PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING

FOR STORYBOARDS AND ANIMATION

by ED CHEE

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING
for Storyboarding and Animation

Hi, the purpose of this document is to breakdown how to use Life-Drawing sessions with a live model as a tool to help us in our daily jobs as storyboard artists, designers and animators.

There are many different reasons you coud go to life drawing: to brush up on anatomy, practice drawing the human form, to relax, socialize, to just break up your normal routine as storyboard artist, animator or designer. Life Drawing sessions are an invaluable way of adding to our visual library of poses and teaches ourselves how to observe and interpret. Definitely use life drawing to study anatomy and drawing the human form, but there is a way that we can use life drawing as a tool to put into our animation toolbox.

Besides the artistic benefits of life drawing, drawing shoud always be fun and playful. If it's not fun what's the point of doing it!

Over the years, I've come to learn one the **most fun and important** aspects of life drawing is what we do in our daily jobs: **STORYTELLING**

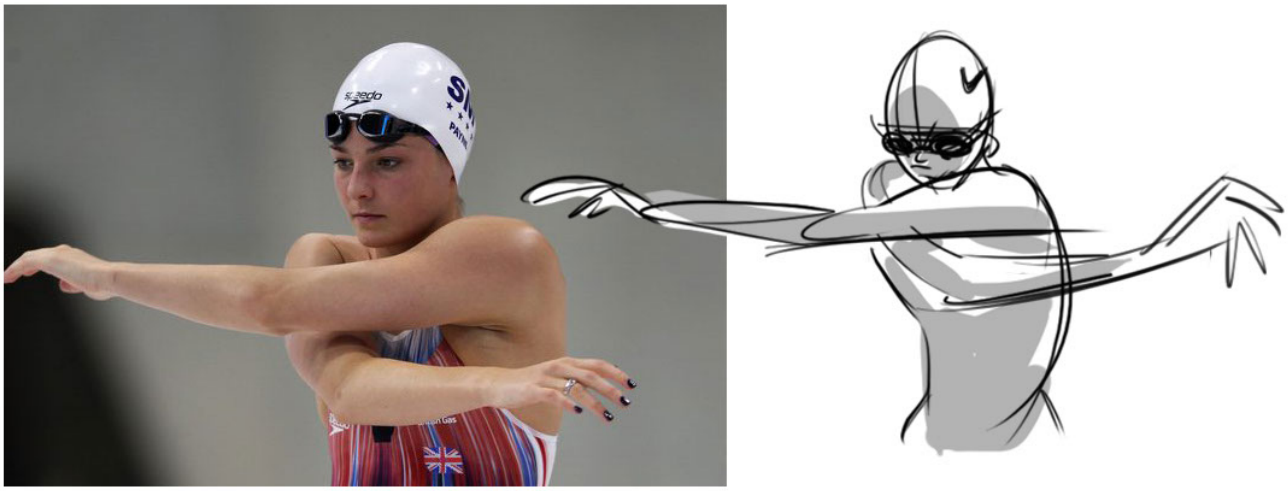
With that in mind, this is about how to use a traditional life drawing session as a tool for storytelling. If STORYTELLING is the ***what*** we'll go over some of the ***how's*** with some tips.

With the intention of teling a story, hopefully, you'll find lifedrawing sessions even more enjoyable, and also have nuggets to take back to our daily jobs of storyboarding and animating :)

yours truly,
Ed Chee
@cheechoo98
Cheers!

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - WARM-UP, START LOOSE

So let's start! the session begins and the model starts with a 30sec or 1min pose and these early poses should be treated like warmups, to loosen up your wrist, your arm, your mind. Just clear away reservations about how your drawings should look and just draw - fast! loose! If you are using an easel and newsprint, it'll feel like a cardio class as you get your whole body into it.



Treat the quick poses as a warmup - you're not making great art here, it's like a swimmer swinging their arms before the race.
Now, as you draw, these are things to consider:

ENERGY bring lots to these initial poses - draw fast!

LINE OF ACTION - find it quickly and...

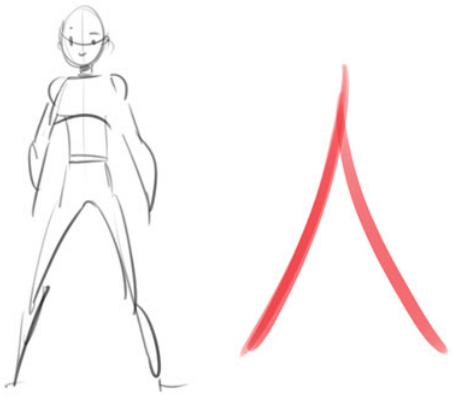
EXAGGERATE IT! - stretch it beyond what is given by the model

ADD A STORY - suggest what the character is doing and feeling

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - LINE OF ACTION

Working fast and loose, consider the line of action of the pose and simplify it to it's most basic form! Pixar storyboard artists, Alex Woo breaks it down as such:

It's similar to the Chinese written language



The Chinese symbol for 'person'

The Chinese symbol for 'big'
is a person with their arms spread out!

So treat the pose and line of action with the same simplification.

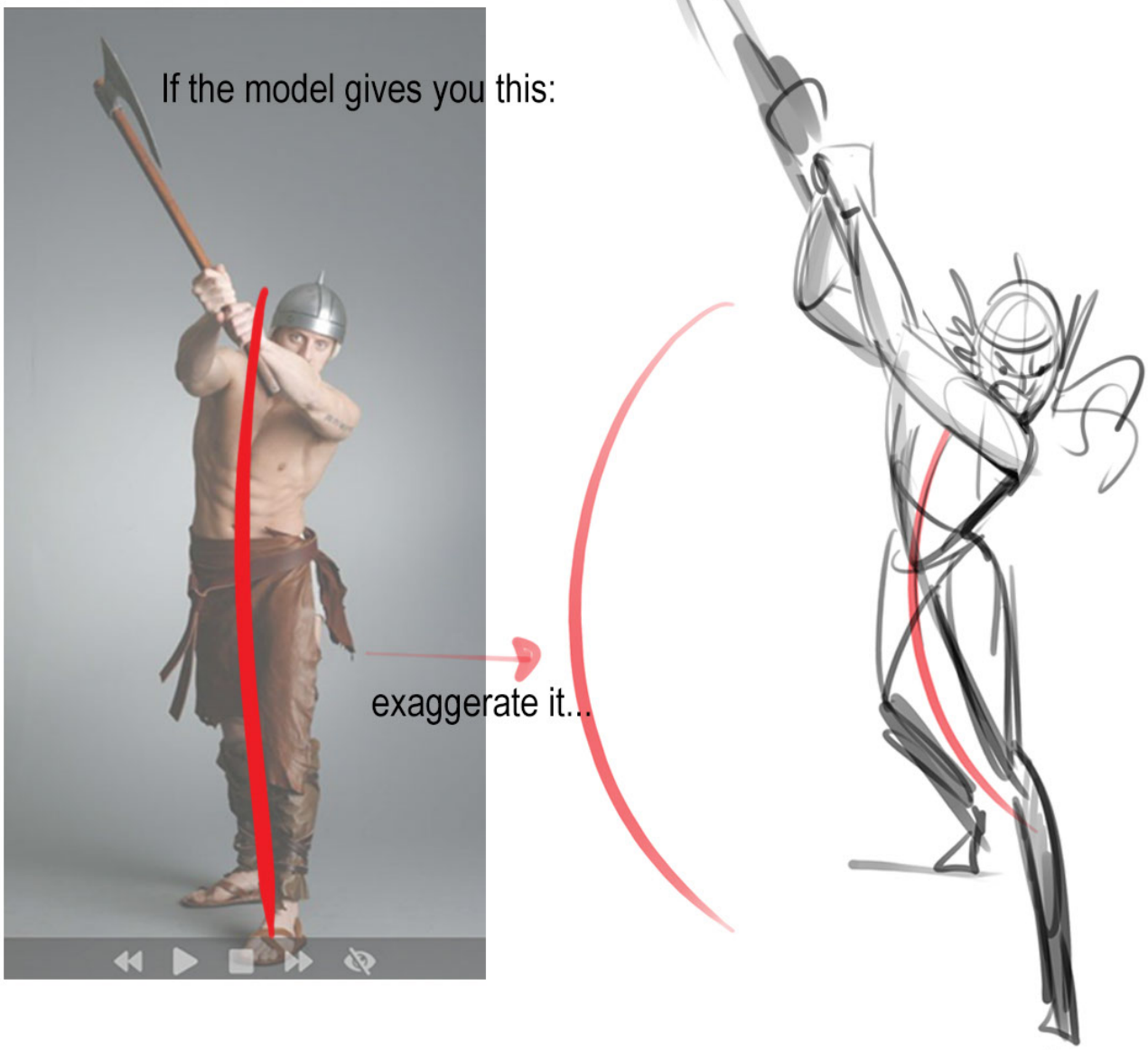
PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - GESTURES - Line of Action

A note about gesures - we'll get 30 sec, 1 min, 2 min poses that the model will hold - but in reality, those poses only exist for a fraction of a second. We are capturing a fleeting moment in time.

