

### Fairy Tale #3

# *The Princess & the Pea*

**by Hans Christian Anderson**

Hi and welcome to Fairy Tale #3, Hans Christian Anderson's, "The Princess & the Pea."

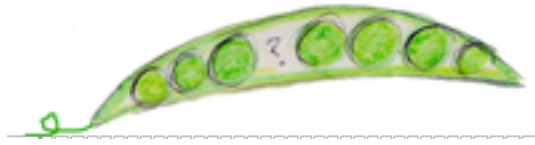
This was my favorite fairy tale when I was young! But when I read it again recently (after many years), at first I was stumped as to why I liked it... the princess in the story seemed ungrateful and whiny when reading it through adult eyes.

And yet — I LOVED the story as a little girl. I really identified with the little bedraggled princess appearing at the castle door, wet and miserable. And then! Bruised and bed-headed in the morning — I could relate to bed-head and complaining (as opposed to jeweled crowns and manners. This princess didn't put on a show; she was who she was. She was *REAL*)!

I had themed this lesson "the innocent side" with the child-me in mind, hoping that the exercises would tap into our child-selves, as I really think approaching art more "innocently" or "naively" can bring a freshness to work that is hard to attain otherwise.

As adults now, though, I know that you'll want to spend time working on things *OTHER* than finding your inner scribble, so we'll begin thinking about composition and drawing bodies as well (but in a way that might seem somewhat silly and/or childlike... but humor me!).

## Let's Begin!



## Research & Discovery

This week:

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- |                          |         |
|--------------------------|---------|
| 1. Read the Text         | Page 3  |
| 2. Composition & Design  | Page 4  |
| 3. Draw 20 Stick Figures | Page 11 |

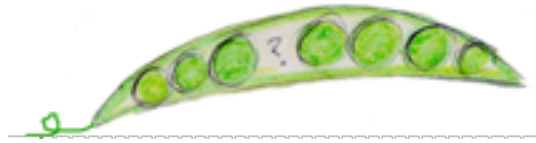
*Article:*

*Thoughts on Design & Composition*      *Page 21*

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I estimate the above assignments will take about 2 - 3 hours.

Have fun, and see you at the flickr or facebook sites!



## Assignment #1

### Read the Text

The first assignment is to read the story! The link for the PDF is

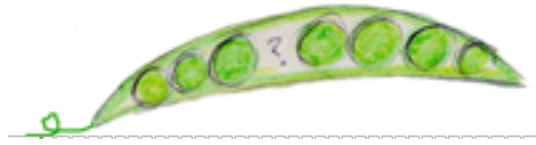
<http://www.carlasonheim.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/FT3PrincessPeaPDF.pdf>

This new tale is both “short” and “tall.”

The short part refers to the length; “The Princess and the Pea” is a very short story! It should take about 3 minutes to read.

The “tall” part referred to the 20 mattresses and 20 eider-down beds. ;)

Click the above link to print the story, then take visual notes as they occur to you.



## Assignments #2

### Composition and Design, Kid-Style



This assignment isn't a drawing assignment, but a "cutting and arranging" project (though you might find yourself drawing a few elements of your collages, as I did for the princess, above).

For years the words "design" and "composition" scared me. I felt completely inadequate that I had never learned the "right" way to compose a picture. I was sure that if only I REALLY studied the rules, I would be able to create a well-designed painting.

However, about 10 years ago something clicked for me. (At the end of this PDF is a short post I did for my "Flower Crazy" class a few years ago on the subject. Please read it if you have the time!)

But basically I realized that, even though there might be design "guidelines," that didn't mean that these were set in stone or even that they had anything to do with the image before me. In the end, I would need to struggle through the problem of that PARTICULAR



piece, and the GENERAL design guidelines out there may or may not help me solve my SPECIFIC problem.

I realized that, like the drawing or the painting itself, I would need to find my way through design and composition in my own way, relying heavily on my intuition at the moment (which, admittedly, comes in part from learning design rules here and there).

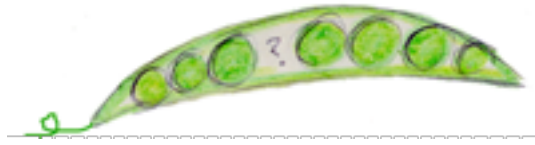
Don't get me wrong. It's not that I have a disregard for rules. It's that I tend to cling to them too tightly, and it trips me up!

