

PERSPECTIVE

Teachers' Notes

The Art of Drawing and Using a Sketchbook:
Workshops for Key stages 3, 4 & 5 at the
Wallace Collection



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'If you have not got the knack of making a sketch of a man who has thrown himself out of the window whilst he is falling from the fourth storey to the ground, you will never be able to go in for the big stuff'.

Eugène Delacroix (19th-century French artist)

This quotation from Delacroix highlights some of the qualities of the sketch: spontaneous, speedy, agile, imprecise and unfinished – an essential skill, used today by artists, architects and designers alike.

These notes are designed to accompany the KS3 – KS5 workshops on The Art of Drawing and Using a Sketchbook at The Wallace Collection and to support the KS3 –KS5 national curriculum targets for Art & Design and Design & Technology. The notes provide a summary of the sessions, some information on the key works of art used and some ideas on follow-up work.

By introducing a range of drawing activities including annotation of sketches, rapid drawing, making best use of the page and making restatements as opposed to erasing, the gallery based sketching will help students develop their sketchbooks – a personal space to gather information, record observations and explore design ideas.

The Workshop

Students should bring their own sketch/workbooks; artist quality materials will be provided.

Following a brief introduction to the Wallace Collection, the tutor will discuss what the students understand by the terms 'mark making, line and texture', any problems encountered with these concepts and what their expectations are for the session. Different approaches to applying these drawing techniques in practice will be discussed.

Through a series of sketching activities (see "Sketching Activities" below) students will learn new drawing techniques, hone observational skills and experiment with a range of dry drawing media including graphite sticks, Conté crayons, lead pencils of varying grades and different coloured and toned papers.

Sketching takes place in the galleries, where the emphasis will be on close looking to gather information, based on observational drawing from objects and works of art including paintings, armour and furniture. Illustrated below are a selection of the main artworks which are typically used in this session, but these may vary depending on the tutor.

Perspective techniques will be used to sketch one of the galleries, i.e. a 'real', three-dimensional space.

Sessions are of two or four hour's duration, with each covering the same ground but with the longer session including an extended range of drawing activities.

Pieter de Hooch, *A Boy bringing Bread*, Netherlands, c. 1663, Oil on Canvas (P27)

As in many of his canvases, the drawn perspective was created by placing a pin at the vanishing point: the hole can be detected with the naked eye on the door jamb at the extreme left of the canvas.



Students will be asked to focus on how the artist created an illusion of space and asked to find the vanishing point (VP), making brief, analytical sketches with tone and line.

The tutor will use a mock-up of the painting with a piece of string to demonstrate the technique.

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Peter Paul Rubens, *The Rainbow Landscape*, Flanders, c. 1636, Oil on oak Panel [P63]



Another large painting on a similar scale to the Canaletto. The scene has great depth, created by a high viewpoint, the converging lines of the trees, cornfield and stream as well as very blue/mauve tints of the distant hills.

The positioning of the horizon line can be compared to the Canaletto to understand how different artists choose their viewpoint. Students to sketch the horizon line and vanishing point.

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Antoine Watteau, *Les Charmes de la vie (The attractions of life)*, France, c.1718 - 1719, Oil on Canvas [P410]

The setting is like a stage where Watteau – who was trained as a scene painter – has carefully arranged his figures. This painting is one



of Watteau's classic *Fêtes Galantes* – scenes depicting outdoor gatherings, mainly of young city-dwellers engaged in conversation and music.

The use of linear perspective is evident in the distant figures – much smaller than those in the foreground; the floor tiles and horizontal bands around the columns appear to converge at a point somewhere centrally on the distant horizon. The most distant parts of the scene are rendered with less contrast and with a bluish hue, to simulate the effects of aerial perspective.

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Canaletto, *Venice: the Bacino di San Marco from the Canale della Giudecca*, Italy, c. 1735 - 1744, Oil on Canvas (P499)

The Wallace Collection contains several 'view' paintings by Canaletto who was renowned for his use of perspective.



