

Part 2: Weekly 2 hour Drawing Assignments. Tone and Atmosphere.

Introduction

This week I have simplified the assignment as last week I suggested you collect some materials you needed from the store room at college. However, Jon has informed me that they could not give out materials until 24th November due to lockdown which is this Tuesday unfortunately. Therefore, I have amended this brief slightly.

You will be working on tone today. I understand that you have worked on tone with John and Chris which is good. This week will allow you to further experiment with tone in order to gain more confidence with its complexities working from life.

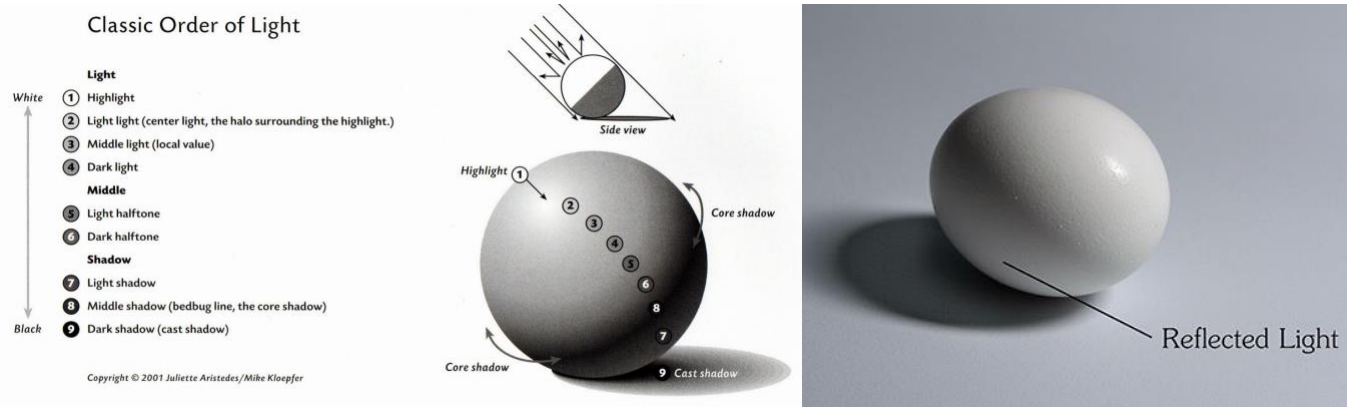
Brief

Tone can be powerful, when used in art it can evoke a strong atmosphere and consequently strong emotional responses depending on the quality of light and darkness. Tonal value is basically about being able to define the lightness and darkness of colour. Light reveals form and how we see form is dependent on how much light there is, how much an object absorbs or reflects it and its directional origin. There are many different types of light; warm light, cool light, daylight, evening light, sunlight, moonlight, lamplight, neon light, street light, candlelight, firelight etc. This in turn creates different atmospheres of light, sharp, soft, dark, misty etc. All have their different qualities. If we did not have light, we would not see form.

Tone, as you have probably realised, can be difficult to get right especially when confused with colour. Tone can be disguised by the brightness of colour. Take a look at the colour wheel below and the corresponding image in black and white. Purple is quite dark and yellow is very light, it can be tricky to evaluate the value of a hue. When working with tone, unlike working in line, we are constantly having to evaluate whether the colour of one object is lighter or darker than another. A very good way to ascertain tone is to narrow your eyes to slits when looking at your subject so that the colour is reduced and you are more aware of the differentiation between light areas and dark areas.



Also, you have learnt with Jon and Chris that a sphere with the light directed on one side has a gradation of tones in the shadow area. A very important fact for revision today is that you will almost always get the reflection of light on the underside of the shadow area. I want you to be particularly aware of this in the exercises today. This understanding can transform a tonal study from an amateur image to a sophisticated well observed piece of work. Really start to be aware of and regularly observe this phenomenon of reflected light in the shadow areas. Today you'll be doing some simple exercises to practice tonal work on location from life.



Note that number 7 is the lighter shadow, number 8 is the darkest shadow on the sphere, but the centre of the cast shadow no 9 is the darkest shadow of all and is in the black range.



Note the reflected light on the apple and the reflected light under the jaw of the portrait. The strongest shadow is the arc along the jaw line.

Exercise 1; Duration 1 hour in total. Three 20 minute tonal studies in ink or watercolour allowing extra time for the ink/paint to dry.

Organising your materials.

