

Blind Contour Drawing, inside and outside

Adapted from teaching material of Robert Spellman, instructor at Naropa University, *The Natural Way to Draw* by Kimon Nicolaides, and *The Zen of Seeing* by Frederick Franck

you will need: a pencil, preferably 2B or softer, white paper, a comfortable place to sit

Drawing with an object

Establish yourself in your seat with your pencil and paper ready.

If indoors, the object should be approximately two feet away from you, clearly visible and not obscured by distracting light or background. Relax. Allow the point of the pencil to rest lightly anywhere on the surface of the paper. Look at the object. Relax. Choose a point on the object that attracts you, and while looking at this point in a relaxed but attentive way, imagine that your pencil (which is still resting on the paper) is touching the exact point where your eye is resting on the object. When you have confidence in this, very slowly move your eye along the edge of the object. Maintain the conviction that the point of your pencil is actually touching the object at the point that your eye is looking at.

As you move your eyes along the object, move the pencil across the paper in the same way—slowly. Do not look at the paper, and don't be concerned about the quality or accuracy, this is not about making a perfect drawing. Continue to move your pencil along whatever edges and shapes your eye finds interesting, slowly. Relax again and again. Don't sneak looks at the paper. If you become distracted, pause and relax, rest, and return your attention to the simple activity of moving eye and pencil. Look at the object, relax, move the pencil until you feel that you have finished. Do not look at the paper until you are finished with the drawing. When you feel a drawing is finished, rest in meditative awareness for a few minutes and make another drawing, using the same object or another one that draws your attention.

If outdoors, the drawing instructions are the same as above, however your vipashyana awareness is expanded.

Again, establish your seat comfortably in a location where conversation with others is not easy to do. Relax and brighten your attentiveness to your surroundings: the sounds, smells, textures colors, air movements, insects, birds, traffic, etc. While resting relaxed in this sensory flow, notice what visual forms attract your attention. When you have chosen a form, begin to draw in the manner previously described. Relax, don't look at the paper and don't be concerned with the outcome of the drawing. Rest right within the visual phenomena before you.

When your attention wanders, bring your attention back to your physical posture, to any of the sensory details, and to the overall atmosphere of your surroundings. Rest for five minutes or so in relaxed awareness. Then, again, notice what visual element of your surroundings catches your attention and begin drawing again, bring your mind back simply and directly to the looking, and to the moving of the pencil. Don't rush.

Alternate between relaxed attentive resting and relaxed attentive drawing.

This drawing exercise is closely aligned with meditation practices designed to free the mind from wandering (shamatha) and those that attend to greater awareness(vipashyana). It also enlivens the sense perceptions altogether, helping to root one in the present moment.