

Resources for Teachers

Rubens to Sickert: The Study of Drawing

This resource pack was made as part of a collaboration between the between the **University Museums and Special Collections Services** and the University of Reading's **Post-Graduate Certificate of Education** students in Art & Design.

Design

Giovanna Correa Theme
Diana Lyall
Abi Peach-Toon

With special thanks to:

Rhea Douglas
Melanie Jay
Naomi Lebens

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The 'Old Masters'

Jacopo Zanguidi, Bertoia

1544-1573

"What spirit is so empty and blind, that it cannot recognize the fact that the foot is more noble than the shoe, and skin more beautiful than the garment with which it is clothed?"

Michelangelo



Who is the artist?

The artist Jacopo Zanguidi, better known as Bertoia (1544-1573), created art in the Renaissance period (1300-1600). Bertoia was a talented and fluent *draughtsman*, who was influenced by some of the most famous artists of the age like Raphael (1483-1520) and Parmigianino (1503-1540). His style was so similar to Parmigianino's that people still often confuse their drawings. Both artists are representative of a distinctive movement called *mannerism*.

Sheet of Studies with Seated Male Nude and Two Arms; (verso) An Ox, Seated Couple, Three Standing Male Nudes and an Anatomized Arm
Ink and chalk on blue paper
350 x 271 mm
University of Reading Art Collection
UAC/10545

The work of mannerist artists is defined by figures with exaggerated features, often arranged in twisted poses that deliberately go beyond forms found in nature. However, artists had to know how to draw naturalistically before they could start to manipulate reality. Like all Renaissance artists, Bertoia regularly practiced drawing from life.

Bertoia was further influenced by Roman Classicism, particularly Raphael. His studies included a variety of material. These included: red and white chalk, brown ink and techniques called cross hatching to add depth to his studies.

What is the artwork?

This drawing is a working sheet (a kind of brainstorm) that brings together several different mediums and *motifs*, from figure studies, to *anatomy* (note the skeleton arm - learning how the human body was constructed was key to artist's practice), to animals.

Useful links for teachers:

Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History (Metropolitan Museum of Art) <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/>

How to Draw Like a Renaissance Master (National Portrait Gallery) <https://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/encounter/explore/how-to/>

Renaissance Drawings: Materials and Functions (Metropolitan Museum of Art) https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/drwg/hd_drwg.htm

It shows the range of drawing practice of artists like Bertoia, and the different effects achieved with different media (compare the fluidity and precision of his pen and ink studies with the subtler handling and more realistic effects of the chalk to convey volume and the play of light and shadow).

The composition was built in successive stages, sometimes by turning the sheet and working on both sides of the paper. Bertoia worked both from life (arm studies/ ox) and from sources (the seated lovers' motifs on the *verso* (back) of the sheet is copied from an etching by Parmigianino).

The twisted figure on the *recto* (front) of the sheet in pen and ink shows the exaggerated forms common to *mannerism* (going beyond life). It bears a resemblance to the twisted male figure in a ceiling painting in the Palazzo del Giardino in Parma, where Bertoia worked alongside the artist Girolamo Miola (d.1570). Michelangelo could have been a source of inspiration for the pose - try comparing this figure to Michelangelo's Libyan Sibyl in the celebrated Sistine Chapel Ceiling.

Drawing in the Renaissance

The word Renaissance means “rebirth”. The term is used by historians to describe scholars and artists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who claimed that they were heirs of the classical world. They placed renewed value on human knowledge and experience and used ancient Greek and Roman literature and art as a model. Europe experienced a rediscovery of Maths, Philosophy, Astronomy, Science, Literature, and the Arts.

Drawing took on renewed importance in the Renaissance as it was seen to be the foundation of all good design (*disegno*), which underpinned high art. The majority of all drawings executed during this time were working drawings - that is preparatory sketches for paintings, sculptures, and decorative art forms.

Materials ranged from metalpoint (a stylus made from soft metal that left a visible mark on paper; silverpoint was the most popular, but leadpoint, goldpoint and copperpoint were also used) to chalk (popular due to its smudging and blending qualities which enabled the artist to create a wide range of tonal variation) to pen and ink (made using quill or reed pens, and gallnut ink or bistre from wood soot, often combined with wash and highlighting: a brush was sometimes used instead of, or in combination with, a pen).

