



0161 Community - Art at Home Projects

Still Life – Shifting Light

Materials needed – several household objects such as a mug, shells from a holiday, cutlery, crockery, anything interesting to draw, pencil/charcoal, paper.

Step 1 - Morning

Set up a small still life arrangement of two or three objects on a window sill up against the wall. If that isn't possible, use a small table or chair placed beside the window – somewhere you can leave your arrangement undisturbed all day.

Step 2

Make an initial drawing of your still life paying attention to the way the light and shade define the forms. Think about how the light areas and shadows aren't just one flat tone and work at defining the gradations of dark and light. You can do this in pencil, pen, charcoal if you have it, or even paint. Spend as much time as possible before the light changes too much, around two hours is good.

Step 3 - Afternoon

Take a break for a bit and come back to make another drawing once the light has changed. Try to make at least two drawings per day but more is also good. Notice how the light has changed each time and work on showing those changes. The shadows may have moved, the lights may be more or less intense. Compare your drawings at the end of the day and see how different they are.

This exercise can be repeated every day if you want, you'll certainly be making better drawings by the end of a week if you end up drawing for six hours a day!



Morning



Afternoon

Tips

You can make a more accurate drawing by taking measurements with a pencil. Hold it up straight in front of you and use your finger to mark out distances you can compare with other parts of the drawing. To draw a mug for example, mark two points on your paper for the top and bottom of the mug. Take a measurement of the mug as described, then use the same technique to measure the width, moving your thumb to mark that distance whilst keeping a finger in place to show the height. Then compare to your drawing by holding the pencil out at varying distances until your finger measurement matches the height. Now rotate the pencil through 90 degrees and use the thumb position to give you the width.

This website gives a good explanation with images - <https://drawingacademy.com/how-to-measure-with-a-pencil>

Also try to see shadows and highlights as abstract shapes. You can make this easier by either squinting your eyes or taking your glasses off if you wear them. Focus on those big areas before you worry about small details.

Cubist Still Life

Materials needed – objects to draw, pencil/pen/charcoal, paints if you have them, paper, ruler or anything you can use to draw a straight edge. Even the side of a cut up cereal box would work if needed.

Step 1

Set up your still life with at least two or three objects. If you can, either set up near a window that gets good light, or use a desk lamp on one side to give you some good strong shadows and highlights.

Step 2

Using your ruler and only making straight lines, draw your still life. Don't worry about accuracy too much as the straight edge will simplify everything and give it a cubist feel.

Step 3

Once you have a basic outline to work with, start to draw in the shadow shapes and highlights, again using your ruler or straight edge. Think about the shadows and highlights as abstract shapes and try to see the angles they create then follow those with your lines.

Step 4

Shade in your shadow areas and midtones leaving the highlights white. If you have pastels, coloured pencils, crayons or paints you can use those to make the drawing more colourful, if not just use pencil or pen to show the light and shade.

You should end up with an interesting cubist style drawing. Try repeating the experiment with different objects – or, for a real challenge, use this technique to draw a portrait of yourself in a mirror, or a family member.



Junk Sculpture

(This one is particularly fun to do with younger family members such as children or grandchildren.)

Materials needed – recyclables i.e. toilet rolls, empty boxes, clean tins with no sharp edges. DO NOT use glass. Pencils and paper if wanted.

Step 1

Gather together some basic recyclable materials – anything that is clean and safe to use.

Step 2

Using the junk materials, try to build the tallest and strongest structure you can. Think about how best to balance the different objects to achieve your goal, about how the weight is distributed and about how stability can be achieved. If there are several of you at home, make it into a challenge to see who can build the best structure. Once you've done one you can take it apart and try to build another one that's even better, taller or stronger.

Step 3

Once you have a structure you like, try making drawings of it. You can treat it as just a series of abstract shapes or you can choose to see it as something else – an architectural model for a huge modern building, parts of an engine or a large, metal abstract sculpture. Try drawing some small figures around it for scale, or setting it in a landscape.

Draw it from different angles and see what difference that makes to what it could be imagined to be.



Window Gazing Sketching

Materials needed – paper and pencil

Step 1

Find a comfortable seat by the window and get yourself a piece of paper and a pencil- easy.

Step 2

Draw what you see. The beauty of this is that everyone's view out the window is unique – maybe you have trees and fields and hills to create a landscape, maybe a row of houses opposite that would make a lovely Lowry like street scene. Whatever is out there, this is about making it work for you.

Think about the perspective, the way things get smaller and lighter looking in the distance and how building's horizontal planes slope towards the horizon. Think about the people that pass by, try to remember how they look and add them into your scene. Consider the shapes of the clouds in the sky and add them into the picture.

Try doing a few drawings – one that's sketchy and only takes 10mins, one that's very detailed and takes two hours, or try swapping format, doing a few as landscapes and a few as portraits. Move the horizon up to give the foreground more prominence or drop it down to make the sky and background dominate. See how many variations you can get just sitting with a pencil and paper and gazing out of the window.



Famous Faces

Materials needed - A good film or TV show, pencil, paper

Step 1

Put on a good film or TV show – I try to find something that's a bit interesting or colourful that has plenty of dramatic lighting. Period dramas are also good for this.

Step 2

Look out for good scenes to draw. This could be a close up of a face where you can really see lots of details, a middle distance shot where you can show a few people interacting, or a wide shot where you get the chance to draw lots of different figures or a few in a large space.

At this point you can either pause and get drawing right away, or take note of what time in your film it happens and go back to it at the end. You can even combine the two, pausing the film or TV show to make a quick sketch, then coming back to your favourite sketches/scenes at the end and making a more in depth drawing.

Moving Targets

This is another one to do whilst watching TV or looking out the window if there happen to be people around.

Materials – Pencil/pen and paper

Step 1

Find a TV programme or film where there will be lots of characters moving or walking around in scenes. Grab a pencil and paper and get ready to pay close attention!

Step 2

While watching people move around on screen, make quick, simple drawings of them. Don't worry about accuracy or getting a likeness – you won't! Instead, think about how the figures are moving and how best to show that in your drawing with as few lines as possible.

If you make a mistake, don't worry, there will be another person along in a second to draw so you can try again. If you want to do some more in depth drawings you can always pause the show or come back to a scene at the end.

Tips

Gesture drawing can take some time to get used to. Here's a great explanation of what it is and how it works - <https://drawpaintacademy.com/gesture-drawing/>

If you're interested in doing some more specialised practice then try this website - <https://quickposes.com/en/gestures/timed> they show you a series of images to draw in a set time period. You can choose the subject, whether figures will be clothed or not and how long they'll stay on screen for. It's like a life drawing class in your own home.

Collage

This is another one that's fun for younger family members to help with.

Materials needed – pen, paper, glue (you can make your own if needed – see <https://www.instructables.com/id/Make-your-own-glue/>) old newspapers, magazines, junk mail etc.

Step 1

Choose a subject. This could be a still life, portrait (from life or a photo) or the scene outside your window.

Step 2

Make a simple line drawing that describes the forms you're looking at plus the shadows and highlights on them

Step 3

Tear or cut your paper scraps to size then stick them down to show the colours and tones you see in your subject. You could find red and orange parts of pictures or adverts to be bricks in a wall, or use blocks of text as shading. Be as creative as possible and don't forget that there are no real rules – you can go back and draw over what you've done if you need/want to.





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