I liken it to trying to take marriage advice from a magazine article. Even though there might be some GENERAL things in the article that possibly could apply to any given argument Steve and I might be having, the truth is that each and every argument is SPECIFIC, and general principles may or may not apply in the heat of the moment. Steve and I have a unique way of communicating, and unfortunately the writer of the magazine article doesn't know us and how we need to work things out; he/she can only generalize! And if I try to apply general rules to a specific problem, I can get in trouble.

For example, after having just read said article, if I thought that if only I phrased something a certain way then Steve would respond positively, I would be kidding myself. If Steve felt any sense that I was bringing someone from the outside into our argument (even if it were the writer of a magazine article!), he would most likely respond negatively; it wouldn't be authentic to the moment.

I think the same can be true for a painting. If you are struggling with how to design a piece of art, it's not a given that the "rules" will align with who you are *at the moment*, and apply to the problem you are trying to solve *at that moment*. (The "rules" sometimes can be that "outside" opinion that is more confusing than helpful, to me at least).

Rules and guidelines can be helpful — of course! But sometimes, if you're like me, they can trip you up and make you timid. So I encourage you to pretend you are that kid that never heard of any rules, just for today, and boldly place the bed in the middle of the composition (or whatever). Just for fun!



### ***Supplies Needed***

*a magazine with bed photos in it*  
*small set of crayons (I'm using kids' Crayola crayons)*  
*scissors*  
*digital camera*  
*stack of inexpensive paper, about 9" x 12"*

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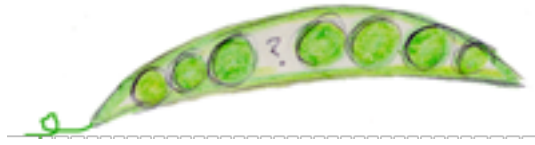
### **STEP 1**

**Draw or Cut out 3 Princesses, 3 Beds, 3 Peas**



For this series of compositions, we will be working with the the Princess, the Pea, and the Bed. Find a magazine (or draw) these three subjects in three different sizes — small, medium and large — for a total of nine subjects.

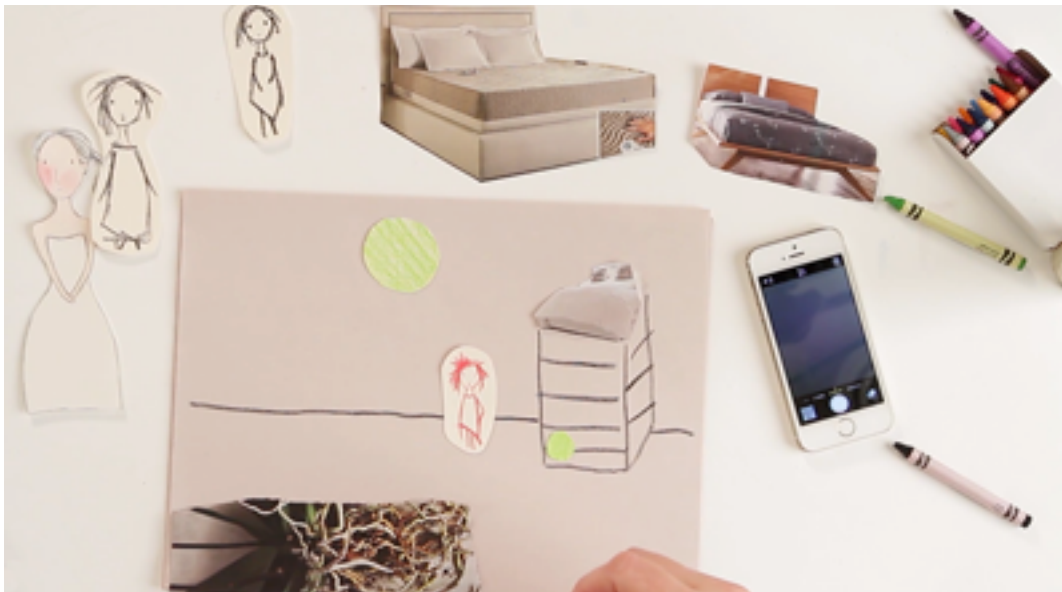
Also tear or cut out some elements that can be used as rugs, curtains, windows, etc.



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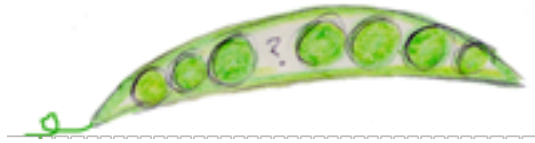
## Step 2

### Create a Composition



Pick your three subjects and create a composition on your paper. Play around with different sized Princesses, Peas, and Beds until it feels right to you. Use crayons to add horizon lines, mattresses, or any other details.

Add other collaged elements if desired.



