

# 8

## DRAWING AND IMAGINATION

**JOINING TWO BAGS • CREATIVE  
PLAYING • MAKING THE FAMILIAR  
STRANGE • WORKING IN SEQUENCE •  
DRAWING ON DIVERSE SOURCES •  
EXPLORING THEMES**

"The mind," wrote surgeon and philosopher Wilfred Trotter, "likes a strange idea as little as the body likes a strange protein and resists it with similar energy. If we watch ourselves honestly, we shall find that we have begun to argue against a new idea even before it has been completely stated."

Notice that Trotter doesn't say we don't have strange ideas — merely that we resist them. Poets, musicians, scientists, artists — in fact, all of us — have enriched our lives from time to time with strange ideas. It was a strange idea for Einstein to imagine he was riding a beam of light away from the clock tower in Berne, Switzerland, which led to the theory of relativity. It was a strange idea for the Impressionists to imagine they were painting bits of pure light with each brush stroke. Franz Kafka's fantasizing in "Metamorphosis" what it would be like to wake up as an insect was more than a little strange. Then there was Buddha's "realization" that our concepts of reality are largely based on illusion.

If we examine each of these "strange ideas," we quickly realize that all are quite simple. None required "genius" to imagine. Each and every one of us has fantasized in similar fashion. None of us need ever fear that we don't have an active imagination, because imagination is mostly a willingness to entertain a strange idea now and then.

For now, let's not make any distinctions between fantasies, daydreams, dreams, free association, creative thoughts, and strange ideas. Let's agree that they are all mental grist for our creative mill, and let's also agree to put them all under the one heading, "imagination."



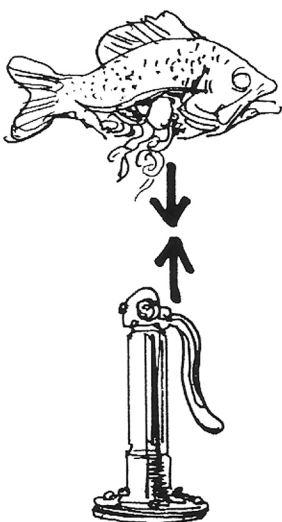
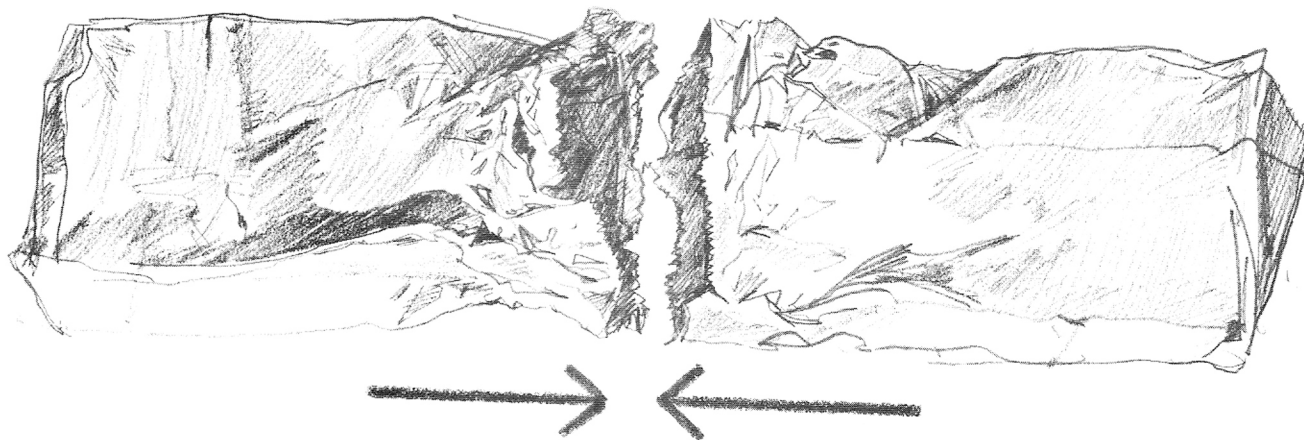
By definition, everyone has imagination. More to the point, how can the imagination help us in drawing? A clue might be found in Steven Guarnaccia's drawing, *Happy Birthday*. With the addition of a little airplane, the birthday cake becomes huge, even monumental. It also becomes humorous and provocative. The artist's "strange idea" in this case comes from playing with scale and with the way pastry writing resembles skywriting.

## Joining two bags

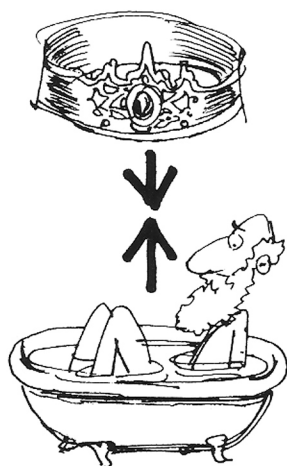
Every creative thought, imagining, or strange idea involves putting together at least two elements in a novel way. We can think of it as taking a bag containing one idea and joining it to a bag containing a completely unrelated idea. A "strange idea" inevitably results.

Obvious to us now, the idea that the heart acts as a





Harvey's idea of blood circulation.



Archimedes' idea of displacement theory.

pump was a novel one to the Western world in the seventeenth century. Various thought of as the soul, the seat of emotions, and the generator for new blood, the heart's true function was understood by William Harvey only after examining the pulsating heart of a fish. Harvey's "strange idea" was his recognition of the similarities between this throbbing organ and the action of a mechanical water pump. In his mind, he put together a bag marked "fish heart" with a bag marked "water pump" and, *Eureka* — he found a truth.

Robert Louis Stevenson's interest in writing a story about the struggle between good and evil in each of us provides another example. He had a dream about a man who was chased by police, and drank a potion which changed his identity. On waking, Stevenson put together the bag marked "good and evil" with the bag marked "identity potion," and he wrote *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

You may recall one of the most famous "strange ideas" of all. Given a beautifully ornate crown, the King of Syracuse asked Archimedes to ascertain if the crown was indeed made of gold as the donor claimed. The only way of determining gold content was by comparative weight. However, that would necessitate melting the crown down to a lump equal to the gold weights on hand — a method unacceptable to the king. Archimedes pondered this problem while stepping into his bath. As the water rose, he realized that the volume of water he displaced was equal to his own, and thus he had the mechanism for measuring the volume of the crown. He put the bag marked "crown of gold" together with the bag marked "bath water displacement." The two seemingly unrelated ideas yielded important creative results. Some accounts have it that he ran naked through the streets shouting, "Eureka! I found it!"

## Creative play

The spirit of creative play is the spirit of "joining two bags." It requires a loose and friendly attitude.

I drew this dead crab on the beach with no particular "idea" in mind. As I drew, I began to see more clearly its human-like face. This prompted another sketch in which the face became more prominent. The old, angry features began to take on more life for me, and I could sense how the word "crab" came to be applied to an embittered, aged person.

I made a separate study of just the face, giving it even more human-like qualities. The three drawings became a process of discovery. I had not started out to emphasize the human-like face. The idea began to grow on me as I drew. I



*A playful attitude helps you make connections between separate things.*



was merely ready to be affected by what I saw, hence the joining of the "crab bag" with the "old person's face bag."

Incidentally, sketchbook drawing provides the best vehicle for creative play. Free of the pressures of serious work, the sketchbook will provide a record of your private thoughts and observations. At these moments, creative play is the most active.

The mountains of Monserrat in northeastern Spain are striking in their verticality and large rounded forms. As with the crab, I began to see human resemblances as I drew them. Heads, shoulders, breasts — the mountains became female forms to an uncanny degree.

English tombs and caskets of deceased knights, ladies, and nobles were frequently decorated with the owner's effigy. I drew a few of these and then thought how odd it would be if this custom were still observed. I pictured the effigies of businessmen in three-piece suits, and I drew a tourist standing nearby as if he adorned his own casket. A morbid idea perhaps, but one animated by a spirit of play.



*Monserrat Mountains and female forms.*

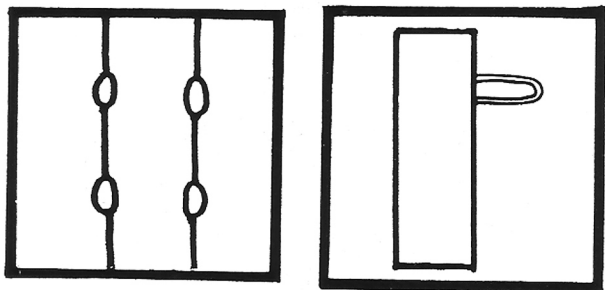


*Old English tombs and modern effigy.*

The drawing of Laurel and Hardy below was done in a wax museum. The actual figures, while closely resembling the two comedians, also had a strong, waxy quality which I began to emphasize as I got into the drawing. I ended up drawing them as if they were soft and beginning to melt.

It's important to realize that such ideas grow out of an *experimental* attitude. Often they will occur to you *as you draw*, not before. By being curious about your subject and refusing to be too "result oriented," you obtain the best results. A sense of humor helps, too.





*Doodles: Commonplace symbols in odd situations.*

Reprinted from *Doodles* by permission of Price/Stern/Sloan Publishers, Inc., Los Angeles.

