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Drawing Masterclass

Creative Techniques of 100 Great Artists

Guy Noble

Illustrated throughout

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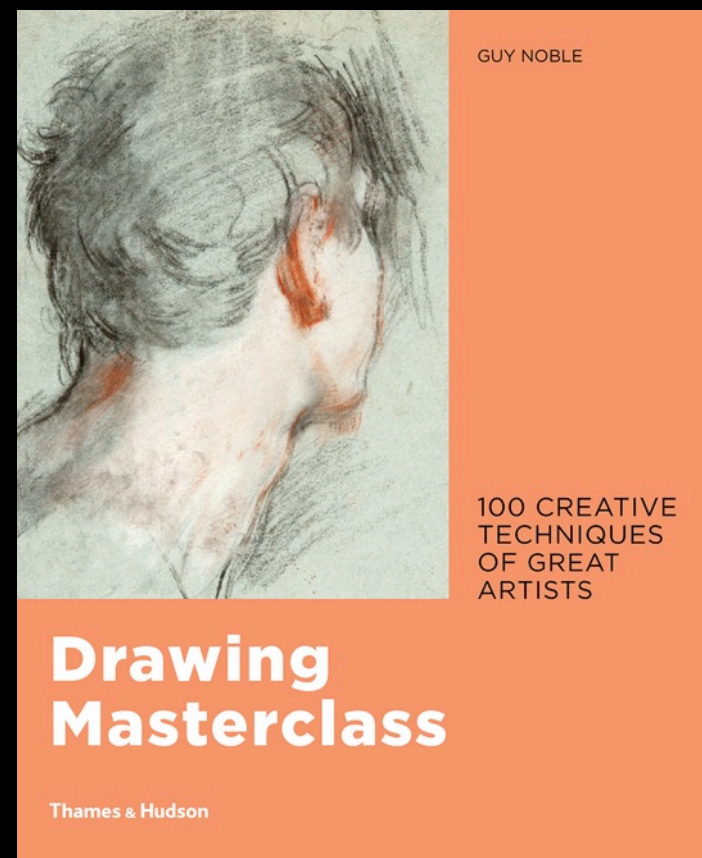
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- In the same format and style as Thames & Hudson's popular *Photography Masterclass*
- Reveals the creative process of making each drawing and analyses the way the artists made the drawings, what they did well (or badly), and how and what we can learn from them
- Explains how to use these materials and techniques in your own drawings with step-by-step illustrations, practical tips and expert analysis

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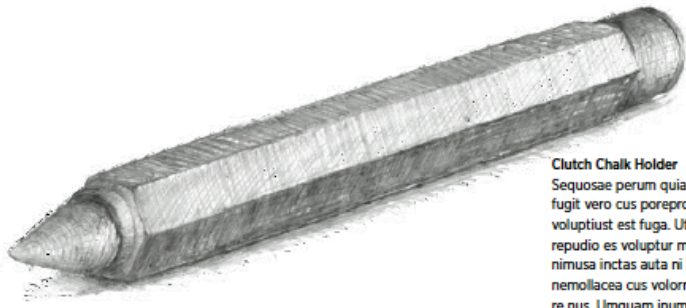
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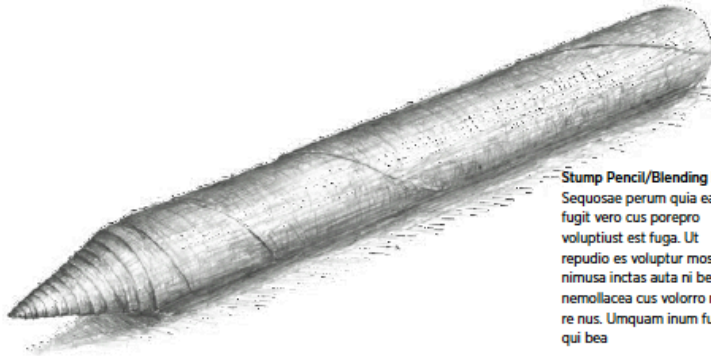
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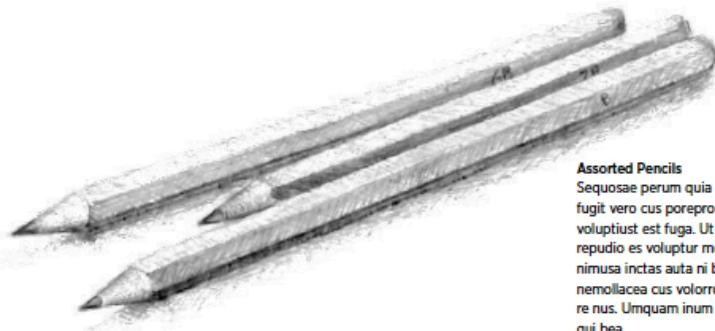
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Stump Pencil/Blending Pencil

