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# DRAWING FACES

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Learn How to Draw a Face with Attitude, How to Draw Eyes with Impact and How to Draw Lips with Structure

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## DRAWING FACES

# How to Draw DYNAMIC HEADS

DEPICTING FEATURES IS ONLY THE BEGINNING. PUTTING LIFE INTO A HEAD DRAWING REQUIRES ASSIMILATING IT WITH THE REST OF THE BODY, CAPTURING AN ATTITUDE—AND MUCH MORE.

by **Dan Gheno**

There are many ways to keep your figure drawings lively, fresh, and dynamic. But there is one sure way to destroy an active and energetic drawing: by plopping a stiffly rendered, ham-fisted head on top of an otherwise nicely drawn figure. Too many artists, perhaps fearful of their subjects, treat the head as if it were nothing more than an inventory of features or an empty, blocklike shape, void of life, sometimes sitting straight and rigidly on its neck, contradicting the underlying gesture of the body and looking like a lifeless lollipop.

This eons-old challenge of how to put more life and energy into drawings, paintings, and sculptures of the human head is easily answered once you get beyond the fear and the seeming complexity of the subject. I will outline many solutions throughout this article appropriate for both the beginner and advanced artist. Some of the cures will seem deceptively simple. Others will reach beyond the obvious, studying the head from all sides, including top and bottom. And just about all of them will somehow involve the overall figure, with the head serving as the crown of the magnificent machine that is the human body.

Friedrich Karl, Prince of Prussia

by Adolf Menzel, 1863, gouache over graphite, highlighted with white, 11½ x 9.

Notice how, from behind, the nasolabial furrow obscures some of the nose and mouth and seems to unite optically with the cheekbone and rim of the eye. This connection helps to push the nose back and, along with several other overlapping shapes, reinforces the roundness of the underlying egg-shaped head structure.



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## Attitude

Perhaps the most powerful key to a stronger head is the most obvious one, which even advanced artists often miss in their obsession to get the features just right—that is, give your head attitude. Faces need to look somewhere; their eyes need intensity and aim. You have probably noticed how the eyes in some Old Master paintings and drawings often seem to follow you as you move around the room. This dynamic event occurs in the viewer's mind, usually when the artist depicts the head in a three-quarter view with the eyes looking off to one side, as Leonardo most famously did in his *Mona Lisa*. In drawings such as Leonardo's *Study for the Angel in La Vierge aux Rochers*, observe how the irises (the circular, colorful portion of the eyeball) seem to peer out of the corner of these eyes, gazing past the canvas or drawing toward the viewer. Remember, you can't move irises around willy-nilly. The upper eyelid bulges above the iris, so every time you change the direction of your model's gaze, you must also change the shape of the upper lid. If you draw the model looking off extremely to one side, you will find that the lower eyelid pulls up with it.

The tilt of the head is equally crucial to achieving attitude in your figure drawings. It should somehow complement or contrast the gestural movement that flows through the body from the toes to the neck and, finally, and hopefully, into the head. In Ingres' masterpiece of a portrait, *Louis-François Bertin* (not pictured) some people seem to lean forward imperiously, head locked into their shoulders as they speak to you. Others lean back, their noses tilted up, and their irises barely peering past their lower lid. Pay close attention to body shapes and gesture, even when drawing a vignetted, seemingly isolated head. You don't want to draw a husky, muscular man with a pencil-thin neck or a young child with a fullback's shoulders. Look at the model intensely. Notice how the neck leads from the shoulder into the

## ABOVE RIGHT

*Study for the Angel in Madonna of the Rocks* by Leonardo, silverpoint, 7½ x 6¼.

The eyes in some Old Master paintings and drawings often seem to follow you as you move around the room. This dynamic event occurs in the viewer's mind, usually when the artist depicts the head in a three-quarter view with the eyes looking off to one side.

## RIGHT

*Drawing of a Man* by Leonardo, pen-and-ink, 11 x 8½. Collection Royal Library, Windsor Castle, London, England.

Describing his diagram, Leonardo explained, "The side of the head on which the (light) rays fall most directly will be the most highly lighted, and those parts on which the rays fall most aslant will be less lighted. The light falls as a blow might, since a blow which falls perpendicularly falls with the greatest force, and when it falls obliquely, it is less forcible than the former in proportion to the width of the angle."



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## ABOVE LEFT

Drawing of a Woman With Loop Earring by Dan Gheno, 2006, graphite with white chalk on toned paper, 10 x 8. Collection the artist.

## ABOVE RIGHT

My Father Posing for Facial Folds by Dan Gheno, 2006, graphite, 12 x 9. Collection the artist.

Facial folds occur at right angles to the direction of the muscles underneath, very similar to a theater curtain being pulled across the stage by a horizontal cord. The zygomatic muscle runs from the cheekbone to the corner of the mouth and, when contracted, creates dependable creases in the face, the most important being the jugal furrow (**left of A**) and the accessory jugal furrow (**B**). Note how the shape of the large chewing muscle, called the masseter (**C**), becomes more defined when the chin is pulled in.

head. It doesn't matter if you are only drawing a small snippet of the neck in fact, the shorter the line, the more crucial the correct angle becomes. If the line fragment angles outward or inward a little too much, the error will become magnified once you imagine the line extending outside of the image, inferring an implausible body type for the head. Body postures and their relationships

to the head are numerous, and they can be quite evocative of an individual's character, psychology, and emotion.

## Getting a Likeness

It may seem like a waste of time worrying about whether you've captured a likeness or not. It's unlikely the viewer will notice that something is missing. True, it will not matter in the end to the viewer. But I feel it's imperative to always give it a sincere try. The pursuit of likeness keeps my concentration focused, it keeps the entire drawing process compelling, and, in the end, the struggle leads to a more active-looking and vigorous drawing.

There is no doubt that the individual features and the distance between the features are essential in getting a likeness and a psychologically animated head and figure. I explained several feature-measuring techniques in my first article for *American Artist* ["Painting Portraits"] in the February 1993 issue.

It's useful to draw numerous studies of the features—like Jusepe de Ribera did in *Study of Eyes*—cataloguing and committing their basic construction to memory. At the same time, try to be sensitive to the bilateral symmetry that underlies the face and its features. Use guidelines to line up one side of the face with the other. But remember this very important caveat: As much as you may want them to, features do not conform to a simplistic rule of absolute symmetry. Look closely at any Old Master portrait. You will usually find that one eye is almost always a little bigger or a little farther from the nose than the other, one nostril a little taller, one side of the mouth a bit lower than the other. These artists' use of subtle asymmetry gives their subjects' heads and figures life and a sense of action, as if the features are in motion. This asymmetry is vitally important from the likeness standpoint as well. It's been proven in clinical and psychological studies that when a photo is sliced

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in half, with one side reversed and pasted next to the other, the viewer finds it difficult to recognize the subject within the new-found symmetry.