## Making the familiar strange

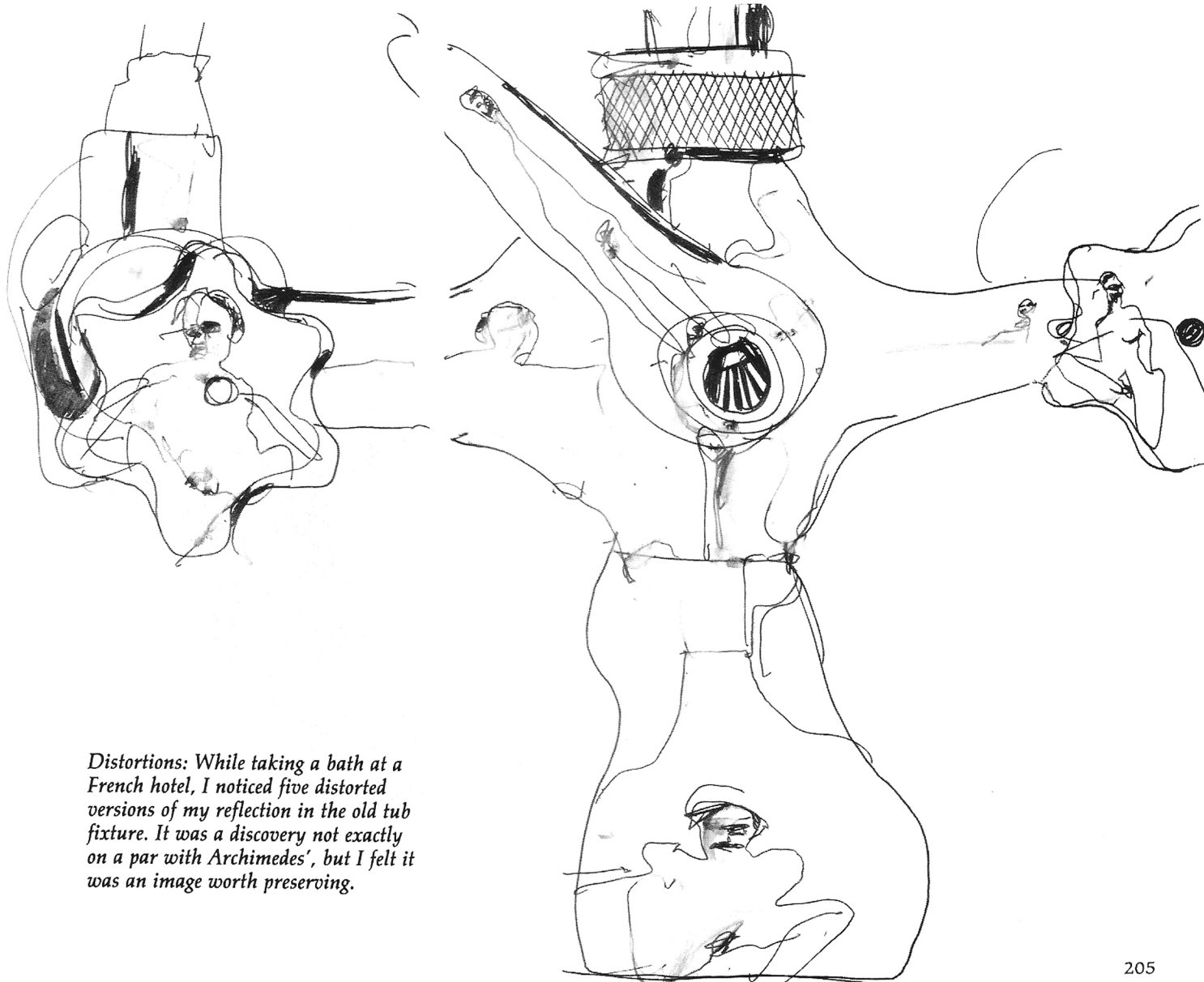
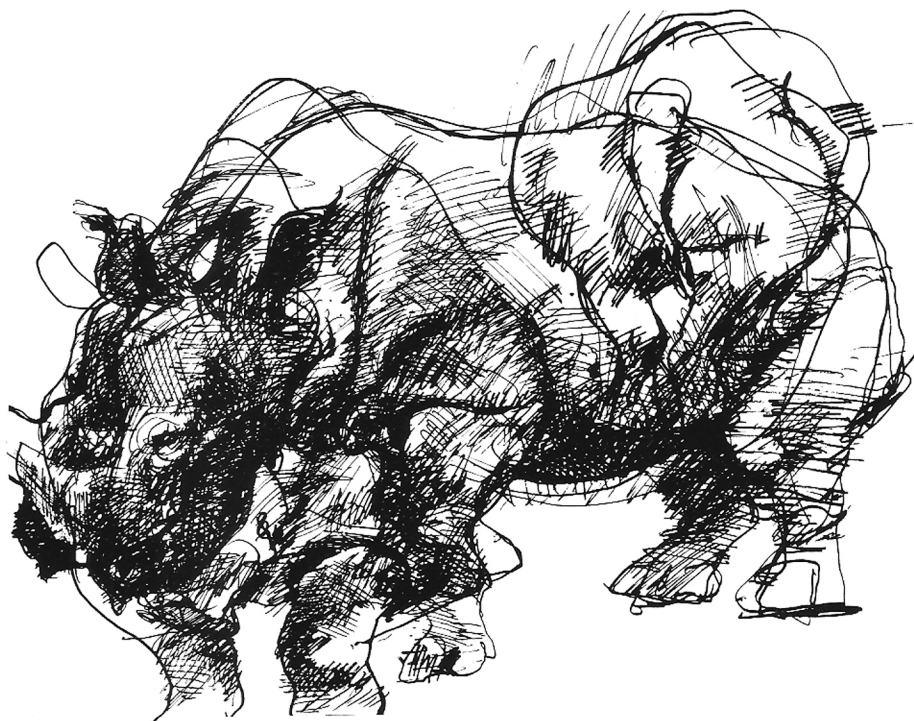
Cartoonist Roger Price invented an art form called the "Doodle", which looks at commonplace things in unusual ways. As he put it, "A Doodle is a sort of drawing that doesn't make any sense until you know the correct title." Price often achieves his effect by looking at something from an unorthodox angle, say, from directly above. At other times, he puts elements together in odd or absurd combinations. The two Doodles above are titled "Bear Climbing a Tree" and "Man Playing Trombone in a Phone Booth." The alternative title to the second Doodle is found by turning the drawing upside down. In that case, it is titled, "Midget Playing a Trombone in a Phone Booth." If you turn the picture on its side counterclockwise, it is subject to a third interpretation: "Deceased Trombone Player." Price claims that Doodles are the greatest invention since the coloring for margarine. I agree. They remind us of the creative possibilities in mixing a playful spirit with an unorthodox point of view.

Anything that makes us see reality in a fresh or unusual way, reawakens our eyes. Odd tangents, overlapping forms, and distorted reflections are but a part of our daily experience with visual strangeness. Making the familiar strange means being alert to such phenomena. It requires three things: luck, nerve, and a little faith in process. People who think you can't do anything about luck are wrong. You can improve your luck by one simple act — carrying a sketchbook. Even when you don't use it, it makes you look at things more intently as possible subject matter. Nerve only requires an irreverent attitude about results. If you don't really care how the drawing turns out, you'll try anything. My sketchbooks are as filled with little fragments that never materialized as they are with completed drawings. Faith in process simply means you don't have to know where you're going when you set out. Each of these three sketchbook studies was started in just such a relaxed and accepting mood.



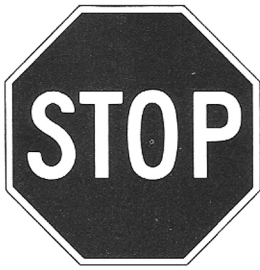
*Tangents: A visual coincidence. I originally intended to put in the rest of the tree trunk and the chair, but the merged man and tree had such an organic feel that I deliberately played it this way instead.*

*Multiple images: Strangeness often grows out of process. As this rhinoceros moved around, I just continued drawing, letting the images accumulate.*



*Distortions: While taking a bath at a French hotel, I noticed five distorted versions of my reflection in the old tub fixture. It was a discovery not exactly on a par with Archimedes', but I felt it was an image worth preserving.*





*Stop sign: It means only one thing.*



*Inkblot: It means whatever you think it means.*

## The stop sign and the ink blot

A red and white hexagonal sign with the word STOP on it means only one thing, and automobile drivers across the United States know what that is. The Rorschach "inkblot" used in psychological testing, however, is another matter. It means whatever the viewer thinks it means.

The stop sign and the inkblot are twin aspects of communication in art. Objects realistically rendered to the last detail are examples of stop sign communication in that nothing is left to the viewer's imagination. Objects partially obscured, distorted, or suggested possess inkblot qualities where viewer participation is required.

Most of our training in communications has been of the stop sign variety. "Be rational, be logical, explain yourself clearly." These were our early messages. The elusive, the metaphorical, and the incomplete were not thought of as communication skills. It's ironic that we haven't legitimized these forms when they provide us with some of our most intriguing experiences.

You drive along a highway and see a small object on the road ahead. You experience that momentary jolt of uneasiness, thinking perhaps it's a dead animal. You realize as you get closer, that the object is only a battered, corrugated box. A coat that looks like a human figure in a darkened room, the gnarled tree root that suggests an old man's hand, these are inkblot experiences, suggesting as much as they reveal.

An appreciation of the value of inkblot communication is part of the fun of being an artist. ("Hey, I don't have to explain this. I'm an artist.") Art actually happens somewhere in the space between clarity and ambiguity, concept and intuition, thought and feeling. Usually, you have to bring your audience "into your tent" first by making something clear and recognizable to them. Once inside however, they are eager to

*Cohesive and objective: A drawing of Moroccan musicians, emphasizing details of dress and instruments.*



participate with you in being tantalized, intrigued, and left to their own interpretations. In the following poem by Ira Ginsberg we catch this mixture of specific, recognizable imagery and tantalizing, mysterious overtones.

Many of the ideas we've discussed previously — such as individualization, focusing, controlling, sighting, and articulating — contribute to stop sign drawing; while restating, shape merging, suggesting, intensifying, and straddling, as well as the keys in this chapter, all contribute to inkblot drawing.

The two drawings of musical groups on these pages illustrate a slight drift from a stop sign drawing to an inkblot drawing. In the drawing of the Moroccans at left, I tried to indicate as clearly as I could (in the short time available) the type of dress, musical instruments, and ethnic mixture of this interesting assembly. The other drawing is of a wedding band in the Montmartre section of Paris. Here I wanted a more vague, loose feeling. Some areas are left undone, details omitted, and proportions are intensified.

