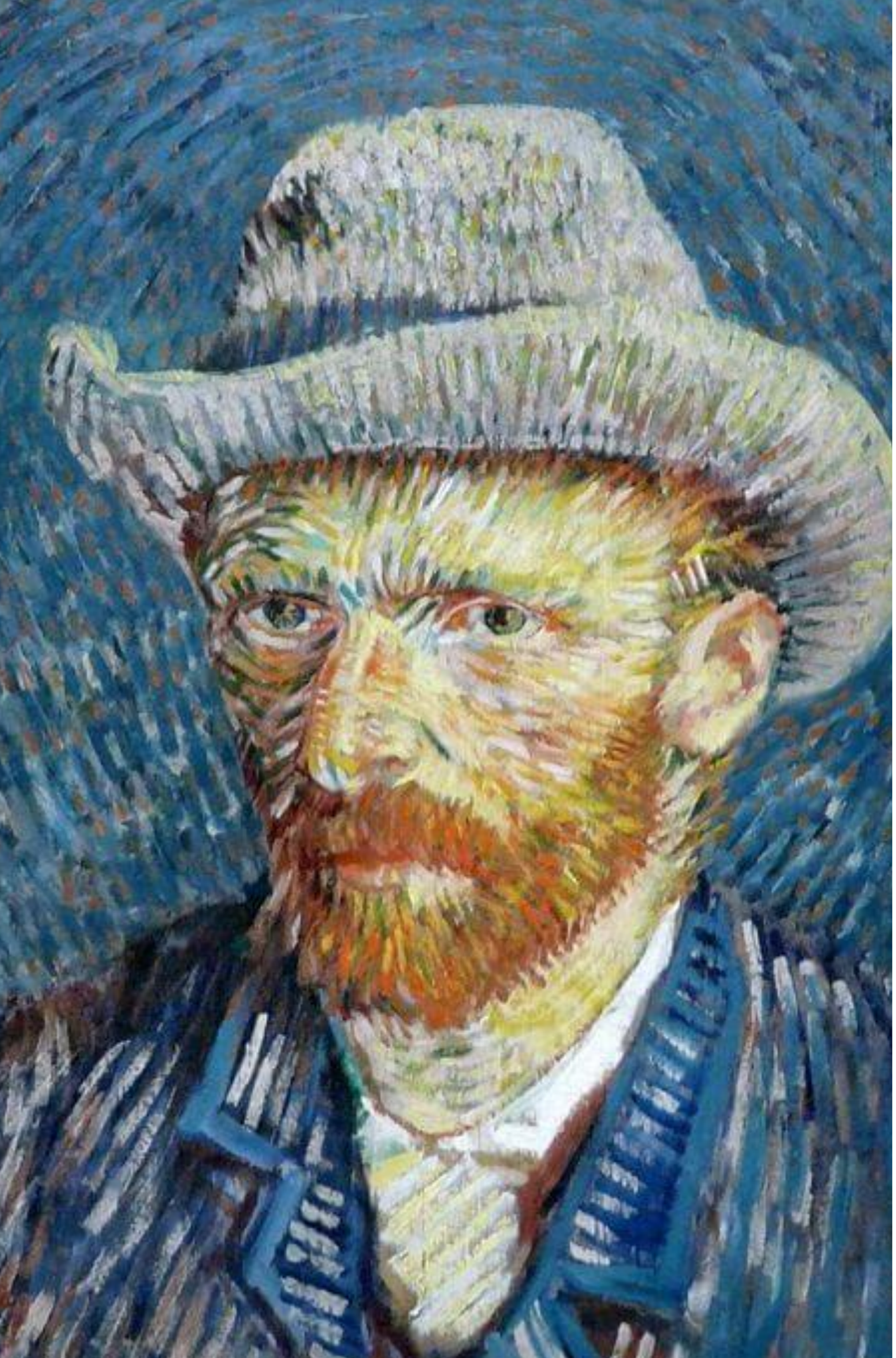
