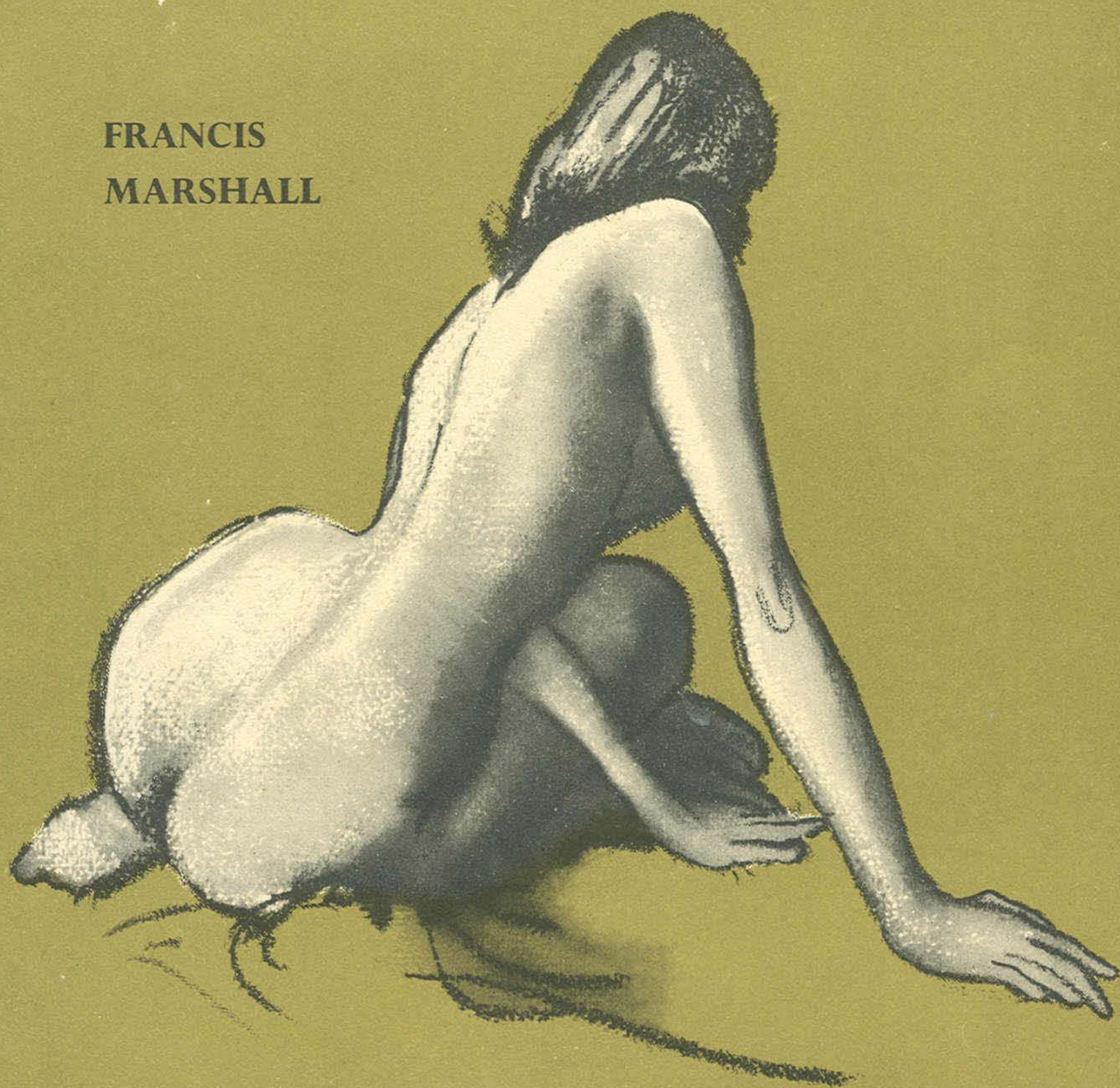


Drawing the

FEMALE FIGURE

FRANCIS
MARSHALL



THE STUDIO *HOW TO DO IT* SERIES: NUMBER 69

Life drawing is the acid test of draughtsmanship. The nude figure is one of the most difficult of all subjects to draw and therefore offers the greatest challenge to an artist's skill. Because of this it is used as the basis of teaching at most of the world's principal art schools.

Few artists of today have shown themselves more skilled in the representation of elegant womanhood than Francis Marshall, whose drawings of the human figure have established fame in the world of fashion.

In this book all clothes are cast aside and the author's knowledge and experience of drawing the nude female form is shared with students and amateurs to whom he explains and demonstrates the procedures he advocates. The book is fully illustrated with litho reproductions of many of his own drawings; all of which have been exclusively prepared for this context; as well as by selected works from the hands of other masters of the human figure, both of the past and the present.

Drawing the Female Figure

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FEMALE FIGURE

HOW TO DO IT SERIES Number 69



by Francis Marshall

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1. Life Drawing

WHY life drawing? Why, long after artists have left the Art Schools and become successful, do they still attend classes and draw from life? Why is it that life drawing is the basis of teaching at most of the principal Art Schools all over the world?

Drawing from life is the acid test of draughtsmanship. It is to drawing what the great classical ballets are to ballet dancing. By it you compare the abilities of one artist with another — and even one generation with another, because life drawing presents exactly the same problems to us as it did to the old masters.

This standard of comparison is used because, of all the things an artist draws, the nude human figure is the most difficult, and especially the female nude figure. Obviously, everything you draw is difficult if drawn sincerely, but in the case of the human figure,



Everybody has a clear idea of what a human figure should look like and therefore any deviation from this will be noticed at once.

should you make even the slightest mistake it will be apparent at once. Everybody has a very clear idea of what a human figure should look like and therefore any deviation from this will be noticed at once — the legs are made too short, they will say, or that arm is too thin and couldn't bend like that. When you are drawing a tree you may draw three more branches on the tree than were really there but nobody will quarrel with your drawing on that account if the tree is reasonably tree-like.

When drawing the female nude you are walking on even more of a tight rope than ever. With the male figure a certain amount of latitude may be given and put down to character or strength but with the female of the species, if you are trying to draw an ideal type and not a grotesque, you have practically no leeway at all, and if your model is attractive it will take all your ability to draw her correctly and attractively. By





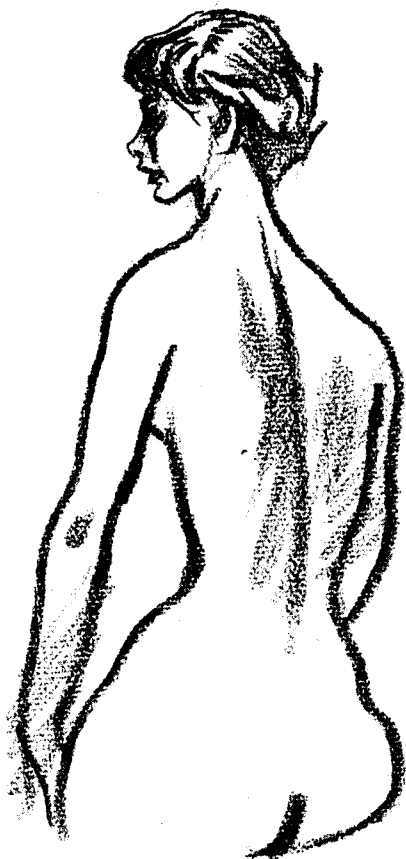
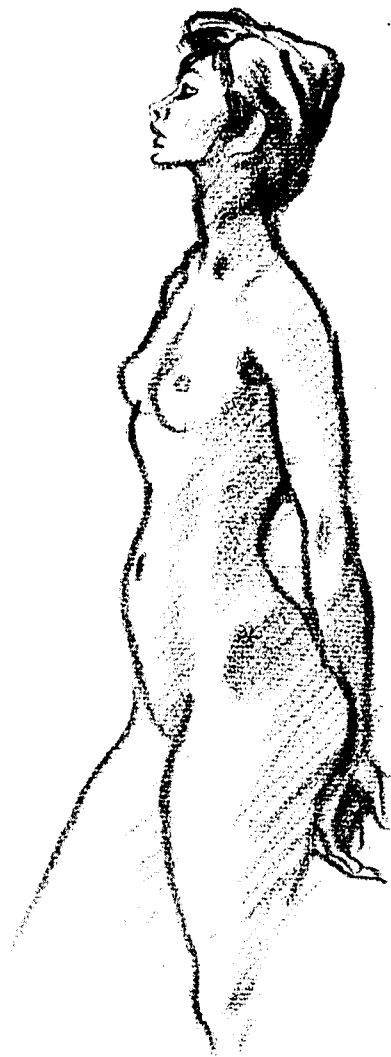
attractively, I mean just that. There is a great deal of difference between a correctly drawn figure drawing of a beautiful model and a pornographic drawing; but even the latter requires considerable ability. It is this hair-trigger precision that makes life drawing so interesting to artists and makes it such good discipline for students. The constant practice of this most difficult of all types of drawing is of the very greatest value all through your life as an artist. From time to time, pressure of work may take you away from it and when returning to it again you find it necessary to work hard at your practice again. Indeed, life drawing is to an artist what constant practice on his instrument is to a musician or the hours at the barre are to the ballet dancer; even the greatest of ballerinas and musicians constantly keep up their practice.

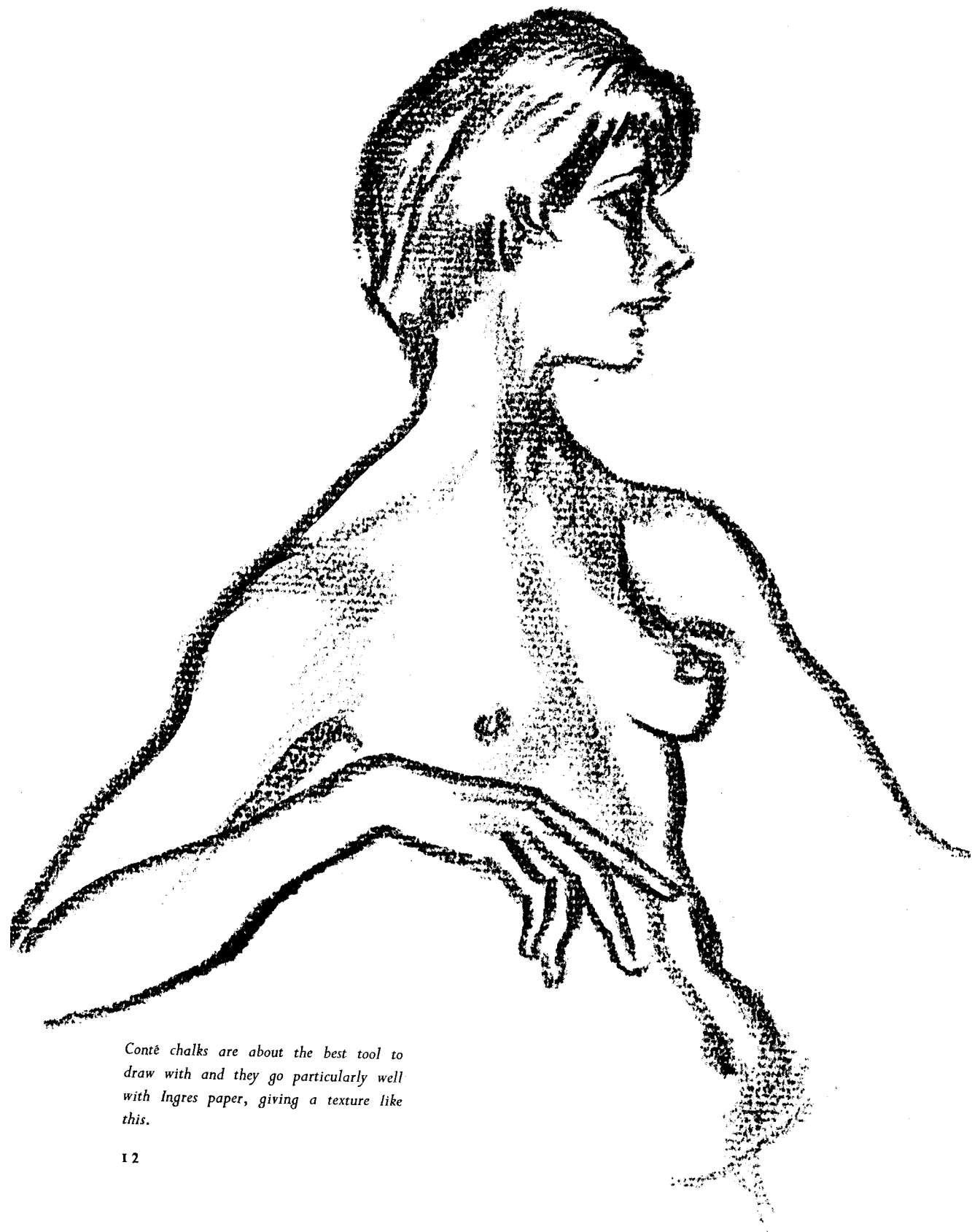
For those about to begin their careers, drawing the figure is absolutely vital. It is a hurdle that must be faced and jumped properly if you are to lay a firm foundation for whatever comes after. I will not be dogmatic and say you can't succeed without

it because that would be absurd, but if your career is going to include much drawing or painting the human figure you will certainly need to master figure drawing. Even if it isn't — should, for instance, design or landscape be your choice — even then it will be of

great value to you, for the human figure is one of the most marvellous designs in the world and contains almost every problem that an artist in his career has to solve. Composition, balance, light and shade, design, pattern, all are included in this problem.

For the amateur too, figure drawing can be an interesting occupation. I know of an Art Club in St. John's Wood, London, where a mixture of amateurs and professionals gathers once a week for two hours to draw from the models, and the amateurs are by no means behind the pros in order of merit.





Conté chalks are about the best tool to draw with and they go particularly well with Ingres paper, giving a texture like this.

2. *Technique*

THIS is not a problem you should worry about too much, the most difficult problem is how to draw ; not what to draw with. Here to help you, however, should you be in doubt, are some of the methods you can use. I do stress that you should not worry too much, especially in the beginning, about your technique. Choose something simple and stick to it. If you are having trouble, it is probably because it's very difficult to draw the figure anyway and *not* the fault of your instruments if things go wrong !

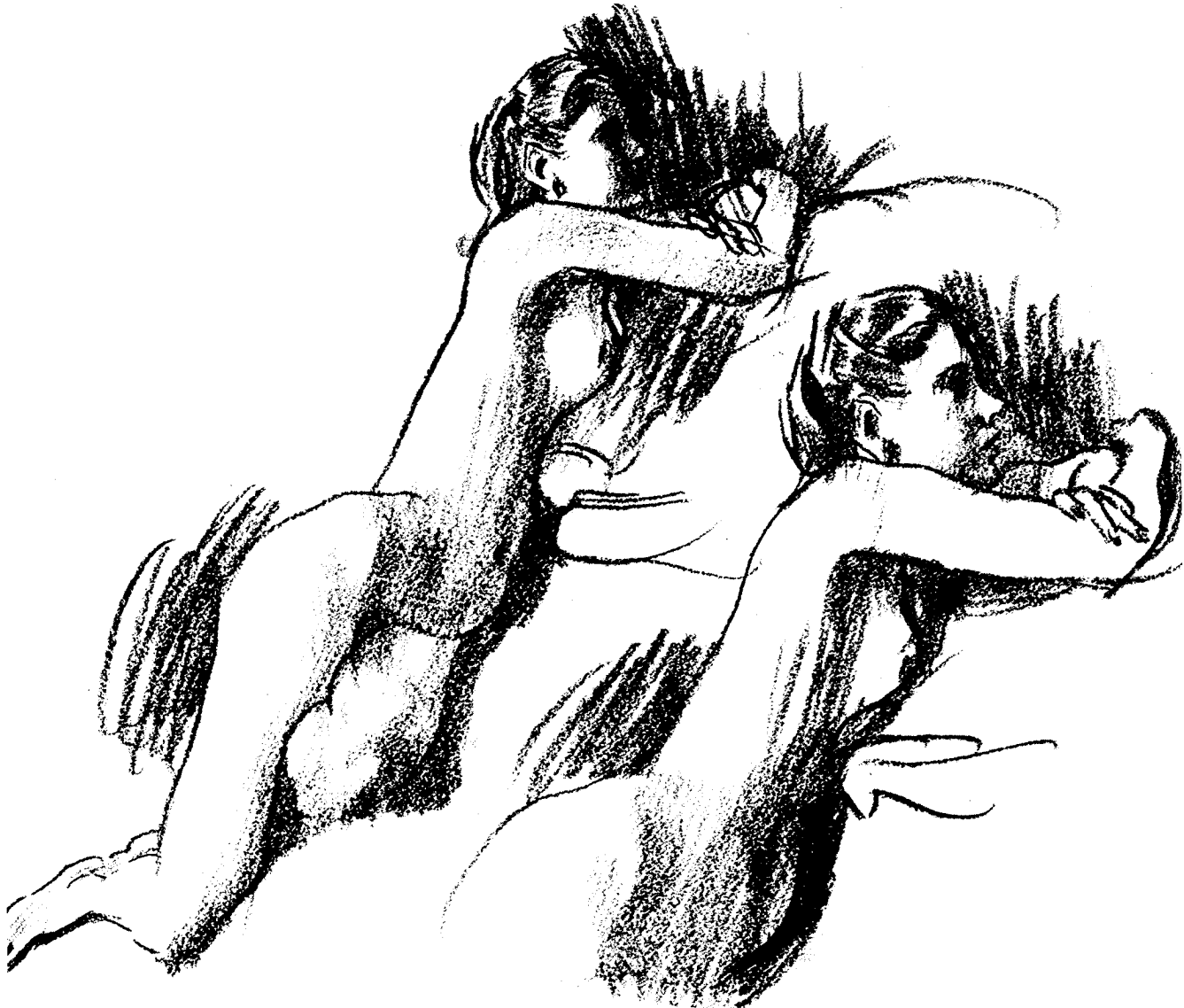
Let us begin with paper. There are many kinds of cartridge papers, from smooth to fairly rough. A medium surface white paper bought in sheets or in a sketch book is the most often used for pencil drawings. You can also use Ingres or Michelet paper which has a rougher surface and is similar to the paper used by 18th Century draughtsmen. It is very suitable for charcoal or chalk drawings of all kinds and is the type I have used for many of the drawings in this book. Augustus John often draws on Whatman "Not" paper, using a pencil. Many artists work on blocks of detail paper, a semi-transparent paper with a rather smooth surface, very useful if you are making a great number of quick studies. If you are going to use a sketch book then don't get too small a size — about 14" × 10" is the smallest you should use.

What to draw with is the burning question and, as I have said already, one is always apt to blame the chosen instrument for one's faults in drawing and is always searching for that medium which will give all the help and sympathy one's drawing longs for. Alas, the perfect tool has probably not been invented yet (unless perhaps the camera is it !). Meanwhile, here are some that artists have been struggling with and cursing at for a long time.

First, there is the lead pencil. In old books on art you can sometimes be misled, for a brush is referred to as a pencil. Sir Joshua Reynolds says : "Take up your pencil" when he means your brush. So the correct term for this ubiquitous instrument is a *lead* pencil. Grade 2B or 3B will probably be the most useful to start with. You can try a softer or harder grade after a time if you wish. Some of the greatest masters of this tool have been Ingres and Augustus John.

Charcoal is very popular because you can get the softness of shadows so well with it and, at the same time, it gives a very sympathetic line. You should work to a larger size when using charcoal than you would in a pencil drawing.

Chalks of all kinds are very popular. Sanguine, a brick red chalk made up in sticks or mounted in wood like a lead pencil, is probably the most used of any. The drawings of Watteau and most of the French 18th century artists are usually in this medium. Conté chalks are about the best and are readily obtainable in both sanguine and black,



although in fact there are at least a dozen varieties to choose from. They go particularly well with Ingres paper and are my own favourites for figure drawing and, indeed, for any studies I make from models clothed or unclothed.

Carbon pencils, which give a blacker, richer line than a lead pencil (though not so deep as a black Conté pencil) are also very useful for our purpose. They are not lead pencils but contain compressed carbon black. An advantage is that they don't smudge so readily as Conté.

Pens of all kinds from Quill pens, beloved by Rembrandt, to thin steel crow-quills, beloved of the late Victorian artists, are available to you. In modern times fountain pens have been added to the repertoire.

When drawing with a pen you must keep your drawing-board flatter than you would with pencil or chalk to enable the ink to flow freely down the nib. It is better to use a

fairly smooth paper with a pen, though not absolutely essential, as you may have noticed in the case of an artist like Tiepolo.

Brushes have also been used, by Rembrandt again and many others, but these are not so good if you want much detail. Some of the diagrams I have made in later chapters to indicate perspective, etc., were drawn with a brush.

If you have a sketch book with a cardboard back you won't require a drawing-board, but otherwise you will. Pin a few sheets on at a time so that the hardness of the board is cushioned by the paper, and your pencil or chalk will move over the paper more easily. A half imperial size drawing-board will be the most useful shape and won't be too heavy. Large drawing pins or clips will keep the paper flat. If you don't want to use a drawing-board, the portfolio you keep your pieces of paper in will also serve to draw on. Attach your paper to it with clips.

India rubber shouldn't really be necessary. If you've made a mistake it's best to draw boldly over it. If, however, this worries you and you want to erase the horrible sight, then by all means bring a soft india rubber with you.

If using a lead pencil, you will probably find that grade 2B or 3B is the most useful to start with.



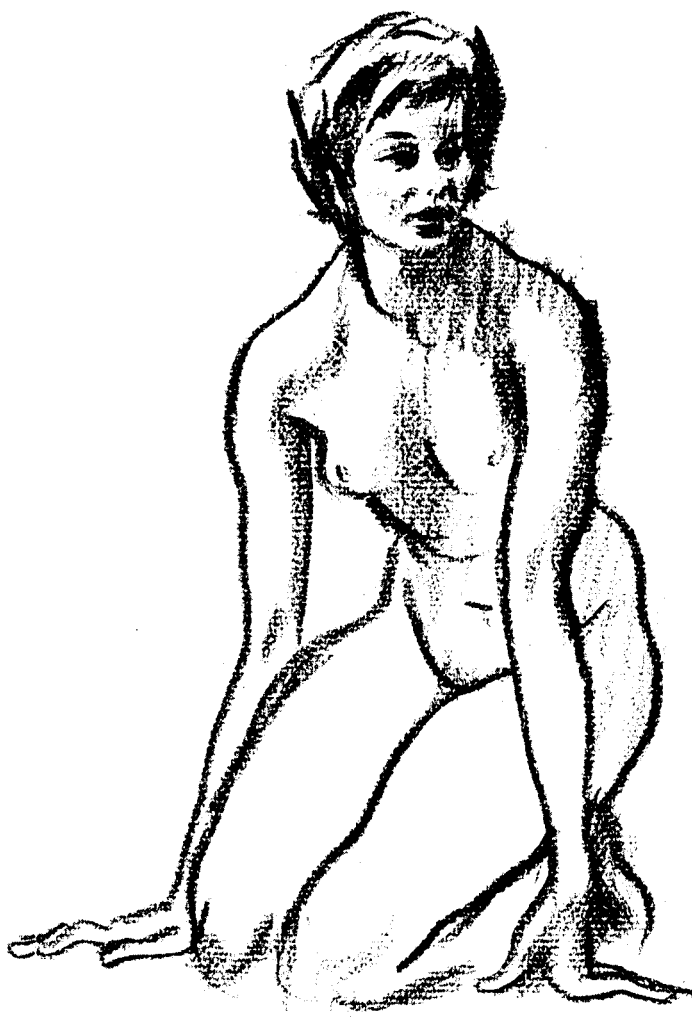


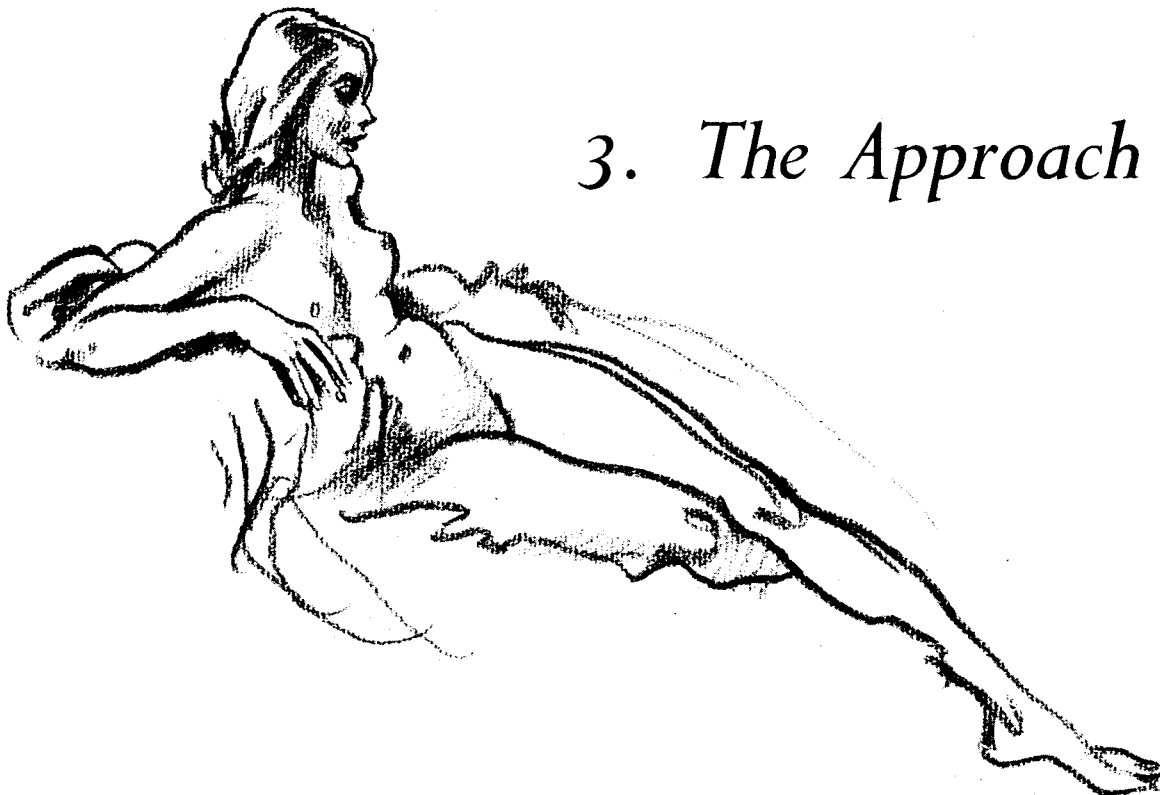
I also suggest you bring along a good supply of ready prepared tools, whether they are sharpened pencils, chalks, charcoal, spare pens with nibs, or properly filled fountain pens. It is terribly aggravating suddenly to have to break off and start sharpening pencils, etc., in the middle of a session and, if you are drawing in company, very distracting to your neighbours. So ; be prepared, like the Boy Scouts !

