Presented by The Artist's Magazine

HOW TO DRAW PEOPLE Portrait Drawing in Graphite & Charcoal

Use Portraits to Express Yourself!

TIPS for Correcting Mistakes and Conquering Challenging Poses

PORTRAITS as a Vehicle for Self-Expression



Maine artist Janvier Rollande finds that a bit of herself always comes through in her graphite drawings of others, resulting in pieces with a psychological dimension that sometimes brings unexpected personal benefits.

ADAPTED FROM AN EARLIER ARTICLE BY BOB BAHR

The subject of Janvier Rollande's drawing Sage seems ready to jump out of her chair and make mischief. The woman standing in the dramatic light from a window in The Gift seems to be holding a seashell as if it were a mysterious, magical object. In each drawing, it's likely these qualities were exaggerated by Rollande-the sitters were probably in a much more mundane posture. It's also likely that Rollande wasn't aware of her changes to the scene. The Maine draftsman works on her detailed drawings over several months, and their psychological intrigues work their way into the pieces intuitively. "I don't think about symbolism a whole lot," she says. "I just get something in mind and I don't stop to analyze it. I go with whatever I see."

SAGE graphite, 17¼ x 12¾.

Rollande also follows her intuition when it comes to her technique. Like many portrait artists, she starts with an eye. But unlike most, she does no preliminary drawing, not even a rough sketch for proportions. Rollande simply eyeballs the dimensions of the surface and then begins. With Staedtler Mars thick graphite leads (usually HB, but occasionally 2B or F) secured in a holder, she builds the drawing using parallel diagonal lines. This hatching is so finely laid down that it becomes essentially invisible to the viewer in the final piece. The artist is extremely careful as she builds up her lines, and she even built a device to place across the drawing as she works to avoid smudging her marks. "Smudging kills the light in the paper," says the artist. "By not smudging, no matter how layered I get with the strokes, there is some light that always comes through. In person, you can feel that sense of light and the resulting softness." For similar reasons, Rollande rarely uses her kneaded eraser. "It changes the surface of the paper," she explains. "That's why I start out with very, very light marks, so I won't have to erase."

This approach has its advantagesproviding, like Rollande, you are capable of visualizing the accurate proportions of the image on the blank sheet. An example of this method's strength is The Memory. The artist explains that this piece was not in the least bit calculated, and because of her working method the drawing could be finished with several objects unresolved. "My mother is fading into the background, which is like my experience of my mother-she was present and not present in my life," says Rollande. "I was able to do this because I didn't sketch it all at once. I didn't know that I wouldn't finish all of her face. I let the drawing speak to me as I went." One of her mother's hands is tightly rendered, which is appropriate for a woman who supported her family by working with her hands. The African violet is fully



drawn to show her success with these sometimes difficult plants, and the drapes in the background, which her mother had sewn, refer to her profession as a seamstress. "It's about her ability to create beauty sewing, and to be nurturing to a plant, yet not be like that as a mother," says Rollande. "It's all about presence and non-presence." **THE GIFT** graphite, 40 x 30.



THE MEMORY graphite, 10 x 8.



Her portrait of her mother dying, Adieu, Maman, has the nightgown's printed pattern missing from the chest area, an omission Rollande chose to retain. "It represents the material aspect of the person leaving," she says. "The material is no longer important." Even without detail in this area, the drawing is an achievement in extremely careful mark-making, a process that can take months, and in some instances, even years. The nearly life-size portrait The Gift took the artist four years to complete. "I had just started when Townsend Wolfe, the director of the Arkansas Arts Center at the time, visited me," she recalls. "He told me to call him when I finished it. Four years later, I called him. I didn't think he would remember me, but he did, and he bought the drawing. I work much faster these days-this would probably take me just two years now," she says with a chuckle. Rollande often uses the drawn-out nature of her technique to her advantage. For Adieu, Maman, for example, the process allowed her to deal with her mother's death. "Watching her transformation from someone who looked like the person I knew to just a skeleton with a layer of skin over it was such a profound and overwhelm-

"I think drawing in general is a way for me to really know something, to understand something or someone." ADIEU, MAMAN graphite, 10¼ x 14½.

ing experience that I felt like I needed time with it," says Rollande. "That's the reason for the drawing. I think drawing in general is a way for me to really know something, to understand something or someone. This drawing was a way of understanding that particular experience and my feelings about it, and coming to a place of peace with her death and with our relationship. That was a gift."

