

Choosing a location

This drawing was sketched on a public beach. *En plein air* – meaning 'open (in full) air' – is more often applied to painting outdoors, but can be applied here, too. This method of drawing the figure contrasts with the other poses in the book. Nothing is predetermined or formal. The artist relies on what she finds.

Selecting locations where you're likely to see the human form in a more natural state is a good idea. The beach is an ideal scenario. Take your drawing materials to places where others are likely to be relaxed, where the positions they maintain are going to be varied, but held long enough to get some observational drawing done. The main challenge when working outside is one's own preparation – what equipment to take, where to set up, environmental conditions and perhaps onlookers.

JYLIAN GUSTLIN

What method you select to draw your subject will be influenced by what they might be doing (or about to do), how far away they are, and maybe how aware of you they are. The lines here are flowing, continuous, searching. Some are more defined than others. Areas of tone have been hastily drawn and smudged in.

One could play safe when out and about and draw with the basics – pencil on paper. This artist has used charcoal and pastel, too. The drawing is richer as a result. These materials can be purchased in pencil as well as in stick form, which makes it easy to keep yourself, your drawing kit and your work clean and transportable.

DRAWING 4
Medium: Charcoal, pastel, pencil



An expressive pose

PHILLIP DVORAK

There are works in this book that explore expressive mark-making. This drawing places as much emphasis on the pose itself being expressive, with the model placing his hands behind and over his bent head. This kind of unconventional, contorted body shape owes much to the work of the early 20th-century Austrian artist Egon Schiele. Seeking out, viewing and analysing the works of well-known figurative artists can often proffer new ways of approaching life drawing. I'd recommend visual research from a primary source whenever possible – seeing drawings, paintings and sculptures firsthand in museums and galleries whenever you can.

Dvorak's style of drawing is definitely his own. His method is to use compressed charcoal (blacker than willow/vine charcoal) to map out an outline of the model. He's interested in cropped compositions where that outline goes off the edge so that the figure is not contained within the boundaries of the paper. He's used

his fingertips to drag passages of charcoal within the outline. Some of these marks are lines but on a much broader scale. They're used to draw the spine, and also to block in areas of tone – on the fingers, under the arm, and for the deeply black hair. Dvorak has an individual style of adding fingertip swirls to his work, too – a patterning that extends beyond the model's pose and into the negative white space around it. (Compare with Marilyn Kalish's expressive marks on page 131 and Mirco Marcacci's surface patterning on page 189.)

Twisted poses, with arms held aloft, are not easy for a model to hold for long periods of time. Dvorak only took twenty minutes to complete this drawing. He is lucky enough to have the confidence, experience and considerable drafting skills to do so.

UNTITLED (MALE NUDE) 6
Medium: Charcoal



Speed drawings

A sketchbook, soft pencil and broad-tipped felt-tip pen was all the drawing kit Tomlinson needed to achieve these reportage-type drawings while on the beach in Italy. (See page 154 for more on reportage.) There's much to be gained by not over-complicating what's required for the making of good figure drawings. The relaxed ambience of the scene, and the artist's own part in it, is reflected in her fuss-free approach.

Using a hardback sketchbook like this one means the drawing surface is a stable one. It's possible to draw standing up – although I'm fairly sure that like those around her, the artist sketched in a much more casual position. A softer graphite pencil has allowed her to create a variety of line qualities – thin and thick and grey through black – simply by varying the weight with which she handled it. There's a real urgency to some of the lines. Tomlinson wanted to capture the basic characteristics of individual postures or movements before the moment was lost. Speed was of the essence.

KATIE LOUISE TOMLINSON

The artist hasn't concerned herself with tone in this collection of drawings. We can assume that the scene was brightly lit by the overhead sun, so any subtle shadows have been minimised. What she has done instead is use a red felt-tip pen to pick out details like bikini patterns, swimming shorts and deckchairs. She only used it to draw one figure. Let's hope that's not because he was sunburnt!

Compare these drawings with those by Deanna Staffo on page 31. Tomlinson hasn't tried to describe the environment of the figures. However, the cream paper and multiple drawings allude to a crowded beach, and so are similarly successful.

PEOPLE ON THE BEACH
Medium: Pen, graphite

