

# SKETCHBOOK ADVENTURES

## Chapter 7: Drawing

Drawing may seem like one of the most intimidating techniques that we'll learn in this workshop, but it doesn't have to be. Once you take away the pressure to be perfect and decide to find your own style through practicing, drawing won't seem scary anymore. Since we're working on building our artistic skills and exploring our creative lives in this workshop, rather than developing fine art techniques like realistic sketching (which usually requires some degree of natural talent and/or years of practice), we'll concentrate on line drawing. Line drawing focuses on depicting something on the page in a representational way, meaning that the viewer knows what the drawing represents. Line drawing is used a lot in illustrations and is much easier and quicker to get the hang of than realistic sketching, plus it's perfect for the type of exploratory exercises we're doing in this workshop.

The first thing you need to do is to stop pressuring yourself to try to make a drawing that's perfect and looks exactly like what you're drawing. The idea here is to draw something in a simple way and find your own natural style. The next thing you need to do is practice. If you've never drawn before, it's likely that your first sketches won't be awesome but don't fret! That's where practice through the exercises in this chapter as well as on your own comes in.

The next thing to remember is to take your time. Just because the end result is a simple line drawing doesn't mean you shouldn't take the time to think about every single line you draw. Taking an extra few seconds to think about where to start or how a line curves can make the difference between a drawing you're happy with and one you want to rip out of your sketchbook.

The third thing you need to do is pay attention. We're so used to looking at ordinary things like tables every day that it seems like it would be easy to sit down and draw one. But if you really look at a table you will likely notice details or elements of perspective that you hadn't thought about. Perspective is something I still struggle with at times.



As far as tools go, I like to start with a pencil and then move onto drawing in pen using Sakura Pigma Micron pens, which come in a variety of tip sizes and are archival quality and waterproof. Using high-quality pens like this is essential for me since I often add watercolors or collage to my drawing and I don't want my lines to smudge or smear. Revisit the hand-lettering chapter and review pen choices and the width of lines.

### **Perspective, proportion and scale**

These are the three main points you'll need to consider when doing line drawing: perspective, proportion and scale. These all affect how the subject looks to you and how it will look on the paper when you render it.

Proportion is the size of the parts of something in relation to the other parts of that thing. For example: the size of someone's eyes in relation to their head. Often artists will play with varying the size of things in relation to other parts of the object. A good example is Margaret Keane and her 'big eyes' paintings, which we'll discuss a bit more below.

Scale is the size of objects in relation to other objects. For example: a person standing next to a tree. If the tree and the person are the same distance from you, the size of them should reflect the size they are in relation to each other. This means the tree should be larger than the person.

Perspective is what creates an illusion of depth and space when you depict a three-dimensional object on a two-dimensional flat surface (like a piece of paper). For example, a person standing close to you appears larger than a tree in the distance.



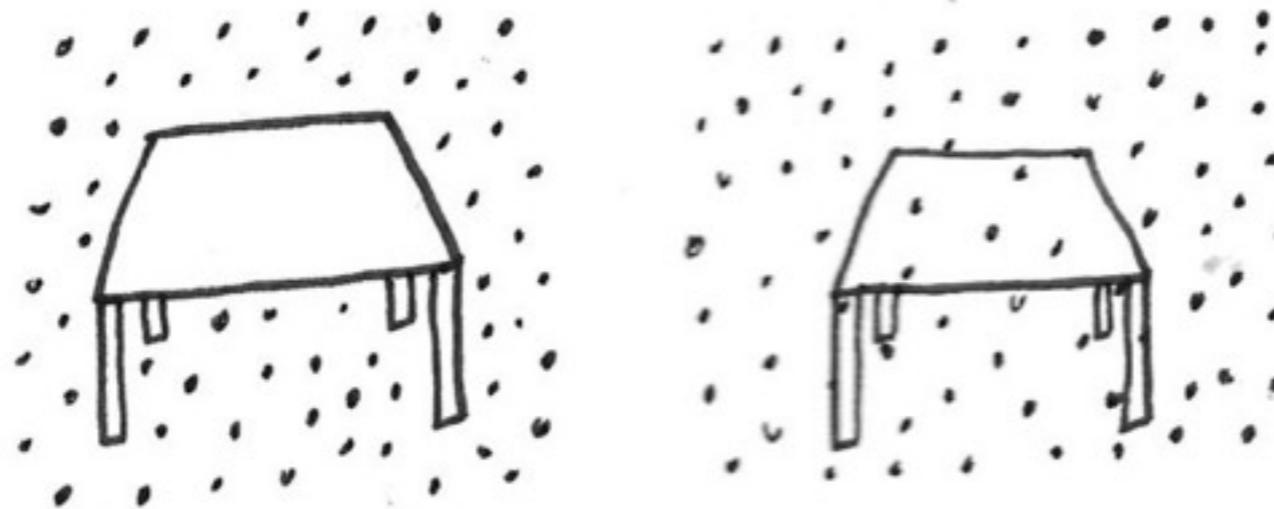
Proportion and scale are a bit easier to understand than perspective, so let's focus on getting a better understanding of perspective. Perspective is your point of view of something in relation to height, width, depth and position. This means that the dimensions of something vary depending on where it is in relation to you. If something is far away, it looks smaller than if it is up close. The part of something that is closest to you appears larger than the other parts of it. Stand 10 feet away from a table and position yourself in the center in front of it. The edge of the table closest to you looks longer than the edge of the table opposite it, even though if you measured both edges they would be the same length. This is a great example of perspective. If you draw a table with the line closest and farthest from you the same length, the drawing will look a bit off and flat.

