3 SEEING AND RESPONDING
Now that you have first-hand experience of the nature of basic drawing materials and how they interact, you are ready to begin working from a subject. At first it is important to focus your attention on the process rather than the product. These exercises are designed to teach you ways of seeing and responding that will form the foundation for future work in drawing. You may not initially produce the kind of drawings that you eventually hope to do, but these sessions are important because, later, they will enable you to visually respond to what you see in meaningful ways. Just as student musicians need to learn scales and the basic theories of harmony to gain control of their instruments, so you need to learn the rudimentary language of drawing. In order to fully commit these visual patterns of thought to memory, you need to consciously develop skills of thinking and responding that will later be used unconsciously and with greater ease and fluency.

**GESTURE DRAWING**

One basic concept unites all forms of drawing. They are all created by hand-held instruments that move across the surface of the drawing, leaving behind a record of their movement. This movement, or kinetic activity, is inherent to the nature of drawing. The use of gesture drawing techniques is one of the best ways to approach the expression of motion.

The term “gesture” refers to the kind of rapidly drawn line we might make in order to record or visualize basic visual information in a short period of time. Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) probably completed *Arab Attacking a Panther* (Fig. 3.1) within minutes as a preliminary sketch for what would eventually become a large, elaborate painting with lots of detail. This gesture drawing is full of energy, conveying the dramatic action of a mounted horseman swinging his sword at a crouching panther. Here Delacroix was searching for the essential visual gestures or basic elements that would express his ideas with great economy. Gesture is concerned with communicating the essence of an idea, not its fine points.

The gestural line is also a means of recording on paper not only what we see but how we see it. Quickly drawn lines mimic the rapid back and forth, up and down movement our eyes make as we visually explore a new form. Using our hand, arm, and upper torso to make rapid gestural lines, we can define important characteristics of the subject we wish to draw - its basic shapes, proportions, and its general position in space. This type of drawing does not concentrate on details, but responds instead with quickly drawn lines to the forms we perceive.

Gestures are dynamically and atmospherically captured in *A Clown* (Fig. 3.2), a charcoal and watercolor drawing by Honoré Daumier.

In an animated gesture drawing of a Cambodian dancer, Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) captures the essence of her body and drapery in motion through quickly perceived and swiftly flowing lines (Fig. 3.3). Gesture does not solely record the edges or contours of the form (a technique explored in Chapter 4, “Line”). The gesture method seeks to communicate something essential about the subject in an economic and dynamic way. Naturally you want to make drawings that are almost mastering the concepts of gesture drawing will increase your capacity to work that is more fluent and expressive than visually “correct.”

The Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti (1901–66) used energetic to visually link all the contents of a room in Portrait of an Interior (Fig. 3.4). The Giacometti’s relentlessly searching and interpenetrating lines the inanimate objects in the room are unified and brought to life. Notice the way all the visual elements in this scene appear to be connected to each other to form a unified whole.

GESTURE DRAWING
3 - SEEING AND RESPONDING

3.5 (left) Bedsheet draped over cardboard boxes.

3.6 (right) Student Drawing. Marisol Torres, Felician College. Charcoal, 24 x 19 in (60.9 x 48.2 cm).

PROJECT 3

Gesture Drawing

MATERIALS: 18 by 24 inch newsprint paper, vine charcoal or conté crayon.

Create your still-life subject by draping a white or solid pastel bedsheet over three or four randomly positioned, medium-size cardboard cartons, preferably set against a bare wall (Fig. 3.5). If possible arrange the lighting so that a strong unidirectional light (such as a window, or spotlight and reflector) illuminates the subject. This will create strongly contrasting shadows and highlights, making it easier to perceive the three-dimensional character of the subject and to respond to it with massed gesture.

