

Drawing 2

# Investigating drawing



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# Contents

## Before you start

### Part one Exploring composition

- Project 1 Observational drawing
- 2 Using space
- 3 Changing the scale
- 4 The human form

#### Assignment one

### Part two Material properties

- Project 1 Space, depth and volume
- 2 Mark-making materials
- 3 Narrative

#### Assignment two

### Part three Physicality and gesture

- Project 1 Drawing blind
- 2 Experiments with markmaking
- 3 Drawing 'machines'
- 4 An emotional response

#### Assignment three

### Part four Environmental interventions

- Project 1 Found images
- 2 Interacting with the environment
- 3 Installation

#### Assignment four

## Part five **Time lines**

- Project 1** A changing scene
- 2 An artist's book
- 3 A finer focus
- 4 Time and the viewer

**Assignment five**

## Part six **Conclusion**

- The parallel project
- The critical review
- Pre-assessment review

**Assignment six**

## Reading and resources

# Before you start

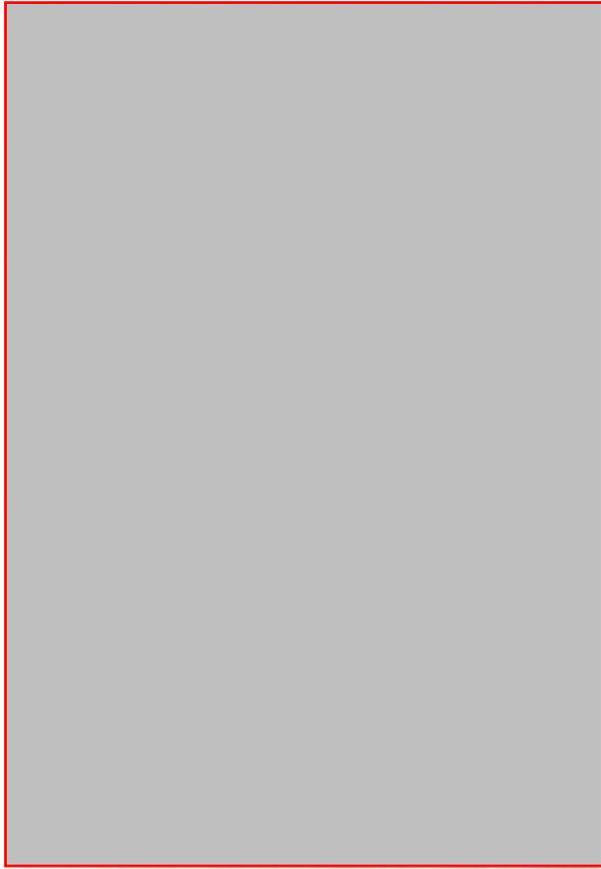
Welcome to *Drawing 2: Investigating Drawing*.

Your OCA **Student Handbook** should be able to answer most questions about the basics of this course and all other OCA courses so keep this to hand.

## Introduction

A resurgence of drawing in recent times has proved, if it needed to be proved, that drawing has a special place in the world of visual art. The immediacy, efficiency and intimacy of drawing make the relationships between the artist, the subject, the materials and the viewer seem particularly close. This course takes an in-depth look at the nature of drawing. It encourages you to take apart (or 'deconstruct') the elements of drawing practice and scrutinise them. The course also focuses on the crucial relationship between contextual research, visual research and your practice. By the time you've completed the course, you should have evolved a robust and healthy working method and be able to articulate and synthesise your knowledge, understanding and skills effectively and creatively. This will enable you to move confidently onto the next level.

You're expected to meet the projects in this course halfway and generate your own ideas, proposals and arguments. As the focus of the course is on the nature of drawing and the thinking processes that underpin it, you'll have a great deal of freedom in terms of the visual source material you use. Make full use of this freedom and enjoy it. You may find it possible to follow up on an idea and sustain it throughout more than one project, for example. Become a visual magpie – always on the lookout for things that resonate and inspire. The parallel project and critical review both place responsibility on you to choose suitable subject matter for enquiry so you'll need to get into the habit of looking around you and finding ways to use what you see at an early stage in the course.