I don't say that one is better than the other, but in our culture, the stop sign mentality is strongly reinforced, often to the detriment of the inkblot. I push the inkblot as an antidote to our "too literal" view of things.

*Disconnected and ambiguous: A drawing of a Parisian wedding band, emphasizing the mismatch of musical types.*

## THE BOX

by  
Ira Ginsberg

There is a brown cardboard box  
in the basement:  
water-stained,  
torn,  
and rather tenuously tied  
with tattered twine.

The box holds something precious,  
I am sure,  
but I can't remember what,  
though an inventory,  
hurriedly scrawled upon a side  
long ago,  
should tell me  
all there is to know.

I might open it of course,  
and would,  
could it withstand one more untying;  
and were it certain  
I'd not find  
the box was lying.

© 1984 by Ira Ginsberg







*A man and a monument: Random play with sizes and shapes.*



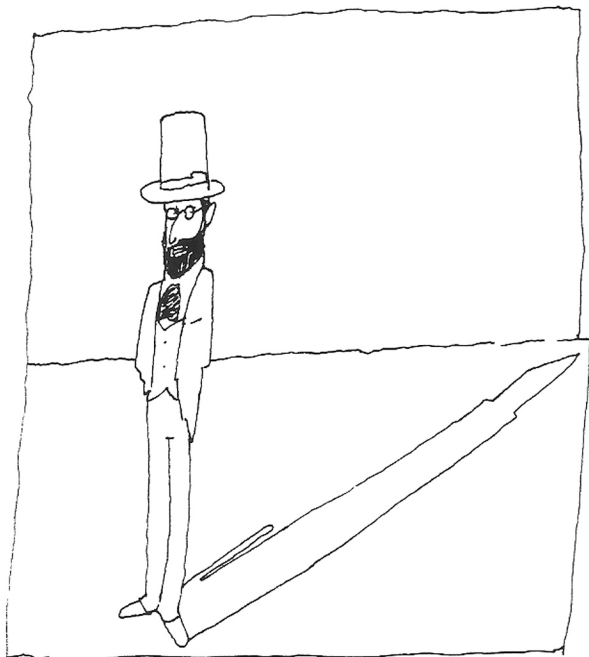
## Working in sequence

The imagination is never stifled for lack of raw materials. There are enough ideas, images, symbols, and experiences in your head already to work with for a lifetime. It's a little like having a car with an unpredictable battery, though. Sometimes you get in and it starts right up. Other times, especially if it has been sitting idle for awhile, you turn the key and nothing happens.

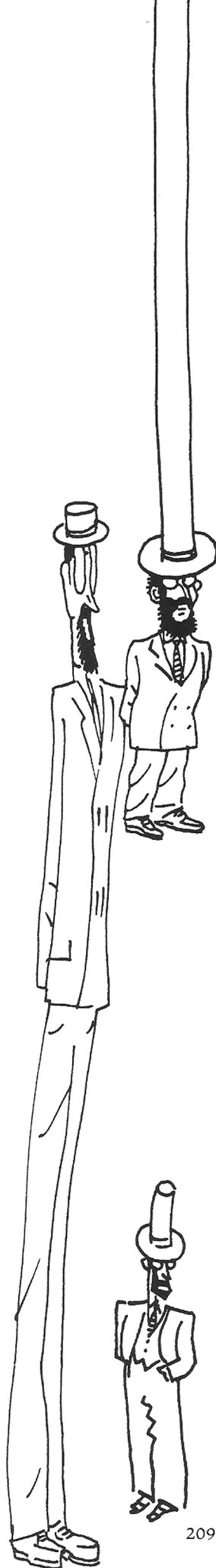
One method for getting a charge on those slow starting days is to work in sequence. Rather than do one drawing, plan to do a series of three or four. Choose a subject and alter it incrementally for each subsequent drawing. If I choose a tube of toothpaste, I will draw it, squeeze some toothpaste out into a jar, draw the tube again, roll the bottom up, and draw it a third time. A tube of toothpaste gains character as it is used up — just like the rest of us. The increased angular wrinkles, the distortion of letters on the label, and the rolled up end can transform a commonplace manufactured item into something with a personality. Documenting that transformation can be the basis for a series.

Another simple object/sequence idea is to draw the same subject matter in different situations. You might draw a hat on a chair with the light and breezy quality of a Palm Beach hotel lobby. Next, possibly with a change of hats, you might do something sinister with dark tones and disappearing edges. You might substitute a tattered chair, include a backdrop of florid wallpaper, or insert a handwritten note, to convey a different mood.

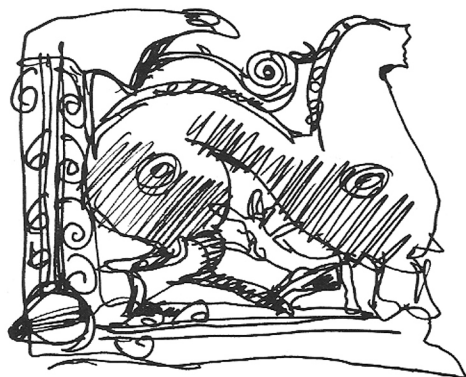
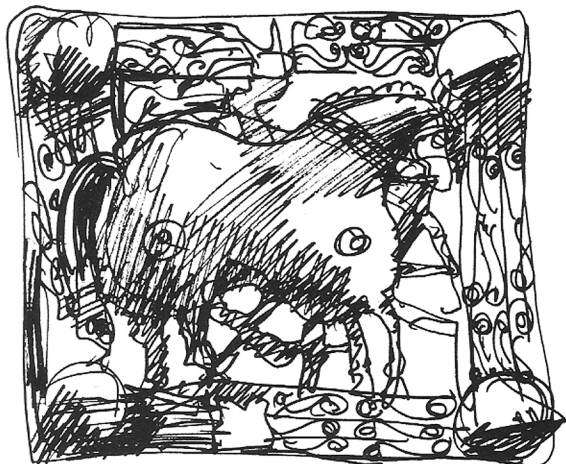
Imagination cannot be forced, it must be coaxed. Working in sequence removes the pressure that can paralyze you on a single drawing by breaking down the problem into increments. After drawing the same basic subject a time or two, your mind is freer to experiment a little. As Dr. Edwin Land, inventor of the Polaroid camera wrote, "True creativity is characterized by a succession of acts, each dependent on the one before and suggesting the one after." Working in sequence places you squarely in this continuum and provides your imagination with a structure and direction in which to begin moving. Each drawing leads to further discoveries that can be applied to the next drawing.



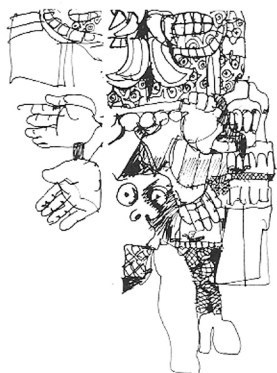
*A drawing by a friend . . .*



*. . . is the basis for Steve Guarnaccia's play with body length and hat sizes.*



Sixth century Anatolian pendants . . .



. . . with a thirteenth century Aztec sculpture . . .



. . . combine as sources for an experimental drawing

## Using sources

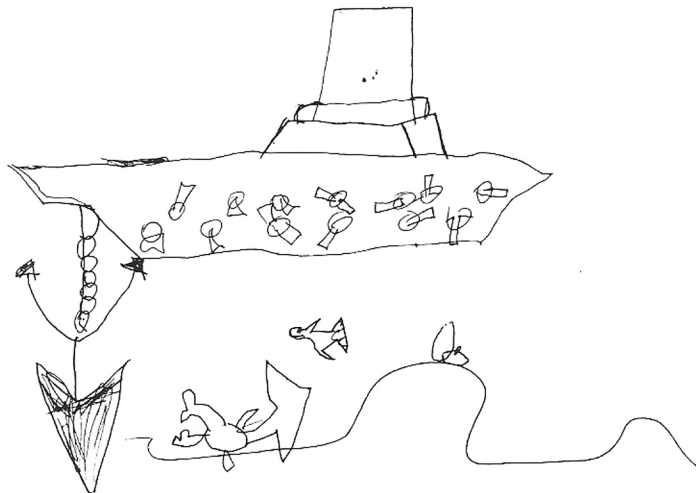
Nothing is wholly original. All anyone ever does is put together new combinations. Once you realize this, you can get right to work, sketching, copying and *combining* the things that interest you. Your sources can be profound or trivial. Remember that Freud got the idea for sublimation from a magazine cartoon and Fleming discovered penicillin when mucus from his nose dripped into a petrie dish.