Mother and Child explored Rollande's role as a single parent. "We have a very close relationship, and I wanted to depict it," she says about her and her daughter, Sarah. "We each have our own life, but we're connected. I titled it *Mother and Child* to compare and contrast it with all the paintings of mothers holding their child and the Madonnas and all that. When it's just the two of you, it can be a very intense relationship, so there are times when I would drift off into my own world and she would do the same, but we would still be connected. It's another point of view on motherhood. She's looking over her shoulder at me, like she needs me, and that T-shirt is slipping off her pre-teen shoulder-maybe I should be paying a little more attention! She's wearing what she used to sleep in, and I'm in my bathrobe—it's morning and we're relaxed. It suggests an aura of intimacy; we're family, sitting around in our sleepwear." The sleek, reflective table is partially an invention-Rollande says the actual table looks battered and well used. "You wouldn't see much of a reflection in it," she comments. "That's one of the wonderful things about being an artist-you can change things, transform them so they are more appealing."

Rollande shot a photograph of the scene for Mother and Child by stepping on a bulb release attached to the camera. Her work always involves a combination of photography and working from life. "I don't bracket my photos and I'm not a photographer, so I'm lucky to get photos that I can work with," she says. "I pretty much just focus and shoot. Sometimes they are not so good, and I have to extract whatever I can. An artist has to go beyond the surface of something anyway. It's about having a certain amount of sensitivity and good perception, both visually and otherwise. When I'm drawing skin, I am thinking about skin, feeling it, seeing all the subtleties that are there. I want to present textures in drawings so that someone really notices what something looks like, be it a wrinkled cotton shirt or the texture of someone's hair."

For commissions, the artist likes to photograph the subject in his or her home so they are more comfortable. The clients may see what she is photographing, but they have no idea what the piece will look like until Rollande presents the finished drawing. "I've



▲ ALEX AND LEIGH graphite, 15¼ x 17.

▼ **MOTHER AND CHILD** graphite, 22 x 26.



"An artist has to go beyond the surface of something. It's about having a certain amount of sensitivity and good perception, both visually and otherwise."



never had anyone be disappointed," she says. "I tell them that I'm the artist and I am going to do the drawing that I will be most happy doing." She often has to work from multiple photographs to get the composition she wants, pulling a facial expression from one and an arrangement of the hands from another, for instance. "Getting it to look natural is the hardest part when mixing sources," Rollande comments. "Getting them to fit well together in terms of size, composition, and light source can be difficult." Sometimes the subject's placement in the environment is crucial to her drawing, as in *Alex and Leigh*, in which the vertical lines of the stair's balustrades mimicked the stripes in the wallpaper behind the children. "The railing also acted as part of the composition and tied them together," she adds. The final dollop is the artist's own personality, which may be magnified by an aspect of the sitter's personality, or it may act as a glaze over the entire piece. "I tend to be a quiet, more gentle kind of person, and I think that comes through in my drawings." **MORNING LIGHT** graphite, 12 x 201/4.

PRACTICING YOUR ART

BY JOY THOMAS

To some, following specific step-by-step instructions may seem an unimaginative and overly technical endeavor. For others, such instruction can serve as a road map for the challenging journey ahead, providing a few of the tools needed on an emotional and intellectual quest.

Through study and hard work, the disciplined artist can develop swift, confident skills and a powerful ability to express their own artistic vision. With practice, an artist begins to internalize the formal elements and principles of art. Ultimately, after you have mastered the elements and principles, your abilities will become intuitive. Presented here are two portrait-drawing demonstrations that will help you assemble the tools you need to begin the journey toward making these processes instinctual and creating your own vibrant drawings.

DEMONSTRATION: CHARCOAL PORTRAIT OF BRYAN

The day Bryan came to my studio was overcast, making the north light dimmer and cooler than usual. The lighting was the first difficulty, but I made many other mistakes. None of these, however, defied correction. Though it may be a struggle, there are many mistakes you can correct in order to make a successful portrait.

