Drawing

Realistic drawing is fundamental to art. It is teachable and helps the brain do visual processing.

Break drawing down into these visual skills:

* 1. Seeing line
  2. Seeing Spaces
  3. Seeing Proportions
  4. Seeing Perspective
  5. Seeing Values

Teaching **Line**:

Create an “Alphabet of Line” (Brooks,) which includes straight lines, angles, curved line, circles (round shapes), and dots (filled in circles).

Introduce the alphabet and create an abstract design using it. Discuss using color well and making the picture intentional. Copy a simple drawing using the alphabet – this helps students break down the picture into its parts. Maybe they can’t draw giraffes, but they can draw the lines, curved and straight, the angles, circles, and dots that make up the giraffe picture.

After using the alphabet of line to break down pictures, begin the “picture plane,” a tool from *Drawing on the Right Side.*  This is a clear piece of plastic or glass, framed and with cross-hairs across the middle. Hold it up in front of your subject (one object) and trace that onto the glass with a dry erase marker. Put the picture plane on a white surface and draw cross-hairs on the drawing paper. Copy one quadrant at a time until the picture is complete.

Other ideas for line: upside-down drawing (Edwards, p. 52-55), blind contour drawing, semi-blind contour drawing

Move to negative **Space** – Show a drawing with negative spaces, point out the spaces, and talk about them. If this drawing is on a transparency, cover it with a paper and the negative space should shine through. Cover the largest negative space with another paper, and then the next two spaces with another paper, until only one negative space shows. Draw that space. Then draw the next two spaces. Try part of the largest space, and keep adding to it until the drawing is finished. Use the picture plane to frame a common object, pay attention to negative spaces, and trace it on the picture plane. Copy the negative spaces to your paper (Glick).

**Proportion**s are next. Think of comparisons. Use the Basic Unit from *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain.* Compare everything in a picture to one fixed part of the picture, the Basic Unit. For example, draw faces and use the eye as the basic unit. Measure how many eyes it is to the top of the head from the eye, to the bottom of the head, to the back of the ear, etc.

The next step is **Perspective**. Landscapes work well here. Use the picture plane again and draw slanted lines.

**Value** – For younger students, go outside and notice where the sun is shining and where there are shadows. Go around the building to see the changes. Go in a closet and shine a light on a ball to see the light and shadows. Draw a still life to help in seeing values. Draw lines dividing it into three values – Highlight, Mid-ground, and Dark. Use three colors that are adjacent on the color wheel to color the three values. This can be expanded into five, or more, values, but it is helpful to find the darkest and lightest spots and then realize that all other values fit in between them. (Gair, p. 19-20)

This introduces each of the Five Ways of Seeing. These are then reviewed until the students are comfortable with each and can use each one when it is called for. This should be used along with teaching of great art works. Find an example of the concept being taught, introduce that concept, and then show it in the artist’s work.

Sources:

*Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain,* by Betty Edwards, 1989, Putnam Publishing Group

*Drawing with Children,* by Mona Brookes, 1996, the Penguin Group

Julie Glick, art teacher, email correspondence, 2016

*Secrets to Drawing Realistic Faces,* by Carrie Stuart Parks, 2003, North Light Books

*Tonal Values: How to See Them, How to Paint Them,* by Angela Gair, 1992, North Light Books

These drawing lessons written up by Arlene Birt using the sources listed above.