

CANVAS & MIND



STRUCTURED OBSERVATIONAL DRAWING

8 WEEK PROGRAM | HANNAH COOK

**“Access without compromise;
preserving the depth of traditional drawing.”**

HOW THE PROGRAMME WORKS

Canvas & Mind is designed to be taken in two stages.
Each stage has a different purpose. They are not interchangeable.

Foundation - Perceptual Preparation

The Foundation chapters are self-paced. They are not focused on producing finished drawings. They are designed to change how you see. Each chapter introduces one perceptual idea at a time:

- rhythm
- line
- shadow
- structure

These are explored slowly, without pressure. You may pause, repeat, or return at any point. The aim is not accuracy. The aim is familiarity. You are learning to recognise visual relationships before being asked to organise them.

Advanced - Structured Application

The Advanced course builds on this foundation. Here, the pace becomes more structured. Each week introduces a specific focus:

- line as structure
- shadow as mass
- value hierarchy
- measurement
- integration

The tasks become more precise, but they rely on the perception developed in Foundation. You are not starting from zero.
You are organising what you already understand.

Why the Programme is Structured This Way

Drawing is often taught as a single process.

This can create pressure to:

- understand everything at once
- produce results too early
- correct before observing

Canvas & Mind separates these stages.

First perception, Then structure. This reduces overwhelm and allows each part of the process to develop clearly.

How to Approach the Programme

There is no need to rush. You may: complete Foundation before starting Advanced, revisit earlier chapters at any time, move at your own pace and If something feels unclear, return to observation. Clarity develops through repetition, not speed.

You learn to see first. Then you learn to organise what you see.



Foundation of Observational Drawing

A structured introduction to perceptual drawing

Through a series of carefully paced studies, this course introduces the fundamental principles of observational drawing. Each week focuses on a single visual concept, encouraging confidence through slow, deliberate observation.

Topics explored:

- tempo and rhythm
- structural line
- shadows as shapes
- repetition and visual comparisons
- perceptual observations
- integration of drawing principles

The emphasis is not on producing finished drawings, but on learning to **observe structure and visual relationships clearly.**

Student Name : _____

Date : _____

Canvas & Mind

Learning to See Through Drawing

Welcome to *Canvas & Mind*,

This booklet is part of the *Canvas & Mind* perceptual learning framework, designed to introduce drawing through structured, staged observation.

This course uses drawing as a way to slow down and observe the visual world more carefully.

You do not need previous drawing experience.

Each session focuses on a single visual idea, introduced gradually so that the process remains calm and manageable.

Throughout the course you may:

draw
listen
observe
pause
or stop when needed

All of these are valid ways of participating.

The aim of Canvas & Mind is not to produce finished artwork. Instead, the focus is on developing attention, observation, and confidence through drawing.

**Take your time.
Learning to see takes time.
There is no need to rush ahead.**

Core Focus & How to Use This Booklet

Drawing is introduced here as a structured, accessible process.

The focus is on developing attention, observation
, and perceptual awareness before complexity is introduced.

Each stage is approached slowly and in sequence, allowing understanding to build.

The aim is not to produce finished drawings, but to **support confidence, clarity, and a sustainable way of working.**

How to Use This Booklet

This booklet is designed to be used slowly, one stage at a time.

Each section focuses on a single visual idea.
There is no need to move ahead until you feel ready.

You may choose to:

- complete one page at a time
- repeat exercises
- pause between sessions
- or return to earlier work

There is no fixed pace to follow.

It is normal for some stages to feel unclear at first.
Understanding develops gradually through repetition and observation.

If you feel unsure, slow down rather than move forward.

“Depth is not created by adding more, but by allowing areas to remain quiet.”

– Hannah Cook

Chapter 1 | Rhythm & Pace

Step 1: This stage reflects ideas proposed by Kimon Nicolaïdes, where drawing is approached as a time-based perceptual process rather than a fixed outcome. Before drawing, take a moment to notice the rhythm of your marks. Drawing is not only about what you see. It is also about the **pace of your movement**. There is no need to create an image yet.

Notice:

- the movement of your hand
- the spacing between marks
- the rhythm that develops

Observe:

- the marks on the page
- how they repeat or vary
- where they feel dense or open

Every mark you make contains rhythm, tempo, and pace.



Quiet

Rhythm is how marks repeat or vary. Some marks feel steady and even. Others feel irregular or broken.



Flow

Tempo is the speed of your movement. Slower marks often feel more controlled.



Dense

Pace is the space between marks. Close marks create darker areas. More space creates lighter areas.

These are not separate skill. Over time, they begin to form tone, texture, and structure.

You are learning to notice, not control.