Before you begin to draw, take a few minutes to study the scene. Where are some of the most prominent visual shapes in this arrangement? Try to view the subject as complete, comprising the various interrelated parts. Since we are concerned with rapidly responding to the forms in front of us, we must not let ourselves become bogged down with minor detail. For this reason there is a time limit of two to three minutes for this exercise. Hold the charcoal in a relaxed way, study the subject, and allow your hand and arm to follow your eyes as they move over the forms of the still-life (Fig. 3.6).

Because gestural response should be spontaneous, make sure you use the full dimensions of your newsprint pad. Avoid unconsciously placing a small drawing in the center of a large sheet of paper but rather consciously maximize the range of your arm movements in order to make full use of the paper. Look for major movements that run through the entire scene and record them with gestural lines. In this assignment it is better to err on the side of boldness than timidity.

Once you feel comfortable with this exercise, try putting to use what you have learned from the exercises that explored the pressure-sensitive nature of
charcoal. To register dark undercut folds, press harder. Minor creases should be drawn with less pressure. Changing the angle of the charcoal against the paper will also change the width of the line. Develop a “push” and “pull” response to the subject. Changing the intensity of the line might be coordinated with the object’s changes in depth or direction.

After you have made a series of short, timed drawings, stop and take a look at them. Could your lines be more flowing and expressive? Have you sufficiently emphasized major divisions in the form? Are you using the whole page? Shift your position to avoid monotony and visual familiarity. Make several more gesture drawings, keeping in mind the previous instructions. Think of the lines as uncoiled strings that follow the forms and fold of the subject. Be aware of the natural movement of your eyes as you trace these flowing forms. For the time being, forget about how accurate these drawings are and concentrate on the linear movements of the gesture lines.

PROJECT 4
The Unification of Gesture

MATERIALS: 18 by 24 inch newsprint paper, vine charcoal or conté crayon.

This exercise is designed to make you more aware of how all the visual elements in your drawing could be organized to work together in harmony. This arrangement of your drawing’s shapes, spaces, lines, and tones is referred to as its “composition.” One of the earmarks of an effective drawing is the way it unifies all its elements to create a feeling of wholeness and completion.

Look for several objects that have simple, uncomplicated shapes such as vases, books, and a shoe-box. (Ignore any advertising labels on the boxes. We are responding to the three-dimensional forms, not the surface design.)

Take some care in arranging your still-life subjects and place them in a group on top of a table in an uncluttered area where the light is good. Arrange some touching one another and some at short and medium distances. Stand back and view this as an informal composition rather than a collection of objects.

We will do a series of three- to five-minute poses for this still-life. Since the shapes of these objects probably do not relate to each other visually, we will have to create this effect with our gestural responses. Pay particular attention to how lines and marks might visually connect and spatially integrate these unrelated objects. We should be able to look at the drawing and see the still-life objects as a unified grouping.

Avoid placing small drawings of these objects in the center of the page. As you draw, allow your eye to travel across one form and on to the one next to it. Respond freely with your charcoal as you mimic the movement of your eyes.

In these initial exercises remember not to dwell on details. We are developing spontaneous response patterns to drawing that will be put to use later in more controlled ways. Stay with these gestural drawing exercises until you feel you have gained some proficiency. It would make sense to thoroughly explore the possibilities of basic exercises such as this one before continuing. Keep in mind, as you progress from one project to the next, that returning to earlier exercises will not be a waste of time. Drawing skills are cumulative, and over time our experience enables us to handle increasingly complex problems.
GENERAL GUIDELINES

Here is a summary of guidelines to remember as you work on the drawing projects in this chapter and throughout the book.

Position yourself comfortably and allow plenty of space to move your arms freely when working on a drawing.

Unless directed otherwise, use 18 by 24 inch paper (newsprint or bond).

Consider the physical parameters of your subject in relationship to the format or edges of your drawing paper before starting to draw.

Use the entire drawing space of your paper. Do not place small drawings in the center.

Exploit the full range of tones and marks your drawing instrument is capable of making.

Practice keeping your eye on the subject while your hand responds with motions that enscribe the forms on the paper.