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### STEP 3

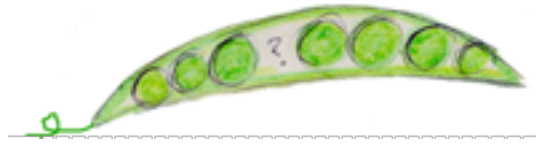
#### Take a Photo



Then, take a photo with your digital camera (I used my iPhone... I'm not going for quality here, I just want to record my composition before I move on to the next one).

NOTE: If you don't have a digital camera, don't worry! You can do a quick "thumbnail sketch" to record your composition instead, like this:





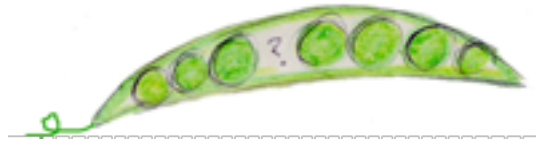
#### STEP 4

#### Repeat Steps 2 & 3

Make at least 15 different compositions, taking a photo of each one before moving on to the next. Try not to worry about anything except having fun, like a child, with magazine cutouts and crayons. Seriously!

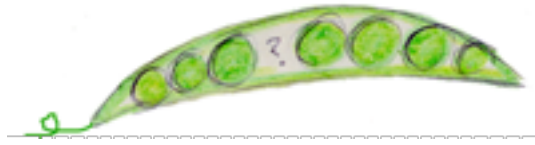


The images on this page and the next are 21 that I made during the course of my "Discovery Period."



Now that you have your 15-20 compositions, that's all you need to do with them for now. Next time we'll put our analyzing hats on and pick one to paint.

Have fun!



### *Assignment #3*

## Draw 20 Stick Figures



Can't draw anything but a stick figure? That's okay! Because that's all you need to do for this next assignment.

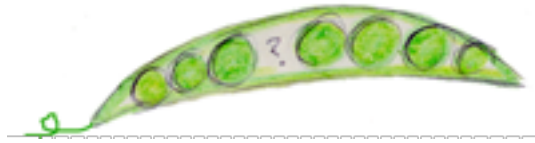
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### ***Supplies Needed***

