Basic Drawing
Handout #1

A Word About Values

Working with value is a core skillset for rendering realistic figures or subjects. If you want to draw something that has connection to the real world, then working with values is vital and necessary.

There are no ethics involved for value assessment when we are talking about sketching and Art. (There are no 'good' or 'bad' values, merely light and dark ones.)

It is important to recognize objectively where the lightest and darkest areas are on your subjects, and to capture those differences in your sketches.

Simply put, darkness and light work together to create form. There are no lines in real life, only different values working together to create the shapes we all see.

If it were pitch black, you could not see any form; if it were blindingly bright, you would not be able to make out any shapes either as there would be no room for shadows. Only when these two things are working together, do shapes become apparent. They push and pull off of each other; everywhere the light does not hit is taken up by the shadows.

When you are sketching, always keep an eye on where the light is falling, on where your light sources are coming from. Look to the light as you fill in your shadows, keeping a consistent light source in mind as you render the grey and darker black values of your subjects.

Making lines on your page at first is necessary to establish placement and proportions, but once you have these in place the goal should be to get rid of or 'kill' the lines, replacing them with different values coming together to create edges and forms.

Working with this priority in mind should be a constant priority when rendering from life.

Cast Shadow Sample

Below is a sample of how light and shadows work together to create a form, in this case, a ball.

I could continue to remove the lines of the ball by creating a darker grey value on the background, and then lightening the edges on the ball to remove the line showing its shape.