

Portland State University

PDXScholar

Dissertations and Theses

Dissertations and Theses

5-1-1970

Life drawing in the secondary classroom

Marilyn Jean Anderson
Portland State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open_access_etds

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Anderson, Marilyn Jean, "Life drawing in the secondary classroom" (1970). *Dissertations and Theses*. Paper 647.


<https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.647>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.


AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Marilyn Jean Anderson for the
Master of Arts in Teaching presented May 19, 1970.


Title: Life Drawing in the Secondary Classroom

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:


Fred Kline, Chairman


Leonard Kimbrell


James Hibbard


Craig Cheek

Life drawing presents some of the most difficult problems in the school art program: the difficulty of securing models, the necessity of using only the clothed model, and the resistance of many students to this particular discipline. The students' confidence in their own drawing abilities is at its nadir during early adolescence, and they become easily discouraged when faced with a live model as a subject.

This thesis represents an effort to deal with these problems in a manner suited to the age and maturity level of the students. In order to build their self confidence, basic drawing skills and techniques are emphasized and the work is designed to afford them maximum

1

success. Based on the premise that the quality of student art work will show greater improvement if they enjoy what they are doing, much effort is made to present interesting and challenging projects. Emphasis is shifted away from the figure itself at first, and placed upon the clothing instead. The more difficult aspects of figure drawing are approached gradually as the need arises.

The work was designed for secondary and junior high school elective art classes. It was tested on a group of eighth grade students on the assumption that most of the problems involved are somewhat magnified at that level. The entire unit involved nine weeks of class work.

In some areas the results were successful. The more visually minded students exhibited much improvement in perception and drawing skills. Those less visually minded displayed enthusiasm for several of the projects which had been planned specifically for them, but they generally showed less improvement. Nine weeks proved to be rather a long period of time for such a unit, and enthusiasm lessened somewhat during the last two weeks.

It was concluded that although the project generally accomplished its goals, perhaps the goals themselves should be re-evaluated. Few students seemed to sense much relevance in learning to draw the human figure as an end in itself. This experience seemed to suggest that the use of life drawing as a vehicle for the expression of ideas and feelings might provide a wider base of motivation.

LIFE DRAWING IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM

by

MARILYN JEAN ANDERSON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING

in

ART

Portland State University

1970

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of

Marilyn Jean Anderson presented May 19, 1970.

[REDACTED]

Fred Kline, Chairman

[REDACTED]

Leonard Kimbrell

[REDACTED]

James Hibbard

[REDACTED]

Craig Cheshire

APPROVED:

[REDACTED]

Frederick H. Heidel, Head, Department of Art

[REDACTED]

Frank I. Roberts, Acting Dean of Graduate Studies

May 19, 1970

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
CHAPTER	
I DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM	1
II A SUGGESTED APPROACH TO THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM	4
III METHODS AND TECHNIQUES'	6
I. Basic Proportions of the Figure	6
II. Gesture and Motion	11
III. Expression of Character	14
IV. Student Evaluation	22
IV CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	24
I. Evaluation of the Basic Approach	24
II. Evaluation of Techniques and Methods	28
III. Recommendations	37
LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED	40
PHOTOGRAPHS OF LIFE DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR	41

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. The figure as a tree by a haptic student	31
2. The figure as a tree by a visually minded student . . .	31
3. Early drawing by a visually minded student	31
4. Later drawing by the same student as Figure 3	31
5. Early drawing by a haptic student	32
6. Later drawing by the same student as Figure 5	32
7. Early drawing by an average student	33
8. Later drawing by the same student as Figure 7	33
9. Early drawing by a haptic student, showing un- conscious exaggeration of the head	34
10. Drawing by an average student, showing intentional exaggeration of the feet	34
11. Caricature by an average student	35
12. Studies of a head by a visually minded student	35
13. Self portrait by a visually minded student	36
14. Self portrait by an average student	36

CHAPTER I

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

Most artists and art educators agree that figure drawing is a basic component of any course in drawing and painting. An indication of its place in art is stated by Edward Hill in his book, The Language of Drawing:

The nude is a principal school of form. An overwhelming multiplicity of forms encompass us and all have bearing on the creative mind. Can we justifiably single out the human body as the first school? Yes, for two reasons: the working principles of construction, articulation, proportion, diversity, and unity which drawing can disclose in the nude, . . . are an analogue of essential form, a key to understanding all form; and the second reason, the human body is the physical center of our world.¹

In life drawing classes in art schools and colleges the nude model is often considered by the students in much the same way as a still-life setup or a landscape motif, devoid of individuality, emotional overtones, and personality. On the secondary school level, however, a different attitude is evident, for here the art classes are not composed exclusively of serious, career-oriented students of art. These students' attitudes range from deep involvement to utter indifference, and it is a continual challenge to the instructor to find new means of generating enthusiasm and interest; for if these ingredients are not

¹Edward Hill, The Language of Drawing (New Jersey, 1966), p. 92.

present, the quality of the students' learning experience generally suffers. A means must be found to help the student to relate to the model; to help him view the drawing of the human figure as a necessary, important, and enjoyable part of his artistic and perhaps personal development.

The fact that nude models cannot be used in the classroom has usually been considered a limitation. The problem of drawing the figure is compounded when it is hidden from view by clothing, and students encounter much difficulty in trying to visualize the structure that underlies the clothing and gives it form.

During early adolescence, young peoples' confidence in their own abilities in drawing, especially in figure drawing, is at a low point. Lowenfeld characterizes this as:

an intermediate stage, in which the individual has already lost the connection with his childish way of symbolic representation and has not yet found confidence in his own conscious approach. Through the strong desire of establishing a conscious approach, however, the child loses temporarily the subjective attitude toward his own creations. With this loss, the confidence in his world of imagination is shaken This period in which the youth has neither an unconscious childish nor a conscious approach of self-expression is marked by a very profound crisis which sometimes shakes the whole self-confidence. This is the reason why so many individuals stop their creative work at this period.²

The art instructor must try to help them to restore this confidence, to learn to coordinate their eyes and hands. They must learn to really look at the things in their visual world, and to see analytically.

²Viktor Lowenfeld, Creative and Mental Growth (New York, 1952), p. 230, 231.

ically. Finally, the instructor should guide them in the choice and use of drawing materials which are appropriate to different problems and techniques.