There are various types of furniture to prop up the artist and his drawing-board. The simplest is the ordinary chair and your own knee, you can add the edge of a table or the back of another chair instead of the knee if you like. The main thing is to hold the drawing sufficiently far away from your eye, so that you can take in the whole of it at one glance. The line of sight of your eye should be at right angles to the line of the paper. Many artists use a donkey ; a kind of stool on which you sit astride ; with a rest for your drawing-board on the front.

Easels can be used, either seated or standing, especially if you are doing larger drawings, from which you want to be able to stand away.

Provided the foregoing principles are adhered to it doesn't matter very much what you use.

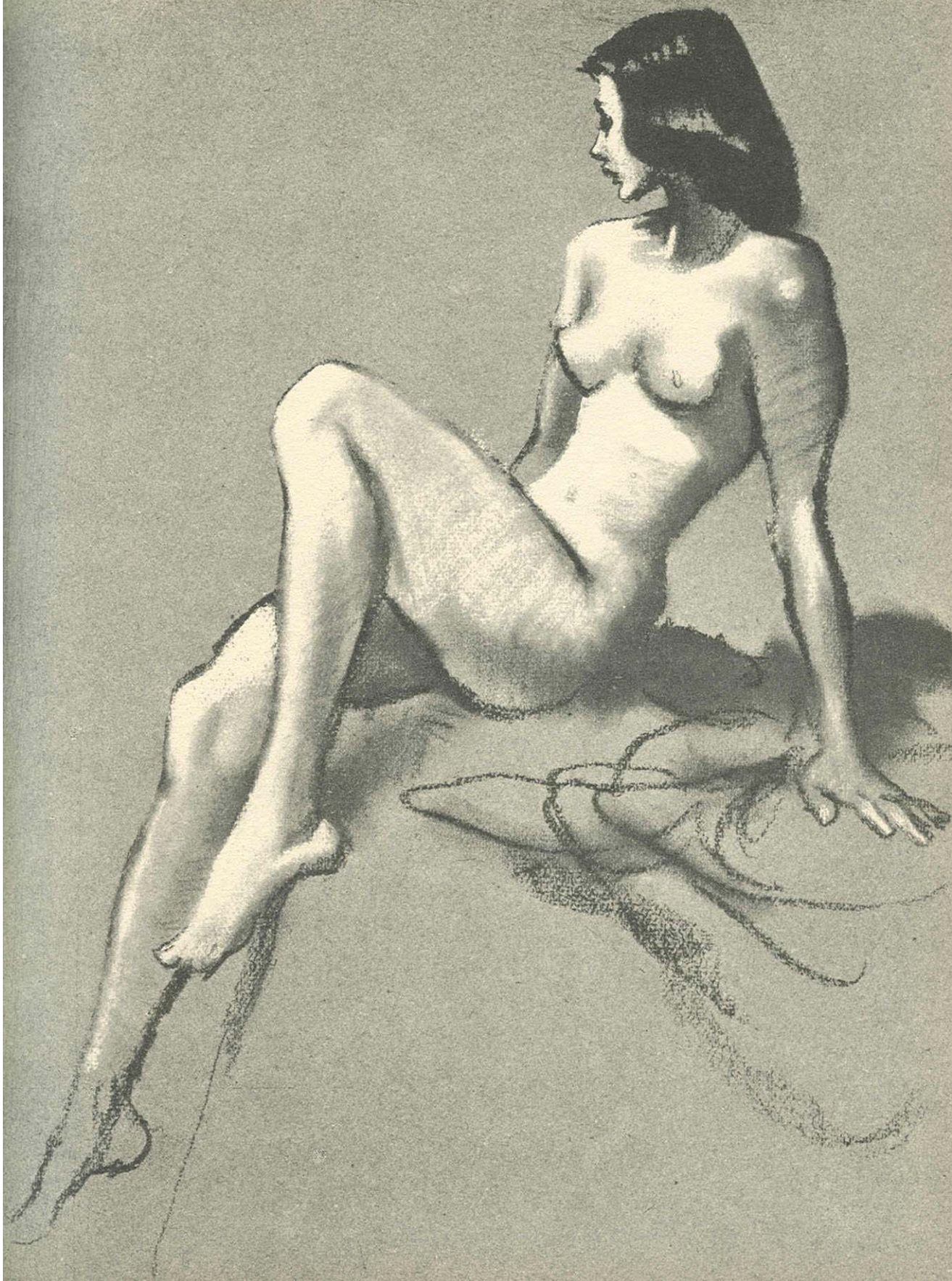




3. *The Approach*

AFTER you have gathered your materials together the next step is to decide on how you will use them. At a Sketch Club or Art School the model is usually posed on a model throne in order that everybody can see her. In this case don't get too close to the model throne because the perspective will be very distorted. The best position in which to sit (or stand) is one in which you can comfortably take in the whole pose with one glance, that is, your eye takes in the model's head and her feet in the same look.

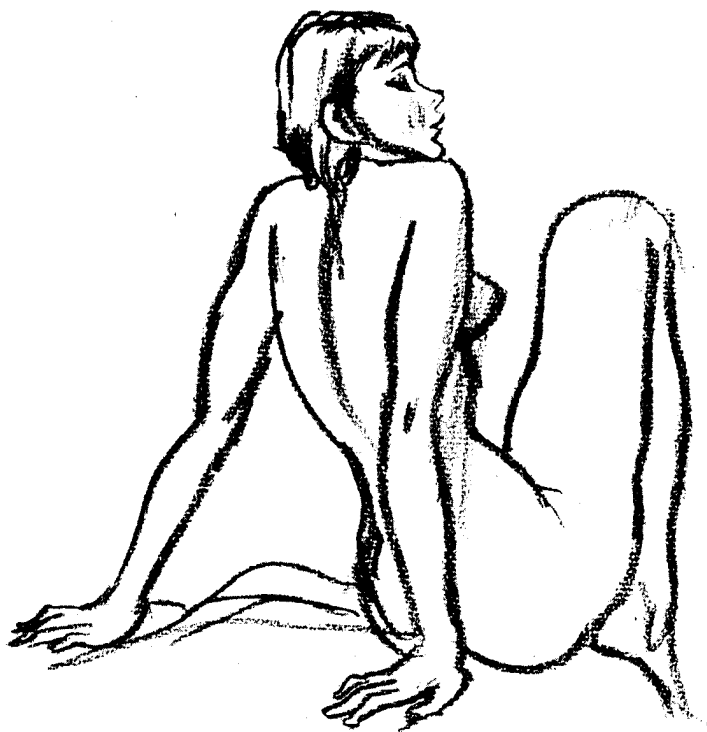
If you are arranging the pose and background yourself, you should avoid any over-elaborate background that will distract the eye. Preferably a bare wall or a cloth hung up behind the model is best. You can then study the shapes, the length and shade and silhouette without trying to find out where some shadow is merged into background — that kind of subtlety can come much later if you like. You should also try and get a very simple effect of light and shade without too many dark shadows on the figure, you only need just enough to throw up the shapes clearly. Everything that distracts you and increases your difficulty should be avoided, so make simplicity your aim. Avoid any confused lighting, that is to say, light which comes from two or more sources and consequently throws cross shadows, liable to cause complications in your search for accuracy. When you become more experienced this more complicated lighting can be very interesting and gives entirely different, but intricate, effects.



Arrangement of light and shade is very important and you should not be in too much of a hurry to start drawing until you have made sure that this is to your satisfaction. If you are working by artificial light, where the light can be moved about the room, you may find that the best method is to have a strong spotlight on the model with a weak top-light, to give general illumination which prevents the shadows from being too dark, without, however, throwing any appreciable shadows itself.

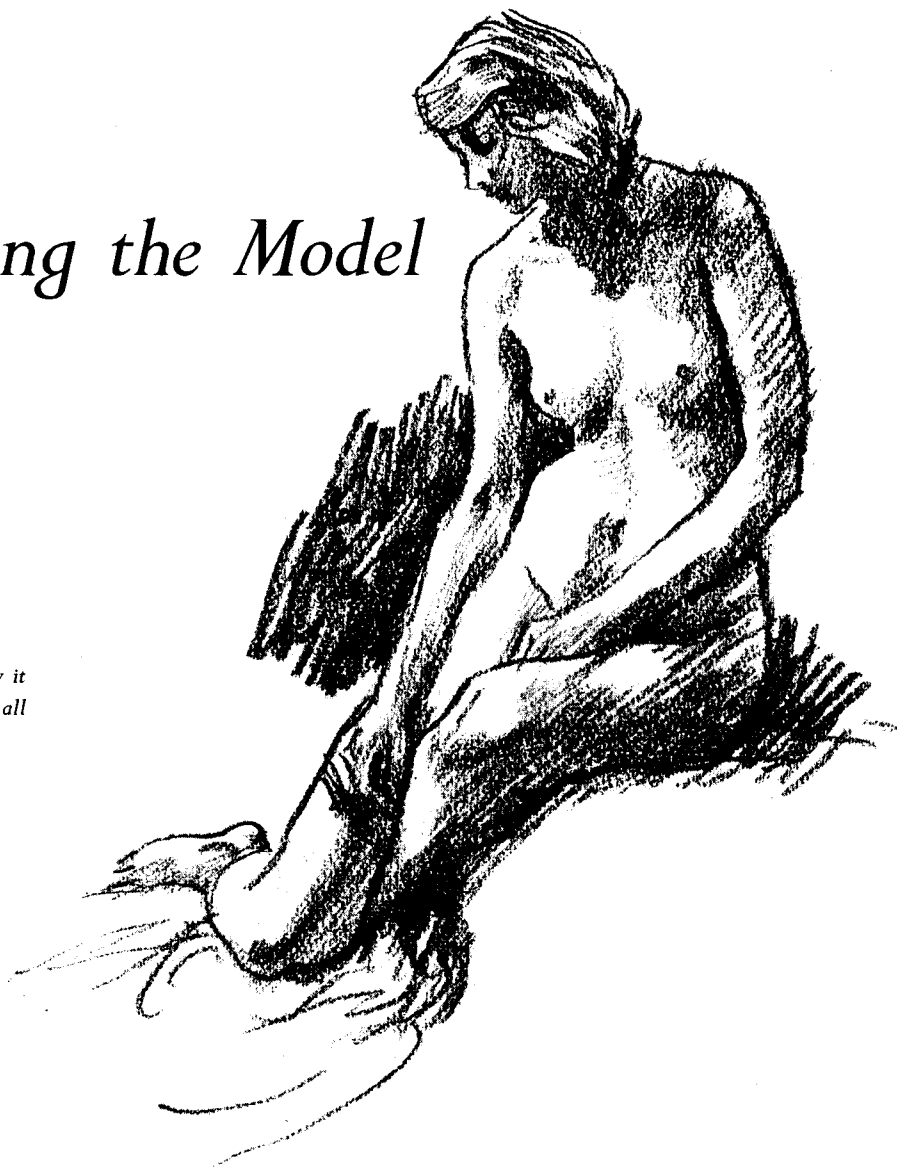
Now we come to posing the model. Unless you have very definite ideas about this yourself it is best to let the model give you various poses, or to move about until you get something that pleases you. A pose with a slight twist to it gives more sense of movement than one in which the model is looking the same way as the body is facing. Too much fore-shortening should be avoided in the beginning. Try also to avoid poses in which the model gets entangled with chairs or other props, this again you can leave until a little later in your career. Poses should be as natural as possible. Some models have a repertoire of all kinds of weird poses, which have no known origin that I can think of, and these should be carefully but tactfully avoided.

To sum up this stage — you pose the model in straightforward poses, against a plain background with simple lighting. You draw at a sufficient distance to include the whole of the model in your eye's focus at one glance.



4. *Drawing the Model*

Draw what you see and, if you draw it correctly, your drawing will be all right.



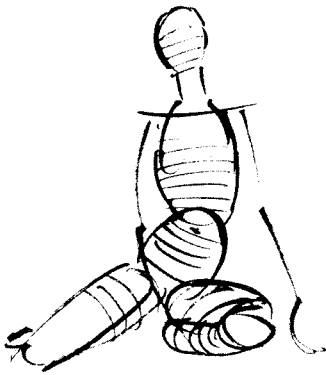
WHEN all the necessary tools, light and shade, background and, finally, the model have been assembled, the most important problem of all has to be attacked. Attack is the word because it's no job to be attempted in a half-hearted way, but it is not a problem to be despaired of. You find you learn even from your worst mistakes — indeed, you often learn more from your failures than the successes.

First of all there are certain bogies and misunderstandings to be rid of. For instance, there is Anatomy. Many people say you can't draw the figure properly unless you understand Anatomy. One might, in reply, point to Greek sculpture, which includes such masterpieces as the Venus de Milo, the Laocoon group, etc. : all created by artists

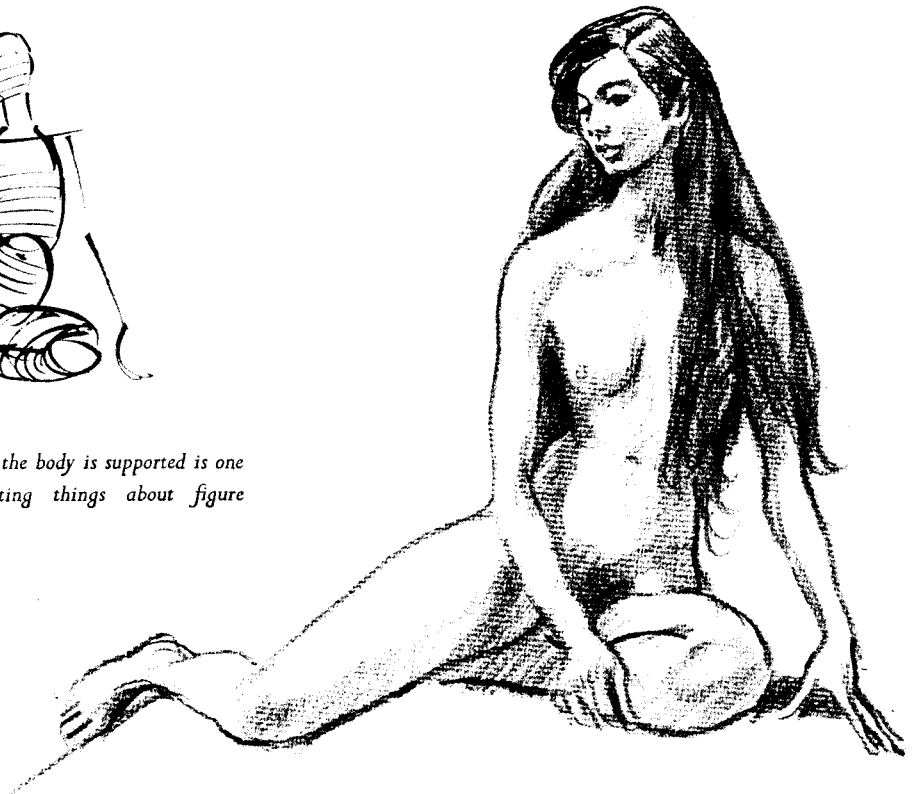
without a great deal of anatomical knowledge. If you have to know the inside workings of everything an artist draws you would spend your life learning how to make aeroplanes, chairs, trains, ships, not to mention the anatomy of horses, cats, seagulls, and also a working knowledge of bridge-building and architecture.

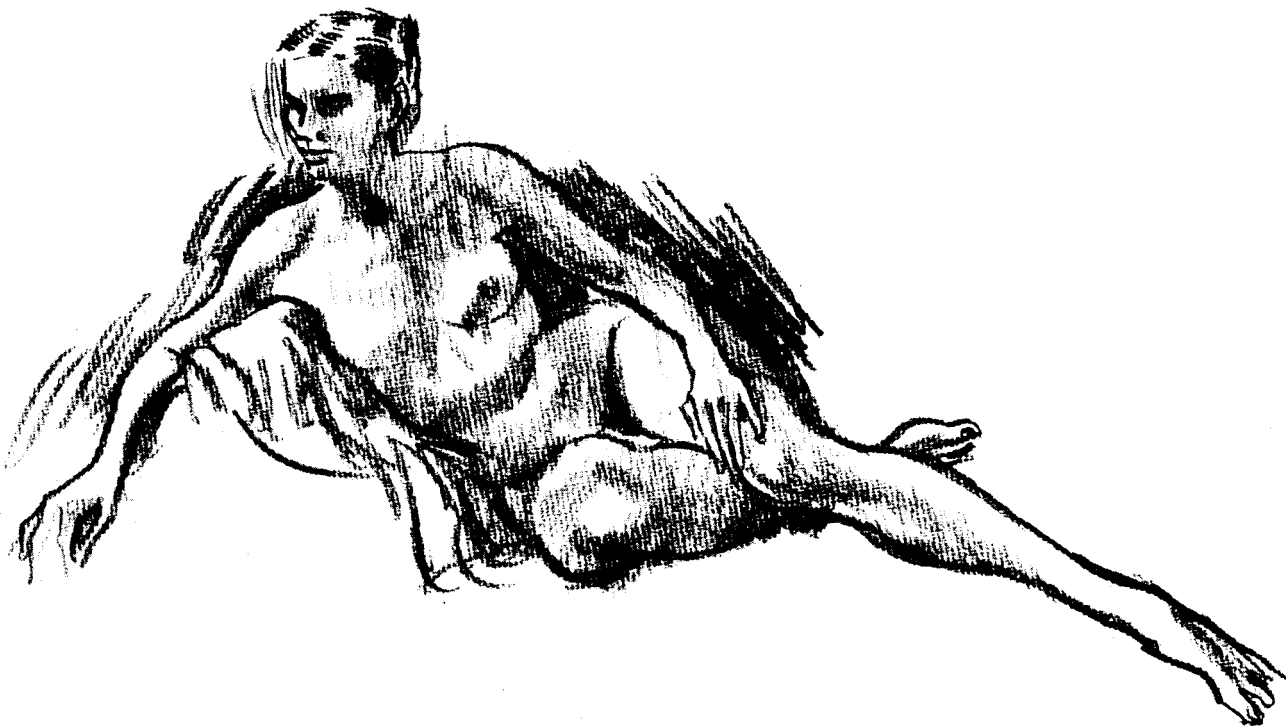
What is required is keen and intelligent observation. A great deal of technical knowledge can sometimes be more of a handicap than a help. I remember one student who knew so much about anatomy that his drawings showed up every muscle, whether he could really see them or not. I sometimes think that some of Michelangelo's drawings show too great an interest in the play of muscles (I know this sounds sheer blasphemy!), so much so that it is difficult to distinguish between his men and women.

Rely, therefore, on your eyes and on what you can see. It's quite difficult enough in the beginning without trying to remember all kinds of muscles and tendons, and worrying about the *latissimus dorsae* and the exact position of the radius and the ulna. Draw what you can see and if you draw it correctly your drawing will be all right. When you have made a beginning, then study anatomy by all means and find out what all those bumps and lumps you've been drawing are called and what they do to cause you so much trouble. There's plenty to study and if you can eventually see the whole working of the intricate human machinery, so much the better. But *start* by using your eyes.



The way the weight of the body is supported is one of the most fascinating things about figure drawing.

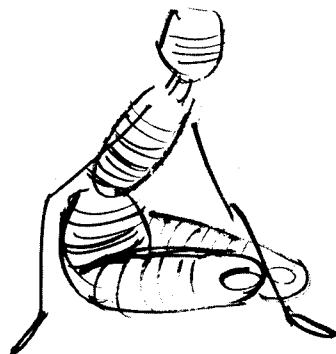




Now what does your eye see when you look at the model? For one thing you think you see all kinds of things that you don't really see. Two conflicting trends are at work. One is your true and trusty eye, the second is your mind, which keeps butting in and telling your eye all kinds of facts it doesn't need to know. An instance of this is fore-shortening. Look at these drawings of bent legs. Your eye sees the leg as a certain shape but your brain knows what the shape is like when the leg is straight and it insists you try and show all this in your drawing. Now this isn't necessary because all you are concerned with is the drawing you are doing at present — of the bent leg. If you could just draw this in much the same way as you would a piece of rock and draw what you see, not concerning yourself with what you don't see, then your problems would be much easier

So, when you look at the model, that first time, clear your mind of all preconceived ideas and just draw what you really see. This needn't, of course, mean that you don't use your brain at all! Your eye is an organ which transmits messages to your brain, which in turn transmits them to your hand. In the process your brain can help by organising the process along practical lines. For instance, this model or shape that is posing before you has weight. If the model is standing then the weight of the body is balanced precariously on its two legs and your drawing should show you realize this, and so help to give a feeling of solidity to your work. If the model is sitting or lying there is also a distribution of weight, not supported by the legs this time, but by the elbows, back or thighs, as the case may be.

It will help you, when you are taking your first look at the model, to study carefully how the weight is distributed.

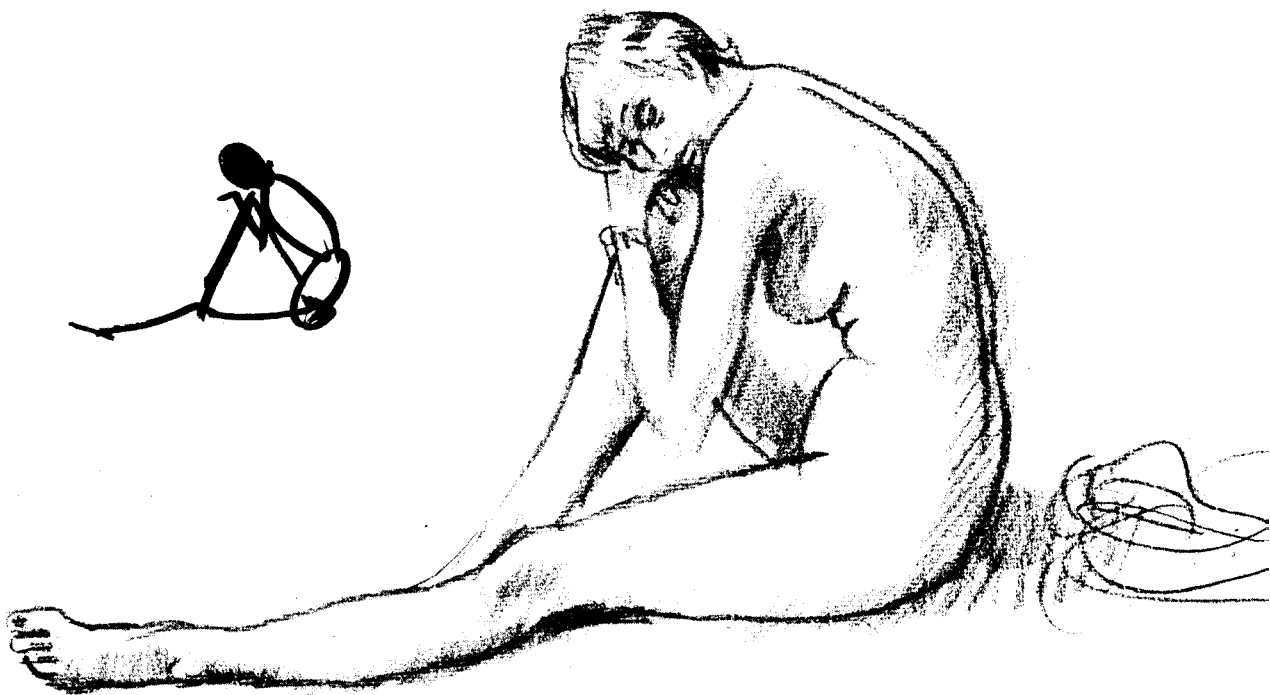


The way the weight of the body is supported is one of the most fascinating things about figure drawing. It will help you when you are taking your first look at the model to study carefully how the weight is distributed in the pose you are going to draw. In the drawings on these two pages I have indicated this in difficult poses. If you think for a moment of a sack of flour (forgive me !) and imagine it propped on two sticks — this is a figure standing. Imagine sacks of flour on the ground — these are reclining figures. By such simple examples get into your mind the feeling of drawing something solid, something heavy, balanced or resting on solid ground. This elementary method will give reality to your work.

