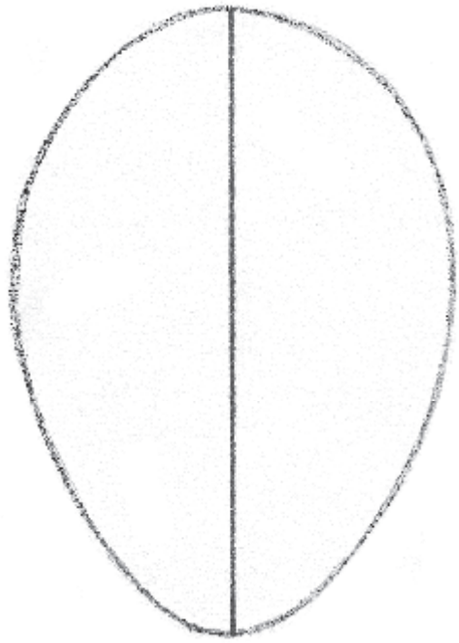
# PORTRAIT DRAWING

ANDRÁS SZUNYOGHY

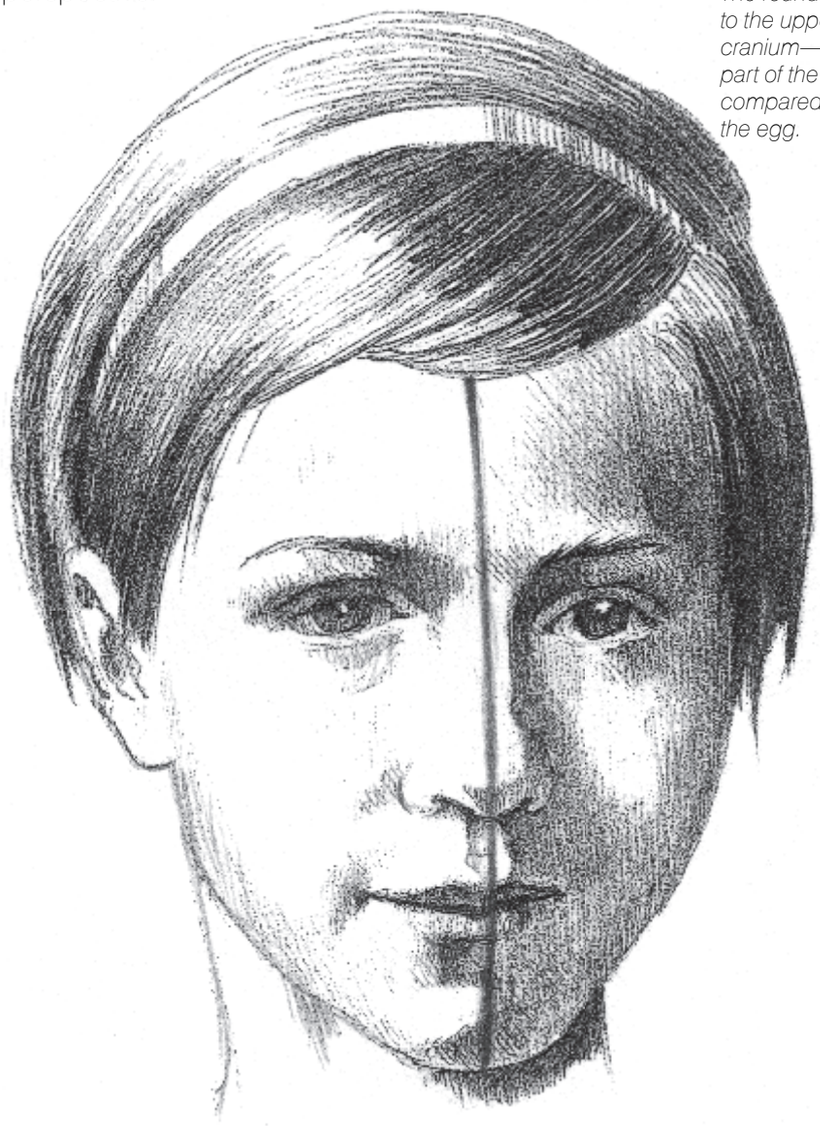
h.f.ullmann

The head consists of the skull, which is composed of many bones and has muscles attached to it, with skin covering the layer of muscle. You do not need any great observational skill to realize that skulls alone can be of very different shapes. For instance, the skull shape of Europeans is clearly distinguishable from the skulls of Asians or Africans. Nevertheless, there are some very important common features. In the past, artists compared the shape of the human head to an egg and consequently characterized it as being oval. So it is reasonable for me to take an egg as my example, to illustrate part of what you need to know for drawing the head.

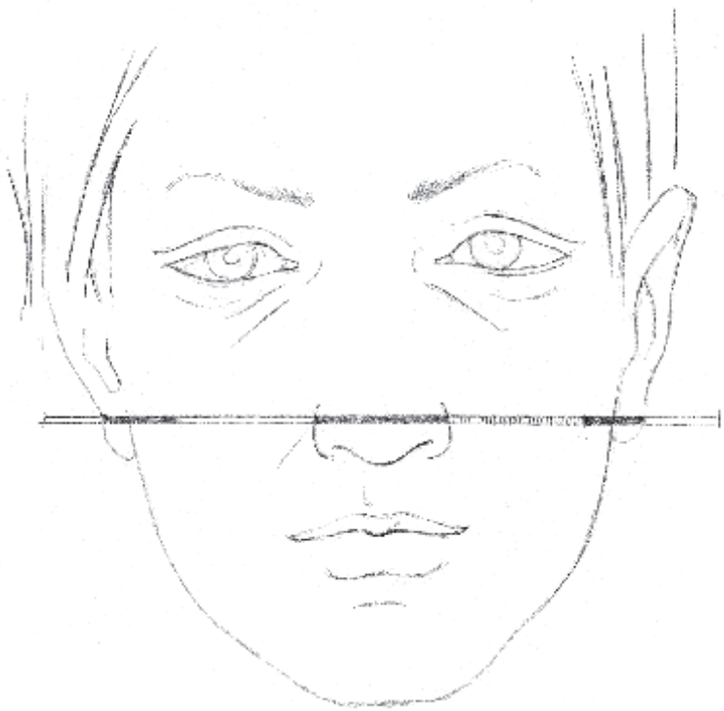
Use longitudinal and transverse axes to help you with this—the main axis, as well as the eyebrow, eye, nose, and mouth axes. When marking them in, bear in mind the symmetry of the human body as well as the perspective.



