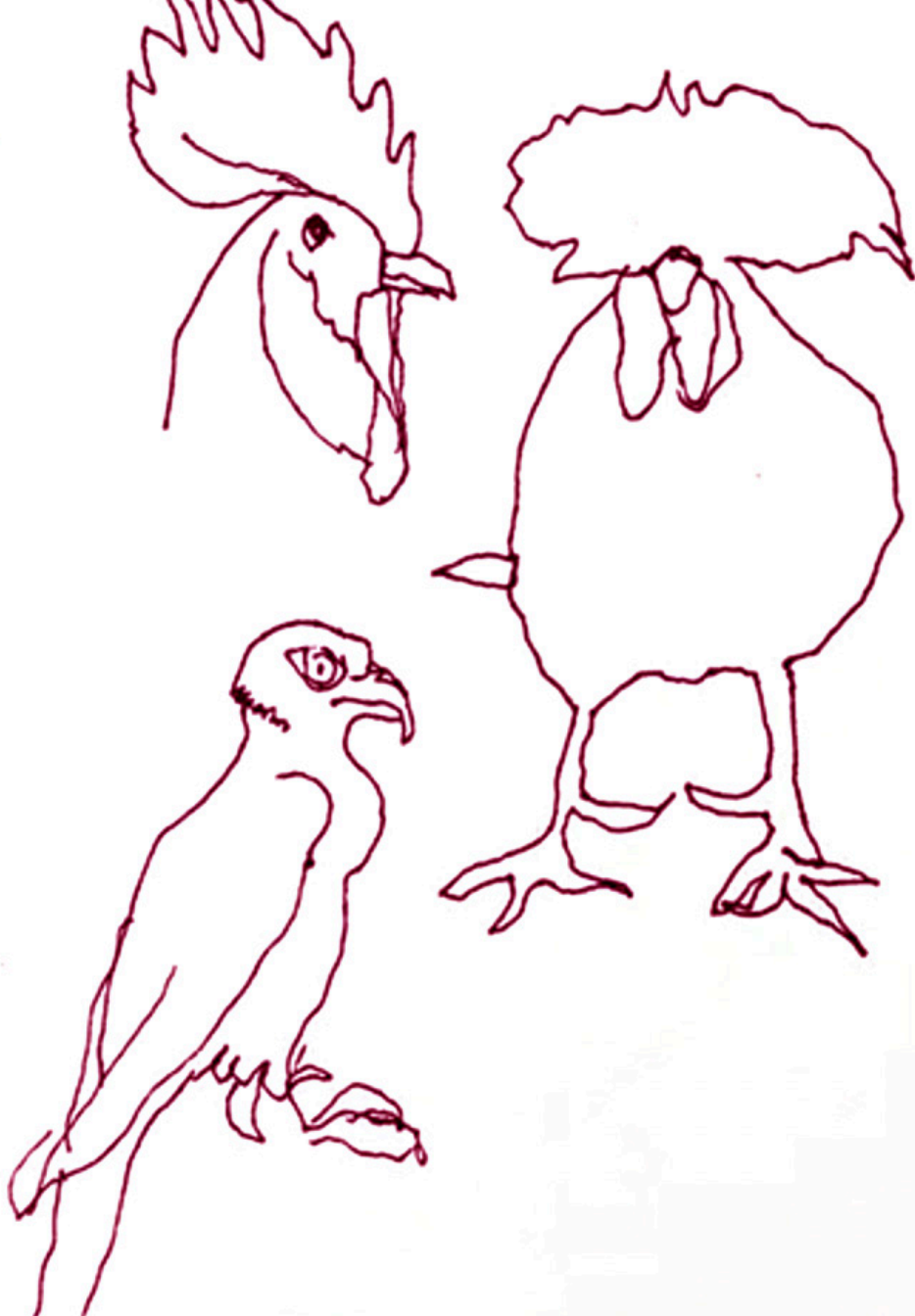




20

Fast & Fun
Drawing
Exercises

Carla Sonheim



Wrong-Handed Drawings

Supplies:

- Pen of your choice
- photo references

Instructions:

This is one of the first drawing exercises I give to any in-person class! Find a photo reference of something you would like to draw—birds are a hoot haha— and put your pen in your non-dominant hand. Pick a spot to start, and then slowly draw what you see, paying particular attention to how your next line is in relationship to the previous line.