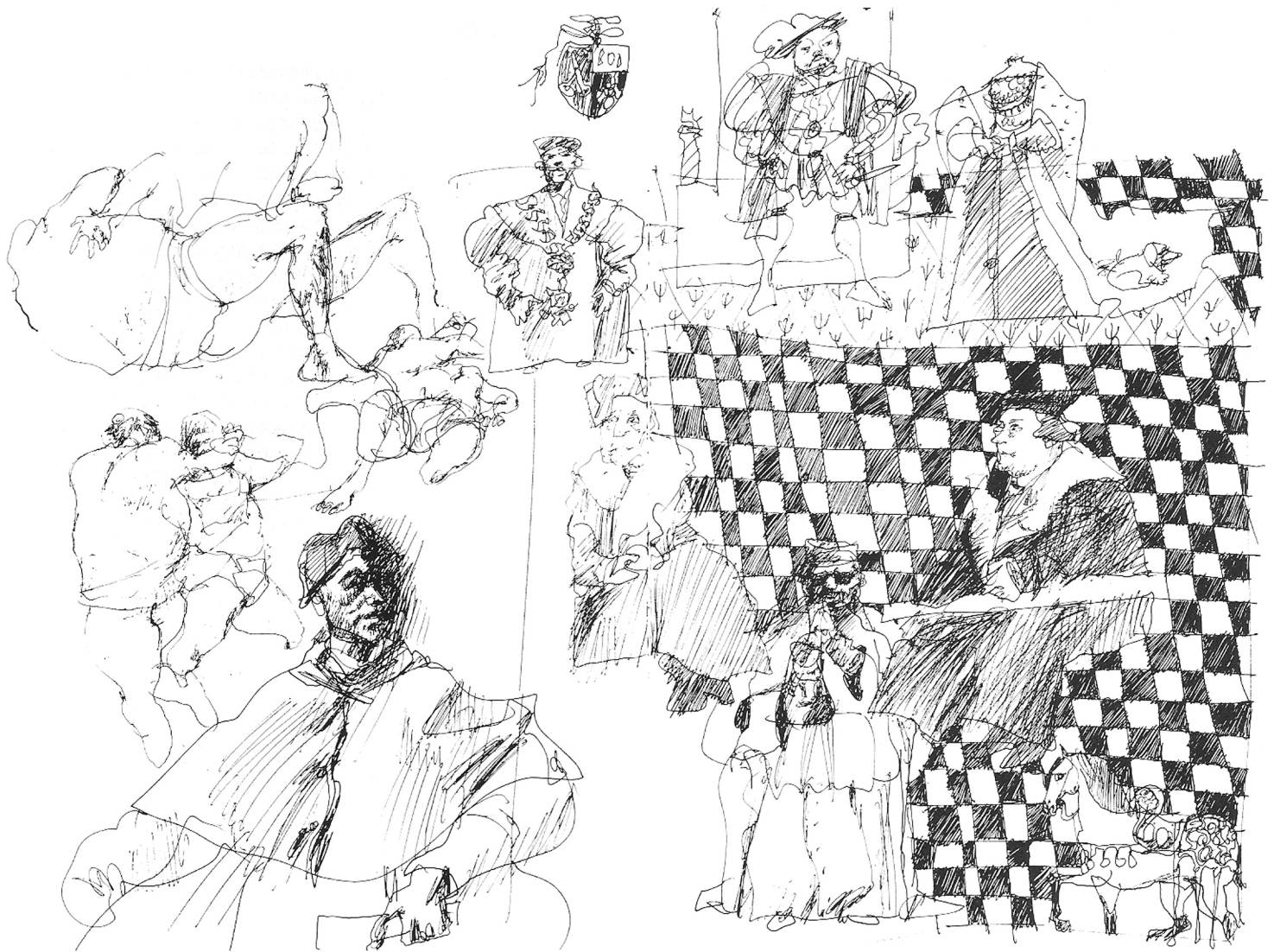
Inspiration should be as diverse as your experience and interests. Mine have been art, history, and movies, so I've connected these elements in illustrative and personal ways. At the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I sketched the Anatolian pendants at left. I liked the cut-out negative shapes and the way they decoratively link up to the center animal. Another people with a lively shape consciousness were the pre-Columbians. I drew this Aztec goddess — Coatlicue, goddess of the earth and creator of man, patron of life and death — in the Mexican National Museum. I loved the creative combination of human and nonhuman animal forms. Now, from time to time, I experiment with little drawings like the one at bottom left, combining the cut-off shapes of the Anatolians with the anatomical experimentation of the Aztecs.

I made a drawing of Henry VIII after reading a book on the history of the Tudors. I began somewhat randomly with some imaginary drawings of the king and one of his beheaded wives. I then began surrounding him with some of the pivotal figures in his life. I copied two of my favorite portraits, Sebastiano del Piombo's portrait of Clement VII (the Pope who refused to grant Henry a divorce) and Hans Holbein's portrait of Thomas Moore (the man for all seasons who was beheaded for his silence on the matter). The wrestling figures along the side represent vague memories of an old Charles Laughton movie, *The Life of Henry the Eighth*.

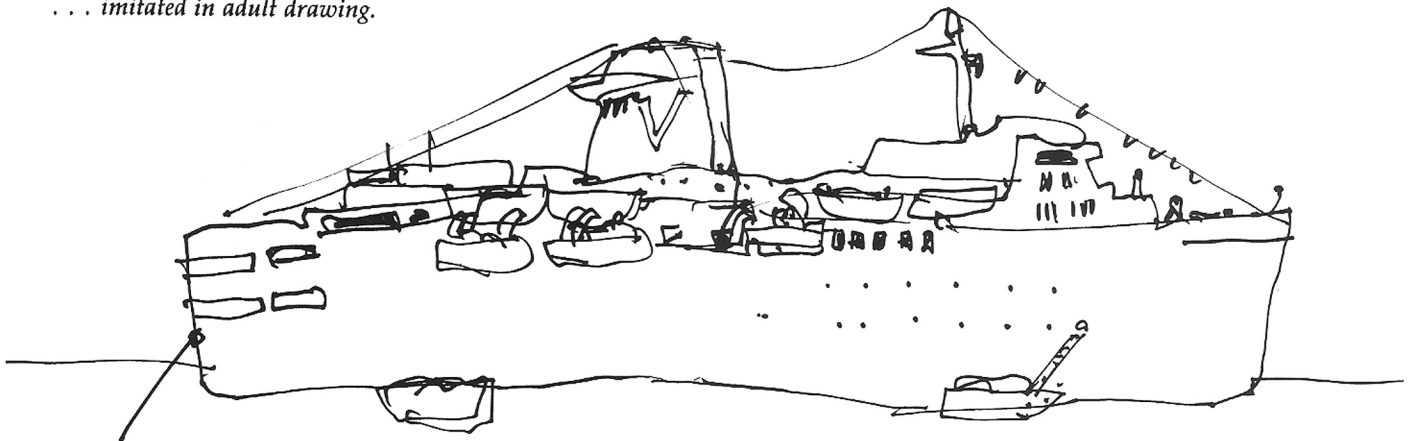
When my son was a small child, I used to emulate his drawing style in an attempt to get his boldness and assertiveness into my own handwriting. I found that when I drew the way he did, I actually felt freer and more open. Now I deliberately shift to this mode when I feel I'm getting too cautious or timid in my work.

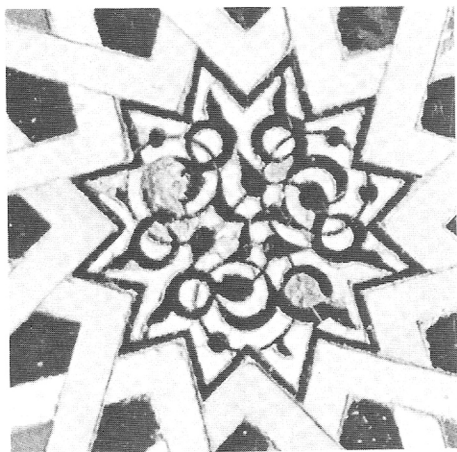
Childlike handwriting qualities . . .





*... imitated in adult drawing.*





*Decorative tiles and lattice-work from the Alhambra, a Moorish palace in Spain.*

## Integrating personal experience

Part of your job as an artist is to intensify your connection with your subject and to break down the distance between you and what you draw. This means sticking your neck out a bit and drawing things with which you have an intimate relationship, transforming personal experience to reveal something of your true self. I am talking about making some lifetime longing or hidden fear the subject of your drawing. You might deal with your attitude toward your body, or toward death, your family, your home, your friends, or your past. This can be exhilarating and scary at the same time. Imagine returning to your old neighborhood and drawing the house you lived in as a small child, standing before a mirror and drawing your naked body, collecting together and drawing some objects that remind you of someone that you have lost. If you've always feared being alone, imagine expressing that fear in a drawing, perhaps doing a series of empty rooms. This kind of relationship with your subject is several steps beyond any we've discussed so far. It means playing for higher stakes and making yourself more vulnerable. It means taking more responsibility and more credit for being an artist than you may be used to. It means admitting to yourself that you might be more of an artist than you've dared acknowledge. This can be a very empowering experience, but it's also risky.

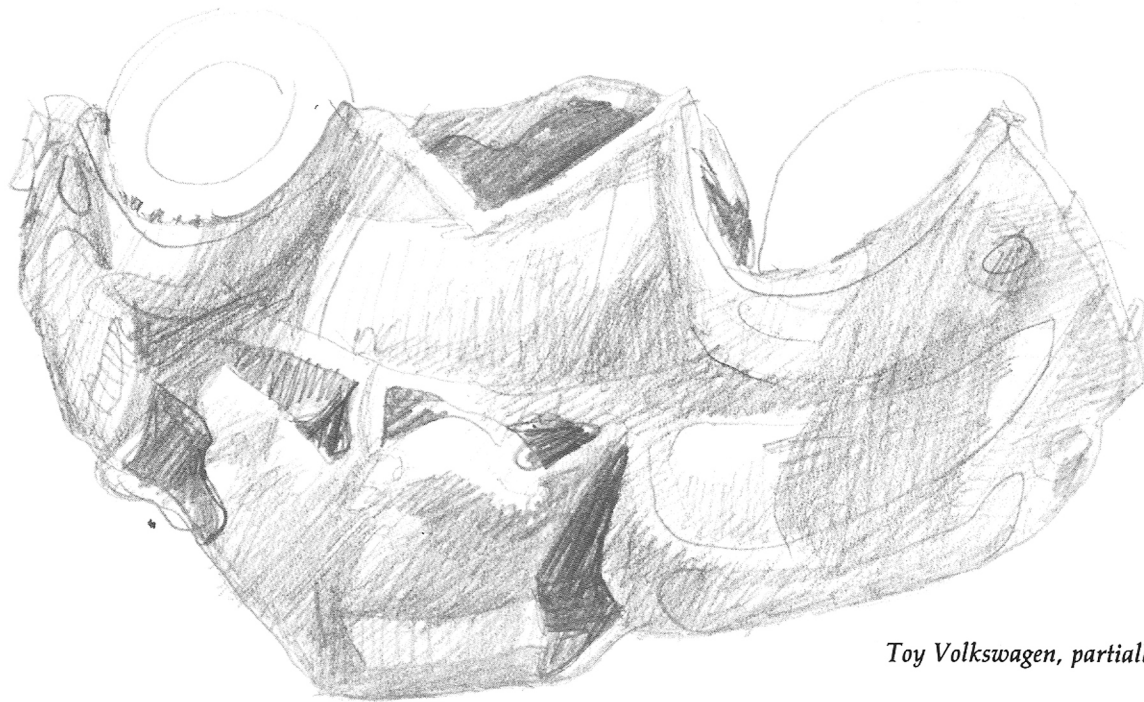


*Illustration for The Rubaiyat.*



What if people don't like what you draw? What if your ideas seem shallow and obvious? What if you're really not much of an artist anyway and this is going to prove it? If critical dialogue like that emerges, I hope you've learned to control it by now. Maybe with your added sense of craft and control, you have more confidence in yourself. Maybe drawing has already helped you get in touch with deep feelings and now you're ready to risk more.

