositional sketches, discussing the character and interests of the sitter, and examining together the stylistic and technical qualities of my previous works and works from art history, the client and I work together to try to understand each other's visions of the portrait as well as possible. However, neither of us can know exactly what the finished work will look like until it is created. The work of art takes on a quality of life of its own that no one can fully predict. Some clients experience feelings of surprise when they first view the finished work because it doesn't match the image in their head. However, after looking at it and giving it some time, the client usually begins to appreciate the portrait in its own right. It's a lot like getting to know a new acquaintance—it takes a little time and the opportunity to experience them at different times of day and in different lightings. Although some of my clients have been initially surprised by the final painting, they all have ended up loving it.

**During the first planning meeting, we will talk about ideas for the painting, discussing factors such as**

- The size of the portrait
- The time frame of the project. Depending on my schedule, it can take up to a year from start to finish.
- The payment structure of the project
- Whether the painting will be done from life (this is the ideal option) or from photos
- Whether to use existing photos or take new ones (this is the most standard process)
- The subject's personality and interests and how to bring them out in the painting
- Outfit, setting, props, etc. that might appear in the painting
- Preferences for painting style (tighter and more realistic and detailed or looser and more impressionistic)
- Any additional ideas for inspiration, such as a literary character the subject identifies with or historical artwork that could provide ideas for composition. I love responding to creative ideas in my artwork, so I welcome any ideas the client might have.

After the initial meeting, I will draw up a contract outlining our decisions. Then,

**If we decide to work from life (this is the ideal option, but requires a lot of time on the part of the sitter):**

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We schedule six three-hour sittings for the portrait (we may not end up needing all of them, or, in rare cases, we may need to add more). We also decide what the setting will be, whether in my studio, at the sitter's house, or elsewhere. During the first sitting, we try out different poses, lighting situations, and outfits. I create quick sketches and take photos to document the pose.

During the subsequent sittings, I will complete the portrait in stages. I may ask the sitter to leave the outfit and props in the studio between sittings so that I can do as much work on my own as possible.

## **If we decide to work from existing photos:**

The client gives me possible photos that could work for the project. Please provide as many as possible, because the biggest factor in the success of the portrait is having an excellent photo to work from. The qualities I look for in photos to paint from are

- High resolution and good detail
- High contrast between lights and shadows: ideally the subject has strong shadows and strong lights on the face. This is different from many formal portrait photos, which are often lit with a very uniform light from the front.
- Accurate color
- Good facial expression that captures the personality of the sitter

## **If we decide to take new photos for the portrait (this is the most standard option):**

We set up a meeting for a photo shoot—I usually block in three hours for the whole process. We decide on a good location for the portrait. This could be in my studio, in the client's house, or at another picturesque location, indoors or outdoors. The sitter and I collaborate on bringing along any clothing or prop items that we might want in the portrait. We then work together to try out different poses, lighting, and facial expressions for the photos. I usually take between two hundred and five hundred photos during the photo shoot, in order to try to capture just the right look. In rare cases, we end up scheduling a second photo shoot after the first one, if we realize that there is something more we need to capture in the photos.

After we have collected as many photo options as possible, I look through them and pick the ones that lend themselves best to becoming a successful painting. Then I create pencil sketches or painted studies of three or four options for the composition of the painting, and we meet to discuss the compositions. **This is the time to bring up any new ideas or concerns about the painting. It's very important that we address any issues at this point, because it can be impossible to change things once I start the painting.**

Once we have decided on a composition, I will provide the client with a document that has an image of the final composition we have chosen, as well as any notes of changes that will be made to it.

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**Then I start the portrait painting.** Depending on my schedule, the painting process can take several months. I will contact you with any questions I have along the way.

**When the portrait is almost finished,** we will have a meeting during which I show you the portrait and discuss any questions that might have come up for me and any minor alterations that might need to be made. At this point, there are certain minor changes that are still possible and things that I am not able to change. The overall pose and the painting of the hands and face are usually not possible to change. I can sometimes alter parts of the background and clothing. Please keep in mind that in a painting there is a delicate balance of all the elements working together, so sometimes one small change can have a domino effect and throw other things off.

## **After delivery of the finished painting:**

I can give suggestions for where to get it framed. We can also discuss options for varnishing. Varnishing is a good idea, as it serves as a removable protective layer for the painting and also can even out the sheen on the surface. However it is important to wait at least six months before varnishing a painting. We can set up a time for me to take the painting back and varnish it at the appropriate time.

**Payment** is usually divided into installments, normally one third of the total price after the first planning meeting, one third when we finalize the compositional sketches, and one third when the painting is delivered.