Don't worry about your wiggly or errant lines... it's your non-dominant hand and so you are forgiven! The pressure to make a "good" drawing is off, so just draw. And don't forget to breathe!



One-Liners from Imagination

Supplies:

- Pen of your choice

Instructions:

This is an exercise that is inspired by Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee and others. The idea is that you put your pen to paper, and don't lift it until your drawing is complete.

I often liken this exercise to downhill skiing, where you are just ever so slightly on the brink of being out of control. So you need to let your instincts and subconscious be in the driver's seat!

Give yourself some mental prompts of what to draw and fill a page. Here are some suggestions: elephant, vase of flowers, horse, house, airplane, guitar and toilet!



One Liners from Reference

Supplies:

- Pen of your choice
- photo reference of faces

Instructions:

The idea is the same as the previous exercise, but this time you will work from reference.

Put pen to paper, and draw your subjects fairly quickly and without lifting your pen. Be careful not to backtrack carefully over your drawing to get to where you want to go... embrace the loopiness of these drawings!



Blind Contours

Supplies:

- Pen of your choice
- Photo references or objects around you

Instructions:

This is a classic drawing exercise designed to get you to slow down and practice linking your EYE to your HAND. Like the wrong-handed drawings, this should be an absolutely NO-PRESSURE way to draw, as you won't be looking at your paper at all.

(If you're not looking at your paper, there's no reason to think you will make a "good" drawing, so you can relax and just LOOK and draw!)

Pick a point on your reference, put pen to paper, and very slowly draw the contour lines of your object. Again... very slowly... draw every curve and bump! Breathe and relax into it.



Cheater Blinds

Supplies:

- A thick pen and a thin pen of your choice
- Photo references

Instructions:

“The moment you cheat for the sake of beauty, you know you’re an artist.”

— David Hockney

Much like blind contours, you will begin these drawings with your larger pen without looking at your paper. But this time, you are allowed to “cheat” and look at your paper 3-4 times while you draw the basic outline of your subject.

Then, with a smaller pen, look at the paper all you like and add details such as fur, eyes, scales, etc. Then, enjoy the wonky!

horse
giraffe
pig
lady
artwork



pen
owl
truck
monkey
water bottle
scissors



headphones
ice cream cone
paint jar
ink jar
notebook
paper towels



Mini Contour Drawings

Supplies:

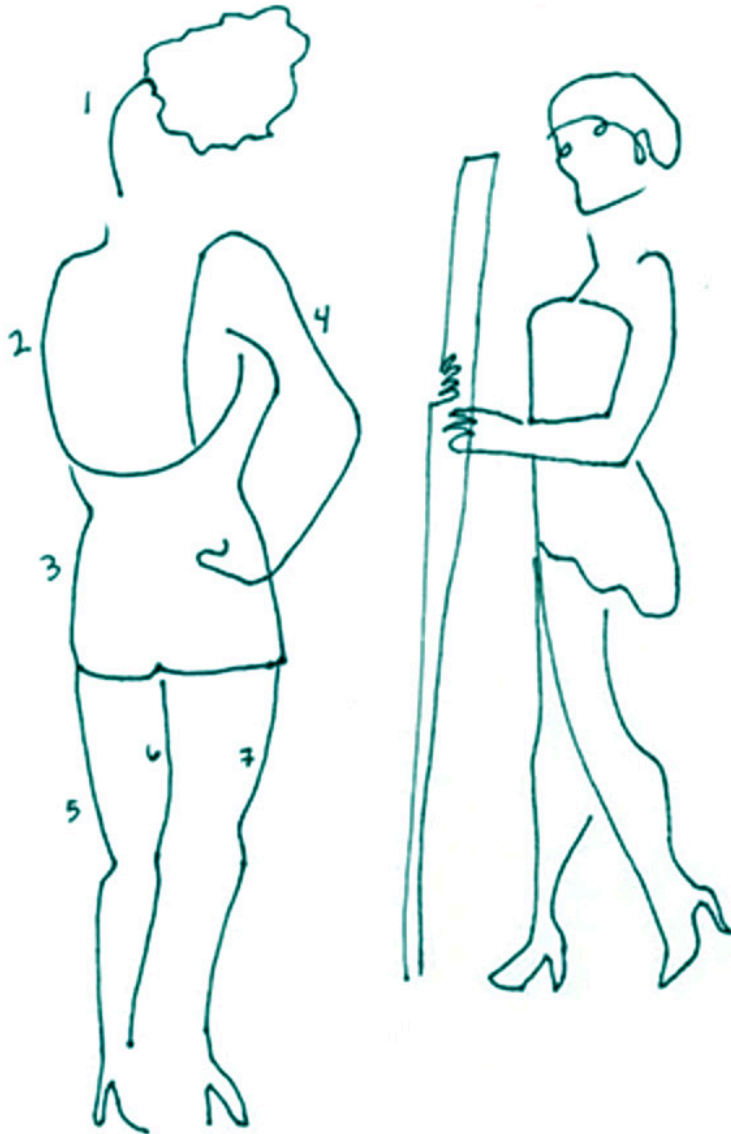
- Pen of your choice
- A bunch of items to draw