No matter how enticing your subject's features, the hard truth is that the ratio of the head shape and size to the body is much more crucial to capturing a likeness or creating a dynamic impression. When looking at your model, ask yourself what sort of geometric shape typifies his or her head. Does your model have a triangular head tapering toward the bottom, with lots of

hair and full cheekbones at the top sliding into a narrow jaw and smallish chin below? Or perhaps your subject has a wide, rectangular face with a broad jaw, full cheeks, and a flat, closely cropped hairdo—or a tall, rectangular head, narrow but angular from jaw to top of head. Maybe your model's forms are built on soft, circular shapes. Whatever your subject's essential structure, you can always distill it into a simple, quickly identifiable shape in your mind that will guide you through the complicated process of laying in the drawing.

## Purge Your Preconceptions

After determining the global shape of the head, assessing the facial angle is the next most important factor in getting a likeness and keeping your head drawing lively. Forensic specialists frequently use this technique to identify decomposed remains, and 19<sup>th</sup>-century phrenologists used it in a foolish attempt to catalogue racial intelligence. You can discover the facial angle of your subject by drawing a line from the ear hole, or external auditory meatus, at the base of the skull to the bottom of the nasal aperture (Fig. B) and then compare that line to one that runs from the base of the brow ridge, or glabella, to the upper dental arch. Called the "muzzle," this protrusion doesn't project as far forward in humans as it does in animals, but it usually juts farther outward than most beginner—and some advanced—artists are willing to accept. The real human head is quite unlike a Greek statue; it's very rare that all of your subject's features will line up in a straight, stagnant, and vertical formation from forehead to chin. Unless you're trying to render some sort of classical ideal, look for this basic facial angle, and then compare it to the usually receding angle that leads from the tip of the nose to the base of the chin, or the angles that radiate off the forehead, across the top of the head, and back down to the nape of the neck (Fig. A).

Even if you get all of the big shapes of the head correct, you're not out of the woods yet. You need to compare the facial size to the overall head size.

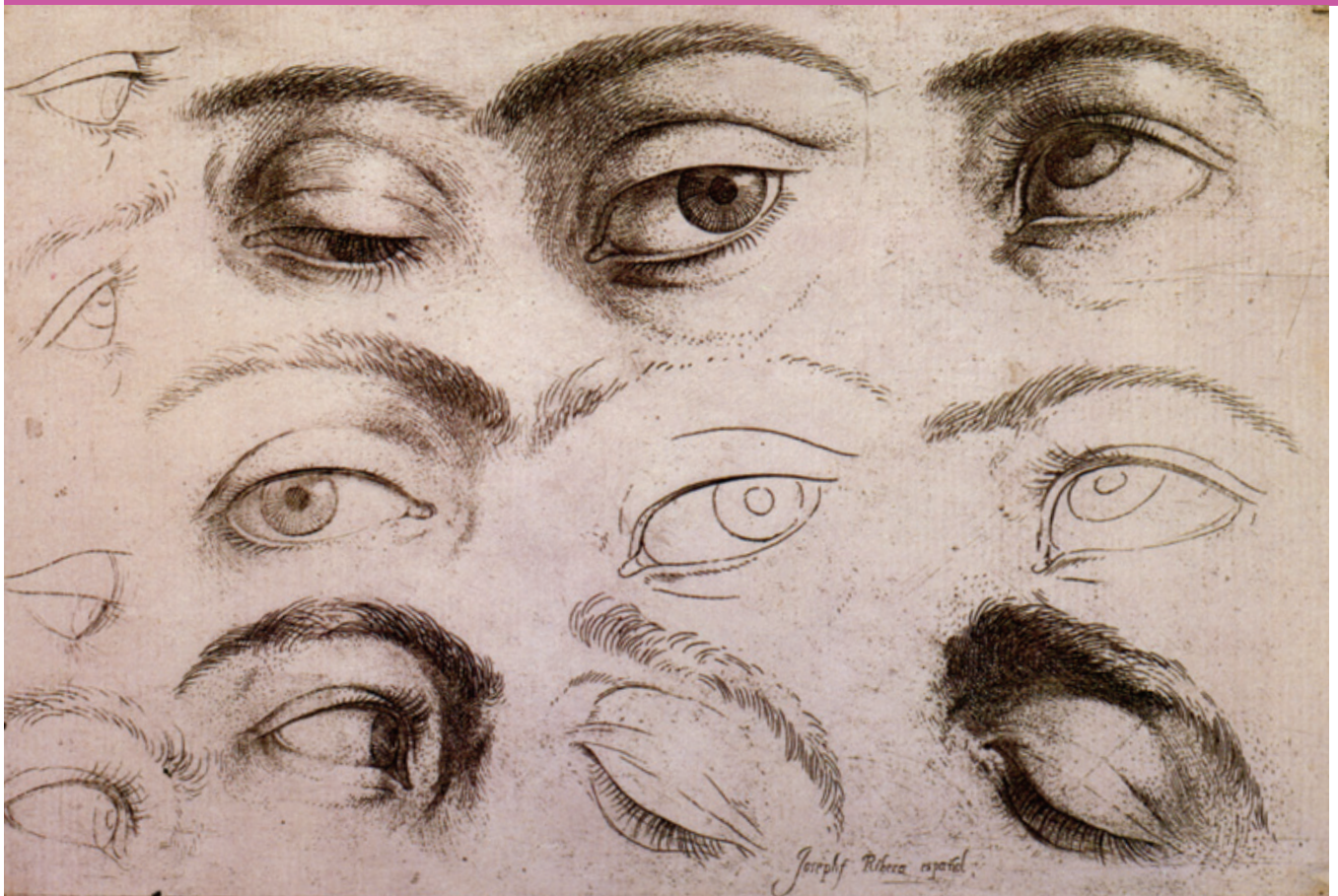
Two Studies of the Head and Shoulder of Little Girl (detail)

by Jean-Antoine Watteau, ca. 1717, red, black, and white chalk on buff paper, 9½ x 7¾. Collection Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, New York.

Always look closely at the periphery of the face. Study how Watteau drew the far eye and eyebrow in this drawing. Approach your own head drawings like him, finding the subtle overlaps and the delicate forms that often lurk behind the horizon of a spherical face.



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## Study of Eyes

by Jusepe de Ribera, 1622, etching, 5 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
Collection Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria.

It's always a good idea to study the subforms of the face. Whenever you have a free moment, draw isolated views of the eyes, nose, lips, and ears from every direction. Soon you will build up a subconscious understanding of each feature.