Understanding Your Marks

As you draw, you may begin to notice that each mark has three qualities; **rhythm** (the pattern of marks), **tempo** (the speed of movement), **pace** (the spacing between marks). These are not separate skills. They often begin to work together as you draw.

Rhythm is how your marks repeat or vary.

Some marks feel steady and even.

Others feel irregular or broken.

Rhythm develops naturally when you allow your hand to move without forcing it.

Pace is the space between marks.

Marks placed close together begin to form darker areas.

Marks placed further apart create lighter areas.

Leaving space is part of drawing.

Tempo is the speed of your movement.

A slower tempo often creates more controlled marks.

A faster tempo can feel looser and less controlled.

There is no correct tempo to use.

You are learning to notice how it changes your marks.

How they work together

When rhythm, tempo, and pace begin to settle, your marks start to organise themselves naturally.

Over time, this becomes tone, texture, and form.

A reminder

You are not trying to control this perfectly. You are learning to notice what is already happening.

Exercise: Making Marks

Step 2: Keep the marks light and steady. Avoid rushing. Focus on movement rather than outcome.

Focus on:

- Slow down your marks.
- Let the movement happen naturally.
- There is no correct rhythm.

Research Focus

This stage supports a shift toward slower, perceptual observation, encouraging awareness of movement, pacing, and sustained attention.

Pause and Notice

Step 3-

Consider:

- Did your hand begin to settle into a rhythm?
- Did slower marks feel easier to control?
- Did the page begin to organise itself naturally?

Drawing begins with **movement and attention**.

You do not need a finished drawing. You practised careful observation. That is enough.

Research Focus:

This stage introduces drawing as a time-based activity, supporting early attentional engagement and reducing performance pressure.

Chapter 2 | Line & Direction

Step 1: This stage reflects the use of line as a structural tool rather than decoration. In the drawings of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, line is used to organise form through direction and proportion, so that complex shapes can be understood through simplified relationships. This chapter introduces structure through line and direction. Look for how lines describe the movement of form.

Before drawing, take time to look carefully. Try to see the object as a series of simple directional lines.



Observe:

- where the form changes direction
- the main angles that describe the shape
- where straight lines appear within curves

Notice:

- where edges turn or bend
- follow direction, not outline
- keep lines simple

Exercise: Line & Direction

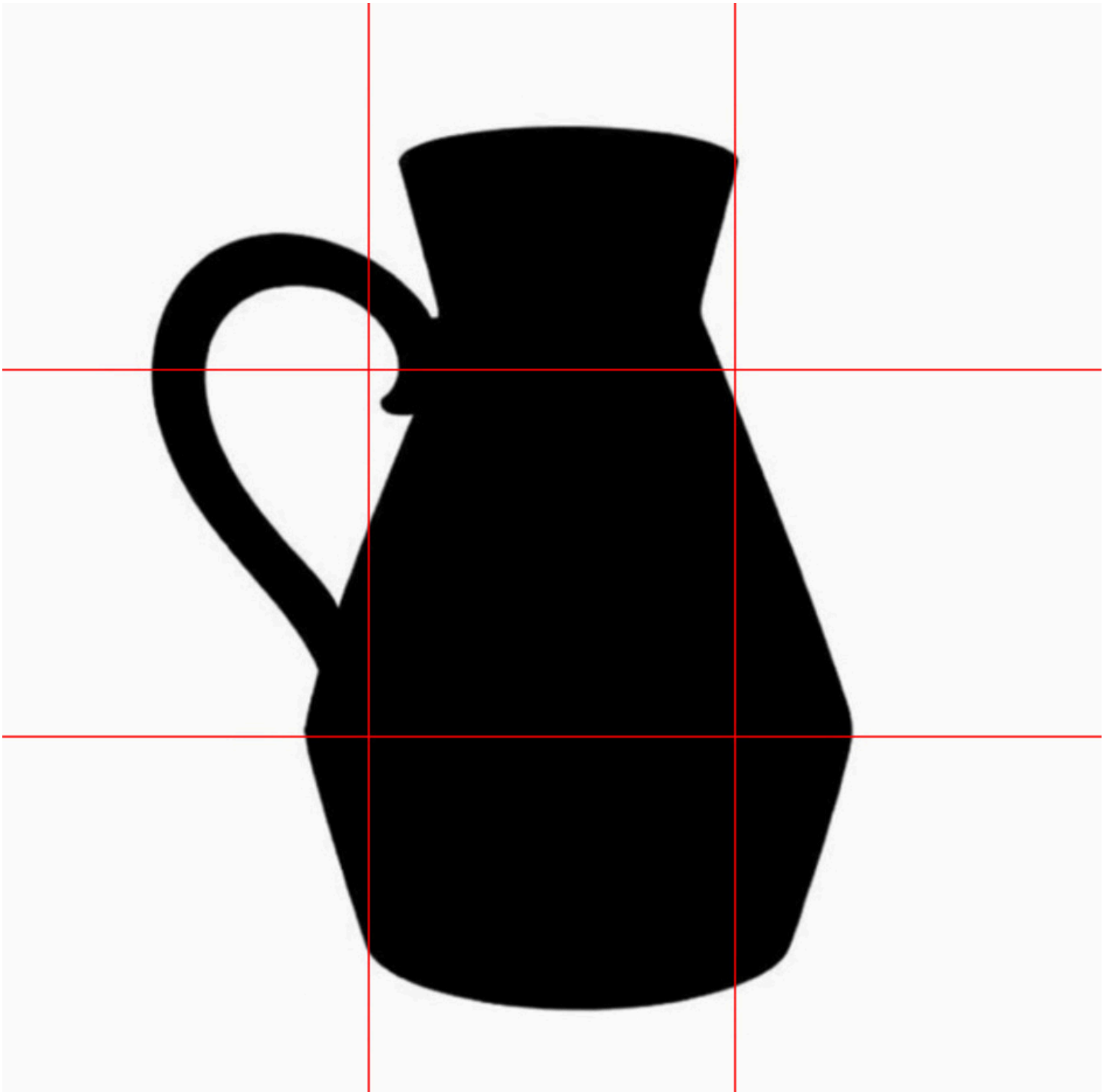
Step 2: Exercise Building with Lines using the silhouette as a guide, draw the outer shape of the jug using straight lines only. Do not draw curves.