Some portraits emit a charm or an artistic quality despite failing to capture a true likeness; others are obviously rendered with technical finesse but are lacking in aesthetic appeal. Aim to create portraits that are both convincing and pleasing. Work toward achieving accuracy, technical virtuosity and artistic merit.



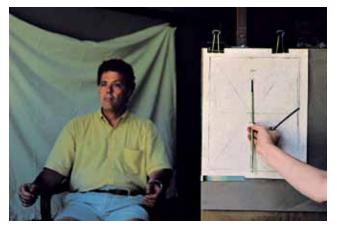


STEP 1: PREPARE YOUR PAPER

Secure your paper to a drawing board with padding underneath using Bulldog clamps and a supersized rubber band. Tone the smooth side of the Canson paper by scraping soft vine charcoal onto the surface with a single-edged razor blade. Work it into the paper with a chamois cloth. It may take a few applications to achieve the desired tone. When you're satisfied, prop up the board or set it on an easel in a position that allows you to see both the drawing and your model.

Materials

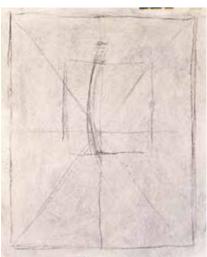
Canson paper in a bisque tone Assorted vine charcoal Charcoal pencils (medium and soft) Chamois cloth Kneaded eraser Easel Drawing board Extra paper for padding Bulldog clamps Supersized rubber band Matte spray fixative Bristle filbert brush Single-edged razor blade



STEP 2: DETERMINE THE ARRANGEMENT

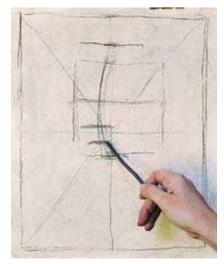
Using soft vine charcoal, create a perimeter to allow for framing, then divide the paper corner to corner, through the middle and finally in a diamond to determine the centers of the quadrants.

When determining the placement of a head study, a good rule of thumb is to keep at least a forehead's height between the top of the head and the inside edge of the mat or frame. It also helps to think of the head as a box or square. Placing the center of the box above center, leave room for the neck and collar to provide a pedestal for the head, in order to create a bust as seen in classic sculpture.



STEP 3: PLACE THE FACE

Place the first indications of the face using your vine charcoal. Although it's often desirable to center the head on the paper, in this case a bit of space appears in front of the face, by placing the box to the right of center. A curved line follows the center axis of the face.



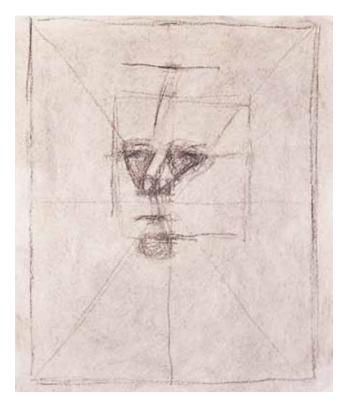
STEP 4: MARK FEATURE LOCATIONS

Using your vine charcoal, place a horizontal line between the top of the head and the bottom of the chin to indicate placement the eyes. Next, place a mark between the eyes and the chin to indicate the nose. Then place a mark between the nose and the bottom of the chin to indicate the mouth.

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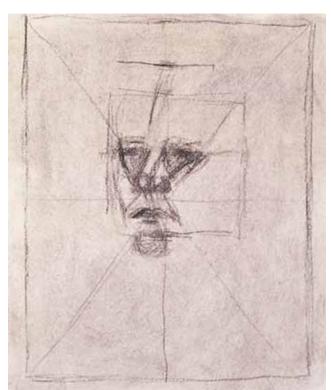
STEP 5: DETERMINE ANGLES

Lay a pencil against each corner of the eye and down to the outside edges of the nose to determine the angles. Those angles form a "V" that will contain the eyes and nose. Follow standard measurements in the very beginning, and then look for the characteristics that are unique to the model. In this case, Bryan has a generous jawline, so the chin is described as a ball placed just under the bottom of the box.