Quite often, even the most experienced artist will make the facial area—the space between the mouth and eyebrows—too big or too small for the rest of the head. Then they wonder why the head looks too big or small, even though they've measured the overall head size against the body a thousand times, and it adds up correctly every try. That's because we often judge the size of the head with our gut; and if the features are drawn too large or small, the head will seem likewise. Most often, artists tend to make the facial mass too big, especially on a foreshortened head or bearded model. Artists

are only human. Governed by our species' psychological focus on the importance of the features, we seem eagerly predisposed to expect a large facial size.

## Larger Than Life

Many large-scale drawings have a built-in dynamism. Unfortunately, it's often hard to feel good about a face that's drawn larger than life, especially when drawing a delicate person. Even if all of the features and underlying angles are impeccably placed, the face will almost always seem "off," or at least surreal, because it is larger than we have experienced in real life. Perhaps you want to embrace that surrealism or want to capture some of the heroic power we see in such sculptures as *Head of Constantine* (not pictured). I do that a lot myself, as do many artists I admire. Perhaps you are doing a mural or altarpiece that will be seen at an

extreme distance. Just be sure you are doing it on purpose, not because you got carried away. Usually, this problem creeps up on you. As one works on the features—or any detail of the body, such as the hands or feet—one can become captivated, and if an artist doesn't step back often to gauge the relative size of the subject's face to the rest of the figure, those features will tend to grow. Artists then compensate by enlarging all the other features, then the entire head, until finally the rest of the figure must be redrawn at a larger size. Then, to add insult to injury, the feet may be falling off the page or the hand could be cut off awkwardly by the edge of the paper at the knuckles, forcing the artist to scrap the whole figure, including the head.

No artist is free from this malady. I know myself too well, and to counteract this tendency, I draw lines at the top, bottom, and middle of my figures

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when I sense my proportions going awry. Whether you are a beginner or an advanced artist who is continually dealing with this problem, draw these lines near the outset of the drawing process. Then, if you find your face or figures expanding even a little beyond these lines, resolutely and bravely enforce a hard-love discipline on yourself. With head drawing, this usually means first revisiting the size of the nose, since all the other features radiate off this central point. Indeed, when initially laying in the proportions of the face, it's a good strategy to put more work into the nose once you start delving into the details. Of course, you don't want to spend all your time on the

## BELOW

Ethel Smyth

by John Singer Sargent, 1901, black chalk, 23½ x 18. Collection National Portrait Gallery, London, England.

From a low, three-quarter view, the lower face looks quite large as the spherical shape of the head curves toward you. On the other hand, the forehead looks rather small and the nose jumps up in front of the far eye as the head rounds out away from you. Don't inadvertently lengthen the top of the head and shorten the lower area to conform to your subconscious preconceptions.

nose. To maintain your objectivity and a gestural quality in your drawing, always move around the face and figure when working on specifics. But once the size of the nose is set, compare all of the other features to it. Say, for instance, you accidentally make the nose too big. If you're vigilant, you will likely catch it before its stealthy effect cascades throughout the features and body with increasing magnitude.

## Purposeful Exaggeration

You might find yourself justifying an overly large head size by arguing, "Well, some people just have large heads!" Think—and look—again. Proportional relationships tend to reoccur throughout the body. There are no absolute rules, but when someone has a seemingly large head, many of their other subform proportions tend to be stocky as well. Among adults, our bodies can range anywhere between six to eight heads tall. If you wander beyond that limit, you surely need to take a second look at your subject to be sure you are

not fooling yourself. Like Sargent, you may purposely choose to elongate your figure by giving your drawing a small head—many of his figures are nine or 10 heads tall and quite plausible. Like him, just be sure to equally lengthen all the other body subforms. Nothing looks sillier or more stilted than a tiny pinhead on a hulking body or inconsistently exaggerated body parts. On the other hand, don't fall prey to the opposite problem—making a head too large—to try to compensate for a heavy or muscular body type. Even if you want to embellish the muscularity or heaviness of the body forms, you must pay particular attention to the way the full neck tucks dramatically into the front of the diminutive head on a large, heavy model and the way the thick shoulders of a muscular model taper gradually into the back of the normal-size skull.

## Elements of Head Structure

*Light Source:* The more you work in a representational manner, the more you need to consider the underly-



## LEFT

Head of a Young Woman

by Jean-Baptiste Greuze, 1765, black and white pastel, charcoal, and red chalk, 13½ x 10¼.

Greuze treated the shadow running through the young woman's face simply and graphically. He knew that light illuminates detail, while the absence of light obscures visual information and leaves the shadow in a relatively passive state. He reserved most of his subtle details for the light side. He rendered the forehead in a dramatically bright highlight that then tapers into progressively darker values, as the face gradually curves egglike away from the light and recedes into the halftones of the chin.

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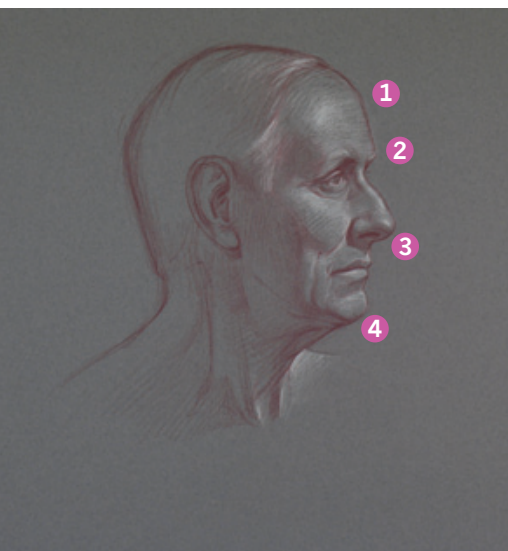
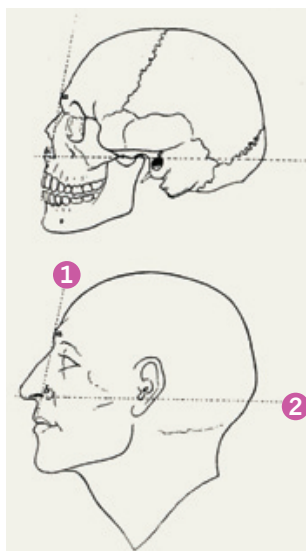


FIGURE A, ABOVE LEFT

Drawing of Paul by Dan Gheno, 2006, graphite with white chalk on toned paper, 12 x 10. Collection the artist.