The body is not, of course, one single shape like a sack of flour. It is composed of a great many shapes linked together like a necklace, but at all kinds of angles to one another. As the movements differ so these shapes vary their angles. Set your trusty eye to work to see how these shapes are set and then get your hand to work to record them, at first restricting yourself to very simple notes such as I have shown here.

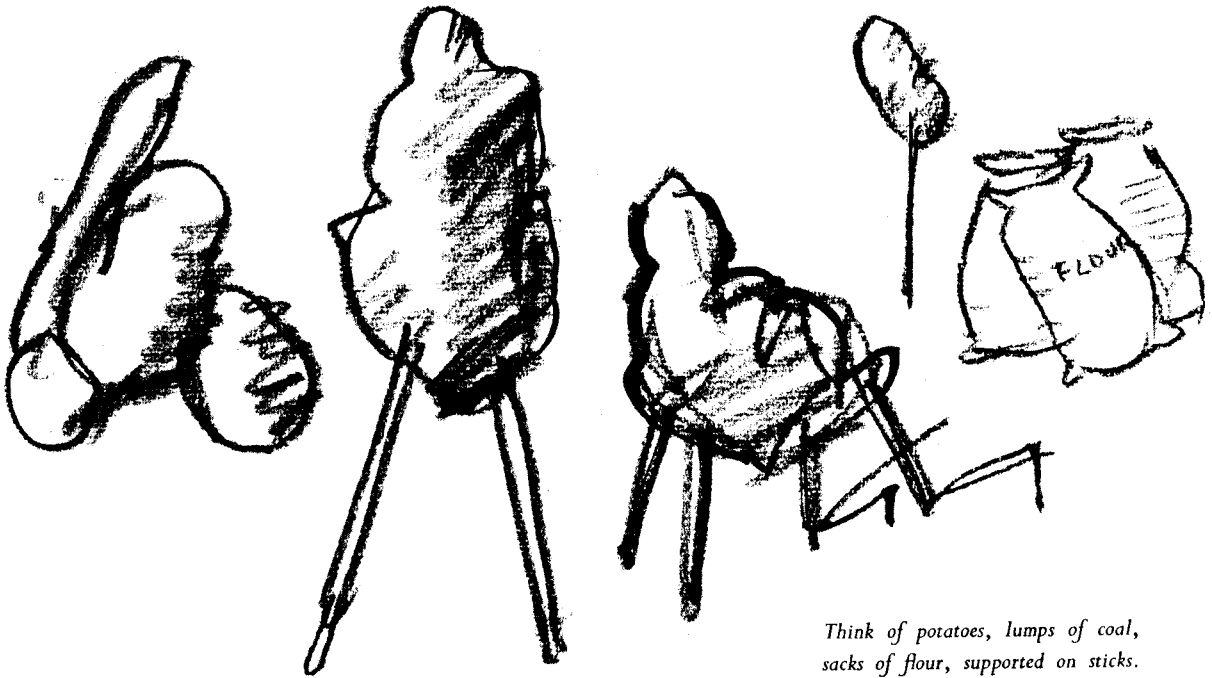
Ignore details in the beginning. Let the head be an egg and the body a larger egg, with long sausages for arms and longer ones for legs. Don't go on doing this too long, however, unless you want to become an *avant garde* sculptor ; it's simply a method of making you realize what it is you are going to draw when you really start.

It is extremely easy to get lost in a maze of details and very difficult to draw them while still keeping the main movement of the figure. Look at the drawing by Degas, on page 26, of a woman taking a bath. Here the broad mass of the figure is shown most



Edgar Degas contributed something new to figure drawing in his quest for the unexpected movements of everyday life. This one is in the Fogg Museum of Art at Harvard University.



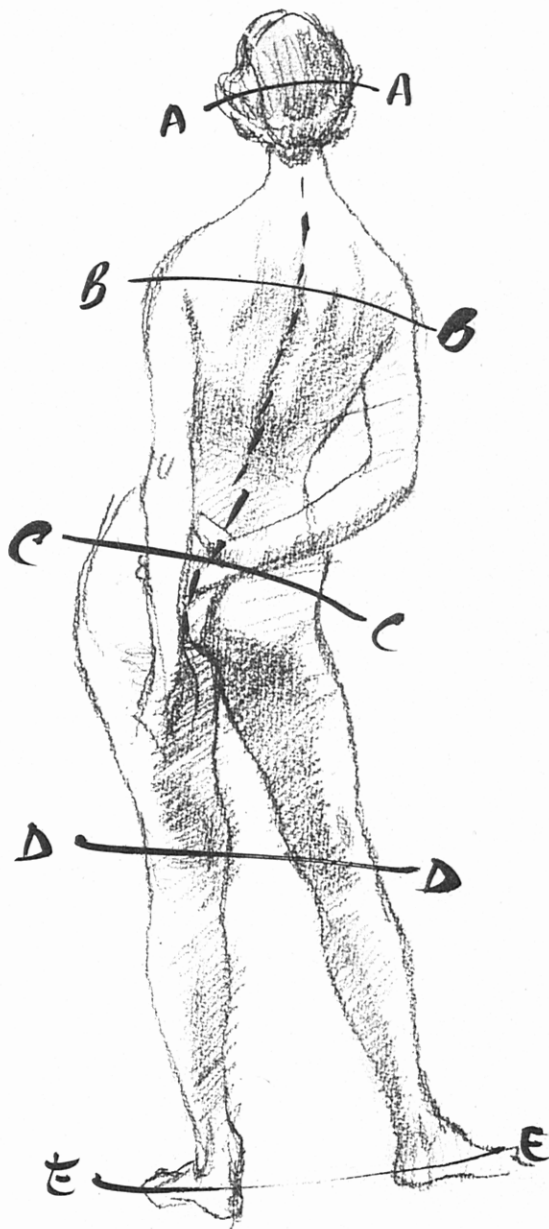
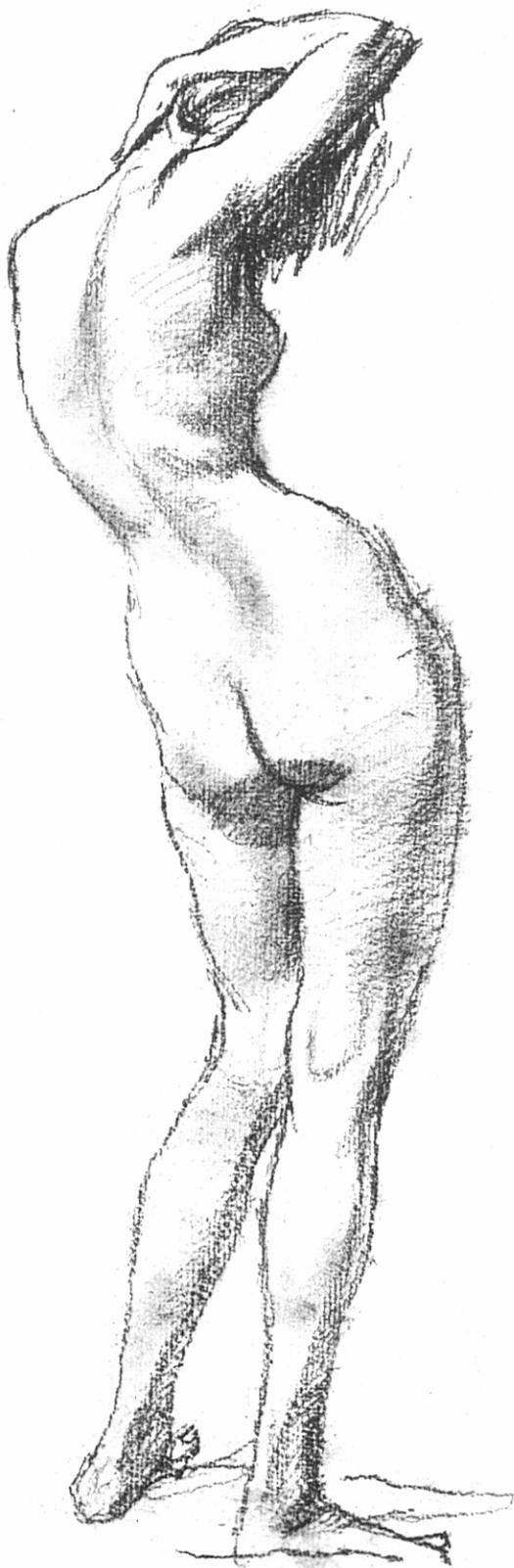


*Think of potatoes, lumps of coal,
sacks of flour, supported on sticks.*

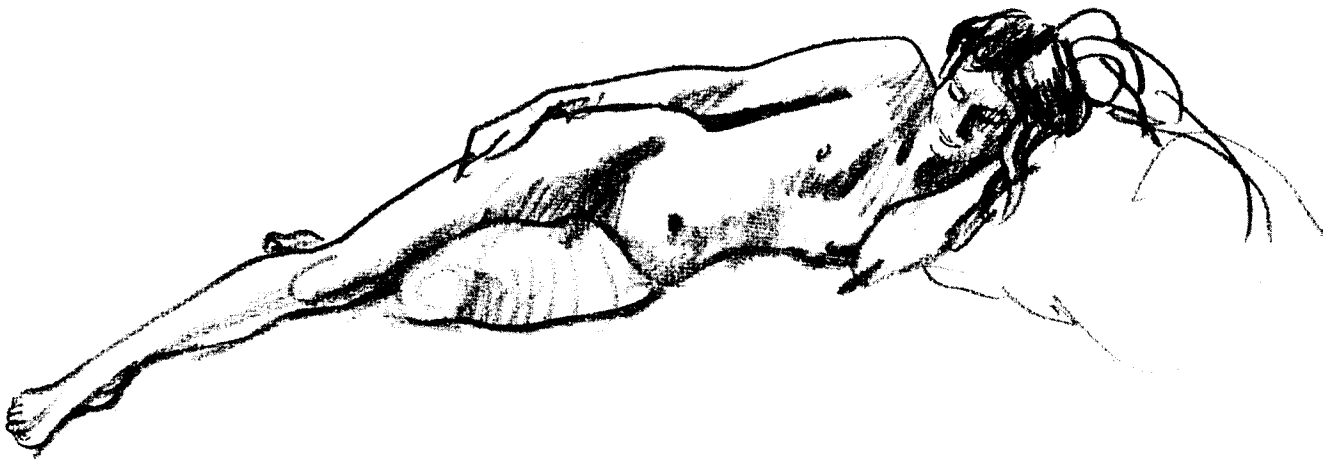
clearly, details are largely ignored in order to keep to the main movement, yet one doesn't feel the lack of detail. Degas contributed something new to figure drawing in his quest for the unexpected movements of everyday life as opposed to the stereotyped studio poses. In doing so all the emphasis of his drawing was on movement and weight. Nobody else renders so well the solidity of the figure. In this drawing you can almost hear the soaping and the sound of water.

Let us now make a drawing from the model and delay no more.

We will ask her to take a standing pose, a back view to start with as being more simple to draw. You will find her on the next page drawn with a 3B pencil on Whatman "Not" paper. The first thing to notice, as you run your eye over the pose to see how the weight is placed, is that the torso has got to balance on the legs and that to do so the feet must be directly underneath the head. The next points to look at are the angles at which the different shapes are set to one another. For instance, notice the angle the head is inclined — the line AA shows this — then the angle of the shoulders. Compare this with the hips and, again, compare the angles at which the different parts of the legs are inclined to one another. If you like, you can make a little diagram of the pose at the top of your drawing to get this clear in your mind, it won't take a minute — better still if you just do it mentally. When you've done this you will *understand* the pose you are drawing and that's a great help. Many people start desperately drawing an eye, without



Two standing poses with an analysis of the angles at which the different shapes are set to one another.

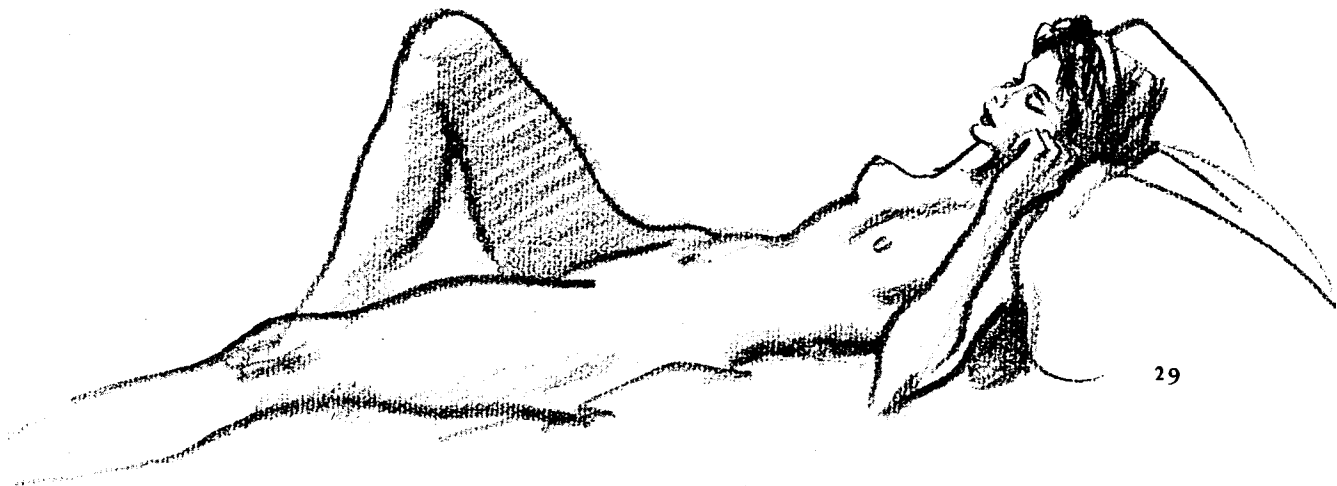


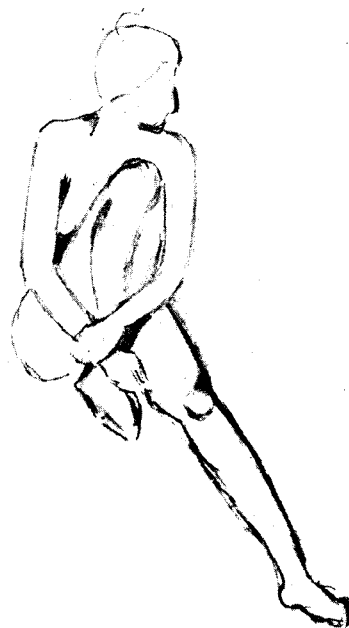
the faintest idea of what's coming next, and by linking an eye with another eye and then with a nose and ear, etc., etc., they eventually hope to arrive breathless, but triumphant, at the feet. The trouble with that method is, somewhere along the road you'll find you've lost the pose and you'll wonder why !

However, if you've taken the trouble to understand what you're drawing it will be possible to keep the details in their proper place, because you know what's coming next — like knowing your way about a maze of little streets in a city.

To get back to our model, standing there so patiently looking at the wall. I drew her lightly in pencil so that I could make diagrams on her, but usually I prefer to use a soft Conté pencil as I have in other examples shown about this book. We've already discussed the technical side of the problem and you will find out yourself which medium you prefer to work in. The model was arranged so that the light was a fairly simple one which threw up the shapes without casting too much shadow and this has made our problem as simple as possible, though, alas, no figure drawing is ever simple !

How are you getting on with *your* drawing ? In spite of all the advice I've been

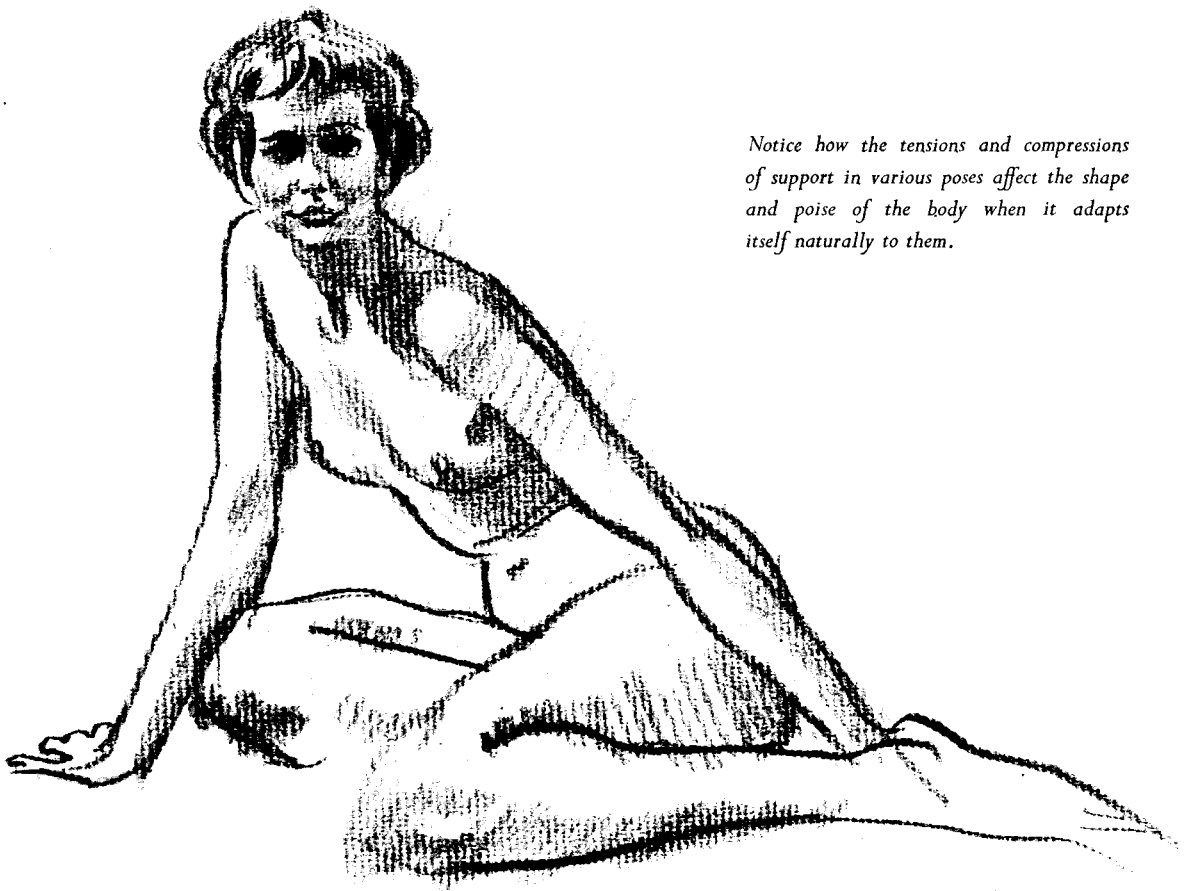




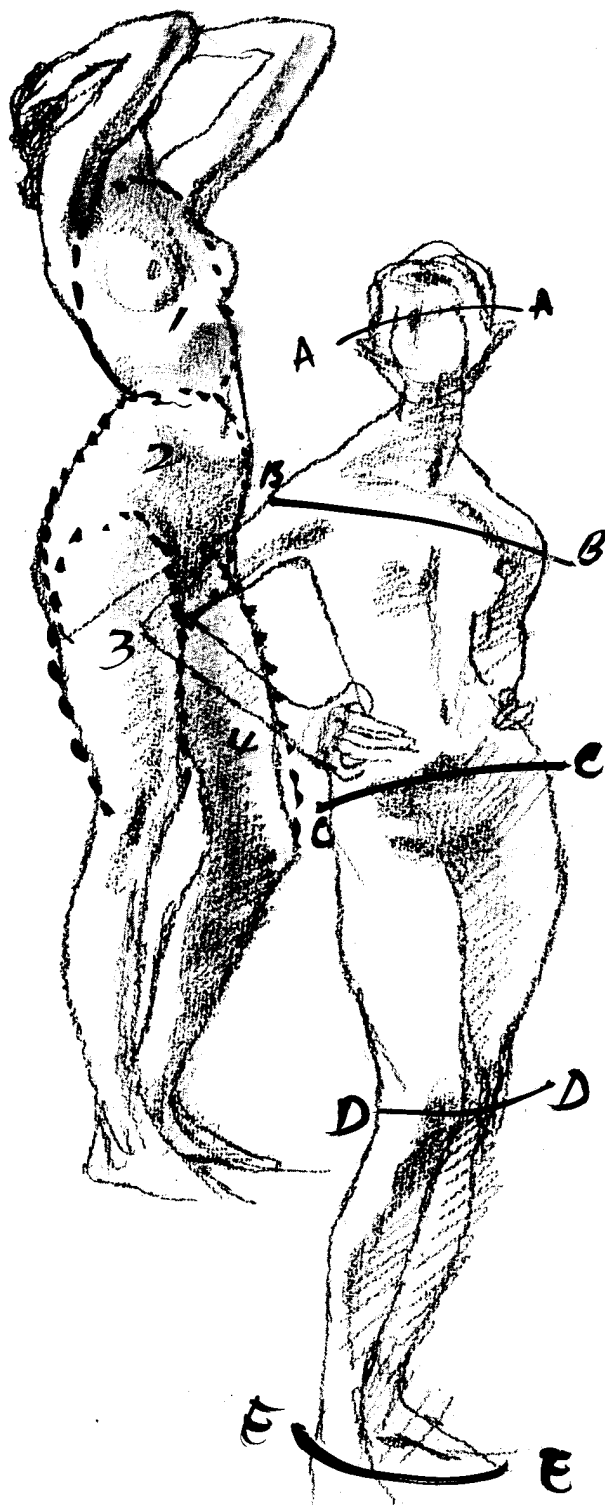
Drawings by the author and by a beginner (the author's wife) respectively, at the same time and from the same model, but from inevitably slightly different viewpoints. Mrs. Marshall has gone for the main movement and balance of the pose and has captured it extraordinarily well.

giving you, have you found it doesn't come right? Well, if you did get it right first time you would be a genius. Don't expect too much at first. Draw very simply to begin with, don't for instance try and make a portrait of the model as well as getting the pose. Be happy to have caught the main essentials — in fact, rejoice extremely if you've done that correctly at first.

Shall we let the model rest for a while — she's posed for half an hour very patiently? Now, while she is resting, let me show you some drawings by a beginner, who happens to be my wife. She is not an artist and had only the usual school training in drawing (which didn't include life drawing). After seeing me draw from life she became interested and decided to try (opposite). As you can see, she has gone for the main movement of the pose and captured it extraordinarily well — the whole movement is there, unessentials are ignored and will be dealt with when greater experience has been gained. The pose illustrated was drawn at the same time that I drew the study which accompanies it, so you can study this pose from two different angles.



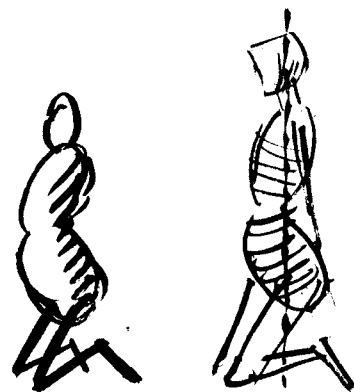
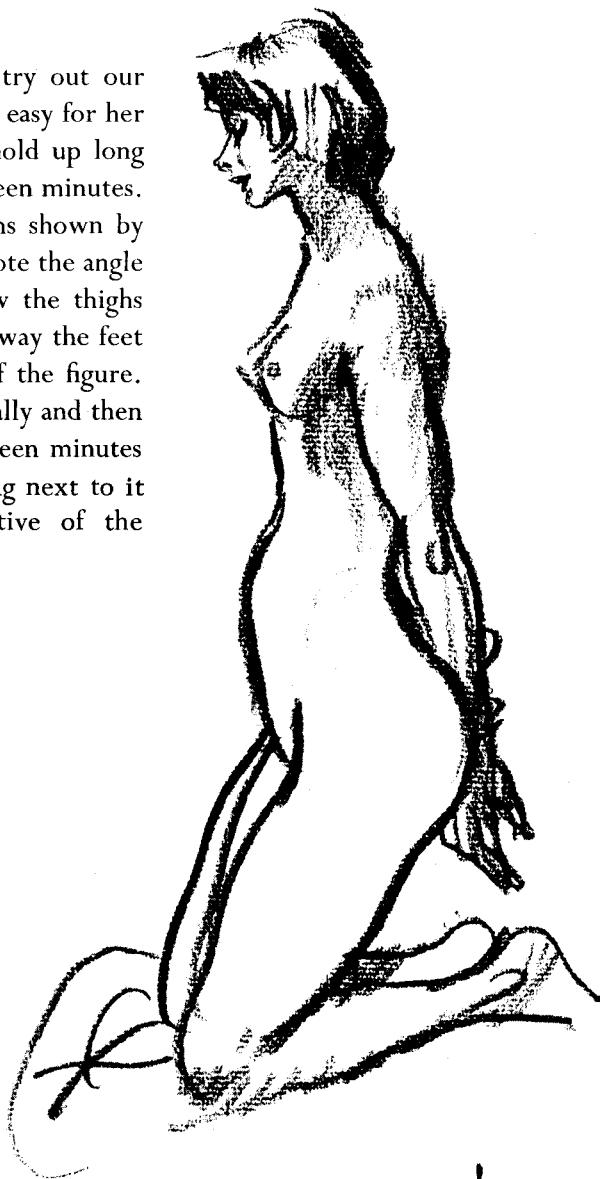
Notice how the tensions and compressions of support in various poses affect the shape and poise of the body when it adapts itself naturally to them.



