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### **About this Article**

In eleven simple lessons learn to draw, improve your drawing, your way of seeing, or to teach drawing. This self-teaching workbook is designed to teach students of all ages how to draw and for teachers to teach students of all ages. Each of the eleven simple lessons in eleven different subjects is both theoretical and practical skill training. Finally, identifying what one's skill level is easy in a one-page grid, which can be taken more than once making improvement easier by repeating, needed lessons. This is a fun, aesthetically enjoyable method for drawing better.

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## The Lessons

- i The instructions to the teacher are the same as those to the student.
- ii Buy a notebook for your art journal.  
Each day jot down your ideas about your drawing experiences however bizarre.  
Date these entries so you can go back and study your own ideas later.
- iii Reach each of the Sections over at least once before beginning.
- iv Study your own work very carefully.  
Learn from yourself.  
Do not fear the drawing of anything. Draw everything.
- v Do not buy an eraser. You don't need one.
- vi Buy a portfolio to put all of your drawings in. The size you purchase depends upon how large or how small you feel like working.

There is only one person who can teach you how to draw, and that is yourself. It is purely an art of self-discovery and the pleasure of seeing.

*"Art, in in the purest sense, is not a product, a drawing, a painting, etc.; art is a form of human feeling, thought, creativity, invention which is highly unique to one individual personality—that of the creator—and it expresses a universal (common to all humankind) symbol." Vassily Kandinsky*

## ON THE QUALITY AND THE FUTURE OF ART

"Art" is not a word that can strictly apply to painting as it once did. Twentieth-century artists have seen to that. The word "art" can no longer refer only to drawing and painting. Photography and film have synthesized with drawing and painting and the results have been the creation of new media such as photographic silkscreen, poster art, printing and graphic arts.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the issues in art were the validity of the non-objective, or the modern vs. the traditional or color vs. black and white. But the vitality of these issues has passed, for once contradictions these have synthesized. The most dominant issues for this half of the century are no longer these, but a subject which was still vital from 1900 to 1930 and which has once again awakened on the American scene. This issue is: What is Quality Art and what is not? Artists themselves and their audiences alike find themselves in daily conversations on these issues: What is art all about? What is the artist's task in society? The artist's responsibility to humanity? How does one tell what is good and what is not?

What is this labored distinction between commercial art and non-commercial art, between technically excellent art and bad art? Either an artist has something to say or not. Either she/he says it well or poorly. Looked at this way, the issue falls to what it is that the artist is communicating. And the medium used becomes a secondary matter.

Some artists are more profound than others. Some are merely saying this or that about shape or color. Some are saying something profound about life. The artists who have something to say are far more important to society and to the future of humanity than those who don't have much of value to contribute, in my opinion.

Some say it well, some not as well. Some have nothing at all to say. These people are merely hobbyists, and it is correct to think of them as such, for their work, though not mainly concerned with advancing the arts or humanity, does fill their individual lives with daily enjoyment. In that this is true, the work can be good for them to continue. But we cannot forget that the work possesses no universal thrust, and makes no objective statements to humanity.

Where the artist has something to say—a member of the art audience could respond that he/she didn't like the particular *Forms* in which it was expressed, or that technically it was poorly executed—but a profound statement in a peculiar contribution to humanity and to the arts. And it seems that such a poorly formed statement is far more of a contribution to humanity than the work of the professional whose only goal is self-pleasure or commerce.

Now let me develop another area of thinking for you. Some mistake what is being said (that can be called a statement) with the universality of a work. A universal statement can extend beyond the individual artist's life, but it need not do this to be a significant contribution to humanity. That is why the subject of what

is being said is the central theme in the discussion of what is quality art. An artist can make the audience feel anger, fear, anxiety, pleasure, concern, outrage, sympathy, pathos, love, human warmth, rebellion. The artist can make the audience think about the human condition, or about color or about space and form. The audience can feel all of these things in the visual work, and then can reject the work and the statement because they don't like the feelings, which the work inspires.

But still there was a significant statement being made by the artist, and it was communicated to an audience.

Naturally, there is no formula for what is significant to the arts and to humanity. But there is this twentieth-century controversy still hanging on concerning whether the subject is the Form or the statement or a synthesis of both. The artists of DER BLAUE REITER who were in rebellion against traditional art say that form is intimate with subject. August Macke and W. Kandinsky presented a clear, solid view of Form in 1912. Macke put it this way: "As Humanity changes, so do forms change. Man expresses his life in Forms and each form of art is an expression of this inner life. The exterior of the Form of art is its interior. Forms are powerful expressions of powerful life."