How many times have you seen a model start their pose in an extreme position and then over the course of time it dwindles down to look nothing like how it started. Always! It's not a fault of the model. It's because these are extreme positions and in nature, they will exist for that fleeting moment in time. It's like a key-pose in animation.

So, just as the model has started with an energy and verve, you should also do the same at the very beginning. Get that line of action down fast! - and exagerate it! Put those first few lines down with a broad stroke with lots of energy. Again, it's good cardio If you are working with a stand-up easel and large newsprint, it'll be a great workout!

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - Line of Action + Exaggeration



Read the pose and quickly drop in a line of action for it. Everything will build off if it - the energy of the pose can dictate, the feeling, emotion and story behind it.

E**xaggerate it!** give it more motion and push it further than what the model may have provided.

Then you'll feel the **STORY** aspect of the pose. Project your own inner feelings onto what the character is feeling. i.e in this case, even adding in a quick expression can give the pose more context.

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - LINE OF ACTION + STORY

In a session with a nude model, try and stick to the principles of: bringing lots of energy, finding the line of action & exaggerating it and adding in a story.

Your drawing will build off that initial line of action and feel free to adjust the pose to suit your story idea! Also, add in any props to help sell your idea. The goal today is not to render an exact copy of the pose or a perfect anatomical study, but to tell a story.

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - Add Props!

Feel free to add in props where needed to support the story pose you've decided to draw

Here, I've added in the sword.
Also, note how I arranged it so I could see her face to help add to the pose.

Also note how when I was drawing the line of action, I over-exaggerated her stance here - see the negative space between her feet.

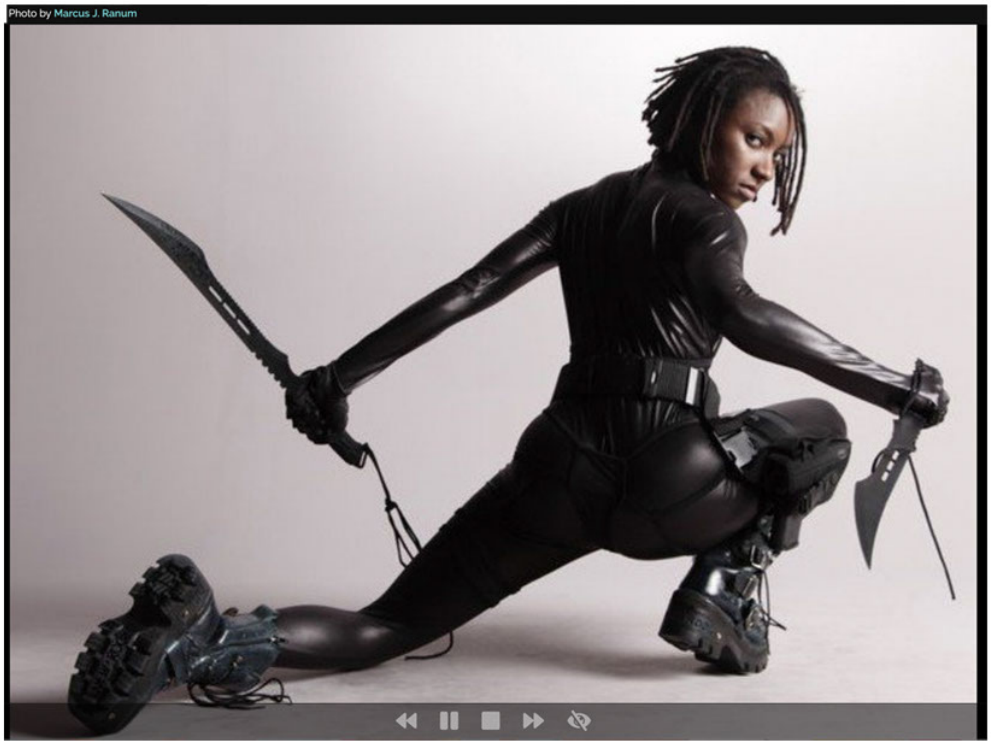
PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - use existing characters

Here, a storyline becomes really easy if we want. Projecting existing characters - even ones on your current show - becomes a fun thing to do.

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - Photo Reference - a note

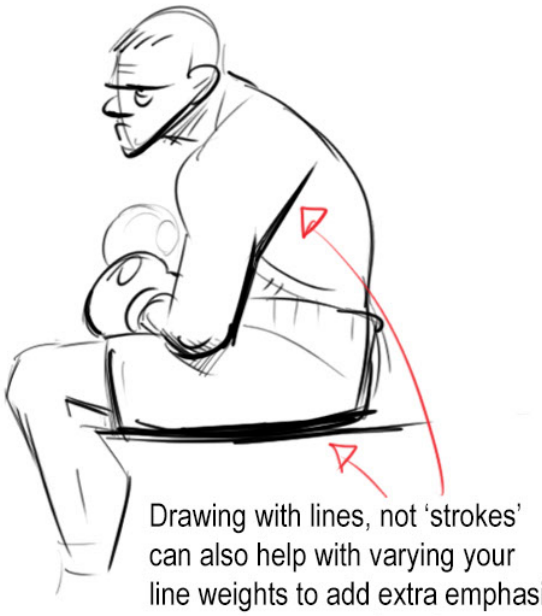
This document deals with live life drawing sessions with a nude or costumed model but for the times when using photo reference - apply the same ideas that you bring a live session:

Line-of-action, exaggeration, adding a story



PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - Line Quality - a note

In capturing the early energetic pose of the model during a life drawing session, try to use continuous lines instead of slower, 'scratchy', broken, lines. It's the phrase you' may have heard, 'draw from your arm, not your wrist'



Drawing with lines, not 'strokes' can also help with varying your line weights to add extra emphasis where the weight of the form sits.

It all starts with the energy you bring at the start. Not all your lines will be perfect from the start, you can go over, and re-work them.

GESTURES - not always REAL

Here's the thing about gestures and specifically poses you'll get in a life drawing session. At times, some poses DON'T exist in 'real' life. What do I mean? Look at the examples here. You'll never see someone walking around like this. Look at the pose on the Right, there's a lot of tension in the twist of the pose, BUT the hands are so relaxed and not really congruent with what the body is doing. You'll rarely have to draw something like this in your storyboard or animation. Unless it's Atlas carrying a globe.

So, what do we do when encountered with these poses? As always, try to add a story: I see feeding grapes or eye drops on the left and maybe holding a hair dryer on the right. If you cannot think of a story to add in the 1-2 mins - use the time to practice other aspects of drawing. i.e. anatomy, balance, force, weight, lighting, contour, line weights, silhouette... etc.. just keep drawing and then move on to the next pose.