*One piece of inexpensive paper*

*a crayon*

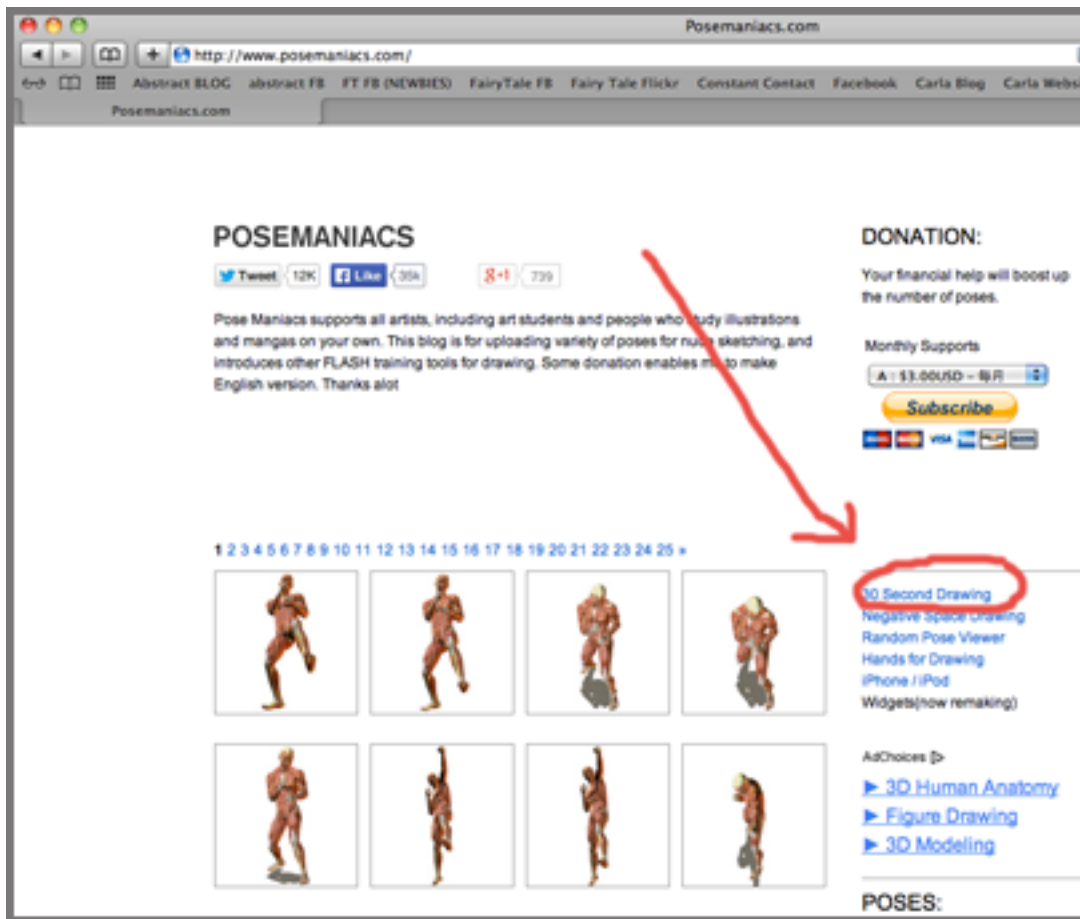
*computer for figure references*



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## STEP 1

### Find Figure References

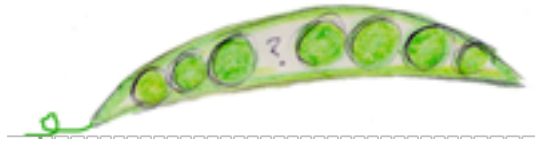


[www.posemaniacs.com](http://www.posemaniacs.com)

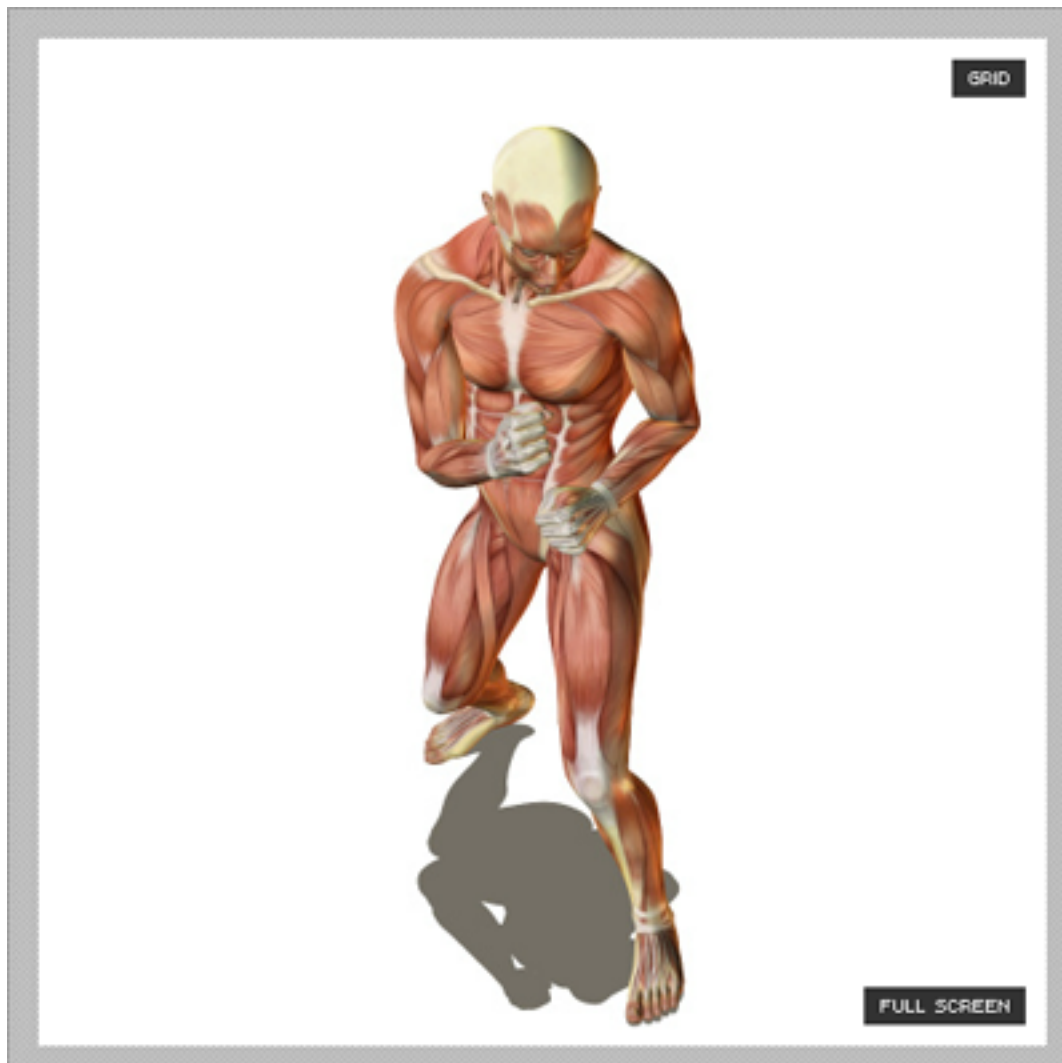
When you get to the home page, click the “30 Second Drawing” link

I started my drawing life with figure drawing 20 years ago (drawing from a live, nude model), and I still think drawing from a live model is the best thing you can do for your drawing practice!