These drawings indicate respectively the principal forms, shown by dotted lines, and the angle and perspective of the main points of the figure.

Now let's ask the model to pose again and try out our theories on another one (opposite). This pose isn't easy for her to keep because the raised hands are difficult to hold up long without moving, so we mustn't take longer than fifteen minutes.

In this pose I've numbered the principal forms shown by dotted lines. No. 1 is the big mass of the thorax, note the angle it makes with No. 2, the pelvis, and observe how the thighs (3 and 4) are set in relation to it. Notice also the way the feet are sturdily placed to support the whole weight of the figure. It is these main shapes that you must watch continually and then your details will fall into place correctly. Our fifteen minutes are up so now let's have a new pose. In the drawing next to it I've again indicated the angle and the perspective of the



main points of the figure — AA across the eyes, and you will see the contrast with BB, the line across the shoulders. Compare this with the angle of the hips CC and the angle of the knees. Perspective plays more part in the latter as they were below my eye level and therefore I'm beginning to look down on them, just as at AA I'm looking at the eyes and head from underneath.

Now, as we've still some time in this session left we can do some quick poses, aiming at getting the main shapes and movements. Page 33 shows the model kneeling and below her a rather grotesque analysis of the pose — a potato-like object supported on bent matchsticks ! The other small sketch shows the main shape broken up a little further, and contour lines to indicate shape. If you make little diagrams like this from time to time you will learn a lot. Below ; a silly pose (there's rather too much shadow in this one) and again I've made a diagram to show the big shapes.

Now, a quick standing pose (opposite). Make sure you get the feet underneath the head (AA) so that the weight of the body is supported. You will also find a lying down pose on page 39, broken down to its simplest parts in diagrams. Look how the weight of the head is supported on a kind of scaffolding made by the arms, and how the hips are held up by the thighs and legs.

Finally, to end this session, here are some hints which may be of use to you.

The plumb line. This simple affair can be a useful guide in checking the pose if



An otherwise interesting exercise may sometimes be spoilt by excessive shadow.



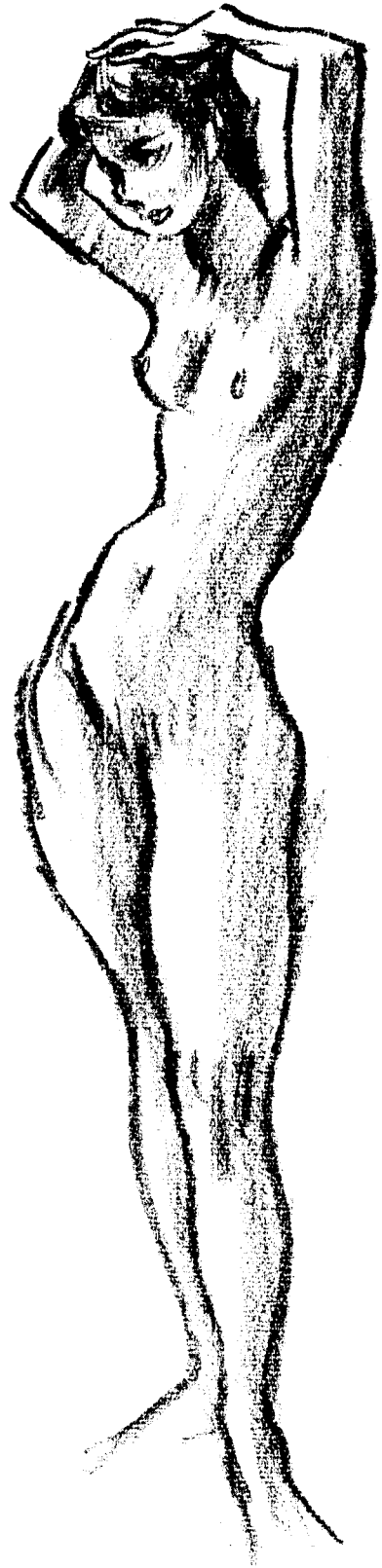




This fine drawing from the Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard, by Agnolo Bronzino, is a figure study after Bandinelli's "Cleopatra." You can apply the same sort of analysis as on page 32.

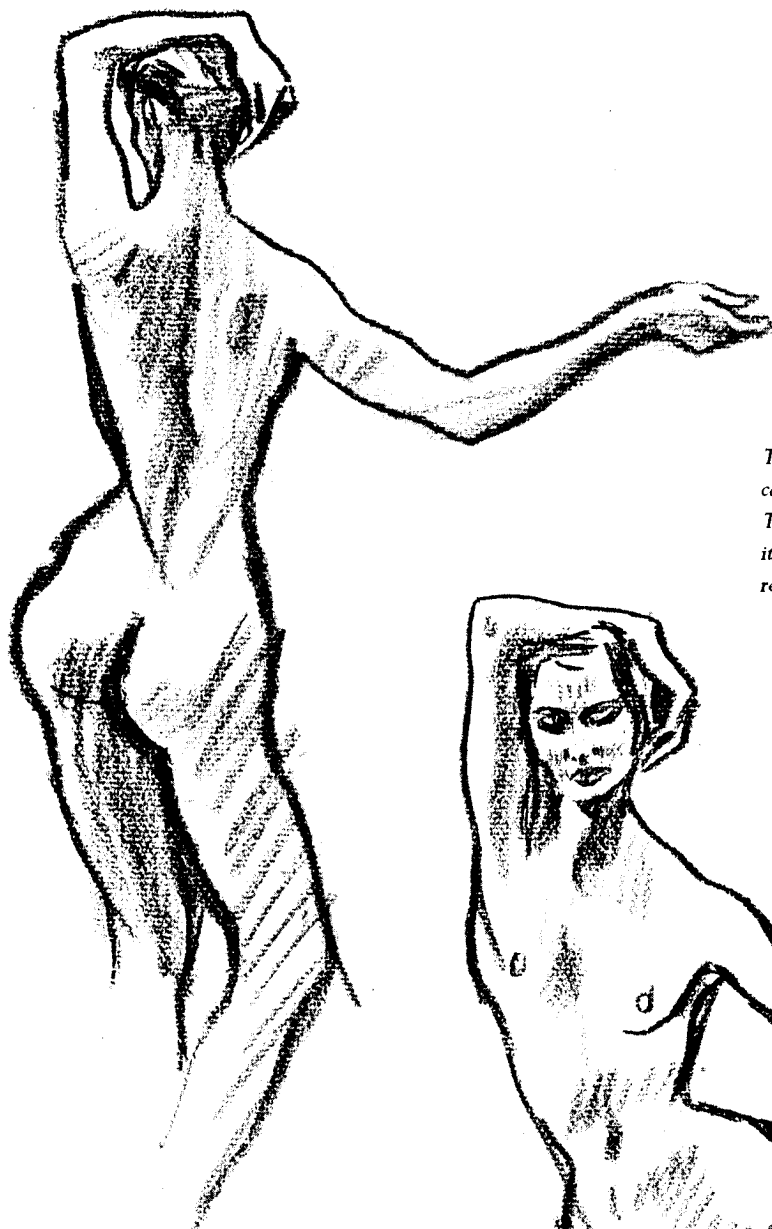


An imaginary vertical line passing through the head of this standing figure should divide the feet, or, to be more precise, the sum of the areas on one side of it should equal the sum of those on the other.



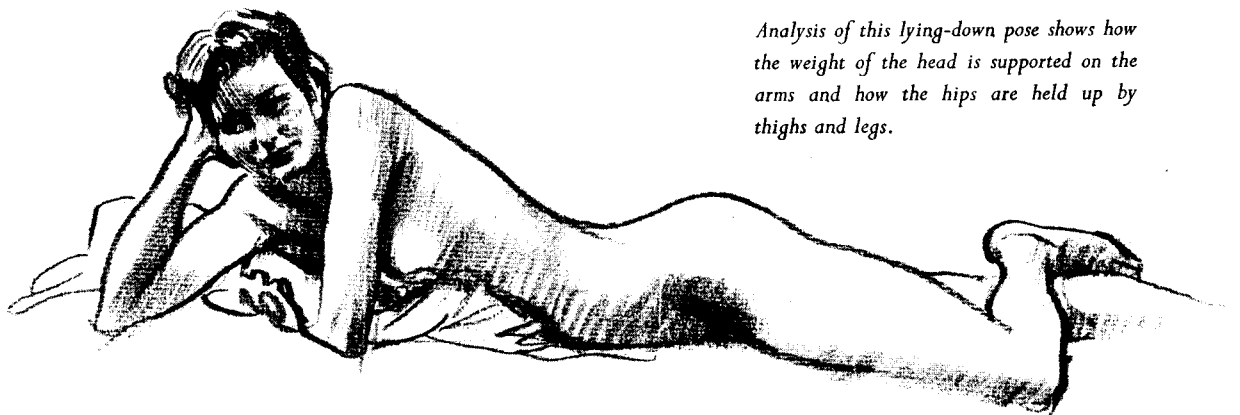
there is doubt in your mind about the accuracy of your drawing. Any weight suspended on a piece of string will do — a bunch of keys, a pencil sharpener, anything heavy that you have in your pocket. Hold up the weighted string between your eye and the model, so that the top of the line bisects the head. You can then check the points of the figure that the line cuts and mark them on your drawing. Alternatively, you can do the same before you start drawing and mark the points lightly on your paper, making check points as you go along.

Closing one eye. One of the disadvantages of using two eyes to draw with is that you get a stereoscopic effect which causes considerable anguish when confronted by problems of fore-shortening like the pose on page 43. Now, baffled by the pose, if you close one eye the effect of depth disappears, the object is flattened out and your one eye



This is the sort of pose that a model can only hold for a minute or two. The posture is not exactly elegant, but it usefully extends the study of form relationships, angle and planes.

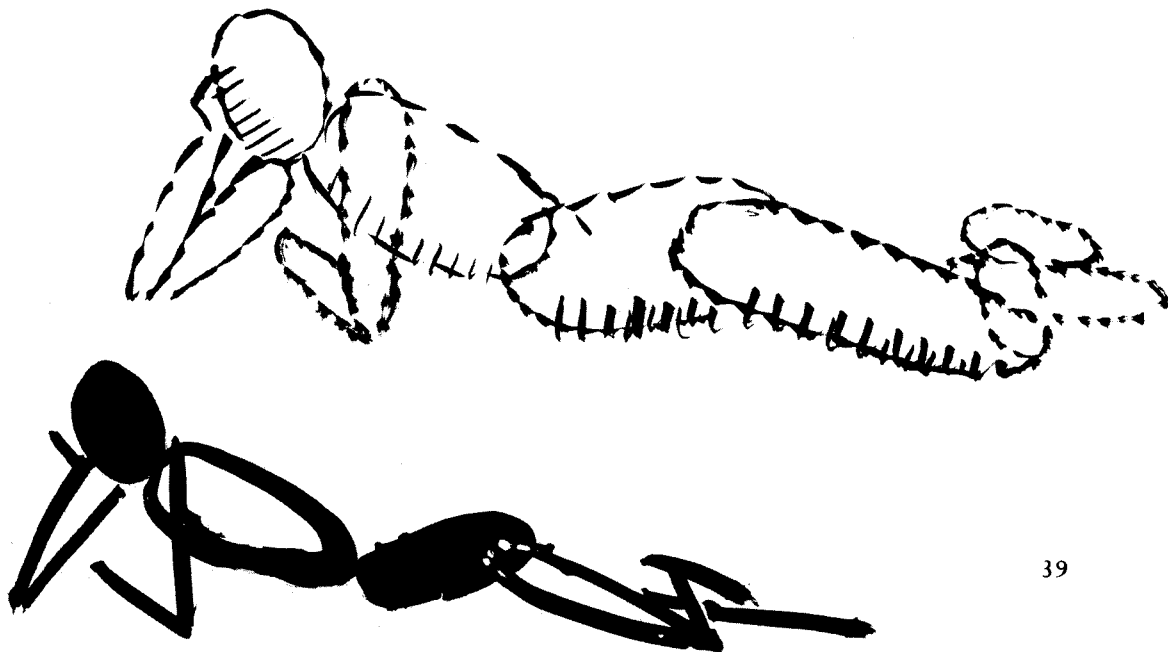


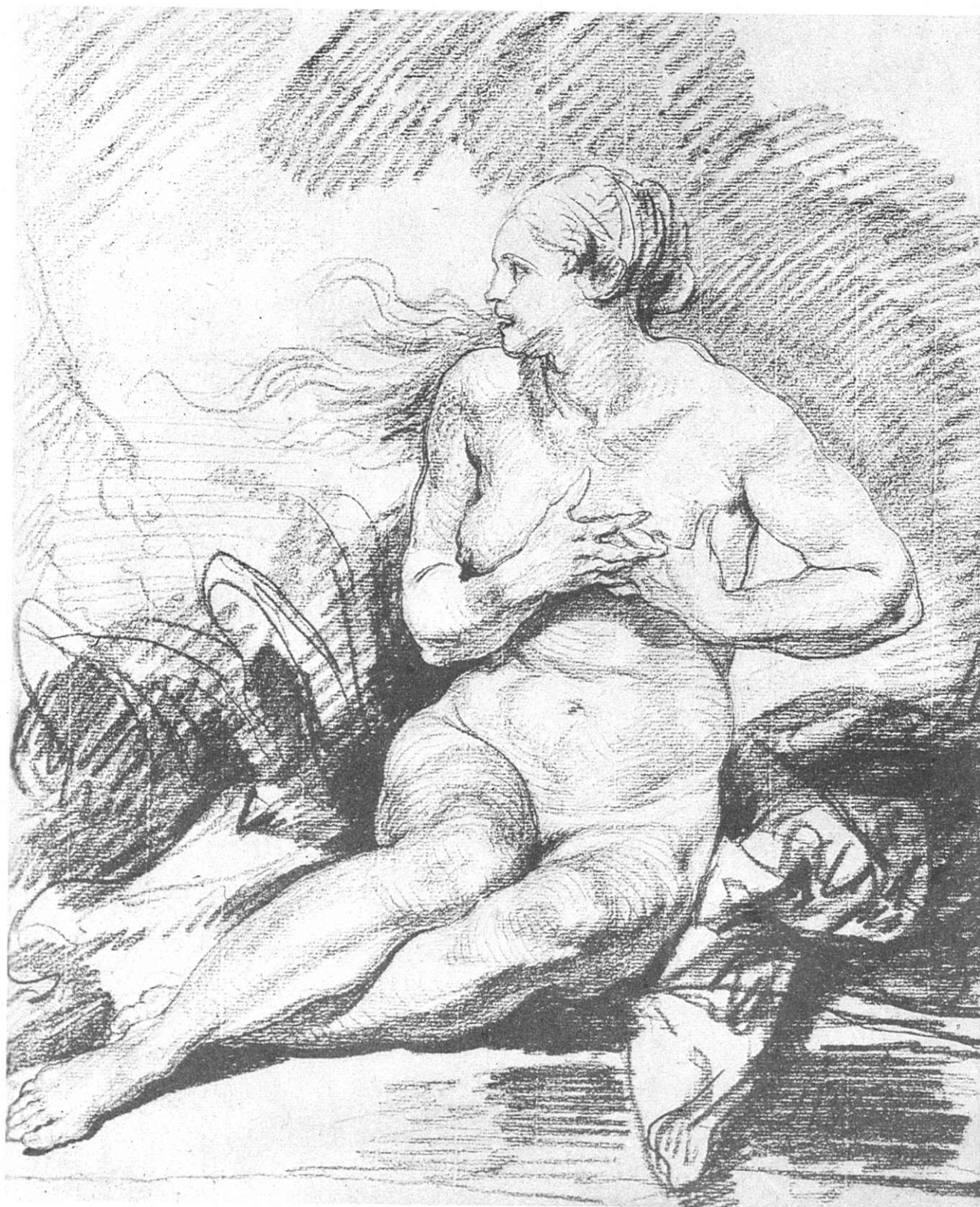


Analysis of this lying-down pose shows how the weight of the head is supported on the arms and how the hips are held up by thighs and legs.

can take in the shape you are trying to draw. Don't, however, draw continually with one eye closed, it isn't necessary all the time. One difficulty you will find when you do is that, as your sense of depth disappears, you'll find it isn't easy to make your pencil touch the paper with the ease to which you're accustomed. Sometimes you hit the paper with a bang and at other times you grope for it helplessly.

The silhouette. When you find yourself stumped regarding the general proportions of a pose, go for the silhouette. Look at the pose almost as if it is one of those black silhouette portraits. Ignore, for the moment, everything we've discussed about big shapes, perspective, everything inside the silhouette. Concentrate simply on this broad silhouette, closing one eye as you do it. If the model is posing against a light background think of her as a dark shape. If the reverse is the case, then make a small postage stamp size drawing and black in the background, leaving the figure white. These are, of course, only diagrams on the side of your paper to help you understand the pose. Having done this, go on as we've discussed before.





The drawing opposite by Jean-Baptiste Greuze, the 18th Century French artist, is an excellent example of how the problems of fore-shortening can be handled. (From the collection at the Fogg Museum, Harvard University.)

5. Foreshortening and Perspective

THE drawing opposite by Jean-Baptiste Greuze is a good example of fore-shortening and on page 43 I have posed a model somewhat similarly, but in about as difficult a pose as you could imagine. Almost every part of her is fore-shortened or distorted in some way. This is done to show you one of those occasions when your brain and your eye have a head-on clash. Your mind, with its knowledge of what happens when the model stands up and the fore-shortening disappears, confuses your eye, which is only trying to draw what it sees at the moment.

Take, for instance, the model's right leg. You are accustomed to think of it as being a certain shape, now you find, when trying to draw it, that you endeavour to indicate all the length from the hip to the knee ; again, the width across the hips is half hidden by the right leg ; notice too the very short distance from the shoulder to the waist owing to the model bending forward. The diagram shows the angle at which these shapes and contours are placed. Note also the way her left hand is propping up the weight of her torso. The model was sitting on a model throne raised about 18" above the ground. I was sitting to draw and my eye, therefore, was about level with the model's shoulders.

Earlier on I explained the importance of understanding the main masses of the





figure and their relation to one another. Now when you study these you should also notice how the shapes are affected by perspective. In the first standing pose the lines AA, BB, etc., not only showed the angle at which the different shapes were inclined, but also gave some idea of the perspective. It is important to appreciate the distortion caused by perspective. Later on, if you are very interested in the subject (which is a fascinating one) get a book and study it thoroughly but, for our purpose, it's not necessary at this stage. All that you need is to observe the level of your eye and where it cuts the model's pose, and realize that everything above this line will be slightly distorted — increasingly so as you get higher up and, of course, everything below will be distorted in the opposite direction.

In the pose on this page, which we were discussing with regard to fore-shortening, there is not much distortion due to perspective because of the short distance from head to ground. In the standing poses on page 32 you will notice this distortion more easily. I can't stress too much, however, that you shouldn't fill your head with theories which take away your reliance on your eye. All these aids and guides I have mentioned are merely suggestions to help your eye and hand to grasp the problem before you. You

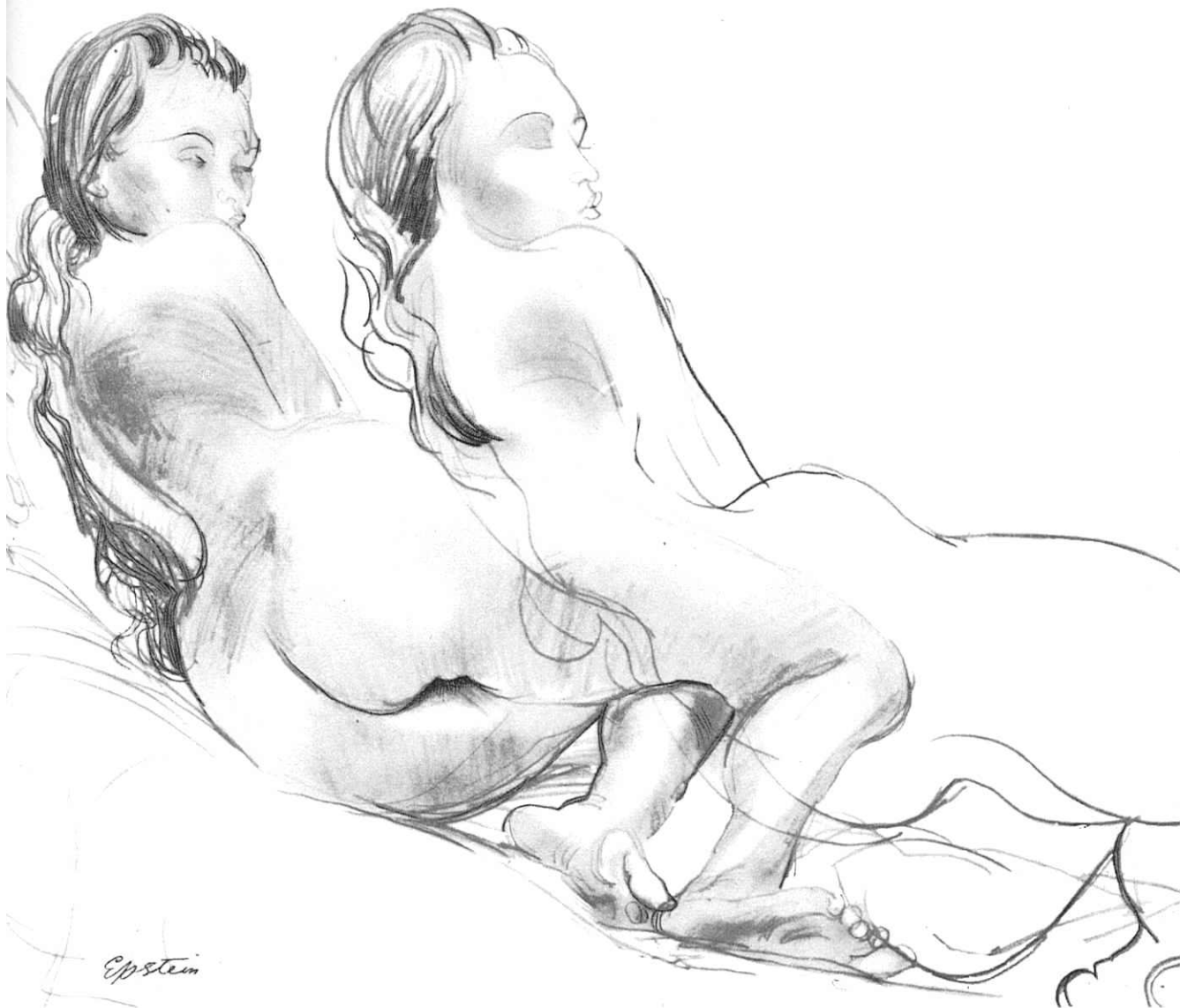


will find after you have practised some time analyzing different poses, breaking them up into big shapes, studying the distortion caused by perspective and fore-shortening, noting the distribution of weight, that you do all this almost subconsciously and only in some emergency will you need to make diagrams. Practice can be obtained not only from the living model but from photographs and reproductions of paintings. Press photos of boxing, swimming and other sports can also be studied. Drawing from life must, however, always be the best method.

I have included many drawings of different poses on which you can practice if you like. Analyse them as I have done, using tracing paper and making dotted lines to show the main shapes and contour lines round them, to show you understand the way the shape is inclined. Try also to understand the perspective and the way the weight is balanced. When you have done this compare your results with mine.

Another way you can do this is to try modelling the figures in plasticine or modelling clay, quite roughly, of course, as we're not trying to become sculptors in this book !





This is a fine bold drawing by Sir Jacob Epstein, such as you would expect from a great sculptor. It reminds me of drawings by Rodin. Here is the sculptor's interest in the solidity of the shapes — you can feel his hands modelling the shape of those shoulder blades. There is also the disregard of technique ; he is not interested in the actual technique of drawing. Compare this drawing with Watteau's and with Renoir, then look again at Picasso and Matisse and you can see the infinite variety of approach to the problem of drawing the female figure.