Renaissance artists often brought together working from life and working from quotation (or copying) as part of their practice. Copying did not have the same negative connotations as now - you learnt by copying masters' work and quoting it could be a form of honouring them and showing off. In particular, artists looked to emulate classical motifs from antique sculpture.

As well as working practice, drawings increasingly became prized by collectors as an insight into the mind of the artist.



Questions for the students

The masters ‘staged’ their models. Can you pose in a suitable way that reflects the drawing in front of you? Is it comfortable? What do you think the pose is meant to reflect?

Now pose again but reflect a modern day gesture. Suggestions might include head in hands, protests, clapping, isolation.

If you were to draw this, what elements would be important if you were making a response to Bertoia (see the caption for Bertoia’s work on the previous page for ideas)?

How do we learn from the ‘Old Masters’ and their techniques? Are they relevant in your work today? If so, how? If not, how? Why were these studies important?

Think about the activities on the next page. Why are you being asked to do them? What skills will you be learning by looking at Bertoia’s work?



“Do not fail, as you go on, to draw something everyday, for no matter how little it is, it will be well worth while, and it will do you a world of good.”

Cennino Cennini, Book of the Artist, c.1400

Key words:

Anatomy – The study of human anatomy, for artists, can be as simple and straightforward as learning about proportions and working from life, or as involved and complex as mastering an understanding of the skeletal, muscular, and surface structure of the human body.

Cross-hatching – an extension of hatching, which uses fine parallel lines drawn closely together to create the illusion of shade or texture in a drawing. Cross-hatching is the drawing of two layers of hatching at right-angles to create a mesh-like pattern.

Draughtsman – a person who makes detailed technical plans or drawings.

Elements of art – These are colour, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value. The ten common principles of art are balance, emphasis, harmony, movement, pattern, proportion, repetition, rhythm, unity, and variety.

Mannerism - a style of 16th-century Italian art characterized by distortions in scale and perspective and the use of bright, often lurid colours.

Renaissance - a term used to describe the revival of European art and literature under the influence of classical models in the 14th-16th centuries.

Key words:

Disegno - the Italian word for fine art drawing. Its meaning extends beyond the literal idea of draftsmanship to encompass the intellectual 'design' component of the visual arts.

Verso - a term used to refer to the back of a double-sided sheet or drawing.

Recto - a term used to refer to the front of a double-sided sheet or drawing

Motif – is a recurring fragment, theme or pattern that appears in a work of art.

Toned paper – paper having a slight tint, in distinction from paper which is quite white.

'Where the spirit does not work with the hand, there is no art.'

Leonardo da Vinci

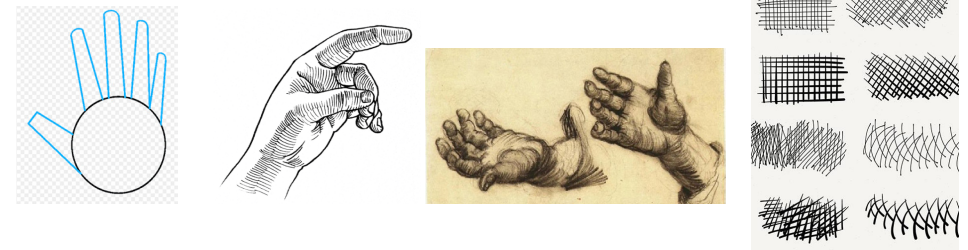
Gallery Activity

Learning objective: To gain a greater understanding of observational drawings from still life, whilst experimenting with 'Old Masters' techniques and materials. In the museum you will observe your hand (or if it is easier, draw your friend's hand).

(1) Begin by drawing a circle (or a rectangle if more advanced)- this will form the palm of the hand.

(2) Draw the fingers. For each finger, draw a pair of straight lines, allowing the lines to converge slightly at the tip. Note that the fingers are of different lengths- the thumb and little fingers being the shortest. Enclose each finger using a curved line.

(3) Draw a curved line between each finger, crossing over into the palm. Extend the line between the thumb and first fingers to outline the curved shape of the thumb. Add some cross-hatching to add tonal value. (see examples of cross-hatching below).



Classroom Activity

Learning objective: To further your study in the classroom. Think about the Renaissance. What does working/school life look like today?

Look for three objects that reflect this in our time. Using tonal paper (tinted), Using red and white chalk or ink and chalk- observe the objects.