*The Trombone Sounds*, Paul Klee, 1921 (no 110) (oil transfer drawing on paper on cardboard)

This course is experimental and exploratory in nature. It will challenge your assumptions about what drawing is or can be, and require you to push yourself to experiment widely on all fronts. This will ultimately enable you to develop your creativity with a much wider range of tools at your disposal. But don't lose yourself in the process. Take the time to develop the projects in a way that feels right for you. If you think flexibly enough it should be possible to find a way to make each project and assignment work for you no matter what your preferences are.

Students can get themselves into a vicious circle in which fear of performing badly leads to an unwillingness to take risks which in turn leads to poor performance. This course requires you to take those risks and enjoy what you're doing. On the one hand, you're the artist so you must always make *your* work, not someone else's. On the other hand, this is a course, not a preparation for an exhibition. You're doing the course to learn new skills, not showcase your existing ones. In order to succeed you must fail. The projects which seem the most challenging at first may eventually filter back into your work in a way which is of lasting value if you're prepared to take them on in an intelligent and reflective way. Be prepared to explore widely – but stay in the driving seat.

The more you put into these projects, the more you'll get out. This course guide is a box of unlit matches. Your creativity is the spark and the effort you put in is the fuel. The scale of the conflagration is in your hands.

## Course aims and outcomes

**This course aims to give you the opportunity to:**

- explore processes and techniques associated with drawing and develop your practical and cognitive skills
- use drawing as a means of developing your creative thinking and learn through experimentation
- build a robust working method of investigation, contextualisation and practice which is reflexive and sustainable
- enhance your understanding of the historical and cultural context for drawing.

**On successful completion of the course, you'll be able to:**

- demonstrate advanced skills in drawing
- show individuality and experimentation in your drawing practice
- demonstrate the ability to synthesise knowledge, understanding and your emerging practice
- critically review the work of artists who have contributed to the development of drawing practice and relate this to your own development.

Even if you don't intend to submit your work for formal assessment, it's useful to take on board these outcomes to support your learning and use as a means of self-assessment. You can check your progress against the learning outcomes in your learning log when you review your progress against each assignment.

## Your tutor

Your tutor is your main point of contact with OCA. Before you start work make sure that you're clear about your tuition arrangements. The OCA tuition system is explained in some detail in your **Student Handbook**.

If you haven't already done so, please write a paragraph or two about your experience to date. Add background information about anything that you think may be relevant for your tutor to know about you (your profile) – for example, your own practice, your reasons for exploring this subject, what you expect to achieve from taking the course.

Email or post your profile to your tutor as soon as possible. This will help them understand how best to support you during the course.

Your tutor will make arrangements with you for dealing with queries, reviewing progress and submitting assignments. You'll also need to arrange with your tutor how you'll deal with any queries that arise between assignments. This will usually be by email or phone. Please note that tutors can only deal with occasional emails between assignments.

## Formal assessment

Read the section on assessment in your **Student Handbook** at an early stage in the course. The **Assessment and how to get qualified** study guide gives more detailed information about assessment and accreditation. You'll find this on the OCA student website. For assessment you'll need to submit a cross-section of the work you've done on the course:

- all five practical course assignments plus any amendments made in the light of tutor comments
- the parallel project and critical review (Assignment Six)
- your tutor reports
- your learning log or blog url.

The 2,000-word critical review accounts for 10% of your final mark.

Only work done during the course should be submitted to your tutor or for formal assessment.

## Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria listed below are central to the assessment process for this course, so if you're going to have your work assessed to gain formal credits, please make sure you take note of these criteria and consider how each of the assignments you complete demonstrates evidence of each criterion. On completion of each assignment, and before you send your assignment to your tutor, test yourself against the criteria; in other words, do a self-assessment and see how you think you would do. Note down your findings for each assignment you've completed in your learning log, noting all your perceived strengths and weaknesses, taking into account the criteria every step of the way. This will be helpful for your tutor to see, as well as helping you prepare for assessment.

### Assessment criteria points

- Demonstration of technical and visual skills – materials, techniques, observational skills, visual awareness, design and compositional skills.
- Quality of outcome – content, application of knowledge, presentation of work in a coherent manner, discernment, conceptualisation of thoughts, communication of ideas.
- Demonstration of creativity – imagination, experimentation, invention, development of a personal voice.
- Context reflection – research, critical thinking (learning logs and, at second and third level, critical reviews and essays).

