

Drawing with White Colored Pencils on Black

Materials: Heavy black paper (I used Bristol), white colored pencil (I suggest Prismacolor for best results)

Art Challenge: Choose a subject, either an animal or a person to create a white on black portrait.

Steps and Tips

Establish a value scale of the shades from dark to light for reference. Begin by assuming that no white is the darkest, then gradually add light layers of white in steps to the most full white possible.

Establish main forms to position portrait on the page. You're going to want to leave room for the eye to rest, so don't take up the entire page. You also don't want part of your drawing to pass off the page, which frequently happens when you don't plan ahead.

Use the lightest pressure possible when putting in guidelines. You will not want your guidelines showing in areas where total shadow is necessary.

Accurately position features by measuring against each other. This is called informal perspective and the more measurements you make the more accurate and realistic your drawing will be. I only took a couple rough measurements and you can tell I have one eye bigger than the other... mistakes happen when you don't measure carefully.

Think in terms of shades of value. I found it helpful to begin by identifying the darkest shades first and determining to preserve them. Then you can move one step lighter and so on until you've identified all major blocks of shade.

Work from most essential to least essential. There will always be one part of the drawing that is most important to you, for my cat drawing it was the face. Start at your focal point and focus on getting the most precise representation you can before moving on to secondary areas. The secondary areas need less attention and it's better to work on the more important areas when you are at your best.

If you do a pet portrait think about fur direction and shadow. If you do a pet portrait it's not about just drawing a bunch of lines! Fur moves with the curve of the animal's body and if you do not show that movement, both in the direction and in the shadows within the fur your animal will appear flat.

If you do a portrait think shadows with smooth transitions. With shading a portrait you can make two mistakes. One you only think in two shades shade and no shade, great transitions with no depth. Two you get all the values accurate but your transitions are rough. It's better to make the second mistake than the first since it can come off as style. Even better is to get all the values from darkest, dark-middle, middle, middle-light and lightest, and the transitions between them. A blending tool can help with this.

I hope you enjoy this lesson!

If you do, please send me photos of your student's art!

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