Anatomy Fundamentals: The Human Figure

Drawing the human body can be broken down into a simple process of defining the angles of limbs, using blocking shapes that make up the figure and then rounding shapes by studying the effects of light and shadow.

**Step 1:** using pencil, start by drawing a horizontal and vertical line through the center of the paper. Use these guide lines for composition and for centering the figure.

**Step 2:** drawing lightly, block in the geometric shapes and angles of Adonis’ figure. Build these shapes on and around your guide lines.

**Step 3:** refine the geometric shapes by softening straight lines and hard angles. Focus only on outlines and not yet on the details.

**Step 3:** continue refining, concentrating on checking proportions. Compare the scale and size of different components so they mimic Adonis’. Check the angles on the shoulders, hips, arms, etc., in relation to one another. Redraw the outline of each area to more closely match the man depicted. Erase away any parts of your original shapes that are no longer necessary.

Benjamin West (American, 1738 – 1820), *Adonis with His Dogs*, 1800, oil on canvas. Museum purchase with funds provided by the Honorable Jefferson Patterson. 1982.3

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Step 4: study the values closely. With a darker pencil (we used a 4B) add value to areas of the figure that are shadowed. This produces a more three-dimensional and life-like look.

Helpful hint: start with the lightest tones first and press harder into the paper as you go to add darker tones.

Step 5: refine the shape and value of his clothing. Fabrics with shiny texture can be drawn with a light fold placed closely next to a dark fold. Use crisp, fine lines for more delicate fabrics. Try to vary the weight or thickness of your lines while drawing these areas.

Optional: use colored pencils to add color or draw the rest of the background!

Extra tips:
1. Use a tissue or blending stick to smooth areas of value.
2. Draw very lightly until you are committed to those marks.
3. Try a mechanical pencil for fine details.
4. Use your pencil eraser to draw white lines and a 6B or 8B pencil for extra dark lines.
5. Work area by area and concentrate your focus on just one section at a time (arms, head, chest, etc.)
6. Place a clean half-sheet of paper on areas you’ve previously shaded. This reduces the chances of smearing your work.

Questions? Email edu@daytonart.org