Avoid cardboard cut-out outlining in gesture drawing. Use lines that visually "touch" the subject in many places, not only its outer edges.

3.7 Rembrandt van Rijn, Elephant, c. 1637. Black chalk, 9¾ × 14 in (24.9 × 35.6 cm). Albertina, Vienna.
PROJECT 5
Using Massed Gesture Lines

MATERIALS: 18 by 24 inch newsprint paper, vine charcoal.

In this project you will use massed gesture lines to quickly block in shadow areas and broadly define areas of light and dark in your subject. The time limit on this assignment should be between five and eight minutes.

Your choice of subject and the way you light it will play an important role in the success of this assignment. Use simple household objects similar to those used in Project 4. Illuminate this still-life with a strong unidirectional light source from a lightbulb and aluminum reflector to produce strong highlights and deep shadows. This will make it easier for you to perceive the basic divisions of light and dark in the subject and to respond to them with massed gesture lines.

Begin by lightly indicating the basic visual structure of the still-life with quick exploratory lines. Do not emphasize the edges of forms but explore the inner and outer structure of these three-dimensional objects. At this stage you are roughly determining where the major shapes are and how they relate to the physical dimensions of your paper. Holding your stick of charcoal at a 45 degree angle to produce thicker lines, make a series of close parallel lines that correspond to some of the deepest shadows in the subject. Avoid holding the charcoal completely parallel to the paper surface because the marks created by this technique tend to be smudgy and have no definition. By varying the thickness, density, and closeness of these lines, we can control how light or dark the tonal area becomes. Stay within the time limit to avoid overworking details; the idea here is to spatially describe the forms in your drawing through the means of dark and light tones. Your response should be spontaneous, direct, and bold. Take care not to cover the entire drawing surface with tones and lines. The contrasting effect of dark to light tones will be diminished. Make the paper work for you, let it represent the highlights in the subject. Rembrandt’s drawing of an elephant (Fig. 3.7) was done using the technique of massed chalk lines. Notice the way he creates the illusion of form through the interplay of dark and light tonalities.

After a few warm-up drawings change your position and before beginning to draw take note of where the darkest shadows are in the subject. What sections fall into the range of middle tones? Where should you leave the paper untouched to represent highlights?

Now that you have gained some experience with this process, practice integrating the spontaneous gestural lines you used in Project 3 with the massed-line technique of this exercise. Figures 3.8 and 3.9 show two student drawings that make use of massed gesture lines. Again do not measure the success of your drawing by how accurate and finished it looks – that issue will be resolved with time. Strive for an extended range of tones that varies from the lightest line to the darkest passages.
3 - SEEING AND RESPONDING
PROJECT 6
Making Continuous Line Drawings

MATERIALS: 18 by 24 inch newsprint or bond paper, a soft, broad-point graphite pencil.

For this assignment create an effective drawing subject by draping a white bedsheet over a high-backed living-room chair. Arrange the folds so that they form continuous, intersecting patterns (Fig. 3.10), pinning folds together in order to achieve interesting visual effects.

The solid graphite drawing instrument mentioned earlier is an idea tool for continuous line drawing because of the ease with which it glides over the surface of the paper (graphite is naturally slippery and is used as a dry lubricant for metal parts). The aim of this assignment is to construct a drawing that appears to have been made from one continuous line, developing the ability to coordinate the art of seeing with the process of drawing. Before you begin to draw, allow your eyes to freely roam and explore the physical dimensions of the still-life.

When you are ready to start drawing, keep your eyes on the subject and repeat this viewing process, but this time, making sure your pencil remains in continuous contact with the paper, synchronize the movement of your eyes with the continuous pencil lines. A good strategy is to convince yourself that you are touching the still-life with your pencil, drawing anything that your pencil could rest on and be guided along. You may momentarily stop the movement of the drawing instrument and look down at your drawing, but keep the graphite in contact with the paper until your resume drawing. This may seem to be an awkward method, but with practice you will be able to better coordinate your eye movements with the movement of your drawing instrument. By constantly looking up and down you are impeding the continuity of perception and you are actually drawing from memory rather than direct experience.

