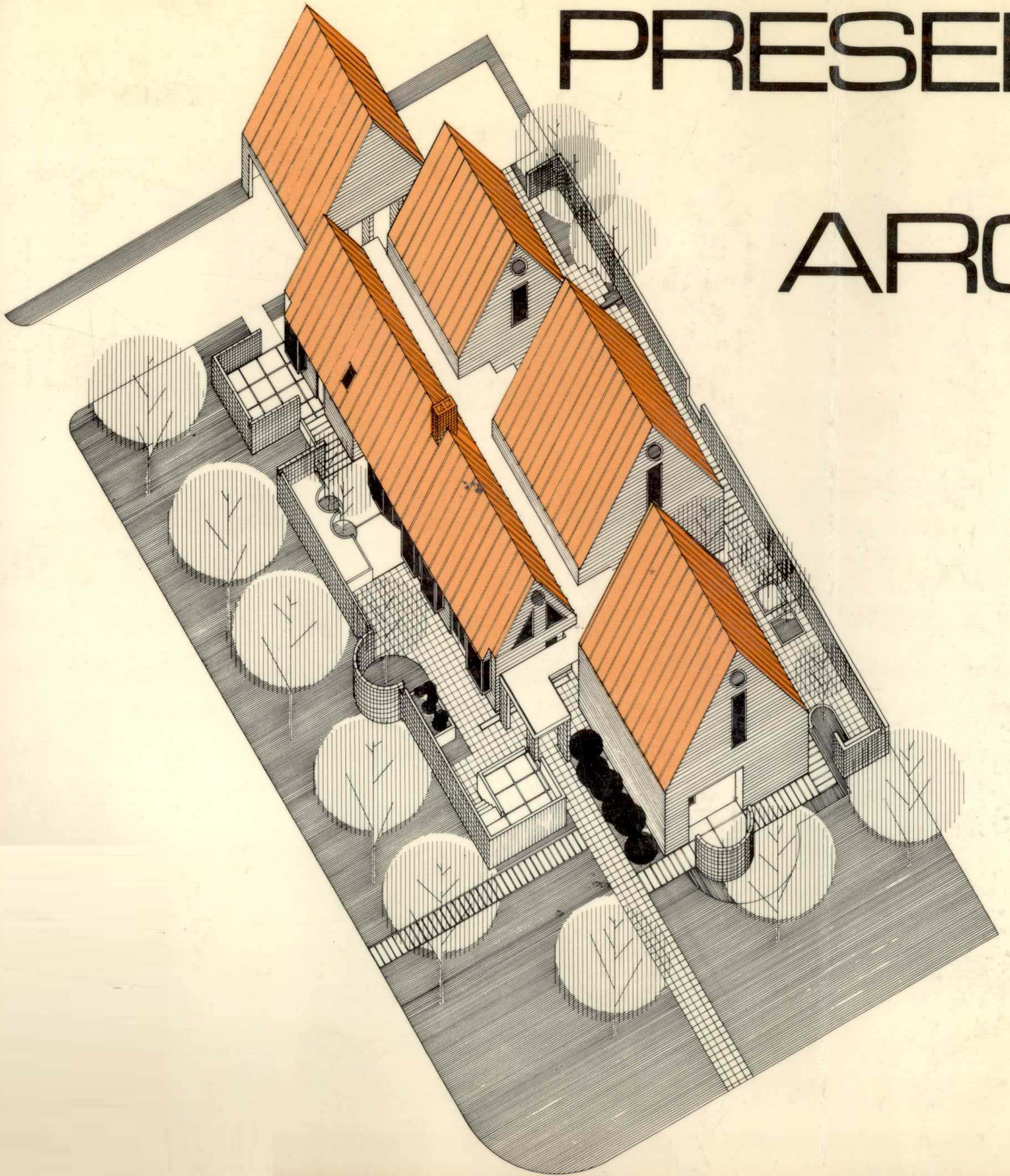

DESIGN PRESENTATIONS FOR ARCHITECTS

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DESIGN PRESENTATIONS FOR ARCHITECTS

PREFACE

A successful presentation enables a client to understand, like, and decide to build a project. Failing this, a successful presentation should at least allow the client to state his objections clearly. A successful presentation is a brilliantly conceived plan that is skillfully developed and sensitively executed. A successful presentation is an all-out effort for a single word: *yes*. Anything less is inadequate. Everything more is a waste. *Yes* is the most important word in design.