Focus on:

- **connect small straight lines to follow the shape.**
- Move slowly around the object.
- Look for places where the **direction of the edge changes**.

You are not drawing a perfect object.

You are learning to see structure within the shape.



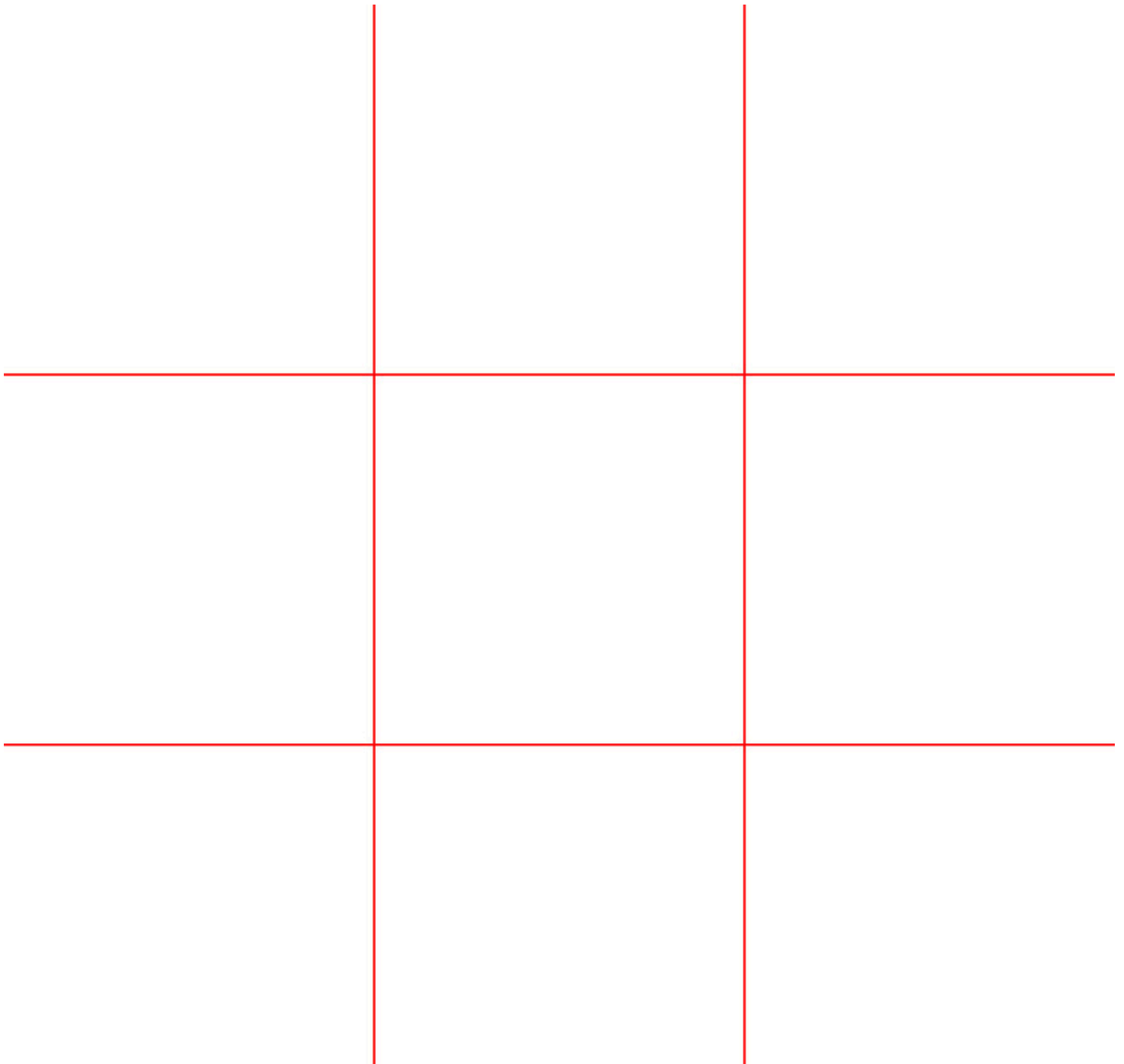
Optional Exercise

Step 3: Exercise using the Guide box If placing the shape feels difficult, the guide box can help. The box divides the space into sections so you can judge **proportion more easily**. Look at where the jug sits inside the box.

Notice:

- where the widest part appears
- where the handle crosses the centre line
- where the base sits within the lower section

Then try building the shape again using straight lines. The box helps your eye measure the space. You may add curves where needed once structure is clear.



Pause and Notice

Step 4: After drawing the shape, take a moment to reflect.

Did using straight lines help you see the **form more clearly?**

Consider:

- where the shape changes direction
- the balance of the form
- the placement of the handle

You do not need a finished drawing. You practised careful observation. That is enough.