When judging a likeness, compare the distances that make up the forehead (1-2), the nose (2-3), and the space between the bottom of the nose (3) and the chin (4). If you don't transcribe these proportions accurately, you'll never find a likeness no matter how well you draw the individual features. Sometimes you might find it difficult to assess the top of the forehead



if your subject has a high hairline. In that case, use the point where the forehead begins its transition into the top of the skull (1).

FIGURE B, ABOVE RIGHT

Diagram of the Facial Angle by Charlotte Bertuch-Froriep, ink.

To determine your model's facial angle, compare an angle that runs from the brow ridge to the upper dental arch (1) with one that runs from the base of the nose to the ear hole (2).

ing structure of the head and figure to keep your drawing robust and exciting. Your choice of lighting is a crucial factor, particularly when working tonally with value masses. Other artists may make different, equally valid choices, but I deliberately place my light source off to one side and above the model for the maximum dramatic and form-making effect. I limit my illumination to a single source, and I position it so that the shadows break decisively along the edge where the major front planes and side planes meet.

*The Egg Effect:* Shapes, proportions—everything seems to measure correctly, and you know for a fact that your drawing is not larger than life. You even take a second look at the relationship of the front plane to the side planes, but your head and figure still appear dull, flat, disjointed, and not quite a likeness. So, what's wrong? Chances are you missed the “egg effect”—the spherical form that underlies the more angular planes of the face. Close attention must be paid to the subtle play of graduating light as it crosses over the width and length of the egglike head. The head doesn't just corner from the front to the side planes, it also curves within the big planes from top to bottom and side to side. It's sometimes hard to discern, but the light tapers subtly darker as the underlying sphere turns away from its source. If you have a hard time seeing this for yourself when working from a live model, try cutting a couple of

## MEASURING FACIAL FEATURES

In my “Portrait Painting” article in the February 1993 issue of *American Artist*, I explained several feature-measuring techniques. Here is a brief recap of these important concepts: First, partition the features into three equal divisions (Fig. A): The top partition runs from the hairline to the eyebrows, the second one from the eyebrow to the base of the nose, and the third one from the bottom of the nose to the bony point of the chin. This classically derived system of measurement has been used by artists to get their bearings since the Greek golden age, and it's nothing more than an averaging of our collective facial proportions. As artists, we need to look at the model and determine where their particular proportions diverge from this standard. Ask yourself, Which of these three divisions is the largest, which is the next largest, and which is the smallest? If you don't catch these divisions correctly in the beginning, it doesn't matter how elegantly you render the specific features. Many people have a hard time locating the position of the ear when drawing a side view; they usually underestimate the overall width of the head compared to its height. Try comparing the horizontal distance between the outside of the eye and the front of the ear with the vertical distance between the outside of the eye and the outside corner of the mouth; these measurements are usually very similar. Notice, as Leonardo demonstrated in his diagrams, that the overall width of the eye is roughly equal to the nose and that, consequently, the wing of the nose usually lines up with the inside of the eye. Meanwhile, the top of the ear lines up with the eyebrow, and the bottom coincides with the base of the nose. Once you begin to render the individual features, you must be equally diligent about their peculiar likeness. Ask yourself some basic questions, using a horizontal line as a reference point: Do the features rise above the line, sit flatly across it, or drop below the line? Does one side or the other rise or drop past the reference line?



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## Skull From Above

by Dan Gheno, 2006, graphite, 4 x 5. Collection the artist.

Purge your mind of preconceptions when drawing the head from an odd angle—the face is barely visible when the head is seen from above.

cover this cascading light effect by turning both the photograph and your drawing upside down.

**Necks:** If heads are fundamentally egglike, necks are basically cylindrical. Try not to disturb their underlying shape by overplaying the sterno-cleido-mastoid, those strap-like muscles that straddle the throat and support the head. Like the subforms of the features, these muscles sit on the curving cylinder of the neck and should participate in its graduating value changes. Remember also that these two muscles are antagonists, an anatomical term that indicates they work as a team. Immobility occurs if they both contract at the same time. This means you can't render both muscles in equal definition, at least if you're trying to show the head in motion. When one of them contracts and bulges out, pulling the side of the head toward you, draw the other muscle more relaxed and less defined. One more warning: When working from life, expect some movement in the pose if the model's neck is twisted to an extreme degree. Always anticipate some unconscious movement of the head and neck toward a more centralized position.

While paying heed to its cylindrical character, notice that the neck isn't a telephone pole, shooting perpendicularly into the head. Observe how the neck projects diagonally from the shoulder into the base of the head, pushing the head forward. This dynamic, diagonal relationship is most clearly identifiable on a side view, but as you likely know from experience, it's much more difficult to grasp on a three-quarter view. You'll know only too well when you've missed the neck slant. The head will often seem mashed into the neck, and both the head and the neck will seem off-center, placed too far over to one side on the shoulder. To correct this problem, try concentrating on the throat—or trachea—instead of the outside edges of the neck. The underlying projecting angle of the throat is much more apparent in this view. Draw upward from the pit of the neck, along the forward edge of the throat, until you reach the under plane or canopy of the chin, and add the outside lines of the neck later. Whatever you do, avoid the static, lollipop look I warned you about at the beginning of the article, with both the front and back of the neck reaching into the head at the same parallel level. The back of the neck intersects the skull much higher up than the front of the neck, often aligning with the base of the nose when the face is on an even keel.

holes in a piece of paper. Hold the paper in front of the model's face, and keep moving it back and forth until one hole isolates the light of the forehead and the other hole isolates the light on the chin. When working from photos, you can usually discover

**Age and Folds:** Age and weight play an important role in the dynamics of the face—its structure and its emotional expression. The older we get, the more our skin drapes, with creases occurring at right angles to the shape and action of the muscles underneath. The zygomatic muscles, running from the cheekbone to the corner of the mouth, have the greatest influence on the face, so when they contract, they also produce one of the strongest folds, called the nasolabial furrow, running from the nose and partially encircling the mouth. Seen from behind, as in Menzel's *Friedrich Karl, Prince of Prussia*, this furrow seems to visually connect with the cheekbone and partially eclipses the nose itself. I've been fascinated by facial folds for most of my life, ever since I saw Stephen Roger Peck's wrinkle chart in his book *Atlas of Human Anatomy for the Artist* (Oxford University Press, New York, New York). Using his seminal dia-



## FORESHORTENING EXERCISE

If you have a difficult time seeing and drawing the nose close to the eye, try this exercise: Find a photo of a foreshortened face; draw it freehand, concentrating on the eye-nose relationship; then trace the photo and compare the two drawings, noting where you may have inadvertently increased the eye-nose distances in your first drawing. Keep repeating the exercise with other photos until you conquer your habits of distortion.

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Study for the Portrait of Louis-François Bertin by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, 1832, black chalk, 13½ x 13¾. Collection The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.

