Portraits with Agency | Zanele Muholi

Assessment and rubric · 9–12 · 50–65 minutes × 3–5 sessions

Assessment prompt

Who controls the meaning of a portrait?

Evidence to collect

Initial idea, research notes or comparison, materials test, revision evidence, finished work, and final reflection.

Four common criteria

Criterion	What meets expectations (3)
Inquiry and evidence	Uses a relevant observation or source to shape an idea
Artistic decisions	Chooses materials and visual structure intentionally, including photographic lighting
Process and revision	Documents an alternative, feedback, and at least one change
Communication and connection	Explains how the artwork addresses Who controls the meaning of a portrait?

Score interpretation

4 = extends the expectations with independence and insight; 3 = demonstrates the expected evidence; 2 = developing, with gaps; 1 = beginning and needs support. Missing evidence is recorded separately, not assigned zero automatically.

Formative observation cycle

Before: Ask students to answer: Who controls the meaning of a portrait? Record a drawing, annotation or discussion response.

During: Look for purposeful use of photographic lighting and a clear link between research evidence and design choices. Ask students to explain an alternative.

After: Compare first plan and revised result; collect a student statement naming one choice, one change, and the evidence that motivated it.

Student reflection prompts

Which source or observation mattered? What visual decision was most intentional? What did you revise? What would you try next time?

Scoring caution

Score artistic process and disciplinary accuracy separately when the lesson integrates another subject. Do not grade students on personal disclosures, identity or an adult aesthetic preference.