STEP 6: MASS IN THE FIRST SHAPES

Search for the bridge of the nose, cheekbones, and eye sockets and see how these elements relate to and define one another. Also look for landmark shapes and values, such as the ball of the nose and the chin, the shape of the eyelids, the corners of the mouth and the form of the forehead. Now make a quick statement of the eye sockets, eyes, and the bottom plane and bridge of the nose. Begin to develop the mouth.

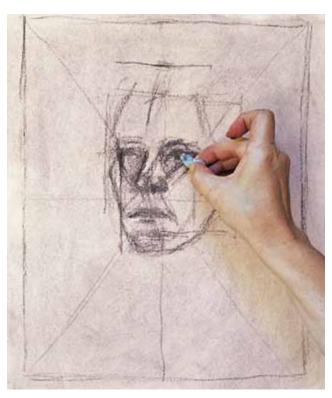


STEP 7: USE PLUMB LINES TO LINE UP THE FEATURES

With the vine charcoal, drop a plumb line from the inside corner of the eye to the outside of the nostrils to the corner of the mouth. Look for how these features line up in relationship to one another and in order to determine proper placement.

Tip: A Common Mistake

Showing too much of the far side of the head is a common mistake when drawing the three-quarter pose. Continuously measure and correct to ensure that this half of the face stays narrow enough.



STEP 8: LIFT TONE FOR VALUE GRADATION

After sketching the shape of the jaw and chin, establish the form by introducing more value gradation. Lift out the lighter planes with a kneaded eraser. Remove construction marks with the eraser and by rubbing with the chamois cloth.

At this point, step back and compare the portrait to the model. Take your time, study the model carefully and scrutinize your work objectively.



STEP 9: INDICATE SHAPES AND STRENGTHEN DARK VALUES

Indicate the hair, the shape of the ear and the eyes, and strengthen the dark shapes with a soft charcoal pencil.



STEP 10: LIFT HIGHLIGHTS AND REASSESS

Lifting out a few of the highlights at this point will help you find your bearings and lead the way to more questions: Where is the flesh of the cheek? Where does the bone catch the light? Are the eye sockets too high or too low? Is the mouth the correct width and placement? As you study the model, imagine an overlay of plumb lines, angles and geometric shapes to help you sort out the visual information. Avoid finishing any one feature before confirming the placement and bone structure. Ask additional questions: Does the nose protrude enough or too much? Is the mouth too high or too low? Are the eyes the appropriate distance apart?



STEP 11: RESTATE AND STRENGTHEN THE FORM

Restate the image in charcoal, then address the edges by moving the charcoal with a bristle filbert brush. When the model takes a break, it's time to scrutinize the piece with an objective eye and look for ways to correct the drawing while strengthening the form. This can be a difficult stage, because the portrait begins to take on a life of its own and can intimidate its maker. In order to capture a likeness, it's crucial to remain objective. Attempt to make accurate corrections as you begin, again, to redraw.



STEP 12: APPLY DARK TONE

Block in the dark shape of the hair with a soft charcoal pencil. Measure carefully, then indicate the neck and collar. Block in the shadows on the neck and face. You can push the charcoal with a brush to simplify the tone.



STEP 13: DEFINE THE FORM

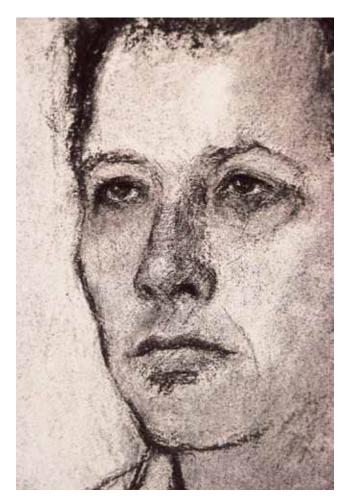
At this point, you should be able to see a bit more clearly where the drawing is headed. Using a soft charcoal pencil, begin refining the piece by applying line and hatch marks to define the form.



STEP 14: ANALYZE YOUR DRAWING

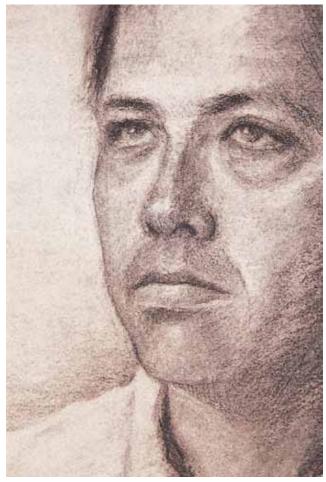
Analyze the drawing from each angle: aesthetic, technical and anatomical.