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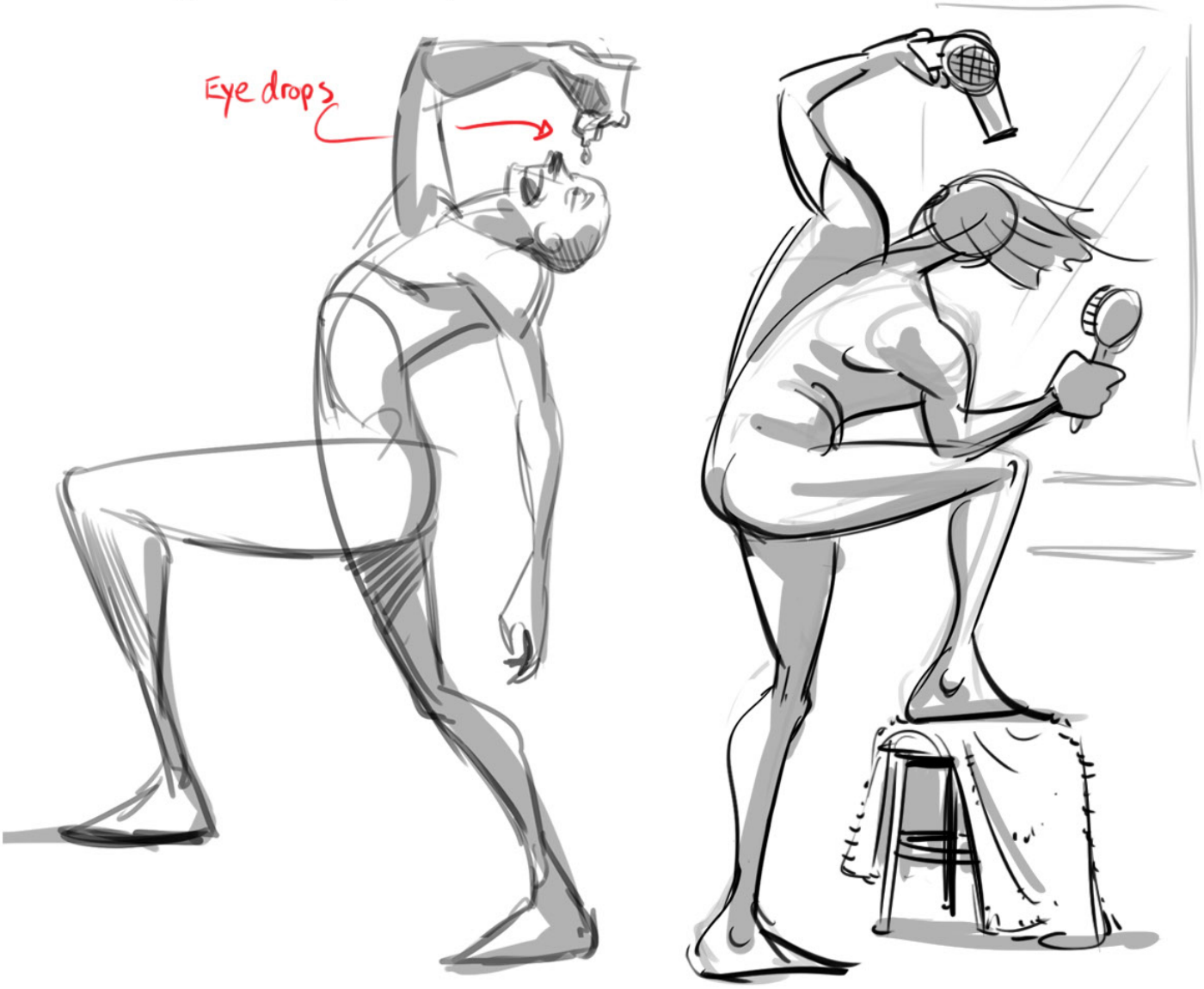

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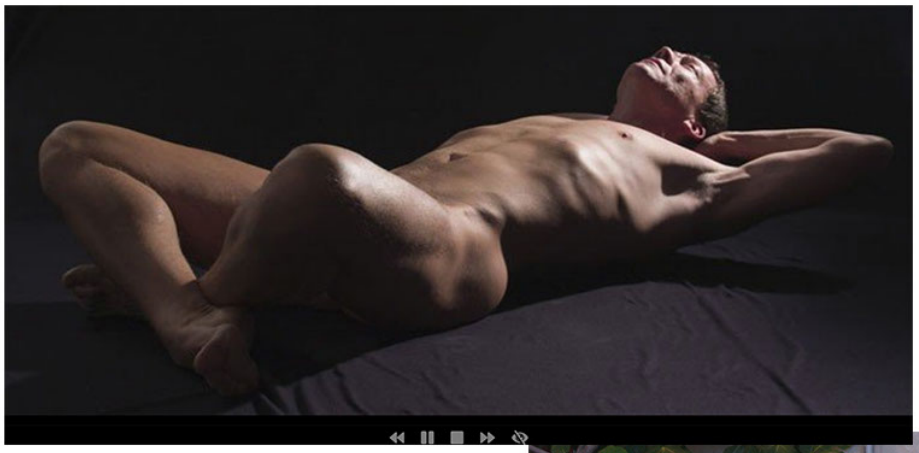
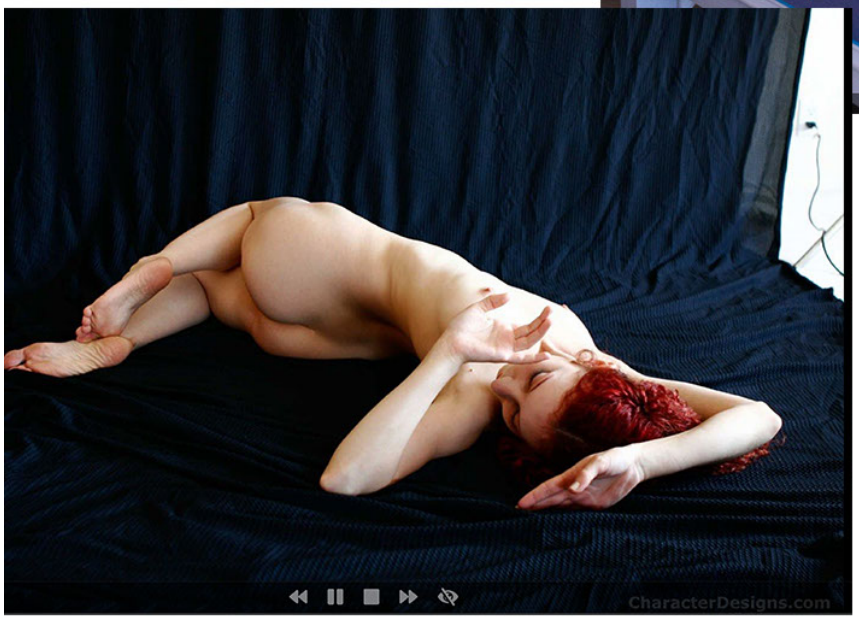
PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - UGH! Those poses...!

We've all seen them. We've all had that same feeling.
Damn! How am I going to draw that?! You're not alone - here's the thing: we can't expect the life drawing models to be super active and creative all the time. It's a physical challenge for them as well.
These poses are also an opportunity for them to take a break.



ALSO: It's very rare that you will have to draw these types of poses in your storyboard or animation. Take a break!

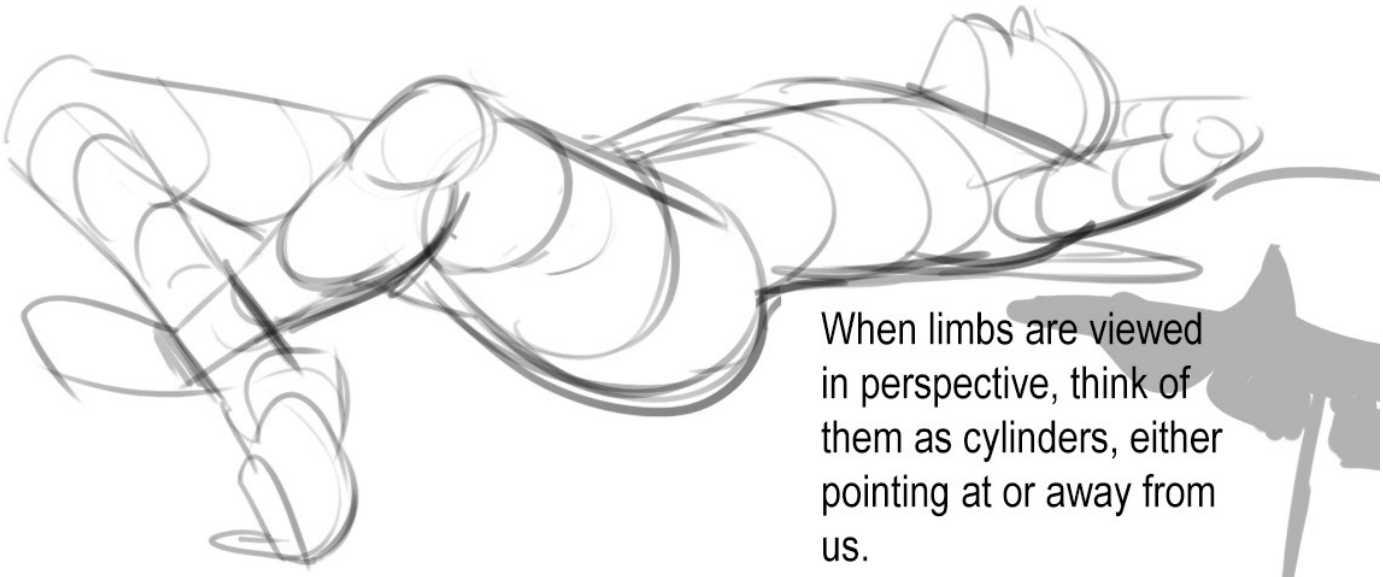
- OR -



you could also use the time to practice other aspects of drawing, like...

