

Wrinkled, Draped or Knotted Fabric Study



Nothing improves observational drawing skill as much as something that is highly detailed in a non-uniform way. When you draw something like the wrinkles on your palm, the reflections on a drop of water or the folds in a crumpled piece of fabric you don't have to fight against your mind telling you what it should look like. Instead you lean in and look more carefully. This is a skill set that will greatly improve drawing skills in all areas.

Take a piece of fabric and crinkle it, knot it or drape it over something. Place it on the table with a single light on it. Begin by drawing the curves of the folds lightly with a pencil then move onto the shading. Use a value scale to help stick to 5 values: black, dark grey, medium gray, light gray, and white. The non-uniform complexity of the subject will allow students to focus so closely that the realism is startling.

Steps:

1. Set up your supplies. Make sure you have a piece of fabric, a single light source, paper, pencils, erasers, blending tools.
2. Move your fabric around to create an interesting arrangement, try wrinkling, draping or knotting the fabric. Use a viewfinder or your fingers to find a composition that you like. Draw 3 thumbnail plans in a sketch pad. Pick the best one.
3. Carefully draw the composition by making relative measurements with a pencil, focusing on the angles of lines and the negative spaces around the objects.
4. When shading use a value scale to find the shades. Start with black, then medium gray. The shade the dark grays up to the medium grays. Finally use the blending tool to pull the light gray up to the edges of the highlights.