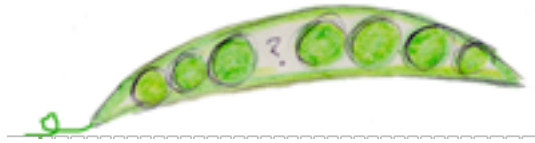
During this “Year of the Fairy Tale” we will revisit “bodies” several times. This month we will focus on capturing the pose or stance of a figure.



You can draw from life if you like, or photo references. I like to use [www.posemaniacs.com](http://www.posemaniacs.com), but there are others out there (including <http://www.quickposes.com/> and <http://artists.pixelovely.com/>). If you're uncomfortable with the nude figure, however, posemaniacs is a good one as they are muscular illustrations.



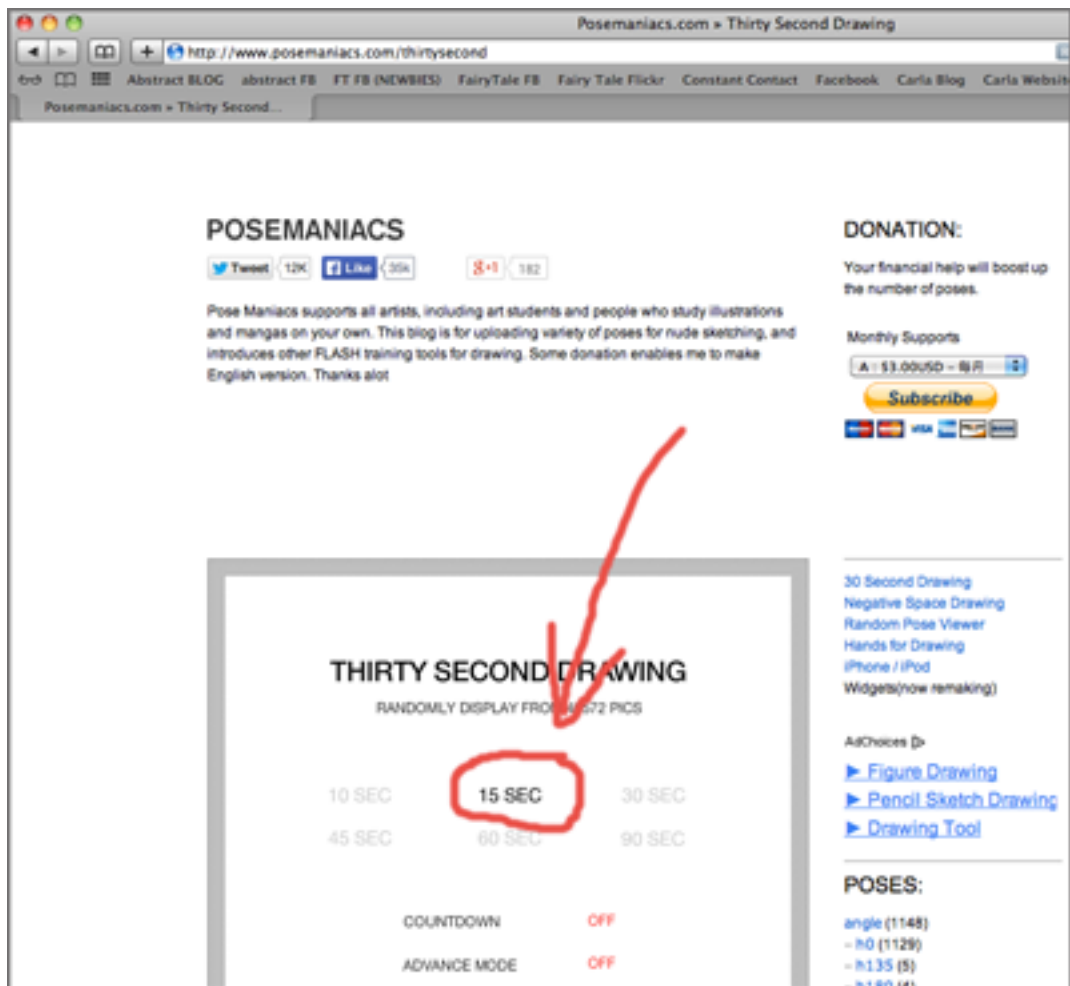
*Image from [www.posemaniacs.com](http://www.posemaniacs.com)*