Graphics is only a part of a successful presentation, and it is only a part of this book. Presentation is as much about people as it is about your design solution. It is about you personally. It concerns what you say and how you say it. It is also about your client as a human being and what makes him respond. Advertising agencies, salesmen, psychologists, commercial display designers—even circus clowns—possess knowledge that we can use to make successful presentations. In addition to the tips and books mentioned in the text, the bibliography at the back of this book recommends numerous volumes that can help you develop your presentation skills.

This book does not offer a wide variety of approaches to design presentation. In fact, it provides only one—but it is an easy one to learn. A broad variety of examples of different rendering approaches has been included in chapter 12 to give you an idea of the range of options available.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to the individual recognition given elsewhere to those who generously allowed their work to be published in this book, I would like to express my appreciation to the following individuals, without whom this book would not have been produced: Lisa Portwood; Kol Wahl; Jim Kudrna; Nick Harm; Brad Black; Dan Lare, ASLA; Ray Yeh, AIA; Ron Hess, AIA; Ross Bell, AIA; William Muchow, FAIA; Robert Engelke, AIA; Ed Warner; Skay McCall; Burt Welz; Jim Yeatts; and Richard Austin, ASLA.

A special thanks to the students who have contributed to this work and to the fullness of my life.

CONTENTS

1 WHY CLIENTS RESPOND

Clients begin to respond to you when they first contact you—with that first phone call or in that first meeting. Your presentation begins with your receptionist, your office, and your first actions.

Your client begins to say *yes* each time you listen rather than talk during your first meeting, when you carefully take notes on all that he says. These actions show that you want to learn about your client. Information is one of the critical chips in the game of negotiating. Start collecting those chips early in your first conference.

INFORMATION YOU NEED

The information you need concerns not only the client's project, but the client himself. It is tempting to rely on elaborate logic and mountains of data. But in the game of persuasion, emotions are equally powerful. Examine the complexity of your client.

First, he or she has *instincts* and will act on them. If you stand near the edge of a high place, you may feel an instinctual response. These "gut feelings" are present from birth. Often, the harder a client is pressed, the more his or her instincts will surface.

In addition, your client's response will be based on *learned behavior.* These are actions that stem from experience. The first time you touched a hot stove, you learned never to do it again. Learned behavior includes your client's usual methods of operation and negotiation. *Attitudes,* also based on our life experiences, are one type of learned behavior. They are the viewpoints from which we habitually operate.

Finally, all people have needs that, in turn, inspire buying motives:

- recognition and superiority
- health and long life
- comfort
- appetizing food and drink
- security
- money
- protection of one's family
- approval of opposite sex
- minimal labor
- amusement
- information and education
- dependability
- curiosity
- possession

Your client's individual needs and motives suggest the type of appeal you should make. Explain how your solution will make the client:

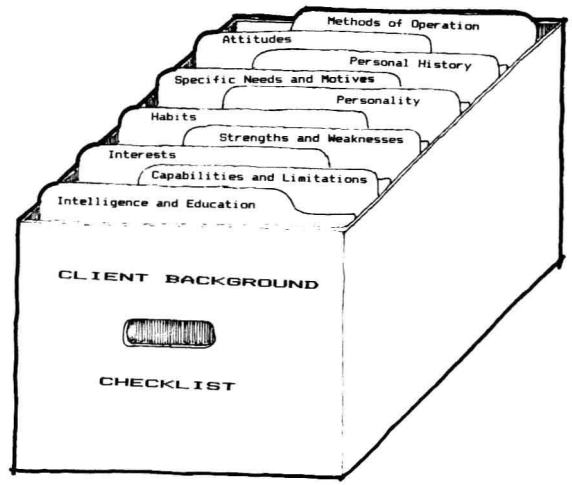
- feel more important
- feel happier
- be more comfortable
- be more prosperous
- have less or easier work
- have more security
- be more attractive
- be better liked
- have some unique distinction
- have, improve, or maintain health
- get a bargain

The presentation plan is based on this process.

To make a successful presentation you must learn about your client's instincts, experiences, needs and motives. Most designers conscientiously research the functional problem and the spatial needs of their clients. Some even ask their favorite color and if they want anything special in the project. But you need to know more (fig. 1-1). Get to know your clients, not just what they want to build.

