

Avoid These 5 Mistakes When Drawing Faces

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by Courtney Jordan

I've always been an ardent fan of the profile portrait drawing. It reminds me of antique cameos, the profiles of emperors stamped on Roman coins, and 18th-century silhouettes. But learning how to draw a face in profile does come with its share of possible missteps, so here are a few portrait-drawing tips to keep in mind.



Virginia Wolfe by Jeremy Mann, charcoal drawing on paper, 18 x 24.

Misplaced ear. When drawing faces, be sure not to place the ear too close to the eye. It is usually equal to the distance between the chin and the corner of the eye.

Shrunken skull. Facial features are not the only important parts of a portrait. Make sure not to cut off the skull above the forehead and to fully shape the back of the head and neck.

Nose to eyes. Take note of how small the visible part of the eye is relative to the size and structure of the nose.

Just two angles. When starting your profile portrait drawing, take note of the angles between the forehead and the tip of the nose, and the tip of the nose to the chin. This will help you build the "envelope" for your face drawing.



Taquia by Gregory Mortenson, graphite drawing on paper, 11 x 14, 2007.

Eye it. When drawing eyes, note the thickness of the eyelid, which often isn't as noticeable when you're drawing faces straight on. Also take the time to register the angle of the upper eyelid in relation to the lower one.

I hope these tips help when it comes time to draw faces and portrait drawings of your own. This is one of the most exciting ways to hone our skills because we get to interact with people while practicing techniques that carry over to so many other

aspects of drawing and painting.