

14.05.20
Life Drawing
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Dear Core members,
Hope this handout finds you well and healthy. Today we will be looking at drawing figures from photo references, which I think might be quite a helpful way to continue to engage with studying how to draw the figure from home 😊
Hope you have a lot of fun with this activity, I look forward to seeing you and your results!
Best wishes,
Noel



Using photo references

When you are using photo reference, be mindful of your purpose. It is easy to sit down and mechanically copy something, but this is not always productive, or fun. Are you looking to emulate a life drawing class? Are you trying to work on that next big painting or just trying to study something specific, such as hands? It doesn't matter what you are trying to do, but it helps to have a purpose when you sit down to draw.

Picking Good Photo Reference

Here are some general tips for picking reference are aimed at figure and portrait work but are not rules. If you want to get a certain effect, break them!

Avoid images with flat, frontal light. This is a common lighting choice for magazines, as it disguises wrinkles and imperfections. Unfortunately, it means we lose information about anatomy, form, tone and colour.

Watch out for overexposed photographs. If a large area of the light side of a subject is white, it means it is overexposed. This makes form and colour hard to discern, losing details. Avoid images with excessive airbrushing and other manipulations.

Be careful with coloured light sources. Coloured light can be a way to get interesting effects for painting, so don't exclude it entirely.



(Don't forget video, it is a great resource for gesture drawing. You can pause it or try to catch moving poses! These ice skaters were drawn in 1-2 minutes each)

Using Photo Reference for Life Drawing at Home

It isn't quite a substitute for a life drawing class but it can still be rewarding and productive to a series of figure poses from photographs. Here are some thoughts to bear in mind:

I find screens are better in terms of colour accuracy and contrast than print outs.

Don't feel you have to 'copy' the reference. Mechanically duplicating a photo is a big temptation, and this is one of the biggest issues with working from photography; the result looks copied more than 'drawn'. You can exaggerate poses, adjust shapes, experiment with your style. Draw as if you were working from life.

Don't take it too seriously – there will always be more drawings. You can reset the timer and try again, that great pose isn't going anywhere. You are at home in your own space, so relax, and take the breaks you need.



(Normal Rockwell – 'The Gossips'. Rockwell worked extensively with reference, but frequently used exaggeration for effect)

Over to You: Home Life Drawing Class

You will need:

Your drawing kit - anything you like! A pencil and copy paper is enough to start with

A timer - ideally a physical timer, but you can use a phone app.

A set of photos

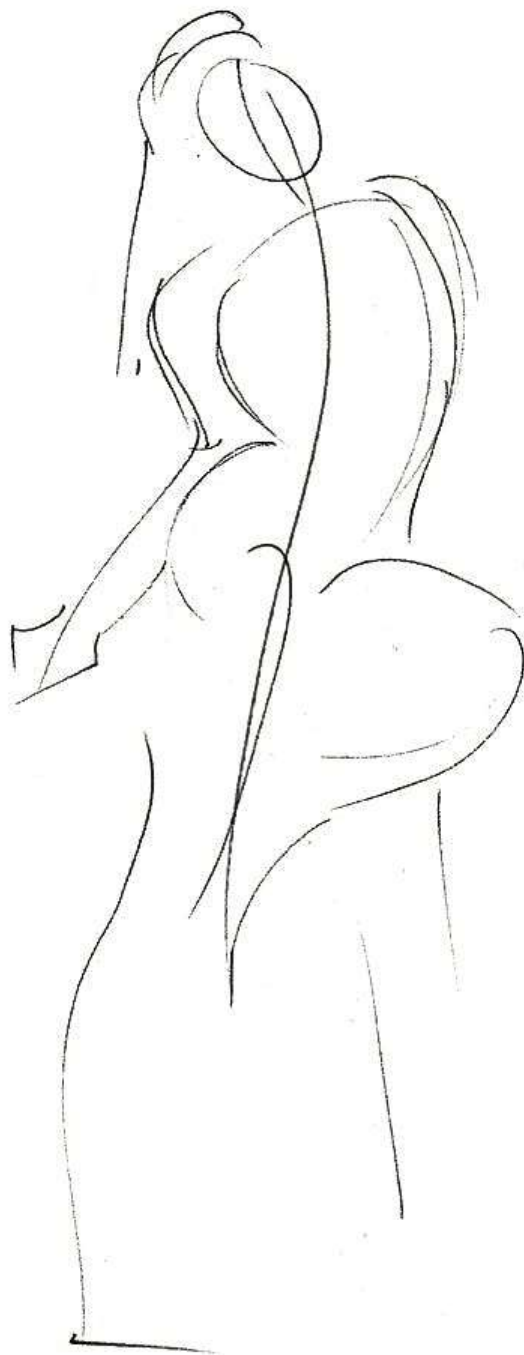
Decide ahead what times you want to draw for. You may want to emulate a session of short (1-15 mins) poses, medium length (30mins -1 hour) poses. A 'mixed pose' session of 5 x 3 minute drawings, 2 x 20 minute drawings and 1x 45 minute drawing can be a great way to spend two hours. These step-by-steps are just a starting point you might want to try; there are many ways to draw figures!

Gesture Drawing Step-by-Step

1. Start with an overall 'action line' to indicate the pose.



2. Indicate major forms, working over the whole body.



3. Start to develop details; here I incorporate ideas about gesture and anatomy. Try to work from one side of the body to the other.

