

Contour Studies in Watercolor... an "Art Learning Fun" Lesson with Debi West

Today you'll be creating a contour object and adding watercolor techniques to enhance the work! As always, this lesson is YOUR work because art is an expression of YOU! It should be unique and personal.

I will be teaching you several artistic techniques and then you can explore these techniques to come up with a piece of art that makes you proud!

Here We Go...

1. Contour Lines – the key to all drawings
2. Elements of Art
3. Watercolor Techniques
4. Putting it all together!

Contour Lines

There are 3 types of contour lines:

- blind contour
- partial contour
- cross contour

In the world of art, a contour line is a continuous line which defines a form or an edge. It is, essentially, the outline or silhouette of a given object. Additionally, contour lines also show the inner lines of objects! I like to think of it like a long string that outlines the object and that helps remind me to not lift my pencil when doing these sample drawings!

- The term 'contour' finds its origins in French and is derived from the Italian term 'contourno,' 'to round off.'

Contour drawing is one of the easiest and most effective ways to improve your hand-eye coordination and drawing skills! I suggest practicing every day in your journal! Draw object around you and enjoy the process!

- Step 1: Choose What You'll Draw

For your first contour drawing, choose just one object to draw, as this will be easier to focus on than several objects. Put the object or place your seat in a spot where you have a clear view of the object.

- Step 2: Look at the Object

It may surprise you to learn that, when you're drawing contour lines, you want to spend most of your time looking at the object itself, not at your paper – this is where the idea of the BLIND contour comes into play! This can be really difficult when you first start doing it, but that's the point! Contour drawing forces you to really notice and work to replicate the outline of an object. It trains your hand to follow what your eye sees.

Start by spending about half your time looking at the object and half your time looking at your paper, and gradually work your way up to looking at the object 90% of the time. This will feel strange initially, and your first drawings will probably look a little wonky, but just keep practicing! As you develop your hand-eye coordination, it'll feel much more natural, and your drawing skills will improve as a result.

You also want to make sure that you're capturing as much detail of the object's outlines as possible. If there's a notch or a warp in the object, make sure your drawing represents that.

Contour art is all about replicating the form of an object as closely as possible.

- Step 3: Draw Long, Continuous Lines

Many people new to contour art begin by drawing lots of short lines because they aren't used to not looking at their paper, and they don't want to make too big of a mistake by drawing a long line that doesn't follow the object's lines. However, you'll improve your drawing skills more if you draw fewer, longer lines. Drawing longer lines, especially without looking at your paper, improves your hand-eye coordination and helps you become more confident when drawing.

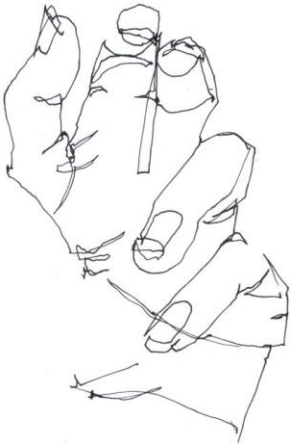
- Step 4: Go Slow and Steady

It can be tempting to rush through contour drawing exercises, especially if you're used to drawing detailed pieces where the outline is only the first step. Remind yourself to slow down and concentrate on replicating the outline of the object as perfectly as you can.

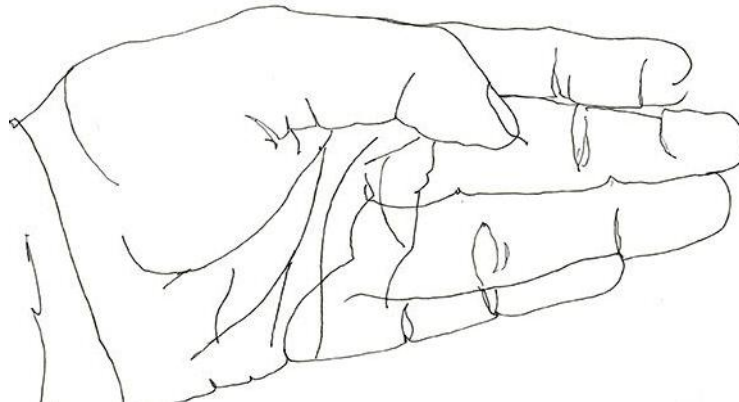
There's no "correct" amount of time to spend on a contour drawing, and it'll likely depend on what you're drawing. However, about 5 to 20 minutes per drawing is average.