Kandinsky had another way of saying the same thing: "Form is spirit striving for material realization. One should not deify form. And one should fight for a form only so long as it serves as an expression of the inner sound. One should not look for salvation in any one form."

These are statements from two of the greatest European painters of the century. But what they said and what they pursued did not take in America. Here in this country the philosophy of the French avant-garde has overshadowed the philosophy of the German Expressionists. But now we face the controversy, as the Expressionists have gained strength in this country and are the issue of what is quality art and what is the future of art raises its head once again in this century. Will we see a synthesis this time? Will there be a resolution of these seemingly contradictory philosophies?

Only the future activities of serious Artists will tell us.

*"Let us not lose sight of the long preliminary ordeal which enables the Artist to give this effect. It is the same in painting. With hard work, the mastery of one's medium should pass from the conscious to the subconscious; only then can one successfully give an impression of spontaneity. An Artist is an explorer. He/she has to begin by self-discovery and by observation of his/her own procedure. After that he/she must never be too easily satisfied with what he/she has done."  
Leon Degand*

What is Drawing?

*"Teaching drawing does not involve teaching the proper form drawing should take, nor the proper subject of the drawing. Teaching drawing requires the one who is the teacher to transfer to the one who is the student a particular method of finding out facts for themselves, so that the one who is the student will then become also the teacher, "lest they be limited for the rest of their lives to facts the instructor relates." (Nicholaides *The Natural Way to Draw*)*

The student must discover central elements of her or his own imagination. And this is what drawing is all about.

And this is not a matter of mere formula.

Are there any laws of Drawing a student must follow?

Hardly. The Artist must make these up out of her/his imagination, or take them from nature, as she/he perceives nature.

Rules are useless appendages if there is not reason for them, and the reason for them must come out of the specific work itself. It cannot be imposed artificially from the outside or from traditions.

Learning to draw is learning to detect what the specific work requires for its composition. Artistic detection requires the development of aesthetic sensitivity.

Drawing develops this aesthetic sensitivity. And aesthetic sensitivity permits one to draw.

## **#2 Contour Drawing**

Go outdoors. Bring a sketchbook and a pencil of your choice.

Choose a pleasant place to sit, well away from your fellow students so that you will be able to draw in the beauty of aloneness.

The purpose of this drawing is to touch the subject with your sight, to make

that kind of contact with an object.

Drawing is like seeing clearly and sharply.

Look around you. What do you see? What fascinates your eye? What pleases you? What is that object? What does it look like, how does it feel, sound, smell?

Now place the point of your pencil on the paper anywhere you like. Without taking your eyes off the object you are looking at, let your pencil slowly caress the contours of the object. Imagine that your pencil is touching the object, following along its contours, studying its shapes. As your eye moves slowly along the contours of the object, let your pencil move equally slowly along the paper. Remember you are looking only at the object, not at the paper.

Coordinate the pencil with the eye.

These drawings are to be done very slowly and with intense concentration. The value of it is the value of experiencing the object. It does not matter what the drawing result is. It is your intense experiencing of the object you have chosen that is what is of value here.

Do not remove your pencil point from the paper even when you begin to follow the inner contours of the object with your eye. Just continue to draw without looking at the paper until you feel that the experience has been completed.

Draw several objects of your choice in the same way. Put some on separate pages. Put several on the same page, drawing one on top of the others. Do not concern yourself with what the drawings look like. Just enjoy the activity of drawing.

Each morning before you leave for your classes set aside a half-hour and draw. Draw contour drawings of subjects you find interesting. Draw birds, trees, grass, and buildings, people. Gradually you will be in touch with the objects around you in a very different way than you were before you began drawing. You will begin to see in a very different way.

### **#3 - Lines**

*"Form is the outer expression of inner content. Form should not be a uniform. Works of art are not soldiers." Vassily Kandisky, 1912*

All around us things exist in various relationships to each other. These relationships present themselves to us in certain forms, which we can discover. Some are 'next' to each other, other are 'between,' some are 'on top of,' others are 'behind.' Colors are next to colors, and lines are hanging in space before us. We can discover these relationships and we can learn to organize them on our paper also. Creating them, however, requires the development of a keen sense of observation and aesthetic sensitivity, which is what drawing gives us.

