

Negative/Positive Space

Study of a Plant



Negative space drawings are an excellent way of learning to draw from observation. It short circuits the tendency to draw how we think things should look. To compare the effectiveness of this method look at the plant only once and then draw it on a scrap paper, what you'll end up with is what your brain thinks it should look like, basically a childish symbol drawing. When we instead focus on carefully observing the negative spaces surrounding the leaves the realism is surprising.

Get a plant set up in a vase. Draw a line to divide the page in half. One half of the page fill in the negative spaces around the leaves. The other half can be a shaded line drawing. To have amazing results in a shorter time focus on a smaller close up composition. Use a viewfinder or shape your hands as a viewfinder to find the best composition.

Steps:

1. Set up your supplies. Make sure you have a plant, a single light source, paper, pencils, erasers and blending tools.
2. Consider possible compositions using a viewfinder or your fingers to frame possible views. Sketch at least 3 possible thumbnail composition ideas in a sketch pad. Choose one.
3. Concentrate on the shapes that surround the leaves as you fill in the negative spaces with even shading.
4. Draw the outlines of the plant on the other side concentrating on the negative spaces to get the outline correct. Shade in the drawing using a value scale as an aid.