CHAPTER II

A SUGGESTED APPROACH TO THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

One way to meet the set of circumstances described in Chapter I is to alter the approach to the concept of figure drawing, converting apparent restrictions into possible advantages. Since it is necessary to use a clothed model, the instructor can capitalize upon the adolescent's natural interest in and preoccupation with standards of dress and appearance. By shifting the emphasis away from the figure itself and focusing upon the clothing and decoration, the approach becomes more casual and students relax more as they experience less frustration and more success. As they concentrate upon the proportions, shapes, and styles of clothing, the figure, although seemingly secondary in importance, develops less self-consciously.

In a unit of work based upon this premise, the accent is placed upon a novel approach to figure drawing, rather than upon accuracy or draftsmanship. To contribute to this end, a variety of simple media are employed, both singly and in combinations; and a number of different approaches and techniques utilizing drapery are suggested.

The unit is initiated with a few exercises in observing and measuring the basic proportions of the figure, and the relationships of its various parts. It is the opinion of this writer that most students at the age level involved here feel a desire and need for some specific guides in establishing the proportions of the figure on the paper be-

fore directing their attention to finer points of contour, gesture, detail, or technique. This is admittedly an arbitrary starting point, but one which helped to promote self-confidence and encourage students to make further observations.

As the course of study progresses and students gain more confidence, the emphasis gradually shifts from the clothing back to the figure itself. During the unit more elementary principles of composition and design are included as they relate to the clothed figure.

The unit was designed primarily for high school art classes; however, it was not possible to test the validity of this approach with such a group. Instead, the unit was used with a class of eighth grade art students, selected at random from five such groups. It is hoped that the concept would prove equally useful in the upper grades.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The basic unit of figure drawing, using the clothed model, has been divided into four areas of concentration which are intended to develop simultaneously the students' elementary drawing skills and their enthusiasm for figure drawing.

I. BASIC PROPORTIONS OF THE FIGURE

The primary element of drawing to be explored in this introductory section is line. It is used simply in the first assignments, to express outline. Pencil is an appropriate medium, as it is the most familiar and comfortable to the student.

Project 1.

The first assignment is of a diagnostic nature, so that the student can be helped to assess his own strengths and weaknesses. A boy was selected to serve as model, and the class drew his outline as accurately as they could. Results were not displayed, as criticism at this point was considered undesirable; but common errors in proportions were observed and pointed out on a generalized basis. Drawings were saved for comparison with later work.

Project 2.

It will be found that some errors in proportions are common to a

large percentage of students at this age level: hands and feet are drawn too small, arms too short, shoulders too wide, leaving a large space between arms and torso. The simplified shapes of the clothing itself minimized these problems, but in order to demonstrate correct size relationships, a student was selected to stand with his back against a large sheet of butcher paper while another student traced around his figure with a felt pen. Using a yardstick, the instructor demonstrated the proportions of the traced figure by measuring them. Emphasis was placed upon the major divisions and relationships only. Nicolaides' system of proportions was used as outlined in his book, The Natural Way to Draw.³

Project 3.

Nicolaides' system as described above was the basis for an initial assignment in drawing correct proportions. A grid was designed to be superimposed upon the model by means of an overhead projector. Vertical and horizontal center lines were drawn on acetate, the horizontal serving as the mid-point of the figure. The top half was divided into thirds, representing the divisions of head, chest, and abdomen, and the lower half was divided into half again. A model was placed before a white background and the grid was then projected onto his figure. Students could then compare the proportions and draw them onto a similar grid on their paper.

Students first drew the model in a frontal pose, eliminating de-

³Kimon Nicolaides, The Natural Way to Draw (Boston, 1941), pp. 106, 107.

tails such as features, and emphasizing the clothing. The grid served as an aid in blocking in the correct proportions. This system proved very successful, as any size student could act as the model, and the grid could be adjusted on the projector to fit perfectly.

The model was also posed with the projected grid for a back view and a profile, then in varied seated positions. In order to keep the attention on clothing and minimize problems in drawing hands, feet, and faces, a boy wore a jacket, trousers, shoes, gloves, and a cap. This amount of clothing nearly completed the figure, and the only part left out was the face.

The process was later repeated with a girl model, and differences in proportions were discussed. Hair can be included to frame a featureless face, and knee-length stockings provide a transition from short skirts to shoes.

Project 4.

When students had sufficiently mastered basic proportions of clothing related to their own age group, clothing ensembles were introduced which are appropriate to other age groups. The articles were pinned to a bulletin board, some were arranged upon makeshift forms. The students sketched one-piece sleepers for an infant, a snow suit for a small child, and a pair of men's overalls, which were displayed in such a manner.

During the course of this exercise a few basic drawing techniques were introduced. The students experimented with different ways of holding the pencil and compared the resulting lines. The emphasis was upon outline only, but different kinds of lines were explored as they express

outline: the heavy, dark line to emphasize important features, lighter lines for details, and use of the side of the pencil to indicate folds or perhaps texture of fabric.

Possibly due to their lack of self confidence, many students tend to produce very small drawings, poorly placed in the format. In this assignment they were requested to draw the groups of clothing large enough to fill a 12" x 18" sheet of newsprint. To help them in composing their pictures, the articles pinned to the bulletin board were outlined with strips of tape which served as frames to correspond to the edges of their paper.

Project 5.

An unusual, interesting clothing ensemble was presented to the class. Each student selected one part of the costume which he wished to emphasize, and the proportions of the whole were distorted so that that particular part was exaggerated. The assignment was executed with a B-5 Speedball pen on fingerpaint paper as a change from the pencil, and the results of a line of uniform thickness and darkness were compared with the previous assignment. Most students insisted upon using a few preliminary pencil guide lines, but responded with enthusiasm to the use of ink.

Project 6.

As a transitional exercise from simple proportions to the following study of gesture, each student was given a lump of plasticene clay from which he fashioned a simply clothed figure. They found quickly that they could not rely wholly upon their brief experience with relation-

ships to insure the accuracy of the proportions, and they took turns acting as models for each other. When the figures were completed satisfactorily, students bent them into a variety of positions, compared the proportions, and sketched the different poses.

Charcoal was selected for this exercise, as its soft edged, smudging qualities seemed to express the plasticity of the clay. Although no mention was made of modeling the figures in light and dark, the students naturally and un-self-consciously blended the charcoal lines to represent their clay "models".

This exercise was especially enjoyed by the haptic type of student. In identifying the two types of critical awareness, Lowenfeld defines them as follows: "The child who refers mainly to visual experiences, we call the visual type; the other, who refers more to subjective feelings as body feelings, muscle sensations, or kinesthetic experiences, we call the haptic type."⁴ He also mentions the fact that "Most people fall between these two extreme types. Investigations have proved, however, that only few individuals have equal amounts of visual and haptic predisposition."⁵ In this thesis, those individuals who exhibit neither of the extreme characteristics, haptic or visual, will be referred to as average.