Some Artists like to talk about the influence of nature on art. These are the Naturalists. Their reference is usually to 'Nature' in the traditional sense of foliage, and animals. The Naturalists believe that art should literally copy laws to be found in 'Nature.' They felt that art should merely commit these laws to canvas or paper. This is called the Transmission Theory of Art: "He neither serves nor rules—he transmits. His position is humble." (Paul Klee, Jena Lecture, 1924) This view, in my opinion it is very narrow and depreciates the influence of the imagination and the intellect in the creation of artistic ideas. At times art demands a departure from these 'Laws of Nature.' And the Artist should not be charged with incompetence and deliberate distortion.

*"The creation of a work of art—the growth of the crown of the tree—must of necessity, as a result of entering into the specific dimensions of pictorial art, be accompanied by distortion of the natural form. For, therein is nature reborn."*  
Paul Klee, Jena Lecture, 1924

### **#3 (a) - Working With Lines**

Materials = White paper / black ink / pen or brush

Choose a white piece of paper to work on. Look at it carefully. Study the space, which it is. How large is it? What shape is it? How long or wide is it? What color is it?

With black ink in either a pen or with a brush, whichever you like best, draw a line on the white paper. Begin anywhere you wish to on the paper. Study carefully with your eyes the relationships, which the line and the space of the paper present to you there.

Now draw another line where it feels natural for it to be. Draw the lines as thick or as thin, as long or as short as the drawing seems to require.

Study the relationships between the lines and the space of the paper. What does it tell you about itself? What does it need?

Now the spacial relationships of your drawing are developing. You must study the relationship of black lines and white paper very carefully. Certain possibilities are being presented to you; others have already been eliminated. Don't be impetuous. Don't just draw lines anywhere. There is a science about this method.

Black is a color too. Other colors use different space between the page and the eye. Black tends to stay on the page. The white of the page comes off the page into the eyes further than black does.

You could proceed in subsequent practices to exhaust the aesthetic possibilities of black and white if you wish.

Try seeing if your drawing wants dots, or more lines, or bold black spaces. If the drawing calls for it, put the linear texture where it seems natural to go. If you hesitated, analyze why. Maybe the composition is telling you something else must be done, instead, or in addition to what you just did.

After each move stop and study your results very carefully. Analyze the relationships before you. What does it look like? Does it feel balanced, even, uneven, erratic, nervous, delightful, joyous, despairing? Just what does the line and the composition feel like to you.

If you are very sensitive to yourself and to your work, you will find that you will feel when it is completed. It will feel completed.

Do not feel under any pressure to finish your drawing immediately or in the same sitting you begin them. I have had unfinished drawings sitting around my apartment for months until they finish themselves. Complete what feels right today. Take the drawing out again tomorrow and look at it. Is it finished? Does it want something else? Ask yourself at each viewing of it. Analyze what you have done each time you look at your drawing. Be sensitive to the moods and feelings, which have produced the drawing. Later you will be able to control the moods and produce what you design.

## **THE GROUP CRITICISM**

When you feel confident in what you have been doing, ask a sensitive friend

or classmate whom you like whose judgment you trust to look at your drawings, and give her/his first impressions of it. Compare their impression with your own. Talk with your friend about the differences and similarities of your impressions. What is different and what is the same? How are the impressions different? Why are they different? What makes your perception different from your friend's? How are your ideas about drawing different? Through these talks you can explore further your own ideas about aesthetics and drawing. In this way you will develop your own conceptions. And you will help your friend whom you like and trust to develop his/hers.

#### **#4 - Motion & Lines**

*"The Book of Changes teaches that rest is merely a state of polarity that always posits movement as its complement." I CHING, #52*

i Go outdoors. Bring a pencil and sketchbook with you.

Look very carefully at a bird in flight. Ask yourself: Why does it fly? What does it look like? What kinds of lines does it make in flight? What are the linear elements of the head, wings, tail; what do these elements look like? Study the flight until you feel you understand the flight well.

Now draw the flight as one drawing. Make it a simple stroke of the pencil. Then draw it as a series of drawing. Use single lines. Remember that you are drawing only one movement in time. The next time you look things will be changed.

Try this several times, experimenting with your lines and your ideas about the bird's flight.

ii Have a student in your class conduct moving poses while you draw several contour drawings of each. Draw quickly to capture the motion only. Do not concern yourself about how it looks. Just get the feel of the movement in your hand, with pencil and paper.

iii What other things move?

