

College Guild
PO Box 696, Brunswick, ME 04011

FUNDAMENTALS OF DRAWING

Unit 4 of 4

Drawing Styles, Accurate Proportion, & Composition

Welcome to the fourth unit in your drawing course. In this unit we'll explore three more essential elements to creating the images you want to create. Let's explore different styles first.

Most people think of drawing as being done in a particular way. Part of the reason so many people claim they can't draw is that they perceive drawing as absolutely and always totally realistic. In fact, there are many styles of drawing and they all have validity. Most people also think they can't look at photographs or other people's drawings for inspiration, unaware that famous artists like Picasso and Michelangelo both spent the first years of their training copying other artists' works.

The main reason for much of the judgement that exists is a simple lack of understanding. Many don't realize that different styles lend themselves better to different subjects and exist for totally different reasons. Imagine comparing the skill of a famous ballet dancer to the skill of a football quarterback. Both use their bodies, both have to follow some basic fundamentals of being in shape, etc., but that's where the comparisons stop.

Styles

Following are some introductory descriptions of the most well-known styles of drawing:

1. **Abstract:** Abstract art can relate to realistic subjects that have been deviated in some way, or it can relate to something that has no relationship at all to a realistic subject. Abstract artists create drawings which express themselves through line, pattern, feeling, texture, contrast and color. These artists tend to want to express tones or atmospheres that can range anywhere from balanced and beautiful images to chaotic disharmony. Many people who love to doodle have a natural affinity to abstract art.

Here are a couple of examples of abstract drawings:



The one above on the left doesn't appear to illustrate a realistic object. The drawing on the right, however, appears to be a stylized version of a butterfly. Ask yourself, what feelings do each drawing create in you? Which do you feel drawn to, or which do you feel unattracted to completely?

Exercise #1: Start anywhere you want to on a piece of paper and let your first line flow out of a feeling. Without planning, randomly let the next line grow out of the first, repeating this over and over again until your drawing takes on an overall look you like and gives you a feeling of having finished. You can lift your pencil during this exercise, but you don't need to.

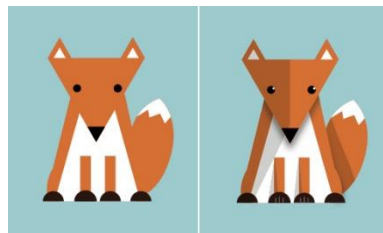
2. Symbolic Drawing: Symbolic drawing is like visual shorthand. Symbolic drawings use abstract forms and symbols to communicate ideas. Check out the two below:



Each of these drawings uses symbols to convey a feeling. The first one is quite obvious since the artist added words to the drawing telling us openly that he or she is trying to stay optimistic, even though it's difficult. The artist used flowers as symbols for optimism. The drawing on the right is very different indeed. You see what appears to be a human form reaching out of an open eye. The fingers on the hands are spayed out and they are drawn with more contrast than the head of the person, which is blurry. Do you prefer one over the other? Why or why not? Why do you think the artist of the one on the right blurred the face?

Exercise #2: Decide on a feeling you want to convey and identify a symbol that will help you to convey it. Try to incorporate contrast in a drawing of this symbolic feeling to further stress what you're trying to convey.

3. Flat Style Drawings: Typically, flat style drawings are somewhat to very realistic, but they make no effort to be three-dimensional – thus “flat styled”. You often see this style used in graphic designs, comic strips and posters. Here is an example:

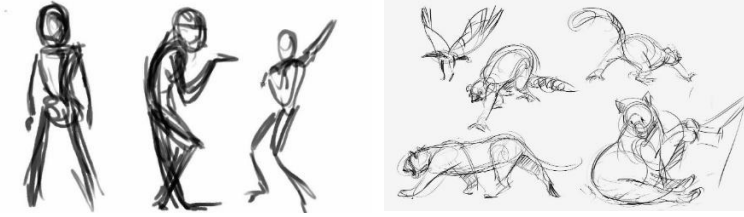


Exercise #3: Pick a subject and attempt to draw it in this style, making sure you make an effort not to use the skills of perspective you learned in units 2 and 3 so it remains flat.