You will need three tones of paint ready mixed. It can be black ink if you have it or black watercolour made up from your black watercolour pan in your watercolour box. Take some time to be prepared beforehand for these exercises.

- **The first mix** is to be a light grey, just a little bit darker than the white of your paper.
- **The second mix** is to be a mid-tone grey,
- **The third mix** is to be a dark tone but not totally black.

Make sure all the mixes are in separate containers, cups or jars etc. and test that they are the right shades/tones on a piece of paper before you start the exercises.

Subject

If you want to work on subjects related to your reportage project that is fine, or it can be a still life, a view in the park, someone who is willing to sit for you etc. Check your composition is good and choose your format carefully.

Method.

Make sure you have your ready mixed inks/paints beside you, clean water and brushes. If you need to, very lightly sketch out an outline of your subject first as a guide. As you become more proficient at drawing you won't need to do this.

Now sit a while and just to look at the subject very carefully; where is the lightest part? Squint your eyes very narrow to see the range of tones. If you don't feel that there is a good enough tonal range, then perhaps light the area with a lamp or move your subject closer to a window to create a greater variety. (don't light your subject too strongly at this stage as the contrast between highlights and shadows may be too strong, this exercise is about being able to define the value of colours.) Once you are sorted you are ready to start.

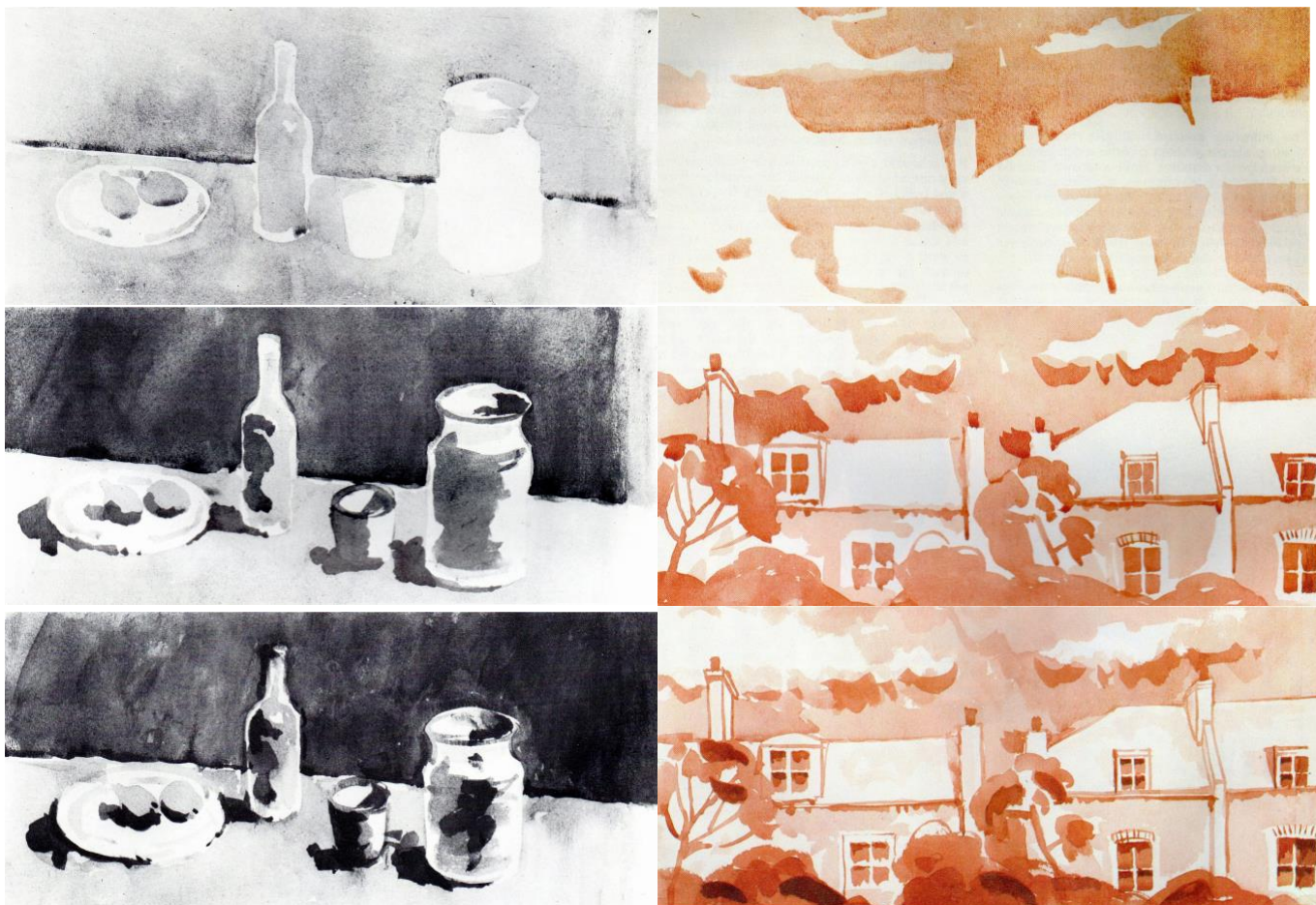
What are the highlights in your subject you have chosen to draw? Where are they in your composition? Having identified the highlights (lightest areas) using your light grey ready mixed ink/watercolour, paint out your whole composition leaving the lightest tonal shapes the white of the paper. This is where you can utilise your negative space exercise identifying the abstract shapes. Work the pale grey tone carefully around the white/lightest shapes. Let the paint dry.

Now look at your subject and identify the mid-tone areas squint and narrow your eyes down, now paint that area out leaving the white of the paper and light grey tones as 'negative spaces' let the paint dry

Now do the same with the darkest toned ink/watercolour mix.

You will see that you have created an image using white (the white of the paper), pale grey, mid-tone grey and a very dark grey.

Repeat this exercise twice more using a different composition of the same subject or change the subject completely each time. Take 20 minutes over each painting (excluding the drying time) This exercise is designed to enable you to work quickly and proficiently with tone from life enabling you to get used to applying the paint in different gradations with a fluidity precision and speed. It will need practice. It is a good idea to carry around ready mixed small pots of grey ink/paint in order to do this exercise whenever you need to record the tonal values in a scene in a few minutes.



Some examples of tonal paintings using ink and watercolour. From the book *Painters progress*.

Exercise 2. duration 1 hour. 3 x 20 minutes using the subtractive tonal method. Use charcoal if you have some, if not use a 6b pencil. (You can take longer over these exercises if you wish.)

Subtractive tonal method of working.

For all of these exercises you are to cover your paper with charcoal, (use the side of the charcoal stick) and when the whole piece of paper is covered rub it lightly into the paper with cotton wool or a cloth to give a soft even dark tone. Then squinting so that you can define the tones more clearly start to erase the light areas out with a rubber. You can cut a plastic rubber to get a sharp edge or use a putty rubber to rub out larger areas of charcoal. You can also use the putty rubber to dab off areas or twirl it into a point to rub out fine lines. If there are large areas of charcoal to rub out, your putty rubber may become clogged with charcoal, you can use white bread to do this if you wish. It will need to be a cheap white loaf that you can knead into a dough like consistency (avoid the crust), this will take off the majority of the charcoal without damaging your paper surface. This is cheaper than buying several putty rubbers if you are working on a large scale. You may need to work back into areas with the charcoal and define some of the contours. Work the way you feel is right for you during these exercises.

NOTE; if you don't have charcoal use a soft 6B pencil and take off the graphite using the same process.

The three 20 minute exercises.

- **a-** set up a still life related to your reportage subject if you can, in a darkened room and light it dramatically with a lamp, you will have lots of interesting shadows to deal with. Now draw this using the subtractive tonal method described above. Make sure you take note of the reflective light in the shadow areas.
- **b-** Self-portrait, light yourself dramatically with a lamp in a mirror in a darkened room and carefully do a self-portrait using the subtracted tonal method above. Try lighting your face in different ways until you find the most dramatic almost abstract shapes of light and dark. Again, be aware of the reflected light in the shadow areas.
- **c-** Draw the image out of your window at night, if you don't have a street view then work outside in the dark for 20 minutes. Make sure you are socially distanced and safe.



Night drawings; Left to right, Laura Footes, Charlotte Anger, George Seurat.



Above; examples of subtractive tonal drawings where the dark medium has been removed to reveal white. Left to right; Barley Beal and two pieces by Anita Taylor,

Below are some examples of reportage illustrators/artist utilizing tone. If you want to, experiment with a dark paper and work light onto dark. If you don't have black or coloured paper put down a coloured wash and let it dry and work on that with crayon and/or pastel etc.



Top left to right; Jill Gibbon, Jill Gibbon, Rachel Gannon, Jenny Soep, Jenny Soep, ,Kathe Kolwitz,, David Haines, Chen Shaoxiang.