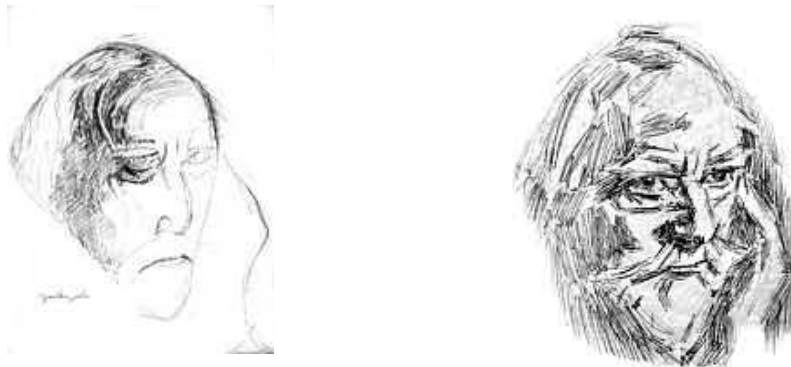


Drawing Lesson

Drawing is the backbone of art. Learning to draw will improve your painting and sculpture, and help you do the work you want. It is an acquired skill. Don't worry about talent. Anyone who can write has enough talent to learn to draw at a reasonable level. I will present a process that will enable you to draw any subject in front of you by using a system of horizontals and verticals and estimating shapes and distances. This is the system I learned from Abe Nussbaum, one of the best draftsmen I ever met or have read about.

Classes and books abound, but very few teach the fundamentals needed by a beginner. After completing most, you know the author knows how to do their drawings, but you really don't know more than when you started, and you still can't do what you want. Once you learn this system you won't have that problem. You will actually be able to draw what you see. This information is not readily available, so I decided to include it on my web site.

Here's a glowing testimonial. Abe asked me to draw a picture at my first lesson. It is on your left below. After he saw how well I was doing, he drew the layout on your right. (I darkened these pictures to make them easier to see.) I had read many books on drawing, and you can see how much they helped me. The drawing page shows the Russian priest I did during the first lessons. That's quite an improvement!!



This system works well for portraiture because a painter must be able to render exactly what they see in order to capture a likeness. Formula painting (draw a circle for the head, make a line halfway down for the eyes, etc.) doesn't work for portraiture, because a formula concentrates on how subjects are the same. The very nature of portraiture is to see how this person is unique, not how they are the same. Portrait painting would not be fun if everyone looked the same. You wouldn't need a brush-just a rubber stamp.

This method is very portable, and can be done on a mountaintop, in the studio, or kitchen, without slide projectors, tracing, grids, or other crutches. The process is divided into three steps:

- **Layout**-place your subject on the paper.
- **Design**-pick one spot and relate everything else to it.
- **Finish**-refine your drawing, hit your values and textures, and complete the piece.

Materials

The materials for pencil drawing are very affordable, small and portable. You need a 9" x 12" piece of masonite, a clip or two to hold the paper, a kneaded eraser, a drafting pencil, a pack of HB lead, a lead pointer, a sanding pad, and some good paper.

The items depicted are (clockwise from the upper left corner):



9 x 12" piece of masonite
9 x 12" piece of mat board
Drafting eraser shield
Pack of HB lead
Clip
Lead pointer
Sanding pad
Drafting pencil
Piece of kneaded eraser in aluminum foil
Kneaded eraser
Eraser shield made from tracing paper

Here are some tips. A moveable clip, such as the one shown, allows re-positioning as you draw, and keeps the clip out of your way. This type also has a rounded edge and does not cut the paper. Place the sanding pad in an envelope with the end cut off to keep your drawing kit clean. I use a piece of mat board or several sheets of paper over the masonite to soften the pencil stroke. The lower left shows an eraser shield made from a piece of tracing paper with cut out shapes. This is very handy to create overlapping lines such as beard hairs.

Use a reasonably good paper. We will assume you will do good work, and want to keep it. Good paper has better surface qualities than inferior ones, and this will affect your drawing. A typing paper with rag content (25% cotton fiber) is adequate, and a 100% rag drawing paper is preferred. A ream (500 sheets) of rag typing paper is enough to practice on for years. DO NOT USE papers which have acid content, or you will see your work turn yellow and eventually crumble.

Choose your Subject

This lesson concerns pencil drawing. Pencil is a good medium for learning to draw, because it makes a precise mark. After mastering this process, you can draw with more ambiguous mediums, such as charcoal, pastel, and paint brushes.

Find a subject that appeals to you. Old men are the easiest, because they have a face like a road map. Lines, wrinkles and facial hair all make it easy to estimate shapes and distances. Babies are the most difficult. Their smooth face requires an accurate eye, and they are better left until you have some experience. If you put lots of lines and wrinkles on a portrait of a woman, you'd better put a lot of distance between you and her. She may sue you for malpractice, or wrap your picture around your neck.

A photograph makes a good model. They are very patient, don't take breaks, and don't move around a lot. Live subjects are best after you have some practice, because they are three-dimensional, provide information not seen in

a photograph, and add intangible qualities from the rapport you establish with the sitter.

Original photographs are preferred, but most people do not have high-quality photos. Some excellent published works of portrait photographers are available. Yousuf Karsh is superb for learning to draw! He captured the essence of his sitters, and his close ups make excellent studies. Magazines are another good source. Find a picture about 8" x 10" which clearly shows features, wrinkles, hair, etc. If you have a good original photo that is smaller, make an enlargement. Even a copy machine enlargement will help you to see shapes and estimate distances.

Decide upon your composition. What will be the top and bottom of your picture? Will you do a study of the sitter where the head fills most of the page, or a person in an environment, with a room or landscape background? Your composition will determine what your picture says about your sitter. You may crop a photograph, or add to it. Copy it without considering changes only as a drawing exercise. Our goal is to be able to draw from real life, and the world does not have edges. You determine where they will be. I'm going to discuss drawing a close-up of a head for purposes of demonstrating this technique, but I want you to remember this process can be applied to any pose or subject.