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High-Focus Drawing: A Revolutionary Approach To Drawing The Figure



Synopsis

High-Focus Drawing is an exciting and challenging new approach to figure drawing from one of America's most celebrated illustrators. Designed for students who are already comfortable with the fundamentals of figure drawing, this book focuses on the essential question of life drawing: how does one capture the natural rhythms and energies of the human form? Inside, you'll find page after page of inspiring instruction as well as dozens of examples from master artists. Particularly useful are insightful critiques of unfinished works by the author and his students. High-Focus Drawing presents a unique aesthetic and perspective. Truly a one-of-a-kind art book, it is sure to inspire and delight students for years to come. James McMullan, one of America's foremost illustrators, is best known for his many acclaimed theater posters for Lincoln Center. His 1976 New York magazine cover and interior illustrations inspired the imagery of the film Saturday Night Fever. He is the author of four books. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Great book, very helpful for anyone looking to improve their life drawing skills

The book "High-Focus Drawing" does not teach the basics of figure drawing. It is oriented toward advanced students who already have basic competence. The purpose of the book is to convey author James McMullan's aesthetic standards for drawings and instruct advanced students how to attain them. I won't presume to summarize his aesthetic philosophy, which is explained throughout

the text. To give an idea of the level of abstraction, he talks about "energy" and "rhythm" in drawings. He talks about "trajectory lines". Such ideas will only be useful to a person who isn't struggling with the more elementary matters of getting the proportions of a figure correct or showing the effects of perspective. For example, on page 72, in a critique of a student's drawing, James writes: "Although both students read the rhythms of the light leg fairly well, giving a certain emphasis to the outside edge of the calf and making it clear that the model's left leg is a secondary player, the rhythms in the left hip in John's drawing falter. They don't manage to carry the energy of the right leg successfully up into the torso; we feel an indeterminate quality around the waist in the figure as though the lines hint at the change in direction but can't quite make up their mind." As to the concrete properties of the book, the pages are about 8 1/4 inches wide by 11 1/2 inches tall. They are of somewhat glossy paper. Many contain nude photographs of male or female models that are roughly 2 inches wide by 4 inches tall. Drawings by the author and his students are shown on full or half pages. The author gives critiques of the student drawings. There are 158 numbered pages. The book contains sketches, not finished works of art. These are line drawings and have hardly any shading. I estimate each drawing took about 20 minutes to complete. They are still at the stage where the edge of a shape might be indicated by several lines instead of one. The viewpoint is that of a traditional figure drawing class. The artist is far enough away from the model so that there is no exaggerated perspective. (It isn't like comic book art where a figure's dramatically large hand may reach toward the viewer.) For teaching the basics of figure drawing this book would rate 1 star out of 5 because it gives no information whatsoever on that subject - "revolutionary" or otherwise. Misleading product descriptions are almost a tradition for non-fiction publications, so I rate the book for its intended purpose. I give it 4 stars out of 5 to indicate it is a good presentation of author's aesthetic views and how students can implement them. (I'm not rating this book as a financial deal. At the time of this writing, the computer algorithms that set the book's prices are producing strange results!)

The author is definitely knowledgeable. He's a famous illustrator. He definitely knows what he's talking about and I think that everyone can learn from him. Even so, I think that this book is not quite as revolutionary as the title implies. The information in the book is valuable but some of it becomes opinion. For example, James suggests that you shouldn't listen to music with headphones (ear buds) while doing a figure study. He says it disrupts the relationship and flow of information between the artist and the subject. That may be true but it's too subjective to be considered revolutionary information. The drawings and examples are not as detailed as I'd hoped. He explains things in

paragraphs rather than the diagrammatic format I was hoping for (unfortunately that's true of most drawing books). The whole experience is not as clear and eye opening as the title would have you believe. He does put drawings in the book to show you what he is talking about. If you give the concepts time then you can definitely benefit from this book. However, his information on the visual rhythm of a figure might be worthy of the word revolutionary. Let's not forget this is James McMullan we're talking about. He is definitely a master of his craft. His body of work is awesome.

as a companion to McMullans class at SVA, which I have done. It is also a great tool on the proper way to draw figure. The book instructs the reader how to see the life flowing through the pose...as much as yoda as that sounds. Starting with a shoe and then a plant. It also instructs how the artist should sit and view the model. Remember there is no real substitute for the actual class and no book is going to make you great. Personally I have had my differences with Mr McMullan and could go as far as saying no I don't like him BUT the book is a great tool, as "a reader" stated. One last thing if Mr. Gargan feels that "I doubt if any artist would find this of much value" then please explain why the classes at The School Of Visual Arts in NYC are always packed and turn out people who end up working for Disney?

Well, I turn to this book for inspiration to remember what life drawing's all about! It touches on a very important essence about life drawing most other books don't: the natural rhythm of the human form and the ability to "catch" it, and translate it on to the page. The ability to successfully make true LIFE drawings: making the images come to life. It is the difference between being just a very good draftsman (being able to render forms faithfully with no emotion/life essence) to being an artist. I wouldn't get this book if I only had to get a single ONE on figure drawing, but it's something to supplement other (figure) drawing books.

Funny, I believe the reviewer below has not read the book. Yes, "Revolutionary Approach" is marketing-speak, but the book itself is rooted in the very principles of the masters he mentions. Michelangelo & Degas are used as great examples. It's not an easy book to digest, but neither are the principles he espouses. Nevertheless, my drawing has become much better because of it, and for the first time I'm actually learning to THINK about drawings & the body. Highly recommended.

Life changing experience from his teaching. The book will open doors for any aspiring artist. Highly recommend it.

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