Although Bertin was one of his friends, Ingres portrayed his subject with all of the imposing imperiousness that the this newspaper editor likely displayed to his employees, political adversaries, and business competitors.

able landmarks. Then of course there are the effects of gravity on the face. If your model lies down to one side, the muscles and folds of the face will droop downward under the force of gravity. Even a wrinkle-free child hanging upside down on monkey bars will look quite different than when sitting up straight in a chair.

If you develop an interest in facial folds, as I have, try not to overdo it. Sometimes folds are barely visible when a face is turned into the light, and that is especially true for younger people. As you work, keep in mind that there are no concave forms on the human figure. Don't cut inward when you draw one furrow meeting another or when bone meets flesh. Nothing ages a model faster than when an artist tries to emphasize a person's cheekbones by cutting inward under the bone or when drawing what appears to be a dip below the bone.

**Bone Structure:** The cheekbone, or zygomatic bone, is just one of many bones that compose the skull and serve as the foundation for the human head. Buy a skull and fill your sketchbook with skull drawings, rendered from all standpoints—the top, back, bottom, and sides. In

gram as a base, I've tried to catalogue how these furrows interact with and telescope into one another when the head moves and how they vary among different ages and weight types over years of personal observation and study. Like cloth drapery, facial folds follow dependable rules, originating at certain bony points and compressing and stretching at other depend-

## PUT YOUR HEAD IN A BOX

Use perspective to better gauge the tilt of the head by trying to visualize the head encased in a box, as Albrecht Dürer illustrated in his notebooks. It's easier to imagine a box tilting in space, with opposite sides slanting at near parallel angles. This helps you remember that if the front of the face is angling down, the back of the head follows the same slant. If you are imagining the head encased within a box, you'll also remember to tilt the top and bottom of the head as well. It also helps to use perspectival tracking lines to align the features as they recede into space. Keep in mind that these imaginary perspective

Stereometric Man

by Albrecht Dürer, 11½ x 8¾. From the artist's Dresden Notebook.

lines converge downward if you are drawing the face from below and converge upward if your eye level is above the model.



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**ABOVE LEFT**

Drawing of Daniel (detail)

by Dan Gheno, 2006, graphite with white chalk on toned paper, 11 x 10. Collection the artist.

The "muzzle" is very small on the human face, but it exists nonetheless, growing out of the base of the nasal bone and encompassing the projecting area of the nose, dental arch, and chin.

**ABOVE RIGHT**

Drawing of Donna (detail)

by Dan Gheno, 2006, graphite with white chalk on toned paper, 7 x 10.

It's important to study and understand the muscles of the neck, but don't let your interest in anatomy obscure the neck's underlying cylindrical form.

fact, take off the skullcap and do some drawings from within. You will probably learn something new each time you sketch the skull, including how it reaches its fullest, widest point in the back of the cranium at the parietal eminences above and behind the ear; or how the cranium (or brain mass) takes up more than two-thirds of the skull—among many other crucial bits of information. Don't worry about making the sketches finished, polished products. Any scribble will suffice, and any amount of time will do, even if it's less than five minutes. The goal is to acquaint yourself thoroughly with the head's bony structure so that you can attack the living, flesh-covered skull with more confidence and instinctual

understanding. Money shouldn't be an issue. Many art stores sell inexpensive, usable plaster and plastic casts; you can always visit a natural-history museum to sketch one there; or, if you're truly strapped, you can buy an inexpensive model kit from the hobby store. At the very least, you can work from an anatomy book borrowed from the library.

## Points of View

As admirable as doing so may seem, don't concentrate exclusively on the front of the face and its features in your studies. If you want to impart a dynamic look into your figure drawing, you need to understand all aspects of the human head, as seen from all points of view. When drawing the head from behind, notice how large the back of the head looks compared to the face. The distance between the ear and the periphery of the face and nose are usually smaller than you may initially estimate. When drawing a reclining figure that's head-first, you'll likely find the features mostly eclipsed by the brow ridge and the cranial mass above. The nose often extends far beyond the nearly invisible dental arch in this sort of extreme, foreshortened position. Ironically enough, when you

draw a feet-first, reclining figure, you will frequently notice the nose extending far above the receding forehead. In any of these unusual positions, always make a comparative measurement of the features against the cranium to be sure that you are capturing—or, if you want, exaggerating—the correct proportional relationships.

## Tilt

As you know, you can use the features—and contort them into all sorts of symbols—to achieve emotion. This can get awfully melodramatic and lead to a visually flat image. A "simple" tip of the head can do so much more with almost no twisting of the features. Admittedly, this simple task is easier said than done. It's easy enough to see that when the head turns upward, the ear drops downward, and vice versa. But many artists freeze when they look at a tilted head, unsure of how to use the other basic guidelines that help keep the features in their proper bilateral position. The answer is to tilt your measurement guidelines running along with the cant of the head. So, if you want to judge the position of the mouth as it relates to the iris, draw a guideline slanted with the tilt of the

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## MODELING A FACE WITH LIGHT

I could write an 8,000-word article on the subject of light and shadows—indeed, Leonardo enthusiastically filled more than six notebooks dedicated to the subject (plus many extensive passages in other notebooks). Briefly put, once you find the outside contours of your head and features, you need to see the “third line” within the limits of your forms—where the light terminates and the shadow begins. Called “the terminator” by astronomers, this line helps establish the inner form where the big planes of the head meet and turn crisply. Therefore, the light on the eye and the cheek that is closer to the light source is almost always brighter than the ones that are farther away. As an example, let’s say you’re drawing someone with a weak chin, illuminated from above by a bright lamp. You may correctly place all of the terminator lines, perhaps finding a strong shadow shape running down the length of the face from forehead to chin, as in the drawing above by Tiepolo. But if you make the broad lights on the lower part of the face the same bright value as the forehead, the chin will not recede and you won’t achieve a likeness or a sense of full volume no matter what else you do.



head, from the iris to the mouth. If you want to measure the position of the eye, drag a tilted line up from the outside of the wing of the nose toward the inside of the eye, and so on.

A foreshortened arm or leg is difficult enough, but the most difficult body part—and probably the most dynamic of all the head positions—is the view of the head from below. Many artists draw the facial mass too large in this foreshortened position, usually increasing the distance between the nose and the eyes and often shortchanging the chin. You need to remember the underlying egg structure of the head. The chin is curving toward you, so it’s much larger in this low-level view than you might imagine. Conversely, the forehead is curving away so the head shrinks visually as it rounds out toward the hairline. Meanwhile, the nose swings upward off the underlying curve of the face, even in a straight-on view, and when it is highly

foreshortened, the nose often seems to jut out in front of the eye in a three-quarter view. Foreshortened or not, it’s helpful to compare the position of the eye to the junction point where the forehead dips to meet the nose. The eye is either above, alongside, or just below this point.