The time limit on this assignment should be about six to eight minutes.

Donato Creti (1671–1749), an Italian artist, made use of continuous line drawing techniques in this fluid study titled *Thetis Dipping the Infant Achilles into the Waters of the Styx* (Fig. 3.11).
Contemporary artists like Mel Bochner (b. 1940) have used similar techniques to produce striking drawings that probe visual perceptions and create feelings of movement and spatial continuity (Fig. 3.12).
INTEGRATING GESTURE DRAWING TECHNIQUES

Now that you have gained some preliminary experience in manipulating and controlling your drawing materials and you have learned to respond visually to various subjects, it is time to integrate and combine the various gestural techniques. Much of your previous effort was directed toward learning response patterns rather than achieving accurate representations. This assignment stresses combining many of the aspects of previous exercises, such as spontaneous gesture, mass gesture, and continuous line drawing, with a greater attention to accurate description.

The time limit on this series should range anywhere from ten to twenty minutes. Within this time-frame stay with the drawing as long as you do not become bogged down with minute detail. The object is to preserve some of the dynamic visual effects you achieved in the initial exercises and to combine them with greater concern for overall organization and accurate description.

In his incongruous drawing of a Campbell’s soup can stuffed with dollar bills (Fig. 3.13) Andy Warhol (1928–87) reveals a technique that effectively integrates quick gesture drawing with careful placement of forms and accurate description. The vigorous gesture lines in the upper half of the drawing contrast nicely with the freely drawn design elements of the soup can and the tightly rolled wad of bills in the foreground.


3.13 Andy Warhol, Campbell’s Soup Can and Dollar Bills, 1962. Pencil and watercolor, 24 × 18 in (61 × 45.7 cm). Collection, Roy and Dorothy Lichtenstein, New York.
3 - SEEING AND RESPONDING

PROJECT 7

Sustained Gesture Study

MATERIALS: 18 by 24 inch newsprint or bond paper, vine charcoal or graphite stick.

For this assignment create an appropriate still-life by using a circular or rectangular wastepaper container and placing a few crumpled sheets of newsprint on it. This, coupled with some effective lighting, should make a challenging subject to draw. Take the time to study the still-life before you begin to work. Give some thought to how you will arrange the lines and shapes on your drawing surface.

Begin by very lightly indicating on the paper where major forms will be located on the drawing plane. Since your first tentative marks will be faint, you can easily erase or draw over them later in the session when you are more sure of the position of the various elements. Do not become too restrained with your drawing technique. Once you feel confident about the position of a form, use vigorous, bold gesture lines. Vary your drawing methodology. As in the Warhol drawing some passages could be very free and sketchy and others more carefully delineated. We are searching for a balance in this series between the loose and the controlled, the spontaneous and the planned.

After you have completed several drawings, take a break and review your results. Pay particular attention to the character of the lines or marks. Are they all the same tonality, the same size? Could you improve the visual qualities of your drawing by making the marks more varied and more responsive?

Review the general guidelines presented on page 68 and make a checklist of areas you want to improve. Are you using the entire space of your drawing surface? (This does not mean filling it in but making appropriate use of all of the space.) Take note of how the Warhol drawing in Figure 3.13 organizes areas of linear activity with visually quiet space.

Another important factor is the “cardboard cut-out” syndrome, a common occurrence in student drawings. Lines should search and explore the full threedimensionality of the forms and not merely outline them. Make note of the basic improvements you wish to make in figure drawings and work toward putting these changes into effect. By the same token, take stock of the elements that work and continue to emphasize these qualities.