Personal information about clients can be easily gained in several ways. All business meetings are accompanied by small talk. Although these light conversations are usually intended only to fill time and reduce tension, they are often rich in personal information. People are usually quite willing to discuss themselves and their personal interests during these casual talks. Careful observation of a client's apparel, car, and personal effects can convey useful insight into the client as well.

Once you feel you know and understand your clients, you can create better designs for them. Now all you have to do is make a presentation that also satisfies those same needs and motives.



1-1. Form a systematic picture of your clients.

POSITIVE RESPONSES

Surprisingly, many architects don't know when to pin a client down to a positive response—to commit him to *yes*. Try for a trial closing on the issue:

- any time you think you can get it
- after strong points in your presentation
- after overcoming an obstacle presented by the client
- when your demonstration ends
- when your client shows signs of saying *yes*

Many also do not recognize when they are being told *yes*. Your client is saying yes if he or she:

- shows intense interest
- makes statements advancing the discussion (e.g., How long would this take?)
- shows a willingness to move into greater detail
- indicates objections are satisfied
- shows hesitation
- nods
- makes a favorable comment on some aspect of the project
- relinquishes the initiative in the discussion
- shifts the attack to simple questions and trivial issues
- allows himself to be moved even one small step toward commitment
- compliments you on the handling of even a small part of the project

NEGATIVE RESPONSES

Your client may say no because the project does not meet his or her needs. This means you did not do your homework—you did not learn enough about the client. But there are also other reasons for a negative response that are not directly related to the design.

Problems with You

An architect's grooming, clothing, grammar, conversation habits, nervous habits, posture, prejudices, rudeness, ego, temper, and carelessness should not be allowed to interfere with the acceptance of a good design. Idiosyncrasies of this type are luxuries that a good designer cannot afford.

Remember that a sense of humor is a two-edged sword. To have one is necessary, but a poor one can be worse than none. Make an obnoxious joke or laugh at the wrong thing and rapport is lost.

Introversion and shyness can also be unnecessary enemies. No one in the room knows any more about your design and its merits than you. The client expects you to succeed, or you would not have been hired. Do not be shy about sharing your enthusiasm for your work—your client wants to be as happy about it as you are.

Problems with the Client

Price, prejudice, power, and procrastination have been cited as common client-based reasons for rejecting a design. Anticipate probable objections and rehearse responses to these objections prior to beginning any final presentation.

The wrong style of appeal may also lead a client to hedge rather than to say yes. Even if you correctly identified your client's needs, your appeal might not be sufficiently forceful to demonstrate this.

If your client is acting as an agent for another, he or she may not have the authority to say yes. In addition, peer pressure can influence your client and deny the acceptance that you have earned. Part of knowing your clients involves understanding who influences them and who has final approval of your work. Learn both the formal and the informal approval procedures of your client so that you can convince the people that count.

Your client may have secret or hidden motives when hiring you. Careful negotiation during the presentation can expose and clarify these, but it is better to know about them beforehand. This can be difficult, since the client may be unaware of these motives himself. Some motives are sensitive, and the client may deliberately conceal them. If you discover one of these, the client will surely object to it being publically announced. Use it to your advantage but keep it to yourself. Motives are by their nature complex and difficult to separate, and they are hard to satisfy separately.

It is said that every man is three people: the man he thinks he is, the man others think he is, and the man he really is. A successful presentation will appeal to all three.

Recognizing a Negative Response

Most people cannot give an unqualified *no*. The motives behind the negative response may make saying *no* even more difficult. As a result most people use escape mechanisms and excuses. Do not be confused by this hedging, and do not ignore it. Watch for the following tactics:

Compensation substitutes another response for the desired response: "I am not happy with your design but your renderings are beautifully prepared."

Sublimation is the act of substituting a "good" action or emotion for a "bad" one.

Organizing paperwork after a disagreement is an example.

Regression is evident when a client or associate begins to act less than his age, experience, or position in an effort to avoid responsibility.

Rationalization consists of an elaborate web of justifications directed at avoiding action or responsibility.

Repression will often surface as memory failure; a person honestly cannot remember an unpleasant issue.

Identification begins subtly but terminates in an astonishing transformation. Before your eyes, a person will change his personality and become someone that he feels would be more adequate in this difficult situation. For example, someone you have come to like and respect starts talking exactly like John Wayne, Dad, or some other power figure.