In the case of the exercise under discussion, the physical act of working with the clay was pleasant for the haptic ones, and the fact

⁴Lowenfeld, Creative and Mental Growth, p. 230.

⁵Lowenfeld, p. 232.

that their drawings were made from a clay model they had constructed instead of a live figure appeared to lessen their frustrations and fear of failure.

II. GESTURE AND MOTION

Project 1.

As an introduction to an exercise in gesture drawing, several master drawings were displayed and discussed. Delacroix's "Sultan on Horseback" and "Mounted Arab Attacking a Panther", and Daumier's familiar "Clown" are good examples of the free, scribbled lines used to express movement and gesture.

A model was dressed in clothing with a bold striped pattern, and students drew the "gesture" of the stripes themselves with broad felt pens. 18" x 24" paper encouraged larger, freer drawings, and the poses were quick and active. The stripes helped to focus upon the basic lines of movement of the figure.

Project 2.

For this assignment, charcoal, black chalk, or Conté crayon can be used to introduce form and augment the pure line. Large manila paper provides a ground with a suitable tooth or texture.

Several students took turns serving as models, in ordinary clothing. The class members were directed to draw the major shape of the figure, emphasizing the movement of the pose with the flat side of the chalk. No emphasis was placed upon modeling; the chalk merely described the mass of the figure, not the light and dark patterns. Later, nylon

pens were used for accents to define contour.

Two models were posed together for a study in which their gestures were related. Students greeted this activity with exceptional enthusiasm and a high degree of success.

Later the materials were reversed, and students used white chalk on black paper. A spotlight proved to be an excellent aid to heighten contrast and minimize secondary light sources. The chalk was used to describe the highlights only, and it helped some students to learn to simplify and select only the most significant movements of the figure.

Project 3.

This exercise was designed to serve as a further aid to the non-visual or haptic students.

A model was directed to assume a rather active pose in which the body was twisted and arms were outstretched. Students were encouraged to assume the same pose and to "feel" the pose, then do a gesture drawing, using the model. A variety of poses were tried in this manner: relaxed and tense, reclining and standing, sitting, crouching, and kneeling. The empathy gained by experiencing for oneself how a position feels seemed to contribute towards a more expressive gesture drawing.

Project 4.

The purposes of this exercise are several: (1) To relate gestures or movements of the human figure to those of other forms, (2) to exercise the imagination and encourage inventiveness, and (3) to inject an attitude of playfulness and pure enjoyment into a unit of work that is rather

taxing at this age level.

The instructor discussed with the class the relationships of the human figure and its environment. An effort was made to demonstrate that the skills gained in life drawing and study of drapery are transferable to the handling of other subjects such as still life and landscape. Sample drawings from Wigg's Introduction to Figure Drawing were shown by the use of an opaque projector: the figure as landscape, as stone, as vegetable form, as a tree, and as cloud patterns.⁶

Two students were posed in reclining positions on a counter-height area and the students were directed to draw them in such a way that the resulting pictures could be interpreted either as two reclining human figures or as a mountain landscape. They were allowed their choice of pencil, charcoal, or pen and ink. Clothing can contribute greatly to this type of drawing exercise. For example, patterns in fabrics can become tilled fields, rough textures can indicate distant wooded mountains, and folds and creases can be interpreted as hills and valleys.

For those who wished to make a second drawing, another student posed as a tree.

This project turned out to be the most enjoyable one in the entire course for some students, and the percentage of successful efforts was unusually high.

⁶Philip R. Wigg, Introduction to Figure Drawing (Dubuque, Iowa, 1967), pp. 84 - 87.

III. EXPRESSION OF CHARACTER

Having gained some skill in preceding exercises, the attention of the students was next directed toward the graphic expression of character and personality. The approach, consistent with the theme of the entire unit, was through clothing and accessories, and the ways in which outward appearance both is, and at times is not indicative of a person's true character.

An introductory class discussion was held in which common sayings and quotations, often contradictory, were included. "You can't judge a book by its cover" and "Clothes make the man" were two that were mentioned.

The first several projects were designed to allow students to draw the clothed figure at face value; that is, to allow the clothing to serve as an expression of character or personality type. During these exercises a third element of drawing, texture, was introduced to reinforce line and form and provide added interest.

Project 1.

The first exercise served to further develop sensitivity to line and to introduce different aspects of its use. Its expressive qualities were discussed and master drawings were studied from the standpoint of line quality. The flowing, decorative line of Matisse, the loose, calligraphic lines of Rembrandt, the delicate but tense qualities of Ingres, Rodin's suppleness, and Dürer's knotted complexities illustrated the wide range of techniques and expressive line.

Students were invited to experiment with different types of line through the medium of brush and pen and ink. They were instructed to draw long, swinging arcs and graceful curves, then to make angular, jagged lines with short, choppy strokes. Thick lines were compared with thin. Some samples were selected and displayed and their qualities discussed, such as, "Which lines seem more relaxed and which appear tense or nervous?" and "Which lines are suggestive of feminine qualities and which suggest masculinity?"

Next the students were asked to invent their own lines to express moods and emotions such as peace, serenity, anger, excitement, boredom, happiness, etc. The differences in mood expressed by horizontals, verticals, and diagonals were noted, and static and dynamic effects were readily recognized by the students when they were pointed out.

Project 2.

A model was selected and students made several studies in combined pen and brush with ink, first with straight lines only, then with curved lines only. The two sketches were compared and the line qualities discussed on the basis of which seemed the more appropriate to the character and the gesture. Then a third study of the same pose was made in which straight and curved lines were combined.

Next a boy posed, dressed in old jeans, tennis shoes, shirt, and a straw hat, carrying a bamboo fishing pole. Students were directed to draw him with pen or brush, using line to express the casual, relaxed aspect of the character.

A similar drawing was executed, using a tall slim girl to model

a lacy, ruffled blouse and a patterned skirt. The contrast in line quality between the two subjects was stressed.

For the third drawing an adult male was invited to serve as model, dressed as a hunter with a gun. This time a thick felt tip pen was used to express the rugged appearance of the model.

Project 3.

Up to this point no emphasis whatever had been placed upon heads, hands, and feet -- three of the greatest problems in figure drawing. Feet had been shod, hands either gloved or hidden from view, and faces were left blank or drawn without instruction, at the option of the individual students.