Think about what elements are important to reflect Bertolotti's style and message. What are you trying to achieve in this study? When finished, reflect as a class on what has worked in your piece. How can you improve on your study? Remember, the 'Old Masters' took years to perfect their skills. Drawing from life requires practice- a lot!

Walter Richard Sickert

1860-1942

'Perhaps the chief source of pleasure in the aspect of a nude is that it is in the nature of a gleam - a gleam of light and warmth and life. And that it should appear thus, it should be set in surroundings of drapery or other contrasting surfaces.'

Walter Richard Sickert



Marie Seated on a Bed

c.1911-1912

Charcoal and white chalk heightening on grey paper

380 × 282 mm

University of Reading Art Collection

UAC/10536

Who is the artist?

Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942) was part of the Camden Town Group of artists, who sought to show the reality of urban living in London just before World War I. Since his death, his work has been known to greatly influence British art in the 20th century. A multi-linguist, and well-known during his lifetime as a famous figure in London, Sickert also practiced as a writer and teacher.



Practice

c.1909

Pencil and chalk

379 × 284 mm

University of Reading Art Collection

UAC/10538

What is the artwork?

The *nude* was one of Sickert's most important and influential subjects, and he sought to re-invent the way in which artists represented the female body. He thought other artists over-idealized their models and detached them from the reality of their surroundings. He advocated for "truthful" images that showed the model in their modern, everyday environment, including unflattering or revealing poses. *The Little Bed*, one of Sickert's earliest drawings of the female nude from 1902, demonstrates this new approach.

Sickert also taught that artists should draw quickly, to prevent over-laboured images, and that you should always draw your model exactly to scale. Finally, he believed you should never rub out "mistakes". This approach is evident in the drawing *Practice*, where the position of the legs has been overdrawn without prior correction.

Sickert's artwork suggests an *expressive* approach to capturing the human figure, with some areas seeming studied, calculated and devised through careful observation. Meanwhile, other areas of the same

piece can be interpreted as still 'in development', only just addressed and captured vaguely as seen within *Marie Seated on a Bed* (completed in 1911-1912).

The artist also experimented with capturing light as well as shadow, through the use of chalk and charcoal on grey paper seen within this same piece.

Questions for the students:

Compared to the Bertoia drawing, what do you notice is different about the way the figures displayed are 'posing'? Are they more natural-looking in Sickert's studies? What makes you think so?

Do you think that art can be significant in the study of other subjects? How can observing Sickert's work teach us about the history of the time period in which the works were made?

Why do you think we study nude figures? What skills/techniques do we gain from drawing them?

“Anything!” This is the subject matter of modern art. There is the quarry, inexhaustible for ever, from which the draughtsmen and painters of the future will draw the endless line of masterpieces still to come.’

Walter Richard Sickert



The Little Bed
1902
Pencil and chalk
238 x 315 mm
University of Reading Art Collection
UAC/10520

The Camden Town Group

A society of English Post-Impressionist artists active between 1911-1913. They gathered frequently at Sickert's studio in the Camden Town area of London, hence their name.

They only hosted three exhibitions during their active period, but the artwork displayed had great influence in British art history.

They are best known for their realist paintings of scenes of city life as well as landscape subjects.

Key words:

Expressive – feelings, moods and/or ideas that are immediately conveyed by works of art

Motif – reoccurring fragment, theme or pattern that appears in works of art

Nude - a naked human figure as the subject of a painting, sculpture, or photograph

Triptych – a set of three (artwork, pieces of writing, music etc.) meant to be shown/appreciated together

Impressionism – a movement in painting originating in France in the 1860s, based on the practice of painting out of doors in which artists looked capture the momentary and transient effects by working quickly and using rapid and broken brushstrokes.

Post Impresionism - the work or style of a varied group of late 19th-century and early 20th-century artists including Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Cézanne. They reacted against the naturalism of the Impressionists to explore colour, line, and form, and the emotional response of the artist, a concern which led to the development of Expressionism.

Gallery Activity

Learning Objective: To gain a greater understanding of how Sickert's style differed from the techniques of the 'Old Masters'.

Activity:

- (1) Ask one of your classmates to pose similarly to how the figures are portrayed by the 'Old Masters' (forced, model-esque poses, men were portrayed quite strongly, and powerful, while women genrally appeared vulnerable and delicate)
- (2) Consider how Sickert would have drawn them – more expressive lines, and a focus on human curves (sitting and turned to face the artist, laying down with their back turned to the artist...)
- (3) Use your pencil and charcoal to capture your classmate in the style of Sickert



Classroom Activity

Learning Objective: Developing an understanding of how to capture a range of tone, with greater consideration for light. Consider making a **triptych** exploring this, through the use of chalk and charcoal.