### The Nobility of Head Drawing

In this article, I’ve tried to stress the importance of the head’s dynamic relation to the figure. Sometimes, when doing a full figure drawing, it’s best to start with the body and gradually work up into the head, measuring it against the neck; Draw some imaginary lines that lead upward, off either side of the neck, and ask yourself how much head you should draw in front of one line and how much in front of the other line. But don’t let other artists chide you for concentrating on the head or—heaven forbid—“portrait draw-

Study of a Boy With His Hand to His Mouth

by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, pen and brown ink over black chalk, 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ .

Squint your eyes when you look at the model, and assess the big value masses as Tiepolo did in this strongly graphic drawing. All the details should merge into the bigger shapes. None of the details in shadow should jump out and appear as light as anything in the light shape, and none of the lights should look as dark as anything in the shadow.

ing.” You can say a lot with an intensely observed drawing of a simple, isolated face or head. The *Mona Lisa* or one of Rembrandt’s self-portraits say more to me about the multilevel, universal human condition than any book I’ve ever read. You know the power firsthand: How many times have you shuddered painfully when a friend sarcastically rolled their eyes or slightly cocked their mouth to one side in derision? On the other hand, how wonderfully bracing is it to look into a loved one’s dilated eyes and, to borrow from a corny song, gaze at their unconscious, subtle *Mona Lisa* smile? ■

# How to Draw Eyes with IMPACT

by Courtney Jordan

If the eyes are the windows to the soul, then a painter needs to get them right when creating a portrait. But the “oval, circle, dot” anatomy of the eye that we all first learned as children is far removed from how to give the illusion of a real eye in your work. But eyes can be one of the most challenging features to depict because its forms and colors are incredibly subtle and delicate. But that's not to say it can't be done.

Here are a few tips about painting the eye that I like to keep in mind. I hope these will help guide you when it comes time to depict this particular



facial feature, so that your portrait paintings or drawings do approach that “window to the soul” ideal.

For starters, it is always good to approach painting of the eye with its basic anatomy in mind. There are two lids to the eye, one above and one below. **The lower lid is the one most people tend to forget, so be mindful to define it.** This will prevent the eye from looking like it is hovering above the face instead of securely seated in its socket.

And it isn't just the eye that can give a the sense of roundness or three-dimensionality to a face in a portrait or drawing of a person. **The cheekbone and brow ridge give a sense of the curve around the eye as well.** Think of the eye as almost nesting between these two; inset into the anatomy of the face.

**Highlight the upper eyelid and cast the lower lid in subtle shadow—that's the way to give it roundness.** But be careful to approach your color transitions subtly. Too sharp a contrast will undermine the realistic representation of your work. Also don't forget to depict the crease where the upper lid folds when the eye is open. Otherwise the eye will look flat.



**ABOVE**  
Jusepe de Ribera's *Penitent Magdalene* (detail) is a moving example of how emotive eyes can be. Notice how convincing the eye socket and area around the eye is painted.

**BOTTOM LEFT**  
Van Gogh's self-portrait is an exercise in line, but notice how it varies in thickness and direction, especially around the eyes.

As with most features on the face, nothing is really defined with strong, unbroken lines. **Use varied lines and shading to create the peaks and valleys that turn the form.**

We all love the idea of bright eyes, but that doesn't mean the eyeball itself is pure white. **Try a pale grey or beige and lighten it up with a bit of skin tone color for the eyeball.** It'll look more natural that way.

The facial features of every person are so unique, and yet there's a commonality about them. If you can master these intricate features, you put yourself in a position of painting anyone well, creating compelling, believable portraits in due course. ■

# Understanding Anatomy: LIPS

by David Jon Kassan

Understanding the way the muscles of the mouth express the emotion of your subject is crucial in determining how to depict that emotion in your drawing. In this article I will touch upon the form concepts and muscular structure of the mouth and lips so that you can have some general guidelines in the back of your mind when you draw your next model.

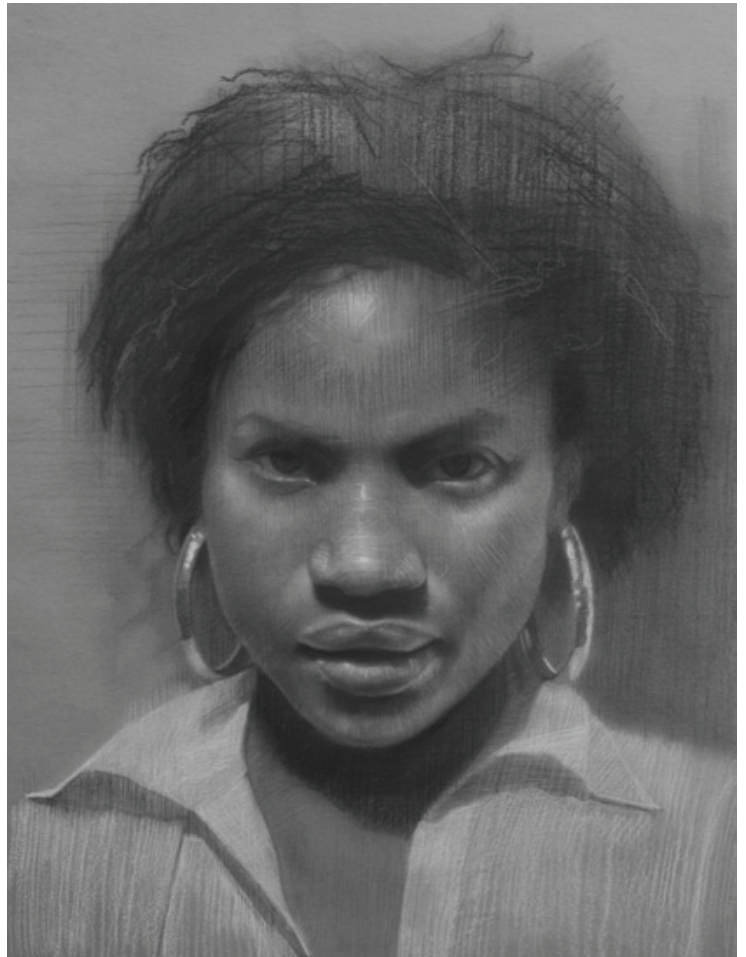
There are many variables to consider when drawing the lips. Everyone's lips are unique; there are different sizes, shapes, and configurations that depend on the model's size, age, ethnicity, and even eating habits. Luckily there are some common attributes as well, and they are helpful to keep in mind while drawing the mouth.