\*Notice in the example below the difference between drawing the far and close edge of the table the same length. The table on the left (with the lines the same length) looks a bit off and flat while the table on the right (with the line length matching the perspective) looks correct.



When you begin drawing something, take some time to study the dimensions of it in relation to you as well as what parts of it overlap. I like to start by drawing the part of the object that is closest to me (the foreground) and then build my drawing from there. The objects farthest from me (the background) are the last areas that I draw. This helps me ensure that the perspective is correct and that I don't spend a lot of time erasing when I've drawn a wall behind a table first and then had to erase it since part of the wall is hidden by the table in the foreground.

\*Notice in the example below, the difference between drawing the wall (background) first (on the right) and drawing the table (foreground) first (on the left).



## TWO WAYS TO DRAW

### Drawing using guides:

If you're just starting out drawing, using some type of guide is a great place to start. There are several ways you can do this like using tracing paper, carbon paper, pressing into the paper to create indentations, using a projector to project the image onto a piece of paper, or creating a grid over your image and a grid on your piece of paper. I've tried all of these, but tracing using carbon paper or creating indentations are the easiest and require the least amount of supplies so we'll focus on them.

When I first started drawing I traced over images in magazines or photographs and then drew over my lines. Tracing an image to create a drawing is the perfect way to help you get the hang of drawing, understand perspective and give you some drawing muscle memory. It's kind of like cooking from a recipe. If you pay attention when you follow a recipe you'll start to understand which flavors work well together and how much of each ingredient to use to create a cohesive, balanced dish. Once you understand the basics you'll be able to build on this knowledge and create your own recipes. The same goes for drawing. Drawing from tracing is like cooking from a recipe in that you're not creating something completely original but you're learning the basics through practice. These basics such as perspective, background, line width, composition, etc. will help you build the skills to draw without tracing.

It's important to note that if you do trace a photograph or image and plan on using it outside your sketchbook, for example in a piece of art that you sell, you start to fall into the gray area of copying and copyright infringement. If you're just using your tracings in your sketchbook (for personal use) you shouldn't worry too much but if you turn those images into a product be sure to consult a lawyer and make sure you're not infringing on any copyrights. I suggest using your own photographs or images that are not copyrighted.



Let's start with using carbon paper, which is available at office supply stores. If you're not familiar with it, it's paper that's coated on one side with dry ink. You may have seen it before in a checkbook or receipt book. To use carbon paper, place the inked side down in your sketchbook and then place the image on top. Then trace over the lines in the image. When you pull up the carbon paper you'll see that the ink transferred to your sketchbook page in the area where you traced. Then you can trace over the carbon lines with a pen. Carbon paper can be very sensitive so pressing on it with your hand as you're drawing often will transfer the ink to your page as well. One way to avoid getting those pesky smudges from accidentally pressing your fingers or hand onto the carbon paper when you're tracing is to eliminate the carbon paper from the equation and use the indention method.