At this time a couple of class periods were devoted to drawing hands and feet. A few prints of master drawings were shown to the class for study: "Studies of Arms and Legs" in black chalk by Rubens, "Study of Feet" in pencil by Delacroix, and Dürer's famous studies of hands.

Another class period was spent in studying special problems in foreshortening. Three available prints proved to be helpful to the students: Ingres' "Study for the Dead Body of Acron", the "Man Lying on a Stone Slab" by Mantegna, and "Studies of a Woman Sleeping" by Van Dyck.

After studying these examples, students took turns modeling for each other while their classmates drew foreshortened views of arms and legs. This assignment was of course very difficult, and help was given to individuals in class, but no drawings were collected or evaluations made.

Project 4.

The use of texture was introduced for this assignment. Several class periods were devoted to exploring the possibilities of textural effects with pencil, charcoal, crayon, and pen and ink.

A soft pencil or black crayon was applied to a rough, grainy paper to produce an even texture with a range of values. Seurat's charcoal drawings, such as "Sous la Lampe", are excellent examples of this technique.

A variety of papers with different surfaces were used for experimentation. Toned areas of pencil and charcoal and varied colors of chalks were rubbed, smeared, blended, erased, and reworked. Other examples shown for study were drawings of Prud'hon and Rubens.

Dots, dashes, hatchings and cross hatchings were also included in this experimental phase, and students were encouraged to try several different media, both alone and in combination, and compare the results.

After the initial experimenting, fabrics of varying textures were hung and draped, and the students were directed to draw the drapery in their choice of medium, using the techniques they had practiced to represent the textures and folds.

For added help in rendering drapery and clothing, prints of drawings by several artists were displayed and studied: the "Man Standing" by Watteau, "Portrait of a Girl" by Velasquez, a "Ballet Dancer" by Degas, and Botticelli's "Abundance" or "Autumn".

Project 5.

A different sort of texture was now introduced: that produced by

the technique of making rubbings of actual textures. To most of the students this was not a new technique, and a very brief demonstration served to send them exploring with pencil and paper to find a variety of textured surfaces for their rubbings. A walk around the halls and school grounds furnished them with a good variety of rubbings, and some brought several more samples from home the following day.

Project 6.

In order to help the students synthesize their newly acquired skills in textures, they were presented with a model, this time an unusually tall woman, dressed in clothing of varied textures and patterns, all of which were chosen to express a particular personality: elegance. They were encouraged to work in pen and ink in order to emphasize the crisp, sharp lines and edges that complement the type of style and personality that the model represented.

As the students had not as yet had any practice in drawing features, they were allowed to leave the face blank, to be completed at a later time.

It proved useful to point out to the students ways in which the fabric designs could be used to enhance their compositions, and related problems of design were incorporated into succeeding exercises.

Project 7.

The drawing exercises next focused upon the head and its accessories. This area had been left up to now in order to give the students time to develop some self-confidence in general figure drawing before

tackling the more difficult problems of faces and likenesses.

In order to draw a personality type with hair and such accessories as hats, scarves, and jewelry, a brief review of the proportions of the head was necessary. Charts showing main divisions of the head and placement of the features were shown to the class and compared with a live model. Using charts for reference but working from the model, three views were drawn: front, profile, and three-quarter. Only the placement of the features was emphasized in this exercise, and no attempt was made at defining individual features.

Project 8.

For a first attempt at a head, the problem was simplified to include only the outline of the face, the hair, and a scarf at the neck. Students were instructed to draw only one single feature, such as the lips or one eyebrow and the nose, or one eye; and they were to study and analyze that single feature and draw it as accurately as they were able.

Project 9.

To help with future problems in modeling the head in light and shadow, a simple cast of a Brancusi head was set in view, with a white background, illuminated by direct light from a nearby window. All other light sources were minimized, just leaving the students enough light to see their drawing paper.

The extremely simplified features of the sculpture and the complete absence of local color helped students in their first attempts at

modeling and values.

Project 10.

A girl model was selected to wear a large hat, dangling earrings, and a scarf at the throat. Class members sketched the head and neck only, with accessories, using pencil. During the course of this rather long pose it was necessary to demonstrate the basic structure of the features: eyes, nose, mouth, and ears. Particular emphasis was placed upon the eyes. Students were invited to approach the model near enough to study the forms first-hand and not rely heavily upon the demonstration sketches offered by the instructor. Learning to see and analyze was stressed in this exercise, as it had been throughout the unit.

To afford more practice in drawing heads, several other models of varying types and both sexes were used, and their individuality stressed. Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain models of different ages, nationalities, and races.

As an aid to developing techniques in drawing expressive heads, a group of master drawings was put on display for study.

Project 11.

As a relief from a difficult set of problems, a brief encounter with caricature was planned. The instances in which artists deliberately exaggerate and distort their subjects in order to achieve greater expressiveness were discussed. Expressionist drawings served as examples.

The students chose one of their classmates to act as a model. They analyzed his features and decided for themselves which feature was

the most characteristic of the model's personality and appearance. They exaggerated or distorted that feature in order to produce a more expressive likeness than strict adherence to visual accuracy might offer.

This was one exercise in which almost every drawing offered something of interest or merit, and an impromptu exhibit was enjoyed by the class members, including the model.

Project 12.

A portrait study was assigned to serve as a summary of techniques and approaches used up to this point. A model was posed in a boldly patterned, brightly colored costume, and students were allowed to draw the complete figure or any portion of it that interested them and provided a good compositional motif. An attempt was made to relate the overall design of the drawing to the gesture of the pose and the patterns of the clothing itself. Unusual design possibilities were brought out by suggesting different arrangements of the figure in the format, cropping parts, and so forth.

Pen and ink was recommended for this project, and the wash technique was introduced for the first time. A few preliminary pointers in the use of wash were necessary: grading tones, blending areas, dry brush, and related methods were demonstrated and practiced. The use of a sponge instead of a brush for certain textural effects was demonstrated. The instructor provided a few reed pens for students to experiment with, and they were encouraged to try other tools and objects for their drawings.

Project 13.

The final assignment in this section of the unit was a self portrait by each student. In the absence of mirrors, students were forced to rely upon memory and previous experience in figure drawing, and some found it necessary to take their drawings home where they could work in front of a mirror. They were requested to select clothing and accessories to bring out what they considered to be their true personality. Line, form, texture, and value were to be employed as means of expressing that individuality and communicating it to the viewer.