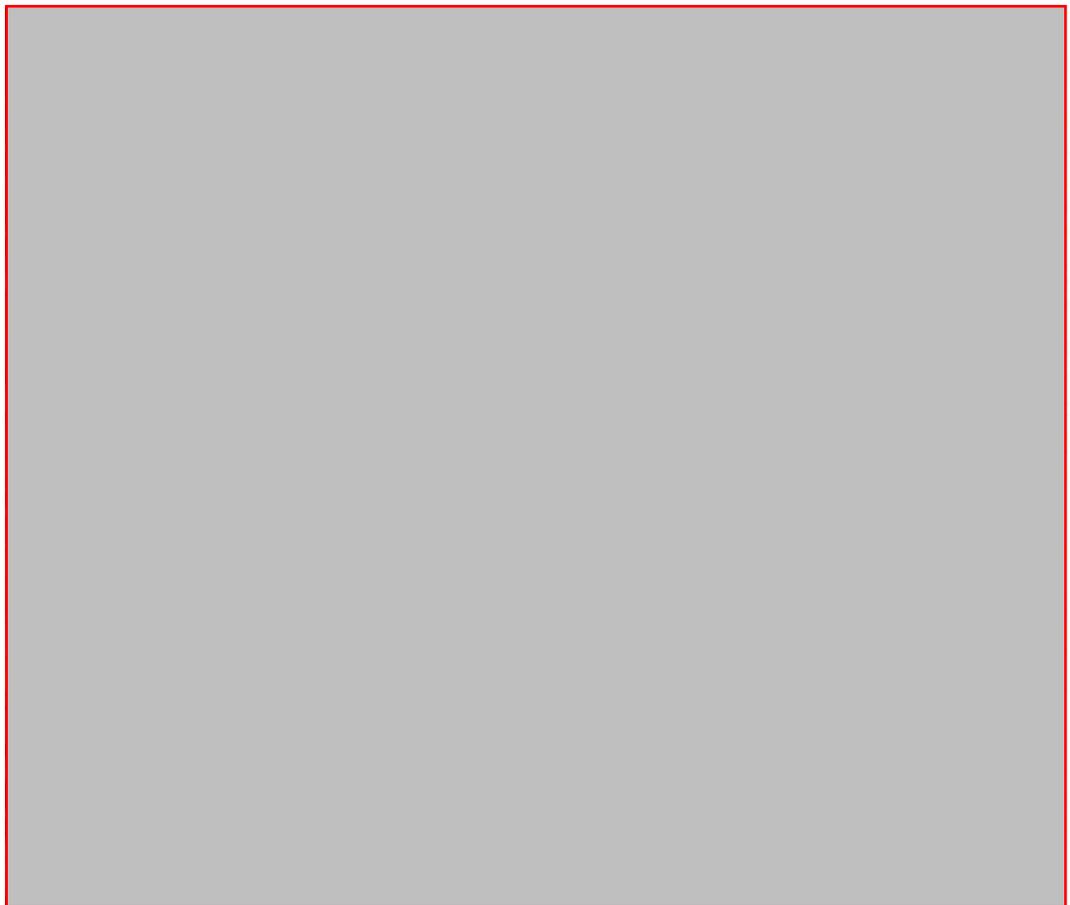
### Pre-assessment review

If you decide to have your work formally assessed, you'll need to spend some time at the end of the course preparing your finished work for submission. How you present your work to the assessors is of critical importance and can make the difference between an average mark and an excellent mark. Because of this your tutor is available to guide you on presenting your work. There's more on preparing your work for assessment in Part Six of this course guide.

## Drawing 2

### Part one

# Exploring composition



*Wire Tangle II*, Prunella Clough, 1978 (oil on canvas)

Building or planning a drawing requires decisions to be made about composition, even if it's at a subconscious level. Spending time reflecting on what motivates you when composing a drawing, and how manipulating the components of a drawing affects the composition, can enable you to cast your net much more widely and create more interesting and diverse images.