*The rounder end of the egg corresponds to the upper, broader part of the head—the cranium—while the lower, more pointed part of the head with the chin can be compared with the more pointed end of the egg.*

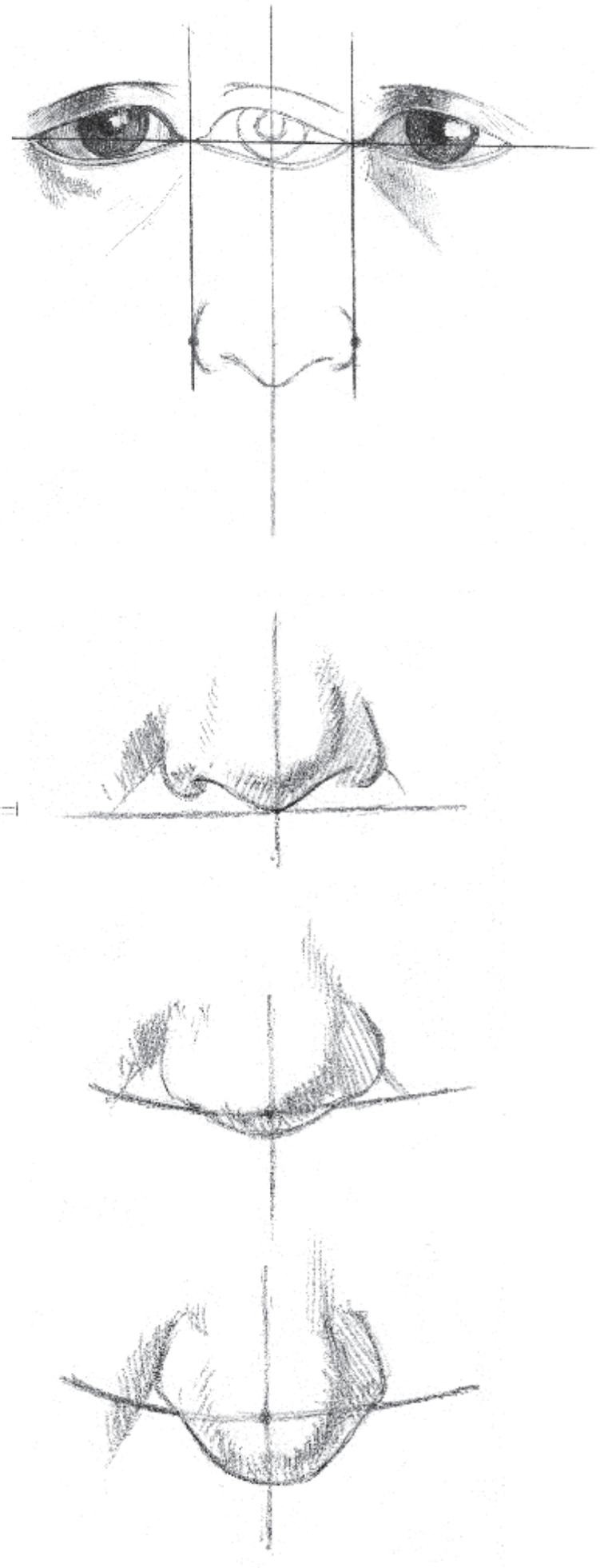


In order to determine the **position of the nose**, you need to know that the main axis bisects it lengthwise. When the head is turned, the part of the nose that is closer to the viewer appears bigger. In people of the European type, the distance between the outer edges of the nose is small, corresponding to the width of an eye—the same as the distance between the eyes—so two lines running through the inner corner of the eye and parallel to the main axis determine the width of the nose. Of course, there are many ethnicities, for example in Africa, Asia, and Australia, for whom this rule does not apply because the distance between the outer edges of the nose is bigger in their case.



