

## Thoughts on Drawing

**Background:** The ancient Greeks, the Romans, and the Renaissance Masters (among others) thought drawing was merely a “planning tool,” something that was part of the process that lead to a finished, formal work of Art. [Leonardo da Vinci](#) considered most of his drawings “notes” that helped explain his creations, for [Michelangelo](#) most of his drawings were concept sketches or “cartoons” that had holes punched in them and were used as guides for his frescoes, and Raphael didn’t leave behind many drawings that we know of. Even today there are painters who do not draw except as, in some cases, an “under drawing” that is hidden by subsequent layers of paint. Drawing as an Art form is both very ancient (the cave drawings of early humans) and very modern (late 19<sup>th</sup>, early 20<sup>th</sup> century), and the “line” that separates drawing from painting is becoming more blurred with each passing decade.

The act of drawing takes many forms and can be accomplished with any, or all, of a broad, almost limitless, choice of tools. In its simplest form a drawing (the product, not the process) is a mark, or series of marks, on a suitable support. This support can be a piece of paper, a piece of cardboard, fabric, wood, or even a wall...you get the idea.) But the act of drawing, the process, can be even simpler. It can be conceptually driven, with no product intended or, visually organized, drawing can be a dance, a series of fluid movements, that acts as an “organizer” for a work in progress (such as a painting, a sculpture, etc.) without leaving a record other than the finished piece. In this instance the drawing will be the foundation, or framework, that lies underneath the image we see giving it structure, a sense of balance and composition, and visual order. The drawing can be hidden or, as in such artist’s work as [Modigliani](#) and [Giacometti](#), a visible part of the surface work we see, or even a separate entity altogether, as in sculpture that is created using working drawings on paper.

Drawing is very old, leading back in time to [cave glyphs](#) done at the dawn of human evolution. It can be as simple (informal) as a single mark on an otherwise blank sheet of paper, or as complex (formal) as you can imagine. While “drawing well” takes discipline and much experience (practice), the drawing process should be fun, emotionally exciting, intellectually stimulating, and should usually be a physical, rather than merely a mental, experience. Both for beginners and for those who have spent long lives learning to draw, whether the drawing is the foundation for another art form, is merely a “doodle,” or is an end in itself makes no difference; drawing has power. Wet media, dry media, merely marks on paper or a combination of line and value, black and white or full color, 2 dimensional and narrative or rendered to have great depth, a simple sketch or a many layered rendering, if your intent is to do a DRAWING then that is what it is. In other words, what makes it a drawing is a matter of intent rather than an absolute definition of terms.

## Definitions of some Drawing terms

<p><b><u>Drawing:</u></b></p>	<p><i>Informal:</i> Means that, in general, there will be some linear component (whether it is drawn on paper, canvas, sheet plastic, a wall, on clay, or whatever and with whatever implement that makes a mark.)</p> <p><i>Formal:</i> Meets the requirements of “Informal” and adds “and deals with the Picture Plane.” A Formal drawing may even be begun in a linear manner and could end up appearing to have completely blended values in dry media, wet media, or a combination of the two. The key element of a formal drawing is that it is concerned with, and effectively uses, the picture plane and is concerned with both the positive and the negative space within the picture plane.</p>
<p><b><u>Sketch:</u></b></p>	<p>“...a rough drawing representing the chief features of an object or scene and often made as a preliminary study.”<sup>1</sup> Can be thought of as a “foundation” for a formal drawing (done usually in a sketchbook) or as a preliminary for a work, in any media, to be produced later.</p>
<p><b><u>Object Rendering:</u></b></p>	<p>Concerned with “...to reproduce by artistic means...”<sup>2</sup> an object without regard for the picture plane. The rendered object may, or may not, be accurately and realistically represented but it is only part of a drawing.</p>
<p><b><u>Thumbnail Sketch:</u></b></p>	<p>Usually a very small (hence the term “thumbnail”) sketch that is intended to either jog the memory for a later work or as a way to test a possible composition, or placement of objects within a composition.</p>
<p><b><u>Gesture:</u></b></p>	<p>An “active” rather than “passive” way of marking (lightly and with very rapid strokes) the boundaries of the objects, as a whole, that you intend to draw. Gesture is a way of seeing the whole without totally committing, compositionally or otherwise, to a formal drawing. Gesture, if done correctly, allows the artist the freedom to rearrange any or all the elements within the picture plane prior to any object rendering. Gesture is also concerned with both the positive and the negative space within the picture plane.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition, page 1167

<sup>2</sup> Ibid: page 1054