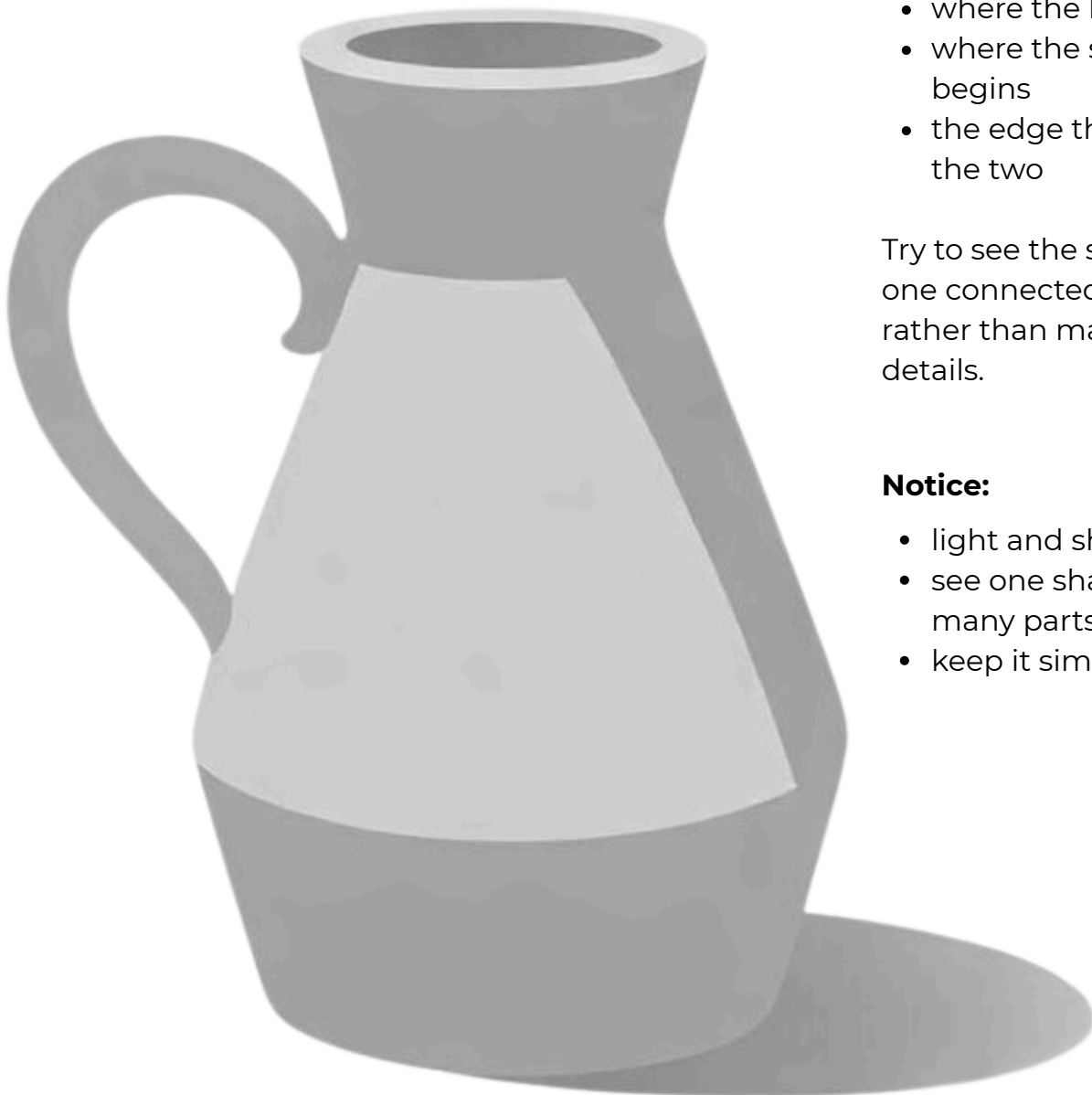
Research Focus

This stage develops awareness of directional relationships, supporting structural perception through controlled visual analysis.

Chapter 3 | Seeing Shadow as Shape

Step 1: This stage introduces shadow as a perceptual unit rather than a rendering process. Drawing from teaching approaches associated with Léon Bonnat, shadow is treated as a single visual mass before any tonal refinement is introduced. This approach reduces cognitive load and supports perceptual simplification, allowing clear visual decisions before introducing complexity.

Take a moment to look quietly at the image. Notice the relationship between light and shadow.



Observe:

- where the light stops
- where the shadow begins
- the edge that separates the two

Try to see the shadow as one connected shape rather than many small details.

Notice:

- light and shadow only
- see one shape, not many parts
- keep it simple

Shadow Shape Exercise

Step 2: Now look again at the reference image. Find the shape that sits in shadow. Instead of shading gradually, treat the shadow as one single shape.

Focus on:

- one light area and one shadow area
- Lightly fill the shadow area.
- Do not blend or add details

You are not drawing texture. You are learning to see the structure of **light and shadow**.



Optional exercise

Step 3: Optional exercise if you want to try and draw the jug and shadows yourself using a central line and cross-axis

Pause and Notice

Step 4: After completing the exercise, take a moment to reflect.

Did the shadow become clearer when you stopped thinking about the object?

Consider:

- the edge between light and shadow
- the shape of the shadow mass
