

Introduction

Hello, welcome to this week's Contactless Creativity project. My name is Marion Royle, I'm a painter based in Lymington in the New Forest. My background is in arts education and I worked and lived in Berkshire for many years before relocating to the South coast about seven years ago.

Since moving to Lymington I have set up a studio where I paint full time. I am inspired by my beautiful and varied surroundings, especially the coastal birds, mudflats and the sea. Walking thorough the marina and dry dock triggered an on-going fascination with boats – their masts, sails and rigging in particular.

Oil paint is my favourite medium but I love experimenting and through this I discovered cold wax which I use to create texture in my work. I regularly visit the local nature reserve and the sea wall to record and collect reference material to use in my studio. My main on-going challenge is capturing light and a sense of movement in my paintings.

This week's creative activities are designed to help improve drawing skills. I believe drawing underpins all art. It has four main functions: Recording, Analysing, Communicating and Expressing. I've often heard people say: "I can't draw" as if it's a gift. However, drawing is a visual language and like other languages it can be learned.

The first activity this week is designed to help you extend your mark making skills through experimenting with of a range of drawing media.

The second activity shows you how to analyse and record the structure and form of objects,

The third activity is about developing compositional skills. A strong composition is as important as strong foundations on a house.

Each activity is designed to lead to the next and in **the final two activities** you will set up a still life and then produce a detailed shaded observational drawing of it.

My overall aim this week is to highlight the importance of drawing from observation and composition, whilst giving you technical tips which will take the 'mystery' out of how to draw and consequently build your skills bank and confidence.

Day 1 – Experimental mark making and gradating tone

AIM: To develop an appreciation of a range of drawing media and their properties

Guidance and Technical Tips:

- Use the sketchbook provided to record your experimentation and exploration of the qualities and scope of each drawing medium included in the pack. Work on a scale that suits you eg part of/whole page. Notes can be useful for future reference. Organise the layout in any way that appeals to you eg regimented/random – see exemplar sheets 1 - 4
- Make as many different marks as possible using each drawing medium in the pack and any others you may have to hand. Vary the pressure to create dark and light, heavy and delicate lines and marks. Use the sides and edges of charcoal and conte crayon. The more experimental you are, the wider the range of effects.
- Collage areas of the page with darker toned smooth but not shiny scraps of paper eg. Brown parcel wrapping paper, envelopes etc. This will create a variety of effects and make the white conte crayon show up – see exemplar sheet 4
- Gradated shading is the result of creating dark to light tones. It requires controlled use of the medium. Experiment with the density and weight of line and other marks to create gradated tone from dark to light using the different drawing media provided – see exemplar sheets

Day 2 – Structure and form

AIM: To develop an understanding of how to simplify and draw the geometric structure of objects.

Guidance and Technical Tips:

- With reference to exemplar sheet 5, Put a mug on the table in front of you and look at its basic shape - a cylinder. Ignoring the handle, make a line drawing from observation of the body of the mug. With reference to exemplar sheet 5 use vertical and horizontal guidelines to help you draw the symmetrical cylindrical mug and its elliptical rim and base. These guidelines should be faint so that they can be rubbed out when needed. Now add the mug handle. Carry out the same exercise with a jug/teapot. It helps to imagine the object you are drawing is transparent when drawing its base.
- Using the 2B pencil provided create a gradated range of shaded tones from as dark as possible to as light as possible. This will involve pressing very hard for the darkest tone and then gradually applying less and less pressure. Try to avoid visible shading marks by shading in more than one direction for each tone. See exemplar sheet 5. You can use a ruler to draw very faint guidelines and to shade up against to get neat edges if desired.
- Look at the shaded drawing of a sphere on exemplar sheet 5. The illusion of 3D is created by the use of strong shadows and the highlight as well as the gradated use of tone. Draw a circle, imagine the main light source is from above. Shade from dark through medium tones to the lightest, leaving the white paper for the highlight. Include the shadow cast by the sphere. Now apply this approach to a cylinder.