It takes skill and courage to make corrections to an existing work of art, especially if you're seeking something elusively expressive. Knowing how to bring the portrait to a higher level without overworking it takes years of working from life and a lot of failures. If you feel intimidated by the good things that are happening in the portrait and are afraid of ruining everything, just remember: if you did it once, you can do it again. Get ready for the final redraw and some very exciting changes.



STEP 15: IDENTIFY ANY MISTAKES

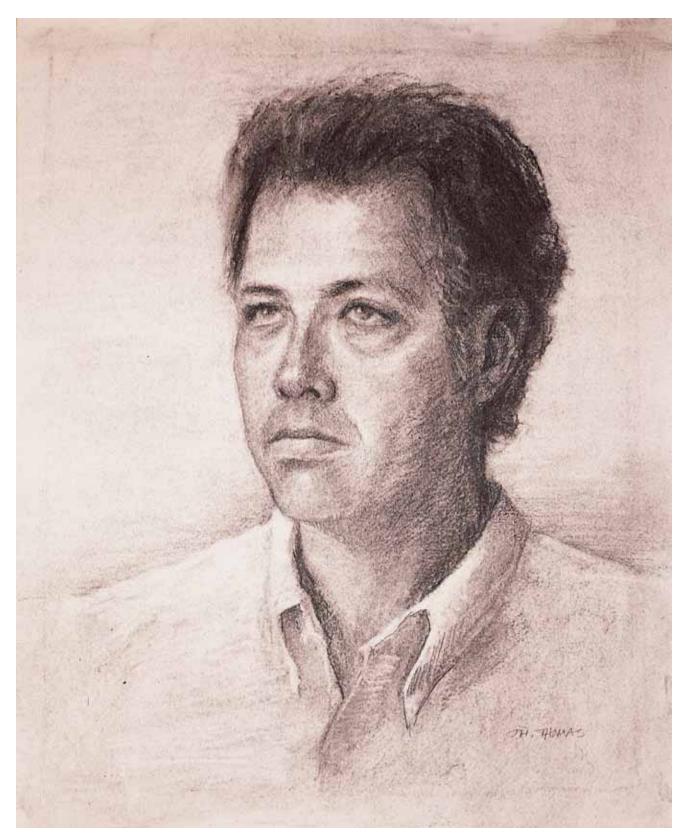
Here, you can see evidence of a common mistake with the threequarter pose: too much of the far side of the face is showing and needs to be narrowed. This means the eye on our left must be moved, and also the mouth. Bryan has blue eyes, which will be difficult to convey in charcoal, so much care with the detail will be required as the values of the eyes are corrected. The nose is too broad, so the bridge must be redrawn and refined. The upper lip should be smaller and the lower lip more full. All light of the light/dark pattern must be restated. All of the transition tones should be subtler. Redraw to correct your mistakes.



STEP 16: MAKE YOUR FINAL CORRECTIONS

Make the final, subtle corrections by removing charcoal with a kneaded eraser and redrawing with a medium charcoal pencil. Shape the kneaded eraser into a very sharp point to work the details, paying special attention to the eyes. Keep in mind that the eyelid acts as a hood that casts a shadow over the eyeball. Continue using light pressure and a kneaded eraser to lift the light areas of the cheekbone, lips, brow, bridge of nose, etc. Finally, find the darkest lines and state them with hard pressure and a medium charcoal pencil.

When detailing the face, avoid stylizing or standardizing. Look for the particulars of the eyebrows, for example, then draw them realistically, without resorting to a symbolic or stylized brow. The goal is to capture the subject's unique likeness and presence, while revealing something of the artist, through a competent head study.