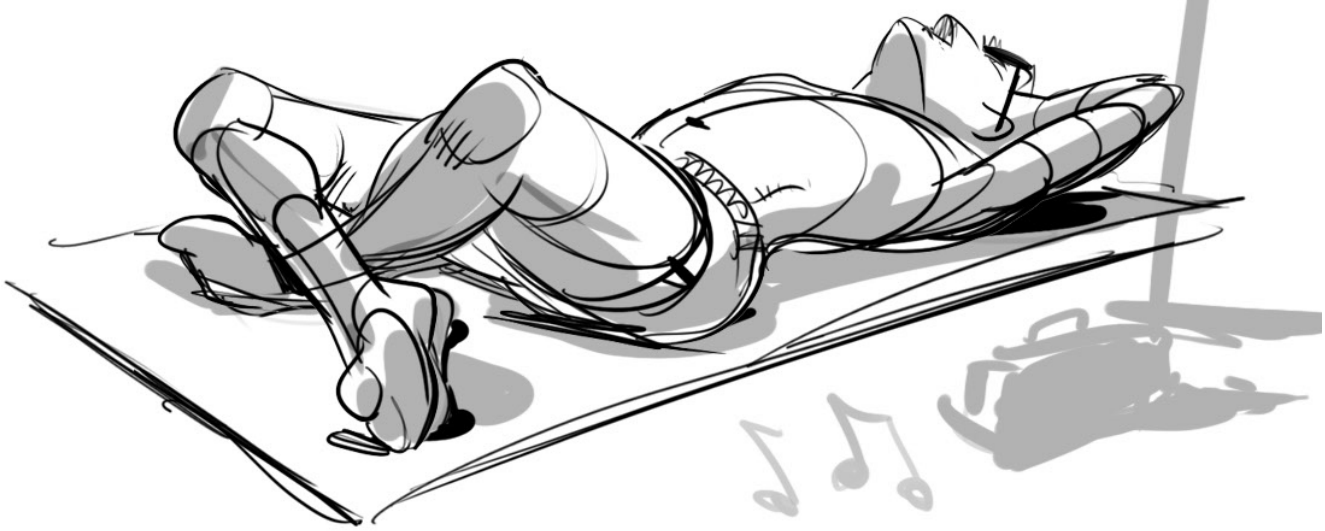
... foreshortening!

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - FORESHORTENING

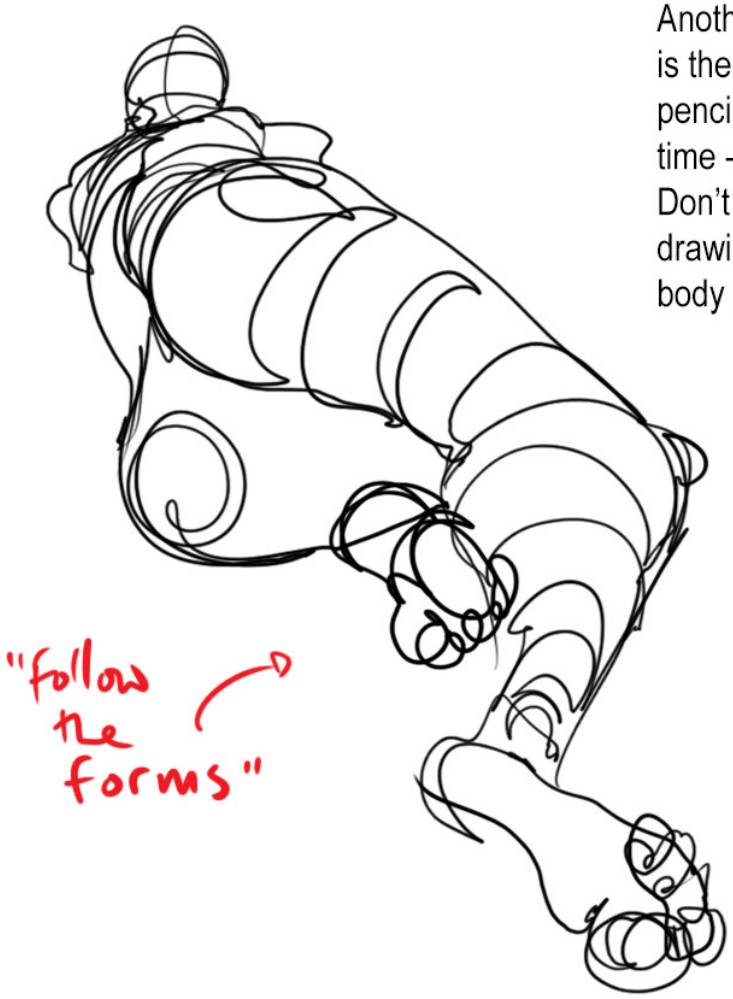


When limbs are viewed in perspective, think of them as cylinders, either pointing at or away from us.

Add in a little story detail and you've got a someone at the beach.



PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - FORESHORTENING - Contour Drawing

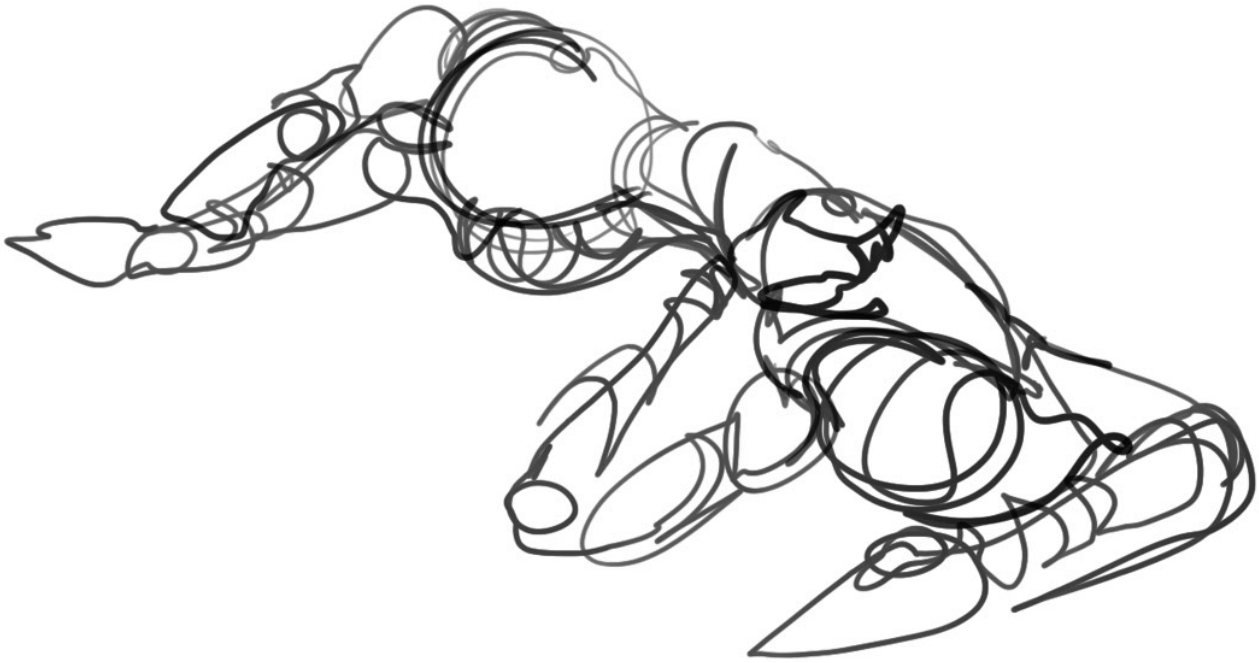


Another exercise to help with foreshortening is the **'blind contour drawing'**. Keep your pencil / pen touching the paper the whole time - and draw without looking at the result. Don't just do the outline like a police chalk-drawing but rather, follow the forms of the body without lifting your hand off the page.

the **'half-blind contour drawing'** allows you to look down at your page sporadically.

As you won't be looking at the paper, practice drawing at the same speed of your eyes. i.e. let your eyes guide where your hand will be.