4. Realistic drawing, from loose gestures to detailed realism: If you have believed you can't draw realistically prior to taking this course, remember, you're not alone. Perhaps 99% of the population feels intimidated and frustrated because they can't draw realistically to their own satisfaction. Hopefully you're becoming part of the 1% as you continue with this course!

In gesture drawing, the image is loosely done, but still realistic. The artist attempts to see the subject as a whole and loosely record their overall impression of it. As the artist observes the subject, he or she lets the pencil move

almost at will, rapidly recording the feeling of action that is picked up from the subject. The best way to achieve this is to keep your pencil from lifting off the paper and let a continuous flow of line do its magic. To accomplish this, you need to let go of your need for perfection and just enjoy the process. Here are two examples:

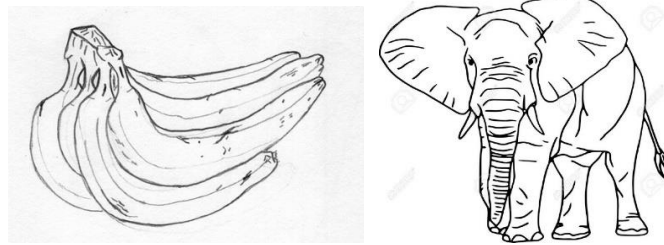


The ones on the left are of a person and the ones on the right are of animals. Both show movement, and you can see that both were done quickly and without a need for perfection.

Exercise #4: Try this yourself with either a person or an animal and try to do it without lifting your pencil.

NOTE: We've covered true realism in the first two units of this course.

5. Realistic contour drawing: There are different interpretations of what the term "contour drawing" means. Some people refer to a very specific process in which you draw without looking at the paper, while others are referring to a line drawing that only refers to the outlines or edges of things, eliminating shading. For this unit, we'll focus on the latter, and you're welcome to look at your paper.



Both of these drawings only show the outlines or edges of the items, plus some interior lines. However, neither show shading or place their subjects into a larger scene.

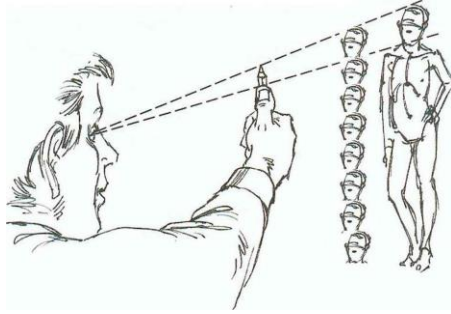
Proportions

Before we get to the next exercise, let's discuss how to draw in correct proportions. First of all, what does "proportion" mean in terms of drawing? Proportion is the relationship of one or more objects to each other. For example, what might the proportion of one of your fingers be to your whole hand?

To measure for correct proportions, all you'll need are your eyes, your hand and a pencil. To identify correct proportional relationships, you can eyeball your subject, but your brain will almost always play tricks on you, so it's better to learn how to measure for correct proportion. The drawing below illustrates an artist using his eye, hand, and pencil to determine how many "heads" tall this model is. Notice the following as you learn this technique yourself:

- His right hand is totally outstretched with his elbow locked.
- The pencil is perfectly vertical, not slanted at all.

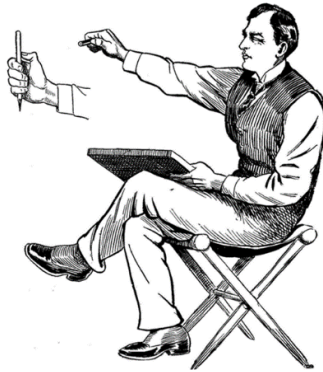
- His thumb is on the front of the pencil.
- He's holding the pencil so that as he views the model, the tip of his pencil is at the top of the model's head and he's drawn down his thumb so it's visually at the model's chin.
- You're not seeing the rest of this process, but if you could, you'd see him bring down his pencil with his thumb still in the same spot, and he'd count how many heads the model is from top to bottom. As you can see from the row of heads, he's finding out that the model is eight heads tall.