Day 3 – Composition and still life

AIM: To recognise the importance of experimenting with different arrangements and viewpoints in identifying a strong composition.

Guidance and Technical Tips:

- Choose five objects of contrasting shapes and sizes, avoiding tiny objects. These can be manmade and/or natural. You will be making several linear biro compositional sketches of these objects, exploring different arrangements and viewpoints. Use exemplar sheets 6 and 7 for reference.
- Place the objects side by side in a row in front of you on the table. Make a (20min approx.) biro sketch of this still life. See exemplar drawings for use of guidelines to help draw the structure of the object accurately.
- Place the same objects in a zig zag line going away from you on the table. Make a biro sketch as before. This viewpoint involves foreshortening - distances will seem shallower because you are looking down the line of objects. Use the far and near edges of the table to help you position the objects on the page.
- Now create a random pile of the objects on the table in front of you. Make another biro sketch.

Extension exercises:

- Stand the objects on the floor next to you and from this high viewpoint make a sketch. This will be more challenging because it is a less familiar viewpoint and the perspective of the objects will be exaggerated. Try to draw what you see, not what you know.
- Put a low stool/small table on top of the table you are working at. Arrange your objects in a group on this. Make a sketch from this low viewpoint. Start with the near edge of the stool leaving out its legs. Again, this is an unfamiliar viewpoint and therefore you will need to look more carefully at the perspective of the objects.

Day 4 – Setting up a still life

AIM: To understand how to select objects, set up an interesting, dynamic still life and make preparatory compositional sketches.

Guidance and Technical Tips:

- The Selection criteria for a still life is personal but needs a rationale eg. objects of sentimental value or a theme which could be anything from a colour to a topic of interest. A still life can tell a story, have a mood depending on the composition, lighting and the style of the work.
- Decide on your preferred approach and select about five objects to include in your still life. Now select a setting including the surface the objects will be arranged on, background and lighting.
- When you have set up your still life make at least two compositional sketches to help decide what the strongest composition will be including the format - landscape or portrait. If you are able to take photos from different viewpoints that can add to and speed up this stage of the process.
- When you have set up the still life to your satisfaction try to ensure a strong light source as this will create dynamic highlights and shadows and tonal contrast.
- Now you are ready to start drawing your still life from your chosen viewpoint. It is worth investing time in accurately sketching out the whole composition before starting to add shaded detail.
- Plan the positioning of your drawing on the page by identifying the tallest/highest and nearest/lowest points.
- A drawing is like a jigsaw puzzle. Try to relate the position of one object to another by looking at the negative spaces/shapes in between them. This will help to get them to be in proportion with each other.

Day 5 – Still life shaded drawing

AIM: To produce a detailed shaded still life drawing.

Guidance and Technical Tips:

- Having produced an accurate linear drawing of your still life you can now start adding shaded detail.
- Identify the darkest and lightest areas within the composition - half close your eyes to do this. Start shading the dark tones first and then add the mid tones working towards the lightest tones. Highlights will stand out more if left as unshaded/bare paper. Strong contrast makes a drawing dynamic.
- As you add detail and refine your drawing you will need to create the illusion of texture. The eye is drawn to the edges of objects when 'reading' texture. Use appropriate marks to suggest a particular texture especially along the edge of the object.
- To evaluate your drawing with a 'fresh eye', either leave it for a while, turn it upside down and /or take a photo of it. Decide which areas you like most and why. Then which areas don't work and why. You can now either continue to refine the drawing or carry over what you have learned into the next drawing.
- Different media give different effects - charcoal allows you to work in a looser way than lead pencil and you can rub out marks with your fingers and use an eraser to put in highlights. Conte crayon is waxy and intense - great for sketching, giving strong contrast as well as mid tones. As you practise drawing with different media you will develop preferences and the ability to pick the best medium for your chosen subject. Its important to experiment and not always be preoccupied with the outcome. We learn a lot from risk taking and mistakes!