- the balance between light and dark

You do not need a finished drawing. You have practised careful observation. That is sufficient.

Research Focus

This stage supports perceptual consolidation by encouraging learners to reflect on visual decisions after observation. By pausing and reviewing the relationship between light and shadow, learners reinforce simplified visual grouping and strengthen perceptual clarity.

Marks Becoming Tone

In earlier exercises, you explored how marks move.

You Observed:

- rhythm
- tempo
- pace

These marks did not form an image yet.
They were part of a process.

Now, something begins to change

When marks are placed closer together,
they begin to form darker areas.
When marks are spaced further apart,
they remain light.

Tone is not added. It emerges.

You are not switching to a new skill.
You are allowing your marks to build gradually.

Notice:

- where marks begin to group together
- where space remains
- how light and dark begin to appear

Keep the same approach

- work slowly
- keep marks light
- avoid rushing
- do not blend

A reminder

You are not trying to shade smoothly.
You are allowing tone to develop through careful placement.

This is enough. Even a small area of tone is enough.

Chapter 4 | Foundation Light and Dark

Step 1: This stage reflects classical atelier training associated with Charles Bargue, where light and shadow are treated as two distinct visual families. By separating light from shadow clearly, the learner begins to understand form through simplified tonal structure rather than detail.

At this stage, shadow is not blended or modelled, but observed as a single, unified shape.

Take a moment to look quietly at the image.