Draw them.

#### **#5 - Shapes and the Use of Space**

*"Forms are powerful expressions of powerful life." August Macke, 1912*

What is a Shape?

Is Shape a Form? Are Forms Shapes? Or are Forms Shaped?

Are these theoretical questions or practical ones?

Shape is

Shape is Shape

Color is Color

Line is Line

Colors are Lines too

Shape is the absence of Color

Colors are Shapes

Composition is an arrangement of Shapes

Shape on Shape

Shapes of Color (ON) Shapes of Color

Shapes of Color (NEXT TO) Shapes of Color

Shapes (ON TOP OF) Shape

Color (NEXT TO) Color

Shape is presented to us by Color and by the absence of Color

In musical compositions, rests are positive spaces between sounds. These spaces are necessary parts of the composition.

### **#5 (a) - Working With Shapes**

Materials = black and white paper/scissors/rubber cement

Select a black or a white ground to work on. Cut shapes to circles, triangles, squares, rectangles, etc., as your primary elements to work with. Place them on your chosen ground as you wish. Once you have determined where you want to place the first two pieces, cement them with the rubber cement. Continue until you feel that the composition is completed.

Make several of these shapes into pictures.

Jot your thoughts down in your notebook and date them.

## **#6 - Color**

*"If we were groundless to repudiate the art of the past, we should at once become poorer spiritually." Leon Trotsky, 1938*

What is Color?

Ancient Egyptian mystics teach that color is the soul of the universe. Therefore, in studying color they concluded that we study a cosmic force of immeasurable and infinite power.

Color for them was a spiritual realm. A realm where our senses meet our cosmic understanding. When we draw in color we control and express the tremendous energy stored up in the light and the vibration of the spiritual universe of color.

What is color?

Physicists say it is wavelengths reflected on the retina of our eye. We see it as light of different colors. We know it as creating certain feelings in us. Scriabin (1872-1915) mystic, socialist, harmonic innovator, and Russian composer related musical tones directly to specific colors. Most musicians relate musical lines to some specific colors. And musical instruments are said to have "color."

Color continuously emits rays and throws off vibrations that affect us in certain ways. Light intensity causes our eyes to define the color of these vibrations. And our culture gives each a name.

The science of color is part of the science of the mind as well as of the physical universe. Color plays a large part in the human aura—the thoughts and emotions of a human being collect around the physical body in the form of fine vibrating waves

of color. When we study these we are studying the vibrating rays of color.

What are "primary colors"?

The word "primary" usually means "primitive" to most modern Artists. And then the question becomes, what does "primitive" mean and in what universe of ideas?

If we put a prism up to the light it separates Red, Blue, and Yellow light out. The Ancient Egyptians referred to these as primary energies.

In his treatise on Light, Isaac Newton formulated a theory of color. From this simple experiment with a glass prism, Newton observed that the Sun's light when refracted through glass produced a spectrum of colors from Red to Violet.

Since that seventeenth-century experiment, a host of famous names trail Newton's in the endless search for a clearer understanding of the nature of light: Huygens, Fraunhofer, Tyndal, Bohr, Maxwell, Einstein.

Artists also observe the properties of light. The German Expressionist member of Der Blaue Reiter, Franz Marc searched for primary elements through animal forms. Vassily Kandinsky, the Russian-German founder of Der Blaue Reiter searched for the "primary" elements through pure color by abandoning what was then considered to be traditional form and by freeing Color from Form.

The twentieth-century musical revolutions also paralleled these discoveries by Visual Artists. It was Schoenberg in writing "Three Piano Pieces" who destroyed the traditional idea of harmony and time in music by going back to a primitive form of musical expression, which is now called "atonalism." And Stravinsky in "The Rite of Spring" released rhythm from meter, doing for music what Kandinsky had done for color. These separations created what we know as "modern abstract expressionism."

Paul Cezanne, observing nature and believing that he had found its natural forms, reduced them to geometric prototypes: sphere, prism, and cone. At this stage of his life, the purely visual experience of impressionism no longer satisfied him. His primary concern was with formal construction, and to track down the fundamental laws of nature's structures.

While Cezanne continued to use color to model shapes, it was Kandinsky who completely detached painting from the object, thereby giving modern art endless

visual possibilities.