Instructions:

While sitting at your desk, make a list on one side of your paper of things you can see and that you would like to draw.

Now, beginning at one spot, draw the contour edges of each subject. You are drawing slowly and looking up at your reference and down at your paper constantly.

By making these “mini” drawings, some of the pressure is taken off and, again, you are practicing LOOKING and recording what you see.



Haiku Drawings

Supplies:

- Pen of your choice
- Photo reference of a person

Instructions:

In this exercise you will aim to draw your subject with just 7 lines. The lines can be curvy and loop over each other, but you must limit yourself to seven!

This is a great exercise to really look and find the lines that will communicate the most information as simply as possible.

Cats in Bed



Draw Cats in Bed

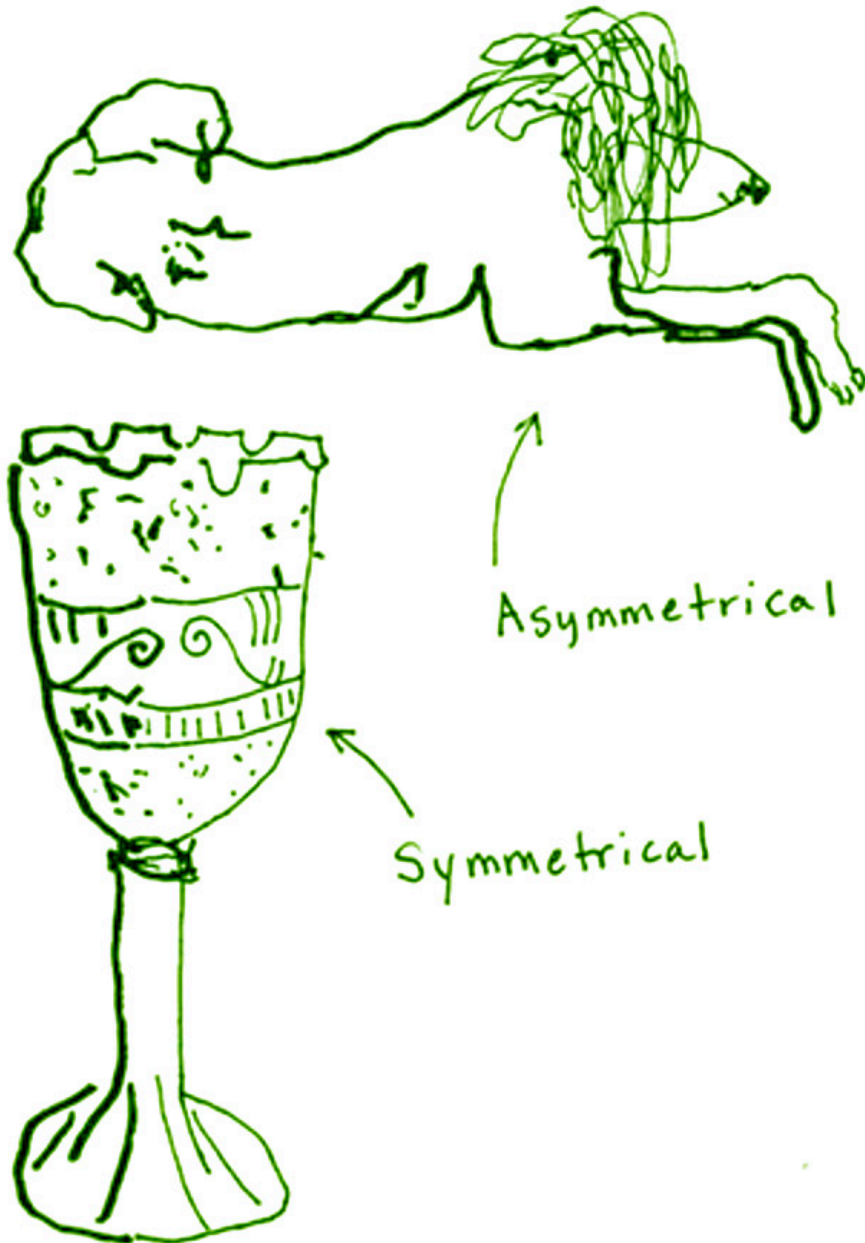
Supplies:

- Pen of your choice
- a scrap piece of lightweight paper
- a pillow

Instructions:

When I was growing up I was taught that drawing conditions needed to be perfect: good posture, an angled desk, a sharpened pencil and eraser. Let's forget about that for a moment!

Take your scrap piece of paper and pen and go to bed. place your pillow beneath your piece of paper and draw a series of cats from imagination. The soft surface will force a looser line quality and may cause your drawing to get away from you a little bit. That's what we want, because sometimes an ear that is way longer than the other ear gives a cat more personality.



Two-Handed Drawings

Supplies:

- Two pens, a thick one and a thinner one
- Photo references... one of something “symmetrical” and one of something “asymmetrical.”

Instructions:

Find a comfortable spot and place your reference where you can see it clearly. Then, place a pen in each hand and make two contour drawings of:

1. Something symmetrical, like a chalice, a face or the Eiffel Tower, and
2. Something asymmetrical, like a profile shot of a lion or face, a bicycle, or your dinner.

Don't forget to breathe, and work slowly, paying attention to what is fun and what is challenging with this process.



Eyes-Closed Drawings

Supplies:

- Pen of your choice

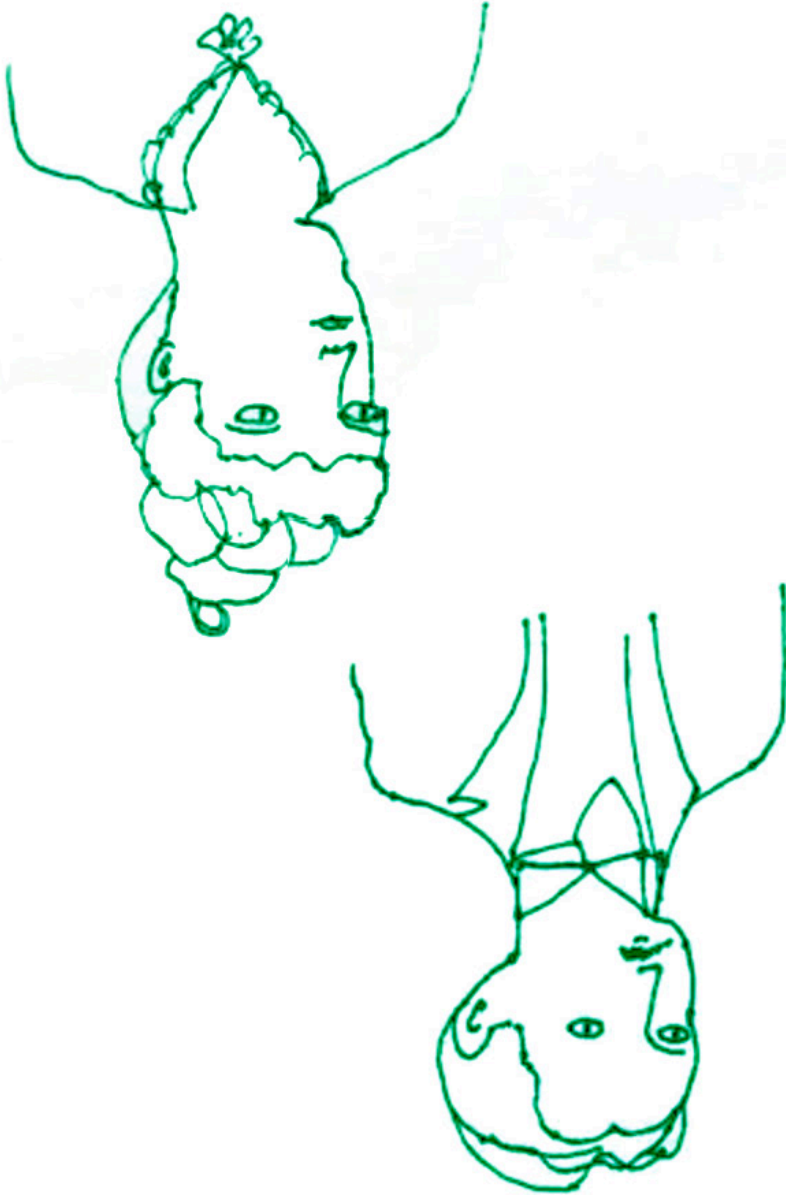
Instructions:

Almost not a drawing exercise at all, but I have to tell you that my eyes-closed drawings over the years have been some of my favorites of all time!

Pick something to draw, such as a lion, and close your eyes. Then, draw the entire thing, eyes, body, tail and mane with your eyes closed.

Repeat the same subject at least three times.

When you open your eyes, you might have a bit of a mess or you might have an idea for a children's book character!



Upside-Down Drawings from Reference

Supplies:

- Pen of your choice
- Photo references

Instructions:

Place your photo references upside-down and make a contour drawing with your dominant hand. The unfamiliar orientation forces you to look at your reference in a deeper way, just building line upon line upon line and working their relationships with each other.

This is good practice for regular contour drawings, which should be the same process (drawing what you actually SEE as opposed to what you think you see).



Upside-Down Drawings From Imagination

Supplies:

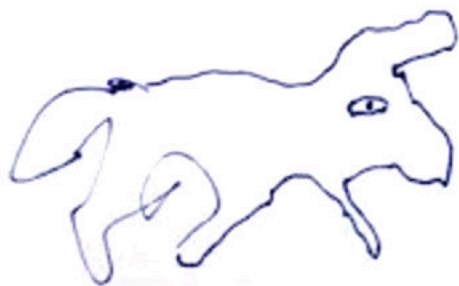
- Pen of your choice

Instructions:

This one is just pure fun, though you may get characters that you wouldn't necessarily do with eyes open.

Put pen to paper and begin drawing from imagination. If you think of something to draw, put it in! These drawings will not be perfect but it will give your brain a work-out and it's so fun.

Try it!



Scribble Drawings

Supplies:

- Pen of your choice

Instructions:

I used to do this constantly when I was a child and you probably did, too!

Make a series of random scribbles on your page. Then, pick one and look at it carefully, then slowly turn your paper around and around. Often your mind will “fill in” and you will see something... your job then is to just finish what your mind already as seen!

Repeat with all of your scribbles.



Scribbly Drawings

Supplies:

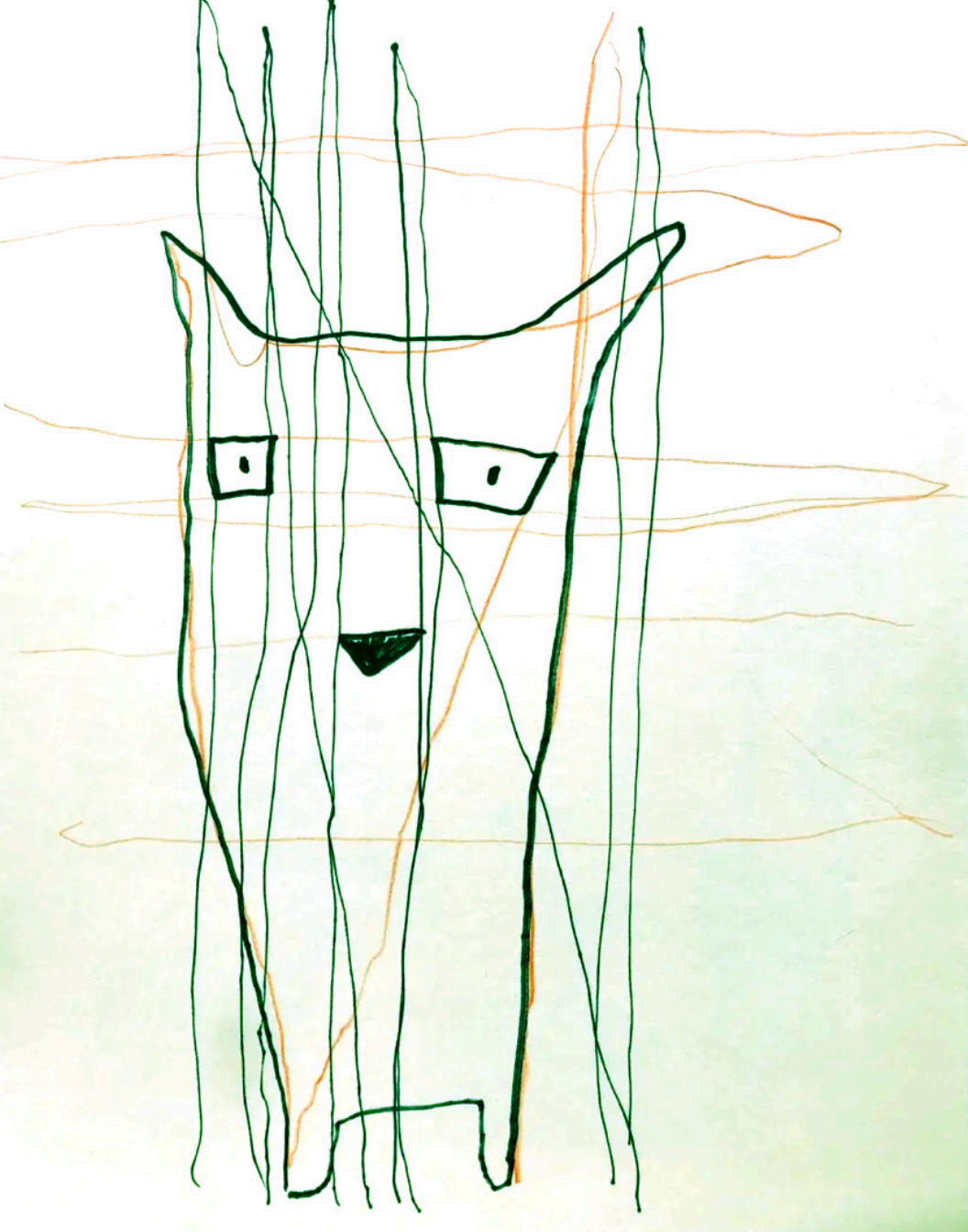
- Pen of your choice

Instructions:

Find a photo reference of a guinea pig or some other kind of squishy animal.

Next, start scribbling... but pretend you are drawing the inside of the stomach and building outwards.

This is the opposite of a contour drawing... you are not outlining the animal first and filling in, but instead FILLING THE ANIMAL OUT with your scribbles.



Lazy Line Drawings

Supplies:

- A selection of pens and colored pencils of your choice

Instructions:

This is similar to the Scribble Drawing exercise, but in this case you will really SLOW DOWN to almost a meditative state. Start making very slow, wobbly and aimless lines on your paper.

Change your drawing utensil up every few lines. First go vertically, then horizontally, then perhaps some irregular lines... after a minute or two of this, stop and see if you can find “something” in your random lines.

Then, “finish!”



Gesture Drawings

Supplies:

- Vine Charcoal
- A stuffed animal or other object you would like to draw.

Instructions:

Gesture Drawings are a classic drawing exercise practiced by artists throughout history... usually done very quickly, the idea is to find the “essence” of drawings are quick, fun, and you are only aiming to get the essence of your subject.

The drawings to the left took about 1 minute each. Be sure to relax your hands and that you aren’t holding your breath... make a lot of them! The “failure” rate for these kinds of drawings can be kind of high, so don’t worry! It’s all in the process.