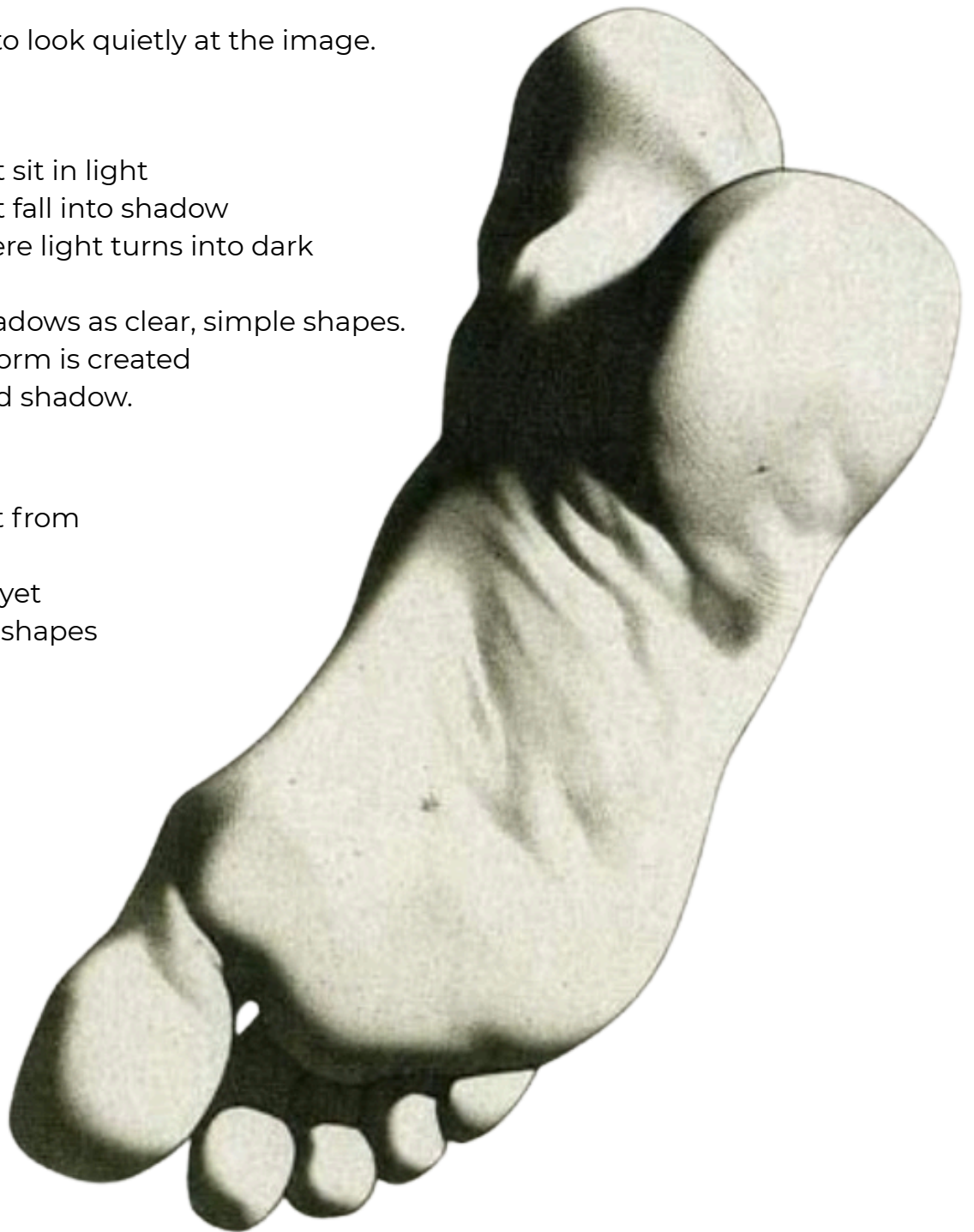
Observe:

- the areas that sit in light
- the areas that fall into shadow
- the edge where light turns into dark

Try to see the shadows as clear, simple shapes. Notice how the form is created through light and shadow.

Reminder:

- separate light from shadow
- do not blend yet
- think in clear shapes



Seeing shadows and Shapes

Step 2: Begin by lightly outlining the main shape of the object. Identify the areas that sit in shadow. These shadow areas can be seen as **simple shapes**.

Focus on:

- Lightly fill the shadow shapes using your pencil.
- Try to keep the shading **even and calm**.
- Do not blend or add texture.
- Focus only on the **shape of the shadow**.



Optional exercise

Step 3: Optional exercise if you want to try and draw the foot outline and shadows yourself using a central line and cross-axis

Pause and Notice

Step 3 -

Consider:

- where the shadows appear
- the shape of the darker areas
- how light and shadow describe the form

You do not need a perfect drawing. You have practised **seeing light and structure**. That is the purpose.

You do not need a finished drawing. You practised seeing light and structure. That is enough.

Research Focus

This stage reinforces perceptual calibration through repetition, allowing learners to stabilise visual judgement over time.

Chapter 5 | Pause and Space

Step 1: This stage introduces deliberate stopping and restraint. Drawing from principles associated with Albrecht Dürer, learners are encouraged to recognise when enough information has been observed and placed. By limiting marks and allowing areas to remain unfinished, this stage supports decision-making, reduces overworking, and builds confidence in stopping without the need for completion.

Drawing is not only about making marks. It is also about pausing and looking again. During this exercise, you will practise slowing down and observing the form carefully.