CONSTRUCTION METHODS

So far we have concentrated on spontaneously responding to the visual forms in front of us with quickly perceived gestural lines and marks. Accuracy of description and proportion in these beginning exercises were of less importance than developing a rapport between the act of seeing and the process of drawing. We were also learning to observe, condense, and record what we saw within strict time limits. Many of these techniques are frequently used by artists when they draw from life in sketchbooks. Often in these situations there is a need to produce drawings rapidly and with a minimum of reworking – the world is moving too quickly for studied efforts. But many of the visual effects of gesture drawing are prized by artists even when they are working in their studio because these gestural lines have visual quali-
ties that are uniquely expressive. For instance, the vigorous and graceful lines of the untitled drawing by Willem de Kooning (1904-97) convey a sense of power and dynamism that correspond to many aspects of contemporary life (Fig. 3.14).

Despite the outward appearance of casual improvisation in de Kooning's drawing, his work shows great control and careful structuring. He organized visual components in such a way that they have the appearance of spontaneity. Years of practice enabled him to achieve the feeling of freshly perceived graphic expression even if he worked on a drawing or painting on and off for years (see also Chapter 12).

In order to begin to develop the fluency of visual thought that results in an effective structure of ideas, we must have a working knowledge of how drawings are constructed. Another basic approach to drawing is to slowly and methodically respond to what we see in terms of planning, compositional structure, emphasis, and the analysis of visual relationships. Once you have gained experience with conscious planning, or construction methods, you will later be able to perform all of these analytical decisions almost without being conscious of using them. When the immediacy of gestural visual response is teamed with meaningful organization and structure, we will have achieved a synthesis of thought that is the hallmark of effective drawings.

**PROJECT 8**

**Blocking out a Drawing**

**MATERIALS:** 18 by 24 inch newsprint or bond paper, vine charcoal or soft graphite pencil (wide-point).

To create a still-life that offers a variety of sizes and shapes, select a group of four or five moderately sized household objects, such as lamp shades, cereal boxes, or toasters, and place them on a supporting surface such as a table or chair. Organize them in an informal, clustered way, avoiding even, symmetrical spacing (Fig. 3.15). In these exercises we will explore ways of consciously analyzing and graphically interpreting visual information.
Pick an angle of the still-life that appeals to you and get into a comfortable drawing position. Try not to work longer than twenty or thirty minutes on one drawing. Before making a mark on the paper, carefully examine the objects in front of you and consider them in relation to your drawing format. All the objects in your still-life should visually fit within the drawing format; some of them should come quite close to at least three edges of the paper. What part of the arrangement will come close to the top of the page? What object approaches the bottom edge of the drawing? What about the left and right limits? Begin by placing a light mark with your charcoal or pencil at specific points on the paper to indicate these parameters. At this stage of construction we are not interested in describing objects as much as we are concerned with determining their spatial and proportional relationships with each other and the dimensions of the paper. After carefully examining the still-life, visualize an imaginary line going from one of the parameter points you have chosen to another. On your paper lightly make an actual line between these points. Keep visually comparing and checking the angle and proportional length of the envisioned line in relation to the actual drawn line. Make corrections over your previously drawn lines as you begin to note their true positions. Continue to analyze and block out the relationships of all the objects in the still-life. What you will arrive at is a series of lines that analytically define the spatial and proportional structure of the still-life. Figures 3.16, 3.17, and 3.18 offer examples of what your progression might look like.

Pay particular attention to the space between the objects you have selected to draw. These negative spaces are as important as the objects themselves in terms of defining the compositional space of the drawing. What you will have created in this drawing session is a “map” describing the visual terrain of your still-life. The concept of a map is explored further in Chapter 9, “Creativity and Visual Thinking.” Classical drawing seeks to present forms and spaces to the viewer in a coherent, logical way. When you have developed the ability to control and manipulate what you see, you will have the freedom to creatively invent and organize anything you can imagine.

3.15 Household objects arranged into a still-life.
Now that you have gained experience analytically blocking out a composition, we will use this technique to create a skeletal structure upon which your gestural drawing is based. In this way we can combine accuracy of proportion and compositional refinement with more spontaneous lines.