Some years ago, I suffered a severe automobile accident which left me with permanent injuries. During my long recovery period, I went over and over it. I felt profoundly changed, more emotionally than physically. I obsessively asked the question, "Why me?" Through drawing, I was able to turn much of my despair into creative energy. I drew my back brace, I drew my x-rays, I made imaginary drawings of people who were injured. When I found my young son's toy Volkswagen partially melted in the back seat of our car, I made numerous studies of it because it reminded me of the accident.



*Toy Volkswagen, partially melted.*

During a year in southern Spain, I read and reread Omar Khayyám's *Rubaiyat*, the epic poem about life, death, and fate. I made a series of drawings, putting together the verses of the poem with the decorative tile, wrought iron, and fabric motifs of the region.

The drawing at left illustrates some of its best known lines:

The Moving Finger Writes; and, having writ,  
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

The realism and acceptance of this poem comforted me, and it was a rich source of artistic inspiration as well.



*Snapshot*



*Initial sketch*

*Final drawing: Gary Hamel's drawing was done from an old family photo. One enjoyable feature of this work is the way Hamel incorporated the blurred, awkward aspects of the snapshot. The dog seems unreal, almost other-worldly, in this arresting piece.*

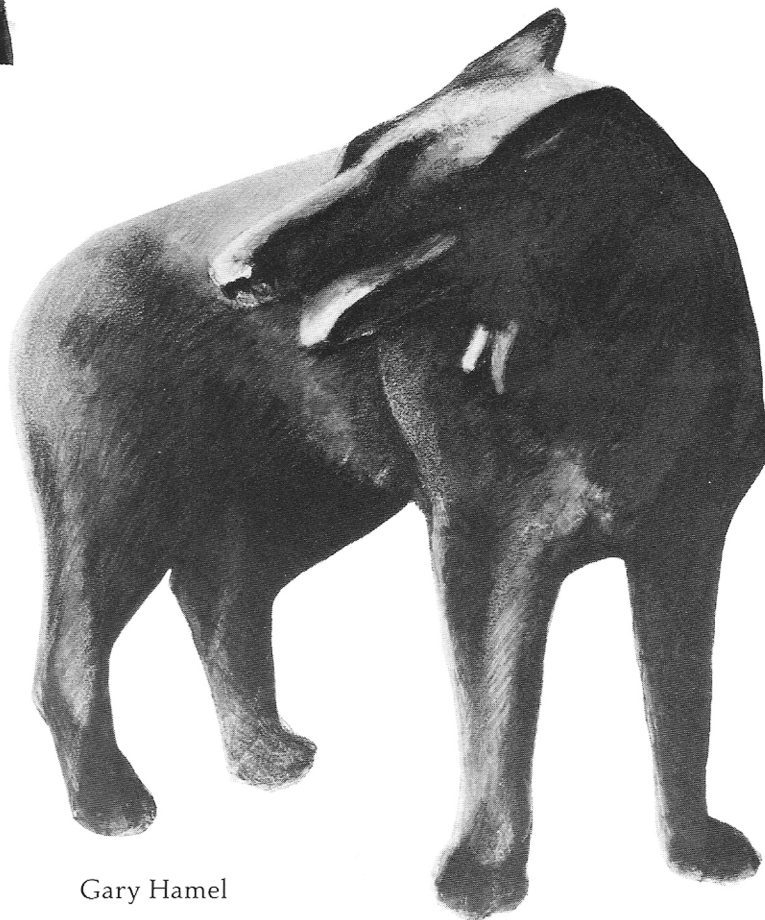
## Photographs

Throughout this book I have attempted to keep you working from what I call *primary sources*, drawing from real objects and real people, because I believe this fresh contact is the best way to improve drawing skills. However, we live in a world filled with secondary sources. Images in newspapers, magazines, and movies offer us something we can't always get in the real world. They can take us places we've never been — to the moon, under the ocean, or inside the body. They can freeze or speed up motion and time, and they allow us to work in the convenience of our own homes.

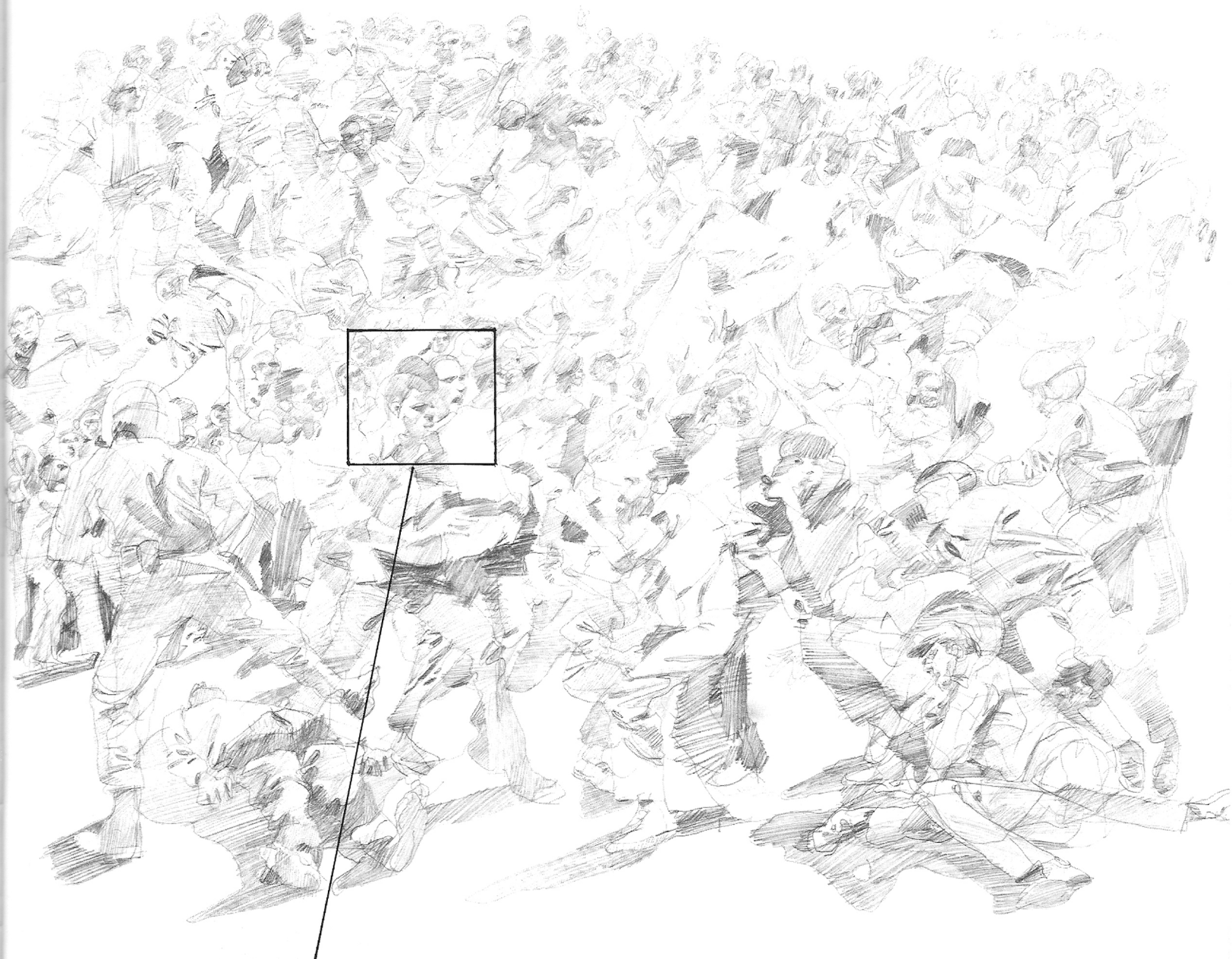
But like every modern convenience, they can also make us lazy and spoiled. Some artists become so dependent on projecting and tracing photographs, they completely lose confidence in their ability to draw from life. With this in mind, I suggest two simple criteria for the use of photographs:

1. As a way of exercising — for example, copying tonality or analyzing proportions; or
2. As a point of creative departure — changing, intensifying, or combining them to make something new.

We've seen their use as exercise tools in Chapters 2 and 4. The examples shown here illustrate their creative potential.