## Visual Structure of the Lips

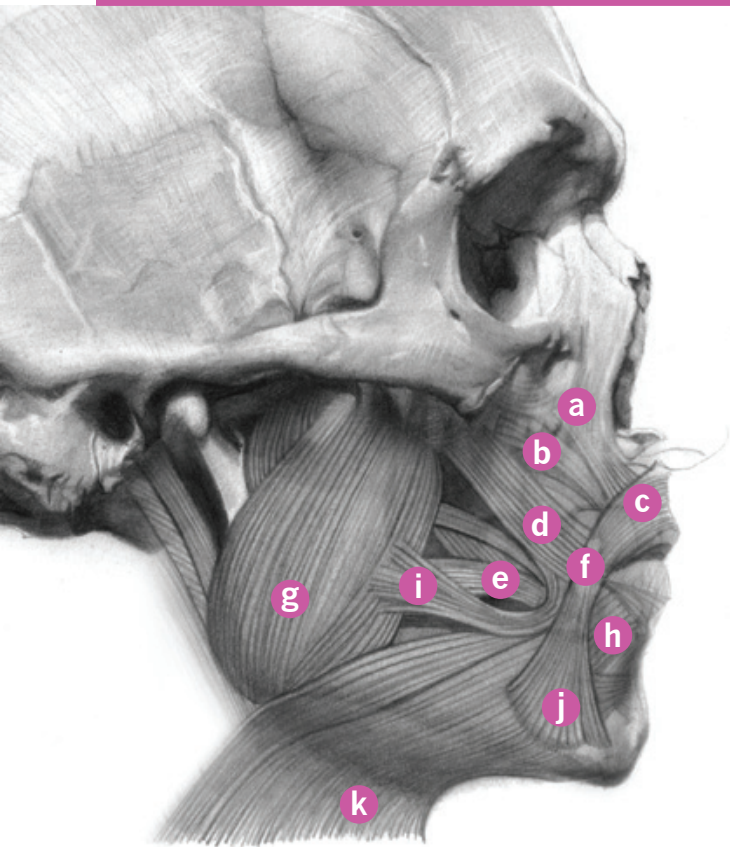
The lips are soft, movable, and very flexible. They are divided into two main parts, the upper lip (labium superioris) and lower lip (labium

Study of Grace (unfinished)  
2008–2009, charcoal and white chalk on toned paper, 14 x 11. Collection the artist. Image courtesy Henoeh Gallery, New York, New York.

Lips come in a variety of shapes and sizes depending on multiple factors including size, age, ethnicity, and even eating habits.



## DRAWING FACES



## ABOVE:

- A. Levator labii
- B. Zygomaticus minor
- C. Orbicularis oris
- D. Zygomaticus major
- E. Buccinator
- F. Node/Modiolus
- G. Masseter major
- H. Platyma-labial portion
- I. Risorius
- J. Triangularis/Depressor anguli oris
- K. Platyma

## BELOW:

- A. Philtrum
- B. Fubercle of the upper lip—beak
- C. Vermilion zone
- D. Node
- E. Lobe of the lower lip
- F. Groove of the lower lip
- G. Mentolabial furrow
- H. Pillar of the mouth

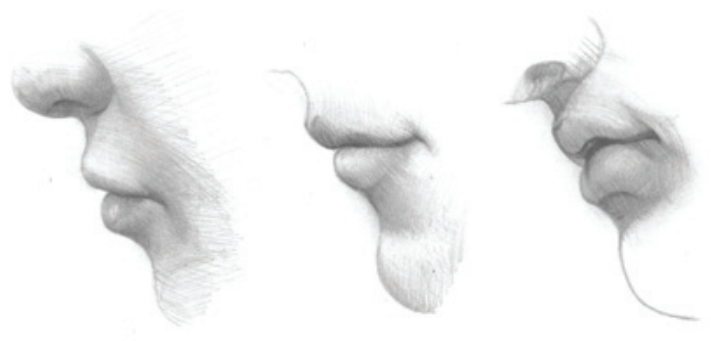
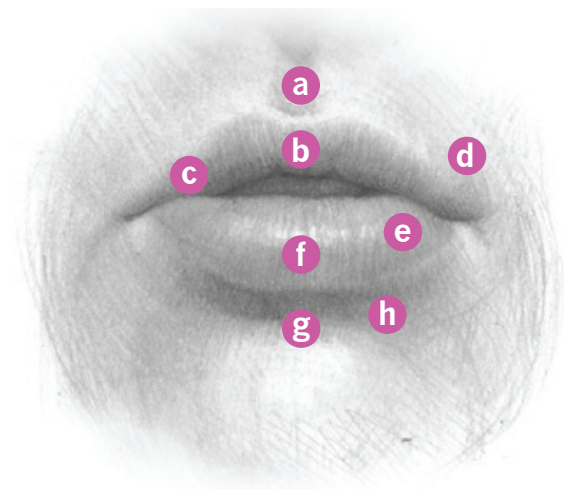
inferioris). In most cases the lower lip tends to be somewhat larger than the upper lip and is pillowy in its fullness compared to the upper lip. The upper lip usually falls into a form shadow because of its inward slant, which starts forward at its apex and ramps down and backward as it pulls inward, causing a slight overhang over the pillow shape of the lower lip. The lips can be broken down further into five distinct shapes. The upper lip may be divided into two wings on either side of the central beaklike shape. The little vertical indentation just above the upper lip is called the philtrum.

The two lips together lay over the cylindrical shape of the muzzle of the mouth. Understanding this roundness of the overall form helps the artist depict how the center of the lips are closer to the viewer (on a straight-on view of the model) and thus how the corners of the mouth fold away from us in space, as if each side were attached to strings that were being pulled tight around a tin can.