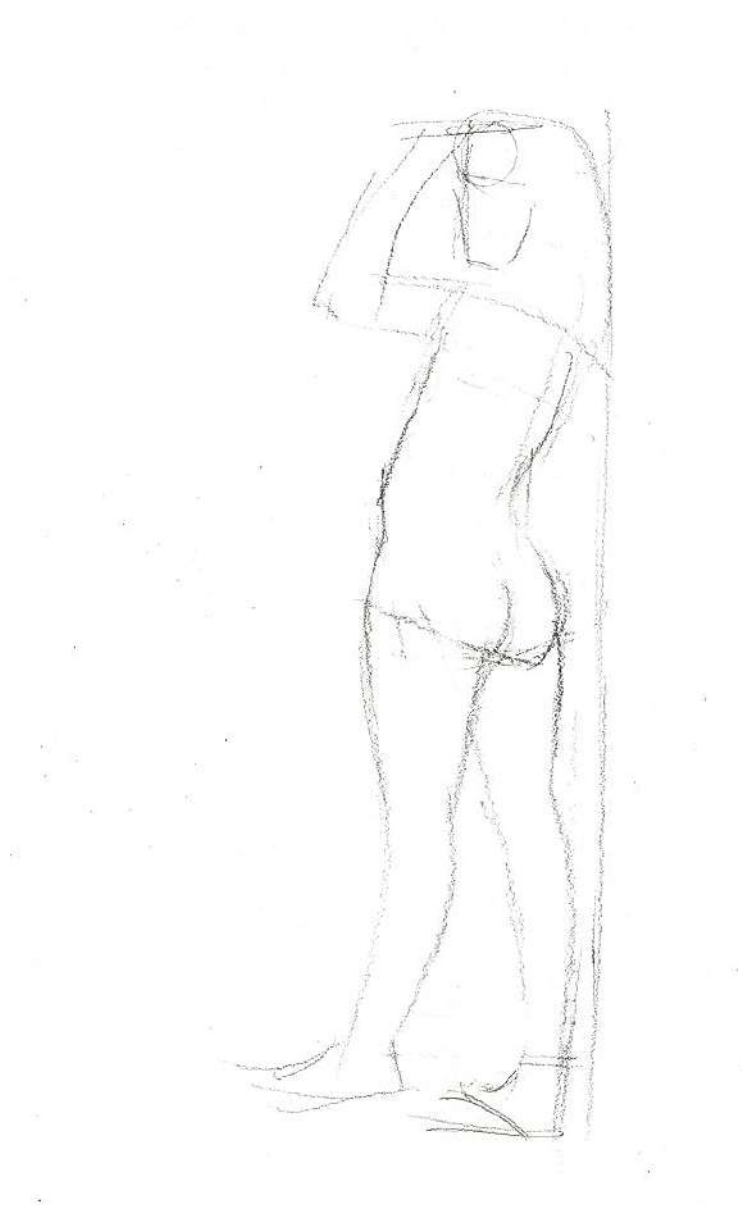


4. Keep adding detail until you run out of time – it's OK if you don't get everything, do your best!

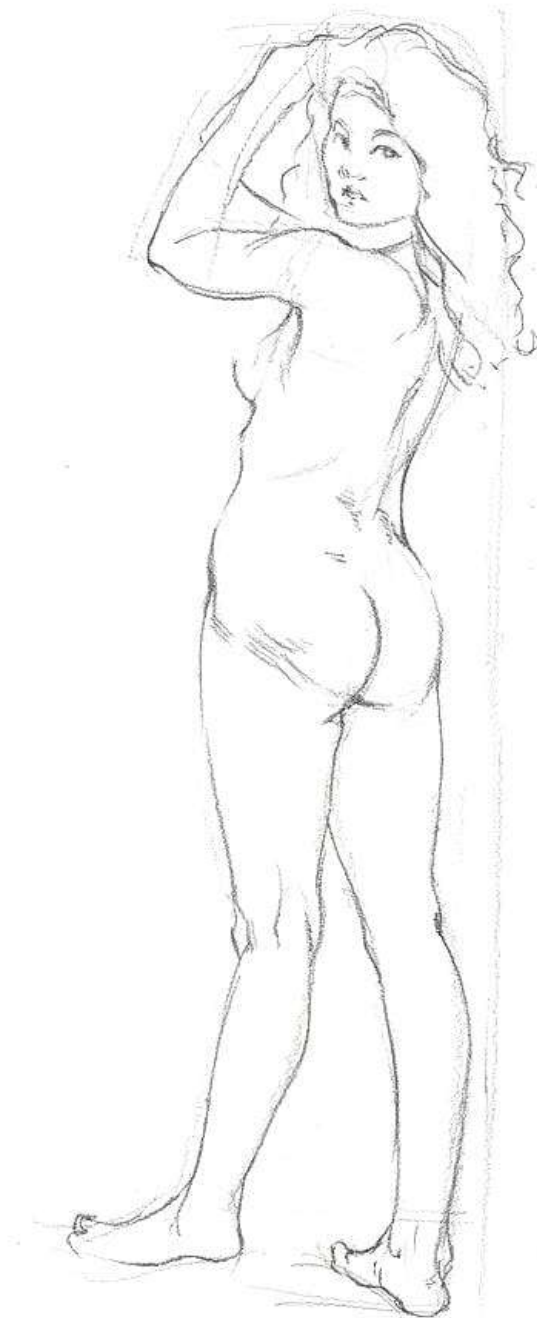


Medium Pose Drawing: Step-by-Step

1. As we have a little more time, block in large shapes and check proportion first. Look at the space the figure takes on the page and break it into measured sections.



2. Work out the contour lines; think about how they overlap and intersect. Contour is not just a single unbroken outline.



3. Here I am laying in shadow shapes. Try to keep these simple, and the edges soft.



4. In this final stage I build up detail – this may take almost half the drawing time. In this case, I am adding details like the features and wrapping lines