Students will establish the horizon line and artist's viewpoint; 3 or 4 quick sketches in line will map out the main perspective effects – linear perspective, vanishing points, converging horizontals and size diminution. The main shapes and tones can be simplified by squinting; sketches to be made using tone only, no linear marks. This painting demonstrates how horizontal lines at right angles to the picture plane appear to converge at a vanishing point (or points) on the horizon line.

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Richard Parkes Bonington, *Venice: the Piazza San Marco*, France, 1828, Oil on Canvas [(P375)]

Another painting which can be used to demonstrate a range of perspective effects, especially size diminution of the figures. Students can use a combination of line and tone in their sketches, strong and feint lines to suggest spatial recession and draw the clouds to analyse how clouds appear in perspective.



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Ary Scheffer, *Margaret at the Fountain*, France, 1858, Oil on Canvas (P284)

This subject, taken from Goethe's *Faust I*.

Drawing circles in perspective can be difficult, so the composition gives students an opportunity to practice sketching a number of different sizes of circles in perspective, with each elliptical shape being dependent upon varying viewpoints.



Other perspective effects are the overlapping of the figures which get smaller as they recede and the use of tonal values to suggest depth.

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Aelbert Cuyp, *The Avenue at Meerdervoort*, Netherlands, early 1650s, Oil on Canvas (P51)

This evening view has a central avenue of trees which leads the viewer's gaze into the picture and as such is a good example to show students how the artist has used perspective as the principal technique to arrange the composition.

Drawing the negative shapes between the trees is an effective way to position the trees as they recede into the distance. The treatment of the distant view of Dordrecht is a good example of aerial perspective.



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European Armoury II

Using the techniques learnt so far students will make a longer drawing of one of the galleries; grid paper will be supplied to assist measuring.

The drawing to include one or two pieces of furniture and a figure to show scale



Sketching Activities

The core activities will comprise the following, with some variations from session to session if temporary room closures dictate:

- An abstract, warm-up drawing to help students loosen up and experiment with materials to see how different marks, shapes and tones can create a 3D effect.
- Tutor to explain the main perspective effects used by artists.
- Students to identify the horizon line and the artist's viewpoint by reference to a large scale view or landscape painting, then make 3 or 4 quick sketches in line to map out the main perspective effects – linear perspective, vanishing points, converging horizontals and size diminution.
- Students to squint to simplify the shapes and tones, then draw the main large shapes using tone only, no linear marks.
- The use of perspective by different artists working in similar genres will be compared.
- Moving to other galleries students will look at selected paintings to observe and draw circles in perspective and overlapping objects or figures – both suggest spatial recession, i.e. a 3D, perspective effect. Students to draw negative shapes as well as positive.
- Working from a Dutch interior students will focus on how the illusion of space has been created.
- The session will end with a longer drawing of one of the galleries.

Follow up Activities

Further discussion on how the Wallace artists used one or more perspective effect to emphasise their viewpoint and to translate a three-dimensional scene onto a two-dimensional canvas or board.

Students to review their sketches and develop one into a more complete drawing; this may involve using visual memory to include detail only hinted at in the summary sketches.

A review of the sketches to identify the main characteristics of linear perspective:

- Closer objects are shown larger than distant ones
- Foreshortening – the appearance that an object is shorter than it actually is because it is angled towards the viewer
- The edges of near objects overlap and obscure things behind them
- Nearer things stand lower on the 'floor', more distant things stand higher up.
- The horizon line is always on the level of our eyes.
- All lines parallel with our line of sight recede to the horizon line, towards the vanishing point. All those lines which are above the eye level go down and those which are below the eye level go up

Some ideas for further reading:

Felicity Allen: *Your Sketchbook Your Self* (Tate Publishing, 2011)

Gillian Robinson, Alison Mountain, David Hulston: *Think inside the sketchbook* (HarperCollins, 2011)

Sam Piyasena & Beverly Philp: *Just Draw It!* (Search Press, 2013)

In the Wallace Collection bookshop you will find several helpful books on the various sections of the collection, including the paintings, armour, furniture and Sèvres porcelain.