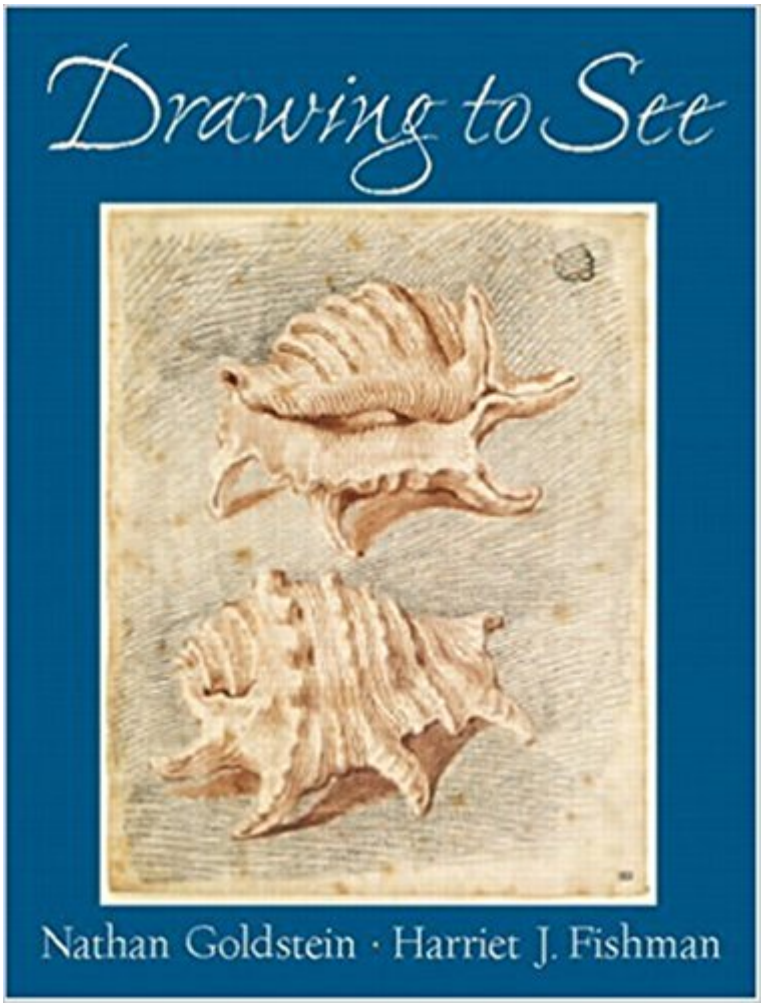
Drawing To See



Synopsis

Progressing logically from the most encompassing fundamentals to more specific drawing considerations, this book addresses the options, challenges, and methodologies of drawings made in the presence of subjects such as still life, figure, and landscape. It revolves around the premise that beginners' main interests center on developing the ability to draw what they see or envision in a more or less objective manner. The book approaches the teaching of drawing in the same way artists approach the creating of drawings: by proceeding from the general to the specific, acknowledging the given conditions of visual expression, being consistent and clear, and presenting a work in an organized and economical manner. Chapter titles include Matters of Measurement, From Gesture to Line, From Line to Shape, From Shape to Plane and Structure, From Structure to Value and Volume, Color in Drawing, Composition in Drawing, Seeing with the Mind's Eye, and Materials of Drawing. For serious amateur artists.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Drawing to See is specifically designed for the beginning drawing student. The focus of this clear and thorough text is to teach students what they need to know and see to draw in an objective manner. It introduces students to the concepts and procedures necessary to develop sound drawing skills, focusing on matters of measurement and perspective, line and shape, planar and structural analysis, value and volume, and color. The book then explores the compositional and expressive aspects of both observational and imaginative drawing. Authors Nathan Goldstein and Harriet Fishman have carefully selected the best examples available to illustrate their points, choosing a

broad range of images from simple line art to old masters to contemporary artists. Features of this new text include: A practical introduction that addresses the book's rationale, themes, and content. Things to Think About sections help students thoroughly understand the main points of each chapter. Critical Considerations sections anticipate common drawing problems having to do with perception, response, execution, composition, and other important drawing issues. These sections introduce beginning students to the kinds of observations and queries generally made by teachers in classroom critique situations. Drawing exercises appear in eight of the nine chapters, giving students the opportunity to practice the concepts they have learned.