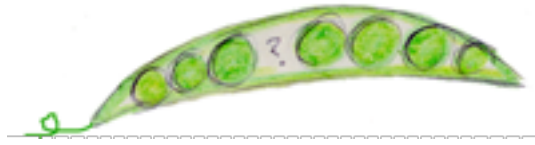
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## STEP 2

Set Poses to change every 15 seconds



Once you click the 30 Second Drawing link in Step 1, you will get this page. Change the time to 15 seconds and click. The clock will start!



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### STEP 3

#### Draw the Figure with 5 Lines Only



The timer will start and you will see the first pose. Take a moment to take it all in, then, with intention, draw a stick figure using just five lines.

1. **First Line:** Look at your reference, and draw a circle for the head.
2. **Second Line:** Then, while really looking at your reference, draw a line down from the head and curve it to act as torso and one leg. Really try to capture the angle of the body.
3. **Third Line:** Draw the second leg.
4. **Fourth Line:** Draw an arm.
5. **Fifth Line:** Draw the other arm.

You're done with one!





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#### STEP 4

Repeat 19 More Times...



... for a total of 20. Done!

(This adds up to just 5 minutes of drawing time! If you crave more, there are extra credit assignments on the next page.)



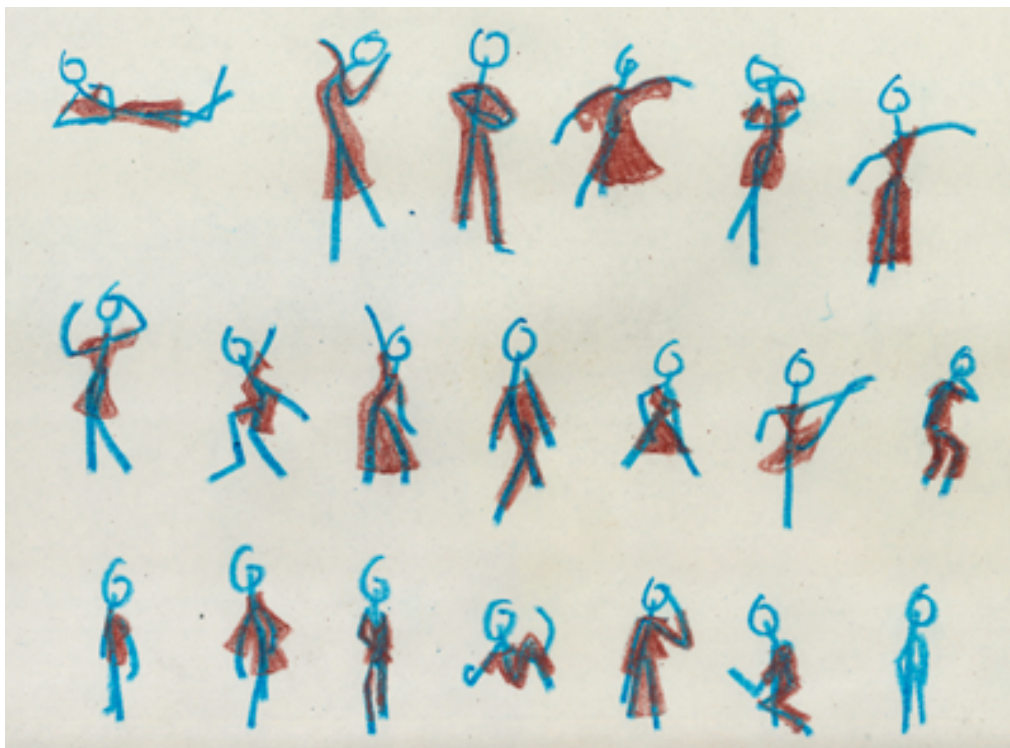
## Extra Credit Drawing Assignments

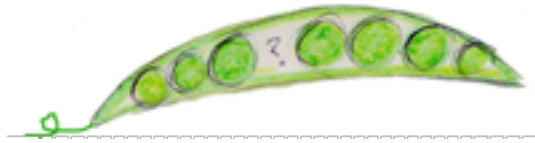
### ***Extra Credit #1***

Do this assignment three more times during the Discovery period (for a total of 80 stick figures).

