

WEEK
SEVEN:

What do you see?

WEEK SEVEN: DRAWING WHAT YOU SEE.

*"Draw for the love of drawing
you don't need a reason!"*

Remember when you drew as a kid? Can you remember how you didn't have any rules to follow, how you didn't feel restricted by the 'rules' of drawing, how a sun didn't have to be yellow and in the left hand corner of the page.

When you drew as a child you weren't limited by having perfectly in proportion tables and chairs, you just drew chairs and tables. And you certainly didn't care if the fingers you drew were three times bigger than the hands.

And remember our drawing like kids exercise - how fun was it to throw out all the rules and draw like a kid again?

Unfortunately I think by the time you hit primary school, these so called rules of drawing are well and truly settled in our psyche.

Thinking about last weeks exercises - the upside down drawings, the drawing of objects with out looking at our pages they are designed not only to drive you a little crazy, but they are also helping you realise two things:

1. That our drawings don't have to be perfectly proportioned and parallel masterpieces.
2. Drawing what you see is very different to drawing what you THINK you see.

SO HOW DO YOU DRAW?

Well if we start with the very obvious basics it is using your hand, holding a pen or pencil, and working on paper or canvas etc. It is your hand moving around the paper, making marks and creating a picture that may or may not (depending on your intention) resemble the scene that inspired you (whether this is an actual in real life scene or a imagined scene from your mind)

But how many times have you drawn something only to be super critical about the lines not being perfect, or that proportionally it was out of wack?

Me too! I was hyper critical - all the time.

Once I began exploring my creativity, so many of those 'rules' would pop up. You know the ones I mean right? That we need five fingers on our hands, that eyes need eyebrows. That a house is bigger than a person and a tree is bigger than a house.

One of the hardest lessons for me to relearn about creativity was learning to **BREAK THESE RULES!**

And I would read all these books on perspective and proportion to try and figure out how to draw, only to leave feeling confused, frustrated and

upset.

The change came when I read Danny Gregory's "Creative License" (which I totally recommend reading) and I ended up having an epiphany!

I realised that I didn't really draw what I saw. I drew what I thought I saw and that's why I was never happy with my drawings. I felt they always fell flat.

And I realised it didn't matter if my drawings were perfectly in proportion, or that a line wasn't perfectly parallel to another.

And it didn't matter that my faces were a bit wonky or the eyes weren't correctly positioned. And really who cared if my teapot looked more like an urn than a teapot?

IT DIDN'T MATTER!

What *did* matter was that I was drawing every day. That I was creating. That I was making my soul sigh with happiness thus I was a happier person because of it.

PROPORTION + PERSPECTIVE

So let's talk briefly about the two elephants in the room - proportion + perspective. And I say briefly because I don't believe these have anything to do with an everyday creative practice, but understanding the basics can be helpful.

Perspective refers to the technique of drawing three-dimensional images on a two-dimensional drawing plane.

Proportion refers to the principles of size, location and the amount of one element in comparison to others in a piece of art.

I cannot actually really explain to you, beyond that, how proportion or perspective works in very specific and real terms. There are thousands of books and videos on perspective and proportion, unfortunately I didn't find any that helped me understand it, but there may one that will click for you.

However I thought I would share two exercises that were helpful and very simple, and they are kinda fun! And both of them taught me the very, *very* basics of proportion and perspective

And in the end made drawing what I saw a much less stressful exercise!



7.1. ACTION: Perspective and Proportion V1: 'It's just a pen!'

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: Your notebook; a pen

I am sure you have seen some artist somewhere along the line - in real life or in a movie, squinting their eyes and moving their thumb side to side or up and down.



This may seem a little stereotypical but in very simple terms they are judging perspective and proportion.

Start by choosing a subject that has lots of angles and straightish lines, like a table or a doorway of a room, etc. And sit down in a comfy spot so that you can easily see what you are going to draw.

Your pen is going to become your virtual ruler. We are not using a real ruler, because sometimes we can become fixated on the ruler's numbers and being perfectly correct not

the actual drawing. And even if a line looks perfectly straight in reality it probably isn't.

Pick up your pen and hold so that the pen is being held vertically (straight up and down) in your finger tips. Hold it closer to the bottom end of the pen.



Now hold your pen up, your arm out, elbow locked and close one eye and move your pen up, down, side to side, vertical and horizontal, so that it runs parallel with some of the lines of what you are drawing subject. (i.e. if it is a table hold it so it is running parallel to one of the legs, the table top, etc)

Notice these three things:

1. Is your pen vertical, horizontal or laying at an angle?
2. Is the line straight or does it curve anywhere?
3. How far along the pen does your line go? Is it half a length, 2/3rds or two pen lengths long.