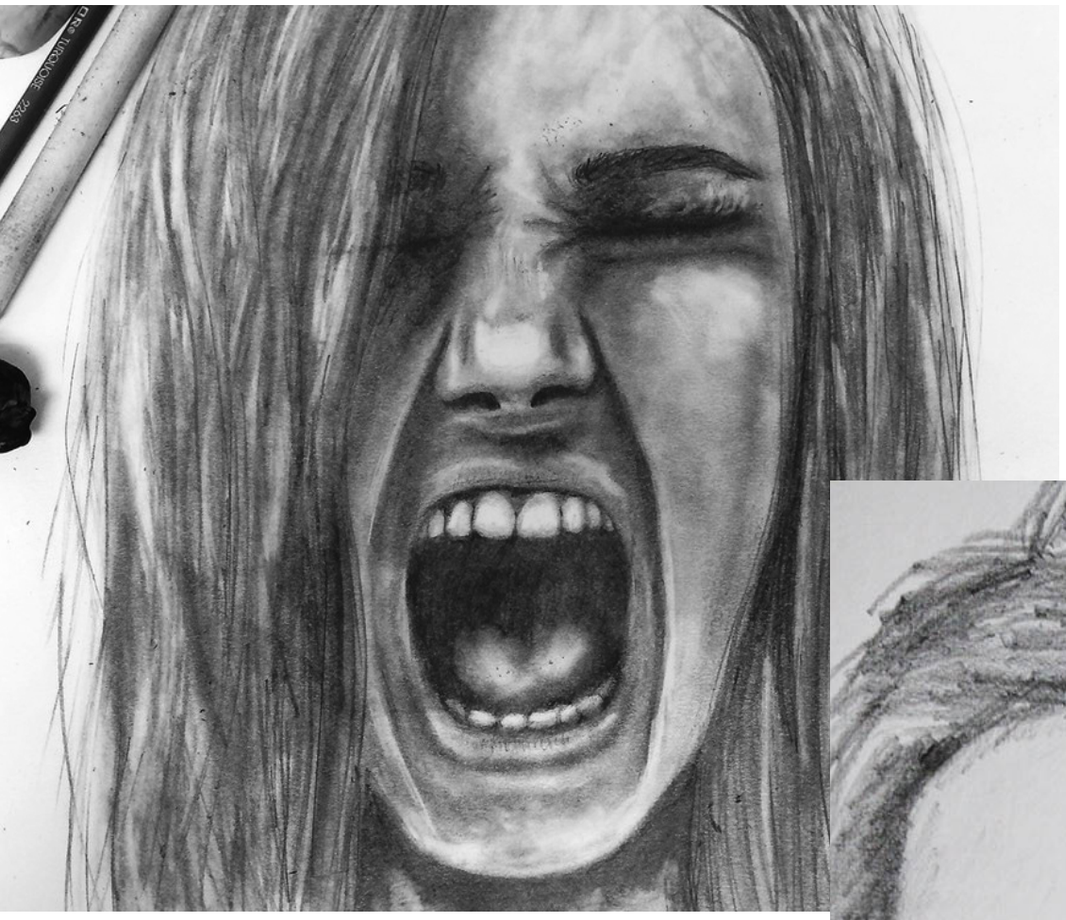