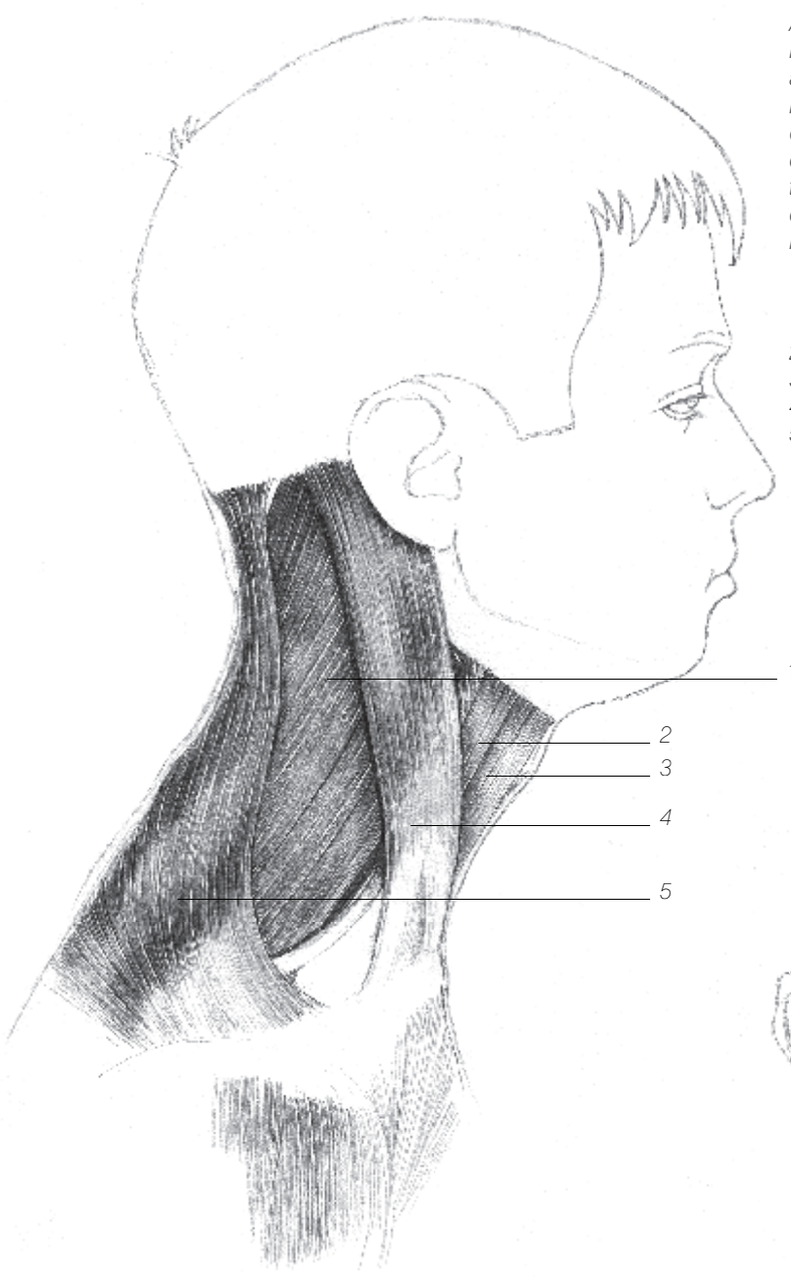
*When drawing the nose, it is very important to check the measurements. For example, you must pay attention to how many times the width of the nose fits into the overall width of the face.*

*The point below the nose is lower than the bottom of the outer edges of the nose, as can be demonstrated by an imaginary horizontal line through the point below the nose. The tip of the nose of a model with a bowed head is often drawn on the axis that runs through the point beneath the nose. As a result, the nose is shortened and the face looks wrong. In a correct representation, the tip of the nose hides this point.*



*A striking feature of the neck is the many muscles used for turning the head, which run in a wedge shape (as seen from behind) from the mastoid process on the cranium to the upper end of the breastbone, from where they spread out over the part of the collarbones nearest to the breastbone. Their V-shape determines the contours of the neck, so particular attention must be paid to them when drawing.*

1 *Scalenus medius*
2 *Omohyoid muscle*
3 *Sternohyoid muscle*
4 *Sternocleidomastoid muscle*
5 *Trapezius*

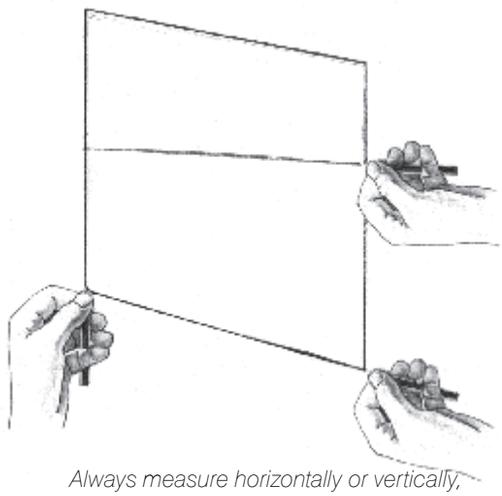


1 *Sternocleidomastoid muscle*
2 *Hyoid bone*
3 *Scalenus medius*
4 *Omohyoid muscle*
5 *Sternohyoid muscle*
6 *Trapezius*
7 *Levator scapulae*
8 *Scalenus posterior*

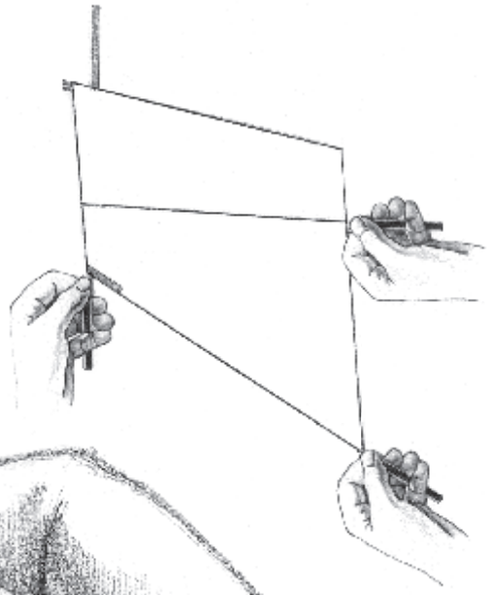
In this chapter on the tricks of drawing I will first discuss what you need to know for all drawing, irrespective of the model and the subject. The prerequisite for a really successful piece of work is the composition, which—like a precise drawing—you can only get right if you are able to use the Dürer Grid, grayscale, and the techniques of measurement. The finished drawing must then be fixed and framed so you can enjoy it for a long time. Drawing is a complex procedure, the result of the interaction of eye, brain, and hand. You will make many mistakes at the start, but with plenty of practice you will develop a feeling for proportion. Once you can judge proportions accurately with the naked eye, you will no longer need to measure. But, until that time comes, I would recommend repeating the measurements and also checking the drawings.