Examples:

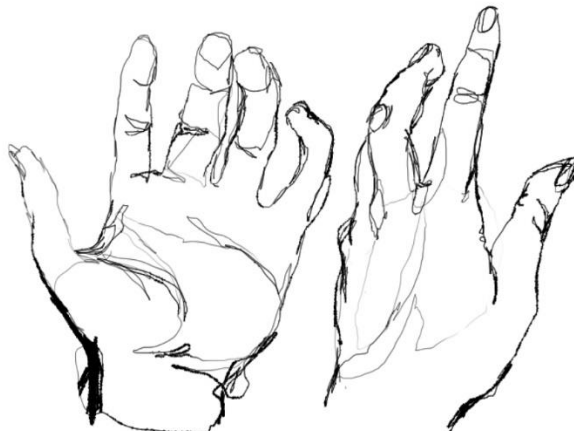
Blind:



Partial Blind:



Contour Drawing:



Objects:



Elements of Art: The building blocks of ART

Line, Shape, Value, Color, Texture, Space and Form! The elements of art are important for several reasons. First, and most importantly, a person can't create art without utilizing at least a few of them. No elements, no art—end of story.



Line

A mark made by a pointed tool such as a brush, pen or stick; a moving point.



Shape

A flat, enclosed area that has two dimensions, length and width. Artists use both geometric and organic shapes.



Color

Is one of the most dominant elements. It is created by light. There are three properties of color; Hue (name,) Value (shades and tints,) and Intensity (brightness.)



Value

Degrees of lightness or darkness. The difference between values is called value contrast.



Form

Objects that are three-dimensional having length, width and height. They can be viewed from many sides. Forms take up space and volume.



Texture

Describes the feel of an actual surface. The surface quality of an object; can be real or implied.



Space

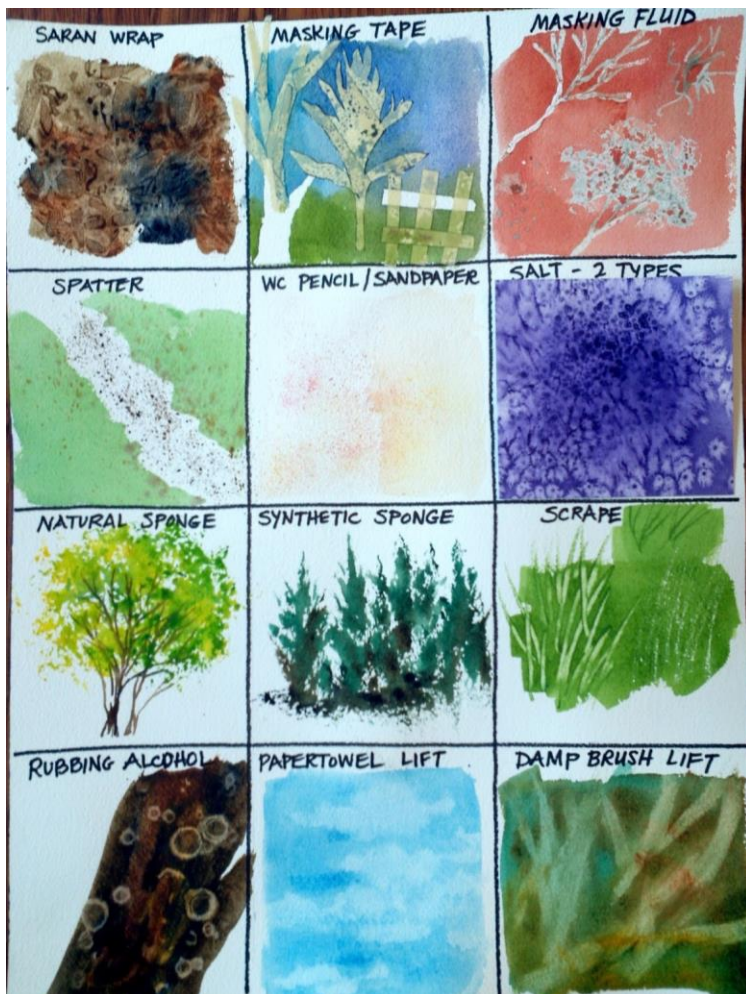
Is used to create the illusion of depth. Space can be two-dimensional, three-dimensional, negative and/or positive.

Watercolor Techniques

What is watercolor? It's essentially paint that is made with a water-soluble binder such as gum arabic, and thinned with water rather than oil, giving it a more transparent color. And it's my FAVORITE!

A few techniques we'll play with today:

- Wet on Wet
- Wet on Dry
- Creating Gradients
- Washes
- Lifting
- Resist
- Adding Textures



Now...let's put it all together!

After you draw your contour flower (or object of your choice) you will grid it out, as seen above in the sample sheet and then use a variety of watercolor techniques to color in your work! This is a wonderful way to experiment with both contour drawings AND watercolor and the results are AMAZING!

Here's the lesson plan for your viewing pleasure:

Watercolor Still Life Work

Objective:

Students will learn techniques needed to make creative watercolor paintings. Students will incorporate their grid art skills, their direct observation skills and their watercolor technique skills into a final art work.

Materials:

2 pieces of 12" x 18" watercolor paper, watercolor palettes, brushes, water cups, baskets of watercolor materials, including salt, alcohol, crayon resist, saran wrap, pencils, oil pastel, netting, screens, masking tape, paper clips, etc...

Procedures:

1. Introduce the lesson by showing a powerpoint on watercolor techniques.
2. Students will fold their 1st piece of paper into 16 rectangles and create a study of various watercolor techniques and washes into each area.
3. Students will then lightly outline a contour drawing of flowers in a vase onto their 2nd piece of paper.
4. Students will grid out their paper lightly.
5. Students will then begin to paint each gridded area using one of the newly learned watercolor techniques.
6. Students will look at the still life, but have the creative license to add their own color, textures, etc... as learned in the 1st study.
7. Students will ensure that there is unity in the background.
8. Final art works will be hung in a class display and critiqued. This lesson is wonderful in that students are very proud of what they created and enjoyed making the connections to some of their earlier assignments.

Assessment:

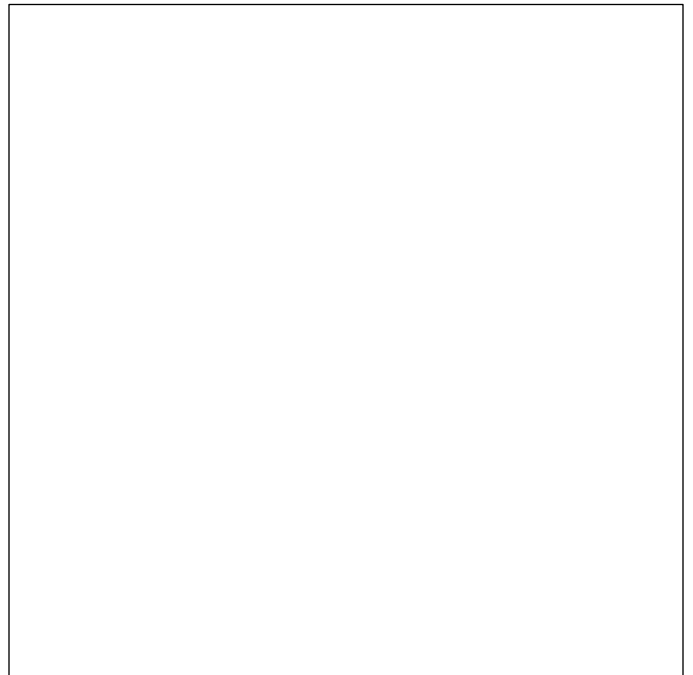
I use a project evaluation form for each lesson I teach. This allows my students to appropriately reflect on the learning at hand and leaves room for them to comment on the process and how they feel the final piece turned out. It also allows me to comment and give them a grade based on their learning AND their final work. We also do in process critiques using my "2 Glows and a Grow" model.

Student Samples:



NOTES:

Doodle Areas:



Thank you for joining us today!

For more info you can contact me at: dwestudio@gmail.com

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