Grid Transposition Self-portrait

Specs:
Size: 40" x 32", Strathmore 100lb drawing paper
Media: Graphite

Description:
Based on the early grid portraits of artist Chuck Close, students will execute a large-scale self-portrait using photographic reference. The initial 8 x 10 photograph will be divided using an inch-square grid. The grid will be transposed at four-times scale for the drawing. (Students may wish to subdivide and label the large grid as well.) The process should focus on the completion of one carefully rendered grid block at a time.

Criteria for grade:

Solution to project as given	25%
Value Range & Application	25%
Craftsmanship	25%
Presentation	25%

Project Due Date:
TBA
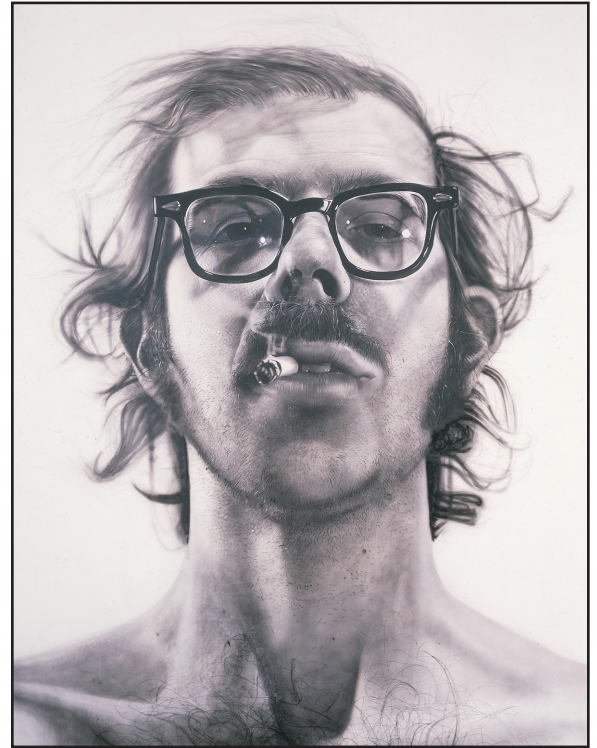
Self-Portrait Drawing Tips

Paper

• For the portrait project we use Strathmore 400 series roll paper (available in 80lb & 100lb stock)
to accommodate the 32" x 40" drawings
It is a good inexpensive alternative and acid-free, but not as archival as 100% rag paper.
• Hot press papers are recommended for consistent surface (cold press paper has too much visible texture)
Arches 90-100lb Hot Press is ideal and is also available in 140lb stock and available in 22 x 30 sheets.
This paper has different characteristics on each side and the reverse side (visible by the watermark) is
recommended for graphite work.

General Tips for Getting Started

• Don't rush! Tackle grid blocks one at a time rather than focusing on completion of facial features.
(Some students create a one square mask on both the photo and drawing to stay focused.
Students have also completed the drawing upside-down to remain objective about the transposition without
thinking of the portrait)
• Choose a direction to work on the grid blocks that makes sense (ie if you are right-handed work left to right)
• View the drawing at a distance from time to time and document the process with photographs.
• Print out enlarged sections of your photograph to aid with detailed areas
• Photographs of the drawing in progress can be overlayed in Photoshop to check for accuracy.
• Photoshop can also be used to test value changes on your drawing. Use the burn and dodge tools to see how
value changes can help.
• Don't go on "auto-pilot." If you find that you are mindlessly tackling large areas or losing focus, stop draw-
ing and take a break.
• Pace yourself! Try to do a bit each day rather than cramming. There are 80 blocks to transpose!

