



Deviant Art Copyrighted Images



In this session we'll be looking at the use of negative space to draw images using a range of materials available to you. This activity can be done in everything from pencil, charcoal, marker pen and even one colour of paint. Equally, this project can be taken in any way you wish – there's even the opportunity of creating something a little more abstract by simply taking a small section of interesting shapes to work on.

Oxyrt, Deviant Art

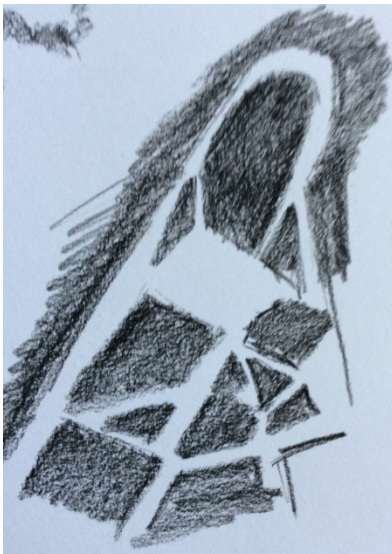
What is negative space?

There's never a positive without a negative and art is no exception. The negative space is the space around the object. By looking at this space, it helps us to be objective and trust in what our eyes are seeing. This can work particularly well for tricky objects – by looking at the shapes and patterns created around the actual object and drawing these, it helps us to pull out the actual form. In a composition it's always important to plan the areas of negative space and this project will help you to begin to see it.

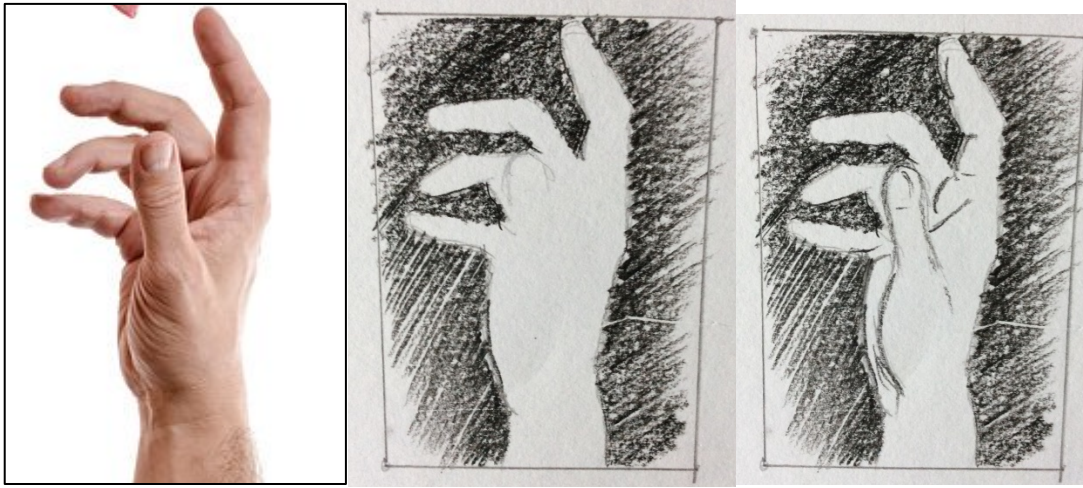
In this exercise you will be drawing the space around the object, negative space, rather than the object itself. This can take some getting used to, so start small with sketches to train your eye. Use a medium such as sketching pencils that you can erase easily.



In the images above, the drawing on the left is the wrong way to approach this subject in negative space as it is focusing on the positive space (the actual object). The drawing on the right is the correct way to approach this subject; the shapes in between the leaves and stems have been sketched in using soft charcoal to pull the image of the leaves out of the paper. Working in this way creates an almost ghostly effect.

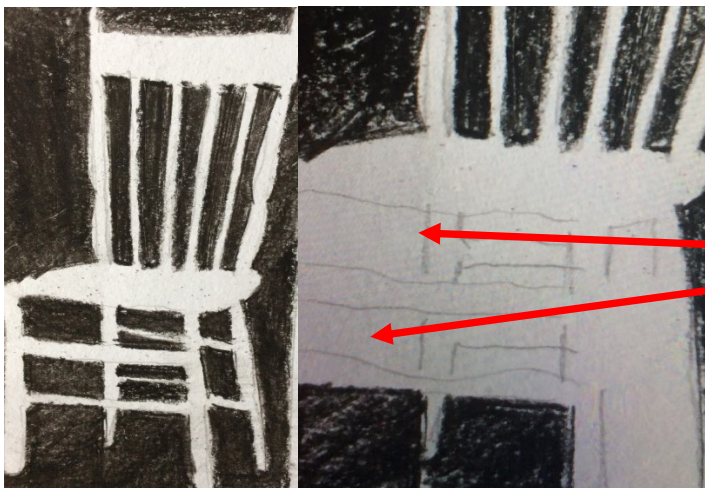


When you're starting out in negative space, putting pen to paper can be a challenge. Don't aim for perfection straight away. Athletes and singers warm up and so should artists. There is a lot of value in drawing a series of very quick sketches, allowing yourself a set time of 5-10 minutes and no more. The drawing on the left is an example of this. In no way is it perfect and some of those angles and proportions are incorrect, but it's starting to train my eye to focus into the negative space.



Drawing a box around your photographic reference and replicating this box onto your paper is useful as this allows you to compare where certain parts of the shapes created in the negative space touch the perimeter and gives you a reference point.

In the first drawing of the hand, negative space has been used to start to get the shape right for this tricky subject. In the second drawing, some positive shapes have been added to help describe the hand in a little more detail. This was much easier to do rather than trying to start with these details.



Don't think that you need to dive in without any sketched lines.

For this chair sketch, I used a 2H pencil to draw in the shapes of the negative space before blocking this in with charcoal.

Once you've practised with a series of small sketches, you'll find a way that works best for you. At this point begin to think about working on a larger scale in a more permanent medium such as black acrylic, Sharpie marker or ink. Plot out your drawing in your preferred method and then use your medium to create your image. Do take a look back at the first page for inspiration. Allow only the white of the paper and a black medium has been used, these are so striking- objects have been created by using a series of interesting shapes.

Tips

- If you're scaling your image up, do consider ratio e.g. double or treble the size of the frame on your photograph when you transfer this to your paper. This way you can compare areas of negative space against the perimeter of your image.
- Do crop an image if you want a more abstract composition – look for interesting shapes made in the negative space, both large and small. Do choose an element that is also recognisable to help the viewer make more sense of your image.
- Think about using a black marker to draw in the negative space in your photographic image, especially if it's a busy background in the photograph – this will help you to focus on the negative space shapes (see the blue chair in the reference images below).

- Try out small sketches first until you get used to the process. If you're an over analytical person this can be a tricky exercise but it's a good one to train your brain and get both left and right sides working together. Doing a quick negative space drawing for ten minutes a day will do you the world of good!
- Another good tip for those over thinkers out there is to turn both your photograph and drawing upside down – this allows you to focus on shapes and forget about what you're drawing. I find that it takes the pressure off and I simply have fun!
- If you're thinking of taking your own photograph, do think about taking it against the plainest background possible –even use a piece of black or dark coloured cloth to place behind it.
- Don't forget to focus on looking at what you are drawing as much as the drawing itself

Reference Images

These are purely suggestions – do feel free to choose your own images/take your own photographs. Sometimes the most mundane of objects such as chairs or a selection of kitchen utensils, make for some interesting shapes.

The whole image doesn't have to be drawn. Use a viewfinder or a crop tool to find interesting sections.