They selected their own preferred media; they could include the whole figure or any parts of it, or only the head and shoulders. It was believed that the emphasis upon the clothing would help to free the students from self-consciousness and provide them with an enjoyable experience. As it happened, the majority of students chose to draw only the head, neck, and shoulders, and they preferred to minimize or even ignore the clothing and concentrate on the features and hair.

IV. STUDENT EVALUATION

As a conclusion to their unit of work in figure drawing, the students were invited to discuss its merits and shortcomings.

Each student was asked to select one of his or her best drawings, and a class period was spent in preparing inexpensive poster board mats for the pictures and arranging them for an informal classroom exhibit. When the drawings were all hung, students commented on their work and that of their classmates. When asked to compare these later drawings

with their first attempts, most students expressed the opinion that their work had indeed improved.

When some students voiced questions about the relevance of the work and how the skills they had gained could be used, the importance of figure drawing in various art careers was discussed. Fashion design and illustration were mentioned, as were general advertising and cartooning. Portrait painting was included in the list of related fields. For those few students who expressed an interest in these areas, some informational sources were provided and general training requirements were discussed.

Some of the attitudes expressed by the students are described in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. EVALUATION OF THE BASIC APPROACH

If any art project or unit of work is to be effective and valuable to the students, self evaluation is important. They must know what their immediate and long range goals are, and must be given opportunities for gauging their progress during the course of their work. Comparison with the work of classmates and discussion of strong and weak points helps them to decide what they need to work on most.

If the instructor is to ascertain the success and validity of the goals he has set for his students, he must certainly listen to the students' opinions and consider their point of view, but he must also evaluate their progress and growth by his own standards.

Today's adolescents often question the relevance of any learning experience. For the majority, the willingness to work at life drawing for the mere sake of self improvement is very limited. If they are to become excited and enthusiastic about anything, including life drawing, they must be able to relate it to other areas and interests. Without this enthusiasm, their work will be lacking in motivation, and they will fail to achieve their own potential.

This unit attempts to accomplish this by relating the drawing of the figure to their interest in clothing styles and standards, which

appears to play an important role in their psychology. However, by the end of the unit, the success of this approach was doubtful. It is true that models wearing interesting or unusual apparel did stimulate more receptive attitudes in many students; but it became obvious during the course of the unit that their primary interests were in the personality of the model (usually a classmate) and their relationship to him or her. In fact, the extremely high degree of social self-consciousness exhibited by this early adolescent age group often prevents them from concentrating fully upon their drawing of the model. It was found that concentration was more easily maintained in the presence of a model who was not a regular member of the class nor of their own age level.

In the course of an evaluative discussion with the students, some of the following attitudes were expressed: (1) Their skill at life drawing did improve, and they did feel that they had gained new skills with common drawing media. They also felt that these skills could be usefully employed in drawing other subjects. (2) Some of the assignments were enjoyable and stimulated the imagination. (3) Many students questioned the value of devoting so long a period of time to figure drawing alone. (4) Some students objected to the unit on the basis of lack of relevance. As the majority of them do not plan careers in art, they could see no connection or relation between their work in this area of art and the other areas of their lives and futures. Their interest in and knowledge of the world and its problems is becoming increasingly sophisticated. They express the feelings or opinions that their work in school should be designed to be of value to them when they

become adults, citizens, and working members of society. A number of the students involved in this project felt that such a specialized study as life drawing did not merit as much time as they were asked to devote to it. However, an interesting change in this attitude developed as time passed. The results of their efforts began to show in later assignments. A number of students voluntarily included figures they had previously drawn in landscape paintings, in posters, and in plaster sculpture. Such an event is unusual in this writer's experience, and would seem to indicate that the students did gain more skill and self confidence than they themselves had realized at the time their own evaluations took place. Perhaps, too, the instructor's efforts to stimulate their interest were more effective than seemed probable at the time.

It is considered by this writer that the really basic value of a course in art is to enrich the lives of the students by making them become more aware, more sensitive to the people, places, things, and ideas around them; more appreciative of life itself. The instructor can play an important role in this growing sensitivity by constantly pointing out areas of comparison between art and life. Basic approaches in artistic expression are comparable to living; concepts of balance, rhythm, harmony, repetition and variation can all be transferred to life situations. Sensitivity to nuances of line and form and texture and values can encourage a growing sensitivity to nuances of personalities, ethical concepts, even logic. It is, however, extremely difficult to impart these concepts in the traditional lecture form to a group of thirty

students at the age level involved in this unit of work. Often it is more meaningful when such discussions are on a more personal, one-to-one relationship, or at least with a small group of students. Such concepts require an extended period of gestation to become significant to many students.

One quotation that has been useful for class presentation is from Edward Hill:

The student must set understanding as his goal, not self-expression; the latter will arise naturally from the former. In this light we can see that the value of the study of drawing goes beyond training professional artists. There is not one of us who could not profit from the education of our vision.⁷

Again, in reference to the value of studying life drawing as a discipline, "Once the artist approaches a felt understanding of form, he will then be equipped to create his own expressive forms -- this is true invention."⁸

In speaking of life drawing, Nicolaidis also demonstrates this relationship between art and living:

Most of the time your instinct will guide you, sometimes guide you the better, if you can learn to let it act swiftly and directly without questioning it. Let yourself learn to reason with the pencil, with the impulses that are set up between you and the model. In short, listen to yourself think; do not always insist on forcing yourself to think.

⁷Edward Hill, The Language of Drawing, p. 125.

⁸Hill, p. 59.

There are many things in life that you cannot get by a brutal approach. You must invite them.

II. EVALUATION OF TECHNIQUES AND METHODS

As a general rule, the projects which aroused the most interest and produced the most successful results were those which presented a change in media and materials and introduced new techniques. In the section on proportions the modeling and use of the clay figures as models was enjoyed. In the section on gesture the students responded well to felt tip and nylon pens, and to the use of white chalk on black paper. Their most successful drawings included those of a pair of boys in a wrestling position. The striped clothing contributed substantially to the success of the early gesture drawings.

In working on varied line qualities, students were very successful and inventive in preliminary exercises, but in most cases this did not carry over into their figure drawings. Such sensitivity apparently requires more time and experience.

The use of textures, both drawn and rubbed, was greeted enthusiastically and the figure drawings which incorporated such textural effects were enjoyed by the students, but were not highly effective from an aesthetic point of view. Again, the practice exercises appeared to be more successful than the application in drawings themselves. It is possible that more time spent on basic drawing skills is desirable before textures are employed.

⁹Kimon Nicolaides, The Natural Way to Draw, p. 17.