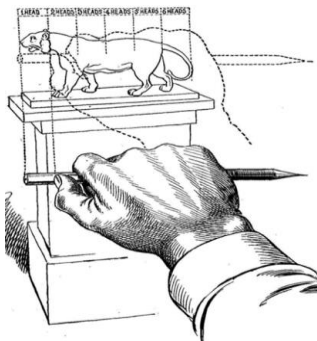
Using this measurement will help the artist draw the model in correct proportion. Here's other information he can discern with this technique:

- The model is three heads from top of head to waist.
- The model is six heads from top of head to knees.
- He could turn the pencil horizontally and find out how many heads the model is at the shoulders while still keeping his thumb in the same place.

Here's another drawing of an artist measuring with this technique:



Again, notice the arm outstretched, the pencil vertical or horizontal. Learning to measure with this technique enables you to get relationships from one part of a subject to another part, or from one subject in a group of subjects to the other subjects.



Look at this picture to the left. Once the artist discovers the width of the lion on the pedestal, which the illustration shows, he'll turn the pencil vertically and he'll then discover that the lion from head to bottom (excluding the tail) is half of the height of the pedestal. Now he can draw the pedestal in perfect proportion to the lion.

Exercise #5: Choose an object available to you, such as your shoe, and draw a realistic contour drawing of it by using this measurement process described above. Make sure you keep the item (shoe?) as close to your eye level as possible so you can measure it sitting down with your arm outstretched and elbow locked. By measuring with this technique, you'll make sure the height of the item will be in proportion to its length.


Have you ever wondered how artists develop their own unique styles? In many fine art schools, the students are required to actually copy the masters, those artists universally admired as having true expertise and very unique styles. By copying the techniques and processes of many different styles, the art students begin to ever so slowly and gradually develop their own styles, based on taking little pieces of many different styles that they've explored over months and years of training. They may intuitively have always preferred certain styles, but they are often surprised at what they end up with themselves after going through this process. You may be getting started with drawing, so this is not something you should concern yourself with at this time. Just draw, draw and draw some more and eventually your own unique style will emerge.

Composition

We're ready to move on to composition now. When you plan a composition, you're deciding where you want to place the items on your paper that you're drawing, what drawing style you'll use, what details and background you'll add, what mood you want to create, and how you want your viewer's eye to move through your drawing – in other words, where you want the focus, or **focal point**, to be.

Some people have an intuitive sense of what they want, and don't want to be structured by design principles or rules. However, just about every artist can gain immeasurably by learning these principles of composition. Don't worry in the least about losing your creativity. When your understanding of composition and structure becomes a natural habit, your creativity will naturally increase. Following are many of the guidelines and "rules" of compositional decisions:

1. Deciding the overall use of the paper: This will usually be the first decision you make. The basic shapes of paper are:

A square format: 

A tall rectangle (vertical format), often known as "portrait" style: 

A sideways rectangle (horizontal format), often known as "landscape" style: 

This decision is often made based on the subject. For example, the vertical rectangle is called "portrait" style since it's perfect for drawing or painting someone's portrait.

2. The drawing style usually comes next. As a reminder, the choices include:

-Abstract -Symbolic -Flat Style -Realistic

3. Next, the artist visualizes the placement of subjects or objects in his or her drawing. The decisions include:

-The main center of interest (focal point)

-Any secondary centers of interest

-What will be in the foreground, the midground and the background

Note: The foreground includes all the items visually placed nearest to the eye of the viewer, the background includes all the items visually placed furthest away from the eye of the viewer, and the midground includes all the

items visually placed between the foreground and the background.