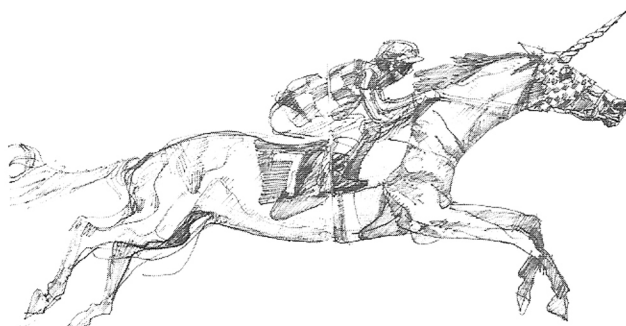


Gary Hamel



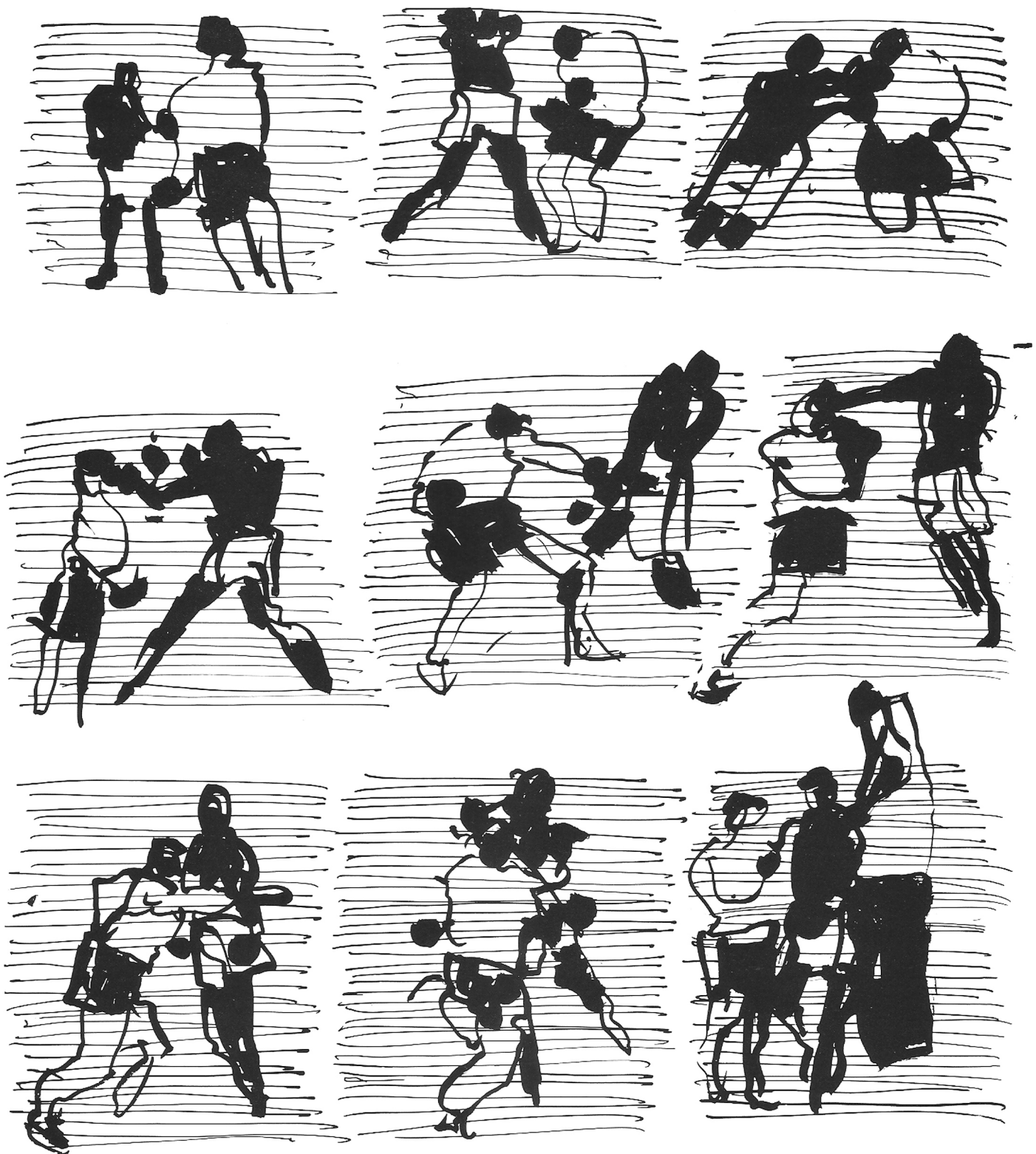
*This is one of a series of drawings on the theme of crowds and violence. It was done from a series of photographs I collected from the New York Times plus a group of stills from the film **Soylent Green**. The more I drew, the less need I had for the photographs. The repetition of the little figure shapes became more or less automatic.*

*Until photography, artists had no idea how horses actually ran so most paintings made them look as if they were flying or floating. In this drawing, made from a Life magazine photo, I tried to reintroduce that quality by exaggerating the stretched-out feeling. I added the unicorn horn on a whim.*





*Boxing match on blurry TV.*



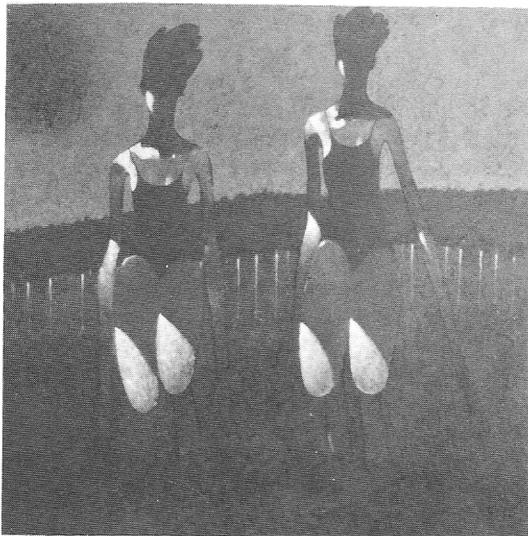
## Television

Drawing from TV is excellent practice for the free hand. The images speed by in such rapid succession that you're lucky to catch just a fleeting impression. I find it's a good eye/hand/memory exercise that helps me draw live, moving subjects. The best programs are those that repeat shots over a period of time such as speeches and panel discussions, sports, and most network music programming. MTV offers more exciting images, but they generally move *too* quickly.

The freeze-frame feature of the videotape recorder is making things a lot easier for the artist. Lynn Sweat, with a longtime interest in painting the figure in motion, has made good use of this device. By replaying and stopping the action he made dozens of sketches from the film *Flashdance*. He then went through them and selected these three as the basis for the final painting reproduced below.



*Freeze-frame drawings from the movie Flashdance.*



*Final painting*

Lynn Sweat



## Exploring themes

Sooner or later, every artist concentrates on a particular area of interest to the point where it becomes a theme. The painter Claude Monet, for example, spent a lifetime exploring the effects of light on objects. Kathe Kollwitz took human suffering and social struggle as her major themes, and we find these represented in nearly everything she did. Andrew Wyeth draws on recurring themes of loneliness and isolation. For the painter Richard Estes, the theme is the landscape of city buildings, commercial signs, and reflections in plate glass windows.

Frequently, artists will work through one theme over a period of time and then move on to another. In his 92 years, Picasso worked on dozens of themes, including mythology, African art, still life, portraiture, and circus performers. The bull appears frequently in Picasso's work. Often a symbol of maleness and brutish power, at other times the bull was simply an interesting form used for cubist experiments with line and shape.

The nineteenth century Japanese master Hokusai chose as a theme "Thirty-Six Views of Fuji," a project he worked on for six years. This series depicts the ubiquitous Mount Fuji in a dazzling variety of compositions, at times only as a distant background element. "Disasters of War" was a theme of Francisco Goya. He produced a large body of etchings on the subject during the French occupation of Spain.

In each of these examples, the theme provided the depth of involvement and exploration that no single picture could supply. Each drawing led to further discoveries to be applied to the next drawing. The term for this is "heuristic" — a type of discovery that stimulates further investigation. The following six themes have strong heuristic possibilities:

### Theme exploration — The empty environment

Environments designed for people but which contain none set up a strong evocative resonance. Romantic feelings associated with loneliness, isolation, and mystery are key aspects of the empty environment. This theme greatly rewards those who feel that creating depth, building up tone, and reproducing architectural details are well worth the patience generally required. Empty rooms at home, bus stations, offices, and diners are a few examples.

### Theme exploration — "A hundred of anything"

This theme has its origins in a remark an artist friend once made: "If you put a hundred of anything of the same type together, it will be visually interesting." The idea is based on the design principle of shape repeats or recurrence. These are "all-over" drawings. No one part has more importance than another. You might draw a tree's leaf mass or a mass demonstration of people filling the paper. There is no focus. Same-sized tin cans can be seen and drawn from different views. You don't really need 100 of anything, just take one and draw and redraw it from different angles. Pushpins, spools, shoes, spoons, hands, or crumpled dollar bills all make excellent *objets d'art*.

### Theme exploration — Decorative motif

Most of us have an impulse to decorate. We often doodle by repeating and embellishing shapes, making little curliques or intricate linear patterns. Weaving ordinary subjects — people, animals, and plants — into decorative motifs has intriguing theme possibilities. A good approach is to organize your drawing like an Oriental rug. Make an outer decorative border, an inside center of interest, and add clusters of pictures and decorations throughout. Look at Persian and Islamic art for ideas. Wallpaper, tile, and fabric designs are also good sources of inspiration.

### Theme exploration — The distorted reflection

The fun house mirror takes our own familiar image and rearranges it, squashing the body, separating and elongating the head, lowering the eyes, and stretching out the ears; yet, however distorted, we still recognize ourselves. Reflections make excellent subjects for drawing, particularly for self-portraits. I have found drawing distortions to be very liberating. One can be looser, free of the restraints of having to “get it right.”

Chrome bumpers or coffee pots are good reflective objects, as are distorted mirrors if you’re lucky enough to find one. Drawing your reflection in puddles offers the added interest of including various puddle shapes and details.

### Theme exploration — The blow-up

To take a small object and blow it up to a very large scale combines the stop sign and the inkblot. The viewer recognizes the object, but, because it is magnified, is forced to see it in an entirely new way. When an object is grossly out of scale, sensitive handling of shapes, tones and edges is critical to keep the object recognizable. Use a magnifying glass to capture the smallest nuances of texture and detail. For best effect, these drawings should be done large, at least 18x24 inches, and the cropping should be extreme to fill the page with only a part of the object. A milkweed pod, an opened pomegranate, a toothpaste tube, a walnut, or an insect are all good macro-drawing subjects.