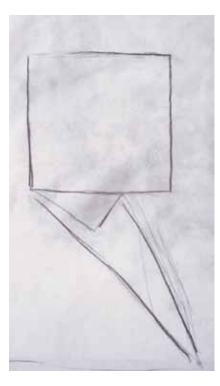


THE FINISHED PORTRAIT BRYAN Charcoal on Canson paper

MEASURING A CHALLENGING POSE: PROFILE IN CHARCOAL

While teaching a portrait-drawing workshop I noticed that even the most advanced students struggled while drawing profiles. When students ended up in the "profile spot," they would invariably complain and even attempt to negotiate a position trade with other students. Since I think of the profile spot as the best seat in the house, I decided to observe them to find out why they were having problems.

My observations resulted in this demonstration designed to emphasize the canon of the head in profile. After watching this demonstration, my students managed to complete convincing profiles.



STEP 1: INDICATE YOUR FIRST GUIDELINES

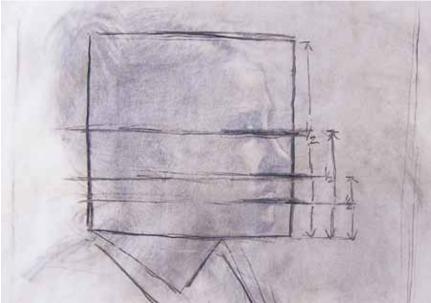
With soft willow charcoal on bond paper, begin with a swift indication of the portrait's perimeter. Determine the middle of the composition by imagining an "X" from corner to corner. If the profile includes the neck and chest, the center point will typically fall in the middle of the cheek.

As you study the model, simplify what you see into a few large geometric shapes. Imagine the head as a box. Draw the width of the box using two marks: the tip of the nose to the back of the head. Use the *exact same measurement* to determine the height of the box (the top of the head to the bottom of the chin). Maintain at least the width of a forehead from the top and left side of the box to the perimeter.

Below the box, sketch a triangle representing the neck. Attach the triangle to the bottom of the box a third of the way from the right side. Place the chest below it. Think of the chest as a wedge shape that serves as a pedestal for the head.

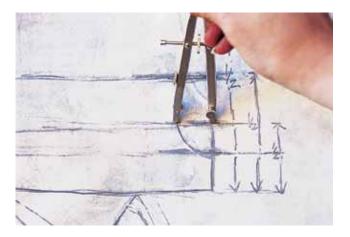
Materials

Bond paper Soft vine charcoal (thin and thick) Soft willow charcoal Compressed charcoal stick Hard charcoal pencil Chamois cloth Stump (optional) Kneaded eraser Matte spray fixative Calipers (or compass)



STEP 2: MARK THE HALFWAY POINTS

Divide the head into halves. Mark halfway between top of the head and bottom of the chin to place the eye socket, then halfway between eye socket and bottom of the chin to place the base of the nose, then halfway between the nose and bottom of the chin to place the bottom of the mouth. Remember that these measurements serve as an approximation to get started, adjusting for the variations will create the likeness as the portrait progresses.





STEP 4: DETERMINE THE WIDTH OF THE EYE SOCKET

Go back to the vertical distance between the nose and the mouth. Pivot this vertical distance and use it as a horizontal measurement to determine the width of the eye socket.

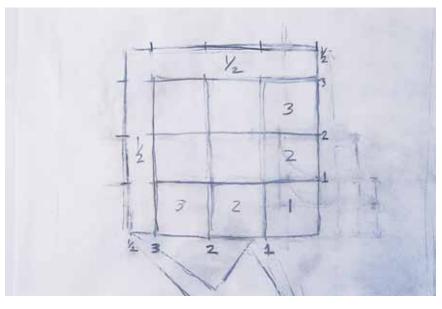
STEP 3: ESTABLISH THE COLUMN OF INTEREST

In a profile drawing, you will have a "column of interest" where all of the subject's features fall. To determine the location and width of this column of interest, use calipers (or "think" like them) to measure the vertical distance between the nose and mouth. Holding these measurements, place the calipers at the tip of the nose (at the edge of the box), then pivot them to mark the back of the nose. Use this mark at the back of the nose to determine the first plumb line. Drop this plumb line from the top to the bottom of the box. This plumb line runs parallel to the perimeter of the box, creating the column of interest.