Charcoal / Side Only

Supplies:

- Vine Charcoal
- stuffed animal or other object for reference

Instructions:

Now, break a piece of vine charcoal to about 1/2 inch (3 picas). Using the side only of your piece of charcoal, do a very quick drawing of your subject... a Gesture Drawing, but this time emphasizing FORM rather than line.

Have a good time with this one... the results are really surprising!



Eraser Drawings

Supplies:

- Soft Pencil with Eraser

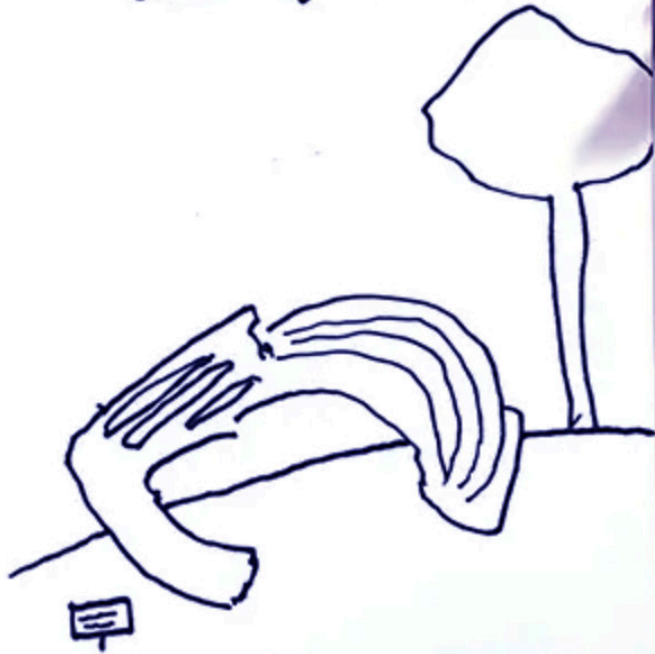
Instructions:

Find a photo reference of a person or animal. Make a very light outline of your subject, and then fill it in with graphite, using the side of your pencil lead. Next, take your finger and smudge it smoother.

Next, refer to your reference and begin erasing some of the lighter areas. Squint your eyes to see better. Erase areas that are lighter and add graphite to areas that are darker.

Continue adding and erasing graphite as needed until you are satisfied! (You will spend more time erasing probably than drawing.)

Grab Bag Drawings



Grab Bag Drawings

Supplies:

- paper bag
- mystery object provided by a friend
- Pen and paper of your choice

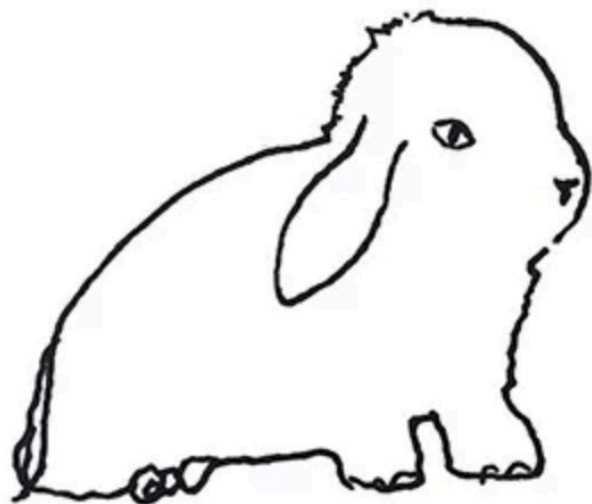
Instructions:

Have a friend put an object into a paper bag... no peeking! Then, feel the object through the bag and draw what you feel. Just do your best!

Once you've finished your drawing, take a peek for fun. Then, turn your drawing into something else. (In this example a tape dispenser became a park sculpture.)

Have fun!

Reverse Drawings



Reverse Drawings

Supplies:

- Photo reference of an animal
- Pen of your choice

Instructions:

Find a photo reference of the side view of an animal or human or object. Then, do a contour drawing of its mirror reflection.

Don't worry if you make errant lines... if you notice, just go back and restate the more accurate line. No erasing!

Thank you everyone for reading and happy drawing... See you online!

— Carla Sonheim, www.carlasonheim.com