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - FORESHORTENING - Contour Drawing

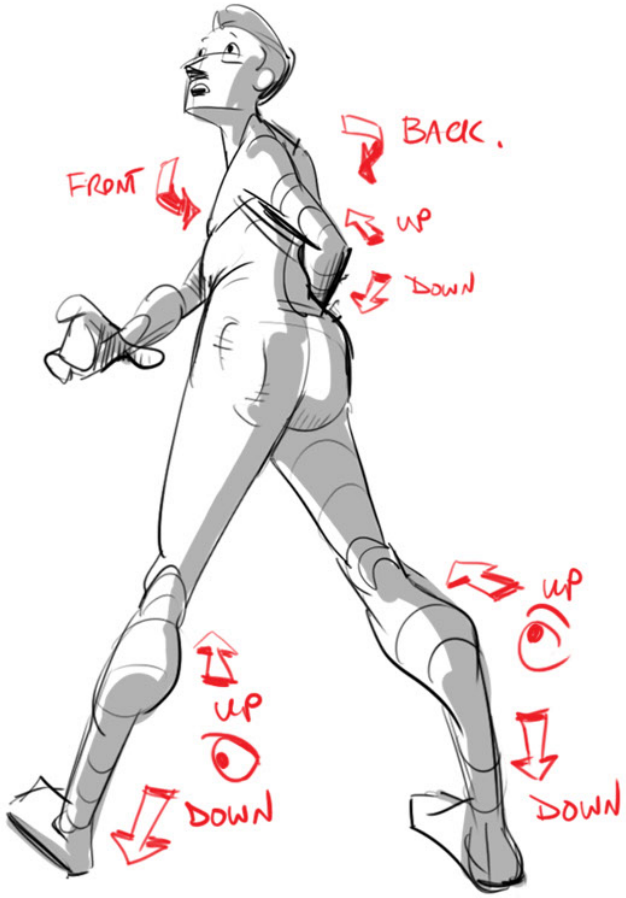


Think about it as drawing a ‘topical map’ of the pose - finding the elevation changes of the form, drawing where forms tuck under or rise above and around each other. The blind contour exercise will help develop hand-eye co-ordination, find the 3D forms that can lead to more dynamic drawings and posing - PLUS you’ll get some really interstingly odd drawings!

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - Direction Changes

The great thing about life drawing is when lookng at the human figure, you will notice it is not a 2D object - there is form and depth to it. Depending on your vantage point during the session, you will be looking ***up*** at, ***down*** at, seeing the ***front*** AND the ***back*** of the model all at the same time - AMAZING!

Anything above the Horizon Line, you are essentially looking up at and anything below it, you are looking down at.



How many times can you tell someone I can see your chest AND back at the same time!

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - Direction Changes

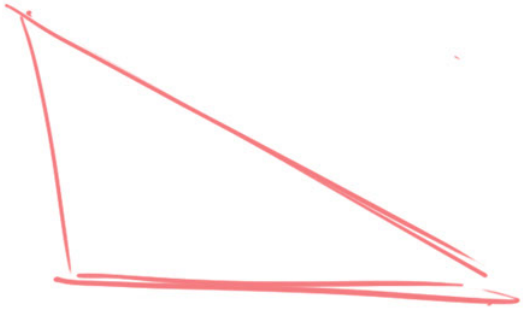
This pose is rather static. We could draw a literal flatter interpretation of it.

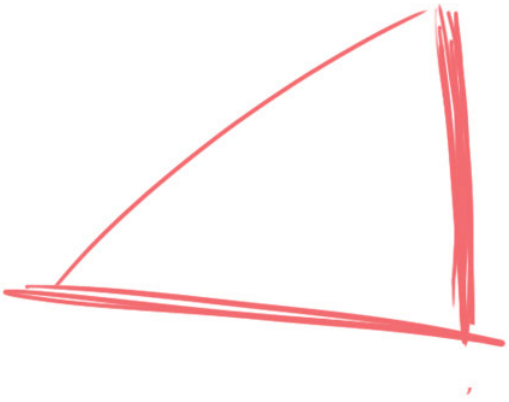
Or as you should always do, exaggerate it a bit and keep in mind the many direction changes in the single pose.

Try and observe where parts of the figure recede and come toward to you.

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - SHAPE LANGUAGE

Another exercise to help capture the pose is to break it down to large geometric shapes





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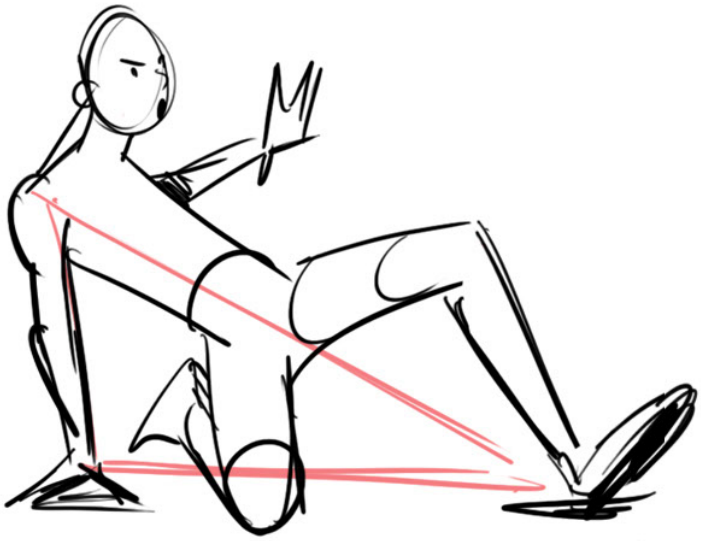
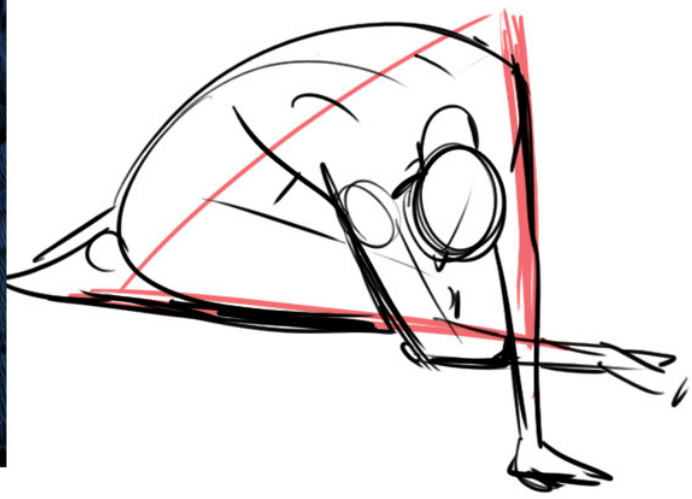
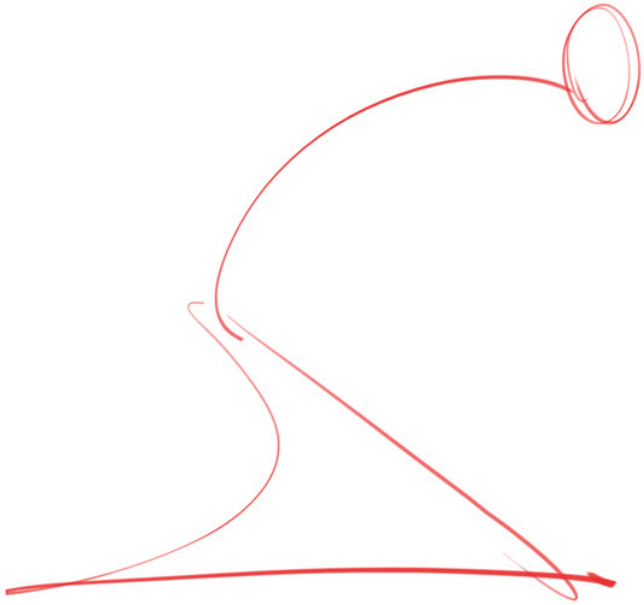


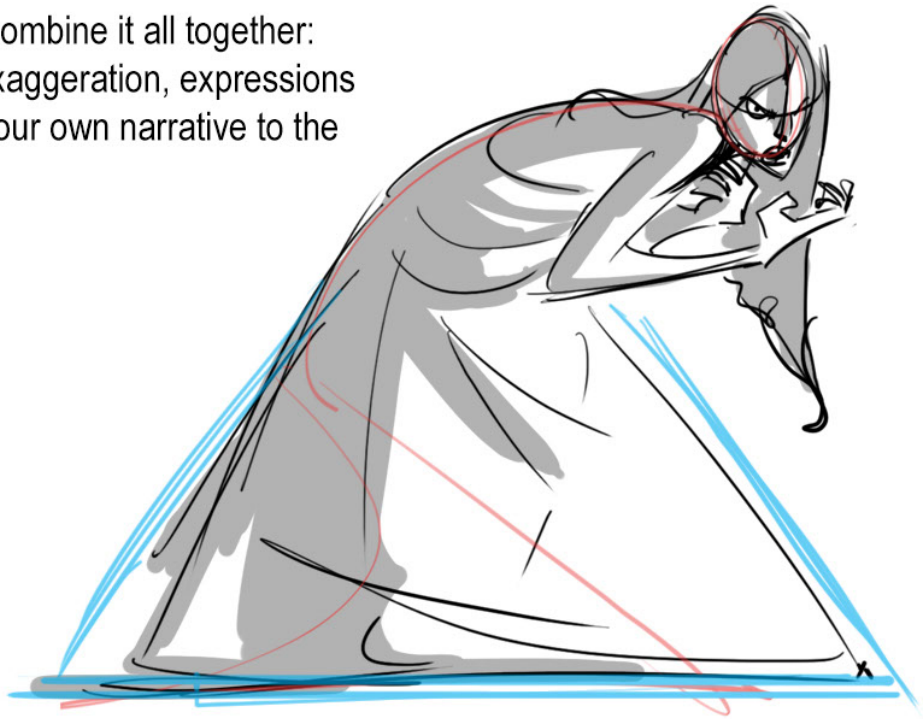


PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - SHAPE LANGUAGE

The overall shape of the pose was a triangle..