Shading/Blending

• Try to avoid placing hands on directly on the drawing surface since oils are present even when hands are
clean and will create inconsistencies that cannot be removed.
• Areas of the drawing can be masked with paper and you can also create a barrier on your hand by taping a
bit of smooth paper on the side of your drawing hand.
• Before starting, create a test sheet using the 100lb paper to experiment with the various graphite and
blending tools. Label each pencil test for reference.
• Woodless graphite pencils are highly recommended.
• Applying less pressure with softer graphite will result in less unwanted texture for areas of consistent value
application.
• Keep pencils sharp and experiment with blending techniques Larger blending stumps/ tortillions or paper
towels can provide blending with less mark-making. A natural chamois is also a good add.
• Sanding the point of the pencil for better use of the broad side will also provide more consistent application.
• In the initial shape mapping process, keep delineation light to avoid contour/linear presence.
• Build texture first - then build value.
• Save darkest values for last to avoid smudging You can also cover completed areas with newsprint.
•To avoid presence of grid lines in the final drawing, consider the transitions from block to block even when
focusing on individual grid block completion.
• Use the white of the paper to create the lightest of the highlights.

Clothing and details

Students have a tendency to over-render textures and details that are visible at close inspection (fabric, clothing patterns, jewelry etc), but are much more subtle at a distance. Step back from your photo and drawing to assess correct value contrasts to avoid over-rendering.

Hair

Following basic shape mapping, consistent texture should be consistently applied followed by value application. In shadow areas of the hair texture may not be visible, so consider consistent application in those areas. Highlight areas can be created by leaving the light of the paper or through subtractive techniques (stick eraser) or resistance techniques (etching the surface)

To avoid a flat appearance of the exterior contour of the hair, lighter valued texture and fly-aways can produce a softer natural appearance. Drop shadows along the hairline/forehead will help create a better transition to the face.

Eyes

The eyes are usually the most over-rendered element. Keep the values consistent with the rest of the drawing. The whites of the eyes are rarely white! Apply darker values to the corners of the eyes and tear ducts along with a soft drop shadow below the eye lid for a rounder appearance.
Eyelids should not be linear! Softly diffuse linear elements and build edges with value to avoid the flattening appearance of line. The lower lid is often defined by a light area between the lid and eyeball.
Don't over-render the iris! Some texture adds nice detail to the iris, but make sure the value is dark enough to set the eyes. There are also transitions within the value from top to bottom which will help them look less flat. Reflective highlights from the photograph will also help the eyes feel more glassy.
Since the shape of the iris is circular, a compass can be used to map the shape, but be wary not to damage the drawing with the compass point.
Be subtle with eyelashes and trust the shape analysis of the photograph to avoid cartoony lashes.
The importance of shadows - Strong but gradual shadows in the eye sockets will anchor the eyeballs and keep them from looking too graphic. The eye socket shadows should also fuse into the eye brows and the bridge of the nose.
Don't over-render the eye brows! Some hair texture may be present, but root any texture in consistent value where applicable to root them to the facial structure.

Nose

Beware flaring nostrils! Don't over-darken nostrils and surround them with proper shadows to reduce contrast. The remainder of the nose should be defined with shadow - not line. Emphasize the spherical nature of the nose with rounded shadows for better form.