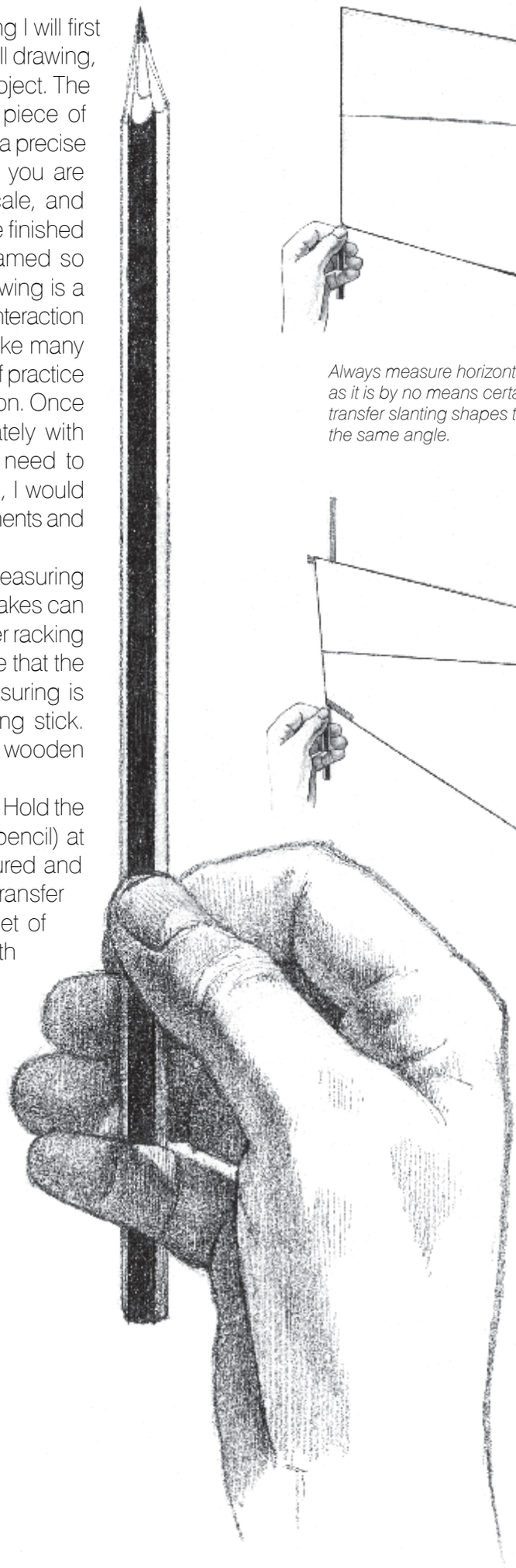
There are hard-and-fast rules for measuring that must be obeyed; otherwise mistakes can easily creep in, and it is often only after racking your brains for a while that you realize that the measurements are the cause. Measuring is done with an aid called a measuring stick. This can be a pencil, a paintbrush, a wooden stick, or anything similar.

The measuring process is as follows: Hold the upper end of the measuring stick (pencil) at one end of the object to be measured and your thumbnail at the other end. Transfer the measurement to the clean sheet of paper by marking in a desired length and adding the other measurements in proportion.

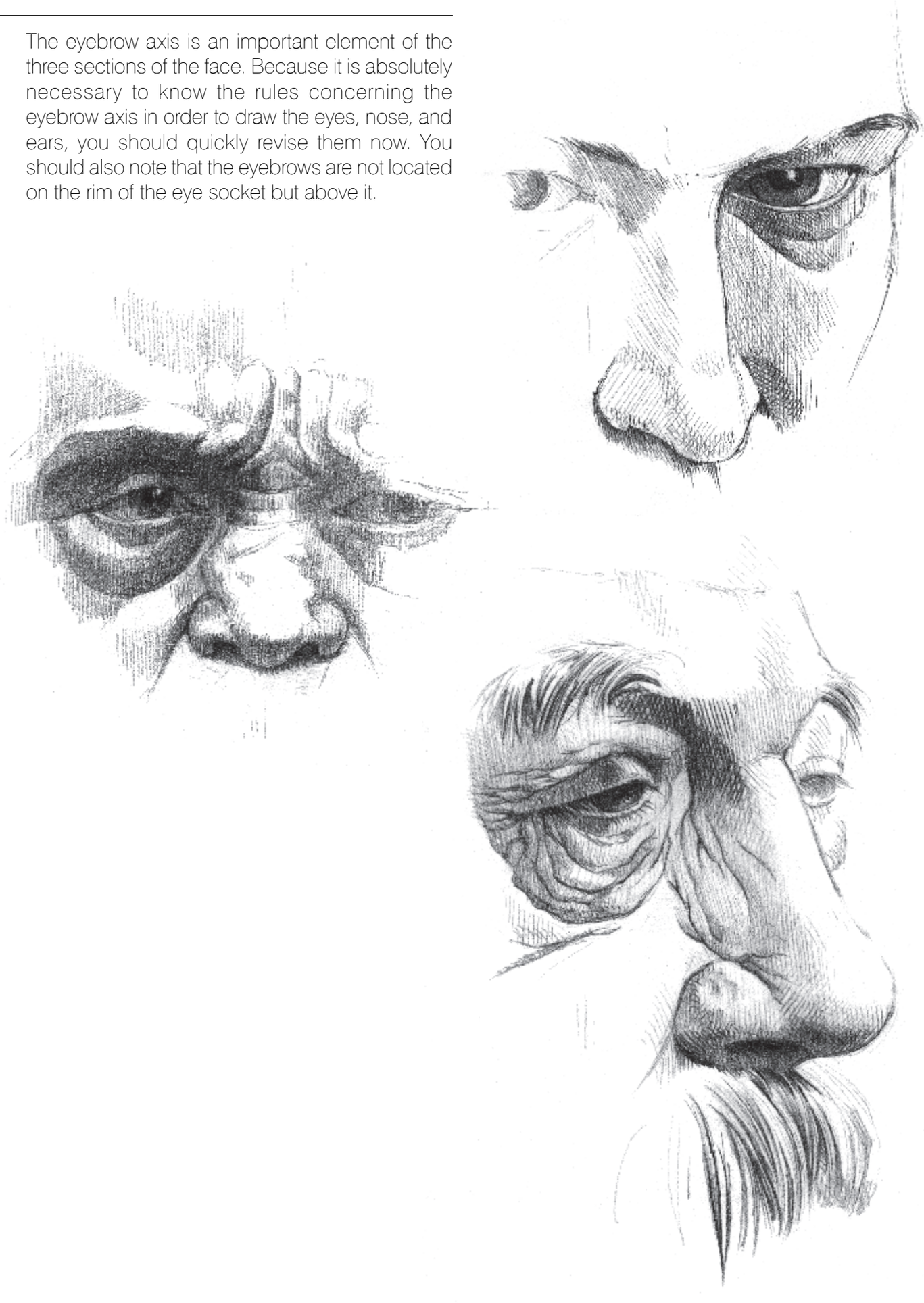


*Always measure horizontally or vertically, as it is by no means certain that you will transfer slanting shapes to the paper at the same angle.*