To use the indention method, place your image on top of your sketchbook page and then trace over the lines using a hard-tipped pen. You'll have to press fairly hard but not so hard that you rip the paper. When you pull the image off, you'll notice indentations on your page from where you traced. Then you can draw over the indentations with your pen. If you have bad close-up eyesight or are working in a room with poor light this probably isn't the best method for you.



## Freehand drawing:

Once you have a better understanding of how to draw from tracing and practicing, you should begin trying to draw freehand.

### There are three ways to do this:

1. Draw while looking at a photograph of your subject: Place a photograph or image on your table next to your sketchbook and look at it as you draw.
2. Draw while looking at your subject live: I suggest starting with drawing things that are stationary (like setting up a still-life) as opposed to drawing a person who will likely be more impatient than a plant as you take your time creating your drawing. Make sure that your subject isn't moving.
3. Draw from your memory or imagination: This is the hardest for me to do if I'm drawing something representational (meaning that the drawing is supposed to look like the subject), but it's awesome if you're drawing patterns, simple shapes and abstract images, or if you just want to let go and see what comes out of your mind.

### Drawing while looking at a photograph/image or live subject matter:

It's easy to get caught up in trying to do this quickly and move on to adding color, collage and other elements. My favorite element of design is color so I really have to force myself to be patient during the drawing process.

First, look at what you're about to draw. Take your time considering perspective, background, and which parts of the image you want to draw. Which part of the subject is closest to you? That's the part you want to start drawing first. If you begin drawing the background area first your lines will overlap and you'll end up spending all of your time erasing. Which brings up an important point: Start by drawing your image in pencil and then, when you feel satisfied with your drawing, go over the lines in pen and then erase any pencil marks you can still see.

Likely you'll notice that your drawing doesn't look exactly like the image you are trying to represent. Don't freak out! This is how your own artistic inclinations come into play. Don't focus on making it look JUST like what you're looking at, but instead concentrate on feeling happy with what you drew and embracing your own style. Perhaps you tend to draw people's legs much thinner than they actually are, but if your finished drawing looks aesthetically pleasing don't worry. You may be familiar with Margaret Keane, the famous artist who painted the "big eyes" paintings in the 1950s and 1960s. When she saw her subjects she saw them with big eyes and accentuated the eyes in her artwork. If she forced herself to make the eyes regular-sized, her unique paintings would have never come to light. The "big eyes" are what tell us that the paintings are hers.



## Draw from your memory or imagination:

Before you pick up your pencil, it's important to clear your mind. Take 10 deep breaths and try to let your mind go blank. If you're trying to draw something representational, close your eyes and take a minute to develop a clear image of what you're about to draw. If you can find an image of your subject, take a few minutes to study it. Think about perspective, composition and other elements of the subject and then bring your pencil to paper and draw it. Likely this image will be less similar to the subject you're drawing than if you drew it while looking at the subject or a photograph of it. That's okay! Maybe the plants you're drawing have huge leaves and in reality the plant has small leaves. The goal is to create something interesting and aesthetically pleasing, not something that is perfect in every way.

If you're drawing something more abstract like shapes or patterns, you may want to go completely freeform. Take a few deep breaths then bring your pencil to your paper and just let it go. For this type of drawing I like to put on music and let the intricate patterns of notes emerge on my page.

At the end of this chapter there are a few exercises based on these different ways of drawing to help you get comfortable drawing and build your skills. There are also exercises after each of the chapters that will help you work on your drawing skills. It's imperative that you embrace your own style and don't try to be perfect. If everyone drew a guitar in the exact same way, life would be boring and there would be no need for museums. The awesome thing about art is that it reflects the artist's interpretation of the subject. When I practice drawing, I'm not attempting to make each drawing perfect but rather to perfect my own style.

## Here are a few more short exercises to build your drawing skills:

1. Fill a page with shapes and patterns while listening to music. Classical music works really well for this. Concentrate on the space in between notes and how long the notes are. Draw lines, shapes or patterns that reflect the feeling of the music.
2. Pick one subject and draw it everyday for a month. Put each drawing into an envelope when you finish it and don't look at them until the month is over. Reflect on how different or similar the drawings are.
3. Draw something every day on a post-it note or index card for a month.