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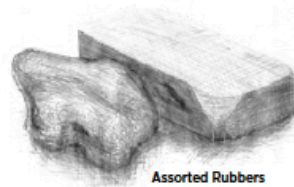
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Sharpener

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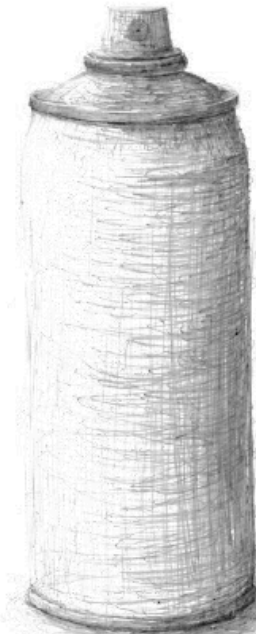
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Sandpaper

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Clothes

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Standing Nude 1810

charcoal heightened with white chalk on blue paper
24 × 13 ¼ inches (61 × 34.9 cm)

Museum of Fine Arts Boston, USA

The ideas behind Prud'hon's way of drawing were not revolutionary. Although he had mixed feelings about Neoclassicism, this drawing of a nude was in the by then well-established Neoclassical style of idealized proportions, using a conventional visual language. However, the drawing has such elegance and is so complete, it is still very convincing.

The figure is a series of parts that have been pieced together and each part is given a size in relation to the rest of the figure. But those relationships have been determined by the conventions of Neoclassicism not from observing the world around him. In 1683, Gérard Audran produced *Les Proportions du Corps Humain* (*The Proportions of the Human Body*). This book, as did many others, lays out the rules very precisely, rules that were deduced from measuring human proportions found in Greek and Roman art. In Prud'hon's drawing you can see how small the feet are in relation to the body and how masculine the body is compared to the head. This odd feeling of disconnection between parts and the whole can sometimes be used to great effect but often destroys any sense of unity the drawing might have.

Here, Prud'hon has managed to create unity with some clever tonal shading and highly refined contours (see figure 2). Most artists don't fit that neatly into one category and Prud'hon is no exception. Many of his drawings and paintings mix Neoclassic simplicity and spareness with the vitality and drama of Romanticism. However, this drawing is a Neoclassical masterpiece.

Prud'hon (French, 1758–1823) was born in Burgundy, the tenth son of a stonecutter. He began studying painting in Dijon at the age of 16. He changed his name from Pierre Prudon to Pierre-Paul Prud'hon out of regard for the Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens and possibly to evoke nobility. He then spent four years studying in Paris but it was his subsequent stay in Italy that left the deepest impression on his painting. On his return to France, Prud'hon became a supporter of the revolution and was one of Napoleon's favoured artists. Although French Romantic artist Eugène Delacroix said of him, "Prud'hon's true genius lay in allegory; this is his empire and his true domain" Prud'hon is held in high regard primarily for his drawing. He was prone to indolence and produced few paintings. However, one of his most talented pupils was the artist Constance Mayer, with whom he had an intimate relationship and collaborated on several paintings. But she committed suicide in 1821 and, consumed with grief, he died just two years later.

Assembled Parts

The predominant practice was for artists to assemble the parts of a drawing as if a collage. Gathering visual information especially of the human form has often been done directly from life. It is important to decide on what you are aiming for as you bring the parts together. Playing with different arrangements will suggest different effects. For example, making the head very small will make the body seem monumental.

Shadow

Although the assembled parts can be seen as separate, a drawing is not achieving its full effect if it lacks unity. For example, a blurred charcoal rectangle is unified. Put some shapes in it and it changes; how do the shapes break up the unity of the blurred area? The style of line or shading has an effect, too. Here, large shadows take the eye on a journey from toe to head and connect the assembled parts. Identify big areas of light and shade early on.