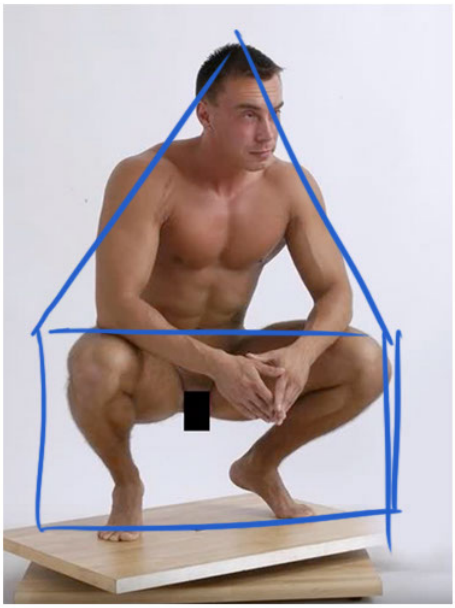


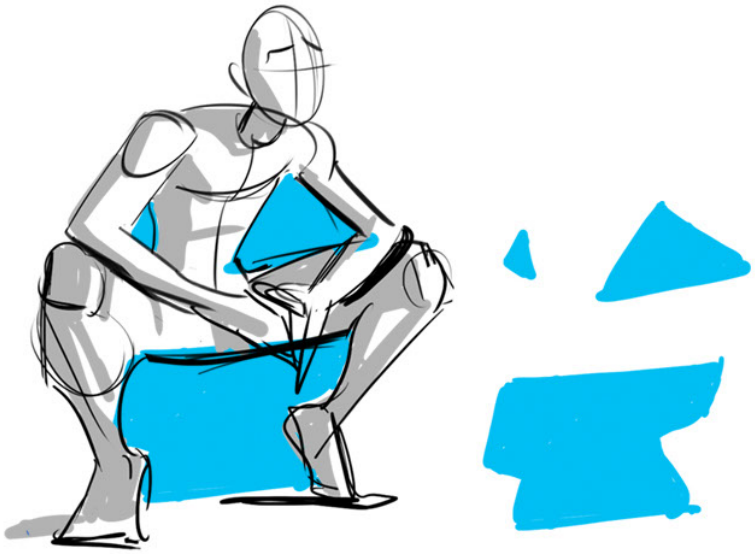
... but you can combine it all together: line of action, exaggeration, expressions to help create your own narrative to the pose.



PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - NEGATIVE SPACE

Another way to help build your drawing is to look at the spaces in-between!