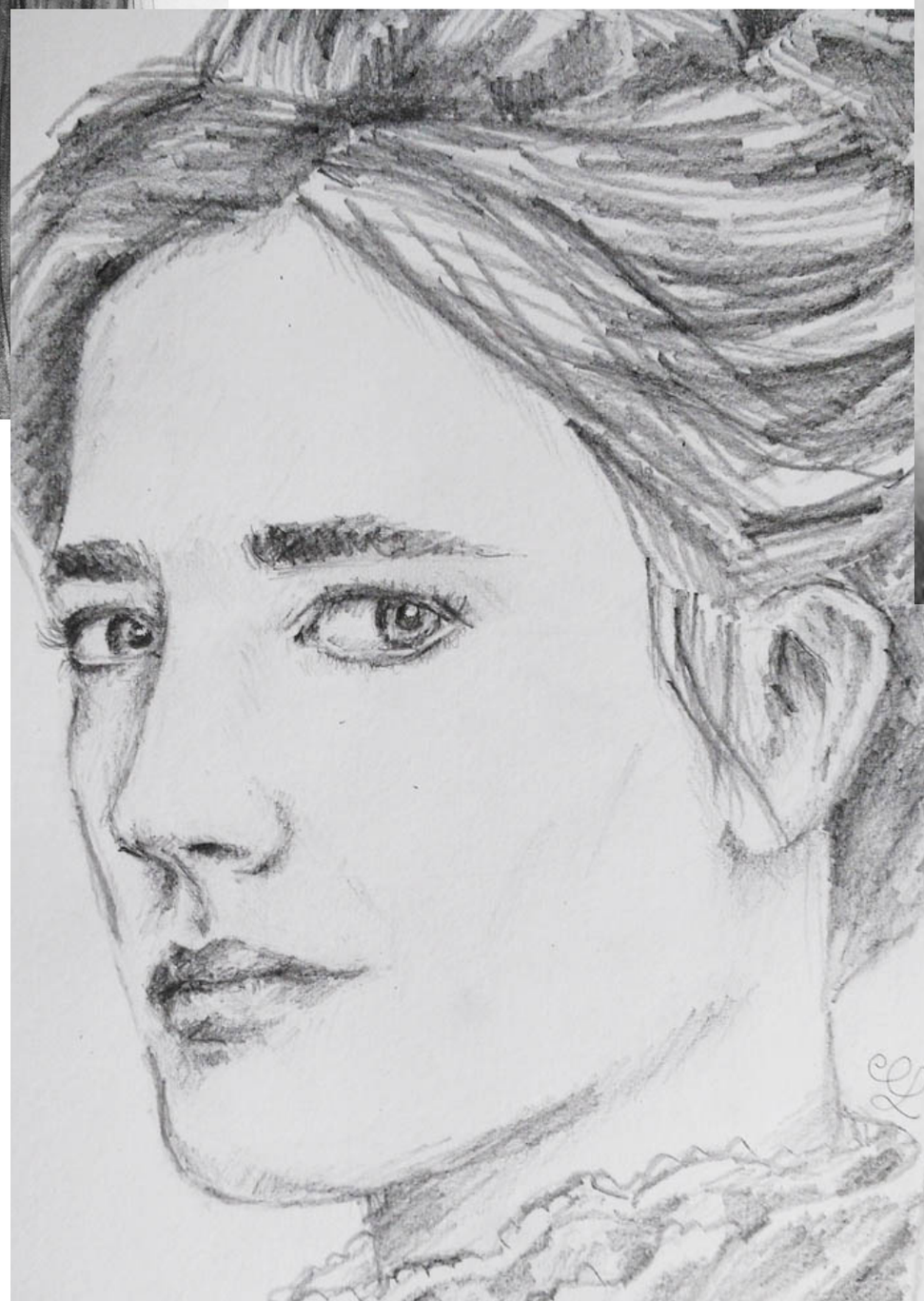