The use of the stylized sculptured head as a model was of considerable help in learning to model features, and was an excellent preliminary exercise.

Students very much enjoyed the assignments that encouraged exaggeration, distortion, and caricature, but the most enjoyed by all students was the drawing of the figure as landscape. In assignments such as these the differences between haptic and visually minded students were greatly reduced, and haptics did not find themselves at a pronounced disadvantage, as can be observed in Figures 2 and 3.

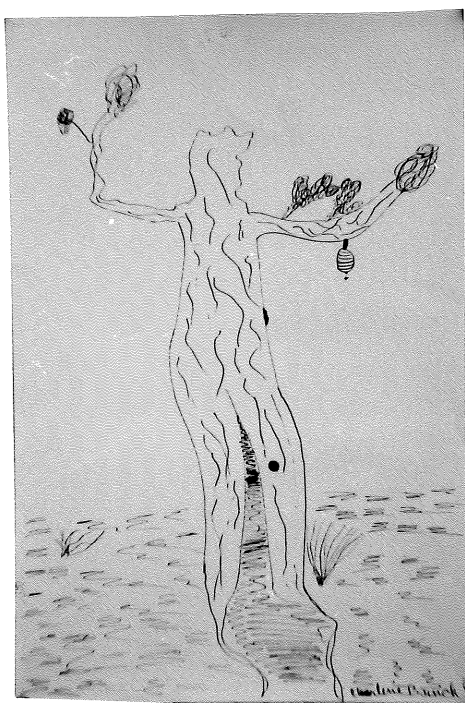
Among the assignments that seemed to attract the least interest and enthusiasm were those which dealt only with drapery study. Students' comments indicated their preference for the live model to clothing and drapery alone. The studies of hands and feet and of foreshortening, although necessary, were not particularly enjoyed by the students, nor were they generally successful.

These attitudes, as gathered from student comments and observed in their work, would seem to indicate that for this age level an ever-changing variety of media, techniques, and subjects is needed to maintain a high interest level. They prefer short poses and relatively short sketches to prolonged studies, and they prefer exercising their imaginations to drawing accurately and carefully what they see. This undoubtedly arises from the fact that they are not yet able to draw what they see accurately, and they experience frustration and failure. Too, the more haptic types appear to be unable to discern some rather obvious discrepancies between the appearance of the model and their drawing.

The demands upon their skills are not as heavy when drawing from imagination or fantasy.

Predictably, the more visually minded students experienced more success in figure drawing than did the haptic ones. Although a few assignments were planned to encourage haptically minded individuals, the entire emphasis upon seeing and accurate drawing tended to put them at a disadvantage. Figures 3 through 14 provide a comparison of the characteristics and rate of improvement of these different types of young people. Figures 3, 4, 12, and 13 demonstrate the improvements made by visually minded students, while Figures 5, 6, and 9 demonstrate the relatively slight improvements made by the less visually minded or haptic types. The work of average students, or those in which neither visual nor haptic inclinations seemed to predominate, is shown as a basis for comparison in Figures 7, 8, 10, 11, and 14. These examples represent neither the most interesting nor the best work done by the particular students represented, but were selected on the basis of comparable techniques and media used in beginning and later work.

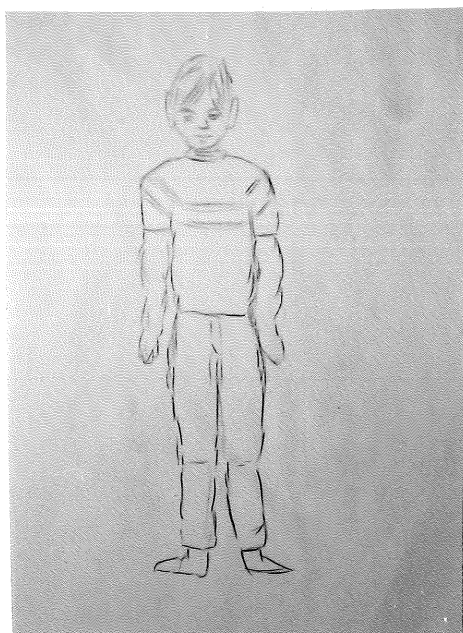
Although the entire unit occupied nearly nine full weeks, it still allowed an opportunity for only a brief exploration of the various approaches and techniques. There was not enough time for some students to gain a proficiency in any particular area and to show a significant improvement.



1 The figure as a tree by a haptic student



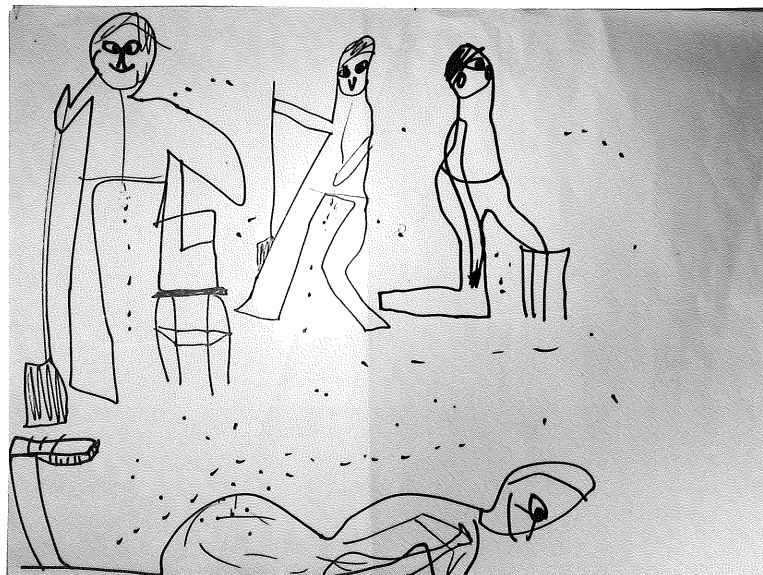
2 The figure as a tree by a visually minded student