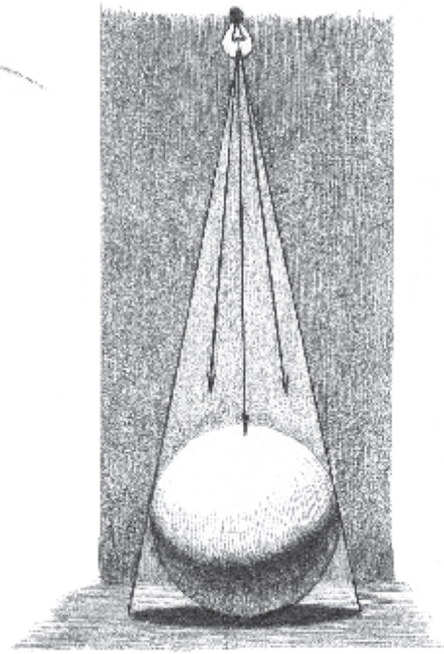




The eyebrow axis is an important element of the three sections of the face. Because it is absolutely necessary to know the rules concerning the eyebrow axis in order to draw the eyes, nose, and ears, you should quickly revise them now. You should also note that the eyebrows are not located on the rim of the eye socket but above it.



*Curls are reproduced with curving lines. At the same time, you can use the depiction of individual hairs to show whether or not the model is moving, whether a slight breeze is ruffling the hair or it has been caught by a gust of wind, or even if the model is standing in the rain or in the sun. In order to achieve this, you must plan the form of the strands.*



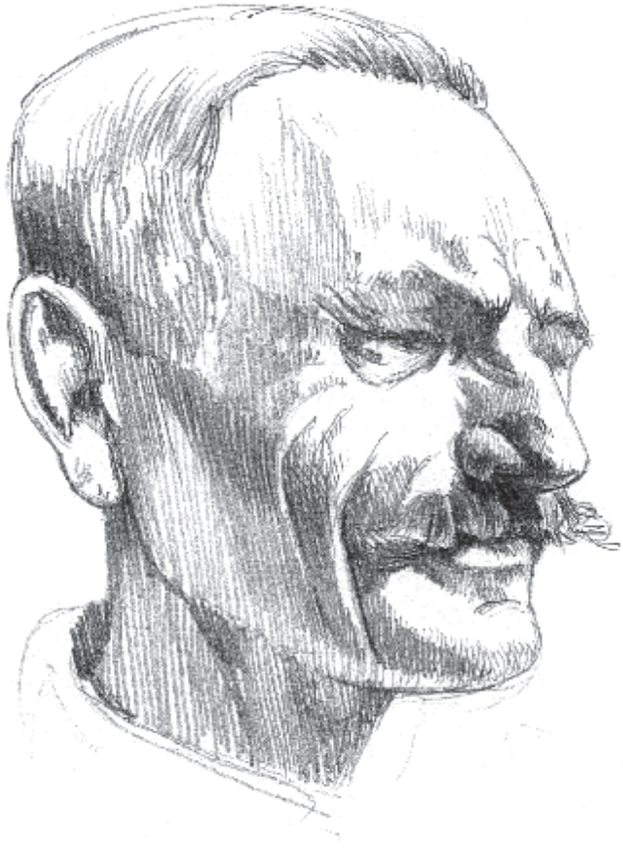
*The easiest to draw is short, straight hair that follows the oval shape of the head. When you are reproducing the chiaroscuro you will use what you know about the sphere. Depending on the position of the light source, there will be a brightest point on which the rays of light fall vertically. The curved surface becomes gradually darker and you can pick out an arc along which the light rays touch the surface only tangentially. Behind this, the body is dark; this is the form shadow. However, when drawing the hair you must note that it does not have a smooth surface and the various planes will reflect the light differently.*

*Drawing dark hair is not easy. I have shown the possible ways on two very different models. On the woman, I have depicted the neat hairstyle using parallel lines. I have separated the two adjacent, almost equally dark spots with a thicker line. I have portrayed the round shape of the head with thinner lines in the lighter area. On the young black man, I have shown the thickness and frizziness of the hair and the chiaroscuro by the use of a few dark spots. In order to reinforce the effect, I have depicted the outline of the hair with lines running in different directions.*

Drawing beards seems difficult at first; however, there are a few tricks that can make this task easier to manage. As the face is known to be symmetrical, it is reasonable to suggest that your first thought should be to mark in the main axis bisecting the face, because the two halves to the right and left of this axis of symmetry will generally be mirror images of each other. Then you find the angle of the beard hairs, also in relation to the main axis. Long moustaches usually run in curves to the right and left, whereas short ones are often almost vertical. Of course, there are no rules that apply in all cases because beards have many individual distinctive features.