Among the earliest traces of our common ancestry are cave drawings and paintings of plants, birds, hands, people, animals, and even hunting scenes. Although we can't really know what motivated these remarkable images (magic? score-keeping? amusement?), it seems that making visual images has been necessary to humankind, almost from the start, for many kinds of clarifying, recording, and expressive reasons. As you embark on the study of drawing, it is important to recognize that, to this day, drawing is still a direct (and enchanting) way to clarify, to record, and to express. Indeed, drawing well is mostly about doing these three things in a resolute and appealing way. No matter what your ultimate goal for drawing may be, you will always be trying to communicate your ideas and experiences clearly. There are many reasons and ways to draw. A drawing may be motivated by a wish to study a form's appearance, or to plan a creative work in another medium. A drawing may serve to show a client what you intend to create, or to explore the images of your imagination in order to see what they may look like and where they may take you. Many drawings are motivated by a wish to experience the visual and expressive character of something that is seen or recalled—the places, things, and people in the world around you. But whatever stimulates you to draw, the "ticket of admission" into the great realm of drawing is the ability to see a subject's parts in a relational way, that is, to see the similarities and differences among a subject's many features and conditions. For example, if your subject is your own hand, opened before you, palm side up, with your extended fingers spread, the middle finger is longest, but by how much when compared to the ring finger? to the little finger? And is the little finger shorter or longer than the thumb? Looking at the spaces separating the fingers, which space is the widest and which, the narrowest? And, although the four fingers are similar in their shape, what differences do you see in their contours? Where are the lightest tones on your hand, and where are the darkest ones? Among the hand's many folds and creases, which are the most pronounced? These are only some of the questions you need to answer in order to drat the unique nature of your hand in an

objectively truthful way. Learning how to draA begins with, and is nourished by, learning how to see, and learning how to see begins with recognizing that inquiries about relationships of size, shape, value, position, and more, must lead the way. It is the inability to see such relationships that stands squarely in the way of learning to draw. Although your eventual creative expressions may take you far from drawing in an objective mode, reaching these goals cannot benefit from a functional blindness to the relational matters fundamental to drawing. The authors of this book, having taught drawing for many years, have repeatedly seen the often rapid development in drawing skills among those studentartists who approach the learning of drawing in an inquiring, and not in an arbitrary or declarative, way. Such students soon realize that sensitively relating a subject's parts and its underlying patterns, when comparing, measuring, and choosing, is a vital key to creating drawings, in any mode, that ring true and come alive. With that in mind, the authors felt that starting this study of drawing with an introduction to a wide range of relational matters (Chapter One) will alert you to more of them than you would otherwise be likely to see and consider. The advantage of beginning in this way is important because seeing more of what is there to compare and relate means you have more control of what you draw at every stage of your studies—the more we see the better we draw. For example, reading Chapter One's discussion on seeing directions—the tilts and turnings of a subject's parts—in alerting you to where and how these directions show themselves—will help you to better draw the main topic of Chapter Two: a subject's gesture. The authors further felt that, just as a drawing is invariably created by a process which moves from the general to the specific, the teaching of drawing can also begin (more or less) with a concentration on the most encompassing matters of drawing before turning to more particular ones. That is why, once you have been alerted to what measurable matters to look for in a subject, we have presented the concept of gesture as the most pervasive feature of anything you set out to draw. This is so because everything has gesture, has some enveloping pattern of action and energy that underlies its form, be it the human figure, an eyelid, a staircase, or a sparrow. And, just as Chapter Two ends with an approach to the visual element of line, (for the underlying matter of gesture soon rises to the surface where lines are a direct and efficient means of proceeding further), Chapter Three begins with line, exploring its several guises and functions, and ends by approaching the next logical matter: shape. Proceeding on our journey from the general to the specific, Chapter Four examines the several roles of the element of shape in drawing, especially shape's role in forming a volume's surface facets, or planes. And planes, when they get together, produce a form's surface structure, a major focus of Chapter Five, which then goes on to explore two more visual elements: value and volume. Chapter Six examines some issues in drawings that use the element