Now move your pen to another part of your subject, arm out, elbow locked and close the same eye. And notice those three things again.

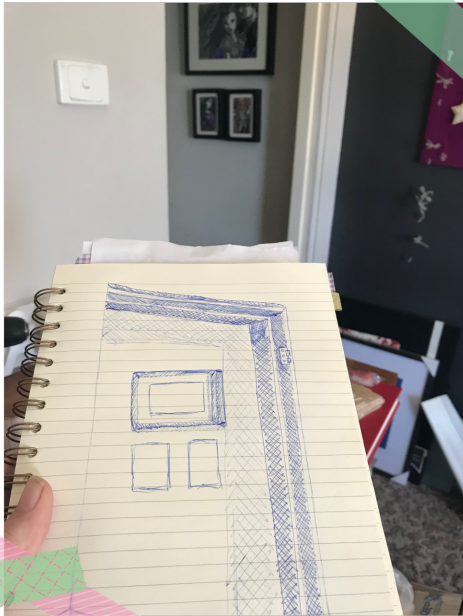
1. What angle is your pen at?
2. Is it straight or curved?
3. How many lengths is it against your pen?

And then take notice of these:

4. How long is this line compared to the last line, and
5. Where is this line in relation to your first line?

Study a couple of angles of your subject, their lengths, their relationships to other lines, and then open your notebook to a random page.

Remember our upside down drawings? How we looked at each part as a line, curve or squiggle, not naming body parts and concentrated on each line until we finished our drawing?



We want to take this mindset into today's exercise as well. We aren't naming parts that we are drawing (i.e. this is a table top, and this is a door frame) we are drawing lines that are angled from this line to that line, and we have a squiggle here and there.

Look over your subject again and choose a line to start from.

Sitting in your chair, you will hold your pen up, arm out, elbow locked and close your chosen eye and study the line. Then you draw that line on your page.

Choose the next line, noticing its relationship to your previous line and its length compared to the first line, its angle draw etc, and draw that line. Keep going - measuring, drawing lines, until you are finished.

YOU MAY ASK? Do you need to keep your elbow locked or the same eye shut? Yes! Just experiment for a minute - relax your arm, is the measurement different? And if you close your other eye, is the angle different? Yes.

And it is easier to keep your arm straight than to just the same elbow bend each time you go to measure!

Little Bitch Buster:

I can draw a door! It is just four straight lines!

Resist the urge to draw what you think you see. We all know doors are four lines but depending where you are they are angled and not all even. And what about the door jam? That isn't straight. Or where the door is warped from years of use?

A door isn't only made up of four straight lines.

Make measured and deliberate lines, stopping to take into account each lines relationship to the last.

DON'T make a mark with out first asking our questions from the exercise above.

7.2. ACTION: Perspective and Proportion V2:

USE A VIEWING PANE.

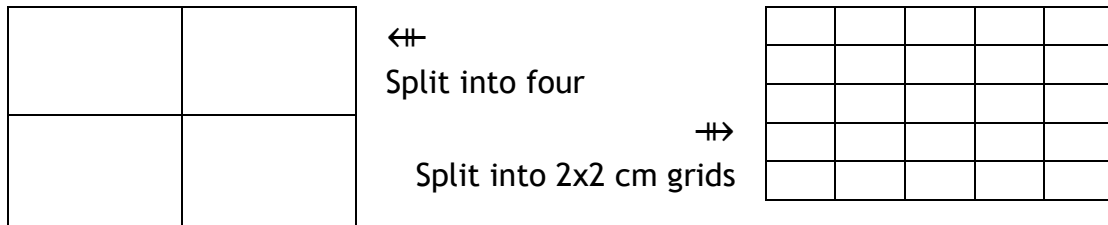
Time: 10- 15 minutes

Equipment: an overhead projector sheet, or acetate
Sheet or a laminator sleeve (laminated clear)
Permanent marker + ruler

Essentially we are making a portable viewing pane (or grid) that will help you to draw in proportion and perspective easily.

Overhead projector sheets are great for this exercise; however, you can laminate a sleeve with nothing in it. The plastic backs from bound books are great too.

You can make a couple of viewing panes in different sizes, but start off with two a4 page sized panes. Using a permanent marker grid your first plastic sheet into four and the second one into a grid of 2cm x 2cm squares.



Choose one of the grids and draw the same grid on your paper, so if you are using the four grids draw the four grids on your paper.

