

THE PROCESS VS. THE RESULT: BLIND CONTOUR DRAWING

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An Art Skills Tutorial

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OBSERVATION

This is an exercise in seeing. While the result will be interesting and rewarding, the purpose is to really see what you are looking at. This very well might be the first time you will really see your subject. Observation takes time and attention.

First, find a friend who will sit for about 5 minutes a few times. The sketches you do will be quick, painless and even fun. You will both enjoy the result. Be ready to sit for your friend if he/she decides that this is too much fun not to try it.

You will need a clipboard, or a table to work on, at least a few sheets of paper and a pencil. You will not need an eraser! You don't want to erase observations. They all teach you something.

THE PROCESS

Have your friend sit comfortably and naturally, looking at you or in any direction.

You will want to try a variety of poses.



The idea is to first look, then set your pencil wherever you decide to start your drawing and then never look at the paper again, until you have completed your drawing.

You will be looking only at your subject.

SELF-GUIDANCE

Some things to observe before you put your pencil to paper:

What angle is the axis of the head at?

Follow the nose to see this most clearly.



Is it tilted? If so, in what direction?

*Do you see the underside of the nose?
Are the nostrils showing?*

Where is the hairline in relation to the forehead? To the ears?

Are the lips parted? Does the mouth have a curve? If so, in which direction and how much of one?

What is the basic shape of the ear?

Observe the curve of the outside and some of the curves on the inside.

Are the eyes open, closed or partially open? Is there a curve to the eyelid? If so, how much? In what direction?

About how much space is between the eyes? Another eye width?

Hold a pencil at arm's length, close one eye and test the angle of the eyes.

Are they horizontal or not? If not, which is higher?

FRAME OF REFERENCE

Using two eyes allows us to perceive depth.

Our brain compares the slight differences of view and synthesizes the image into a spatial one.

When you use only one eye your depth perception is hindered.

This is a benefit to artists when they are trying to figure out how to translate a three-dimensional (3D) object onto a two-dimensional (2D) plane.

ALTERNATE APPROACHES

Now that you have studied your subject, you will need to make a decision about a strategy of drawing. It is preferable not to lift your pencil from the page, as it can be difficult to estimate where you are placing it back when you are not looking at the page. There are many options; here are a few to get you started:

- *Start with the hairline at the top of the head.*
- *Start with the hairline overlapping the forehead.*
- *Start with the eyes and move out and around.*
- *Start with the nose.*

If you find that you need to move from one part of the face to another by lifting your pencil, you will need to estimate how far to move and in what direction. You might find it advantageous to retrace a feature you have already drawn in order to get to another part of the face.



THE RESULT

Are you surprised by the result?

If you have made the sketch in the spirit of this exercise, you should be pleasantly surprised to find very accurate parts of your drawing.

You will have noticed and translated on paper some of the language of your sightings.

Which parts best capture what you were looking at?

A lip ?

An eye or an ear ?

The hairline or the chin line ?