

There are many ways to approach the drawing stage of a painting. This is my way.

The importance of the drawing

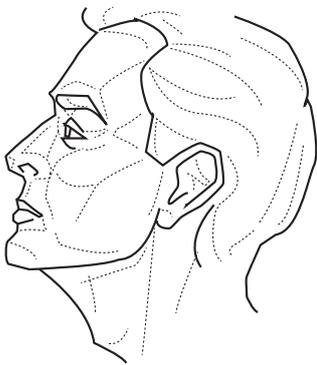
There are always elements of a painting that we look forward to, and others that give us more concern. If these areas are not addressed satisfactorily in the drawing stage, they will remain there waiting to pounce at a later point when correction becomes more tricky.

I've developed a method that makes it easier to make changes at the drawing stage, avoiding smudged rubber marks and dirty areas of the drawing that it is difficult to see through.

1. Using a 2B / HB pencil I complete the first drawing layer in my natural drawing style, but avoiding any shading
2. I paint white acrylic, with some water added, across the whole canvas in order to 'ghost' the image. This not only cleans up the canvas but allows me to draw and correct over the ghosted image. NOTE: never paint out small areas as the overpainting will appear blotchy. The whole canvas must be covered with acrylic
3. I repeat this process as many times as I need to get the drawing right and maintain as clean a canvas as possible. Getting the drawing 'right' is subjective - as long as you can say "that's the drawing I wanted", it's right.

I prefer to use a 2B because any softer and the pencil could smudge when over-painted, any lighter and it could be obscured.

The drawing provides several important advantages. Firstly the image to paint over. Secondly to understand the structure or sculpture of the face in order to achieve a sense of 3D-ness in the painting. Thirdly to build confidence for moving onto the painting stage, because difficult issues have been resolved and the image has become more familiar and better understood.



The importance of natural drawing styles

We each make marks with pencils, paint, pastels ect... and they are unique to each of us. It's like hand writing. People write big, small, tidily, messily - each to their own.

If we try to contrive our mark-making, we use the analytical side of the brain, which interferes with the natural flow of creativity coming from the other side of the brain.

This is why letting our hands and fingers work in the way that is natural to each of us compliments our creativity.

After all the way we make marks is one of the key factors that differentiates our work from others.

Always be protective of your mark making and never allow someone to try and change the way you do it.

You can do things like using different pencil strengths, paintbrushes and paint to extend your mark-making repertoire.

In essence, only you see the world as you do, only your brain translates what you see in it's own way and sends messages to your fingers to make the marks you do.



The diagrams above illustrates the kind of information I want to understand. The muscle and bone shapes, direction of the hair and the shapes the hairs make (I find that trying to draw individual hair detail is unhelpful at this stage, I can deal with that later in the painting)

Basically I just want to understand how the face's sculptural form plays out. **The same goes for the structure of a still life.**

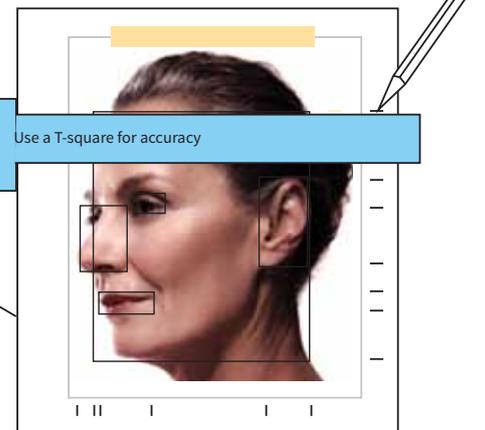
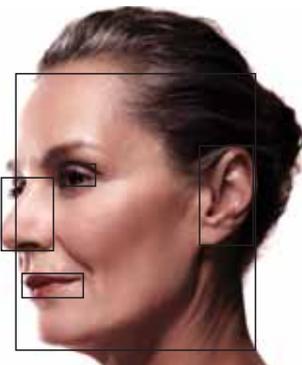
Drawing from a photograph

There are four ways of doing this. From a projector (not for me), squaring up, boxing and freehand. Many top artists use the squaring up method. It doesn't mean you cannot draw it is just a quicker means to an end. There is a more accurate way of doing this without any maths involved but it is too complex to explain in writing (I've tried).

I prefer to use the box method which is half way between using a grid and freehand. Here's how I do it :-

The main advantage to this approach is that it avoids lots of grid lines over the canvas that need to be painted out and gives lots of clean space to draw in.

1. The reference photo needs to be printed out to the same size as the drawing on the canvas
2. Draw boxes around the key features of the face or still life that are easily transferred to the canvas - not too many to begin with as it over complicates what you are looking at. More can be added later
3. Tape the photograph to the canvas in the position you want it on the canvas - this makes it easy to position the image on the canvas as wanted. See diagram
4. Use a T-square for accuracy and mark the box lines onto the canvas. Flap the picture out of the way keeping the tape in place. Draw the box lines onto the canvas using the pencil marks and T-square. Try to keep the lines light - off you go with the drawing



Next stage

Once the drawing is completed using your natural style of drawing, strengthen the basic linework: in the next tutorial I'll be showing the grisaille method which will necessitate covering the whole canvas with paynes grey acrylic. Consequently you will need to ensure that your linework is strong enough to see through the grey.

Tip.... When I was on my foundation course the tutor made us sharpen at least 6 pencils before we started. This was to avoid working with a blunt pencil, because it is easy to forget to keep the line sharp which changes the nature of the drawing in progress.

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