

METHODS FOR CONVEYING EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION IN PENCIL PORTRAITURE THROUGH HATCHING AND TONAL VALUES

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Abstract: This article discusses the theoretical and methodological aspects of conveying emotional expression in pencil portraiture through hatching and tonal values. The anatomical construction of the head, facial proportions, facial expression, viewing angle, and light–shadow relationships are considered as interconnected pictorial factors. Stroke direction, density, length, and pressure are explained in relation to the representation of form and tonal unity. A sequential portrait drawing workflow, criteria for reviewing the work, and methods for correcting common errors are proposed. The central argument of the article is that emotional expression arises from the integration of observed facial features, accurate construction, and tonal relationships rather than from an isolated graphic technique. The recommendations are presented as a methodological approach to portrait drawing, not as findings from an educational experiment.

Keywords: pencil drawing, portraiture, emotional expression, hatching, tonal values, anatomical construction, facial expression, viewing angle, light and shadow, graphic expression

Portraiture is a genre that enables the artistic interpretation of a person’s appearance and individual characteristics. In pencil drawing, this task is accomplished through line, hatching, form, and tonal relationships. Gaze direction, the position of the eyelids and eyebrows, the corners of the mouth, and the orientation of the head contribute to facial expression, while light, shadow, and hatching make these features legible in the drawing.

Anatomical accuracy and likeness are essential to the study of portraiture, but they do not encompass every aspect of creating emotional expression. The roles of graphic techniques in constructing form and establishing the expressive mood of an image should therefore be considered together. The impression of mood conveyed by the image should not be equated with the actual psychological state of the person depicted.

At the initial stage of portrait drawing, the overall volume of the head, its orientation, and the facial centreline are established. The eye line, base of the nose, and position of the mouth are compared with one another. These guidelines are not a rigid template; rather, they help check the individual proportions of the person being observed.

The face should be understood as a system of interconnected volumes rather than a collection of separate details. The shapes of the forehead, eye sockets, cheeks, nose, and jaw determine the distribution of light. An incorrectly positioned eye or nasal axis cannot be fully corrected through subsequent tonal rendering; the construction error must first be addressed. In a frontal view, the centreline and natural differences between the two sides of the face are observed. In a three-quarter view, the more distant facial features are foreshortened. The axes of the eyes, nose, and mouth are aligned with the orientation of the head. In profile, the relationships among the forehead, nose, lips, chin, and jaw are important. Views from above or below alter the visibility and apparent proportions of the features. Viewing angle affects how facial expression can be seen but does not, by itself, signify a particular emotion. Emotional expression is conveyed through the combined appearance of changes around the eyes, eyebrows, lips, and cheeks. Gaze direction, eyelid opening, eyebrow position, and

the corners of the mouth should be compared with one another. Exaggerating one feature without relating it to the others makes the facial expression appear artificial.

In an eye study, the eyeball, eyelids, eyebrow, and eye socket are treated as a single system. Outlining the eyelid margins with uniformly heavy lines or leaving the visible white of the eye entirely unshaded can weaken the sense of volume. The lips are also represented through their form and the tonal relationships around the mouth, rather than through contour alone.



Figure 1. Eye study showing the volumetric and tonal relationships among the eye, eyelids, eyebrow, and eye socket.

The artist depicts observed features and simplifies them in accordance with the intended artistic effect. The same facial feature may be interpreted differently in different situations; emotional expression in a portrait should therefore be assessed together with context, viewing angle, and lighting.



Figure 2. Construction studies of the head in frontal, three-quarter, and profile views.

Facial volume is represented through the relationships among illuminated areas, halftones, form shadows, cast shadows, and reflected light. At the outset, the direction of the light source is identified and the major light and shadow masses are established. Smaller transitions are developed within this overall structure. Side lighting can accentuate differences between facial planes, whereas soft frontal lighting can reduce sharp contrasts. However, soft lighting does not invariably convey calmness, and strong contrast does not necessarily indicate anxiety or strength of character. Lighting influences the expressive mood of the image but does not independently establish the actual emotion of the person depicted.

To preserve tonal unity, each feature is compared with the overall lighting conditions. If a shadow around an eye is not related to the other shadows, it may appear detached from the face. Rendering all shadows equally dark or eliminating the distinction between light and dark areas also weakens the sense of volume. The strongest contrasts are used purposefully at the composition's focal point.

Hatching serves to construct form, build tonal values, and represent surface qualities. Strokes that follow the form help describe the volume of the cheek, forehead, or nose. However, this is not the only possible approach. Parallel hatching and cross-hatching can also be applied consistently within the chosen graphic style. Stroke density, the number of layers, and pencil pressure affect tonal

value. More paper remains visible between widely spaced strokes. Closely spaced or overlapping strokes produce darker areas. The resulting tone also depends on pencil softness and paper texture. Building up layers gradually, rather than immediately applying heavy pressure to darker passages, makes corrections easier. Stroke length and rhythm contribute to the graphic character of the drawing, but no particular stroke type consistently signifies a specific emotion. Its expressive effect emerges through its relationship with facial expression, tonal contrast, and the overall composition.

1. Observation and placement. Head position, gaze, facial expression, and lighting are observed; the scale of the image on the paper and the surrounding negative space are established.

2. Construction. Light lines are used to establish the overall volume, centreline, and placement of the facial features.

3. Refinement of volumes. The relationships among the forehead, eye sockets, cheeks, nose, lips, and jaw are checked.

4. Establishment of major tonal masses. Light and shadow areas are separated, and their overall tonal relationships are established.

5. Development of hatching and tone. The chosen hatching approach is used to model volumes and develop the required tonal transitions.

6. Review of facial expression. The gaze, eyebrows, and lips are compared again with the observed appearance, and excessive contrasts are softened.

7. Unification. The work is viewed from a greater distance, and likeness, volume, tonal unity, and the expressive focal point are assessed.

These stages are not strictly separate procedures. Facial expression and proportions are checked throughout the process, and earlier stages are revisited when necessary.

Five criteria are proposed for reviewing the work: convincing structural proportions, consistency of the viewing angle, tonal unity, purposeful hatching, and coherence of facial expression. Students explain where they increased contrast and what function the selected graphic approach serves. These criteria are methodological recommendations and have not been tested as a standardized assessment instrument. Moving to details too early can produce errors in overall proportion. In such cases, the major form and axes are rechecked. Observed individual differences are retained rather than replaced with artificial symmetry. Uniformly strong contours are softened or clarified according to lighting and volume. Disorganized strokes are restructured in accordance with the chosen approach. An excessively narrow or overly stark tonal range is corrected by comparing the overall light–shadow relationships. When facial expression is exaggerated, the artist returns to the initial observation and reassesses the eyes, eyebrows, and lips together.



Figure 3. Completed portrait integrating construction, hatching, tonal values, and facial expression.

Emotional expression in pencil portraiture is created through the integration of anatomical construction, observed facial features, viewing angle, and light–shadow relationships. Hatching

articulates this structure graphically, while tonal values connect the volumes and establish the image's expressive focal point. Their effect derives from the overall artistic treatment rather than from isolated technical characteristics.

The workflow and review criteria proposed in the article may support a systematic approach to portrait drawing classes. Emotional expression is treated as a task extending from initial observation to final unification, rather than as a feature added only at the final stage. Separate educational testing and assessment are required to determine the effectiveness of the recommendations.

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