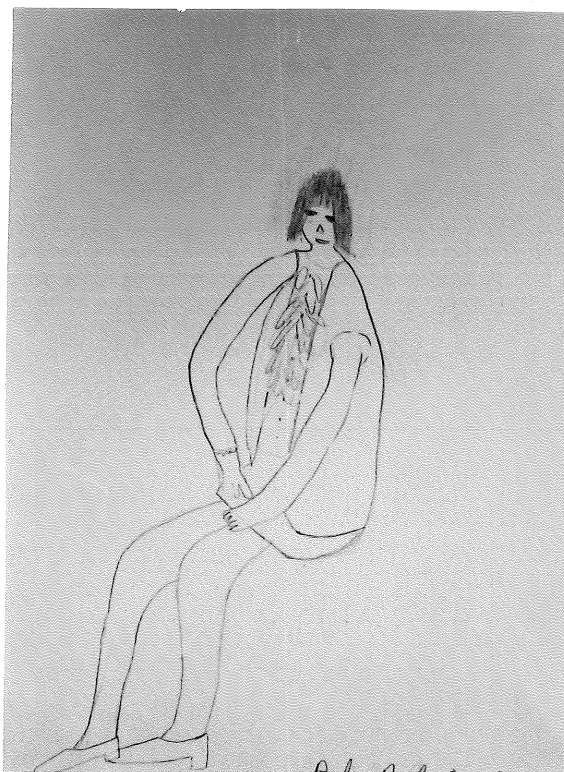
3 Early drawing by a visually minded student



4 Later drawing by the same student as Figure 3



5 Early drawing by a haptic student



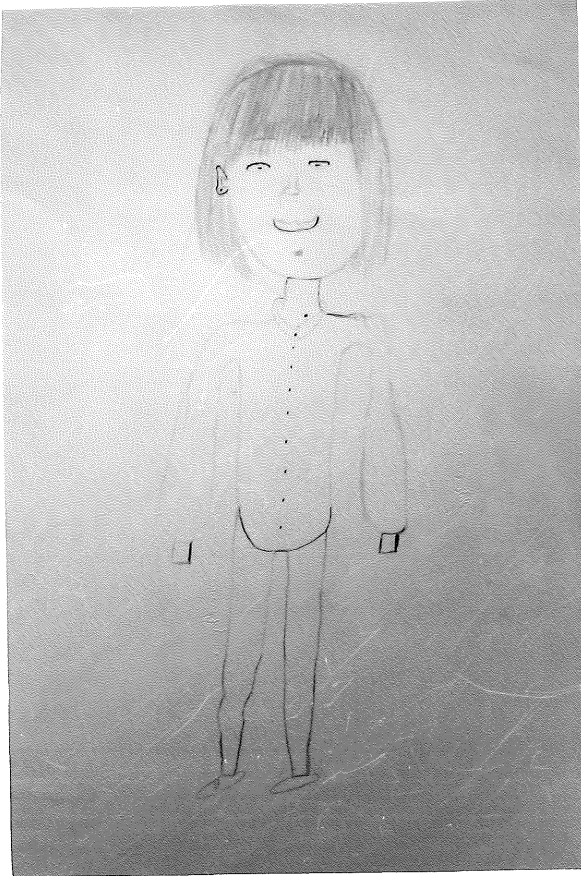
6 Later drawing by the same student as Figure 5



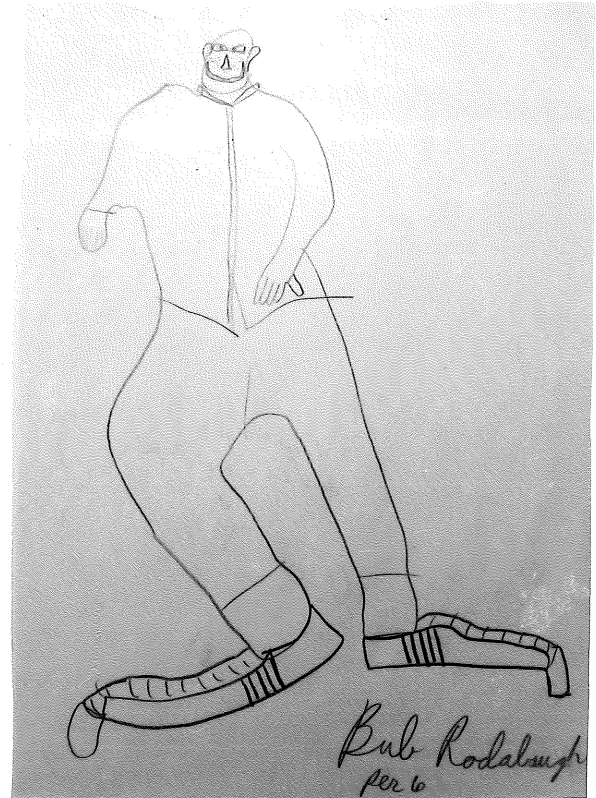
7 Early drawing by an average student



8 Later drawing by the same student as Figure 7



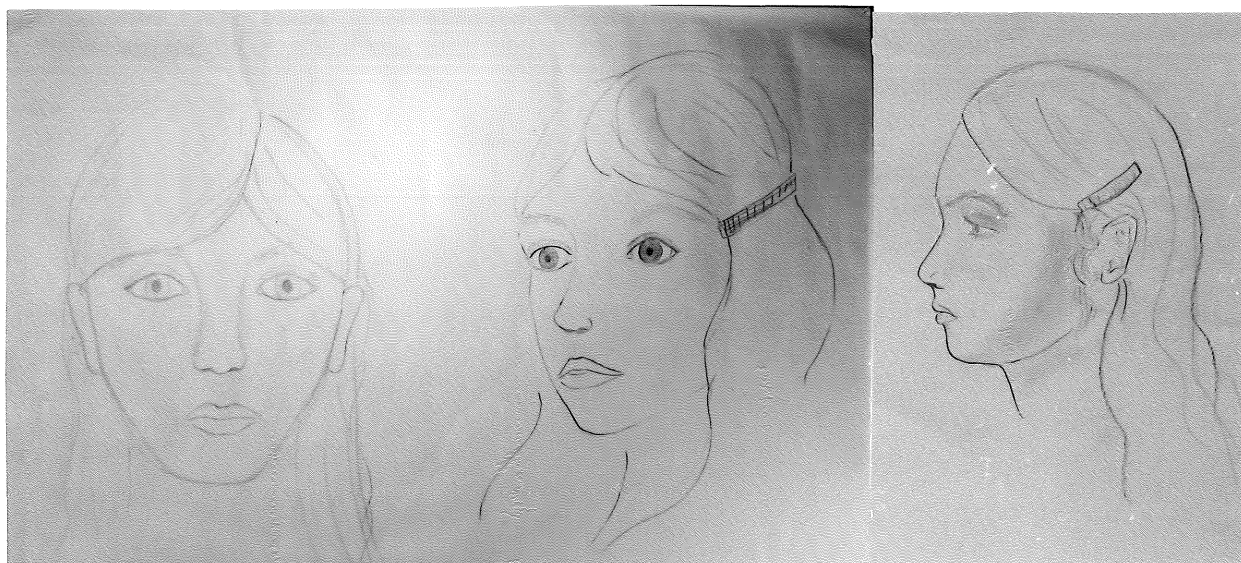
2 Early drawing by a haptic student, showing unconscious exaggeration of the head