Even a small child recognises the western traditional landscape composition of green rectangle at the bottom, blue rectangle at the top, roughly divided into thirds and with more blue than green. The other obvious compositions are the centrally placed still life, often slightly triangular in arrangement, and the portrait, often in three-quarter profile. And these are just the tip of a very large iceberg when it comes to arranging the elements of a drawing. Scale, negative space, light, rhythm, energy, form and their relationship to each other are all there to be directed and composed.

Part One of this course will focus on composition within the picture plane. In Part Four you'll get the opportunity to think about composition in the context of installation work.

The main tenet of composition is that you consider the whole picture plane. This doesn't necessarily mean that you cover the whole surface with materials. Blank areas or areas of plain colour are just as relevant and potentially useful as drawn marks. Many students fall down in their drawing because they lose interest towards the edge or mentally edit out a particular area because it doesn't interest them. There may be over-reliance on the centre of the image or too great a focus on describing an object placed centrally, with the rest of the image demoted to 'background'. In representational drawings it is more helpful to think of negative space or areas around objects as their space or environment. This space which your subject inhabits is key to contextualising it and can have massive implications for how your image is perceived by the viewer, whether that is simply by creating a convincing volume and depth, or a specific mood, or changing the way form and colour is read through juxtaposition. For some artists the space around objects *is* the subject.



*Madame Josse Hessel in Vuillard's Studio*, Edouard Vuillard, 1915 (pastel on paper)

Composition is the relationship you set up between all the elements in your artwork. These relationships lead the viewer's eye around your drawing and can be used with quite some precision. Consider a spider's web; this leads the eye to the centre. But the addition of a spider in the corner or a rent in the web changes everything. Now your eye may well start with the spider then move across to the centre.

Visit a gallery with a friend or fellow student and check to see how often you agree about how you view the paintings. You'll find that what may seem at first to be a carelessly outflung arm, for example, is actually a device placed by the artist to lead you through the image.

*"Thus the eye, like a grazing animal, feels out the terrain not only from top to bottom but also from left to right and in all directions for which it feels the need. It travels the paths laid down for it in the work, which itself came into being through movement and became fixated movement."*

Paul Klee (quoted in Petherbridge, 2010, p.90)

You'll start your work on Part One by attempting an observational drawing – but with a twist.

# Project 1: Observational drawing



*The Barricade*, Gustave Courbet, 19th century (pencil on paper)

If you're to get the most from the projects in this course, it's important to read and thoroughly familiarise yourself with the aim of each project. These are set out at the start. Before you begin, take some time to absorb the project aim; think about what it means and how you'll meet it. Make some notes in your learning log or blog so that your tutor can see how you're engaging with the aim of each project. If necessary, do some preliminary research to put the project into a broader context.

**Aim:** When you're drawing from observation it's all too easy to make assumptions about your subject and take certain elements at face value. This project encourages you to reflect on the wider potential of observational drawing, in particular how you can use what you look at more experimentally as you develop your composition. You probably normally start by finding an interesting subject or setting up a still life. This project asks you to reverse this process by finding what may seem an initially unpromising subject, but one with several elements, and then building up the composition to create an interesting drawing. This will encourage you to reflect on the potential of a more creative and open-ended approach to composing drawings.

**Method:** Find an inconspicuous area of a room or small area outdoors where several elements are juxtaposed. Take photos and make sketches of cropped details. Make several drawings, playing with the composition of the elements. Allow interesting features to develop; extend lines, repeat motifs, allow forms to come together in unusual ways. Be as playful as possible with pattern, texture, form, etc., whilst still being sensitive to what you're looking at. You may find that photocopying your drawing, cutting it up and making a collage will help – or overlaying tracing paper to create repetitions of interesting lines and shapes. As you progress you may find that parts of the subject which feature large in reality disappear completely in your drawing, while incidental patterns of shapes develop their own status.



**Reflection:** In your learning log, reflect on how far you've moved from your original subject. Is your final drawing still of the object, or is it now more a drawing about the process of looking and being creative?

Reflect on whether you've made the best possible use of the space available to you. Are some areas simply 'background'? What more could you have done to develop these areas of your drawing?



The next project develops this idea further. Remember to spend time considering the project aims before you start work.



Five-minute sketches exploring the potential of an initially unpromising spider plant