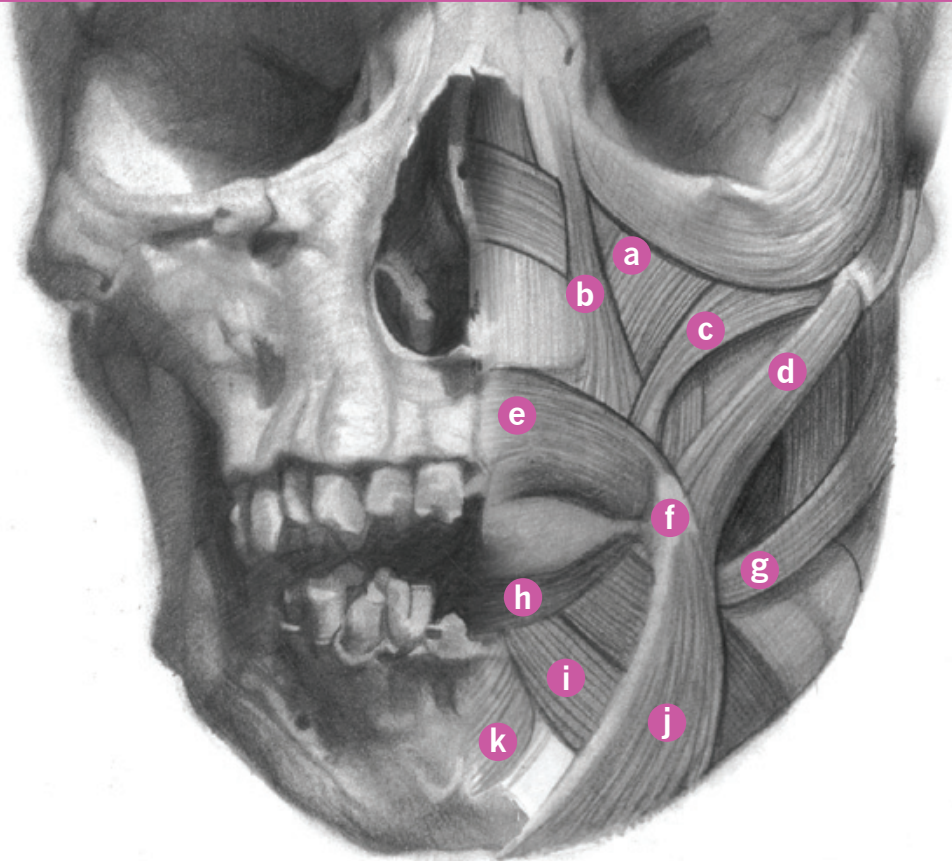
The lips are really the transition point between our exterior facial skin and the inner smooth lining (or mucosa) of the mouth. This meeting point between these two tissues is called the vermilion zone. The name vermilion comes from the red color that is characteristic of this facial feature; this color is unique to humans and comes from the many blood vessels found in the dermis and their close proximity to the thin, translucent epidermis that covers them. The skin of the lips are only three to five cellular levels thick, compared to other facial-skin areas that are as many as 16 layers thick. The ridges found in the lips are a result of a highly folded dermis that is not found in the skin of any other body parts.

## Muscular Structure of the Mouth

The extreme expressiveness of the mouth is due in part to its flexibility and wide range of movement. This range is attributable to the muscular structure that controls the lips under the surface, a complex web of facial muscles that are so interconnected with one another and with the



## DRAWING FACES



- A. Levator labii superioris
- B. Levator labii superioris alaeque nasi
- C. Zygomaticus minor
- D. Zygomaticus major
- E. Orbicularis oris-orbita port
- F. Node/Modiolus
- G. Risorius
- H. Orbicularis oris-outer portio
- I. Platysma
- J. Triangularis/Depressor anguli oris
- K. Mentalis

different facial features that if you were to wiggle your nose, your upper lip would move from side to side as well.

The main muscle of the mouth is the orbicularis oris. The orbicularis oris forms the muzzle by surrounding the orifice of the mouth with several different layers of muscle fiber and extends from the base of the nose down to the top of the chin. The buccinator works with the orbicularis oris, stretching the circular fibers around the mouth's cavity. It is used when compressing the lips and cheeks against the teeth. The buccinator starts at the mandible (jawbone) and moves deeper than the rest of the facial muscles to connect to the modiolus and the upper and lower lips. Laterally flanking each angle of the mouth, the modiolus act as the anchors for many facial muscles. These muscles are held together by fibrous tissue and are extremely important for facial expression.

The fibers of the orbicularis oris have origins in other facial muscles that end and join with the lips' own muscle fibers. Specifically, the three muscles that lead into the upper lip are the levator labii superioris, the levator labii superioris alaeque nasi, and the zygomaticus minor. These three muscles control the upper lip region and move the lips sideways and raise them. They are well connected to the nose, too, and are helpful for wiggling the nose as well as expressing emotions of grief and contempt. The nearby levator labii superioris originates at the maxilla. The muscle that flanks the mouth on both sides and is in control of raising the lip high and sideways is the zygomaticus major. The lower lip and mouth is controlled primarily by three muscles: the risorius, the triangularis (or depressor anguli oris), and the mentalis. These muscles are used to pull down the corners of the mouth and lower lip. The

mentalis can even wrinkle the chin.

Another important muscle is the masseter, which starts at the zygomatic arch (cheekbone) and stretches down to the ramus of the mandible. This muscle controls the opening and closing of the mouth as well as the pushing out of the chin; it is used to express anger and emotional tension.

The lips are one of the face's most prominent and expressive features. They help to visually communicate our emotions, and they have many functions, including helping us to eat and articulate speech and—most important—to kiss and be intimate. It takes careful attention and observation to evaluate each subject's own unique turns, tucks, folds, and roundness of the mouth and lips. But the time and patience is well worth it; with this pragmatic and well-observed structure in place, you can infuse your subject with an emotive strength. ■



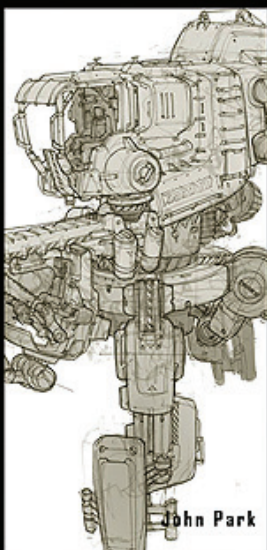
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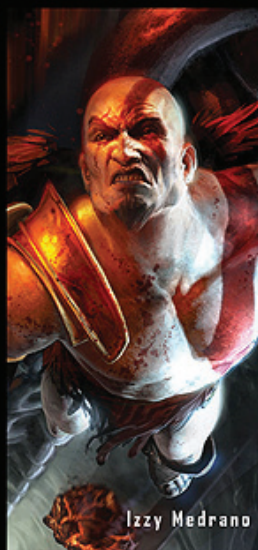
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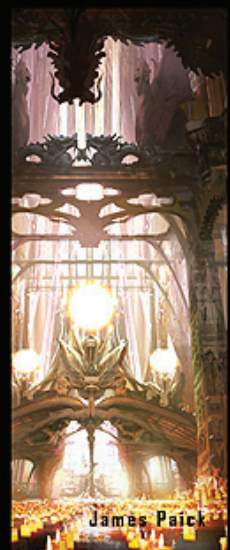
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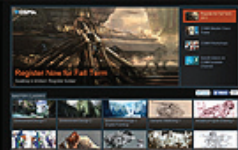


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