Tone

Prud'hon uses a tonal structure familiar to artists from the Renaissance. When you use this technique, keep control of the big tonal relationships. Most of the image has four or five tones. The mid-tones make up a small percentage.
A. Highlight (see p.6)
B. Shadow (see p.12)
C. Mid-tones or linking tones (see p.14)
D. Reflected light (see p.10)
E. Reflected light (see p.10)
F. No reflected light (see p.12)





Red Chalk Head (Studies of St Joseph for Pala Pucct) 1517
red chalk on paper
6 7/8 × 5 inches (17.5 × 12.7 cm)
Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy

With some rare exceptions, artists up to the mid 19th century built on the achievements of previous generations, making modifications to the traditional language of painting and drawing. Pontormo was no exception and the formal elements that make up his drawing vocabulary were common to all artists of that time.

Light, shade and transition tones are clearly stated. Line is used, in a limited way, to define contours or to give internal planes direction. Although there are some indications of facial expression, this drawing's power comes from the spontaneous springy quality of the contours and the broad internal marks that generate a rhythmic sense of movement.

It is worth considering the size of the drawing, which is less than A5. Paper was expensive until machine production provided cheap, mass-produced paper in the 19th century and so drawing on a small scale was a matter of economy. The small scale allows several things to happen. First, the whole drawing is seen in one glance—at arm's length or closer, so the effect of the whole is constantly taken into account as the artists works. Consequently, the internal rhythms and connections are more easily achieved. Secondly, the artist is less likely to fill in areas and is able to treat the shadows as active parts of the drawing. Finally, the speed the eye moves around the drawing appears to be connected to the speed the artist's eye was moving around the subject.

Form

Think of the head as opposed to a portrait. The relationship between the face and the whole of the head is important. Consider the whole head not just the face. Marks that carry gestural autonomy should make the form of the head and describe the features.

To achieve this requires practice, so practice looking and drawing. When looking at your subject switch your attention every few seconds from the area you are drawing to the whole head. Do the same when considering your drawing.



Mark Making

When drawing, it is important that you are able to make different kinds of marks. You can either blend the chalk or use lines to create shading.

Using the chalk broken or on its side (as here in this drawing) will enable you to create variations. This can be visually confusing if there are too many changes in one image, or stylistically monotonous if too uniform. As you push the side of the chalk into the paper, gradually pressure one end as this will help create a graduated tonal range.



Pontormo (Italian, 1494-1557) was born Jacopo Carrucci, near Empoli in Tuscany. At the age of 15, both his parents dead, he moved to Florence and became, in succession, a pupil of Leonardo da Vinci, Mariotto Albertinelli, Piero di Cosimo and Andrea del Sarto. In *Lives of the Artists* (1550), Giorgio Vasari talks of Pontormo's interest in creating new effects. Admired by Michelangelo, Pontormo was a successful artist but eccentric. He was known for spending time in his attic drawing up on a ladder so that no one could reach him; he recorded every detail of the people who came by to see him even though he would pretend not to be there. During the last two years of his life, he kept a diary in which he wrote about his daily existence, including his diet, health and even his bowel movements. Despite being a renowned hypochondriac and a recluse, Pontormo produced some of the most beautiful drawings of the 16th century.



A Nude Youth 1863

49.3 x 31 cm
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Cezanne is rightly thought to be one of painting's great revolutionary figures but here, in this early work, he uses a very conventional drawing language. Compared to the Prud'hon drawing (page xxx), the tonal structure is almost identical. Of course there are differences. Here Cezanne's flagrant disregard for an idealised form with proportions that conform to the academic rules is obvious.

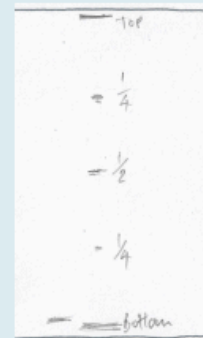
Around this time many of the male models were soldiers who, having no war to fight were looking for unskilled work in the cities. These men were physically fit but hardly the Greek ideal. The problem Cézanne faced was he had no desire to idealise the figure - the studios he was working in demanded a different approach to that straightforward realism - even some of his fellow students ridiculed him. So it was the blatant realism rather than a revolutionary development of the graphic language that put Cezanne at odds with the establishment.