Notice:

- the overall shape of the form
- where light moves across the surface
- where the form begins to fall into shadow

Pause:

- stop and look again
- look more than you draw
- let some areas remain open
- allow the eye to reset

This often helps us see more clearly. Drawing is not only about making marks, but about pausing and looking again.



Chapter 5 Light Perception Concept

“Squinting Eyes Without Squinting”

Core Principle

Before drawing detail, reduce the image into simple masses of:

- light
- mid-tone
- dark

Like when you squint and detail disappears.

You are teaching learners to see value structure first.

What the Light Image Does

Using softened / simplified references helps learners notice:

- main light shape
- shadow family
- dominant contrast
- large tonal relationships
- object unity

Instead of chasing details.

What to Ask While Looking

- Where is the lightest area?
- Where is the darkest area?
- What joins together into one shadow mass?
- What disappears when detail is removed?
- Which mid-tones connect forms?

Mapping the Shape

Step 2: Begin by lightly outlining the main shapes you see.

- Use soft pencil lines.
- Focus on placing the form on the page.
- Do not worry about details yet.

Pause and look again before adding more marks.

Focus on:

- Now begin to **lightly shade** the darker areas.
- Look for places where the form turns away from the light.
- Keep the shading soft and simple.
- Pause between marks.

Once the structure and shading are placed, begin to introduce gentle curves where the form naturally turns.

In earlier stages, marks are left visible to help organise structure and tone. Here, **small areas may be gently softened where the eye naturally reads smooth transitions** This should remain minimal , most of the drawing should retain the clarity of individual marks.



Pause and Notice

Step 3: Take a moment to look at your drawing.

Consider:

- What happened when you slowed down?
- Did pausing change what you could see?
- Where did the form become clearer?

You do not need a finished drawing. You practised careful observation. That is enough.

Research Focus

This stage reconnects observation with perceptual responsiveness, supporting attentional flexibility and embodied awareness.

What Lines Describe

Lines are not just marks. They show how a surface moves through space.

Surface Direction



Curving outward
lines open and widen



Turning away
lines wrap and fade

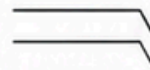


Narrowing inward
lines move closer together

Changes in Form



Flat areas
lines straighten



Sudden change
lines shift direction
or break

Building Tone Through Lines



Darker areas:

- lines closer together
- repeated passes
- slight overlap



Lighter areas:

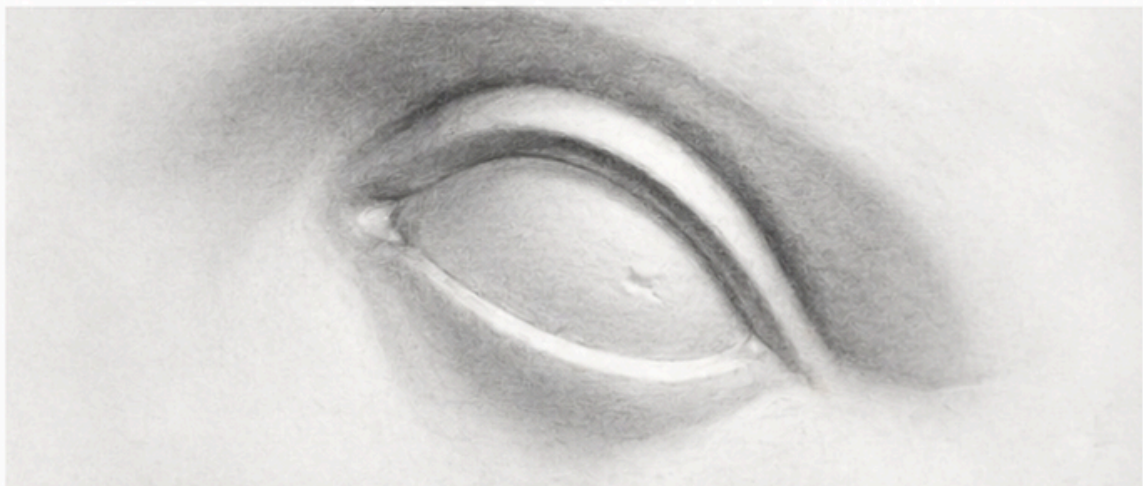
- wider spacing
- fewer lines
- softer pressure

Ask Yourself

- Is this surface round or flat?
- Which way is it moving?
- Is it opening or tightening?
- Where does it turn away from me?

Reminder

Tone is not added.
It develops through structure.



Chapter 6 Integration:

Seeing, Choosing & Trusting the Process

Step 1: This stage brings together the observational principles developed throughout the programme.

Drawing from the approach of Giorgio Morandi, learners are encouraged to observe subtle relationships and choose what to prioritise rather than trying to include everything.