# ART ASSIGNMENT #15

*How to Get Started with Portrait Drawing- Understanding Basic Facial Proportions*

Vincent Van Gogh, *Self Portrait with Grey Felt Hat*, 1887







*Where I’m currently at.*

**All of these were created completely freehand.*

# INTRODUCTION

- Being able to draw/paint believable faces can be *incredibly* rewarding, but oftentimes beginners don't know where to start or get frustrated with their results.

- **Most often than not, when people reach out asking me for suggestions on how to improve, their struggles stem from one (or more) of these three:**

**a) They haven't taken the time to learn about basic facial proportions**

**b) They haven't studied the structure of the human head as a three-dimensional form composed of many different planes**

**c) They aren't using a quality reference photo**



Albrecht Dürer, *Head of a Bearded Old Man,* 1516

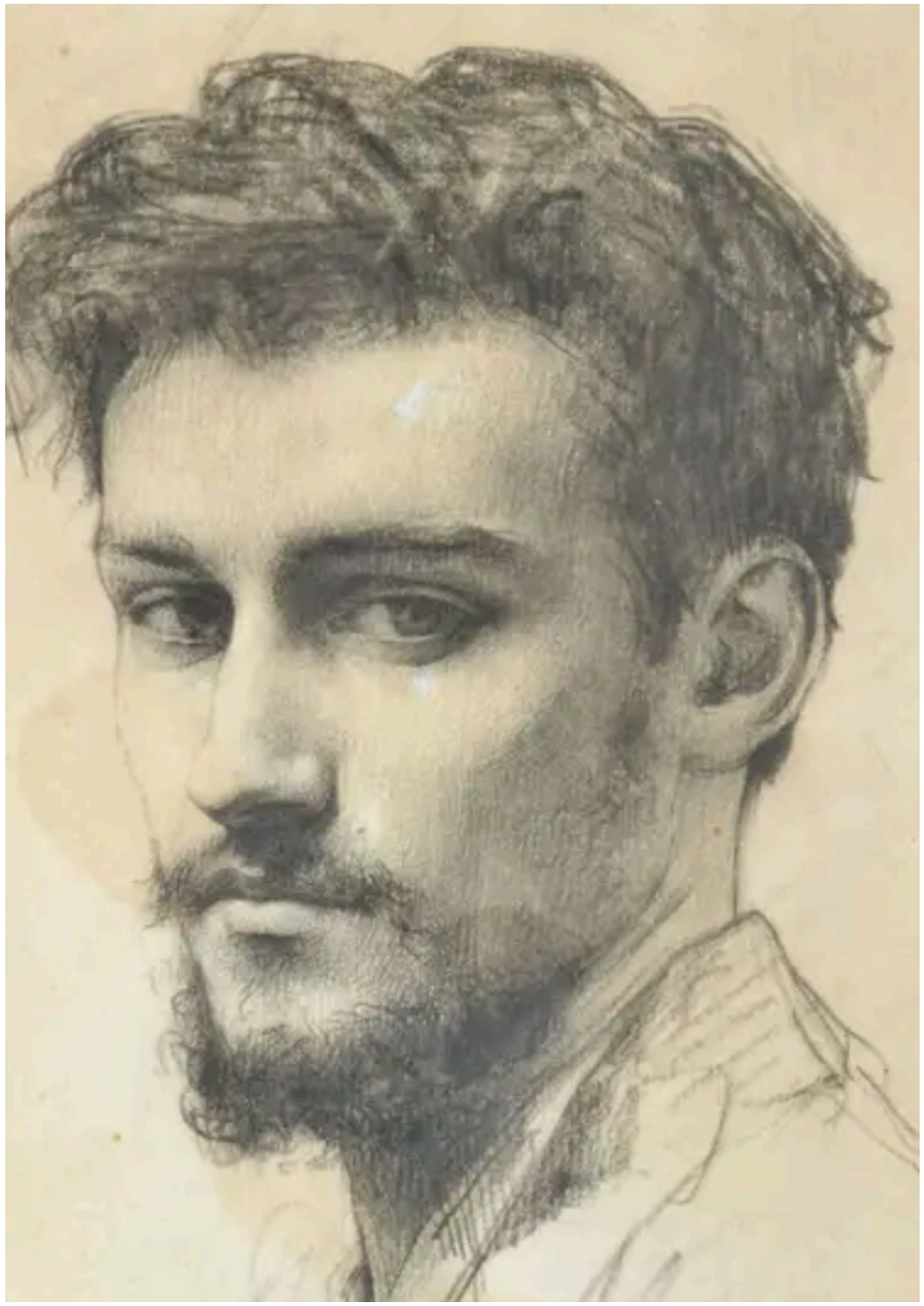
# INTRODUCTION

- **Oftentimes beginners feel they can jump over learning the basics about facial proportions and the structure of the head, but the lack of this knowledge *always* shows, no matter how much they've mastered basic shading techniques, and they will always be hitting a wall.**

- Shading is a *technique*, and does not replace the knowledge we must gain about light behavior and the structure of whatever it is we're trying to draw or paint. The two must go hand-in-hand.