Mouth/Lips

Don't delineate lips! The lower lip is formed by the shadow beneath it. Some light vertical cross-contour texture application can help with the volume and highlights. The upper lip has a darker value and may have transitions from right to left based on the lighting.
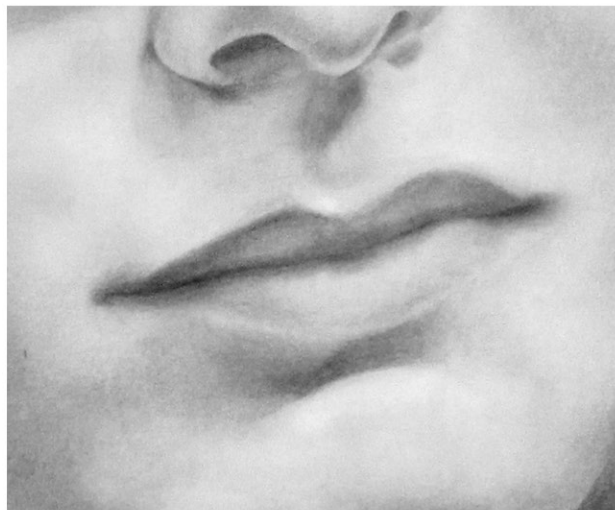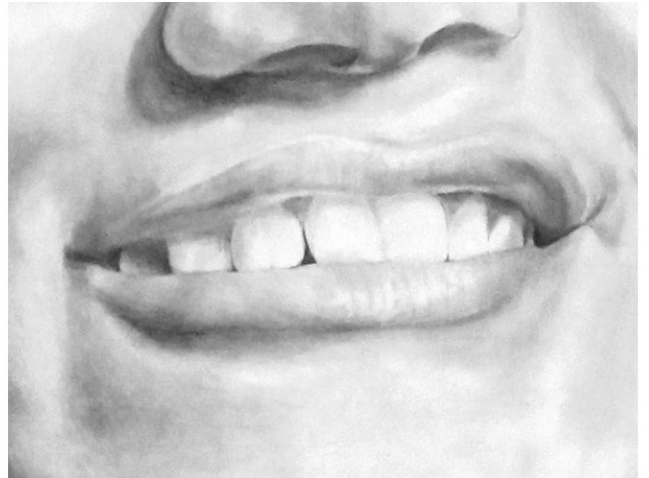Don't create the seam of the mouth with line. Use contrast in value to create the edge.

Teeth

Other than highlight areas the teeth should not be white and often feature value transitions from top to bottom based on drop shadows from the upper lip. Do not delineate individual teeth and make sure the outside teeth to the left and right are darkened gradually to give a sense of roundness and avoid a flat appearance.
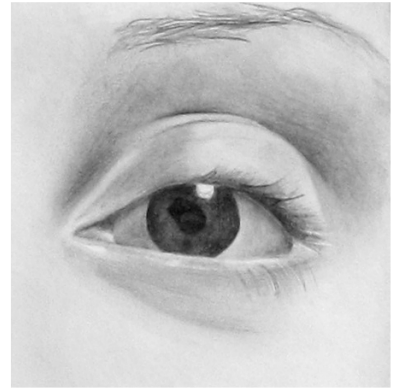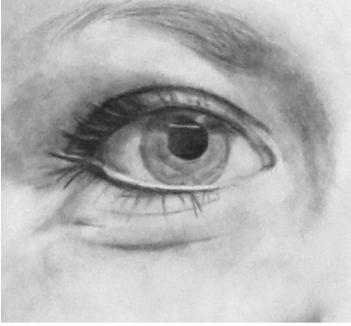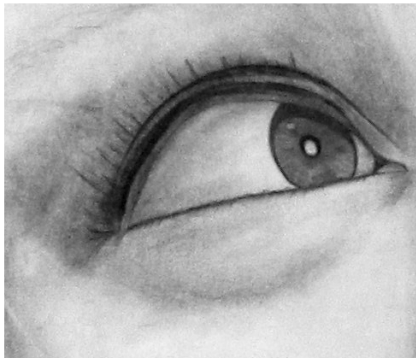
Not so good....
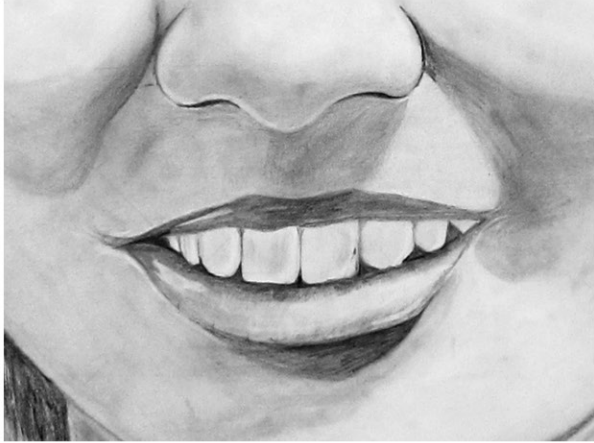
Good!

Good!

Not so good

Good!

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