



Pencils & Perception Lesson #7*

Collisions and Transitions: *Light and dark*

Time: 20 minutes

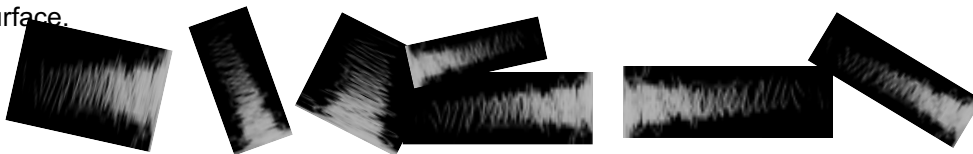
Materials: 4B Pencil and white paper

So far you have been learning about lines, directions, intersections and constellations. It is time to learn about light and dark or the scale of light and dark. Artists use the full scale or range of light running from lightest light to darkest dark to express depth, movement, variety, drama, and balance.

In this lesson you will learn how to make light and dark collide and thus create high contrast or drama. You will also learn how to make smooth transitions from dark to light. When light and dark gradually blend you have low contrast or transitions. Round surfaces like tree trunks and arms exhibit transitions.



Your brain interprets the scale of light in very specific ways. Light appears to come toward you, while dark appears to move back and away from you. The artist manipulates this duality to create a sense of space or depth on a flat surface.



EXERCISE:

1. Press a 4B pencil firmly, making heavy, smooth black strokes. Lighten the pressure of the pencil gradually until you blend into the white of the paper. Don't be afraid to make your black really black! Go over it several times. Learn to manipulate your pencil to get the darkest dark possible and to lighten up gradually to produce what looks like a little tornado. We'll call it a scale.
2. Make another scale somewhere else on your paper. And another. And another. After about 10 minutes stand back and look at your drawing. Ask three questions: 1. Did you use the full spectrum of black to white in each scale? 2. Are your scales smoothly blended? 3. Is your black really black? If not, go back and blend so your eye sees a smooth transition and a rich black.
3. Now change your focus. Look at the paper and see if you can make some of the scales thick and some thin, some wide, some narrow, some long/short, some curved/straight. While drawing imagine light flowing through you, exciting your bloodstream, quickening your cells.
4. Now change your focus again. This time focus on the empty white areas in between the scales. Look for areas that are beginning to take on the appearance of shapes. The background now becomes foreground. Negative space becomes positive space. Use the scale of light to tone around and away from one or two sides of a white space. Press firmly at the edge of a white space, gradually lifting as you move away from it. In this way the white areas take on a more definite form.
5. Make sure you have at least several intense collisions—white paper colliding against blackest black.
6. You have just completed an abstract pencil drawing! Congratulations! You can apply this lessons learned in this abstract drawing to any representational drawing. Good job! And happy drawing in the future.

*See pages 47-52 of *Drawing as a Sacred Activity*, by Heather C. Williams