Useful links for teachers:

Sickert writing on "The Study of Drawing" (Tate)

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/walter-richard-sickert-the-study-of-drawing-r1104303>

Sickert writing on "The Naked and the Nude" (Tate)

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/walter-richard-sickert-the-naked-and-the-nude-r1104293>

Spencer Frederick Gore 1878-1914

'Frank Rutter, critic and friend to Gore recalled Gore's experience at the ballet "Never shall I forget going with him to Covent Garden when he saw the Russian Ballet for the first time. At the fall of the curtain he turned to me, his eyes shining with moisture, and whispered 'I've often dreamt of such things - but I never thought I should see them!'"



Top: *Ballet at the Alhambra; (verso)*
Dancing Figures
Pastel
223 x 278 mm
University of Reading Art Collection
UAC/10566

Who is the artist?

Spencer Frederick Gore (1878-1914) was an English painter of landscapes, music hall scenes and interiors. A close friend of Walter Sickert, he was the first president and founding member of the Camden Town Group and was influenced by Post-Impressionism.

Gore studied painting at The Slade School of Fine Art in London and it was during his time in London that he painted some of his famous dancer scenes. Gore was fascinated in particular by the ballet and many of his paintings focus on this theme. Gore's art career was cut short by his death from pneumonia at the age of 35.

Bottom: *Dancing Figures: (verso)*
Landscape in Black and Yellow
Pastel
206 x 279 mm
University of Reading Art Collection
UAC/10547

What is the artwork?

These two pastel drawings depict dancers in motion. These are studies for other paintings and are not supposed to be completed work, rather they are a closer look at the motion of the dances; they capture the often transient poses of the figures on the stage.

This would have meant that Gore had to capture the dancers in constant motion, meaning he would have been working quickly, trying to give an impression of their movements rather than a perfectly accurate observation.

Artists at this time wanted to paint their subject in situ, working in front of the people they were trying to draw or paint. This meant that they had far less time to create an image as the subject would be constantly moving; they instead created an 'impression' of what they were observing.

Techniques used:

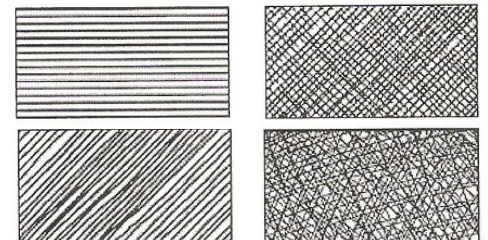
Gore uses hatching and cross-hatching in these pastel drawings, mainly in the background, but also in the figures. Try to look closely at the drawings and see where you can notice this.

Questions for the students:

How can we tell that these drawings are quick studies? And what do you think Gore is trying to focus on in these works?

How do you think Gore represents the motion of the dancers? Discuss the techniques he uses to achieve this.

What about Gore's use of colour? Does it depict the lighting of the stage and if so how?



"He took incessant risks, but he had social and artistic tact to a rare degree"

Walter Richard Sickert, discussing Gore

Useful links for teachers:

General Bio (Tate)

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/spencer-gore-r1105355>

Gore at the Alhambra (Tate)

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/spencer-gore-inez-and-taki-r1139016>

Performance and popular fiction (Tate)

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/performance-and-popular-fiction-r1105710>

Key words:

Camden Town Group – A society of English Post-Impressionist artists active between 1911–1913. They gathered frequently at the studio of painter Walter Sickert in the Camden Town area of London, hence their name.

Impressionism – a movement in painting originating in France in the 1860s, based on the practice of painting outdoors in which artists looked to capture momentary and transient effects by working quickly and using rapid, broken brushstrokes.

Post-Impressionism – an art movement that developed in the 1890s. It is characterised by a subjective approach to painting, as artists opted to evoke emotion rather than realism in their work. Post-Impressionists' work sought to evoke emotion through vivid, sometimes unnatural colour and expressive line.

Transient – Lasting for only a short time.