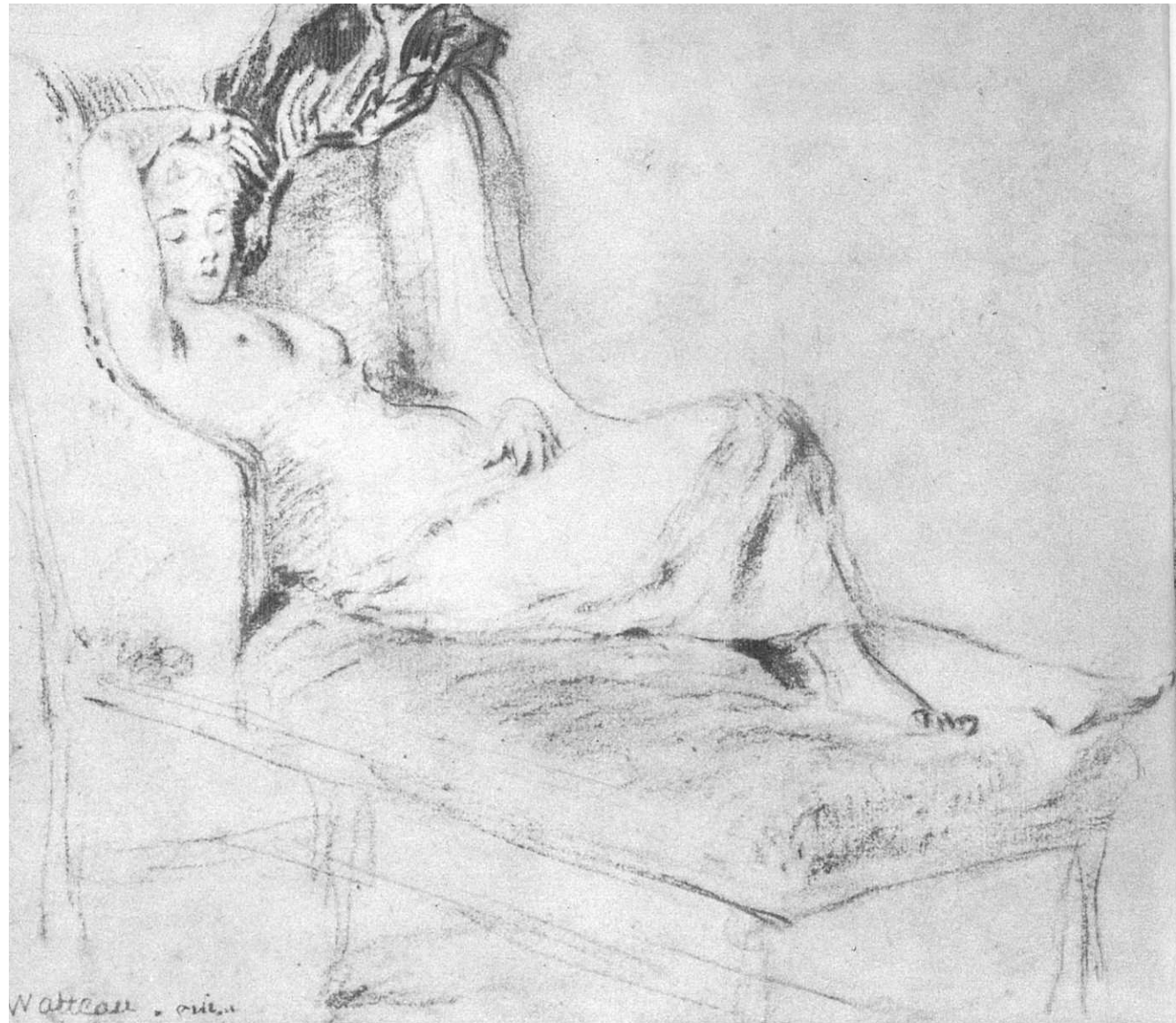
6. *Methods of Drawing*

Opposite: A drawing in pen and brush by Rembrandt, made 300 years ago, and now in the F. Koenigs Collection, Rotterdam.



WE discussed some methods when considering Technique, but there are some pitfalls which can beset the beginner even in a subject like Figure Drawing, in which technique is very simple.

Beginners nearly always have a tendency to copy some master's work. Art Schools are full of students working away industriously in this or that master's technique. During the course of one's labours you usually run the gamut of them all, finishing up with whatever method suits you best — probably the one you started with ! There is no harm in all this so long as you keep your eye — that hard working organ — on the main job. In case you've forgotten, that job is to reproduce accurately and sensitively the pose before you. The fact that some people do it with a pencil and others prefer a pen is of no more importance than that some writers use a typewriter direct and others prefer to write their own manuscripts — it's the results that matter. Another point is that there is no need to think you must always work in the one method. A good draughtsman like Augustus John has done wonderful drawings using all kinds of methods — pen,

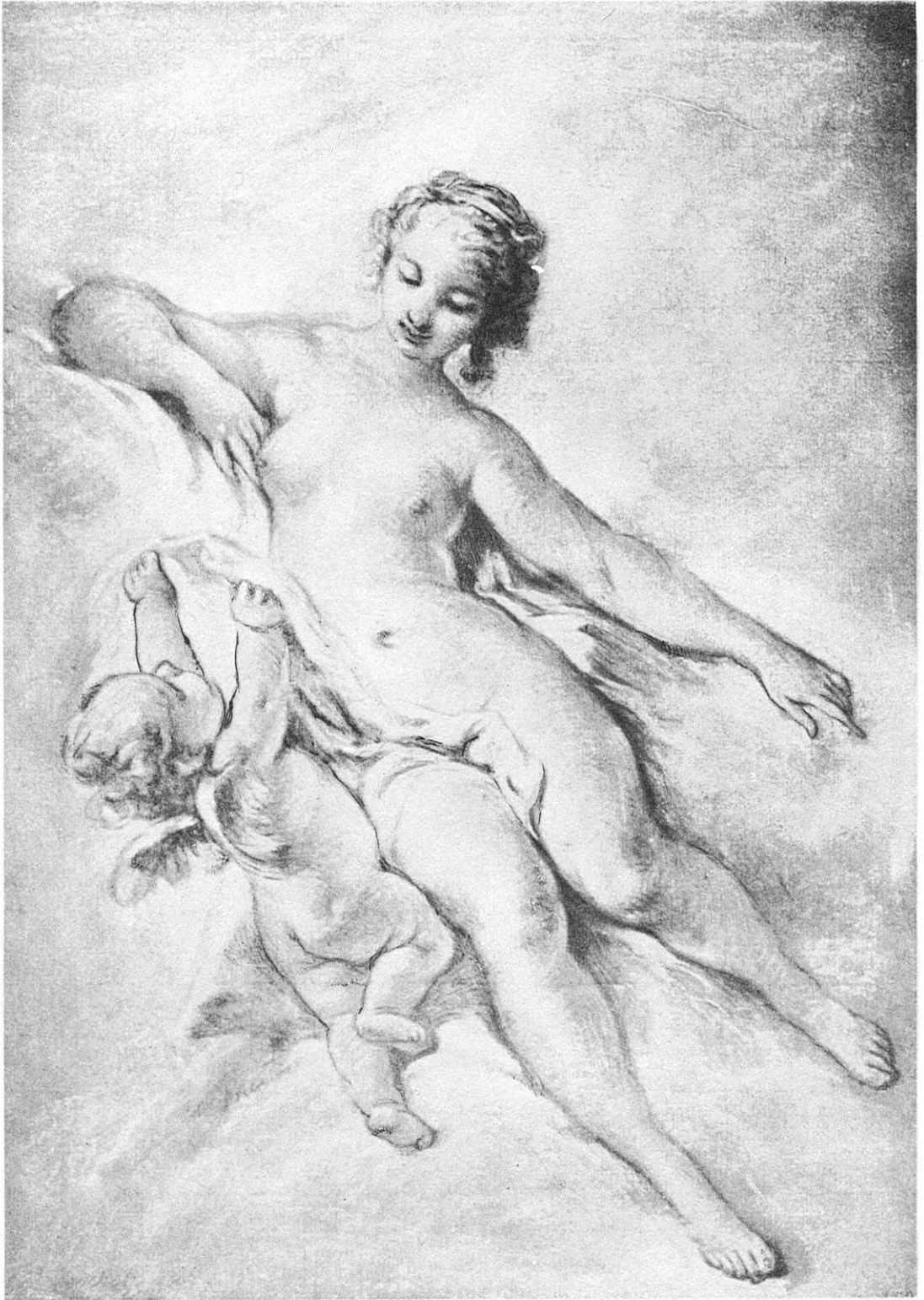


charcoal, chalk and, of course, principally pencil. Though the drawing on the opposite page by Rembrandt is in pen and wash (a favourite medium) he also made figure drawings in every medium except lead pencil, which hadn't been invented in his day (though something called Silverpoint was used, which has a similar effect).

This drawing by Rembrandt is a good example of the feeling for the solidity of the figure that I keep stressing. Don't start by trying to work in this technique, which is much more difficult than it looks ; there is also the disadvantage that it requires the use of more tools — water, ink, brush, and pen. I show it mainly because it's a beautiful



Born in 1684, Jean Antoine Watteau came to Paris to earn his living as an artist at the age of eighteen. At first he lived in extreme poverty, copying and doing deep religious pictures. In 1705 he worked for a scene painter. Gradually, however, his ability was recognised and he achieved enormous success in his lifetime. He was a consumptive and had all the restless energy of those suffering from this disease. His drawings are as famous as his paintings. They were in fact the basis from which he painted his pictures, and the examples shown were both studies for paintings. The drawing opposite is from the collection of Miss Lily Bowse ; that above from The Louvre, Paris.



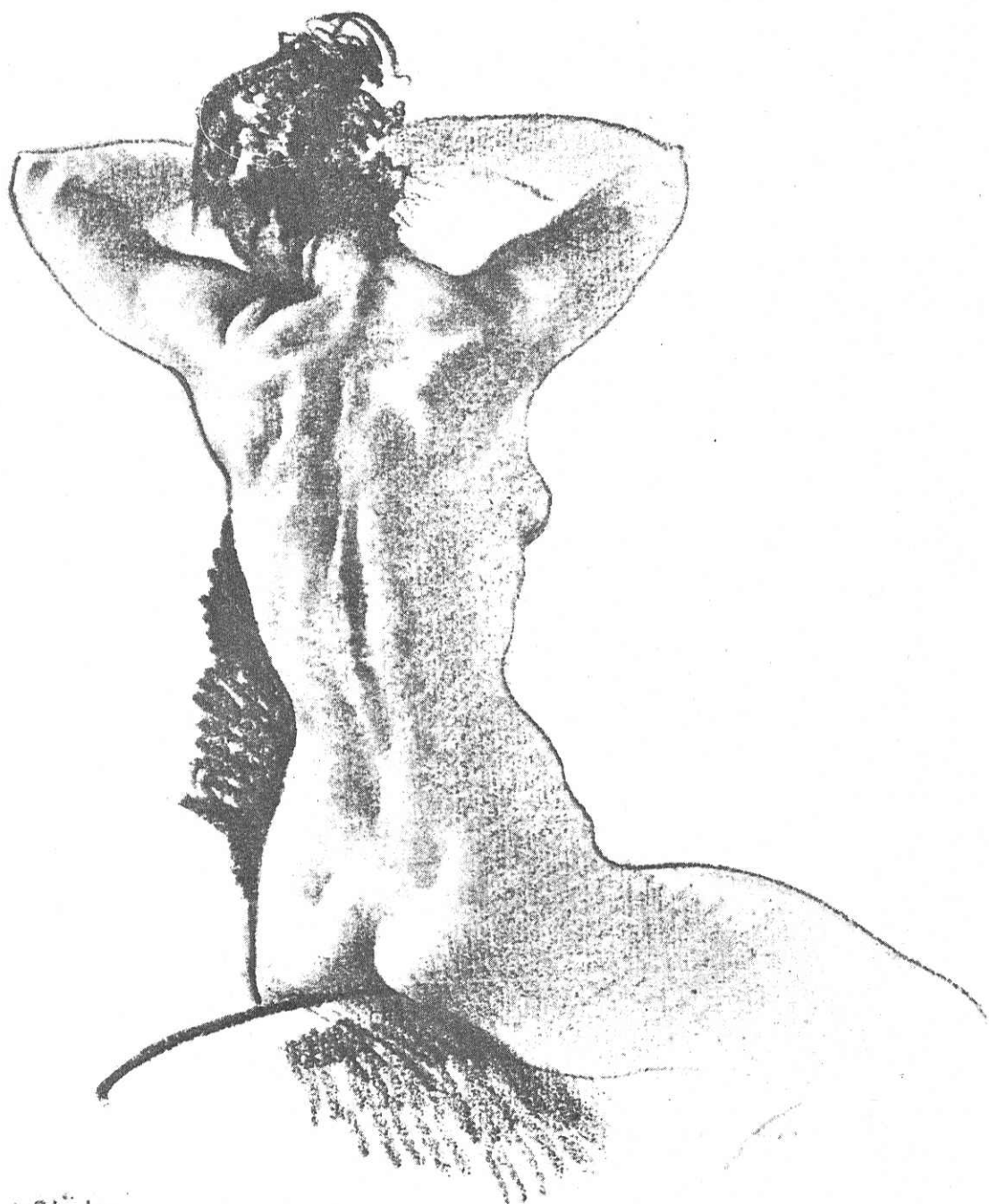
This drawing by the French sculptor Charles Despiau is interesting as being in the classical French tradition that began with Ingres. The line is everything and the tone and modelling are only there to help and explain the line. Obviously a drawing made for a job, it tells you a lot, and is a good example of a workmanlike approach to a problem, though not perhaps as aesthetically pleasing as those by Watteau and others. I confess though I'm always a little suspicious of drawings that have no head and would feel happier if this one had.

Opposite: A drawing of Venus and Cupid, by François Boucher, from the collection of J. N. Brown, Esq., Providence, Rhode Island. Due to considerable practice in life drawing, Boucher, like Rubens, was so familiar with the human figure that he could draw it in all kinds of attitudes without needing a model. It is perhaps fortunate for him that he died before the French Revolution, as other artists of his type, who survived him, fell upon evil times, their work being considered old-fashioned and vulgar.



and powerful drawing by one of the greatest draughtsmen that ever lived. It shows a method you can try later on if you feel like it and want to experiment bravely.

Art Schools in Victorian times were afflicted with a disease known as "stumping." This was a method whereby the drawing was built up without the use of lines. They used a paper stump — a roll of very soft paper rolled up to make a point — which was dipped in black powder and rubbed on to the paper to give a vague indication of light and shade. This might be gone over with a piece of soft charcoal to produce greater definition but any suggestion of linework was stumped out with the stump. Lights were obtained by rubbing out some of the grey mess with rubber or dry bread (rolled up in

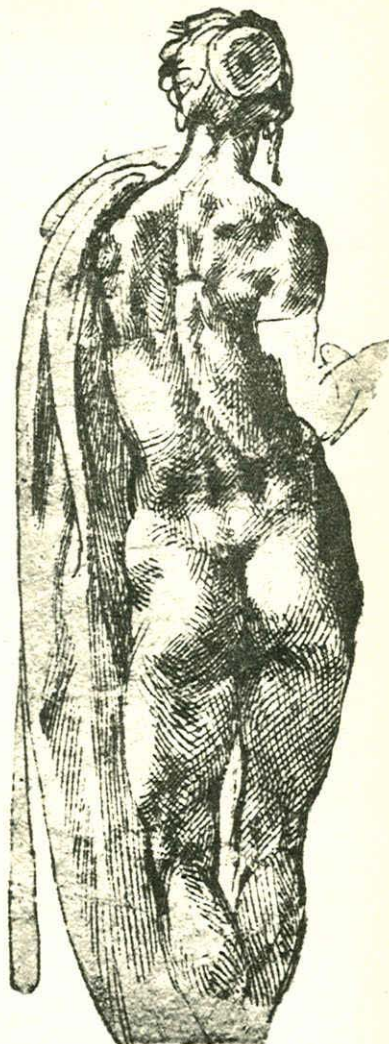


Art 2. 1971. 10

The drawing opposite by Sir William Russell Flint, R.A., P.R.W.S., is in chalk on slightly tinted paper and is shown here as a comparison with a Michelangelo drawing on this page.

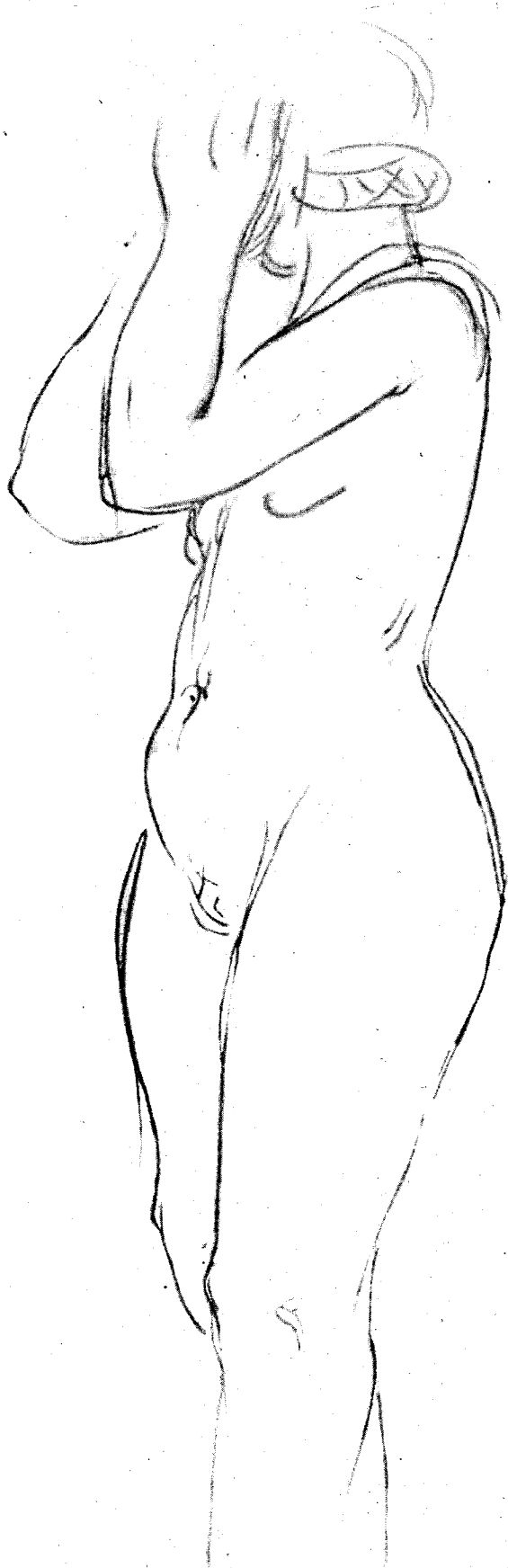
Sir William has made many thousands of drawings as preliminary studies and has developed his figure drawing to very great heights. No unnecessary rhetoric ; all facts stated in a simple and workmanlike way without flourishes or unnecessary lines. The result is a quality of work that should be studied with great care and interest.

In the drawings shown it is Sir William's that gives the more convincing suggestion of feminine flesh. Being primarily a sculptor, Michelangelo thought in terms of solids and his first drawings were usually studies for sculpture. This particular pen and ink drawing happens to be from a group of studies of draperies and sculpture. It is about 450 years old and is in the collection of the Musée Condé, Chantilly.

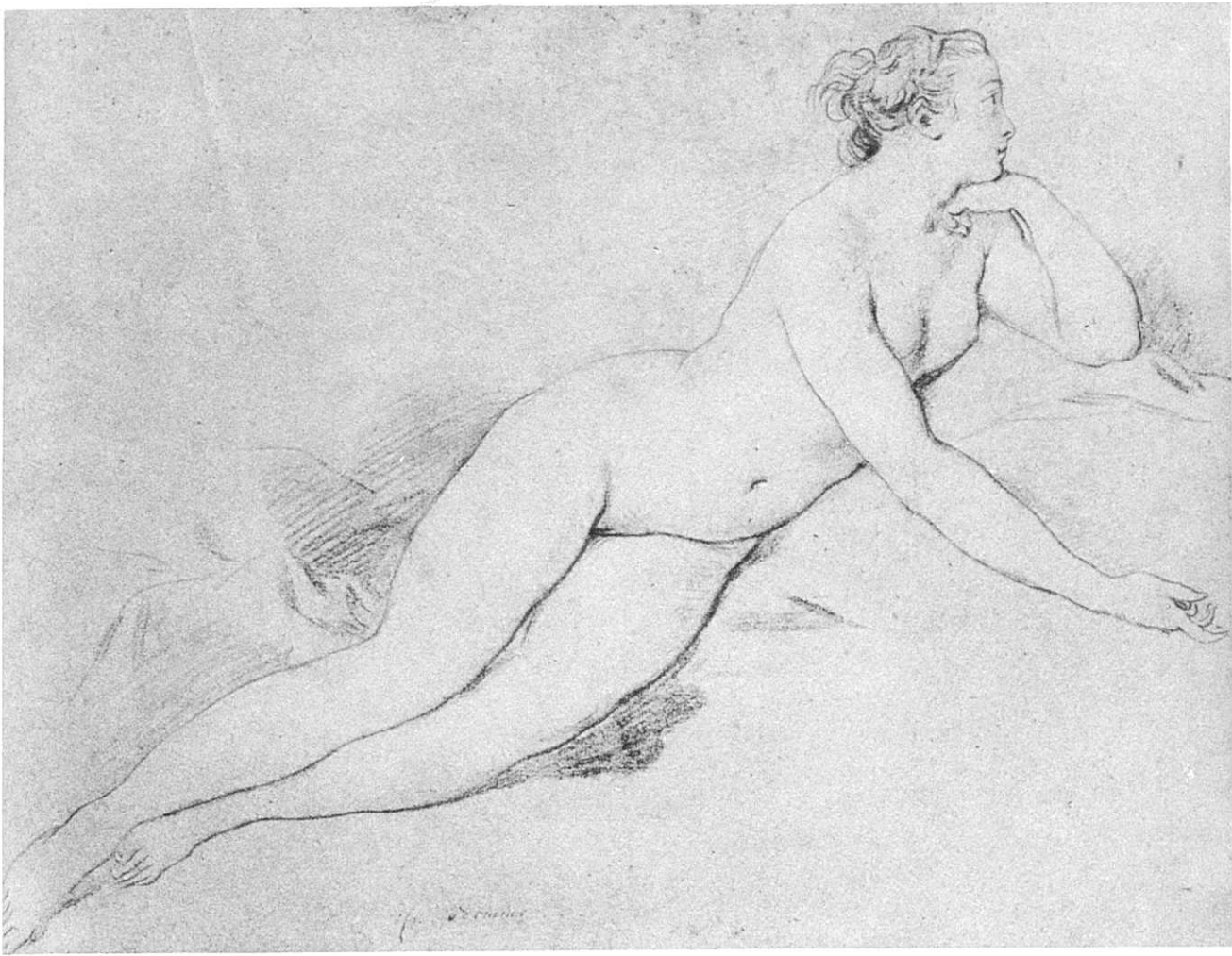


a ball and kneaded into any desired shape). All this was gone over again and again until the finished drawing looked more like the photo of a piece of bronze — sometimes the model endured week after week in the same pose. Fortunately, stumping died out and more vigorous draughtsmanship took its place, brought about by the increasing interest in topical events and its emphasis on sketching movements. The nearest modern type of stumping is when making chalk or charcoal drawings, where, if you like, you can get an effect of light and shade by smudging the lines with your thumb.