It is the structure of the physical universe which both Artist and Scientist have been curious about. These aesthetic and scientific ideas, which come down to us, are our intellectual heritage. And as moderns we find ourselves working on the same problems in art, in science, and in music as did our predecessors.

Colors make sounds, fill distances, and are warm or cold. It is the sound of color, which is most fascinating, and with some experience with color and the sounds of colors, the Artist learns to rely upon his/her instincts and then new forms of expression are inspired.

### **#6 (a) - Working with Color**

*"The chief aim of color should be to serve expression as well as possible. I put down my colors without a preconceived plan. ...I discover the quality of colors in a purely instinctive way. ...My choice of colors does not rest on any scientific theory; it is based on observation, on feeling, on the very nature of each experience." Henri Matisse, 1908 La Grande Revue, Paris*

Materials = white paper (textured or untextured) / colored inks/brush

Determine what size white paper you wish to work with. Cut it to size if necessary. Choose several colored inks to draw with and a brush. Look at your paper closely before beginning.

Where would you like to start painting in ink on it? Do you prefer a textured paper or an untextured one?

Select a color to begin with. Use the brush. What shape should the color have? How much space should it take on the ground?

Dip the brush into the ink. What shape is the brush? What kind of shapes is it capable of making on paper? Try the brush out on a piece of paper like the one you will be using. What does it look like? The ink dries fast so you will have to work fast. The ink and the shape of the brush determine to a large extent what you can do. You must know your materials and what they can do and what they cannot do. So don't be afraid to experiment with your materials.

When you feel comfortable with your brush and paper well enough to begin, decide where you will put your first shape on the ground. What will it look like?

How thick or how thin do you want the ink color to be? Why? Do you like it transparently glossy or dull?

Put your first color down. Look at it. Do you like it? What do you like about it? Why? How do you feel about the color in that shape? Does your picture want more colors or the same color in the same shape now?

If your picture wants another color, select it. What shape should it have? Where shall you place it in relationship to the other color shape? Why? How would you feel about that set of colors and spatial relationships?

When you have put down your second color or second shape, continue if your picture calls for it in the same manner as you have, selecting color based upon your analysis of your work, and your determination of what shape and what color your picture needs.

When you feel it is finished look at it closely. It is finished? Does it feel finished to you? Maybe it needs something else.

Remember you need not finish any drawing at one sitting. You just keep it and take it out later and look at it every few days or so and ask yourself if it needs something else or if it is finished.

You can begin several different drawings like this. Jot your thoughts down in your notebook and date them.

### **#7 - Forms in Color**

*"Cutting colored papers permits me to draw in the color. For me it is a matter of simplification. Instead of establishing a contour, then filling it in with color—the one modifying the other—I draw directly in the color. This guarantees a precise union of the two processes; they become one." Henry Matisse*

Matisse eventually dropped the line entirely and drew directly with color—a method that involved the line and the color as a spatial unit.

Color is the subject. (What is the color about?) The subject is these colors having this shape on this page in that way.

Drawing in color is unlike any other kind of experience such as painting in

color.

### **#7 (a) - Working with Color Paper**

*"Color cannot stand alone; it cannot dispense with boundaries of some kind."  
Vassily Kandinsky*

Materials = colored paper/scissors/rubber cement

Select a piece of paper of any color you like for your ground.

Select some colors from your choices, which you will cut into various shapes and rubber cement onto the ground you choose. Take these colored papers firmly in your hands. Feel the color with your fingers. Can you tell what color it is from your touching alone? Pick up your scissors and while thinking about making a shape of your determination, cut into the color. As you cut the paper you are making a line drawing, but only with color instead of with pen and brush.

After you have cut the first color, look at the shape of your ground. What would the total creation look like if you put your cut color in the middle? Just off the middle to the left? To the right? In the upper right or upper left/

Select the place you will cement the color to your ground. Do you want another color too? Why? Does the picture call for it somewhere? Where?

Analyze what it is you have done at each stage before proceeding. If you want more colors, continue in the same manner you just did. Learn from your past work what it is you want next.

### **#8 - Lines & Color Shapes**

*"It is evident, therefore, that color harmony must rest ultimately on purposive playing upon the human soul; this is one of the guiding principles of internal necessity." Vassily Kandinsky*

Let the colors organize themselves.