When any of these behaviors starts to surface, give your client a little slack. He is evidently under a lot of stress. You need to find the cause, not press him to a defensive *no*.

Examples of how clients try to reject a design tactfully include:

The design isn't suitable.

Credit is too difficult right now.

We can't afford it.

I want to think it over.

I'm too busy right now.

Personal problems or ties won't allow me to do this.

I need to discuss this with others.

My boss, wife, etc., will never go for this.

We are okay the way we are now and really don't need these changes.

Unspoken negative reaction might be indicated by increased restlessness, loss of interest in the subject, changing of the subject, and prolonged silence. Learn to recognize negative response from the body language and facial expressions of your client (many good books on this are available).

Tactfully end a meeting that degenerates into a string of excuses and negative behaviors so that you can regroup. Following such a meeting, immediately review the events in detail. Determine exactly *when* the client started to resist the design. This is often the best clue available in fully understanding *why* the design was rejected.

DRAWING SKILLS REVIEW 2

Design presentation presumes the ability to draw. No graphic tricks are a substitute for it. Poor drawing ability suggests poor design ability to a client. Since most design presentations begin with a fine drawing, a moment should be given to a review of common techniques used in learning this critical skill.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

Two separate sets of equipment and materials are recommended to improve drawing skills. The first will help you increase line control. The second set will help you add flamboyance and power to your drawings.

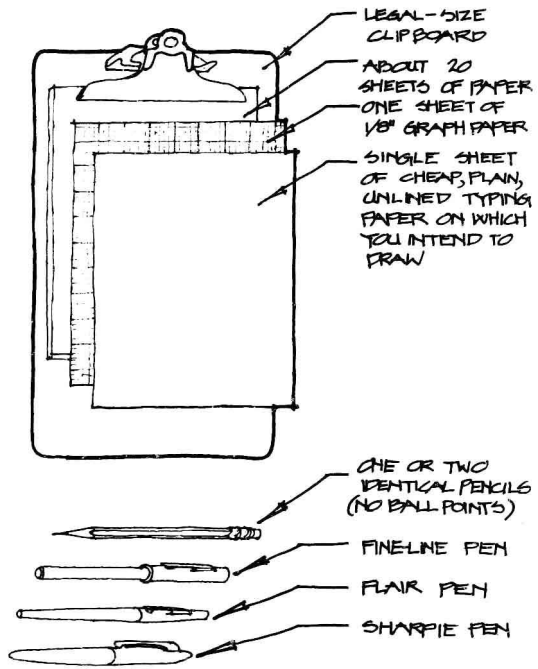
For set 1, buy a legal-size clipboard and a package of cheap typing paper. Computer paper or copy-machine paper are expensive but good substitutes. Do not buy erasable paper, as pencil and felt-tip markers smear badly on it. Do not bother with papers that have a "rag" content. They are not good for these drawings, though they are costly. Also buy ⅛-inch graph paper. Right now, you need only one sheet.

Now pick your pens. A Flair, a Sharpie, and a razor-point are best. Also buy a couple of #2 pencils with erasers. Finally buy a pink eraser—just for security; you will not be using it much.

Set up your clipboard as shown in figure 2-1, with one sheet of typing paper over the graph paper. The rest of the typing paper is used to pad the hard surface of the clipboard. With this arrangement you can draw straight freehand lines. Your vertical lines will be truly vertical, and your horizontal lines will be straight. More important, you will always have consistent guidelines for your lettering. Finally, you will always be thinking and drawing in scale. All of this leads to better control. The best part of this setup is that it is cheap and easily available. You can do reams of drawings for pennies. This means more practice, and more practice means more confidence.

For set 2 buy a pad of cheap 18- by 24-inch newsprint paper at your nearest art-supply store. While you are there, pick up a package of vine charcoal. On this pad draw big, draw bold, draw fast. These materials are cheap, so be flamboyant. Charcoal will not allow you to get fussy with detail.

Both setups will teach you to draw line drawings. There are other types and methods, but line drawings are easier, so they will dominate this book.



2-1. Tools and materials for drawing.

GESTURE DRAWING

Gesture drawing is often used at the start of a life drawing session as a warm-up exercise. It teaches an artist to see the most important lines in an object. In gesture drawing the model quickly goes through a sequence of spontaneous, exaggerated poses. Each pose is held for only about five seconds. The artist must capture the essence of these poses with quick line drawings.