A very straightforward method of drawing is that used by Sir W. Russell Flint on page 52. This drawing, in chalk on slightly tinted paper, relies on line for its basic shape, but light and shade are fully explored and the whole solidity of the figure is



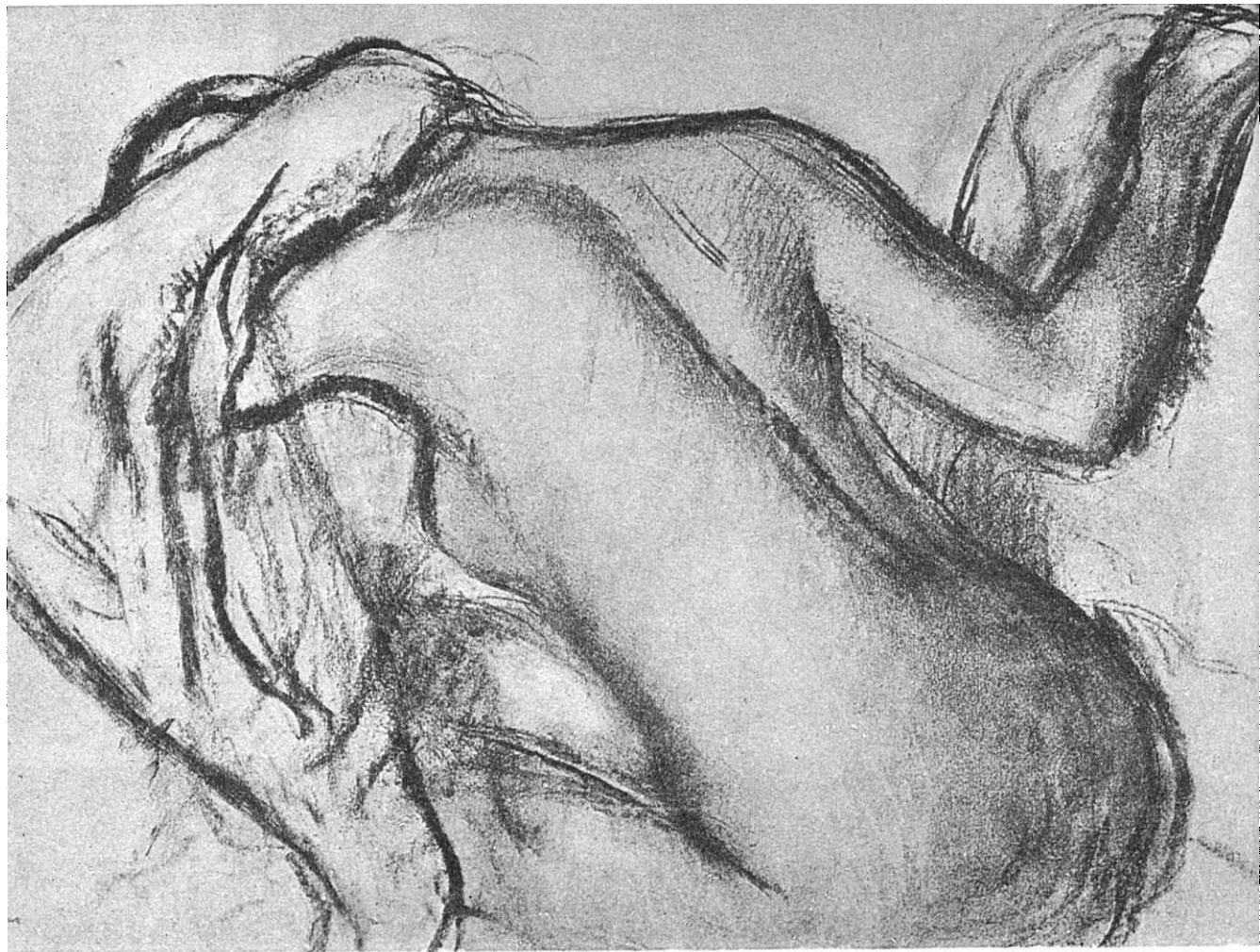
A further drawing by Charles Despiau in which the line referred to earlier is even more sparingly used. This apparently "empty" drawing nevertheless creates a wonderful illusion of roundness and volume.



This superbly sensitive drawing by François Boucher is a further example of the apparent ease with which he was able to master any pose. You will notice the completely relaxed manner in which the limbs support the body. Although Boucher and other 18th Century artists were able to turn out drawings in great quantities for the albums of connoisseurs, his work should not necessarily be disparaged on this account. This drawing is from the Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard University.

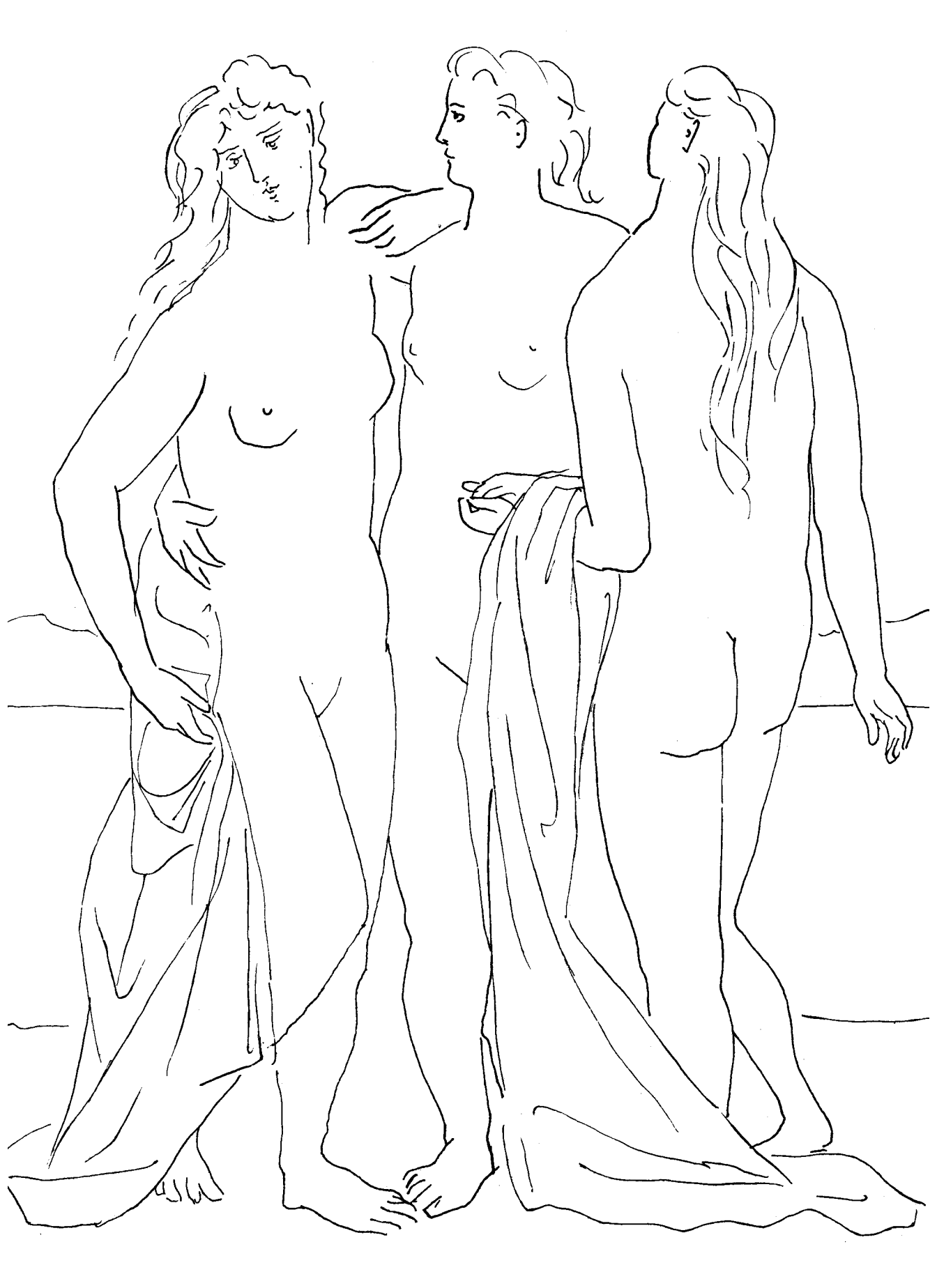
understood and expressed. The play of light on the muscles of the back and the occasional glimpse of the bone structure show superb concentration and the keenest eye. I'm sure the artist knows all about anatomy, but I'm equally sure, with that keen eye, he would have drawn just as well without the knowledge.

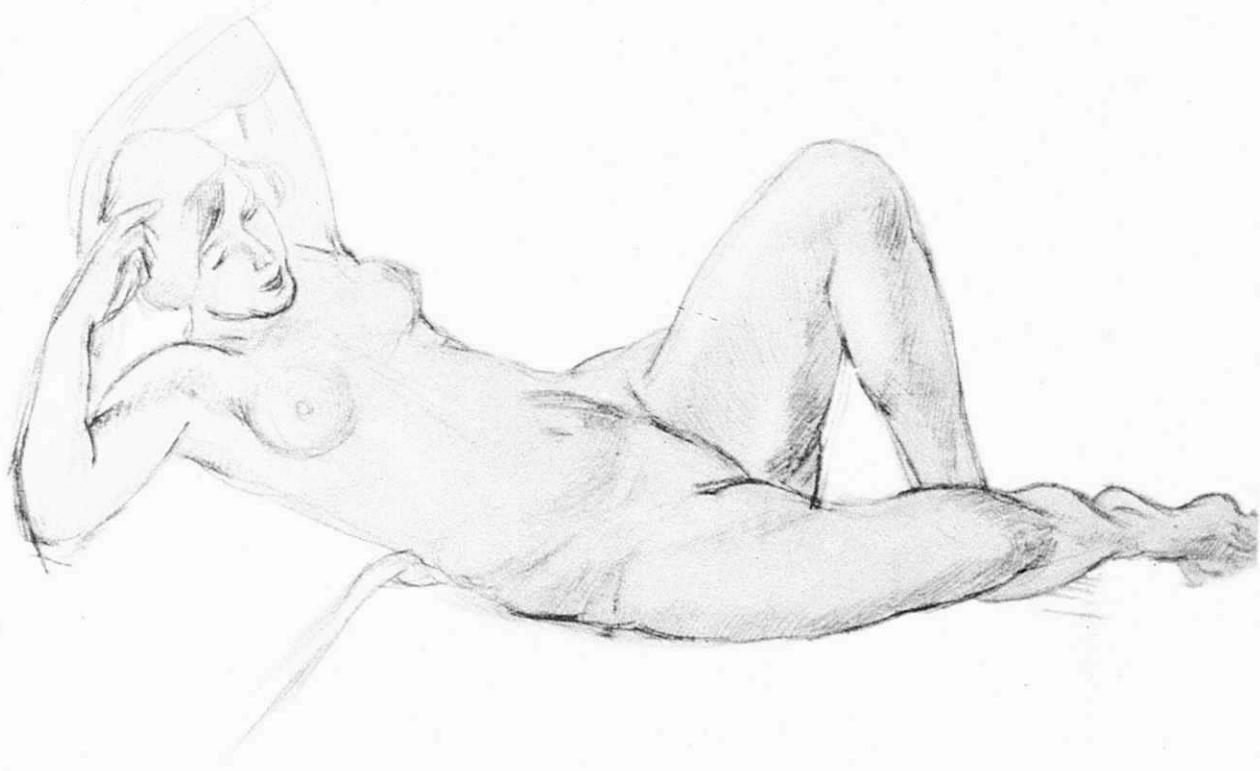
It is interesting to compare this drawing of a woman's back with the study of a similar subject by Michelangelo. Russell Flint has given the suggestion of feminine flesh



Here is another Degas from the Fogg Museum of Art. How different was his method of drawing the female figure from that of Boucher, for example, and, indeed, from the drawings of Pablo Picasso, who is represented at his most typical in the example opposite. Picasso manages, with the greatest possible economy of line, to get a tremendous amount of effect. It is good practice to try sometimes to draw with such simplicity as a contrast to some of the types of drawing we have seen so far.

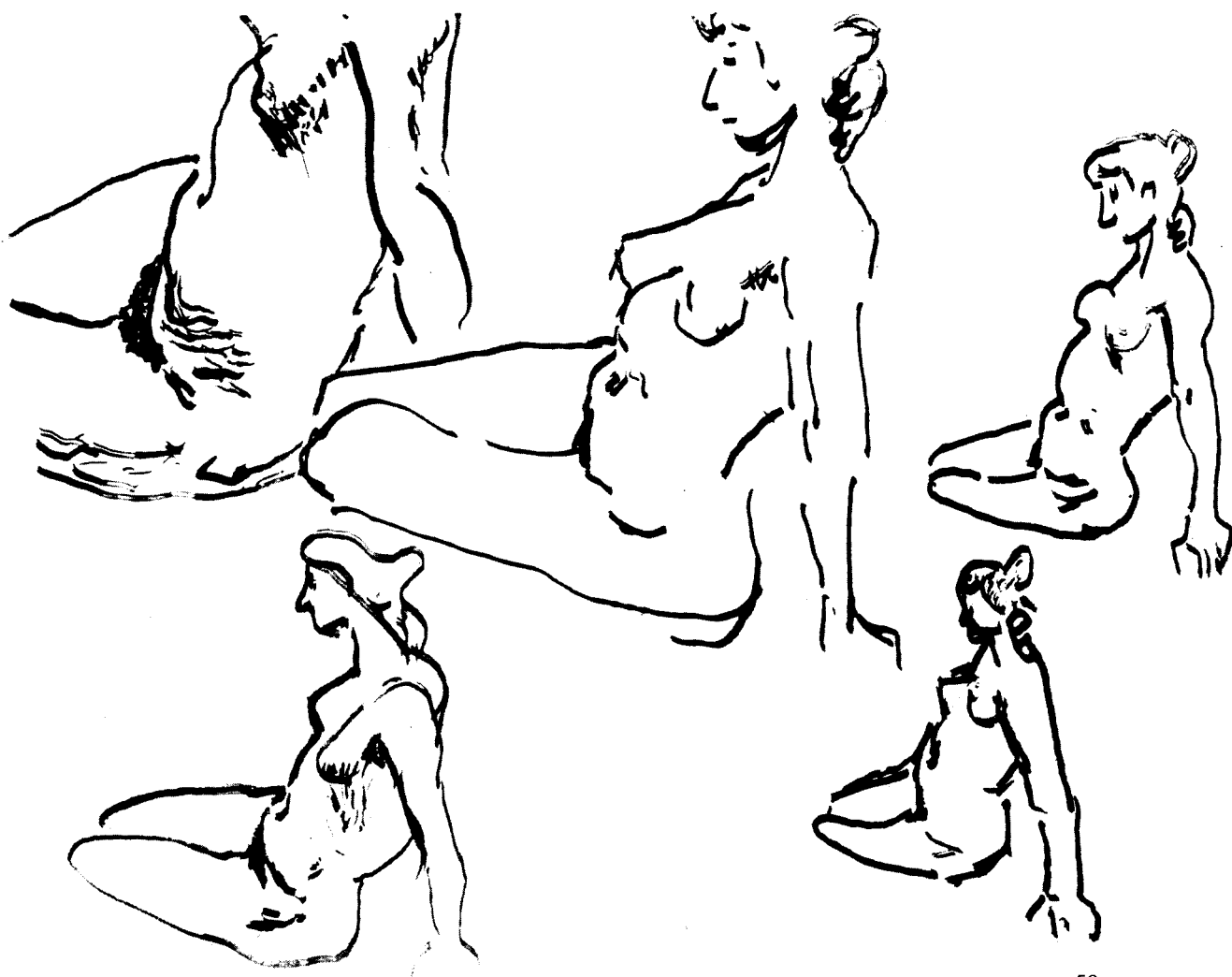
more convincingly than has Michelangelo, whose drawing might almost be a very muscular boy. Being primarily a sculptor, Michelangelo thought in terms of solids and his first drawings were usually studies for sculpture. When, much against his will, the Pope forced him to undertake the mural decoration of the Sistine Chapel, he conceived this more from the sculptor's angle than the painter's. This monumental conception gives his work its greatness but, of course, you don't go to Michelangelo for charm or femininity. There are all kinds of figure drawing, all of them difficult if sincerely approached and drawn for all kinds of different purposes, there is no standard of comparison except the sincerity of the artist.





Henriette P.

Another method of drawing, taught by Kimon Nicolaides in New York, is to follow the outline. Begin, anywhere you like, with an outline ; follow this round, examining as you go along what causes the contours, the bumps and lumps that make up the outline. Cling tenaciously to your line and if you have sufficient tenacity you should eventually arrive back again at the point you started from, having completed the circuit. It takes a lot of doing but produces some very decorative results and a kind of drawing shorn of all flourishes, bravado or anything that isn't absolutely necessary. You can do it with either a pen or a hard pencil — in fact, anything with a point. Some, who draw by this method, use a ball point.

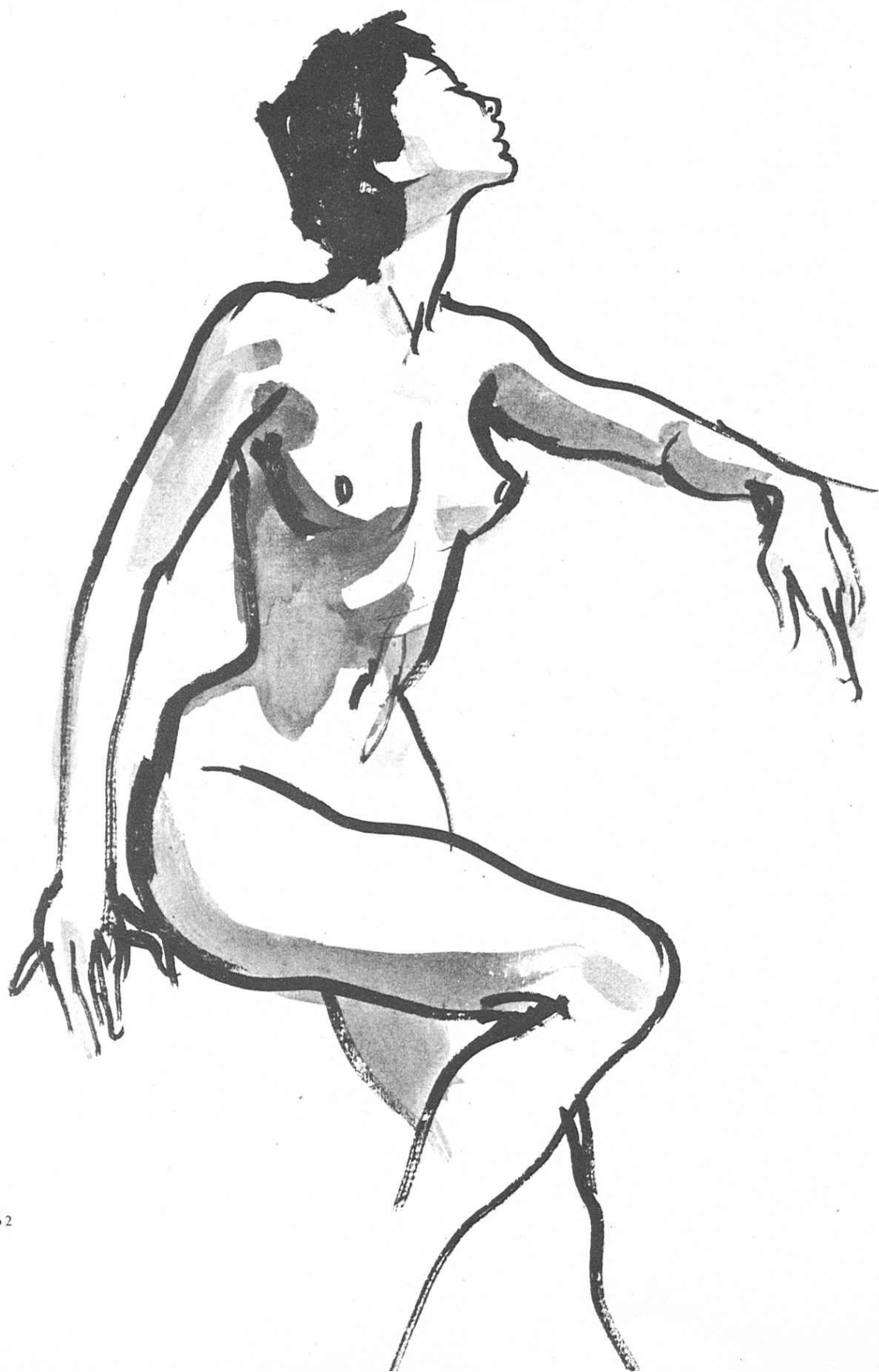




Rembrandt's drawings have always been considered some of the greatest ever produced. Most of them, as is this one from the Graphische Sammlung, Munich, are in pen and wash. There is no attempt at feminine beauty. He looked for beauty in the light and shade.



Famous as a painter, Renoir's drawings are not so well known, but he was a very careful draughtsman ; sometimes almost too careful. This pastel shows his interest in tone values and in the silhouette of the figure. Notice how the tone of the hair merges into the flesh. (Photo : Durand-Ruel & Fils, Paris).



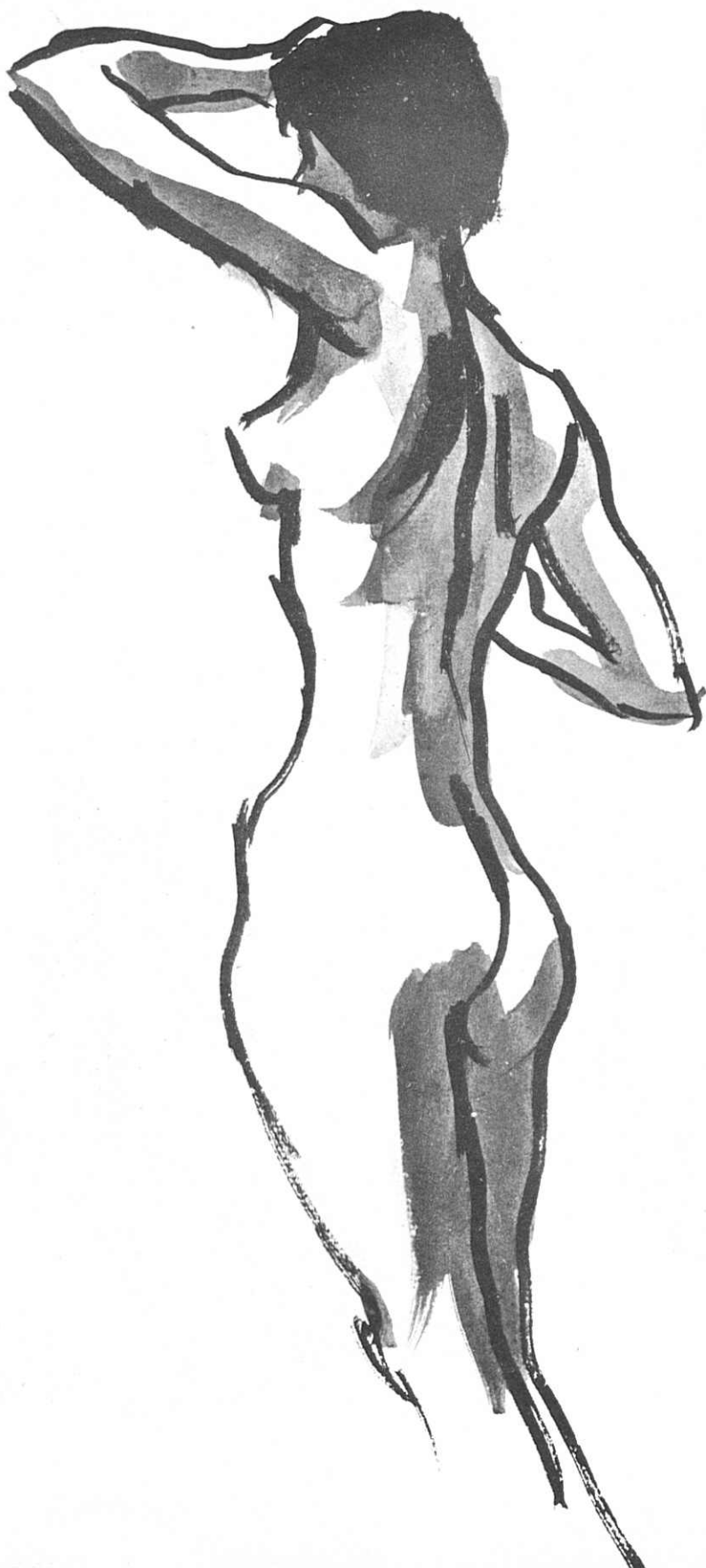
Brush drawing has a very honourable ancestry and the brush is a very pleasant and flexible instrument to use. It is capable of the thinnest, finest lines or the broadest washes. You can study Chinese and Japanese drawings to get an idea of its possibilities and many artists to-day use it for all kinds of work from line drawings to paintings.

In the examples here and on the next opening I have used a fairly fine sable brush and Indian ink, the latter diluted for the washes. It's not, perhaps, quite so portable as a crayon because you need water and a bottle of ink, but it can give you a very different effect, as you see.

The important thing is not to be too subtle in your approach. Get the broad effect visualized before you start, study the masses of shadow and use them to give solidity to your drawing. Don't be afraid of the line, and if you go wrong the first time draw another boldly alongside and another too if you're still wrong. The great advantage of brush drawing is that it forces you to be bold and direct and therefore it's very good for you should your work tend to become a little too timid and detailed. The paper used is Ingres paper; the same as that used for chalk drawings.







