B09 Beginner: Learn to See

In this lesson, you use a viewfinder frame to identify and draw (from life) the negative space surrounding the shapes of a chair by visually identifying, measuring, and comparing distances within spaces and shapes.

Before you begin this lesson, review the following:

- A07 Making and Using a Viewfinder Frame
- B01 Drawing with Spaces
- B02 Shapes of a Duck

In addition to a chair and viewfinder frame, you also need drawing paper, a sharpener, and a 2B or 4B graphite pencil.

Recommended for traditional and digital artists of all ages, as well as students of home schooling, academic, and recreational fine art educators

6 PAGES – 6 ILLUSTRATIONS

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**ArtSpeak**

**Shape:** is a two-dimensional geometrical object that can serve as the outline of a three-dimensional object. For example, a circle is the shape of a sphere. Common shapes include squares, circles, and ovals.

**Viewfinder frame:** is an adjustable, see-through frame that allows you to look at a subject from various viewpoints, and is invaluable when planning a composition for any type of drawing or painting (such as portraits, figures, and landscapes). An easily constructed viewfinder frame consists of two adjustable L-shaped pieces of heavy paper, cardboard, or matte board, which are held together with paper clips.

**Negative space:** refers to the area, space, or background that visually surrounds or appears to be behind (or in front of) an object, person, or another space.

**Positive space:** is the space occupied by an object or living being and (or) its various parts. Positive and negative spaces assume distinctive shapes which artists need to be able to identify. Outlines exist where the two spaces meet; hence, knowing how to see spaces is integral to drawing accurately.

**Preparing to Draw**

In this lesson, you use a viewfinder frame to draw the negative space around the shape of a chair (positive space) by identifying and measuring the shapes of distances. Seeing spaces often necessitates visually excluding aspects of what you see, until you can focus only on the parts you want to draw (in this case the negative space). Examine the drawing of a chair (Figure 901) and try to see only the negative space (without the chair) (Figure 902).
ArtSpeak

Drawing from life: refers to the process of drawing from an actual person, animal, or scene, rather than from a two dimensional photo or sketch.

Composition: refers to the arrangement of the various parts of your drawing subject within the borders of a drawing space.

1. **Place a chair in front of you (or place yourself in front of a chair).**
   Some chairs are very simple and others are quite complex (as is the chair in Figure 901). Choose a type of chair that will challenge, but not frustrate you.

2. **Turn the chair at an angle (or position yourself) so one of its legs is closer to you than the other three.**

3. **Set up the viewfinder frame, your supplies, and yourself so you can maintain a constant viewpoint of both the chair (through the viewfinder frame) and your drawing paper.**
   The basic process of viewing a subject from life through a viewfinder frame is similar to looking at a photo of a subject through a viewfinder frame.

   This being said, a huge challenge when working from life is to figure out a way to move only your eyes without moving your head as you draw. (If you move your head, the proportions of your subject look different.)

   Drawing environments are very different; hence, examine your surroundings to figure out ways to:
   - Keep the viewfinder in place so your hands are free.
   - See your subject and your drawing surface at the same time.

   Then, adjust the viewfinder frame until you find a composition that includes the chair and a little of the background (Figure 903).
ArtSpeak

**Diagonal:** refers to lines, edges of objects, and shading, etc. that are neither vertical nor horizontal, but rather, slant at an angle.

**Drawing space:** (sometimes called a *drawing surface*) is the area in which you render a drawing within a specific perimeter. It can be the shape of a sheet of paper itself, or a shape you outline on your paper, such as a square, rectangle, or circle.

**Proportion:** is the relationship in size between two or more components of a drawing (or painting).

## Drawing Negative Space

Finally, you are all set up and ready to draw!

1. **Outline a drawing space on your paper proportionate to the size of the opening of your viewfinder frame.**

2. **Fill in the negative space with shading.**

   Use a 2B or 4B pencil to fill in all the shapes of the negative space. Remember to keep your vision focused from a constant head position.

   Do not draw outlines around any shapes – merely fill them in all at once (Figure 906) or in stages (Figures 904 to 906). Draw all your shading lines in only one direction to help you resist the temptation of outlining. (My shading lines are diagonal.)
Challenge

Use the same process discussed in this lesson, to draw the negative space surrounding other objects in your environment, such as tables, light fixtures, or shelving units.

Another fun idea is to look at a full view of yourself in a large mirror and draw the negative space surrounding your own image.

In addition, you can also draw negative space surrounding other people, such as someone sleeping or reading on a bus, train, or plane.

To prevent drawing (pun intended) too much attention to yourself in some environments, you may prefer to simply imagine the viewfinder frame and drawing space.
BRENDA HODDINOTT

As a self-educated teacher, visual artist, portraitist, forensic artist (retired), and illustrator, Brenda Hoddinott utilizes diverse art media including her favorites: graphite and paint.

“My philosophy on teaching art is to focus primarily on the enjoyment aspects while gently introducing the technical and academic. Hence, in creating a passion for the subject matter, the quest for knowledge also becomes enjoyable.”

Brenda is the author of:

✓ **Drawing for Dummies** (2003), Wiley Publishing, Inc., New York, NY
✓ **Getting Started with Drawing** (2009), Drawspace Publishing, Halifax, NS
✓ **Illustrated Dictionary of Art-related Terms** (2010), Drawspace Publishing, Halifax, NS
✓ **Drawspace Curriculum for Art Educators: B01 Introduction to Drawing** (2011), Drawspace Publishing, Halifax, NS
✓ **Drawspace Curriculum for Art Educators: B02 Contouring Spaces and Shapes** (2011), Drawspace Publishing, Halifax, NS

She is currently writing several additional books in the Drawspace Curriculum for Art Educators series.

Born in St. John’s, Newfoundland, Brenda grew up in the small town of Corner Brook. She developed strong drawing and painting skills through self-directed learning.

During her twenty-five year career as a self-educated civilian forensic artist, various criminal investigation departments have employed Brenda’s skills, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In 1992, Brenda was honored with a commendation from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and in 1994, she was awarded a Certificate of Membership from “Forensic Artists International”.

In 2003, Brenda retired from her careers as a forensic artist and teacher to work full time writing books and developing her website (Drawspace.com). This site is respected as a resource for fine art educators, home schooling programs, and educational facilities throughout the world.