By focusing on small tonal shifts, spacing, and quiet observation, the drawing develops clarity through restraint and supports confident decision-making.

Take a moment to look quietly at the image.

Observe:

- how the objects sit together
- where the darkest shadows appear
- where the light touches the surfaces
- how the forms overlap

Notice:

- what feels most important
- what can be left out
- how the forms relate to each other



Chapter 6

Seeing Form Through Directional Lines

In earlier exercises, you explored how to observe shape, spacing, light and dark. You learned to slow down and notice relationships. Now, something begins to deepen. Sometimes form becomes clearer when marks follow the direction of the surface. These marks do not simply shade. They describe how an object turns in space.

You Observe:

- where the surface curves outward
- where it turns away from light
- where the form narrows
- where it widens
- where direction changes suddenly
- where the object feels round or flat

These observations help guide your marks.

Notice:

- where lines begin to flatten
- where curves tighten
- where the object turns most sharply
- where light begins to fall away
- how repeated marks can suggest tone

Now, something begins to change

When lines travel around the form, volume can begin to appear.

When lines are spaced closer together, tone may deepen.

When lines open further apart, areas remain lighter.

Structure and tone begin to work together.

Form is not added. It is revealed.

You are not switching to a new skill. You are allowing observation and mark placement to describe the object gradually.

Keep the same approach

- work slowly
- keep marks light
- allow rhythm to build naturally
- avoid rushing
- do not over-correct
- do not force dark tone too early

A reminder

You are not trying to decorate the drawing.

You are studying how surfaces move through space.

Even a small area explored carefully is enough.



Morandi, G. (20th century) Still Life, demonstrating tonal relationships and compositional balance.

Light Shading & Gentle Refinement

Step 2: Look carefully at the image.

Focus on::

- the shapes of the objects
- where the darkest tones appear
- where the paper remains light
- how the objects sit beside each other

Begin by following the mapped outlines. Work slowly. You may add gentle tone where the form turns away from the light .Some areas will naturally become darker, while others remain light.

Reminder

heavy movement often creates a hard mark, and slower, lighter movement allows tone to build gradually.



Pause and Notice

Step 3: Take a moment to look at your drawing.

Consider:

- What helped you see the forms more clearly?
- Where did light and shadow define the shapes?
- Did pausing change what you noticed?
- What changed when you slowed down and observed more carefully?

You have practised combining the skills from the previous weeks. That is enough.

Research Focus

This stage supports the integration of perceptual skills, allowing learners to coordinate observation, structure, and pacing.



Closing Reflection

Over the past sessions you have explored:

line
shape
light and shadow
tone
observation and pacing

These are the foundations of drawing.
Many artists spend years returning to these same ideas.

The purpose of this course is not to perfect drawings, but to practise looking carefully and working gently.

Often, the most important part of drawing is simply noticing something you hadn't seen before.

This programme is part of an ongoing exploration of perceptual learning, accessibility, and structured drawing.

Thank you for taking part in Canvas & Mind.

Your attention and observation are the most valuable tools you bring to the process.

Keep looking.

Keep noticing.

And remember: **stopping is also part of the practice**



Moving Forward

You have practised:

slowing down your marks
observing structure
seeing light and shadow
recognising when to pause

Which has helped You have built:

- awareness's
- control
- trust in the process

.

In the next stage, we will begin to:

- develop drawings further
- introduce refinement gradually
- make decisions about what to keep and what to leave

You will still work slowly.

You will still observe carefully.

Now, you will begin to build on what you see.

References

This programme is informed by established drawing traditions and research into perception, attention, and learning.

Drawing Practice & Pedagogy

Bargue, C., & Gérôme, J.-L. (1868–1871). Cours de dessin.

Ingres, J.-A.-D. (19th century). Observational drawing studies.

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Dürer, A. (1525). Four Books on Measurement.

Nicolaïdes, K. (1941). The Natural Way to Draw.

Morandi, G. (20th century). Still life studies.

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Gibson, J. J. (1979). The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception.

Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, Fast and Slow.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience.

Image References

Historical and study images used throughout this programme are informed by established drawing traditions, including academic studies, atelier training materials, and observational practice.

Where specific sources are known, they include:

- Bargue Drawing Course plates (Bargue & Gérôme)
- Academic studies after Ingres, Bonnat, and Dürer
- Tonal studies informed by Morandi
- Observational exercises informed by Nicolaïdes

Some instructional images have been created specifically for this programme, including AI-assisted study images used for educational purposes.

Statement of Position

Canvas & Mind does not replace these traditions.

It restructures their perceptual foundations into an accessible, contemporary learning framework.