Often the longest lines of an object are the most important. A line might begin at the fingertips of the right hand and flow down continuously to the toes of the left foot. Gesture drawing encourages you to see these long lines. Forget names of body parts. Look only for long lines that, by themselves, describe a posture (fig. 2-2).

You say you have no model? No matter. Turn one way and sketch whatever you see for five seconds. Turn another way and do the same again. Repeat the process, facing in different directions, at least ten times. Warm up this way every time you draw. It takes under one minute.

2-2. Gesture drawing.

You can use either your clipboard setup or the newsprint to make gesture drawings. Since you are trying to loosen up, work fast, work *big.*

SCUMBLING

Scumbling is another technique often used as a warm-up exercise. It also aids a designer in studying masses and voids in a composition without being distracted by details of the outline. Charcoal and newsprint are best for scumbling.

In scumbling the model usually shifts poses every fifteen seconds. You are not looking at lines, but studying the sizes and shapes of the masses and voids that you see (fig. 2-3). Do not look at your paper and guess. Look at the model and get the real proportions correct. Four of these drawings per work session will be enough to warm up.

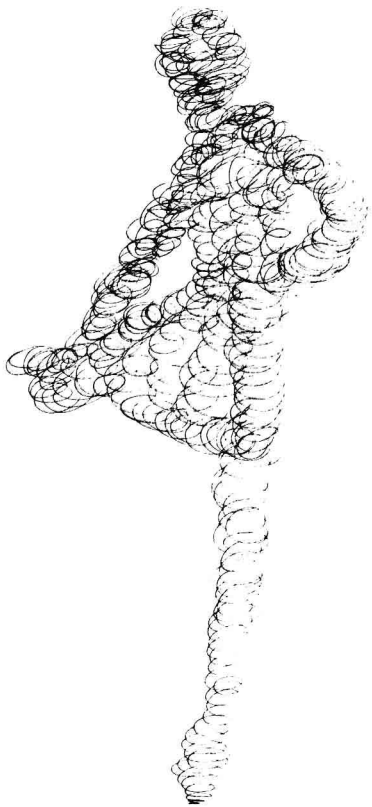
Scumbling is not only a good exercise; it is a valuable tool that will help you with composition, discussed in chapter 4.

No model? Follow the same routine as for gesture drawing: face one way for fifteen seconds and draw, then turn in another direction and draw.