The colors are their own form and structure the way they are on the paper. And color does not require itself to be confined within the line drawing. If it wants to go outside the lines it does. You must learn to leave it alone, and to let it do what it

wants to.

The hand has a mind of its own. Let it draw.

If I eliminate the line drawing the colors fit together like a puzzle. It feels sometimes as if the line drawing is something established in order to fill it in with color. If that is the case, then the drawing does not stand on its own, and, therefore, should be removed. Lines can have a life and an existence all their own.

### **#8 (a) - Working with Lines and Color Shapes**

Materials = black ink/a pen/white paper

Select a ground in the size you wish to work on. Look at it carefully before beginning. Where will you start putting your lines? What subject will you draw?

Put the lines down as they come to you, analyzing and looking carefully at the relationships of the spaces and lines after each line. How does it strike you? What does it feel like to you? What do the spatial shapes look like? How do they feel?

Continue in the same way you did in the previous drawings. You will find that you are beginning to learn how you draw and how you see things. You will develop your own perception and out of your perception your style will emerge too.

Once again do not feel pressed to finish your work in one session. You can always come back to it later. It will be there, and so will you. Drawing is a form of meditation and of discipline. You must learn to be patient. Ideas will come to you. And they will appear before you on the paper.

### **#9 - Tonal Elements**

Color is tonal like sound. In Stravinsky you can hear Reds, Blues, Greens, Golds across your visual path as the notes sound across your tonal path.

What is the color of that sound?

Many musical works fill up the auditory space inside my ears. Stravinsky fills up the visual space outside my eyes.

Colors have tonal dimensions. The color Red has the range of l to n. All are Reds, but different tones of Red sounded by different intensities of light. This visual range is analogous to the auditory range of ppp *fff* *ppp* in musical dynamics.

### **#9 (a) - Working with Tones and Colors**

i Select one color, a paper which you have colored for a ground, a brush and some water.

Draw with just one color. Change the tones of that color by thinning it with water. Draw with several of these tones on your paper. Look at each stage as you go along in the same way as you have been doing. Do not be afraid to experiment with new shapes and colors. But do not stray too far from what you have already learned from yourself.

Try several of these drawings with one color if they are leading you somewhere.

Jot down elements of the experience in your notebook and date your thoughts.

ii Put on a piece by Webern or Stravinsky or Schoenberg.

Listen to it. Do you see colors coming with the music? What are these? What shapes are they? What color is the ground?

Listen to the piece again. Now draw the pictures you have been seeing as clearly as you can, following what you have already learned about color, space, and line.

If this interests you do it several times with different pieces of music by different composers.

Jot down your thoughts in your notebook.

### **#10 - Drawing People**

*"What interests me most is neither still life nor landscape but the human figure. It is through it that I best succeed in expressing the nearly religious*

*feeling that I have towards life ..."* H. Matisse

Materials = pencils/pens/ink/paper

Drawing people is not so difficult as you think it is. You just must not be afraid to look or to draw and you utilize all that you have learned about line, form, color, shape. Look directly at the whole person or you must get past all of your preconceived notions about people, about beauty, and about drawing. And look directly at the lines, which form this person, which will be the person on your paper. Look directly at the colors, which this person emits. Neither social prejudice nor academic knowledge can stand in your way. You are drawing what you see before you, and you must look boldly at what you see. This is all that is important. And you must intensify your seeing, and clarify your lines. This you can do by looking at people. Look at their eyes. Look at their face, hair, fingers, torso, hips, legs, and feet. Know what a muscle moves the way it does, and a limb bends the way it does. Like Modigliani and Picasso, you can break up the human figure into planes and connect these planes. Or you can draw the human figure representationally like Rubens or Rembrandt. But to do either you must know the body, know what it looks like, and how it operates. For this you must study the movements of your models, and the drawings in anatomy books, you must study people walking, running, sitting, standing, until you understand instinctively how the body looks.

i Study thoroughly the figures in Michelangelo's Last Judgment (1535-1541). Michelangelo painted every sort of foreshortening, turns, and gestures that the human body is capable of in that work. There is a great deal of variation in the poses and movements of the figures. It is a definitive work on the human form.

ii Do a scribble drawing and contour drawing on some of these figures. Trace them also and you can follow the lines with your pencil until your hand and the pencil know all the turns and bends in the human body thoroughly.