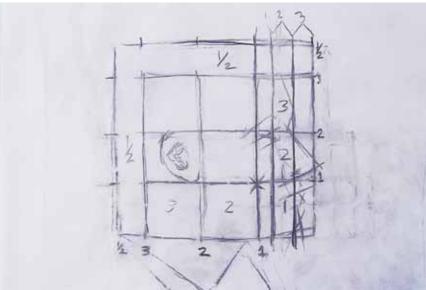
STEP 5: MAKE MORE MEASUREMENTS

Take a vertical measurement from the eyes to the bottom of the nose. Pivot this measurement to a horizontal position and mark the front of the eye. From that mark, drop a new plumb line to locate the corner of the mouth. Measure from this mark to the bottom of the nose. Swing this up to determine the width of the eye socket. Drop another plumb line from this point to help place the corner of the mouth.



STEP 6: DETERMINE THE CANON OF THE HEAD

Measure from the tip of the nose to the bottom of the chin. Holding this measurement and keeping one point of the compass on the nose, pivot the measurement so that it is now horizontal. Make a mark. This square unit (marked with a "1"), will serve as a standard unit of measurement for this drawing's canon. The head will be three and a half units wide by three and a half units tall. If you find it difficult to visualize this, use soft vine charcoal to subdivide the box into an actual grid according to these measurements.

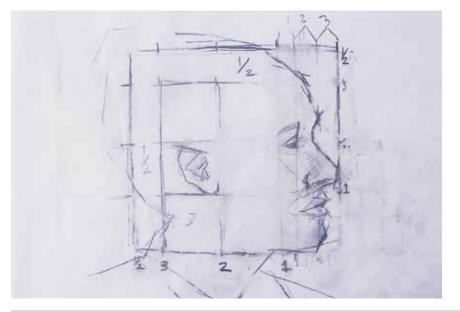


STEP 7: PLACE THE FEATURES

The ear usually fits into the third unit of the middle row (which also happens to be the measurement between the eye and the nose). After placing the ear, divide the first column of units vertically into thirds. Sightmeasure the various features to place them. To sight-measure, choose a measuring tool (pencil, brush handle, chopstick) and then, holding this tool, extend your arm toward the model. Figure out each angle, then draw and transfer each angle. Look for parallel angles and tangents. Compare positive shapes against negative shapes. Use the grid to correctly place all angles, such as the angle from the nostril to the corner of the mouth.

STEP 8: REMOVE THE GRID AND TONE THE PAPER

Reveal the drawing by using a dirty chamois cloth or stump to carefully move the charcoal. This removes the grid while toning the paper.





STEP 9: WORK SUBTRACTIVELY TO ADD VALUE GRADATION

Using the same system of measurement, work subtractively with a pointed kneaded eraser to draw and lift the light shapes. The features and likeness will become more apparent.



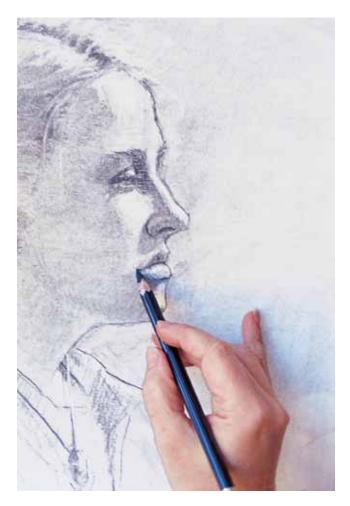
STEP 10: STRENGTHEN THE SHAPE MAP

Using a very large, pointed vine charcoal, strengthen the shape map. Draw the angular planes and outline the profile. With broad strokes, mass in the darker value of the hair.



STEP 11: MASS IN MORE DARK SHAPES

Using a large, pointed vine charcoal, continue massing in the dark shapes. Lay another layer of tone over the top of the midtone and dark values (avoiding the highlights), then distribute the charcoal with a dirty chamois cloth to strengthen the shadows and to darken the background beyond the profile's edge.



STEP 12: ADD THE DETAILS

Work the entire portrait with subtractive drawing, using a kneaded eraser to lift the highlights on the face and in the hair. Add linear work and restate the darks with a small, pointed stick of compressed charcoal. Finally, switch to a hard charcoal pencil to apply fine hatch strokes along the shadow edge of the profile. Look for the interior subtleties of form within the shadow shapes that can be described with a linear, artistic hand.