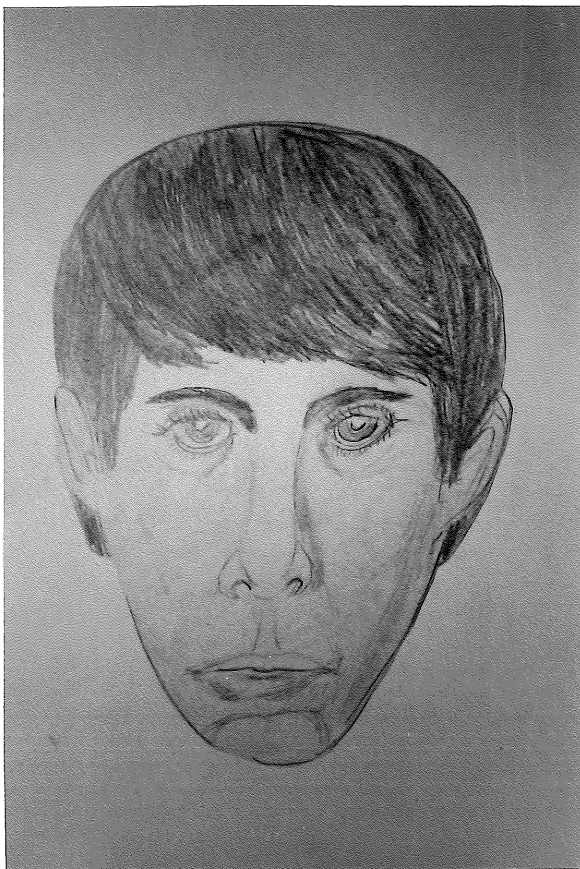
10 Drawing by an average student, showing intentional exaggeration of the feet



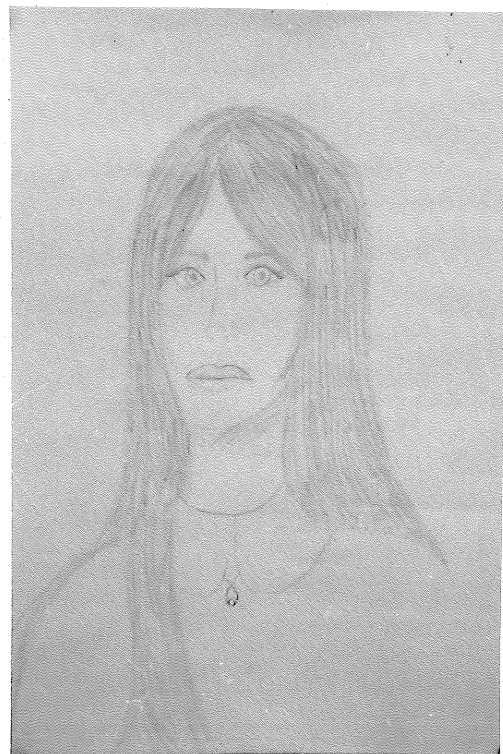
11 Caricature by an average student



12 Studies of a head by a visually minded student



13 Self portrait by a visually minded student



14 Self portrait by an average student

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended Revisions and Improvements in Methods.

It is suggested that the contents of this course in life drawing be expanded or condensed to suit different types of situations. For instance, the course as it is here described would probably prove suitable for art classes which are on an elective basis, and in which all the students have a special interest in art, but it is somewhat too time-consuming and too specialized to be suitable for a required "exploration" type of art class in either junior or senior high schools. A condensed form of the unit would be more appropriate for the latter type of situation.

The order in which the various problems are presented is flexible, and could easily be altered for different purposes. For example, the group which was selected for this thesis contained a predominance of visually minded students. With this in mind, proportions were explored first and visual accuracy was emphasized to some degree. When dealing with a different group, with a higher percentage of haptic students, the instructor might select an entirely different starting point, or even omit the exercises which deal with proportions.

It is also recommended that some work in contour drawing be added to the course. As it was planned, there was no particularly appropriate place in this unit for such a study; but it is felt that the added skill in coordinating the eye and hand, which is a particular feature of contour drawing, would contribute greatly to improve quality and sensitivity of student drawings.

A further suggestion for heightening student interest is that the instructor attempt to secure outside volunteer models of more varied ages, nationalities, and races.

It would be valuable for the instructor to obtain prints of contemporary drawings in which newer materials and techniques are used and contemporary concepts and values are expressed. A comparison of the better contemporary works with those of the past would be meaningful to the students' growth and understanding of the wide scope of life drawing.

Recommended Revisions in the Basic Approach.

In evaluating the success of this course of study, two major deficiencies were found to exist: (1) Visually minded students appeared to enjoy an advantage over the haptic ones, due to the emphasis on visual observation and accuracy of drawing, and the relative lack of opportunity for self-expression and exercise of imagination. (2) The failure of the motivational means employed to satisfactorily motivate a percentage of students.

In order to rectify these shortcomings, it is recommended that a greater attempt be made by the instructor to relate art in general, and life drawing in particular, to concepts and areas of vital interest to the students. Life drawing could be explored as a means of expressing personal ideas and attitudes towards themselves, their associates and environment; it could become an expressive vehicle for social comment; it could be a means of exploring the different aspects of contemporary problems and issues, and serve as a key to a greater understanding of

life, man, and art. By expanding life drawing skills through such means, it is possible that students would be able to discover the relevance of art to life that they seem to be missing.

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

- Collier, Graham. Form, Space, and Vision. New Jersey, 1967.
- Ellender, Raphael. Basic Drawing. New York, 1964.
- Gollwitzer, Gerhard. Express Yourself in Drawing. New York, 1960.
- Hill, Edward. The Language of Drawing. New Jersey, 1966.
- Kaupelis, Robert. Learning to Draw. New York, 1966.
- Lowenfeld, Viktor. Creative and Mental Growth. New York, 1952.
- Mendelowitz, Daniel M. Drawing. New York, 1967.
- Nicolaides, Kimon. The Natural Way to Draw. Boston, 1941.
- Read, Herbert. Education Through Art. New York, 1958.
- Wigg, Philip R. Introduction to Figure Drawing. Dubuque, Iowa, 1967.

LIFE DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR