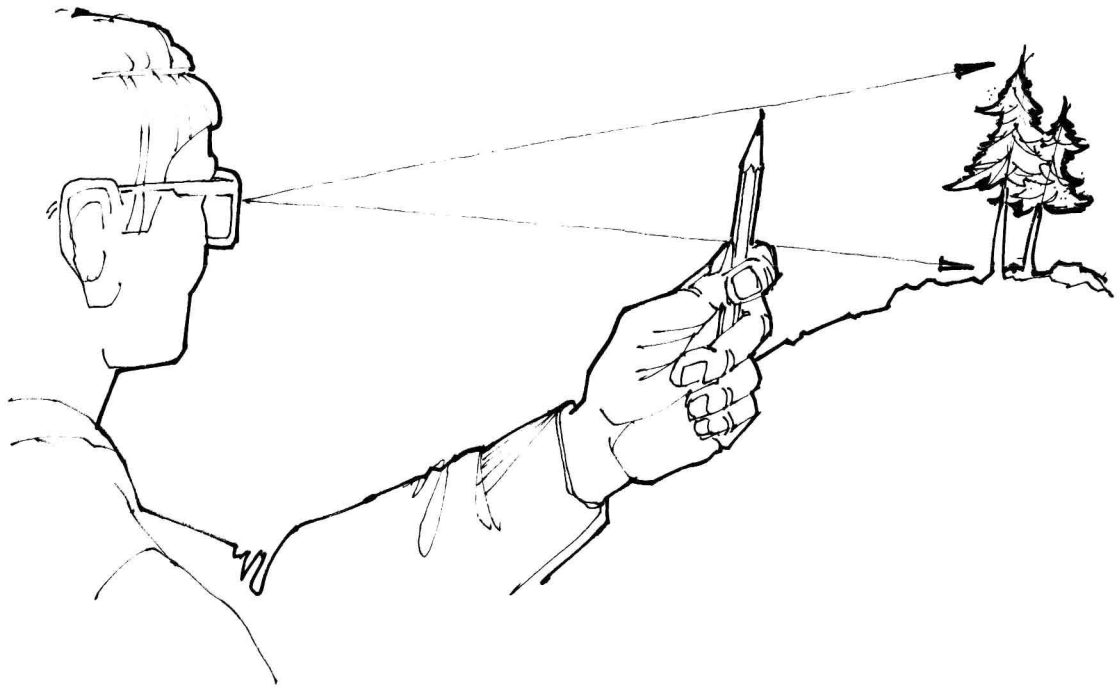
PROPORTIONAL DRAWING

Many people find that seeing the true proportions of a model, building, or other subject is difficult. Commonly, five students make the same drawing with five different sets of proportions. In art school it could be called interesting, individual, or creative. To an architect, it is inaccurate.

You should have no need to guess proportions when you can measure them. Hold your pencil vertical at arm's length and measure the overall height of the subject that you are drawing (fig. 2-4). Use the top of the pencil



2-3. Scumbling.

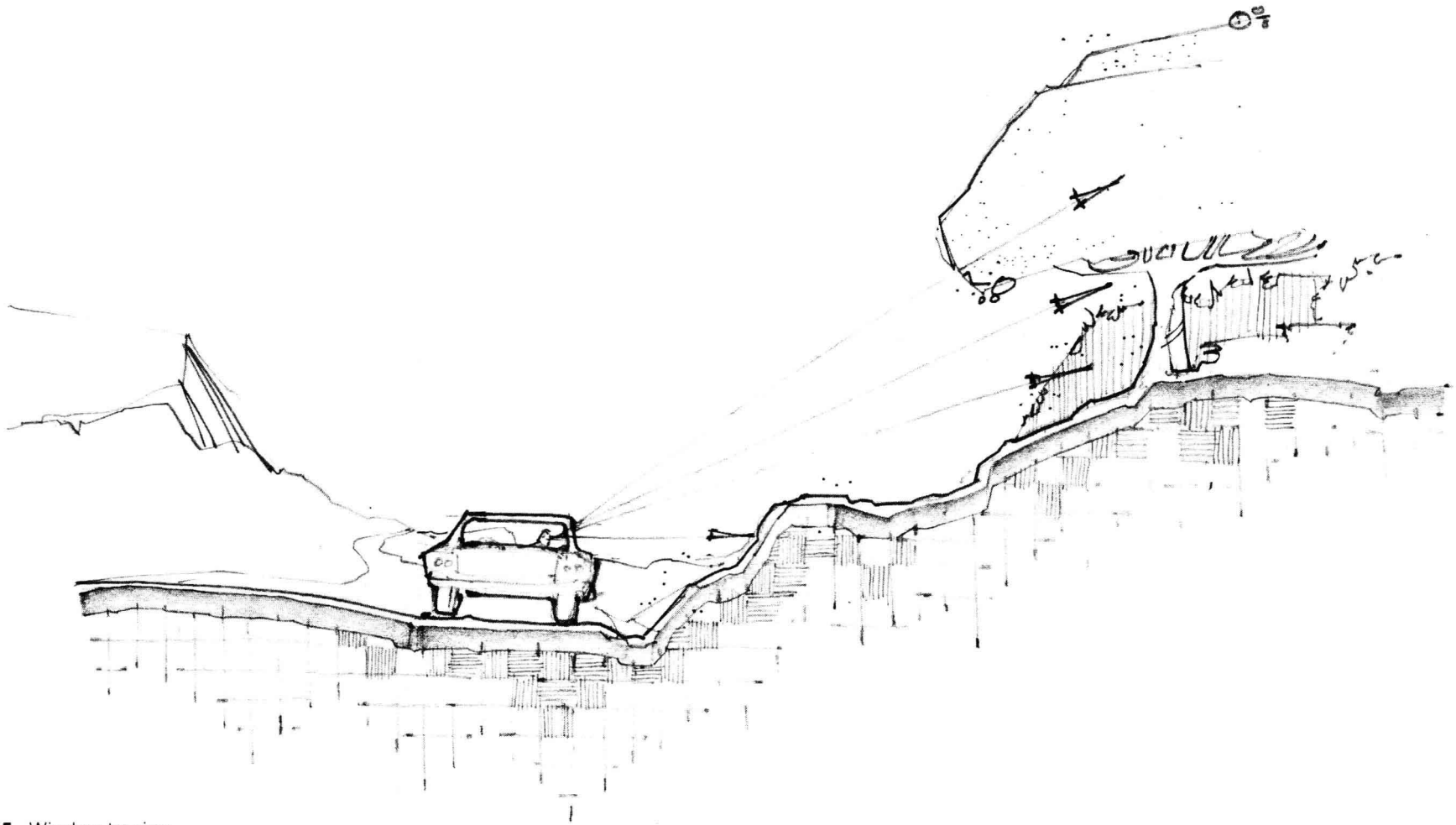


2-4. Proportional drawing.

and your thumb to scale this vertical dimension. Then place the pencil flat on your paper and transfer the dimension to the drawing surface. To accomplish this, quickly put a small tick mark on the paper where the top of the pencil falls and a second mark where your thumb falls. Now again hold the pencil at arm's length while you look at the subject of your drawing, but hold the pencil horizontal to scale the overall width of the building. Transfer this dimension to your clipboard as before. Now make a visual judgment. Does the building look to be twice as tall as it is wide, for example? Use the graph paper (always under the sheet on which you are drawing) to verify the relationship. Rough in the outline of the building.

Now turn your attention to the secondary masses. Perhaps your building is divided into three wings. Scale each of these wings (secondary masses) as before, and transfer the dimensions to your drawing. Subdivide the overall mass of the building accordingly. Finally, scale and place the details, such as windows and doors, within each wing, or secondary mass.

Scaling in this way is a good means for accurate sketching, and it will make you more conscious of true proportions in a composition.



2-5. Window tracing.

WINDOW DRAWING

If you are just learning to draw and you have difficulty locating objects in their proper place in your drawings, try the following technique. Get into your car and take a drive. Take a grease pencil, some paper towels, and some window cleaner with you. When you find a scene worth drawing, park the car so that you can look at the scene through one of the side windows. Now trace the scene directly onto the window (fig. 2-5). This technique may not be very elegant, but it will give you practice in placing everything in the drawing in its proper place. A paper towel and window cleaner will put you back on the road searching for another worthy scene. After an afternoon of work, you will have clean windows and greatly increased drawing skill.

STRUCTURAL DRAWING

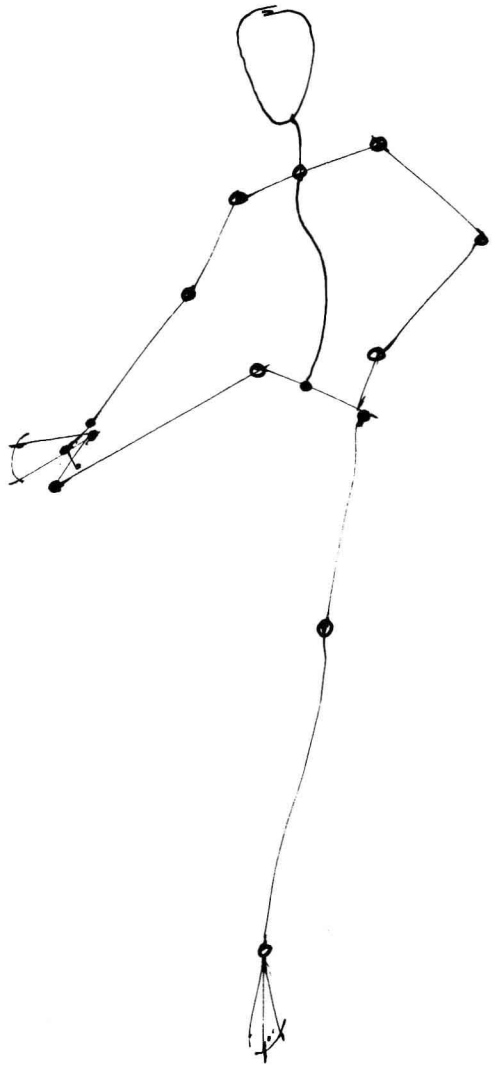
Structural drawing produces what are usually called stick figures (fig. 2-6). They are very helpful in life drawing if your model is in a complex pose. Structural drawing helps you to unravel complicated subjects with ease. Just replace major bones with single lines. Once you have these "sticks" in the right places, use the proportional drawing method to confirm each stick's length.

Other complex objects, such as trees, can also be more easily drawn by first using this technique to discover their underlying structure.