Begin the drawing by determining the basic compositional organization as you did in Project 8. Make a series of horizontal and vertical lines that define the heights, widths, and general shapes of all the still-life objects and the negative space that surrounds them. These lines should continue past the objects, sometimes to the edge of the page. Keep these lines light because later you may want to draw over them and make them darker at crucial points.

Use this guide as a basis for a gestural drawing that explores some of the details of the still-life. Do not erase the preliminary lines that helped you define the composition; they reveal the visual thinking that went into the drawing and enable the viewer to share in the process of discovery.

CONSTRUCTION METHODS

3.16 (left) Sequential steps in blocking out a drawing (1).

3.17 (right) Sequential steps in blocking out a drawing (2).

3.18 Sequential steps in blocking out a drawing (3).
Rosemary Thompson's student drawing (Fig. 3.19) makes effective use of analytic drawing methods to create visual structures upon which she can further refine her composition. The large circles indicating body mass and structure and the smaller circles describing places where the legs are jointed aid her description of the donkeys' forms.

Later, as you gain proficiency with visualizing how a drawing might be organized, you might use fewer actual lines to plan its composition. Much of this analytic planning will be done unconsciously.

**PROJECT 10**

**Sighting with a Pencil**

**MATERIALS:** 18 by 24 inch bond paper, a 6B drawing pencil or conté crayon, a sharpened writing pencil.

Much of the difficulty of achieving accurate proportions in our drawings is because what we know about an object gets in the way of what we see. For instance, we may know that the top of a certain kitchen table is square. But,
rectangle. Yet when we draw the table we will tend to make its top square. In order to help us perceive spatial relationships and determine the correct angles and line positions, certain techniques and mechanical aids can be very helpful.

Find a rectangular kitchen or dining-room table that is convenient for you to draw. Sit down about 8 to 10 feet away from the table at an angle where the sides of the table do not appear parallel to the bottom of your page. Hold your sighting pencil at a consistent full arm’s length (this is important because if your arm is sometimes bent you will introduce unwanted measurement variables) and position it parallel to the bottom edge of your drawing paper. Close one eye, and keeping the pencil at this angle, move it up until it visually appears to touch the bottom of the table leg nearest to you (Fig. 3.20). Now it is possible to more objectively observe the angles of the table legs and the box sides in relationship to the bottom of your page. You can also use the sighting pencil held upright like a plumb line, to determine vertical alignments. Although our goal is to be able to overcome the impediment of misperception in drawing by training our mind, eye, and hand, this mechanical device can help us correct initial mistakes.

We can also use this technique to optically measure the relative proportions of shapes found in our still-life. For instance, many drawing students might at first have trouble correctly drawing the top of a table such as the one seen in Figure 3.20.

Once again, holding the pencil in your outstretched hand, measure the length of the table leg nearest to you by visually placing the pencil point at the top of the leg and placing your thumbnail at the position that corresponds to the bottom (Fig. 3.21). Keeping your thumb in this position with your arm still fully outstretched, compare the length of this leg with other visual measurements of the table, such as the table top. In this way you can objectively measure all the proportions of your subject and align them correctly on your drawing.

Using this sighting method, accurately draw the composition you created in Project 8, paying particular attention to horizontal and vertical angles and relative proportions.
PROJECT 11

Analyzing Complex Forms

MATERIALS: 18 by 24 inch bond paper, vine charcoal or a 6B graphite pencil.

Once you have gained a modest proficiency with the sighting pencil, purposely choose a complex subject to draw such as an opened umbrella, the blades of an electric fan, or a bicycle. Begin by blocking out the general composition of the subject and then use the pencil-sighting method to determine the exact position of shape and angles. There is no time limit on this exercise; take as much time as you need, organizing the details carefully.

VISUAL EMPHASIS

Even the simplest of drawing subjects presents us with an enormous amount of visual information – seemingly infinite gradations of light and dark values, complex and simple shapes, surface textures, and in general a wealth of spatial detail. A camera records all the light-based information passing through its lens. By contrast, a drawing might show us less but tell us more because of the way artists edit visual information and emphasize only those features important to the theme or concept.

