Abstract Drawing
Preliminary Syllabus

Course Objectives

- To experiment with some of the methods, techniques, tools and concepts of abstract drawing
- To take part in a community of artists
- To enjoy the challenging and nuanced process of drawing

Course Methods

- Practice & repetition
- Experimentation & play
- Observation (inner & outer)
- Creative synthesis
- Mutual support & feedback

Course Requirements/Grading/Guidelines

Please make a commitment to the work we’re going to do together. Students who want to get the most out of this class should be on time, have regular attendance, and complete all assignments.

Grading options:

- No Grade Requested: Default option
- Letter Grades: Not offered
- Credit/No Credit: No more than one absence and completion of all assignments and active participation in discussions is required

Guidelines:

- Do actively participate in discussions
- Do listen to the instructor and fellow students and follow directions
- Do complete all projects, including home assignments
- Do not talk while the instructor or a fellow student is speaking
- Do not use a digital device in class (make calls outside)
- Do not be mean, rude, or disrespectful to anyone in the class
- Students who cannot follow the rules or instructions of the teacher might be asked to leave

Course Structure

We’ll be drawing the majority of the time, but there will also be slide lectures, demos, class discussions, and short writing projects. At the start of every class we will have a warm-up before the main project. You’ll receive info via email before each class that explains what we’ll be doing that week, which materials to bring, and what to work on at home.
Course Materials

For the first class you will need:

- **Work Clothing:** Always wear old clothes or a smock/apron that can get dirty.
- **Pencils:** An assortment of hard and soft pencils.
- **Eraser & Sharpener:** A white eraser and a small, portable pencil sharpener.
- **Paper:** One sheet of good watercolor or printmaking paper, Hot Pressed, 140 lb. or thicker. Some brands: Arches, BFK Rives, Fabriano, Stonehenge, etc.

Later you will need:

- **Paper:** One sheet of good paper per class (same as above); five sheets total.
- **Charcoal & Conté:** A small package (2 sticks) of compressed charcoal, a small package (2 sticks) of Conté brand white crayons and one “kneaded rubber” eraser.
- **Pens:** Your choice of two or more different types of pen (ballpoint, rollerball, felt, fountain, brush, paint, gel, parallel, technical, etc.).
- **Sumi Ink & Brush:** A small bottle of Japanese liquid black sumi ink (*do not substitute other types of ink!* ) and a small to medium-sized Asian-style bamboo calligraphy brush. Also two mixing cups/jars/containers.
- **Collage Supplies:** Glue (e.g., glue sticks, Yes! glue, white glue, etc.), artist masking tape, scissors and/or X-acto knife.
- **OPTIONAL:** Ruler, water spray bottle, gloves, colored pencils, crayons, pastels, etc.

Portable Art Kit (PAK):

- A PAK is a small, portable container with supplies and a small sketchbook. The key aspect of the PAK is that it is **truly portable**—it must fit in a backpack, pocket, or purse. Use it to write down ideas, plan a piece, sketch on the fly, and brainstorm freely without judgment.

  - For your PAK you need:
    - **Sketchbook:** Must be 5” x 7” or smaller (my favorite brands are Handbook and Moleskin).
    - **Pencils and/or Pens:** A small assortment of your choosing.
    - **Container:** A small and portable box/bag for supplies.

Where to buy supplies:

- **Accent Arts (PA):** 392 California Ave. @ Ash St.
- **University Art (Redwood City):** 2550 El Camino Real @ Center St.
- **University Art (SJ):** 456 Meridian Ave. @ Saddle Rack St.
- **Michael’s (Sunnyvale):** 818 W El Camino Real @ S. Pastoria Ave.
- **Michael’s (Mountain View):** 2415 Charleston Rd @ Independence Ave.
- **Michael’s (Cupertino):** 20640 Homestead Rd @ Forge Way
- **Michael’s (San Mateo):** 1750 S Delaware St. near Concar Dr.
- **Maido Fine Stationery & Gifts (SJ):** 378 Santana Row, St. 1125, @ Olsen Dr.
Course Outline

Week 1:
- Introductions, syllabus & materials
- Class objectives & prior experience
- Demo: Range of Abstraction, Serendipity
- Warm-up: Escape Your Mistake!
- Project: Disparate Juxtapositions (Creative Synthesis)
- Home Fun: 1) Get supplies. 2) What’s your definition of abstraction? 3) Bring examples of patterns.

Week 2:
- Slide lecture
- Demo: Composition & Non-Illusionistic Space, Positive/Negative Space
- Warm-up: Observation Task: Patterns
- Project: Pattern Transmogrification (Nonrepresentational Geometry)
- Home Fun: 1) Finish Pattern Transmogrification. 2) Observation Task: In-between Time. 3) Bring three or more poems you enjoy.

Week 3:
- Slide lecture
- Demo: Gesture, Chance
- Warm-up: Observation Task: Visual Haiku
- Project: Poetic Distillation (Metaphor & Ambiguity)

Week 4:
- Discussion: All work thus far; Harsh-O-Meter
- Demo: Mixing Media & Collage
- Warm-up: Five senses
- Project: Trans-Form Triptych (Repetition & Perception)
- Home Fun: 1) Finish Trans-Form Triptych. 2) Prep collage ingredients. 3) Observation Task: Look Inward.

Week 5:
- Demo: Shaping Surfaces, Non-Traditional Tools
- Warm-up: Big Collage Pile
- Project: Anti-Self-Portrait (Self-Concept & Ego)
- Home Fun: Walk off into the sunset with your PAK…

IMPORTANT NOTE: Course outline is subject to change. Students will receive an updated syllabus on the first day of class.
Class Goals & Past Experience

Directions:

1. Pair up with the person next to you.
2. Ask your partner the two questions below.
3. Write down her/his answers carefully (and legibly) and be prepared to tell the class what your partner said.
4. Give this handout to your partner at the end of the exercise.

Your Name & Partner's Name:

• What is your past experience with drawing in particular and art in general?

• What do you want to get out of this class?