## **#11- Composition**

*"There is at the back of an artist's mind something like a pattern or type of architecture. The original quality in any kind of imagination is imagery. It is a thing like the landscape of her or his dreams, the sort of world he (she) would like to make or in which he would wish to wander in; the strange flora and fauna of his (her) own secret planet; the sort of thing he likes to think about. This general atmosphere and pattern or structure of growth governs all creations however". G.K. Chesterton*

When you put a drawing together you must be sensitive to how you build it. If you do not build it correctly it will fall apart on you.

When you choose some subject you wish to paint, draft it first on some paper you have chosen to use for this purpose. On this working surface, you can study the figures and subjects before you commit them to the final surface. Purchase some tracing paper and work the figures up until you are satisfied that they are what you expected to see in a drawing of the subject. Paying attention to how it is built, balance the elements as you would a fine structure you want to last for centuries.

Once you have the working drawing finished, you must decide what color this graphic must be on your final surface. Whether this surface is to be canvas or paper, it makes no difference. What does matter immensely is this: the color of the line graphic will significantly determine what you will do following. Should your line graphic be in black, which will make you have a strong line drawing? Or should it be subdued in brown or blue? Maybe you want to have no strong lines in the final picture at all; in this case you would want to put the graphic down merely as a guide to the painting. In this case you could put the lines down in pencil, or in the color which the figure or subject will finally be rendered.

You can erase nothing. Everything you put down becomes part of the final picture in one way or another. If you like something that is relatively unimportant at one stage, you can draw it out at another stage, and make it more important, as you wish. IF you do not like something, you can subdue it by using several techniques that you will develop as you go along. But nothing at all can be removed once it is placed on the final surface. For this reason your work must be well thought out before you build on the final surface.

So ask yourself: Does the work look the way I expect it to look? Does it act the way people in that situation would act? If you are satisfied with the working drawing, then you should proceed quickly to execute the drawing on the final surface you have chosen. If your final surface is gessoed masonite or paper of some non-textured material you can trace the working drawing directly—provided, of course, that you have done the working drawing the same size. If you have a small working drawing then you must rethink it without mechanical aids, using just your hand and your eye when transferring it to the larger surface. No mechanical aids such as grids and lines will allow you to balance the whole or to produce the spontaneity of the original work. But there are times when accurate precision in the line drawing is required and then you must trace your work into the finished surface or transfer it using a mechanical method. In either case the whole drawing must work together with all the formal elements grouped so that each is in its place

and none clash with the other. The whole composition must be weighed and cannot be too heavy on one side or on the other, but must possess equilibrium. So you must study your line drawing and choose your colors, weighing them here and then there, putting them down where they will balance each other. Take great care to listen to the sounds as well as to look at the intensity of the colors you have chosen. If you do this finished work will be tonal and rhythmic like music.

Art is all of this. The colors, the lines, and the spatial shapes are all interrelated. As you work with these elements and with your materials, you will learn to rely on your instincts, and your style will develop quite spontaneously.

*"Expression to my way of thinking does not consist of the passion mirrored upon a human face or betrayed by a violent gesture. The whole arrangement of my picture is expressive. The place occupied by figures, or objects, the empty spaces around them, the proportions, everything plays a part. Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the various elements at the painter's disposal for the expression of his feelings. ...All that is not useful in the picture is detrimental. A work of art must be harmonious in its entirety for superfluous details would, in the mind of the beholder, encroach upon the essential elements.*

*"Composition, the aim of which is expression, alters itself according to the surface to be covered. If I take a sheet of paper of given dimensions, I will jot down a drawing which will have a necessary relation to its format – I would not repeat this drawing on another sheet of different dimensions, for instance on a rectangular sheet if the first one happened to be a square. And if I had to repeat it on a sheet of the same shape but ten times larger, I would not limit myself to enlarging it: a drawing must have a power of expansion which can bring to life the space which surrounds it. An artist who wants to transpose a composition onto a larger canvas must conceive it over again in order to preserve its expression; he (she) must alter its character and not just fill in the squares into which he (she) has divided his (her) canvas."*

*Henri Matisse, La Grand Revue, December 25, 1908*

## **ABOUT AESTHETIC THEORIES**

1.0 Given the long and tedious history of western philosophical thought on aesthetics, any self-respecting thinker would undoubtedly reject immediately any suggestion of the introduction of yet another theory of art. And I would say that this impulse should not be respected if it weren't for one crucial historical fact: none of the well-known aesthetic theories presented to us via the trying history of philosophical leads anyone to any reasonable view

whatsoever.