Gallery Activity

Learning objective: To gain a greater understanding of how to capture motion through drawing using pencil and/or pastel

- (1) Choose a subject from your group to focus on. Try to draw this person in motion, as they move round the gallery...maybe ask them to move in a particular way for you...or ask them to hold a pose for a couple of minutes (if you find this easier)
- (2) Try to make quick marks on the paper to give an impression of what you are seeing. Do not focus on the details as you will not have time!
- (3) Set three different timers for three different drawings: two minutes, five minutes and then a ten-minute sketch. Use pencil and/or coloured pastel.

Classroom Activity

Learning objective: To create a more detailed study, based on your gallery sketches and the work of Gore using pencil and pastel.

Now use your studies from the gallery to create a more detailed composition. Use pencil and coloured pastel to achieve this.

Take a look at the finished paintings of Gore's dancers and try to incorporate his style in your work.

Think about your composition and include a background, either from the gallery or make something up. Maybe your figure could be on a stage, in a show, as we see in Gore's work.

Extension Tasks for KS4/KS5

Based on Jacopo Zanguidi/Bertoia's work

The work of mannerist artists is defined by figures with exaggerated features, often arranged in twisted poses that deliberately go beyond forms found in nature. However, artists had to know how to draw naturalistically before they could start to manipulate reality. Like all Renaissance artists, therefore, Bertoia regularly practiced drawing from life.

Research the work of Jacopo Zanguidi (better known as Bertoia) and the Renaissance. Consider using easily available materials such as pencil, ink, pen, chalk-red/brown/white, tinted paper and explore the possibilities of mark-making that are unique to yourself and compare it to Bertoia.

What are the similarities and differences?

Create a visual diary of your thinking and drawing processes, documenting your attempts and explorations with drawings or photographs. Consider the relationship between you, the artist, and the model/object and how this is reflected throughout your study.



Jacopo Zanguidi (Bertoia)
Three Studies of Heads

Pen and brown ink, 96 x 129 mm
(3.8 x 5.1 inch); laid down onto an
18th- or 19th-century collector's
mount with framing lines in black in
and orange and pink wash

Based on Walter Richard Sickert's work

Consider how Sickert chose to depict the figures captured in his work. How are they posing? Does this seem natural or forced? Reflect on why you think so.

Continue developing your understanding of life drawing in the style of Sickert, paying close attention to your attempts at capturing light. Challenge yourself by using tinted paper also, so that your work with chalk becomes more precise. Consider where the source of light is emanating from, and how this can be captured in your observational drawings. Be mindful of showcasing a tonal range within your outcomes.

Experiment with drawing from life versus a photograph, and reflect on how your outcomes differ.

Based on Spencer Gore's work

Take a more detailed look Gore's work featuring ballerinas. Notice how these are studies, rather than completed works and consider how Gore is trying to create an impression of the dancers, their poses and movements.

Working in your sketchbook, explore the techniques used by Gore in his drawings and compare Gore's drawings and paintings of the ballet to Degas' ballerinas. Try to keep to the ideas of Post-Impressionism.

Create your own observational sketches. Use different types of media in your work such as pastels, pencil, chalk, to create an impression of your subject. Challenge yourself with timed exercises, for example, a two-minute sketch, followed by a five and then ten-minute drawing. Consider how this changes your work. Try to include motion and movement in your own work and reflect on how you have achieved this.

The work, up-close



Jacopo Zanguidi, called Bertoia
(1544-1573/1574)

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Nude and Two Arms; (verso) An Ox,
Seated Couple, Three Standing Male
Nudes and an Anatomized Arm*

Ink and chalk on blue paper
350 × 271 mm
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The work, up-close



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The work, up-close



Walter Richard Sickert
(1860-1942)

The Little Bed

1902

Pencil and chalk

238 × 315 mm

University of Reading Art Collection

UAC/10520

The work, up-close



Walter Richard Sickert
(1860-1942)

Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942)

Practice

c.1909

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379 × 284 mm

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UAC/10538

The work, up-close



Walter Richard Sickert
(1860-1942)

Marie Seated on a Bed

c.1911-1912

Charcoal and white chalk heightening on
grey paper

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UAC/10536

The work, up-close



Spencer Frederick Gore
(1878-1914)

Ballet at the Alhambra; (verso)

Dancing Figures

Pastel

223 × 278 mm

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The work, up-close



Spencer Frederick Gore
(1878-1914)

*Dancing Figures: (verso) Landscape
in Black and Yellow*

Pastel

206 × 279 mm

University of Reading Art Collection
UAC/10547