Larry Rivers, an American artist born in 1923, created a particularly expressive portrait of Edwin Denby by selectively focusing on specific facial features and eliminating or only suggesting others (Fig. 3.22). Bold, gestural lines define sections of the figure's head and shoulder, while softer, finely hatched pencil lines describe lips, nose, and eyes, perhaps the most important areas of a portrait drawing. Large areas of the paper are left untouched and these sections act as a contrast to the complex,
visually active passages. By consciously emphasizing and playing down various visual elements of Denby's features, Rivers creates a haunting portrait that appears to be half-imaginary, half-representational.

When a drawing presents us with a lot of undifferentiated visual information we may find it monotonous and dull. Rosemary Thompson, a beginning student, makes effective use of visual emphasis in her drawing (Fig. 3.23) to counter this potential problem. By making the ceramic vase and some of the vertical forms significantly darker than other elements in this drawing, she creates interesting visual juxtapositions and encourages us to look carefully at her composition.

**PROJECT 12**

**Selective Focus**

**MATERIALS:** 18 by 24 inch bond paper, soft graphite pencil or vine charcoal.

Using objects found in your house or apartment, create a still-life that combines a variety of unusual shapes and themes. You may wish to use the white sheet as in earlier sessions since it has enormous flexibility and can simplify or embellish a drawing subject. If possible, choose objects that have some personal meaning to you that could be juxtaposed with other thematically expressive objects, for instance, a childhood collection of teddy bears could be combined with other memorabilia to create interesting visual and thematic possibilities. The incongruity of some of these objects might lead to drawing ideas you would not otherwise have conceived of. Use your imagination and take some time to create a still-life that encourages involvement on all levels of thought, thematic as well as visual.

Remember that interesting subjects do not guarantee effective drawings. You will need to fully exploit the visual principles and elements that we have been learning in order to make the drawings themselves interesting.

No strict time limit is set on this assignment but be aware of the pitfalls of dwelling too long on any detail or section. Generally it should take you an hour or two to complete this drawing.

Once the subject material is arranged to your satisfaction and the lighting is complete, examine the subject from several angles. What drawing position seems to offer the most interesting compositional possibilities? What preliminary thoughts do you have about emphasizing or playing down various components in the still-life? The primary objective of this drawing is to experiment with visual selection and emphasis. Think carefully about what is drawn, how it is drawn, where it is placed, and just as importantly, what is left out or only tentatively suggested.

Lightly block in key points of the composition and define where the outer limits of the drawing will be. Slowly begin to develop detail in areas that are significant to you. Let the drawing activity gradually grow over the entire surface of the paper, taking care not to let any one area develop too rapidly. As the drawing evolves, step back for a minute and consider the total composition. Are certain areas in need of more development? What about the open spaces of the drawing; are they contributing to the overall effect?

During this drawing project we need to be particularly conscious of the effect of the composition as a whole. Avoid automatically placing your main focal
points in the center of the page unless this is an important part of your compositional theme, otherwise you may inadvertently produce a dull, static arrangement. Larry Rivers (Fig. 3.22) placed the figure's head off-center near the upper edge of the composition. Similarly, the focal point of Rosemary Thompson's drawing (Fig. 3.23) is placed off-center. This visual organization creates an interesting tension between the empty space of the drawing and its selectively drawn details. As you draw, think carefully about what sections will be emphasized. What supportive role will other details play? What visual components could be suggested with just a few lines? Figures 3.24 and 3.25 illustrate two successful student responses to the issues of selective focus and visual editing.
By now you should have a clearer understanding of some of the basic visual concepts and skills you will need to learn in order to draw with confidence and fluency. Sitting down in front of a subject with a blank sheet of drawing paper in front of you should not be the intimidating experience it might have been in the past. Future chapters will build upon this foundation and allow you to begin to express your ideas with more assurance and skill.