### Theme exploration — Broken or hidden images

Revealing some parts of an image and concealing others makes a drawing more compelling. The combining of elements so as to partially obscure them adds a sense of mystery and surprise. It’s another way to make the familiar strange by creating “gaps” which the viewer must fill in. These situations may seem unusual, but they occur more often than many realize.

A person partially obscured in a window or doorway, a dog whose body lies in bright sunlight but whose head disappears into a dark shadow, or a child sleeping under a sheet with only an arm or leg sticking out are all examples. Sometimes you can deliberately set up this sort of situation. Other times, you’ll just come upon it. Either way, it’s an imaginative approach to your subject.



## Project 8 — Explore a Theme in Six Drawings

For this project, make a series of drawings based on one of the themes listed here or on another of your own choosing. These drawings should be well considered, so make a few little preparatory notes and sketches ahead of time to get some direction clear in your mind. This doesn’t mean you should plan each drawing in detail, though, because a willingness to explore and an openness to possibility are essential. Invest some time in this project, perhaps completing it over a period of several weeks. Make all your drawings the same size and think of them as a unified group. They should all be connected by a common thread, however invisible.

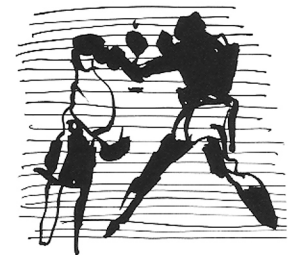
When you’ve completed your six drawings, rather than rushing into a self-critique, set them up as a group and live with them for a while. Let your evaluation of these drawings come gradually. Since you will need to set your own criteria for this project, you’ll want to evaluate it by those same criteria. No self-critique questions are provided.

# KEYS TO CHAPTER 8

## Drawing and Imagination

Imagination, the ability to conceive strange ideas, is part of everyone's mental makeup. Each day, whether we recognize it or not, all of us are actively manufacturing strange ideas in our heads. The only difference between creative people and so-called non-creative people is that creative people welcome their strange ideas.

- **Join two bags.** The creative process is the act of joining two unrelated bags. In drawing, that means combining at least two different ideas on the same piece of paper. These ideas may have only a remote connection with each other.
- **Be playful.** Adopt an attitude of looseness, friendliness, and sense of humor toward your subject and yourself. Rather than worry about how your drawing will turn out, get into the spirit of the moment. It's not necessary and it's probably not wise to know exactly where you're going when you start. If a strange idea occurs to you in the middle of a drawing, go with it.
- **Make the familiar strange.** Seeing the familiar and the commonplace in a new way is the basis for imaginative drawing. This could mean drawing something from an unusual or obscured view, combining unrelated elements, changing the relative sizes of the elements, distorting, rearranging, or symbolizing.
- **Work in sequence.** By doing a series of drawings with small changes in between each one, you create the healthiest environment for the imagination. Each drawing leads to further discoveries that can be applied to the next drawing. It has the effect of coaxing your creative abilities into play.
- **Use diverse sources.** Visuals and non-visuals alike are rich sources of inspiration. In your work, incorporate influences from art, photography, and television, as well as from poetry, literature, and music. Especially try to incorporate the most powerful of sources: your own intimate and personal experiences.
- **Explore themes.** Make lots of drawings over a period of time on a particular subject or a particular approach to a subject. Paradoxically, when you narrow your focus this way, you widen the potential for discovery.



# CONCLUSION



I have, in these last few chapters, placed a good deal of emphasis on creativity and the associative qualities of imagination, curiosity, open-mindedness, spontaneity, and sense of humor. I do so because I believe that these qualities represent the very best parts of ourselves in both art and life. They allow us to live in an ever-unfolding present rather than in the past or the future. They help to keep us free of inhibiting rules and positions, letting us experience the pleasure of making our own discoveries.

I hope that I have clearly presented to you my conviction that drawing is a means, not only of self-discovery but discovery of the interconnectedness of things. When this happens to us, we experience drawing's purest pleasures.

Yes, drawing can also be frustrating and difficult — a common experience for most of us. It may be reassuring to consider the cases of Mozart and Beethoven. Mozart's gifts seemed to be at his fingertips. He wrote forty-eight symphonies, two symphonic movements, and over forty concertos in his short (35 years) life. He could, by all accounts, dash off concertos at a moment's notice. He was said to have written one concerto while playing a game of croquet.

Ludwig van Beethoven was a struggler. In a lifespan of fifty-six years, he wrote only nine symphonies and less than half as many works as did Mozart. He seemed to labor tortuously over all of them, writing, changing, crossing out, starting over. Friends reported that his study was littered with crumpled pieces of paper.

Given a choice, I think we'd all like to be like Mozart — flawless and beautiful images dancing off our pencil points with effortless grace. But although I believe there is genius in everyone, for most of us it will be the Beethoven kind. It will take a lot of crumpled drawings to bring out the best in us.

Best wishes,

*Best Dodson*

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arthur, John. *Realist Drawings and Watercolors: Contemporary American Works on Paper*. Boston: New York Graphic Society Books, 1980.
- Canaday, John. *What Is Art? An Introduction to Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture*. New York: Random House, Alfred A. Knopf, 1980.
- Capra, Fritjof. *The Tao of Physics*. New York: Bantam Books, 1977.
- Chaet, Bernard. *The Art of Drawing*. 3rd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1983.
- D'Amelio, Joseph. *Perspective Drawing Handbook*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1984.
- Edwards, Betty. *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. Los Angeles: Houghton Mifflin Co., J. P. Tarcher, 1979.
- Elbow, Peter. *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Ghiselin, Brewster, ed. *The Creative Process*. New York: New American Library, 1952.
- Hampden-Turner, Charles. *Maps of the Mind*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1982.
- Henning, Fritz. *Concept and Composition: The Basics of Successful Art*. Fairfield, Conn.: F&W Publications, North Light Books, 1983.
- Henri, Robert. *The Art Spirit*. Edited by Margery A. Ryerson. Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984.
- Jaynes, Julian. *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1977.
- Maurois, Andre. *Illusions*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.
- Nicolaides, Kimon. *The Natural Way to Draw: A Working Plan for Art Study*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941.
- Pirsig, Robert. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1974.
- Price, Roger. *Doodles*. Los Angeles: Price, Stern, Sloan, Publishers, 1965.
- Richards, Mary C. *Centering in Pottery, Poetry, and the Person*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969.
- Rico, Gabriele L. *Writing the Natural Way: Using Right-Brain Techniques to Release Your Expressive Powers*. Los Angeles: Houghton Mifflin Co., J. P. Tarcher, 1983.



# INDEX

- Anatomy, 16
- Articulation in art, 148, 150
- Artists' characteristics, 8
- Authority in drawing, 8, 22
- Blind drawing, 13
- Cezanne, Paul, 107, 189
- Composition. *See* Design (Composition)
- Connected-line drawing, 59
- Control in drawing. *See* "Handwriting," artist's
- Converging lines. *See* Depth illusion
- Copying the masters. *See* "Handwriting," artist's
- Courbet, Gustave, 156
- Creativity. *See* Imagination
- Criticism, 10, 13. *See also* Projects, self-critiques of
- Cropping, 180-81
- Degas, Edgar, 51, 156
- Delacroix, Eugene, 42-43
- Depth illusion, and aerial perspective, 131; by converging lines, 131, 133, 138, 142; by diminishing size, 130, 132; in ellipses, 144-45; experiencing by drawing through, 134-35, 144-45; experiencing by thinking through, 136; eye level (horizon line) in, 138, 143-45; and geometric structure, 136-37; intensifying, 132-33; and linear perspective, 131, 138-43; by overlapping shapes, 130, 132; by softening edges and contrasts, 131; vanishing points in, 138-43
- Design (Composition), active and passive shapes in, 194; balance and imbalance in, 192-93; clarity and ambiguity in, 190-91; by crop and float formula, 181; decision making for, 182-83; defined, 172; emphasized by cropping, 180; paradoxes or "straddles" in, 30, 176, 184-85, 188-94; repetition with variation in, 185-87; selection by viewfinder, 178-79; by sensing pattern, 177; shapes in, 174-75; simplicity and complexity in, 188-89; tangents in, 195; tone in, 175-76. *See also* Enrichment; Light; Shapes
- Distance. *See* Depth illusion
- Distortion. *See* Imagination
- Drapery, 164
- Drawing, correcting, 91; defined, 8, 10, 13; erasing, 67; by eye, 72; grip, 58-59, 60, 62; imagination in, 198-219; internal dialogue in, 10-11, 13; masking in, 67; as process, 26; relationships on, 156; rubbing procedures in, 66; tools, *See* Media; types of, 9, 58-62. *See also* Blind drawing; Edges; Eyes; "Handwriting," artist's; Keys, reviews of; Look, hold, draw process; Media; Portrait drawing; Proportions; Time, drawing; Tone (Value)
- Edges, 60-61, 104, 108-09, 131-33, 165, 167
- Ellipses, 144-45
- Emulating the masters. *See* "Handwriting," artist's
- Enrichment, defined, 27; shapes, 25-29, 124-25, 188-89
- Erasing, 67
- Escher, M.C., 195
- Estes, Richard, 218
- Exercises (in order of learning), gesture drawing, 58; connected-line drawing, 59; five-minute burn, 59; tonal bar, 60; tonal matching, 61; precision patch, 61; egg model, 96-97; light sources, 110. *Also see each project.*
- Eye level. *See* Depth illusion
- Eyes, and blind drawing, 13; as drawing subject, 22-23; focus of, 10-11, 13; "innocent vision" of, 17; trusting own, 8; and visual vs. mental images, 16-22. *See also* Proportions; Squinting
- Five-minute burn, 59
- Focusing, in Degas drawings, 50; on selected points of interest, 34-37. *See also* Eyes
- Foliage, 162-63
- Foreshortening, 16-17, 80, 86-88
- Format. *See* Design (Composition)
- Forms, Four basic, 107. *See also* Shapes
- Framing. *See* Viewfinder
- Freedom in drawing. *See* "Handwriting," artist's
- Gesture drawing, 58
- Goya, Francisco, 218
- Hair, 160-61
- "Handwriting," artist's, controlled (analytical) mode, 40, 60-62, 207, 221; copying the masters, 56; Degas, 41, 50-51; Delacroix, 42-43; emulating the masters, 57; free and control combination, 62; free (intuitive) mode, 40, 58-59, 62, 207, 221; Kollwitz, 54-55; Matisse, 46-47; Morandi, 41, 52-53; Rembrandt, 41, 44-45; van Gogh, 41, 48-49
- Hatching and crosshatching, 52-53
- Head drawing, 89; egg model for, 96-97; foreshortened, 96-97; front view, 90-91; profile, 94-95; in strong lighting, 109; three-quarter view, 92-93, 109
- Highlights. *See* Enrichment
- Hokusai, 218
- Horizon line. *See* Depth illusion
- Images, mental, 20-22; visual, 16-20
- Imagination, 198, 221; creative play, 200-13; inkblot experiences, 206-07; joining unrelated ideas, 198-200; personal source material, 212-13; photographic