(Keep in mind. If you are not using paper the same size as your grid you may need to scale your grid sizes)

You can use a piece of blue tack you to prop viewing pane up and view your drawing subject through it. Then picking a square to start in, start by transferring lines and shapes onto your paper.

Again we are only thinking what we see through our viewing pane, as just lines and shapes and thinking about their relationship to the next square or the next.



Little Bitch Buster:

“But this is cheating”

If this is what your little Bitch is uttering then let me set it straight.

This is not cheating, this is just another artistic tool in your arsenal, and many of the ‘greats’ like Van Gough etc. used this tip to sketch out their paintings!

While you can use this technique to transfer from photo’s or pictures, for the first couple of times, use this technique on something in real life - like a kids toy, a doorway, your hand etc.

7.3 REFLECTION: Create your Drawing List

Time: 5 minutes

Equipment: Your notebook; a pen

On a double page spread in your notebook, (you can make it prettier, by smooching some paint around, or sticking some stickers on it, or decorating it how ever you like)

Write down the numbers one to thirty, and then list thirty things that you can easily access to draw in the next thirty days.

This may include things like:

a tea cup	a tea pot	food
kids toys	an electrical device	a remote control
glasses	water bottles	decorations
jars/ vases	scissors	pens
paint brushes	books	etc...

Alternatively you can use my list that I made when I did this exercise.

It doesn't matter which list you end up using, but for the next week and beyond, draw something that you can see from your list. Which brings us to the next exercise.

7.4 FUN: DRAW SOMETHING EVERYDAY.

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: Your notebook + pen.

As part of our commitment contract from week four to create every day you are going to draw something every day that is RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU.

You are not going to think about perspective, parallel lines, how in proportion it is or if it looks like a giant hot mess.

YOU DON'T CARE - YOU'RE JUST GOING TO DRAW IT!

There are three very important rules for this exercise:

1. Use a biro/ pen - Do not use a pencil or an eraser. You don't have to be okay with the final drawings - it took me some time to be happy with my imperfect drawings, but please resist the temptation to erase lines.

Own your imperfections because they are beautiful - I pinky swear!

2. Draw **something you see**. Use your list of 30 things to draw inspiration from and by the way if you draw the fork five times in a row that is ok too!

3. One your drawings should be done in a **public place**.

OK. Don't freak out on me. And I know this is going to freak some of you out. Because it totally freaked me out too. Which of course leads me to your...

Little Bitch Buster

Drawing in public is not easy to do. In fact even though I carried my notebook around with me with the intention of drawing in public I can honestly tell you it took me close to a year to actually draw in public.

My little bitch was going bananas about this one. She was absolutely and positively 'No way José, you are freaking nuts if you think we are doing this'....

Logically I know this was done with love and protection in mind. She was protecting me. *Bless her heart.*

But I also realized that my little bitch wasn't protecting me. Instead she was limiting me.

How did I overcome this creative block? Very slowly and in little increments!