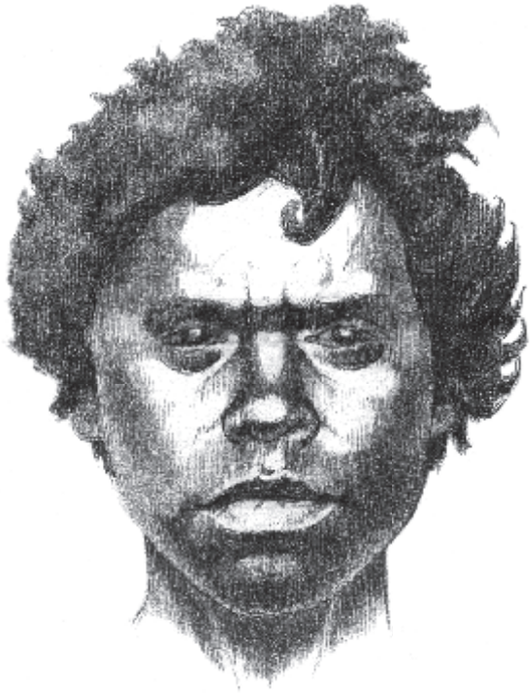
If the beard and moustache are gray, the face should be slightly darker in tone; with dark hair and beards, make the face paler.

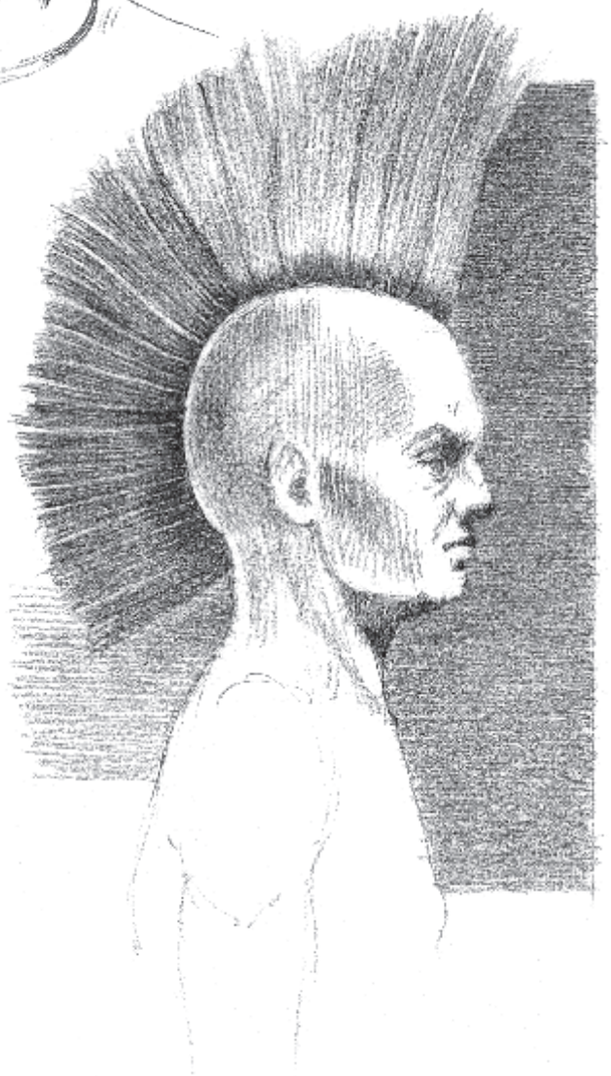
*My former teacher, Jenő Barcsay*



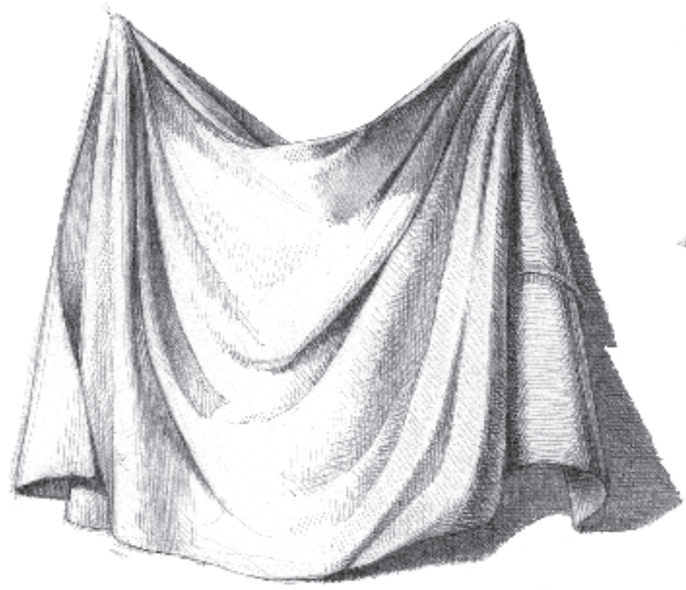
As with the hair, most of the problems with drawing beards arise because it is more difficult to determine the actual measurements of the head. Measuring helps here, too. Select a suitable section of the face as your starting point and relate all other measurements to this (see pages 110–111).