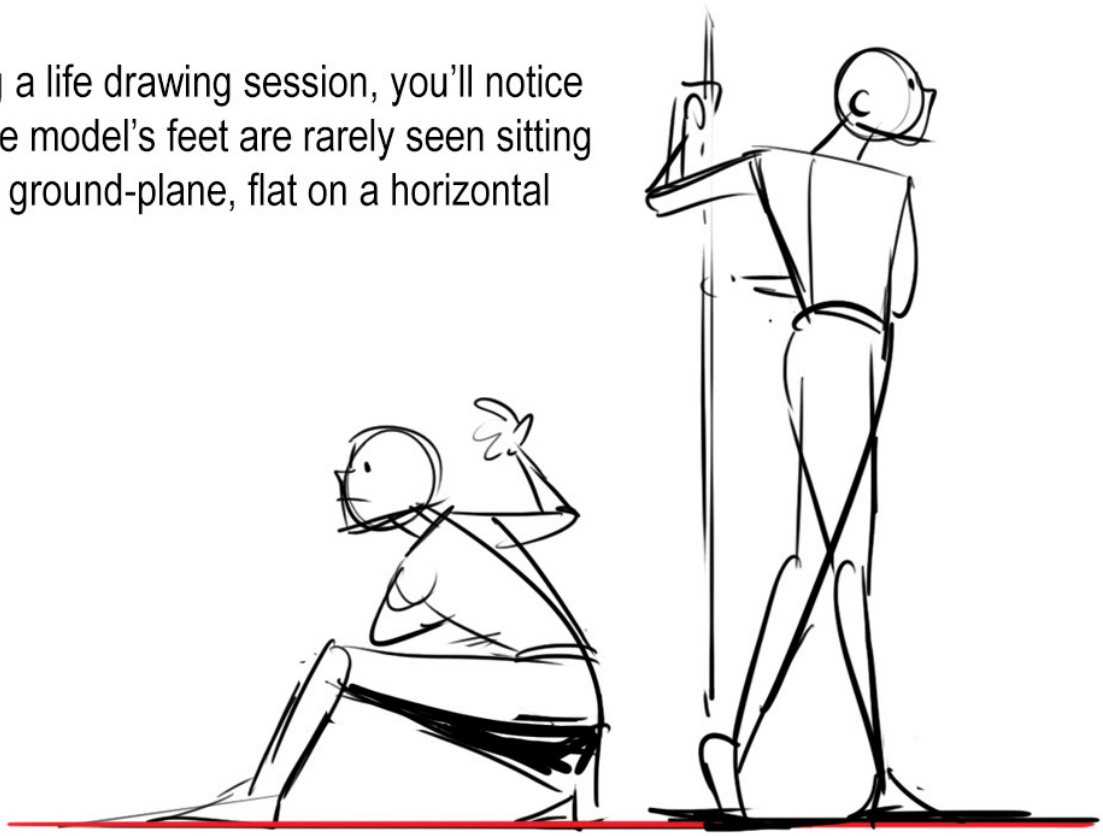


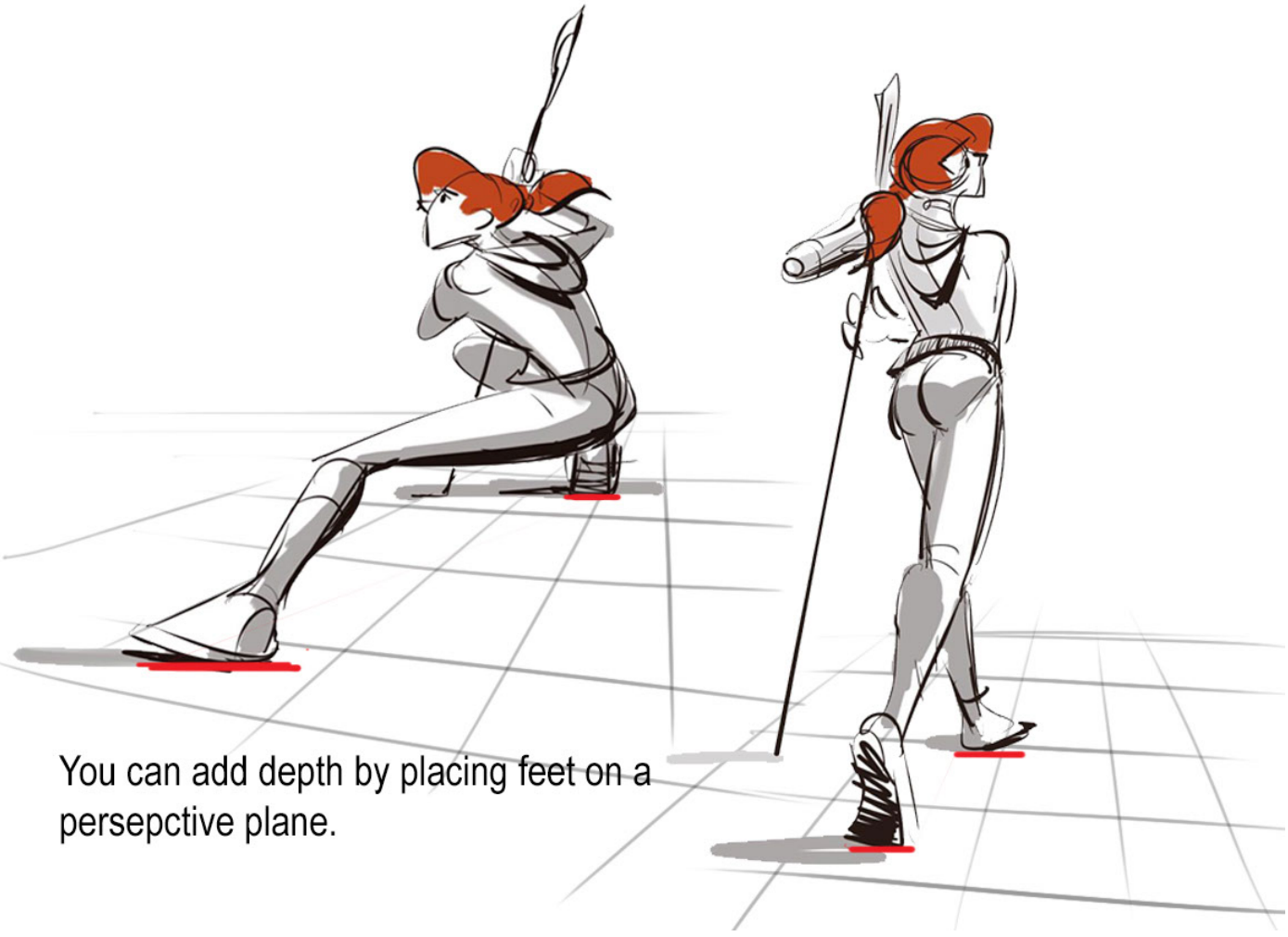


Searching for the negative spaces will also help in building your ‘strong silhouettes’

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - Depth and Perspective

During a life drawing session, you'll notice that the model's feet are rarely seen sitting on the ground-plane, flat on a horizontal angle.





You can add depth by placing feet on a persepctive plane.

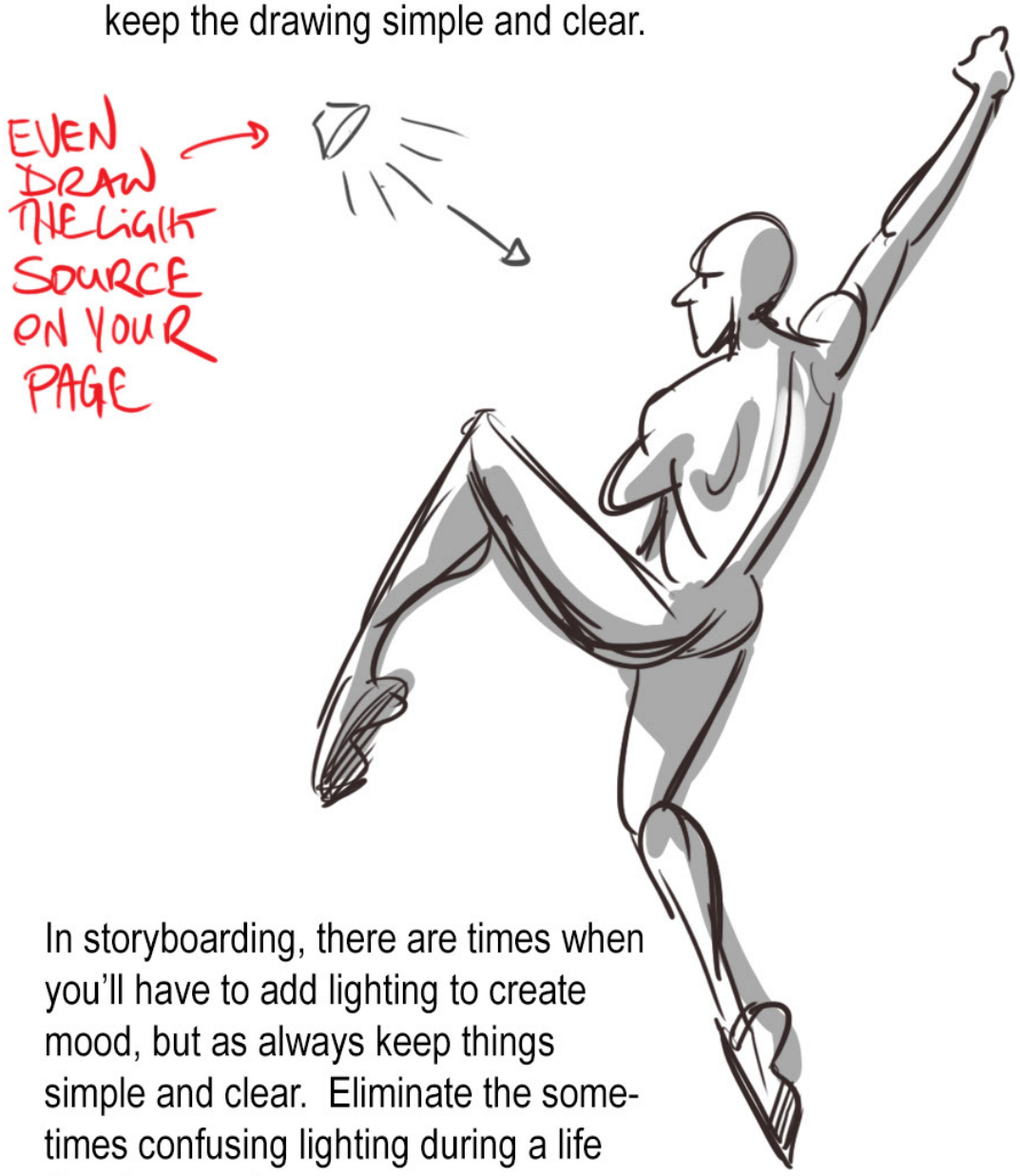
PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - LIGHTING

There will most likely be multiple light sources in a life drawing session. There may be overhead flourescent lighting along with multiple spotlights. This can be confusing trying to see the forms through the multiple shadows

TIP!

Pick ONE light source!

Decide on one light source and visually eliminate the others. You'll eliminate multiple cast shadows on the figure and keep the drawing simple and clear.



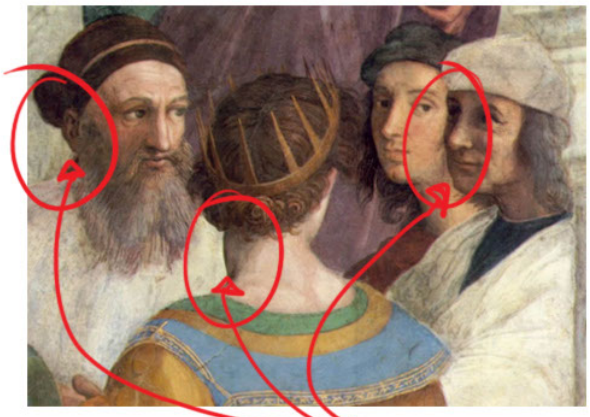
In storyboarding, there are times when you'll have to add lighting to create mood, but as always keep things simple and clear. Eliminate the some-times confusing lighting during a life drawing session.