of color, perhaps the most mysterious of the visual elements, and the most powerful too, as it modifies all the other elements. Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight depart from our general approach and move toward to specific approaches, as each chapter concentrates on ever-present matters fundamental to drawing. Chapter Seven takes on the illusive but crucial matter of composition, and shows that the successful communication of your creative meanings owes much to the underlying dynamic forces alive in the things you draw. Up to this point the book has concentrated on how to better draw the things you actually see. Chapter Eight considers how to respond to subjects that you don't actually see: those of recall and imagination. All of the preceding chapters will have prepared you for encountering and capturing these more personal and often fleeting visions. Chapter Nine concerns the materials and tools of drawing, an important subject because of their influence on the images you will make. Lastly, we have included a glossary of terms as used in this book, to help you get the most out of each discussion. Put simply, learning to draw means doing a lot of it as you take on the many challenges of relational seeing. One of the most useful tools for enabling you to draw anywhere and at any time is the sketchbook, an invaluable learning device that students and artists have used for several hundred years. There are many kinds and sizes of sketchbook. The authors suggest selecting one that can be easily carried around. A sketchbook that measures approximately 8.5 by 11 inches is just about right. In the relative privacy of a sketchbook you are more likely to "take chances," to more bravely risk losing a drawing that tries to reach for an idea, a procedure, or a subject that, earlier on, was too difficult to manage. Think of your sketchbook as a private journal or sanctuary, not available for others to browse without your permission. It also helps to think of it as a kind of gym, a place where you go to visually "work out." And, as in a gym environment, where a failed attempt is simply dismissed and tried again (and again), a sketchbook drawing that doesn't succeed should likewise be dismissed and tried again, and not be seen as an unmovable limit of your ability to draw. To continue the analogy, as with your physical limits in the gym, where you can jump only so far or lift only so much, learning how to jump farther or how to lift more will, in time, get results. It is the same with drawing. Learning how to see more will, in time, result in drawings that succeed in saying better what you mean them to say. The sketchbook helps to speed up the process of seeing, because many sketchbook drawings are likely to be of short duration—a condition that encourages artists to see in a more selective and relational way—the better to recall the subject, which may have moved on. This practice makes for better observation and more resolute results. The advantages of the sketchbook for practice, investigation, planning, anq the recording of subjects you would otherwise not encounter are too important tb bypass. Browsing this book's reproductions of old and contemporary master drawings

will show how many of these works are, if not actually sketchbook drawings, in the investigative spirit of sketchbook drawings. A word about the drawings that appear in the book is in order here. The authors felt that showing you the most outstanding examples of maters referred to in the text far outweighed all other considerations. The idea of insisting on a policy that would all but exclude either contemporary artists or old masters in making our selections seemed unnecessarily restricting as extraordinary drawings are to be had from each era. Instead, we searched for works that most clearly demonstrated the various points in each chapter with little regard for when or where a work was created. Another matter to think about as you embark on the study of drawing is the evaluation of your efforts by others. Art students, like professional artists, will have their works judged now and then. The famous art school "critique" of student work is one example of this, the opinions of friends and family, are another. Although such evaluations can be valuable to the development of your drawing skills, it is usually difficult to hear that your judgments or manner of drawing are regarded as faulty in some way: It may be of some help to recognize that there are, broadly speaking, two categories of criticism: those having to do with provable fact, and those with opinion. Teachers of basic drawing will generally emphasize the former: "the legs are too short for the rest of the body," or "the perspective of the table is off," or "the volume of this form isn't clear to me." Such criticisms, being plainly factual, can be readily accepted. Criticisms having to do with opinion may also be valuable, but these often have as their basis certain artistic beliefs or other values of importance to the critic that he or she hopes you will consider. When, in the opinion of an art teacher, your drawing is regarded as "too tight," "too carelessly observed," "too concerned with surface effects," or "unbalanced on the page," you are probably getting good advice. But when a relative or a friend suggests your drawings should be "prettier," "less messy," or "not so sad," you can safely disregard the criticism, however well meant it may be. Criticism is best sorted out by having in mind the goals you hold for yourself. As you read (and draw!) your way through this book (ideally while enrolled in a drawing course), remember that you are probably a good judge of your progress in developing your drawing skills, in the light of where you wish to go. But so too, are the artist-teachers who are helping you by alerting you to possibilities, problems, and challenges you need to confront to reach your goals. They can help you work through obstacles and achieve results. The authors hope this book will also help you in that important way.

"Drawing to See" is an excellent book for someone interested in a somewhat basic explanation of the aspects of drawing responsively. It is a contracted presentation of the concepts presented in two other books by Goldstein, "The Art of Responsive Drawing" and "Design and Composition". I feel

that "Drawing to See" would be an excellent text for Drawing I and II classes at the community college level.

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