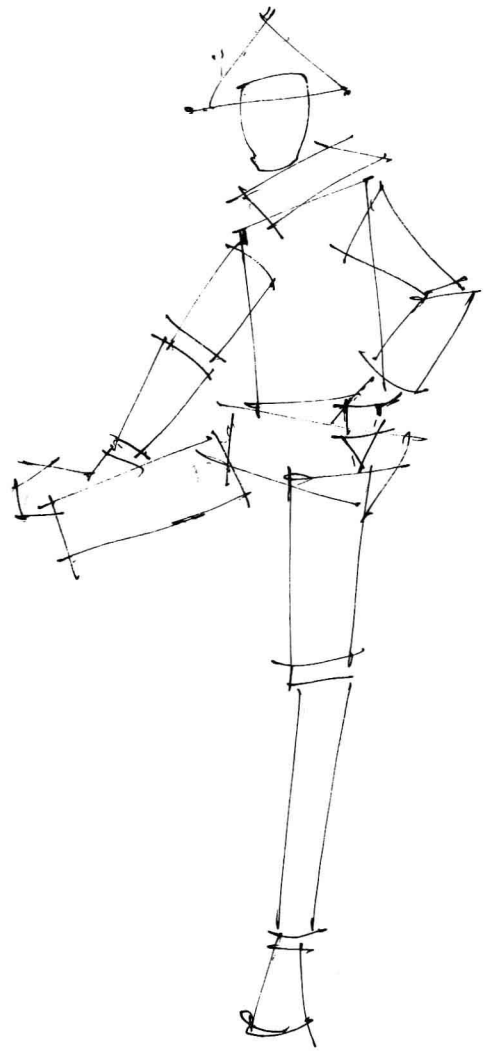
CUBIST DRAWING

Cubist drawing involves replacing real, complex forms with their closest geometric equivalent. The human head can be approximated by a circle or an ellipse. A nose is roughly a triangle. Reducing a composition to simple shapes allows you to study them without confusing detail (fig. 2-7). The proportion of each shape can be scaled using techniques previously discussed. Often these correctly scaled shapes are "hung" in their proper position on a "stick" skeleton.

Once the shapes are lightly sketched, a detailed drawing in darker pencil will be easy to create. Cubist drawing can also be used to study the shape scheme in a composition (see chapter 4).



2-6. Structural drawing.



2-7. Cubist drawing.

CONTOUR LINE DRAWING

Each true line in a drawing has a unique character of its own. Whether it is an important line or not, it must be accurate—"true." The true lines are on the object or model you are drawing. Your goal is to transfer these lines from the model to your drawing. The line in the drawing must wiggle if the true line wiggles. It must bend if the true line bends.

The secret to making true lines in your drawing is to look at the subject, not at your paper. Try this. Get a good friend to sit very still, facing you. Put your clipboard and pencil in front of you and look at his or her face. Really study its details. Do the eyes slope up or down? In which direction does each small hair in the eyebrows run? Study the total face very carefully.

Now, without looking down at your clipboard, put your pencil on the paper and begin to draw. *Never* take your eyes off the face. *Never* lift the pencil from the paper. Draw the whole face with one long, continuous, expressive line. Pretend that you are not drawing, but actually touching the face with your pencil: you are a blind person running your hand over the face of a stranger. Exaggerate. If, for example, you see razor stubble, make a real field of stumps as your hand jolts and bumps over each whisker. Draw only what you see. Draw all that you see.

Now look down at the drawing for the first time. Of course it looks funny—but the truth is there. Although out of proportion, it really looks like your friend (fig. 2-8). If you had used the same technique but looked down once or twice and exaggerated a bit more, it would become caricature drawing.

MINIMAL DRAWING

Combining all the skills you have learned thus far, complete your best drawing. If you are drawing a person, use structural drawing to lightly sketch a stick figure. Proportionally measure the sticks. Very lightly hang the geometric shapes on the structure. Then use contour line drawing to carve the true lines onto the framework that you have constructed. Look down as little as possible during the contour line phase of the drawing.

Now take out an eraser. Begin removing everything possible from your drawing. If two eyes are not required to tell the story, erase one. If the drawing is understandable without a pocket, remove it. Get down to the absolute, uncompromised essense (fig. 2-9). Sometimes less really is more.

2-8. Contour line drawing.

2-9. Minimal drawing.