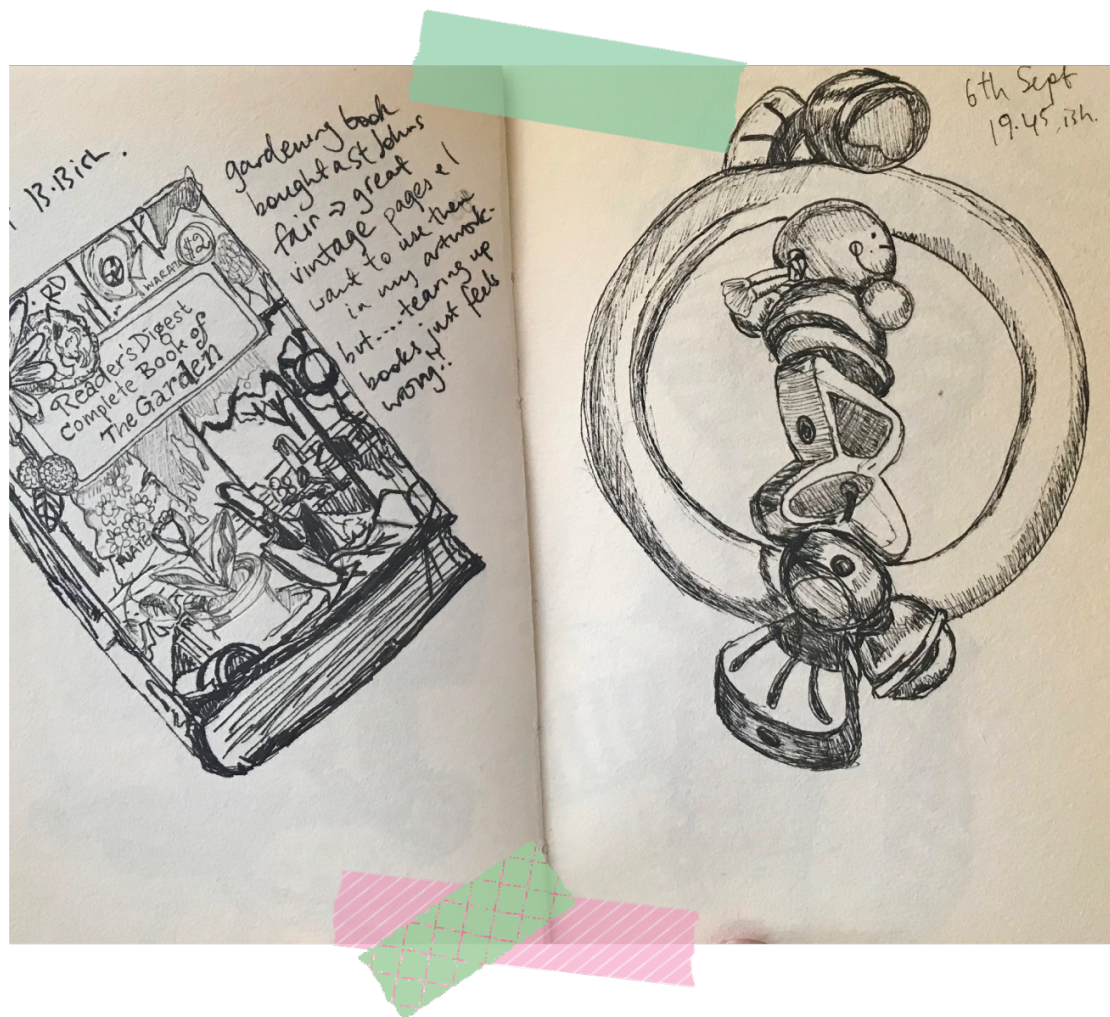
- I took my notebook everywhere. It was as essential as my driver's license. It had to be in my bag before I walked out the door.
- The next step was to take my notebook out of my bag when I was having a coffee, or at the park with the kids. I sat it in my lap on the train or at dance class. I didn't open it - not for a long time!
- I would draw in it in front of the kids at home. They are my favourite critics because everything I drew was awesome! They are so non-judgmental. They'd asked me what I was doing, say cool and wander off.
- I drew in front of Mac: He was like 'whacha doing?' I'd mumble 'drawing' hiding behind my sketchbook. He'd say 'Ok' and return to watching TV.
- The first time I drew in actual public I grabbed a drive through coffee + sat in the car in a secluded area. Maybe not such a great idea now I think back on it! But what about the car park at the beach, the Play Park or shopping mall. Everyone is too busy to think about what you're drawing in the car.
- I sat in our front yard and drew. Now my street isn't busy, but it has enough traffic that a couple of people drove and walked past. I had my headphones in and just drew.
- I sat in the play park at a fast food restaurant and drew while my kids were playing. It was pouring with rain and there was hardly anyone around. Just my kids and me.

- Finally I sat in the same fast food restaurant - not in the play park this time but in the dining room and I drew.

Because I took these gradual steps my inner bitch didn't have a huge freak out. Because I didn't go from wanting to draw to drawing in public the very next day she didn't shut me down.

With gradual steps and pushing a little more each time and eventually you will be sitting in a crowded park sketching the scene in front of you.

And the biggest thing I realised during this exercise was that nobody cared. No one was interested in my sketchbook - they had their own lives that were far more interesting than what I was doing!



paste this in your notebook:

- 
1. your shoes
 2. your breakfast
 3. a book you're reading
 4. your tv/ phone/ computer/ ipad etc
 5. your favourite mug
 6. a shell
 7. a pen
 8. a nicknack
 9. a kids toy
 10. a card
 11. a shop sign
 12. whats on your bedside table/ coffee table
 13. earrings
 14. a painting/ photo on your wall
 15. a bottle of water/ beer/ wine
 16. a drink you ordered
 17. your knives, forks and spoons
 18. a chair
 19. a teapot/ coffee machine
 20. your jar of pens
 21. paintbrushes/ paints etc
 22. something in your bedroom
 23. something in your bathroom
 24. your steering wheel
 25. something in your garden
 26. an ingredient used in dinner
 27. glasses/ contact lense case
 28. something you collect
 29. a rock/ flower or leaf
 30. what's out your window.