1.1 A critical survey of western aesthetics roughly gathered from 2,000 years of history philosophical ideas, reveals a meager choice of eleven aesthetic theories:

1. Illusionism
2. Realism
3. Naturalism
4. Impressionism\*
5. Hedonism\*
6. Expressionism\*
7. Transcendentalism\*
8. Configurationism\*
9. Permanence Theory\*
10. Psychoanalytic\*
11. Ethically Good

\*—Those applicable to music.

1.2 None of these theories answer with any certainty the intriguing query: What should art be about? And no field of study is so unrewarding to curious artists than philosophical aesthetics. It leads absolutely nowhere.

1.3 "What should art be about?" differs from the question, "What is art about?" The latter question seems more like a question, which is answerable through some observable scientific study. But the former question is quite another matter. It is a question, which the practicing artist pursues, in her/his daily work.

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<b>1. Basic Skills</b>	<b>POOR</b>	<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>EXCELLENT</b>
GENERATING IDEAS	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
SPONTANEOUS INVENTION	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10

UNDERSTANDING LINES	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
COLOR EXECUTION	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
MIXING COLORS	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
SPACE USAGE	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
FORM INVENTION	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
COMPOSING PICTURES	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
"EYEBALL" ESTIMATING	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
ESTHETIC APPRECIATION	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
IDENTIFY ART ELEMENTS	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
TECHNIQUE	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
LIGHTS AND DARKS	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
SHADOW	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
MODELING	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
TOOL MASTERY	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
VOLUNTARY CREATIVENESS	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
CREATIVE IMAGINATION	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10

## ***2. General***

COOPERATION	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
ATTENTION	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
CONSISTENCY	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
OPENNES	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
POSITIVE LISTENING	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
EAGERNESS TO LEARN	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
BUILDS ON STRENGTHS	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10
DEVELOPMENT	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10

### **About the Artist -Author**

**PHYLLIS B. PARUN** a multifaceted Native New Orleans artist-sculptor-poet began a classical art education with her mother, a Louisiana teacher and graduate of LSUBR and continued as a student of John McCrady. Her German heritage and early exposure to medieval Europe lead her to a passion for the expressionist art of Paris and Germany in the war years routing her to cave paintings and to ancient Asia. On her recent trek through ancient shamanism, Phyllis conducted many painting and sculpture dialogues with major western and eastern masters of the early 20th century. Her current artwork expresses a fusion of all of these ancient and modern, western and eastern influences.

With a rich artistic and cultural European-American heritage, Ms. Parun expresses herself in a diversity of literary and studio mediums including painting, sculpture, photography,

essays and poetry. In addition she is a devoted *culturur* who has spent many years using her abundant organizing skills bringing people together for community enrichment projects as diverse as the UNO Concert Choir, food coops, and health, art and wisdom venues.

Swiss Art Reviewer Maya Hackett said of Ms. Parun “*Phyllis Parun has emerged a truly multifaceted artist as she is a classicist both in the subjects she chooses and in her technique. Phyllis has the trained hand and eye required for achieving the ultimate purity of tonal color and grace of form Phyllis’ work is ever fresh and each new piece of sculpture seems to grow out of yet another nourishing source.*”  
**Maya Hackett, Washington Brief**

In New Orleans art circles, Phyllis is perhaps best known for her pioneering work in and out of the studio. In the 1970's, she helped developed the visual arts community by initiating The Artists Information Bureau, the city’s first Artists Slide Registry, the first introduction of the 1% for Arts Amendment as Founding President of the Artists Equity Assn. of Louisiana, the city's first Artists slide library, Founder and President of the La. Chapter of the Artists Equity Assn., And in 1984 she opened New Orleans' first fine and decorative arts studio specializing gilded objects. And as a fine artist she revived three lost gilded arts: Medieval Panel Painting, Verre Églomisé (etched gold leaf on glass) and Gilded Bas-Relief, thereby, transforming the gilding arts into an exquisite fresh contemporary art form.

Also a poet, writer, and health journalist, she holds degrees in Philosophy, is a Certified Practitioner in the Am. Organization for Bodywork Therapy Asia, recipient of 1999 WDSU-TV "Making a Difference Award." [www.phylliparun.com](http://www.phylliparun.com) and [www.avantgardeU.com](http://www.avantgardeU.com)

### **END NOTES**

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**FiN**