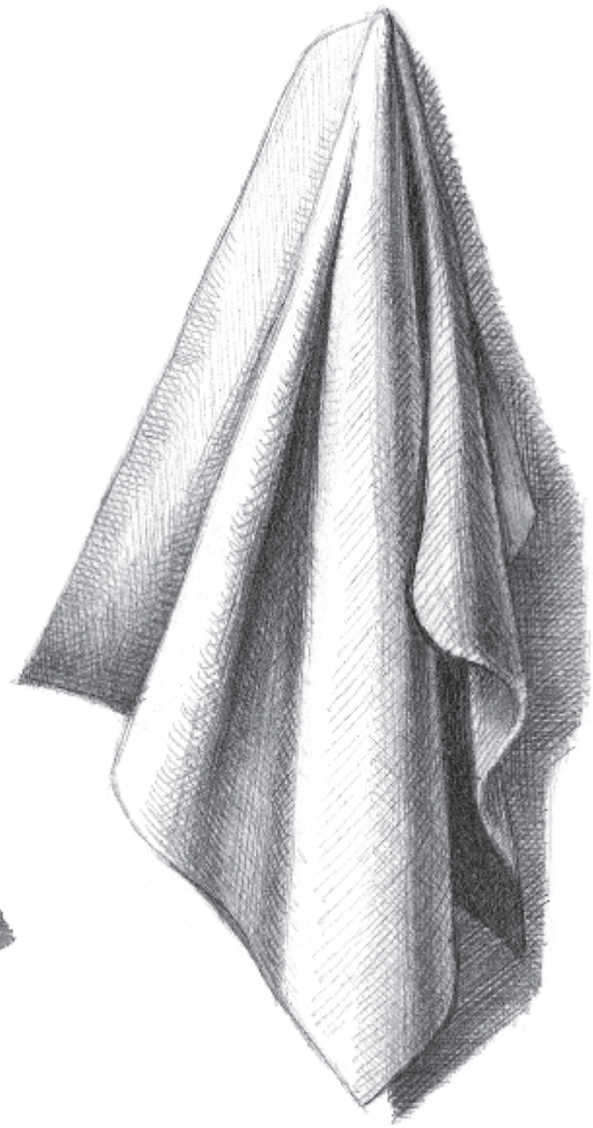
The style of hair and beard usually provides information on the times in which models live or lived as well as their age, gender, position in society, and ethnicity.



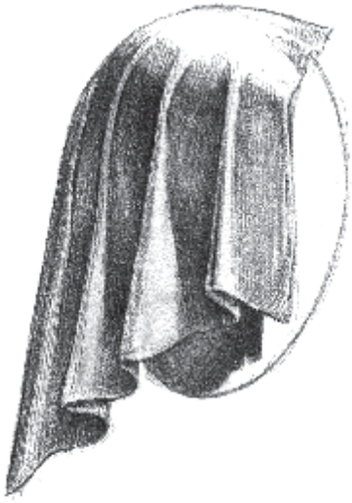


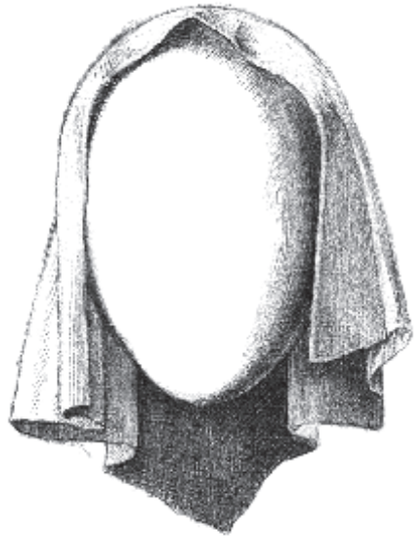
A special task awaits the artist when the model is wearing a headscarf because, in order to depict this, you need to know the rules for drawing drapery. The folds of drapery follow specific rules. With drapery fastened at a single point, the folds run outward and are conical. It is the same with drapery fastened at several points, except that a few additional downward folds form between the fastening points.

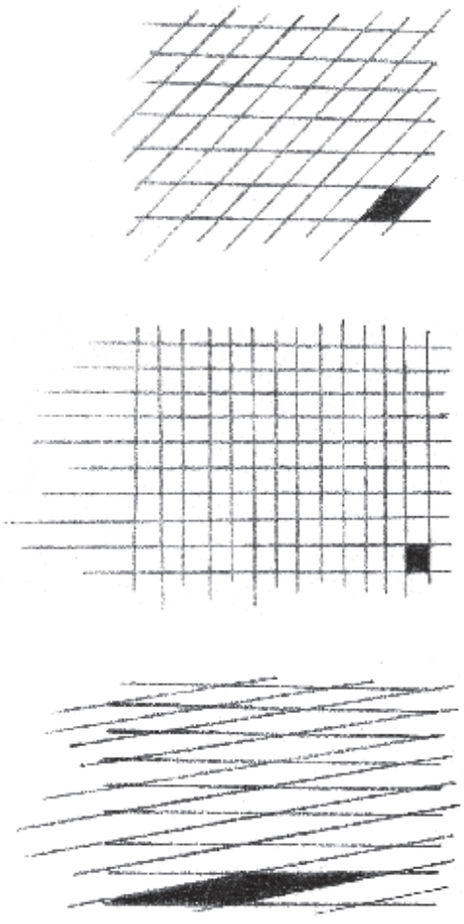




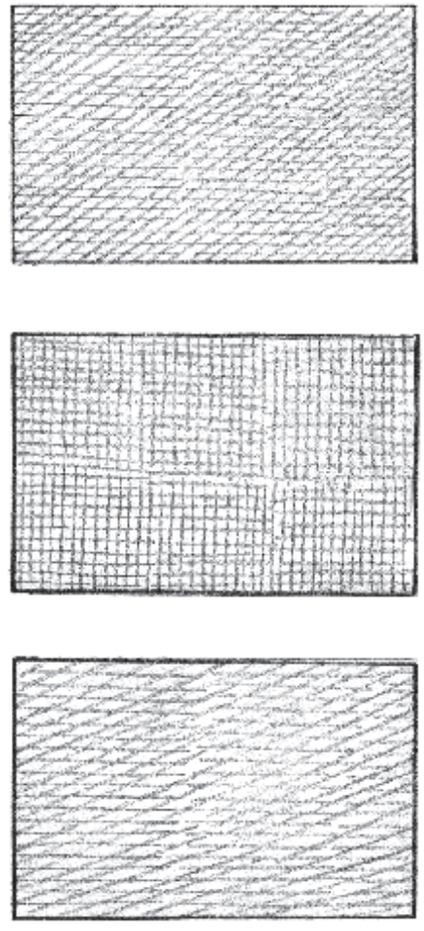
Additional rules can be noted when the cloth covers an object because the shape of the concealed object can also be made out. A figure wearing a headscarf can be compared to a drape supported by a sphere. The shape of the object that is the head is apparent at the highest point of the covering drapery, and the folds falling from this point are conical.