4. Once the above decisions are made, the artist can decide on a few other elements, such as:
- Will there be much variety in my drawing, or will most items or subjects be similar?
 - Will I use a lot of repetition or not?
 - Will the overall effect be harmonious or will there be a sense of disharmony? Harmony is the aspect that makes the viewer feel that all the pieces are meant somehow to go together.
 - How much contrast will I try to create?
 - Will my subject(s) be still or will I create a sense of movement?

This might seem like a whole lot of decisions, and many will be made intuitively, but your end result will usually be much more satisfying when you go through the process of making such decisions.

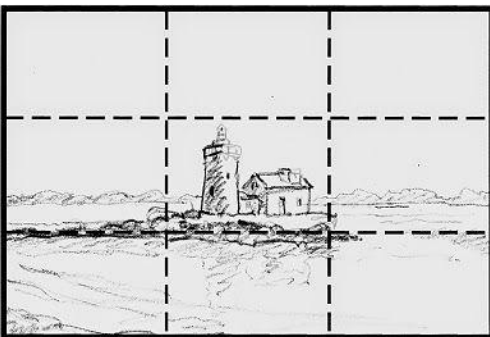
There are some general guidelines for placement of your subject(s) on your paper that are visually interesting to look at and generally pleasing to the eye. Here are two of the most common compositional placements:

1. The 1/3 to 2/3 ratio:

The painting to the right is an example of the 1/3 to 2/3 ratio. Notice the painting has been divided into thirds with the windmill as the focal point (where your eye is drawn). Notice the placement of the windmill, 1/3 of the way from the right margin, 2/3 of the way from the left margin.

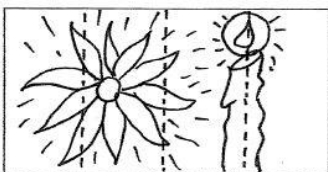


Here's a drawing using the 1/3 to 2/3 ratio:



Notice in this seascape drawing that the lighthouse and home are directly in the center 3rd with the land behind the rocks laying across the bottom third. You can also see that 1/3 of the total space is filled and 2/3 of the total space is empty.

2. 1/4 to 3/4 ratio:



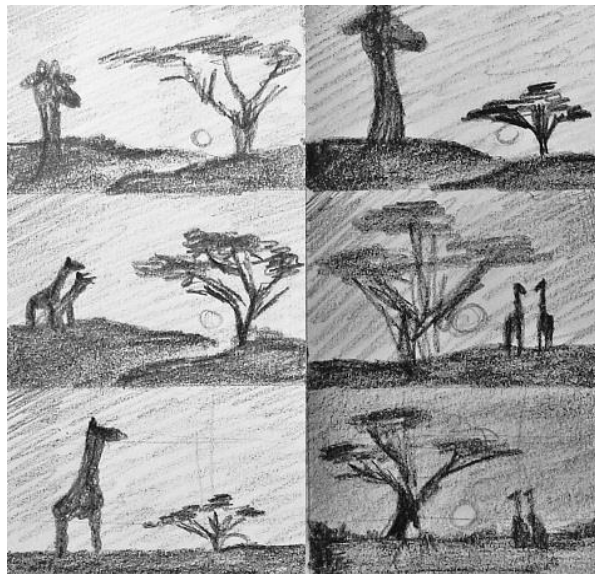
In this drawing you see the candle on the line that is 1/4 of the total width of the drawing, with the flowers taking most of 3/4 of the drawing. Because the candle is drawn larger and bolder, it becomes the focal point.

Exercise #6: Examine the drawings below. In each one, identify some of the decisions the artist made, such as use of paper, drawing style, the focal point or main center of interest, what mood or feeling is evoked, and which placement ratio was used if you can discern it. Also decide what appeals to you about each drawing and what may not be appealing to you.

Drawing #1:



Drawing #2:



Drawing #3:



Tessa

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes
