

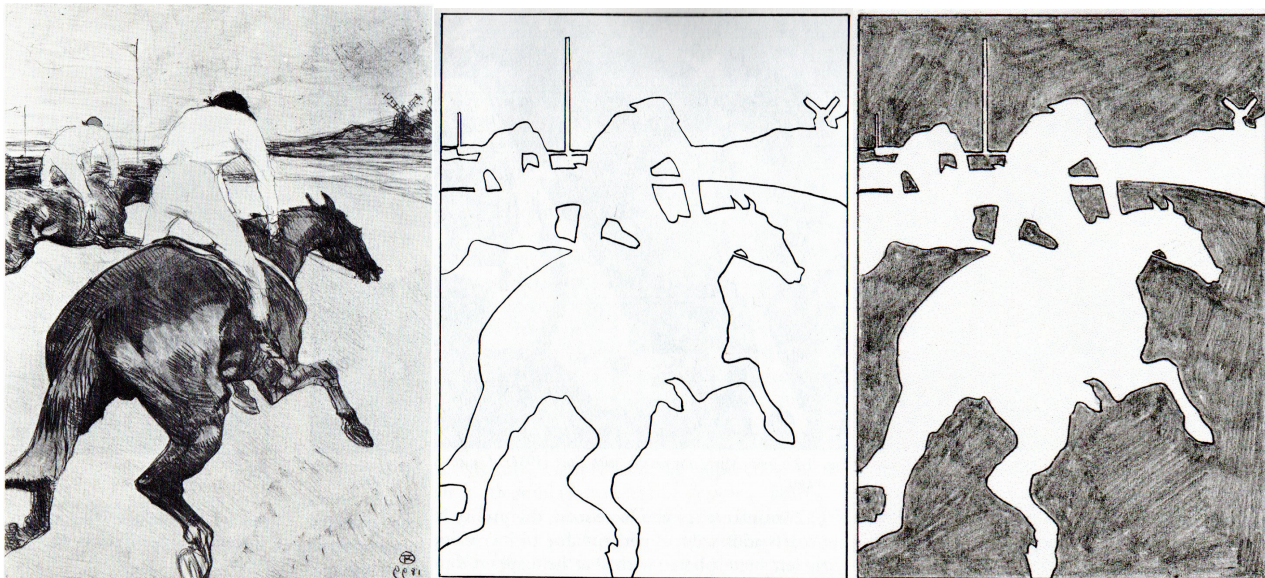
Part 2: Weekly 2 hour drawing assignments. The space beyond; Negative space.
(take more time over this exercise if you wish)

Introduction

In the last three assignments, you have looked at the accuracy and sensitivity of your line. Explored textures through touch. Experimented with mark making and format. Last week you were asked to draw on a scroll or a concertina in a room and on a journey. This was to get you to focus on objects and subjects you would not normally notice. To get you to expand your visual capacity beyond your usual visual repertoire. Today you will be drawing for a two-hour session, in total, exploring this concept further. A very different discipline to the many five, ten or thirty minute sketches you have been doing previously. Make sure you are comfortable and able to concentrate. Please note there is no PowerPoint PDF this week.

Brief

When we draw, we tend to focus on the object. You will probably notice, if you look at your drawings, that you yourself tend to focus on just the subject. You probably often take little notice of what is happening beyond. Look through any books on art and you will see that many artists tend to look at the positive subject and will ignore the surrounding space. However, if you look at the work of famous artists they consider the background with equal importance as the subject matter, it is put into context. Today I want you to focus on the 'space beyond', what is known as the 'negative space'. Not only will this help you with your accuracy regarding observation but will encourage you to be aware of the surrounding space.



Images from; Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain by Betty Edwards.

Look at the image above by Toulouse-Lautrec. Firstly, notice the way the horses are composed so that part of them is out of the image. Now look at the second image, where lines have been drawn around the subject (the horses and riders and the landscape). this is called the '*positive space*'. Now look at the spaces left that have been coloured in grey, these are called the '*negative space*'. Look at these grey shapes, they are quite abstract but far easier to look at objectively. They are easier to draw because we are not influenced by our knowledge of 'what we think we see'. For example; how we think a horse or a man riding a horse would look as opposed to how they *do look*. Take note; you can see clearly from the middle image that the line shares exactly the same space as the *positive space* and *negative space*. If it is easier to see the negative space objectively, then it is easier to draw an object more accurately. It is an obvious statement to make, that if you have not drawn the negative space correctly then the positive space will be incorrect. Use this knowledge to check your drawings.

Exercise 1; 2 hours. Drawing the negative space of a still life.

You will need an A2 sheet of paper (tape paper together if you need to), different pencil grades and/or charcoal that you can rub out easily in order to make corrections, an eraser, tape to tape your paper down and an A2 drawing board if you have one. (it is easier to work on a drawing board; you can also hold it vertically on occasions to check the image is not foreshortened)

You will need to set up a complex still life, something with lots of negative spaces. i.e. plants together, chairs all jumbled/stacked together, maybe you could go out and bringing some branches with leaves and put them in a vase so that you have the spaces showing between the leaves and the twigs. Alternatively, you could collect leaves and twigs and place them on a sheet beside you and draw the spaces. Don't make the number of spaces too many or too complicated at this stage as you only have two hours and you need to do an accurate drawing.

Look at the format of your paper and the still life you have set up, make sure you orientate your paper to fit the still life. For example, a tall vase of flowers with negative spaces between the leaves needs to be drawn on your paper set in a portrait position. (Use a view finder if it helps but make sure it is the same proportion as your drawing; if you don't know what this is, research it.)



Images left to right from fedoniaArt. An example of a negative space image in progress. Plants have been used in this example but you can use chairs or other objects.

Now get yourself comfortable for a two-hour session. Focus only on drawing the negative spaces. Look at them carefully, analyse the shapes and with care, draw them relative to each other as accurately as you can.

If you have completed your drawing within the two hours and you have time left, then you can work on the details that you can see within the negative spaces but do not draw any details on the object. You don't need to shade in your negative spaces if you don't want to, you can leave it as a line drawing. If you find you have done your negative space drawing quite quickly then do another one until you have done a two-hour stint.



Examples of images utilizing negative space; top three by Karyn Fendley, bottom sketches and watercolour study by Roger Coleman

Hand in date Midnight Sunday 1st November 2020. Scan in the usual way and put your name on the sheet.

Next week

Next week I will introduce myself on teams and do a short presentation of my work and then we will have informal tutorials in groups of six. I will send out a list of names and times sometime next week.

Below; Some examples of reportage artists, and artists utilising negative space alongside positive space in their work. You get a balance of foreground and background as opposed to the subject sitting in a space with no association with the environment they are in. It is quite a decorative method of working. Experiment with this assignment in your Reportage project, looking at backgrounds in context.



Top left to bottom right; Laura Carlin, Dasha Shishkin, Cristobel Forbes, Toulouse-Lautrec.



Above; Liz Anellie, scenes from Tanzania