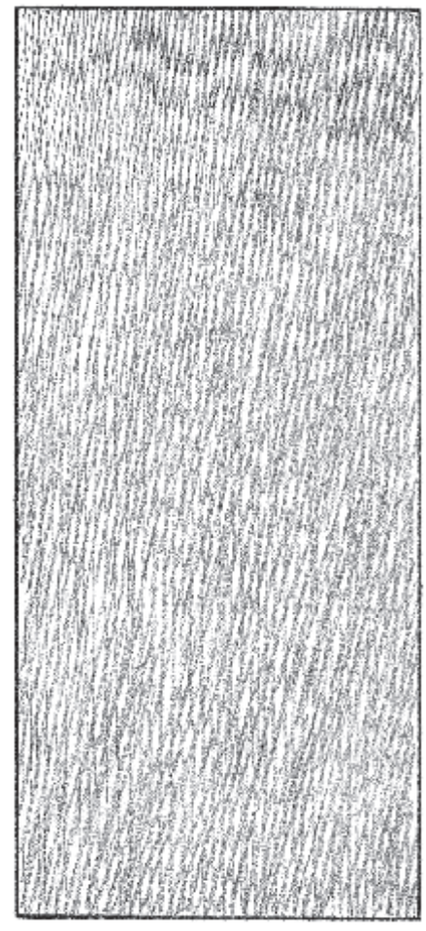




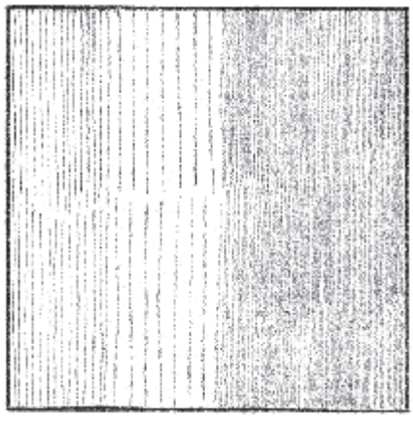
*Shading can be made up of one, two, or several layers of lines. Two layers create a network. The best result is achieved when the lines cross at an angle of 45 degrees.*



*You can also create a network with lines crossing at a right angle, although it is less attractive to look at.*

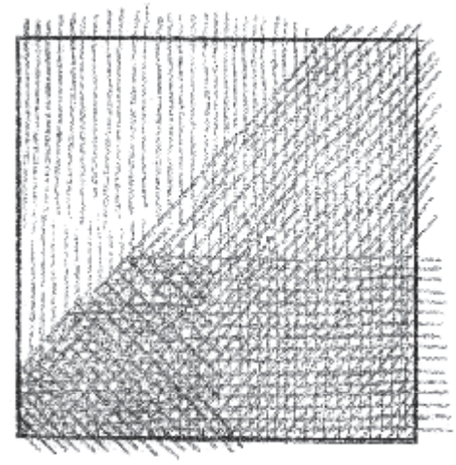


*The rhombuses that are created when the lines form an acute angle are irritating to the eye. In addition, a moiré effect is created, producing an unwanted line that has a disturbing effect.*



*The rhythm of the lines—that is, the amount of distance between them—changes the tonal value.*

*Confused lines have a disturbing effect, muddle the tones, and are unattractive to look at.*



*If you draw one, two, three, or four networks of equal density on top of one another, you end up with four different shades of gray.*

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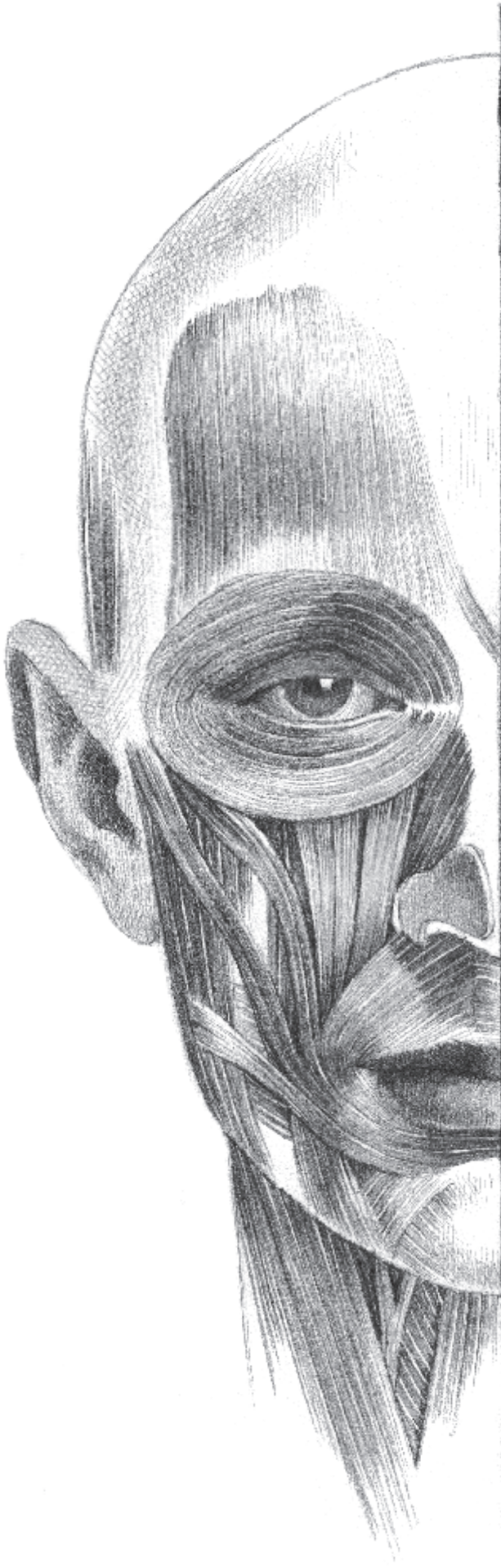

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