STEP 13: COMPLETE THE DRAWING

Attend to the details and to the quality of the profile's edge with a hard charcoal pencil. Evaluate the shape map created by the values. Are the darkest elements dark enough? Are the lightest light enough? Correct these values where needed. Immediately fix the drawing with spray fixative to prevent smearing of the fragile vine charcoal.

THE FINISHED PORTRAIT

(next page)

Portraits that exhibit the use of a canon make a strong statement through their constructed appearance, revealing the knowledge and confidence of the artist. The sound construction also provides a beautiful venue to exhibit "the hand of the artist" through expressive detail work, in terms of surface texture, value transitions and line quality.

Practice drawing profiles in vine charcoal using this system of measurement. Use different models and lighting. And make sure to practice drawing the profile in both directions. With practice, you'll internalize the knowledge and be able to visualize without having to draw all of the plumb lines or units of measurement. You will soon be equipped to rapidly draw a profile that is at once accurate and compelling.

PROFILE OF MODEL IN CHARCOAL Charcoal on bond paper



JANVIER ROLLANDE: THE ARTIST'S MAGAZINE Q&A-

The Artist's Magazine: What's the best piece of advice about drawing you've ever received?

Janvier Rollande: It was from one of my professors when I was an undergrad: "Draw from your life, and draw every day."

TAM: Is there anything you do, or any way you work, that other draftsmen would be surprised by?

JR: I never smudge and rarely erase. I don't like how these affect the light and texture of the paper ground. I build tones by layering diagonal lines over and over to get a dark; and I just vary the pressure on the lead to get lighter tones. **TAM:** What would you say is the one thing an artist should keep in mind when beginning a painting?

JR: Trust the impulse that makes your heart beat fast and hold on to it through the difficult task of creating the image.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Janvier Rollande earned a B.F.A. in drawing and a B.A. in art history from the University of New Hampshire, in Durham. She later studied art education and took fine art classes at University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her work is in the collections of The Art Institute of Chicago and the Arkansas Arts Center, in Little Rock, as well as in numerous private collections. Contact the artist at **jrollande@gmail.com**.



JOY THOMAS: THE ARTIST'S MAGAZINE Q&A

The Artist's Magazine: *Is there anything you do, or any way you work, that other artists would find surprising?*

Joy Thomas: I like to sharpen the handle ends of brushes and use the tips to push, scratch, and apply paint.

TAM: *Is there anything that you know now that you wish you knew as a young artist?*

JT: It is better to be a student at an art academy than to be an art major at a liberal arts university.

TAM: What would you say is the one thing an artist should keep in mind when beginning a painting or drawing?

JT: Determine the concept, then make sure to research, learn, explore, and apply the established "elements and principles of art." The elements are line, shape, direction, size, texture, color, and value. The principles are balance, gradation, repetition, contrast, harmony, dominance, and unity. Upon delving into each facet, one soon realizes that a lifetime is simply not enough to master all of the elements and principles, so be prepared to practice, study, look at art, et cetera. If you are lucky, art will become a lifelong quest, more about the process than the product.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Joy Thomas paints portraits, still lifes, and landscapes. She is the author of *The Art of Portrait Drawing* (North Light Books) and has appeared in four DVDs: *Drawing the Clothed Figure; Portrait Drawing: 5-Minute Head Studies; Painting Oil Portraits With a Limited Palette;* and *Classic Pet Portraits: How to Draw a Dog*, all available at www. northlightshop.com. Her paintings have been selected for many juried shows, including ones at the Salmagundi Club and the National Arts Club, both in



New York City. Thomas has painted portraits for leaders of business, finance, and government, including official portraits of the Secretary of the Navy, the Commandant of the Coast Guard, the Governor of Kentucky, and most recently, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce. She also teaches workshops throughout the country. For more information, visit www.portraitartist.com/thomas.



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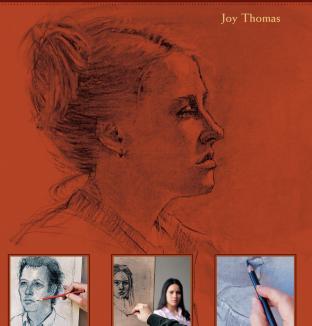
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