

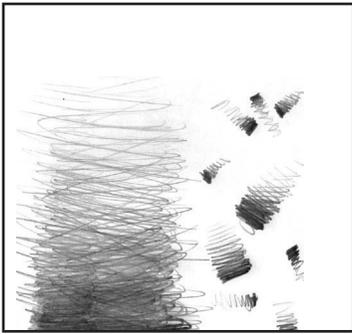


Warm-Up Seven: The Scale of Light

Time involved: 20 minutes

Materials: A piece of paper and a 4B pencil

So far we've been working with lines, directions, intersections, patterns and constellations to place our subject (whatever it is) onto our paper. Now it is time to talk about values, specifically the scale of light and dark and millions of shades of gray in between. Artists use the full scale of light to express depth, movement, variety, drama, balance and more. Now you will learn how to bring light and dark together to create believable forms and to move the viewers eyes around your drawing. Light and dark collide to create high contrast. Light and dark transition gently to create low contrast. High contrast areas (collisions) indicate sharp edges close up while low contrast areas (transitions) indicate round surfaces and distance. As you master the scale of light, your drawings will express emotional drama, movement, energy!



The Scale of Light Exercise

1. Press your 4B pencil firmly on your paper making heavy, smooth black strokes. Gradually lighten the pressure until you blend ever so delicately into the white of the paper. You are making little tornados at first concentrating on smooth transitions from blackest black to whitest white. There is a skill in making a smoothly blended scale of light.
2. Make another scale somewhere else on your paper. And another. And another. After 5 minutes stand back and look at your drawing. Ask 3 questions: 1) Did you use the full spectrum of black to white in each scale? 2) Are the scales smoothly blended? 3) Is your black really black? If not go back and make it so.
3. Now change focus. Look and see if you can make some of your scales thicker, thinner, longer, wider, curving or straighter. Open up your imagination to the idea of light flowing through your hand and pencil onto the paper into these shapes. Allow intuition to guide your hand. Fill your paper with many variously shaped scales of light.
4. Now change your focus again. Focus on the empty white areas in between the scales. Look for areas that are beginning to take on the appearance of shapes. The background can become the foreground. Negative space becomes positive space. Use the scale of light to tone around and away from one or two sides of a white space. Press firmly on the edge of a white space, gradually lifting as you move away from it.
5. Stand back and look. Do you have several areas of HIGH contrast? LOW contrast? Are there some positive and some negative shapes and spaces? Good!
6. You have just completed an abstract pencil drawing. You can apply this skill of making the scale of light with your 4B pencil to any representational drawing.

That's it! Come back and do this exercise again and again. See pages 47-52 of my book, "Drawing as a Sacred Activity" for more about this exercise.

Final Note: One further idea that might bear fruit for you is to journal for a few minutes about the range of emotions in your life. Emotions are so important in living fully and creatively, yet sometimes they can cause problems. Might it be a good idea to express difficult, conflicted emotions safely on paper rather than blowing up at another person?