### ***Extra Credit #2***

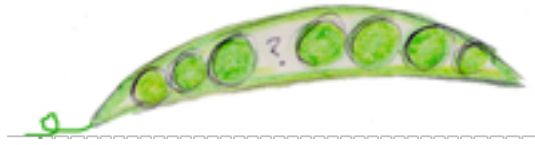
Add clothes to your stick figures with a crayon. "Fill" out the figure with clothing to be more human-like.





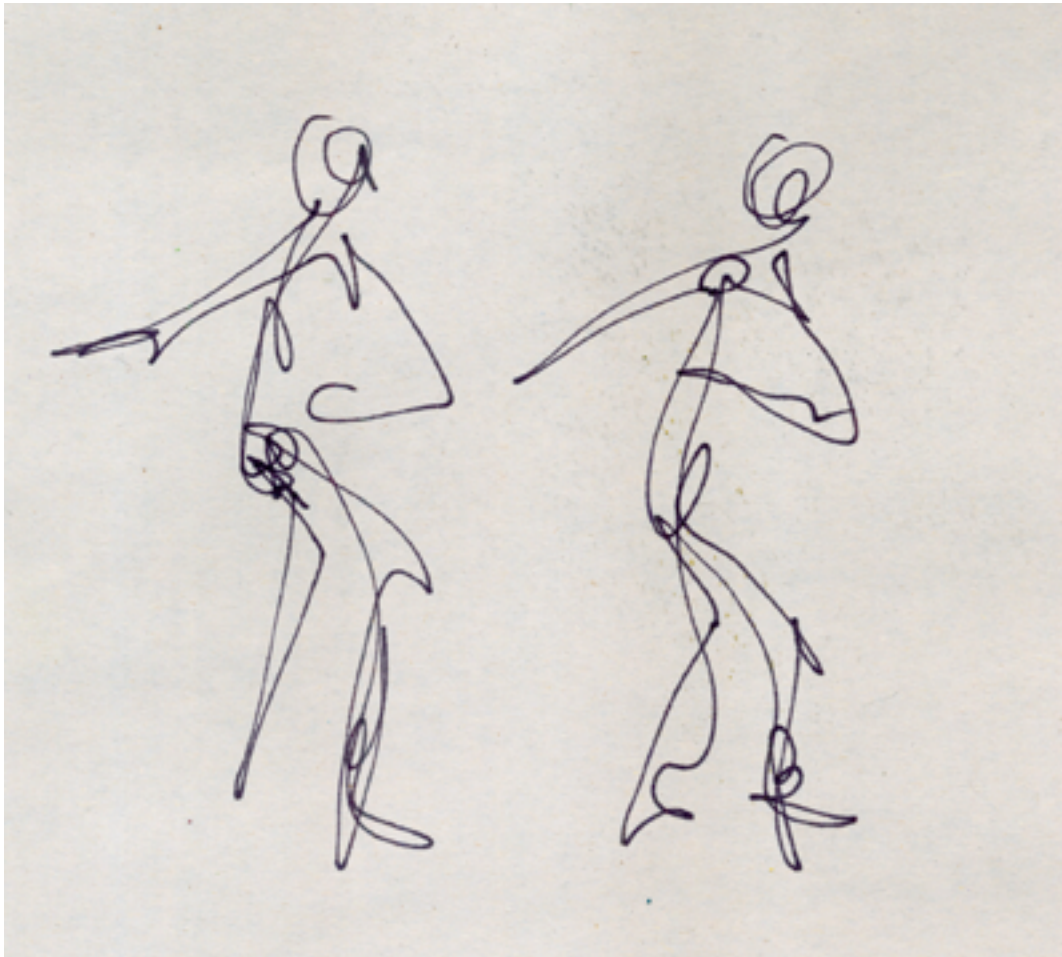
**Extra-Extra credit:** Pick a crayon that has a similar value as your original. Then, if you scan them in and take out all the color, you will see more clearly how “human” these stick figures really look!





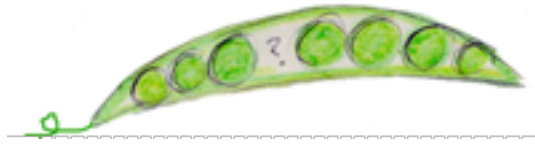
#### ***Extra Credit #4***

Use posemaniacs.com or a similar site to do a series of 20 gesture drawings. Gesture drawings are basically faster, sketchier, messier stick figure drawings (though you will normally do these without lifting your pencil from the paper).



#### ***Extra Credit #5***

Do the Character Development exercises from Fairy Tale #1 to “find” your Princess with the pea.



## Summary

So those are your tasks for the next 2 days; reading, cutting, photographing, and drawing!.

