**Observational Drawing:**

**INTRODUCTORY GLOSSARY**

The glossary below defines terms and concepts that are fundamental to Observational Drawing. Many of them have relevance to other forms of drawing and other artforms.

**CONTOUR:** a line that shows form by describing the edge of an object *or* running directionally across the object (this is sometimes called a cross-contour)

**SHAPE:** a flat, bounded area without volume

**FLATNESS**: two-dimensionality; the absence of sculptural volume and/or spatial depth

**PLANE:** There are several meanings:

* a facet or flat area of a form (e.g. the planes of the face)
* a spatial plane (a band of space where several objects align, e.g. foreground plane, midground plane, background plane)

**PICTURE PLANE:** any flat surface on which forms and space are represented

**VOLUME:** convex three-dimensional fullness of form, especially circular or rounded form

**FORM:** There are several meanings:

* a sense of volume (e.g. the form of the torso)
* a represented object in a drawing (e.g. the ball is a circular form)
* an abstract unit in a composition (e.g. the triangle is a dynamic form)

**MODELLING:** creating a sense of volumetric form on a two-dimensional surface

**SPACE:** the continuous field in which objects and their relationships are perceived

**RECESSION:** a sense of depth created on the picture plane

**OVERLAPPING FORMS:** the relationship between a form in front and another form behind it, the front form obscuring part of the one behind

**NEGATIVE SHAPE/NEGATIVE SPACE:** the space beside an object which may be observed to see the object’s shape; a shape or space between objects

**PASSAGE**: a series of connections between objects, implying a sense of movement between and around them

**INTERVAL:** an imaginary line between two points

**PERSPECTIVE:** a set of systems for creating the illusion of space and depth on the picture plane, including:

* Linear Perspective (for conceptualising geometric and architectural forms according to eye level and vanishing points)
* Atmospheric or Aerial Perspective (the softening of edges and contrast on distant forms)
* Perspective of Scale (the gradual shrinking of forms from near to far)

**EYE LEVEL:** an imagined line running horizontally through space at the height of the viewer’s eye when looking straight ahead

**VANTAGE POINT:** the position in space from which the viewer observes

**FORESHORTENING:** the apparent distortion of proportion due to the viewer’s angle of sight

**COMPOSITION:** the organisation of the elements of a drawing into a considered whole

**FIGURE-GROUND RELATIONSHIP:** a fundamental compositional strategy in which one or more objects (figures) are set in considered relationship to the space around them (the ground)

**WEIGHT:**

* “weight of touch”: the pressure applied by the hand to a drawing material, and the resulting heaviness or lightness of what is drawn
* “weight of form”: the force of a form’s presence on the picture plane, relative to other forms

**TENSION (PICTORIAL):** dynamic interrelationship of pictorial elements

**ORGANIC (FORM):** natural or irregular

**ORGANIC (PROCESS):** evolving through an intuitive process; growing towards wholeness

**SYNTHETIC:** produced through consciously combined elements

**TONE:** the range of values from light to dark (white being lightest, black being darkest)

**TONALITY**: the overall tonal character of an object or composition, e.g. high-contrast, close-toned, dark or light

**VALUE:** the degree of darkness or lightness of a tone

**CAST SHADOW:** the shadow of an object when lit, falling upon the ground or nearby surfaces

**FALL OF LIGHT:** the direction and strength of a light source as it illuminates objects and creates shadow

**REFLECTED LIGHT:** light that penetrates shadowed areas by being reflected from or bounced off other surfaces

**HALF-LIGHT:** the intermediate or mid-tone observable through a shaded area

**Observational Drawing: NOTES ON PROCESSES**

The processes summarised here are fundamental to Observational Drawing and support a broad range of approaches to drawing.

**PROPORTION: a process of seeing**

Accurate and consistent observation of the relationships between the position and scale of one part to another.

The main tools for doing this are

* **Measuring**
  + Using measurement to see the relationships of the parts to each other and the whole.
  + This is best done in response to a question that is generated by the drawing. i.e. How does x relate to y?
  + It is important to have one thing that remains consistent.
* **Positive /Negative Shapes / space**
  + Helps to see more than one thing at a time and observe how things and parts relate to each other.
  + Helps to build space.
  + Unifies a drawing through shape
* **Vertical and Horizontal axes** Checking what is in line both vertically and horizontally. Verticals also help to identify weight and gravity.
* **Seeing angles**
  + A good help with plotting, but can be hard to see so good to double-check with other strategies.
  + Helps to represent perspective in forms and space
* **Overlapping and Cross-referencing**
  + Observing where one thing crosses over behind another.
* **Perspective and Foreshortening** Understanding the principles of perspective aids observation.

These methods should all be used in conjunction with each other.

**DEVELOPING A DRAWING: a process of articulation**

– from **the general** to **the specific**

- from **schematic drawing** (searching for the structure) to **finish**

- from **the armature** (the underpinning structure of the drawing) to **the surface**

– from **focal point** to **periphery**

- from **line** to **tone**

- from **dry** to **wet**; from **wet** to **dry**

*-* using**erasure** (rubbing out); incorporating **pentimenti** (the marks left after rubbing away)

**COMPOSING A DRAWING: a process that may be organic or synthetic**

**the vertical**

**the horizontal**

**the diagonal**

**arcs** and **curves**

**organic** and **irregular shapes**

**symmetry** or **asymmetry, balance or chaos**

**single focus** or **multiple foci**

**pathways into space**

**rhythm**

**repetition**

**pattern**

**dominance**: the prioritising of one particular quality above others, giving unity.