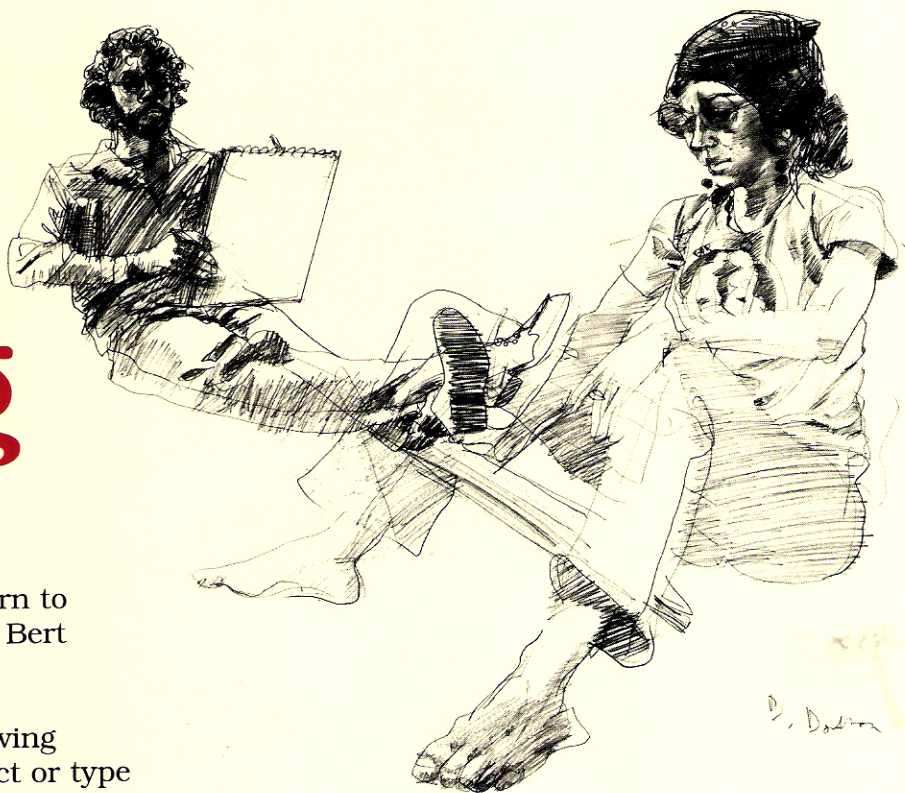


- sources, 214-15; stop sign communication, 206-07; television and videotape sources, 216-17; theme exploration, 218-19; working in sequence, 209
- Individualizing, 22-23
- Keys, reviews of, 38, 68, 100, 126, 146, 170, 196, 220
- Kollwitz, Kathe, 54-55, 218
- Light, from back, 110-11; and cast shadows, 116-17; and design quality, 102, 124-25; and form, 105-07; four elements of, 105; as illusion, 102; and the l/s pattern, 16, 102, 105, 112-13; mapping of, 8, 104, 164, 166; as metaphor, 102; and mood, 102, 112-17; source of, 110-11
- Line, language of, 16, 22, 24; of Matisse, 46-47
- Lithography, 51
- Local values. *See* Tone (Value)
- Look, hold, draw process, 12-13, 141
- l/s (light and shadow) pattern, 102. *See also* Light
- Mapping. *See* Light
- Masking, 67
- Materials, drawing. *See* Media
- Matisse, Henri, 46-47
- Measurements, comparative, 72-85
- Media, ballpoint pen, 64; brush and ink, 64; charcoal, 65; Conté crayon, 66; crow-quill point, 63; dry-type, 65; eraser, 67; felt-tip markers, 63-64; fountain pen, 63; ink-type, 63; mechanical pen, 64; paper stump, 66; pencil, 65 (*For sizes, see each project*); razor blade, 67
- Merging shapes, 8, 30-31
- Midpoint, 71-77
- Monet, Claude, 112, 218
- Morandi, Giorgio, 52-53
- Observation, keys for, 38; of light and shadow, 105. *See also* Eyes; Look, hold, draw process; Perspective
- Paradoxes. *See* Design (Composition)
- Pattern. *See* Design (Composition); Enrichment
- Pencils, drawing. *See* Media. *Also see each project.*
- Perspective. *See* Depth illusion
- Picasso, 218
- Playful attitude in drawing. *See* Imagination
- Plumb and level, 72-81
- Portrait drawing. *See* Head drawing
- Profile. *See* Head drawing
- Projects, self-critiques of, 39, 69, 101, 127, 147, 171, 197
- Proportions, and comparative measurements, 72-85; and critical measuring—portraits, 89-97; defined, 70; and foreshortening, 16-17, 80, 86-88, 96-97; intensifying, 98-99; and midpoint, 71-77; and plumb and level, 72-81; and sighting, 71-85
- Reflections. *See* Enrichment; Texture
- Rembrandt van Rijn, 44-45
- Restating, 8, 14-15; absence of (Matisse), 46-47; in Degas drawings, 50-51; in perspective drawing, 141
- Rubbing on drawing, 66
- Self-critique, 10, 37. *See also* Projects, self-critique of
- Sequence, working in, 209
- Shadows. *See* Enrichment; Light
- Shapes, background, 33, 174; as building blocks of design, 172; language of, 24-25; order of drawings, 26, 28-29; positive and negative, 33, 174, 187; recognizing, 174; rules of, 25-33; trapped, 32-33, 177, 187; tying together, 30-31, 175-76. *See also* Design (Composition); Enrichment; Forms; Light
- Sighting, 71-85; for perspective, 141
- Sight-size drawing, 82
- Squinting, 17, 26, 60-61, 106, 109, 119, 165
- Straddles. *See* Design (Composition), paradoxes in
- Strokes. *See* "Handwriting," artist's; Texture
- Suggestion in art, 148, 150
- Tangents. *See* Design (Composition)
- Television and drawing, 216-17
- Texture, articulation of, 148-50; contrast in, 156-57; at a distance, 169; of foliage, 162-63; and form in drapery, 164; of hair, 160-61; and reflective surfaces, 166-67; by repetition with variation, 152-55, 162, 185-87; by scribble to shape, 151; by shape to scribble, 150; and tone, 164-65; unifying with, 158-59. *See also* Enrichment.
- Time, drawing. *See* Exercises
- Tone (Value), bar of, 60; with brush and ink, 64; of brush strokes with wash, 44; of charcoal and Conté crayon, 54-55; of crosshatching, 52-53; in full tonal drawing, 118-19; local value and, 120; matching, 61; of parallel marks, 50-51; of pencil strokes, 43, 50; soft edge as, 108; and texture, 164-65; and value pattern, 120; and value sketch, 119; with water-soluble felt tip, 63
- Tools, drawing. *See* Media
- Tracing, 43, 45
- Trapped shapes. *See* Shapes
- Triggering words, 13, 58, 60, 90, 119, 160, 162
- Turner, J.M.W., 112
- Value. *See* Tone (Value)
- van Gogh, Vincent, 48-49
- Vanishing point. *See* Depth illusion
- Videotape as art tool, 216-17
- Viewfinder, 119, 178-79
- Visualizing, 8
- Wyeth, Andrew, 189, 218



# Keys to Drawing

by Bert Dodson



"Anyone who can hold a pencil can learn to draw with some degree of proficiency," Bert Dodson proclaims.

In this book he shares a complete drawing system that you can use for any subject or type of drawing—even if you've doubted your ability to draw. It's based on 55 "keys to drawing," which are introduced at a comfortable pace. The keys are interspersed with dozens of practice exercises that help you learn by doing.

*You'll learn such helpful concepts as:*

- restating, focusing, mapping, and intensifying
- how to free your hand action, then learn to control it
- how to convey the illusions of light, depth, and texture
- how to stimulate your imagination through "creative play"

## About the Author

Bert Dodson, a talented draftsman, painter and illustrator, graduated from Arizona State University and later studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. He taught drawing and illustration for several years at the New York Fashion Institute of Technology, has illustrated more than sixty books, and is the creator of the comic strip "Nuke." A transplanted westerner, he now lives with his wife in Vermont.

*"This book is an excellent resource to teach students the principles of drawing."*

—Laura Woodward, M.A.

*"...outstanding...a great aid for art instructors."*

—Susan Arndt  
Professor, Art

*"...a virtual dictionary of drawing and related subjects, properly mixed and poured-out in a teaching sequence that works for artists of any age or skill level."*

—Draw Magazine

\$22.99

(CAN \$35.99)

ISBN 0-89134-337-7

90000



9 780891 343370