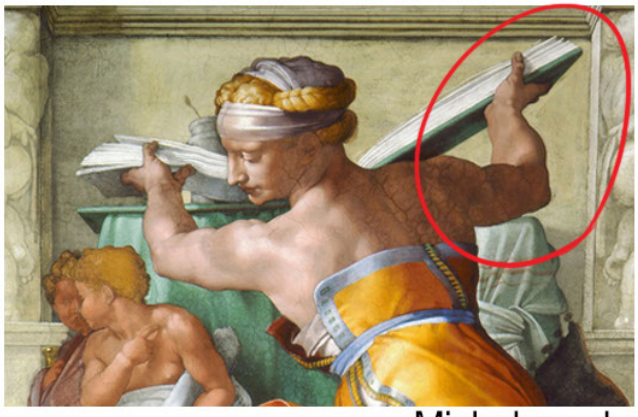
Lighting to Create Depth - Light vs Dark

One easy tip to create depth in your drawing is to put a light against a dark. The painters of the rennaissance discovered this technique and used it all the time in their paintings

12thC Medieval painting

The RENAISSANCE! 15thC Raphael

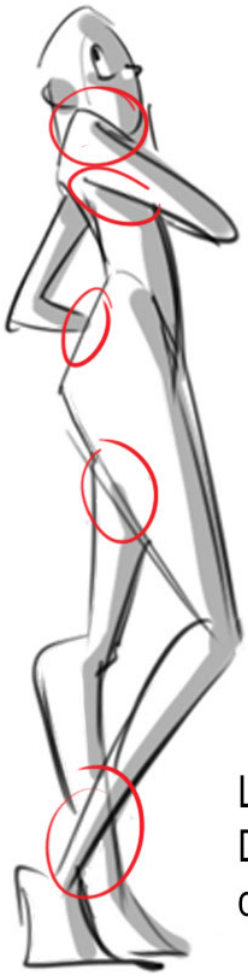


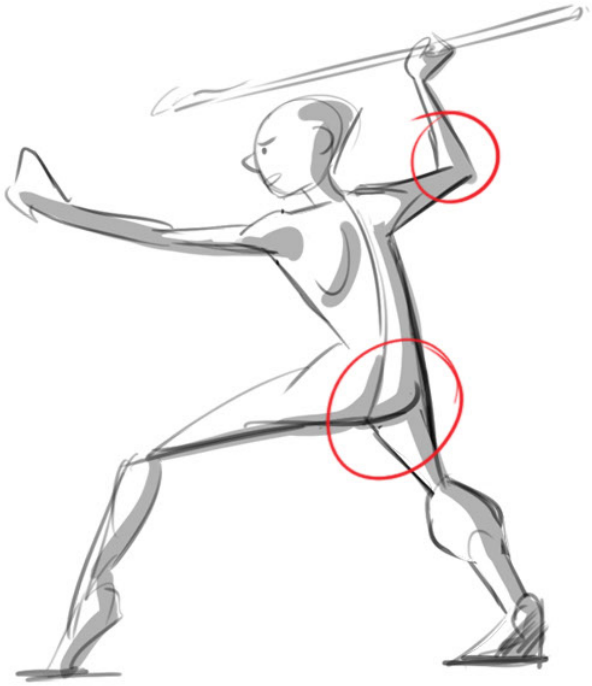


Michelangelo

STORY: You'll acutally see this in real-life all the time - when my art teacher pointed it out to me it was an 'enlightening' moment. Similar to the film 'Field Of Dreams' when the step-brother finally sees all the ballplayers for the first time. "When did all these ballplayers get here?" They were there the whole time his mind was just closed to seeing them. The Lights against Darks are always there. Use it to help show depth in your drawings.

Lighting to Create Depth - Light vs Dark

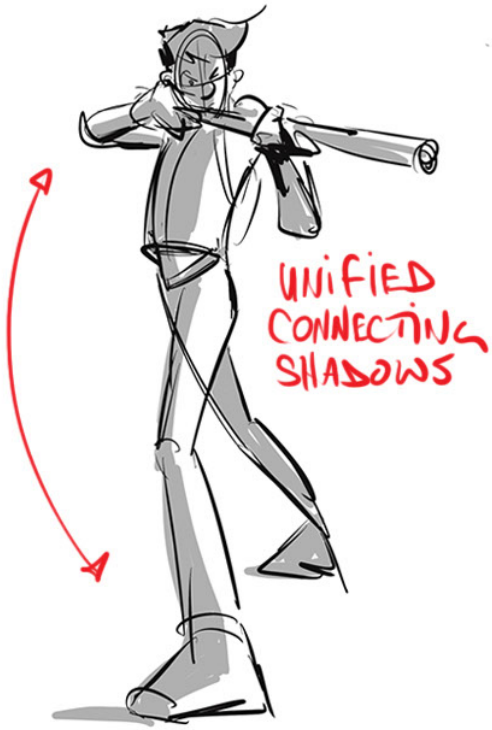


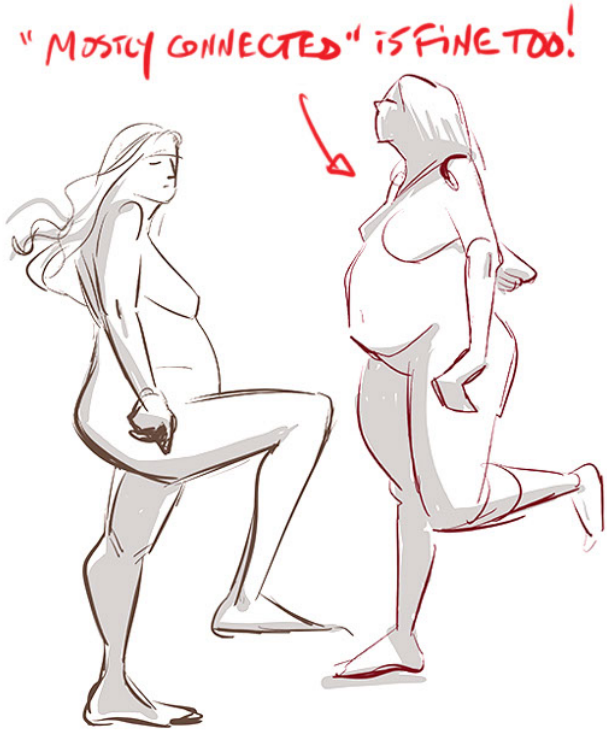


Look for places to put Light against Dark on the same pose to create depth and dimension.

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - Connecting Shadows

This is a TIP from Disney storyboard artist, Normand Lemay*:
When drawing shadows on the figure, try to keep them connected from start to finish.





Connecting the shadows will help simplify the lighting in a life drawing session and add clarity and simplicty to your drawings.

* you can find more Normand Lemay tips at grizandnorm.squarespace.com
or simply search “Normand Lemay Tuesday Tips” online

PRACTICAL LIFE DRAWING - Resources

Online

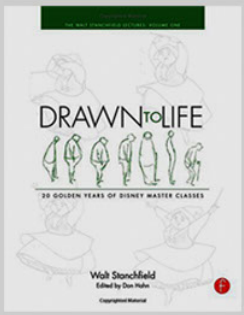
line-of-action.com
http://reference.sketchdaily.net
https://www.quickposes.com/en/gestures/timed
https://www.bodiesinmotion.photo/

- timed costumed and nude poses

https://grizandnorm.tumblr.com/

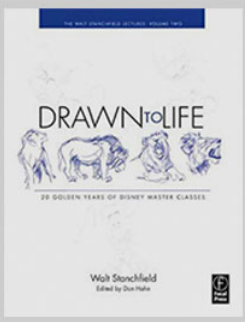
-Disney Artists, Normand Lemay and Grizalda Stayastema-Lemay

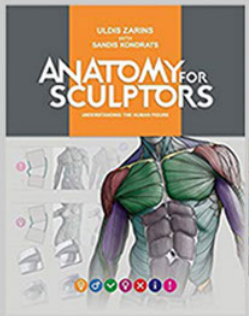
Books



Drawn To Life vol. 1, 2 by Walt Stanchfield

legendary Disney animator sharing lessons from life drawing sessions at Disney





Anatomy for Sculptors

best modern anatomy book (available as .pdf)

How To Draw Comics The Marvel Way

visual storytelling!

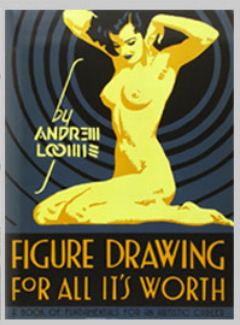


Figure Drawing For All It's Worth by Andrew Loomis

legendary artist, designer with fundamentals

Local Life Drawing sessions (Vancouver, BC, late-2019 check online for info, subject to change)

Basic Inquiry - 1011 Main Street - (traditional life drawing, various sessions)
Dr Sketchy Vancouver - (various venues) burlesque-themed eat, drink, draw and be entertained!
SNAG - 926 Main St, The American Bar - monthly live art event w life drawing
Kerrisdale Life Drawing - 2909 W 33rd Ave. (traditional life drawing)
Slice of Life Gallery - 1636 Venables St.
The Space2 - 3133 Kingsway (Japanese Kinbaku rope bondage life drawing. Oh My!)

BONUS GALLERY - Thanks for reading! Have Fun!

the model was doing this:

but I dressed him as
Dirk from
Last Kids on Earth

BONUS GALLERY - Thanks for reading! Have Fun!

the model was doing something like this, but I turned him into Jack, from Last Kids on Earth

the model was sitting on a stool, but I turned him into Superman lecturing the children...

BONUS GALLERY - Thanks for reading! Have Fun!