

Basic 101: Class 11 That Ol' Black Charcoal

As we further progress into this course you are going to find that we will be using other interesting media to enhance our drawings. That being said: At anytime that you do NOT own, cannot afford, or DO NOT want to draw in the course's prescribed media, then feel free to follow along in pencil or in another medium of your choice. For now, break out the Kingston grills and dig in a grab yourself a hand full of charcoal.

There are many different types of charcoal so your choice will be determined by what kind of effect that you want to achieve. At this point, I would advise keeping a spare sheet of paper handy that you can "try out" on before proceeding on to an actual drawing. In the illustration of my "strange fruit" I did just this—I got a feel for using the vine charcoal which I used for this lesson. Doing this little thing, will save you hours of heartbreak and pointless backtracking.

Also, if you are using a scanner and have not yet applied fixative to your drawing, place a sheet of acetate or any clear transparency sheet onto the bed of your scanner and then GENTLY lay you drawing face down on top of the acetate/transparency. This will protect your scanner bed and scanner's internal working from the charcoal dust.

Types of Charcoal:

For this course, I am using Vine Charcoal exclusively but charcoal can also be found in sticks of various sizes and degrees of hardness. Charcoal can be in sticks or in pencil form in varying degrees of softness to hardness—just like graphite!!! You can also get powdered charcoal, which lends itself nicely to cover large areas and will allow you to gently "paint" some areas for nice pastel-like effects.

Erasers and Blenders: Charcoal is versatile enough to allow you to produce an endless amount of strokes and coupled with the blenders and erasers, you can do pretty much anything that comes to mind with charcoal., I use toilet paper or Kleenex or my fingers—several WC members use cotton swabs to achieve some startling realistic effects. Some people like to use tortillions or paper stumps. Experiment and see what works for you.

Papers: Paper choices are endless as you all know. For this exercise I am using Canson Mi Tientes pastel paper. You can use either white or toned paper—again the choice is really yours. Many artists prefer toned paper. Remember that some papers have a different front surface from the back surface. Mi Tientes Papers generally have a rough side and a smooth side. I tend to use the smooth side as a matter of preference.

Fixative: I use Winsor Newton or Kryolan Fixatives. Both are toxic so use open air ventilation or, better yet, spray your fixatives outside. Spray ACROSS your drawing not straight down into it. This will avoid soaking your drawing.

The Demonstrations:

1. The first picture that you see is of an anonymous fruit—it is of no particular breed—just something from my imagination. This is not a demonstration piece—it is more like a friendly hello from me to the charcoal. I made this piece as a way of getting a feel for the charcoal. I used both black and white charcoal. I wholeheartedly encourage you to do the same.

2. The second series is of a set of stools. I just quickly sketched the stools in regular pencil and then developed it as a light tonal drawing to serve as a MAP for my work with the charcoal. Notice in the drawing that I also use WHITE charcoal. White charcoal is very interesting. I use it as a highlighter and then I also use it as a blender. To use it as a blender, simply make your black charcoal line and then with your white charcoal pencil simply PULL down starting from the black line. You will get darker tones running to gray running to lighter tones. There is a second reason for this particular demonstration and that is to take advantage of the negative spaces created between the rungs of the stools. The cast shadows are left free of charcoal while the floor is white and a deep black charcoal background is developed to help push the stools forward.

3. Finally, in the next demonstration, I have drawn in a light basic sketch a sheep's skull. In this demonstration, I am using a lighter cream toned paper for this demonstration. The side of the paper that I am using is smooth. I develop the graphite sketch a little further so that I have a tonal map to follow. If you are using a darker paper like black you will want to do your sketch in white charcoal pencil. Moving on, I take a piece of vine charcoal and mark off the darkest areas. Wherever I make a dark stroke, I generally follow ABOVE it with a white stroke. If you make the white over your graphite, you will get a chalky looking gray. This is ok. In this demo, I blended the drawing using my fingers. If your fingers are oily or they tend to perspire do NOT use your fingers as all you will do is just lift off the charcoal. Once the blending is completed, I go back and touch up the darker tones and try to make sure that all of the marks are nicely blended. Finally, I add the fixative and I am finished.

You may copy these demonstrations for yourself if you want but if you are daring, try some of the photos that I have included with this class. Also, note that I am starting a new Field Trip Series that will feature WC artists who excel at the topic discussed. This will enable you to visualize the possibilities of your medium. Happy drawing!!!!

FEATURED ARTIS SERIES: FIELD TRIP DEMONSTRATIONS IN CHARCOAL:

Nancy Anthony (WC Member)

<http://www.wetcanvas.com/forums/showthread.php?t=127070>

<http://www.wetcanvas.com/forums/showthread.php?t=126846>

<http://www.wetcanvas.com/forums/showthread.php?t=127852>

<http://www.wetcanvas.com/forums/showthread.php?t=111165>

You can see more of Ms. Anthony's work at

<http://www.nancyanthony.com>

Attached Thumbnails



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