Compared to many of the more refined early 19th-century drawings Cezanne reduces the transition tones. This makes the light look more dramatic. The tones in this drawing are generalised; large areas are not broken up into smaller more detailed areas but synthesised. The tonal value of each area has been gauged in relation to the other areas - The model's chest looks like its tonal value has been compared to light of the tummy and the dark of the face.

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Scale & Size

This drawing is just over A3 - since the head and feet touch the edge of the paper effectively the figure is 48 cm high. Establishing and holding the appropriate size for the figure presents many students with their first obstacle. Draw a mark where you want the top of the head and mark where you want the foot. This has two advantages: first it will help prevent the figure becoming either too big or too small, so long as you stick to these guide marks, and secondly



Compare Drawings

Prud'hon, Cezanne and Matisse. These three life drawings provide us with some interesting insights. They all use light and shade, focus specifically on the figure and were most likely done, if not entirely, from life. The Prud'hon creates an idealised form with a refined technique. The Cezanne uses a cruder technique to create a more realistic and vigorous image. The Matisse is more fluid and atmospheric.

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A Gathering at Wood's Edge 1770-73
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
37.5 × 49.2 cm

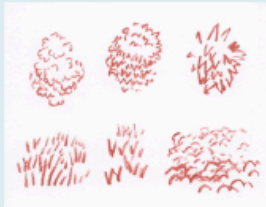
The first thing that strikes you when you see this drawing is the perfect surface quality - the tiny horizontal ridges in the paper create (see laid paper) an almost machine manufactured look to the red chalk. There is no ugly rubbing out, everything looks deliberate, subtle and controlled. Just like the scene that is being represented the technique is easy and relaxed - this is an ideal world. But Fragonard was about to see this easy privilege life come to a shattering end with the French Revolution.

The late Rococo period was in many ways, if you were born into privilege and wealth, a great time to live but as with all great art the apparent ease of execution belies hard won skills and extraordinary technique. Fragonard spent about six months in the studio of Chardin and then several years with Boucher learning the prevailing traditions and skills. Only 5 of Fragonard's painting are dated so we can't say for certain when this drawing was done but it seems likely to of been about 1772. At this time there were some great artists working: Goya was 25, J.L.David 22, Greuze 46, Gainsborough 44, Chardin 72 and Tiepolo had just died.

Fragonard's drawings were appreciated by a growing audience as original works by the hand of the artist - work was turning up at public auctions and gaining good prices suggesting that they were made for the market as independent works of art.

Subject Matter

Although Fragonard made many drawings directly from nature it is unlikely this drawing was; it is too big and too elaborate. However all those hours of working directly from life have been utilised in this imaginary landscape.



Visual Language

Look closely and you can see a range of marks that characterise the leaves and blades of grass. These marks don't describe each leaf but suggest the look that leaves have. Practice different kinds of marks to create different kinds of leaves and trees. It may be your only interested in the patterns these marks or signs create but if you want to make a convincing whole you will have to



Method & Materials

It is possible to replicate the materials and techniques Fragonard used. Laid paper is simply paper that has been handmade, where the wire mesh leaves an imprint on the surface. Buying large sheets of a good thickness can be difficult but not impossible. Red Conte chalk is available at good art shops but can be bought online if necessary (see materials notes).

See Also

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Artist (p.000),

Artist (p.000)

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Harbor Scene 1636

Pen and brown ink with brown wash and white heightening on white paper
19.6 × 25.6 cm (0 1/4 × 1 1/8 in.)
British Museum

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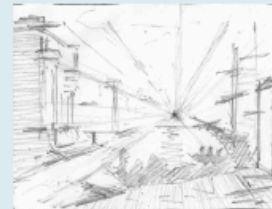
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Visual Language – Tone & Space

Whether you are drawing directly from the landscape, from memory or from another painting try to think of the image as large generalised shapes of tone. This can be difficult as there always seems to be parts within large areas that contradict or breakup that large area. For instance in the foreground of the picture illustrated there is a patch of light on the quay that seems to go



Composition

The relationship between the big areas of light and shade and the composition of the whole image is very interconnected. Although the light area around the sun forms a focal point there are strong long zigzagging movements into the space. The way these big tonal areas and strong linear spatial directions pull the eye around the image forms the composition. Claude has a major

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