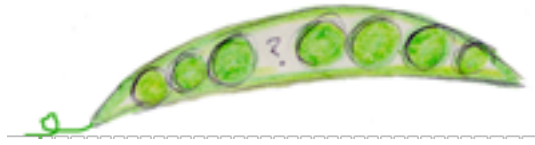
Next time we'll take one of your compositions and paint it!

Have fun!

Carla

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## Thoughts on Composition & Design

*Originally from the "Flower Crazy" online class, April 2012*

*Carla Sonheim*



I titled this post "Thoughts on Composition and Design" because I wanted to tip you off right from the start that I'm not going to give you guidelines or rules for how to compose your pictures.

I'm just not sure I believe in "rules," and I'll try to explain why below.

I am self-taught, by which I mean only that I didn't go to art school and never really learned in a formal way the rules of design and composition.

There are distinct disadvantages to this, I know, and yet in the end I have found it to be mostly an advantage.

Everything I "know" I've learned either by doing the art itself, or by reading art books. But, I chose books about artists that most interested ME, and not ones that necessarily gave me a "well-rounded" art education. (I tend to gravitate to artists working in the early to



mid-20th century: Picasso, Modigliani, Klee, Calder, Matisse, Chagall, and Dubuffet are my favorites. In addition, I love Outsider Art and children's art.)

So my education is a bit limited, tailored from the beginning by my personal preferences and way of looking at things.

I HAVE looked at lots and lots (and lots) of images from these artists and more over the past twenty years, noting what I liked and didn't like, etc. Looking at the design and composition of that many paintings teaches you. You begin to instinctively know what a "good" design is to YOU. But this way of doing things does take time.

My husband Steve recently taught an online photography class, and it was my job to edit his posts and format his worksheets. So even though I wasn't exactly taking the class, I was reading all the material and looking at the class postings at the flickr site and generally learning and being inspired.

At some point Steve made a comment to one of his students about "rules," and how they don't always apply. I remember thinking it was the same with drawing and painting....

The next day I had my iphone out and started taking photos of some flower buds on a tree. I wasn't loving my first few images, so I tried a different angle. In that one, the sun was shining directly into the camera. For a moment I remembered an old rule from my "photography phase" that you should never point the camera at the sun, and I hesitated.

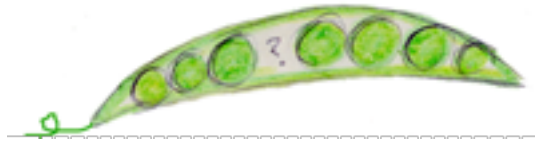
And yet... I LIKED what was going on in that image. I remembered Steve's encouragement to his student, shrugged my shoulders, and proceeded to happily take more images with the sun shining directly into the camera.

Steve's comment helped me ignore the rule of "what made a good photo" and to just go with my impulse... which is kind of an important thing when making personal art!!

I talked to Steve about it later, wondering aloud if rules were in fact "dangerous." (And what I mean by that is that we can get so caught up with the "right" way to do something that we focus too much on that and forget to just DO -- to "do" while being true to ourselves and our own way of seeing the world.)

He wisely noted that the rules can help make better images in the *beginning*, but in the end, we agreed, you still need to do the work of finding your own way. (And often, when you learn the rules early, you pay a high price: it can take a lot of willpower and confidence to break away from what's considered "right.")

On the other hand, not knowing the rules means you will spend an enormous amount of time making "bad" art.



Either way, it takes time. There's really no way around it!

Over the years I have read my share of posts, articles, and books on design and composition. So in the back of my mind are things such as focal points, balance, contrast (lights/darks, big/small), etc. They are good things to know and they do help inform my drawings and paintings; however, I think that most of my design and composition decisions come from many years of trying to ferret out my own unique design and composition "style."

(I suppose my only problem with the rules is that they are so "general" — they are not specific to me, my tastes, or the specific painting I might be working on at any given moment.)

When it comes right down to it, YOU are the one that determines what good design is to you. And you need to find the way of going about it that is best for you (which may include, of course, learning the "rules").

I just encourage you to take them with a grain of salt, knowing that in the end, you will need to do the work in the studio and find your own way.

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*For those of you who want a reminder of some traditional design and composition tips, I did a quick google search and have provided some links below.*

Some Composition and Design Articles on the Web That Looked Pretty Good

<http://painting.about.com/od/paintingtipscomposition/a/10TipsCompositn.htm>

<http://emptyeasel.com/2006/11/24/9-steps-to-creating-better-compositions/>

<http://www.explore-drawing-and-painting.com/painting-tips.html>

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