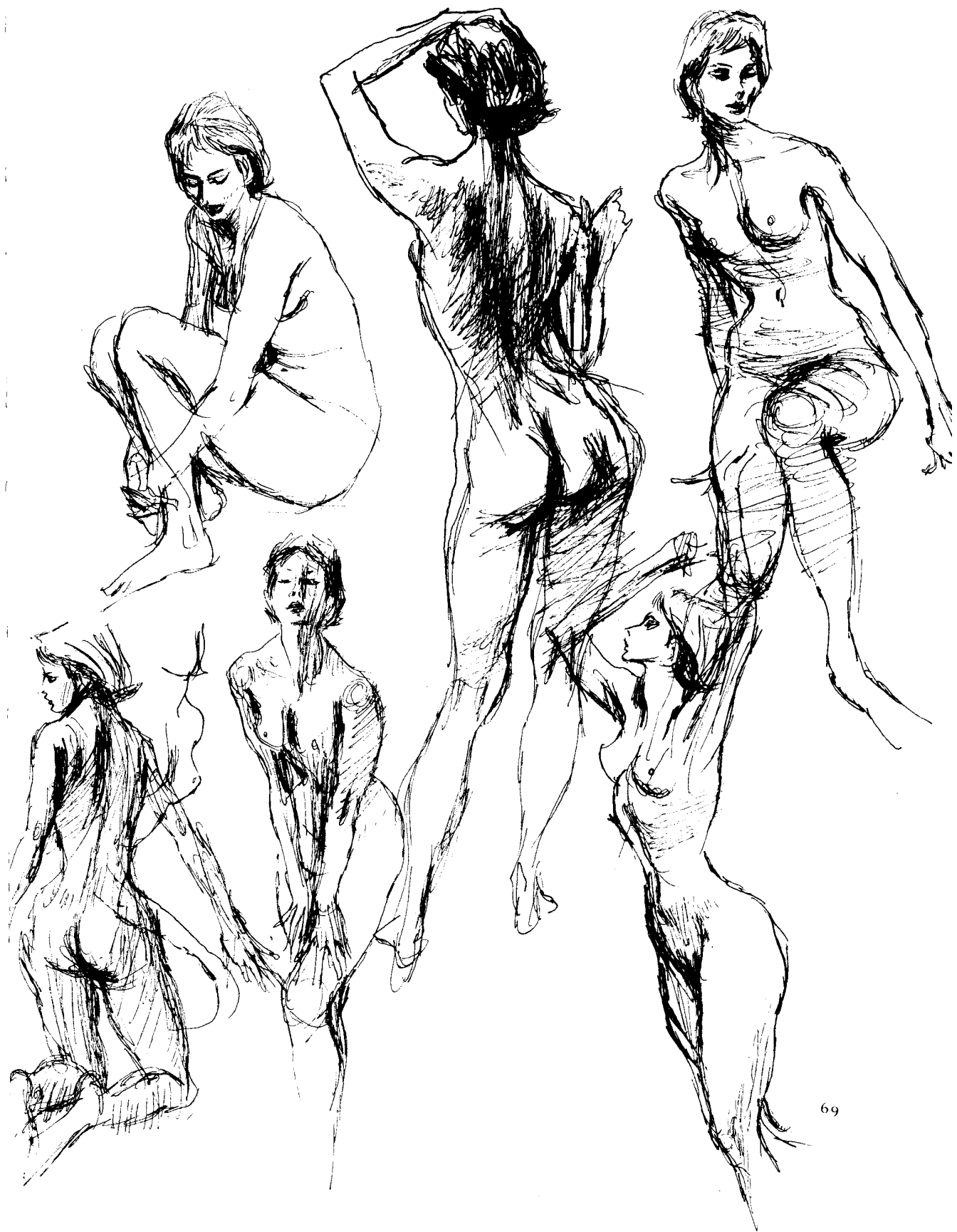
Shown here and on the following two pages are various drawings made with different types of pens. Some are with a fine crow quill nib on Bristol board ; others, like those opposite, with a thicker nib on Whatman " Not " paper. They are not drawn so large as those in which I've used Conté chalk ; none of the pen drawings is more than 8" high, this size being as much as a pen line can really manage without strain.

As far as the approach to the drawing is concerned, it makes no difference whether you use chalk or pen, but you must appreciate the limitations of a pen. It is difficult, for instance, to cover large areas of shadow quickly and therefore these are best suggested or even left out if possible. I find the pen is most sympathetic when used fairly loosely, don't concentrate too much on a rigid outline but more on the shapes — for this reason especially it makes good practice. I used three different sorts of pen nibs, the finest was a Gillot crow quill used on Bristol board. The medium size was a Gillot 303 also on Bristol board. The thickest nib was also a Gillot nib and is called an " artistic shoulder " nib ; I don't know why ! The latter is a very flexible nib for all kinds of uses, and I used this with Whatman " Not " surface paper.

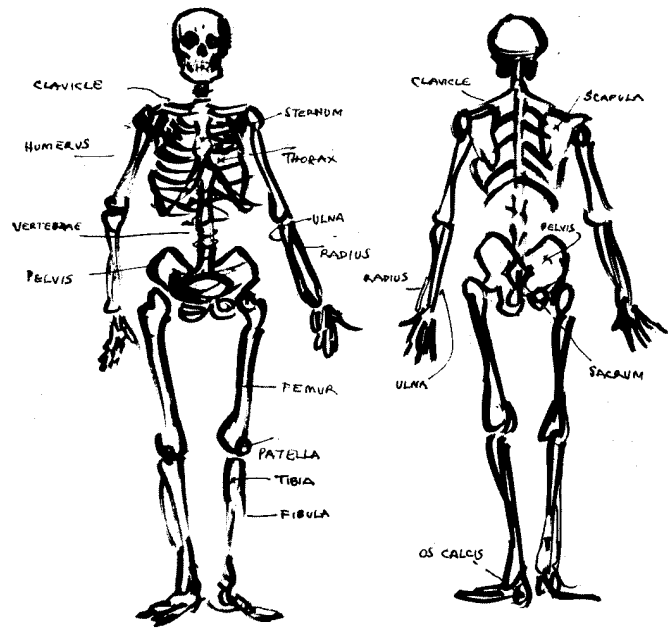








7. Anatomy



I HAVE said earlier on that you don't need to worry about anatomy in the initial stages. We seem to have made some progress since then, so perhaps now would be a good time to consider this matter.

Briefly then, there is a basic skeleton, a kind of Meccano-like framework, which will be vaguely familiar to you, though (except perhaps in X-rays) you've never seen your own. This frame isn't wholly rigid, some parts of it bend by means of muscles and tendons which contract and expand like a piece of elastic. In consequence, some parts of the frame are hidden by a complex web of muscles which almost completely cover it. They are hidden still more from your inquisitive eye by areas of fat, in certain parts of the body, by arteries and other blood vessels, by the digestive system and, finally, by the skin.

It follows, therefore, that, when the model moves, a very complicated process goes on. Muscles change their shape as they haul the bones into another pose, some areas of fat alter with the shifting of weight and all kinds of things happen which involve you in a whole new world of study. This study can be very fascinating and if you are to benefit from it you must get a good mental picture of the building up of a human body.

So much happens every time a model moves into a new pose. Quite apart from anatomy, there is distortion caused by perspective, which we've already discussed, and we've also gone into problems of fore-shortening. It is with some diffidence then that I bring along this further problem.

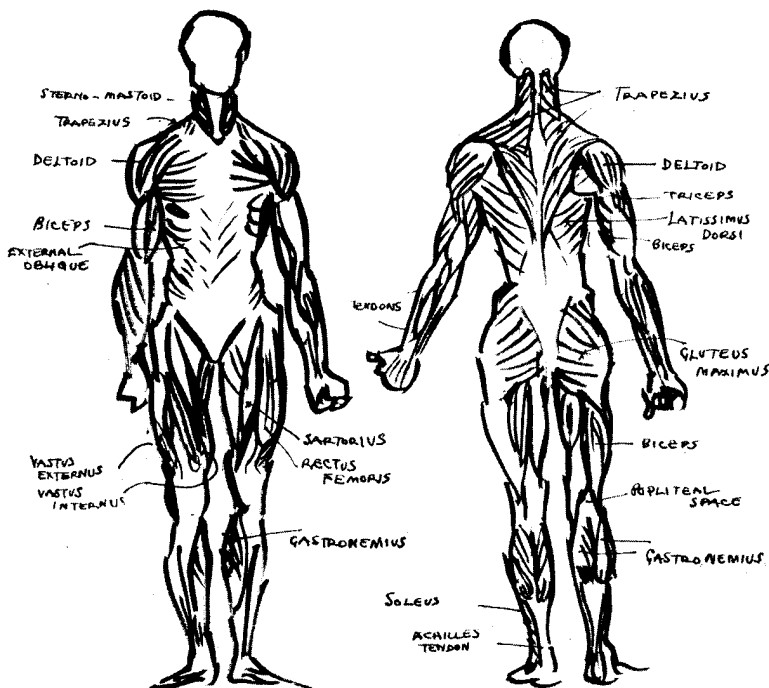
You will begin to think that this chapter on Anatomy consists of advice. Don't! However, anything that can be of help to you should be used, and so, now that we understand the importance of using our eyes, we can begin to educate ourselves in mild

doses. For purposes of drawing you don't need to know names and details as a medical student would. You are simply concerned to understand the figure, to help you draw it. You know that very roughly the framework of the body looks like the sketches opposite. Now don't be conventional in your outlook and think of a skeleton, as you've seen it in drawings or photos — remember it has three dimensions.

Seen as a whole the human skeleton might roughly be described as an egg-shaped, rather heavy blob at the top (the head), supported on a long line of bones knitted ingeniously together so they will bend and twist (the spine). Attached to this spine is a kind of cage (the ribs), also rather egg-shaped, and the spine ends in an almost shapeless piece of heavy solid bone, the pelvis (the nearest description would be bowl-shaped). All the above are supported almost three feet above the ground by a series of long, thin bones which end in flat platforms composed entirely of little bones, the feet (tarsal and metatarsal, etc.). These support the full weight of the body and, in addition, help it to move about. Loosely attached to the rib cage we must not forget those important things — arms. Again these are a series of long, thin bones, vaguely like the leg bones but smaller. They are supported in front by the collar bone, and at the back by the shoulder blade, neither of which need any introduction I'm sure.

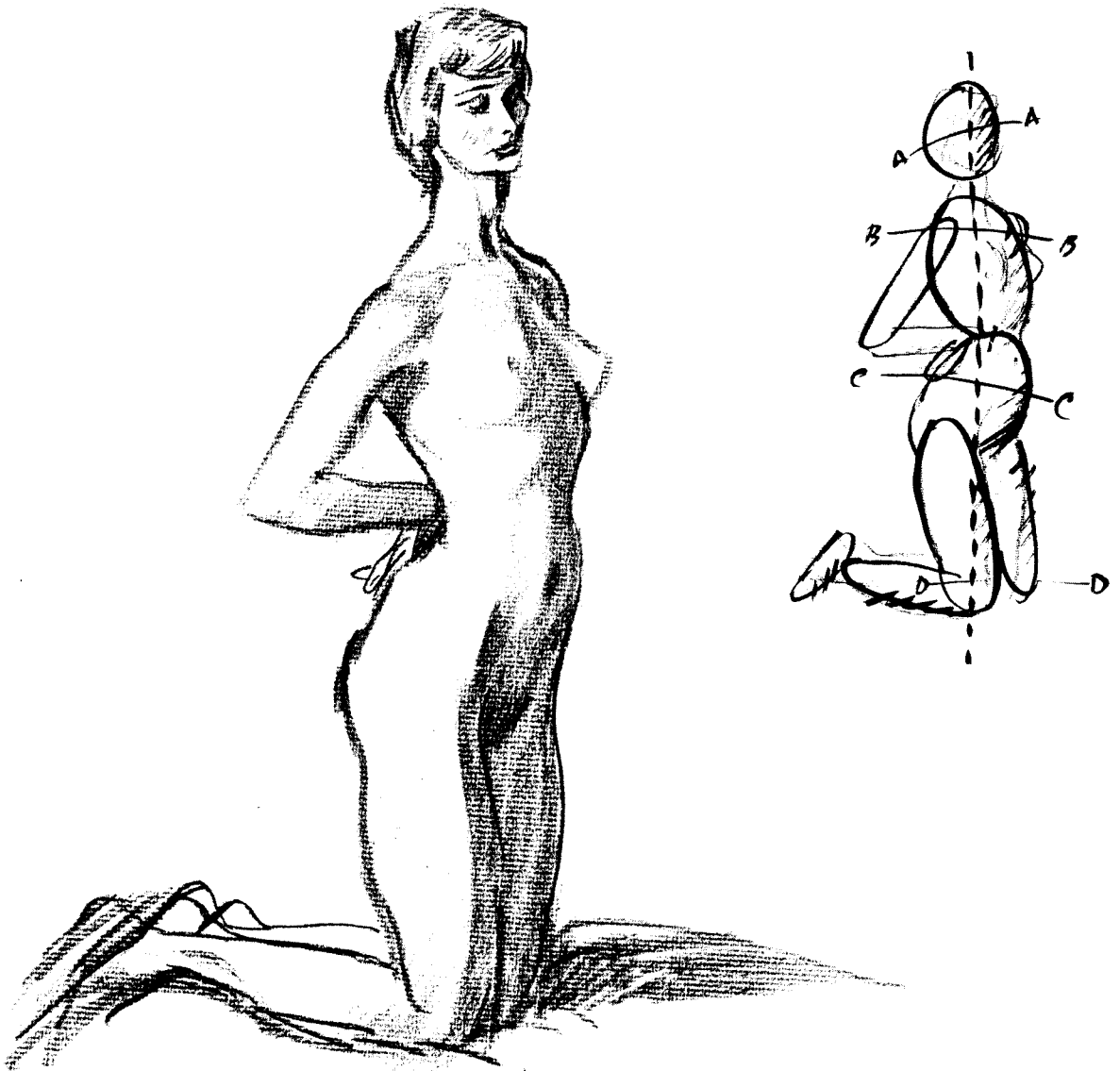
There's very little point in worrying yourself about what these bones are called unless you want to impress your friends or take a first aid course. It will help if you just get the rough idea of their shape in your mind.

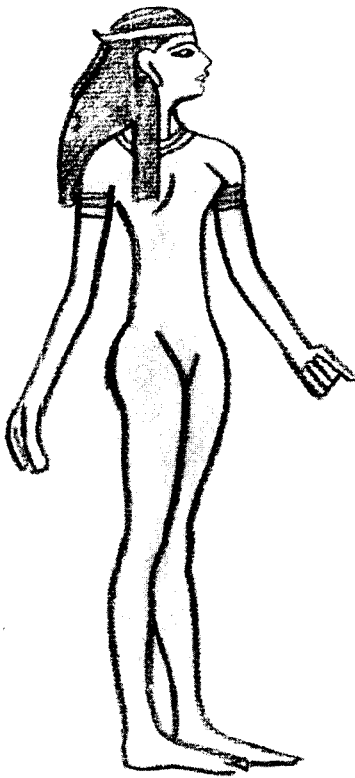
The main muscles, which cause you so much tribulation, are the parts of the body which you can trace most easily when drawing. I have drawn, below, a front and back view (again very roughly) to show the different muscles which overlay the skeleton.



This rough drawing shows, in front and back view, the different muscles that overlay the body. The names don't matter ; it is the shapes that you should notice.

It's not, however, the names that matter, it's where they are and their shapes that you should notice. When you have done this try out your new found knowledge on some of the drawings in this book, or photographs of bathers in the South of France, or on your friends. To start you off I've analyzed a pose from the anatomical angle (below). Possibly I sound a little flippant about anatomy, but please don't think I underrate the subject, and once more I stress the fact that, if you feel that more knowledge on this subject will help your work, you should certainly acquire it. Otherwise, I feel that the rough and ready and most unorthodox anatomy lecture I have just given you will serve its purpose for the moment.





8. History

The drawings accompanying this chapter were prepared by the author to indicate styles typical of various periods. Here, to start with, is an early Egyptian nude of about 1900 B.C.

SINCE the beginning of time men have been interested in drawing but the ability to make drawings of the human figure came long after bison, mammoths, antelopes, etc. I don't know why this was so, but if you look at early prehistoric cave paintings the humans are usually just little matchstick-like objects over which the wild horses and bison tower like skyscrapers. Not until long after primitive draughtsmen mastered the drawing of animals did their studies of humans begin.

Early Egyptian drawings were completely stylised (except for brief excursions into reality during the reign of Akhraton) — a kind of artistic shorthand in which conventional symbols represented human beings. It is not until the Greek influence percolated into Egypt during the period of the Ptolemys that naturalism began to appear.

Greek and Roman figure drawings that exist to-day are mostly on walls or vases and, in some cases, on floors in mosaic patterns. Here we find much more naturalistic movement but not any figure drawing comparable to the sculpture of the period. It was mostly the pot-boiling kind of drawing, typical of lesser commercial art to-day. One thing to notice about the figure drawing we have discovered so far is that nearly all of it is based on line, with very little modelling, a very conventional, unsympathetic sort of line at that. There may of course be some drawings, as yet undiscovered, that will rank with the Venus de Milo and the Parthenon freize as masterpieces. They must have existed at one time ; Phidias surely made studies for his sculpture and probably artists drew their wives and mistresses. . . .

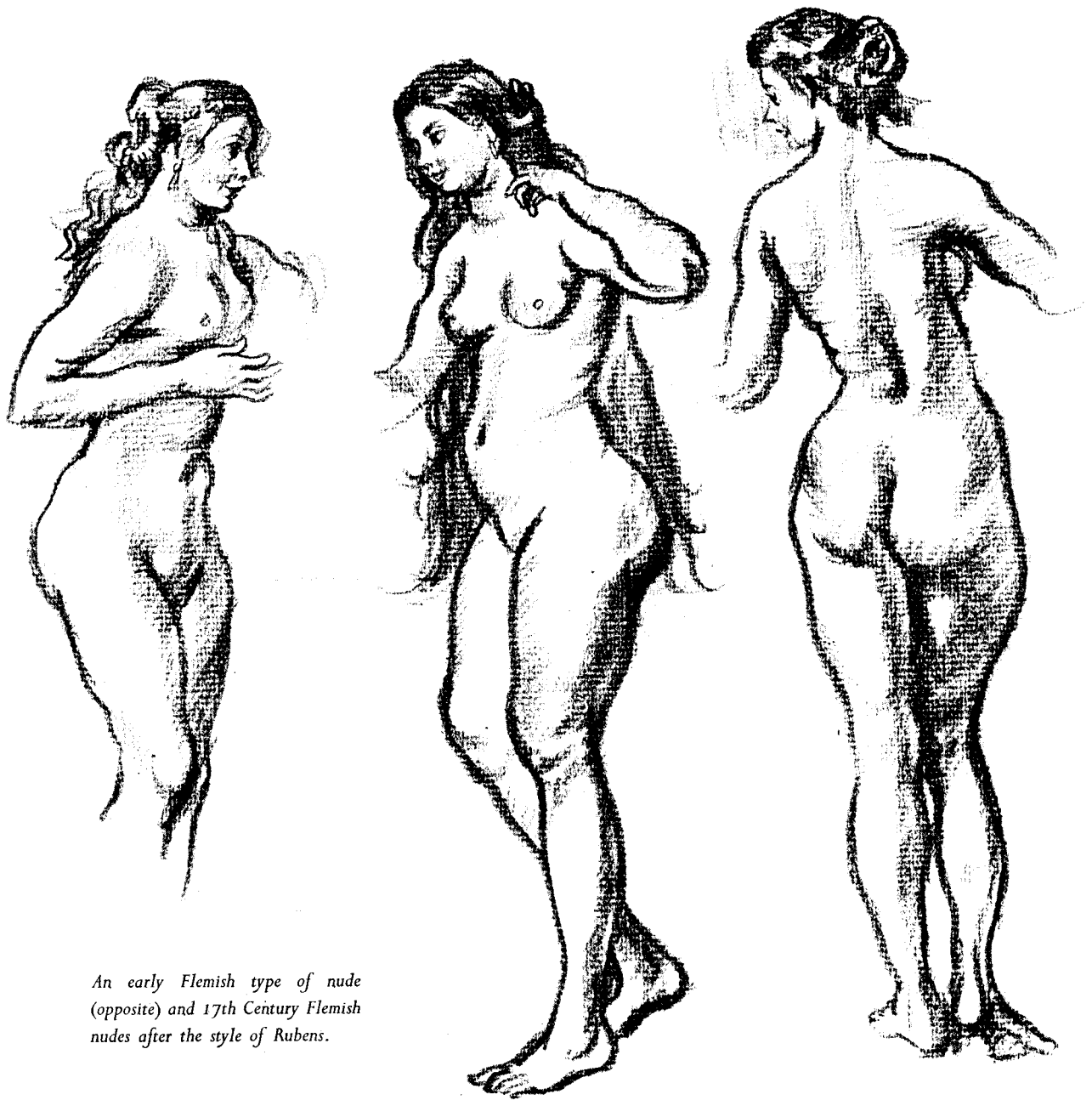
We're now approaching comparatively civilized times, but still no figure drawing as far as we know. . . . In Europe the darkness of the Middle Ages and the iron rule of the Church spread a blight over any hope of drawing the human figure without its clothing. Here and there an Adam and Eve timidly depicted, or scenes in Hell by Bosch or Bruegel showed some attempts in this direction. During this period Art was flourishing in China, India and Persia, but again, in a conventionalized form — charming, observant, often drawn with wonderful accuracy, but the masterpieces of figure drawing are yet to come.

It was the Renaissance that produced them. Suddenly, almost overnight it seems, the heavy hand of symbolism was lifted and the eye of the artist was free to record what he saw. It wasn't really quite so quickly as that, and between the paintings of Bellini and those of Titian lies a generation's difference. All over Europe the New Spirit, in which man became interested in man again, began to produce masterpieces of figure drawing. The first essays in this new medium were too detailed, too hard and slightly grotesque, such as Durer's studies and etchings. Some others, too, by Grunewald and Bellini, still have a primitive look. In Italy the progress was faster than in Northern Europe — compare, for instance, Raphael and Durer, who were contemporaries.

After Raphael and Botticelli came the flood: Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Giorgione, Titian, Veronese, etc.: from Italy the movement spread to Spain where Velasquez picked up the Spirit, and to Flanders where Rubens and Vandyck carried it on. So we come to the Baroque period, notable always for its primary interest in the human form. Gradually all Europe had its artists studying the figure. In England, Gainsborough, Hogarth and others were at work; France had a most magnificent group, headed by Watteau and Boucher; Tiepolo was creating masterpieces with pen and sepia washes in Italy — one might almost call this the Golden Age of figure drawing.

All this activity was not wholly confined to Europe. In Japan popular artists of the Ukiyoe School were making drawings with a brush. These drawings, while still subject to a certain conventionality — which suggest that they weren't actually drawn from life — are far in advance of the more stylized work which Eastern countries had up to then produced. In Hokusai a really great master emerged whose work, later on, had a great influence on European artists. Degas and Toulouse Lautrec were to feel this influence.





An early Flemish type of nude (opposite) and 17th Century Flemish nudes after the style of Rubens.

We thus come to the nineteenth century, beginning with a revered worship of all things Greek and consequently an even greater interest in the human figure. This produced at least one master draughtsman — Ingres. His influence was great and was passed on, especially to Degas, who, developing from this point, carried draughtsmanship of the figure into the bedroom, the bathroom and the ballet and right out of the studio into the modern world.

A Tiepolo-type Venetian nude of the 18th Century, drawn in pen and wash, and a French nude (opposite) of the same period, in chalk on toned paper.

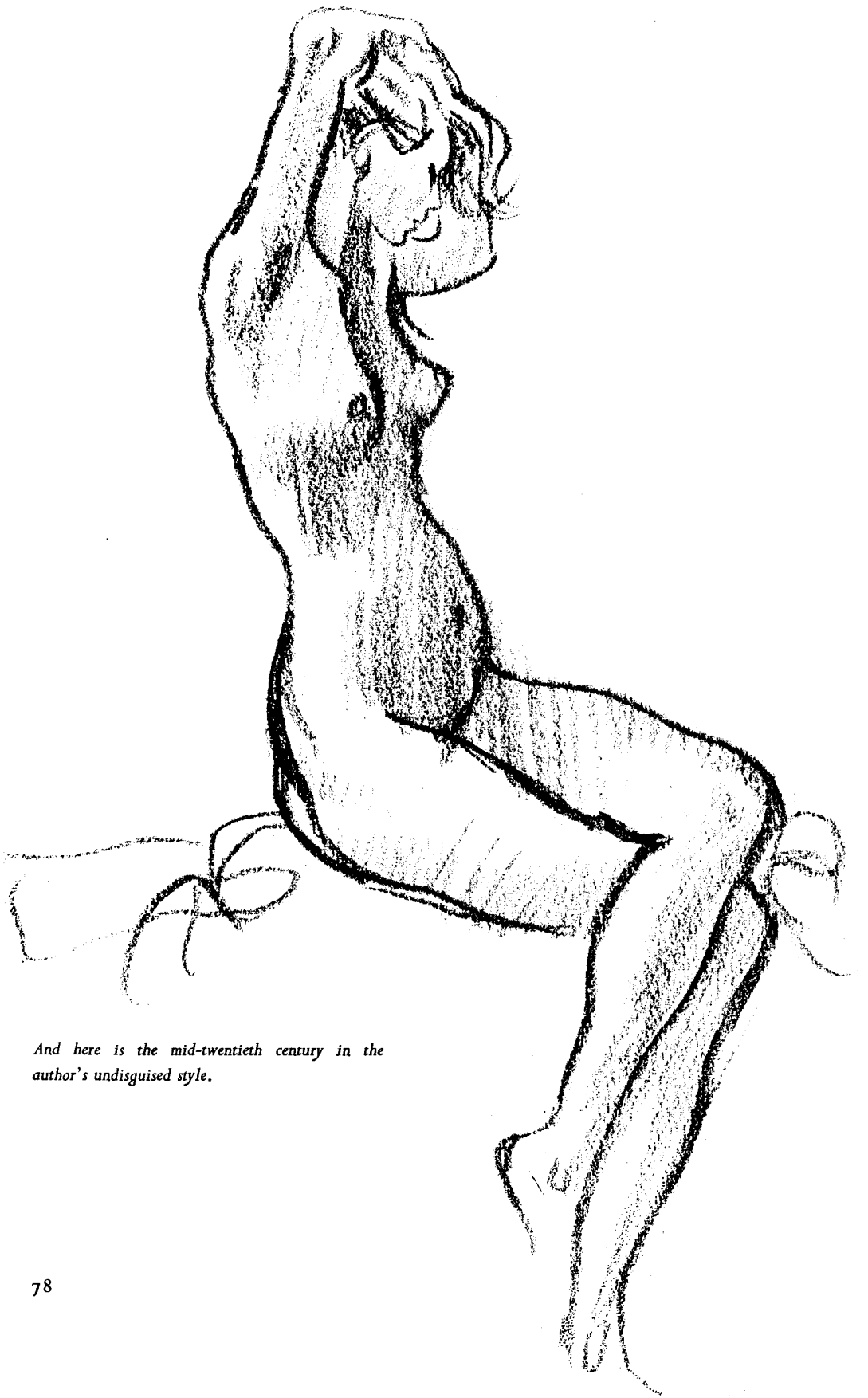


Progress in draughtsmanship had gone so far, from the carefully executed metallic-looking drawings of Durer to the freedom of Degas or Augustus John, that there seemed no further to go. Consequently, many artists took a different path. Picasso, Dufy, Matisse, deliberately turned away from representational drawing, and the Paris School of painting developed.

The trend recently seems to go back to more truthful renderings of the figure. Each in his own way, artists are subject to such diverse influences as Degas, Van Gogh, William Blake and, in fact, almost everybody you can think of.

In this rather broad sweep I've missed out some interesting sideshows. There is,





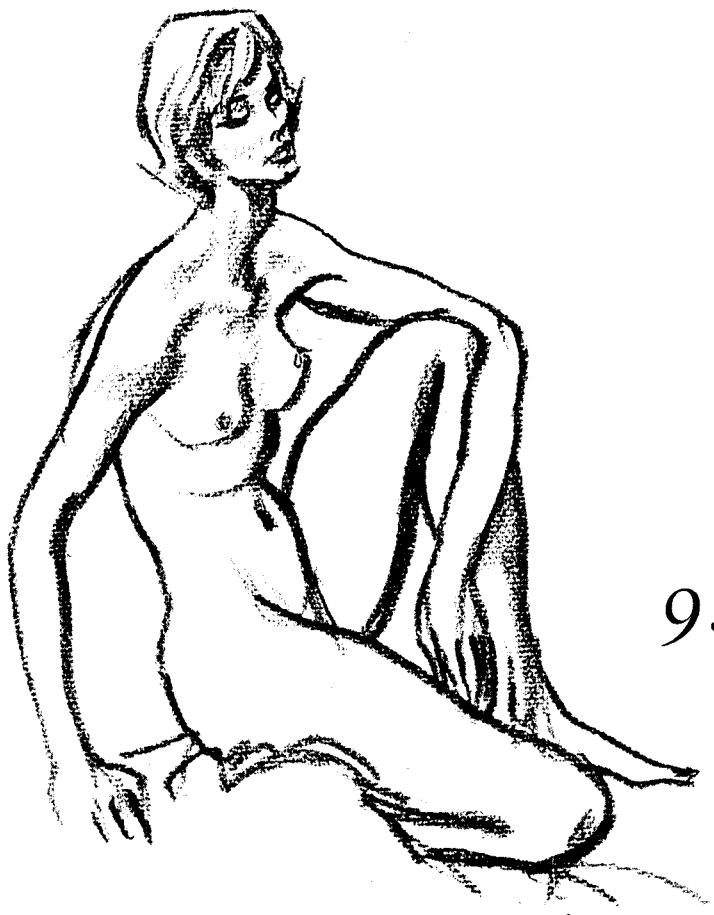
*And here is the mid-twentieth century in the
author's undisguised style.*

for instance, the mystery of Bougereau. He worked at the same time as the French Impressionists and though his fame completely eclipsed theirs during his lifetime, now he and his work are completely ignored — he's a forgotten man. The fame of the French Impressionists has so obliterated the work of Borgereau and others of his School that many people don't know that this group of artists ever existed. In England their equivalent, Lord Leighton and his followers, has suffered a similar fate — overshadowed by artists whose work they despised. In the sphere of figure drawing there is also the problem of Burne Jones. He could make superb studies of the figure. In his lifetime he became the much revered Sir Edward Coley Burne Jones, Bart., but because most of his work was harnessed to obscure Arthurian legends — quests for the Holy Grail and so on, which are now unfashionable — it has also gone into cold storage. Some day his paintings may come back into fashion but, meanwhile, I feel his drawings are unfairly neglected.

I have made no mention of an artist who made his first appearance in the nineteenth century and who, it was thought at the time, might put all other artists out of business — I mean the camera. Camera studies of the figure began to appear nearly as soon as the camera was invented but so far it has not put artists out of work.

The progress in figure drawing that human beings have made from the prehistoric draughtsmen to our own time resembles somewhat the process of development which every student goes through : the preliminary gropings, effects often obtained more by luck than technique ; the hard, dry, over-detailed studies (Durer, etc.) ; the gradual appreciation of the human form and how to depict it ; finally such mastery that exact realism can be forgotten and only the essentials put down (Degas, etc.). These are very much the stages every successful artist must follow, though only a few reach the level of a Degas or a Rembrandt.





9. *The Model*

A WORD about that indispensable part of the programme — the model. So much nonsense has been written about models, ever since Du Maurier wrote *Trilby*, that it's sometimes difficult to think of it as a hard-working prosaic occupation like any other. There are a few models who blaze a brief and lurid trail across Bohemia but generally models are business-like people who are booked by the hour, do their job and go on to the next one. They are usually obtained through model agencies. Often one model recommends others, so that if you are using models frequently you find you accumulate a list of different addresses and telephone numbers and could almost run an agency yourself!

There are all kinds of models. Some are really small part actresses or dancers who model between engagements; others are permanently models and always have been. Sometimes they come from a family who have been models for three generations. I remember one Italian family in which the old grandfather posed for apostles; the father was anything from Samson to heavy industrial types (dignity of labour, etc.); the female side of this family had a cast which included everything from Macbeth's witches to Salome or Greek maidens at play. They probably made their debut as cherubs

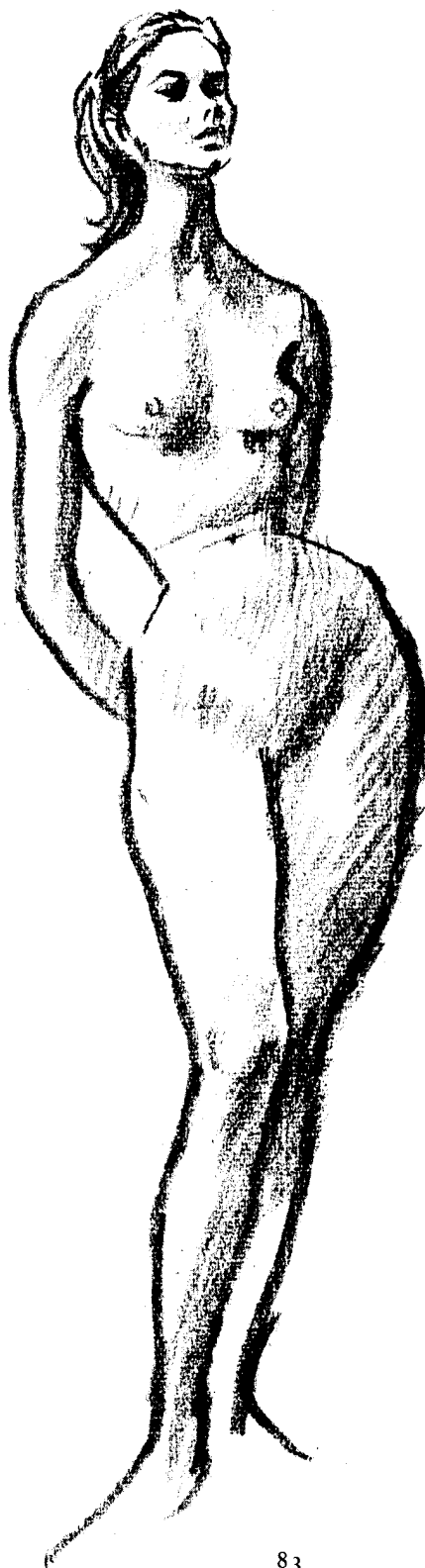


for a ceiling decoration or innocents in the Murder of the Innocents !

You will help your work by being considerate to the model. Don't try impossible poses, or, if for some reason you must, draw as quickly as you reasonably can. Get the model's help by explaining your problem clearly; if necessary make a little diagram, it's surprising how quickly you get results this way. Some models are artists themselves, who are paying their way during difficult times. They usually pose the best because they understand what you want.

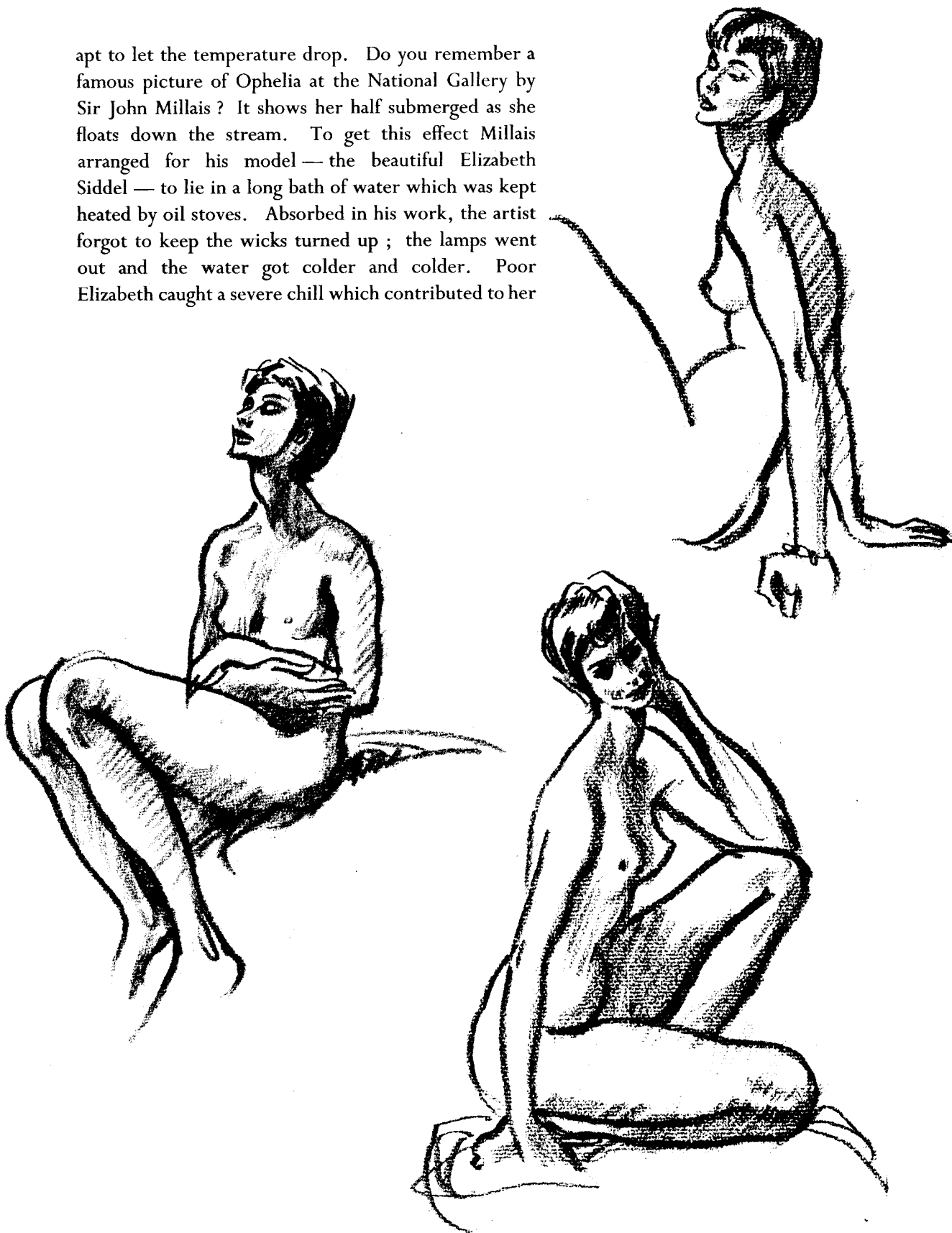
The worst models are those who have a repertoire of very dramatic and contorted poses, which they try to give you regardless of what you really require. This type is as bad to the artist as an artist who doesn't know what he wants is to the model.

An important necessity for a model is that the room should be warm. Artists usually manage this in the beginning but, becoming engrossed in their problems, are

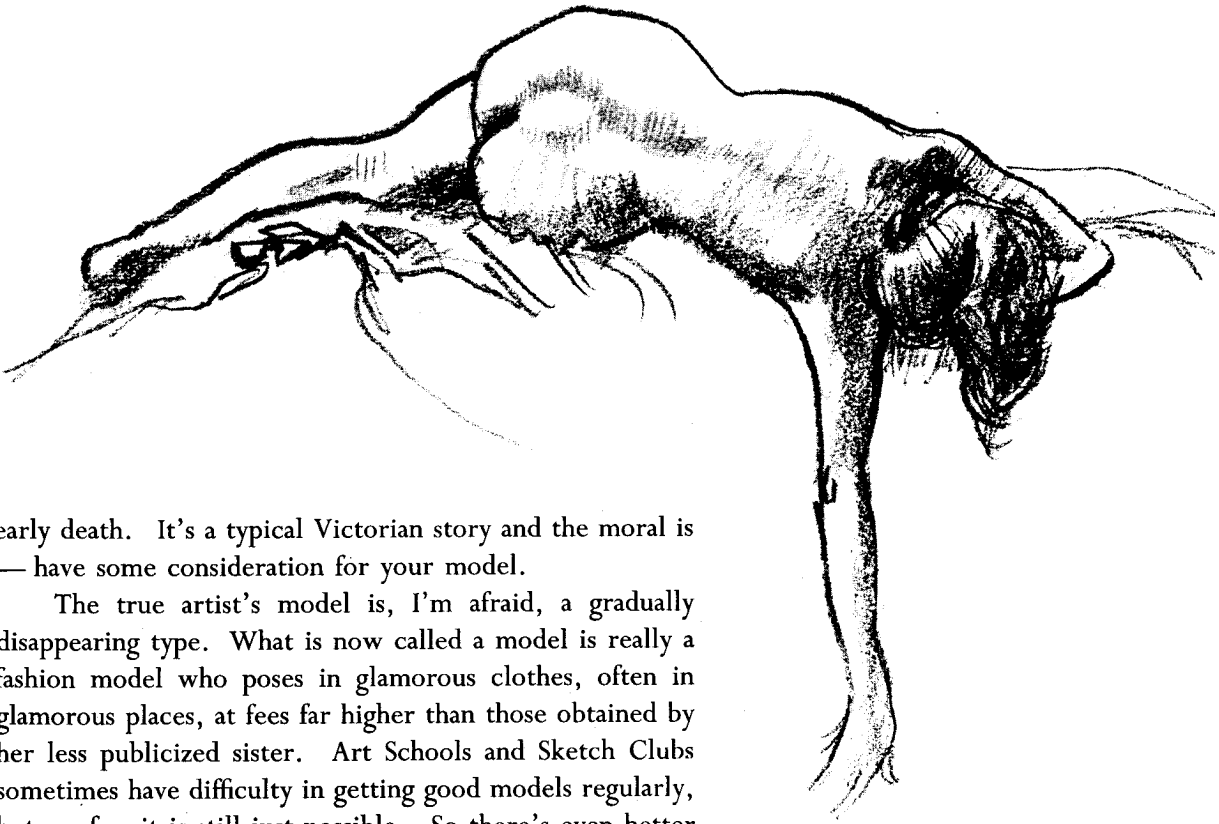




apt to let the temperature drop. Do you remember a famous picture of Ophelia at the National Gallery by Sir John Millais? It shows her half submerged as she floats down the stream. To get this effect Millais arranged for his model — the beautiful Elizabeth Siddel — to lie in a long bath of water which was kept heated by oil stoves. Absorbed in his work, the artist forgot to keep the wicks turned up; the lamps went out and the water got colder and colder. Poor Elizabeth caught a severe chill which contributed to her



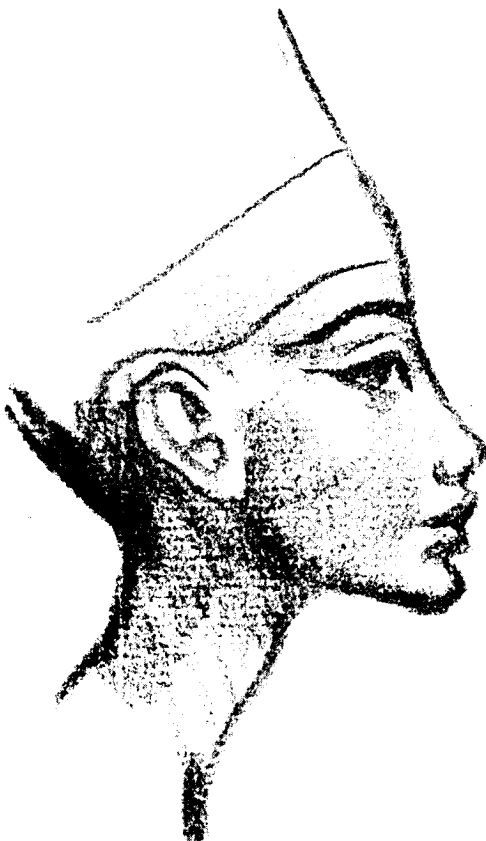




early death. It's a typical Victorian story and the moral is — have some consideration for your model.

The true artist's model is, I'm afraid, a gradually disappearing type. What is now called a model is really a fashion model who poses in glamorous clothes, often in glamorous places, at fees far higher than those obtained by her less publicized sister. Art Schools and Sketch Clubs sometimes have difficulty in getting good models regularly, but, so far, it is still just possible. So there's even better reason now, than in Millais' day, not to let your model die of pneumonia !





10. *Beauty*

Again the author gives his own interpretations ; this time of ideal types preferred by artists of different periods. The first is an Egyptian head of about 1350 B.C.

HERE is a dangerous and controversial subject, especially *feminine* Beauty. Nevertheless, it should be considered.

It is not enough to go on drawing the model blindly and aimlessly, though it is true that the constant practice of figure drawing is necessary to an artist. The mere copying of a model is, however, not the end of your troubles ; moreover it is not really true to say that anyone “ copies ” a model exactly. When you look at twenty drawings of the same model by twenty different artists none of the versions will look alike because no two artists look at the model in exactly the same way. Their version is conditioned by their mind and this influences, subconsciously perhaps, their rendering of the subject. It is not a bad thing ; this difference of outlook makes artists' work interesting and gives it a human quality which a photograph lacks.

When an artist, however sincerely, studies his model he is biased — in one direction or another — by many things : his convictions or standards of taste, his aspirations, technical ability, the quality of his eyesight, all kinds of stresses are at work. Though

there may be fairly general agreement as to what constitutes a beautiful woman, it does not follow that there is complete unanimity in all details. Not all artists who draw the female figure are trying to draw a beautiful woman, they may be interested more in the beauty of light and shade or the angles of one plane against another. Others, maybe, don't do so because they can't or because their opinion of what constitutes beauty is quite different from that of other people.

It does not necessarily mean that because you try to make your drawing of an attractive model *look* attractive that she should have an air of insipid sweetness or that she has got to look as sexy and provocative as some movie posters. If the model is attractive then there seems to me no reason why you should not try to show this, but some artists will deliberately avoid anything attractive in their drawing of her because they think it will be considered "inartistic." It may be, of course, that they don't consider she is attractive and this is a matter in which opinions differ.

To me, it seems essential that you should soon begin to establish a conception of beauty in your own mind which will give you a standard of comparison. You should try

The Greek ideal.





A Flemish beauty in the Rubens style.

to decide just what you are aiming at beyond the elementary attempt to record the dry facts without any emotion whatever. It is, in any case, a delusion to think that you can draw without emotion of some sort or another. Whether you like it or not, you will have a bias in some direction, even if it is an attempt to have no bias at all !

To realize what your objectives and your standards of beauty are will be a great help to you. For instance, my own personal bias is towards tall graceful figures, not too voluptuous, and faces with well defined bone structure. This does not mean, however, that, if I were drawing a model without these characteristics, I would endeavour to endow her with them. She might have another type of beauty, which it would be equally interesting to try to discover and get on paper.

In the name of stark realism some artists make everything look as unattractive as possible, but this is not realism when the truth is that in reality the model is very attractive.

You should, therefore, decide that, since the artist is a human being and not a machine, your emotions are bound to sway your interpretation. Try to be clear in your mind what your purpose is in drawing the model and what are your standards of beauty.

It should be emphasized that this doesn't mean the creating of a type which you impose on all your drawings regardless of the model in front of you. There are many types of beauty, all different and all equally beautiful. Compare, for instance, the varying types of film stars — the sultry Italian types, blonde Scandinavians or lanky Americans.

. . . These are only generalized types ; you have only to walk down the main street of any city to see many attractive types ; perhaps a few really beautiful ones. Some others, charming for some individual characteristic, and some who, though ugly in reality, have a beauty when seen from some particular angle and in a certain light. It isn't necessarily only the film stars who are beautiful.

It should be your objective to bring out in your drawing the particular charm or beauty that you have discovered in your model. I can see nothing in this that need conflict with art or good taste, nor need you try to create a type of your own regardless of the model before you. The dividing line between a characterless prettiness and the individual beauty you are trying to depict is very difficult to define, but you must learn to do so.

One way to help with this problem is to analyze the different proportions and characteristics that make up what, in your opinion, constitutes beauty. What is it that makes this or that actress beautiful ? Why does that girl on the beach seem so lovely ? Don't merely say to yourself that she is lovely, ask why is she lovely. Look through



*A Florentine head of the type perpetuated
by Leonardo da Vinci.*



Venetian beauty of the 18th Century after Tiepolo.



*18th Century French,
after Boucher.*

books of drawings or photographs and analyze the qualities that make the effect of beauty. Is it the way a head is set on the neck, the particular carriage of the body, the graceful pose? — all may contribute, and the reason should be understood.

Unless you deliberately look for these things you will not perhaps realize what apparently intangible quality it was that attracted you and which you might wish to capture in your drawing. Novelists can write about intangible beauty and dream-like qualities but an artist has to be more practical about it and set down these effects with the intractable and often exasperatingly crude implements at his disposal.

There is a story concerning beauty about Leonardo da Vinci. A crowd of courtiers and artists surrounded a piece of Greek sculpture which had just been excavated, and were all exclaiming and admiring it in a very highbrow manner. Leonardo said nothing,



An Oriental type of beauty is typified in this Balinese dancer.

but, producing a tape measure, proceeded to take exact measurements of the statue in order to find out how the effects had been obtained. Something of that attitude towards beauty can be of use to you too, though it may be difficult to be quite so aggravatingly unemotional about it as da Vinci was.



Late 19th Century, after the manner of Dana Gibson.

11. Conclusion

IF you have been following the advice I've given you or even, perhaps, if you've not followed it exactly and mapped out a system of your own, I'm sure you will have found out the enormous importance of figure drawing. The necessary discipline to your mind, eye and hand is about the most difficult and exciting thing in art. The feeling you get when you have made a few good drawings (not necessarily masterpieces) is something like that which a sportsman feels when bringing home a good "bag" — and not nearly so destructive to the victims.

All through this book I've stressed the importance of drawing what you see. I've even exaggerated the importance of this because it's a good thing to err a little in this direction at first. Now I want to emphasize that drawing what you see doesn't necessarily mean making a slavish copy of the model, a dead-looking photographic copy (in the worst sense of that word). You should have found out as you go along that your mind will, if you let it, also do its share. In some cases, as we've seen (with fore-shortening, etc.), you draw, and decide what you want of the pose, whatever it may be, then let your eye and brain work together, you will obtain the result you're aiming at.

The method you use will become progressively more and more personal to you. It will depend on practice and lots more practice. All the time, if you are engaged in other branches of art, the result of what you are learning, even the mistakes you make, will have their effect! The construction of the body, its sense of balance, for instance, is of the greatest value to a feeling for decoration. You learn a tremendous amount of useful information about true values as you follow the effects of light on the body's subtle shapes. At its very least the practice of figure drawing will give you a critical standard with which to judge the work of masters, both ancient and modern.

Lastly, I don't want to underestimate the difficulties of good figure drawing. It's about the most difficult problem in art. There is every need to take it seriously and to approach your task sincerely. As long, however, as you do that progress will come more quickly than you think.

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