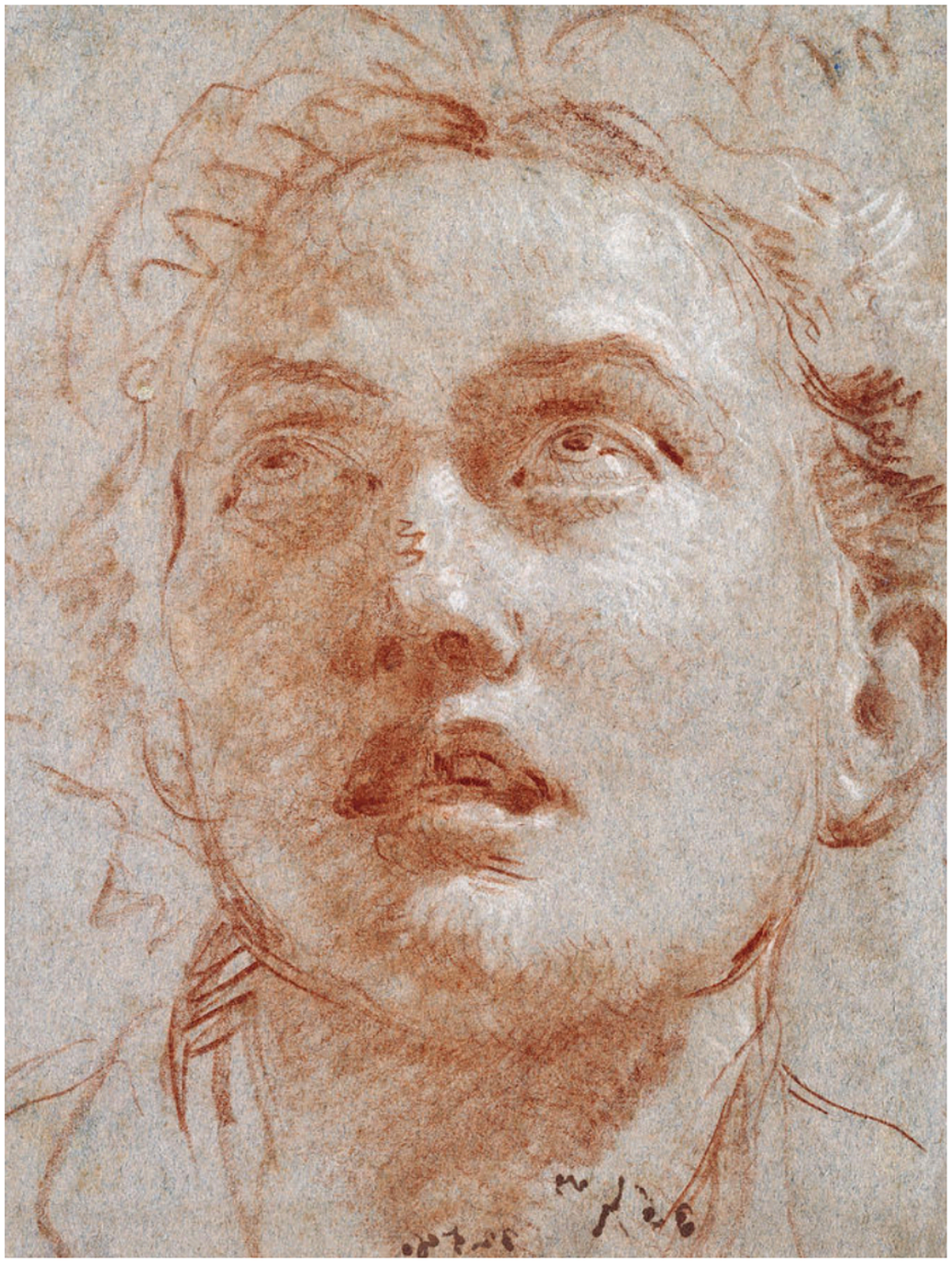
- **The knowledge gained from studying Loomis's method works *in combination* with the visual information we take in via reference photos or from direct observation, as we're creating our drawings or paintings.**

- You'll be able to make up for the information your reference will often be lacking.



Raphaël Collin, *Portrait de Paul Victor Grandhomme,* 1800s

# DIFFERENT PORTRAIT STYLES, YET STILL REALISTIC



Giovanni Battista, *Head Of A Man Looking Up, 1750–1760*



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait with Two Circles*, 1665-1669

# DIFFERENT PORTRAIT STYLES, YET STILL REALISTIC



Théodore Géricault, *Head of a Man*, 1800s



Johannes Vermeer, *Girl with a Pearl Earring, 1665*

# BASIC FACIAL PROPORTIONS

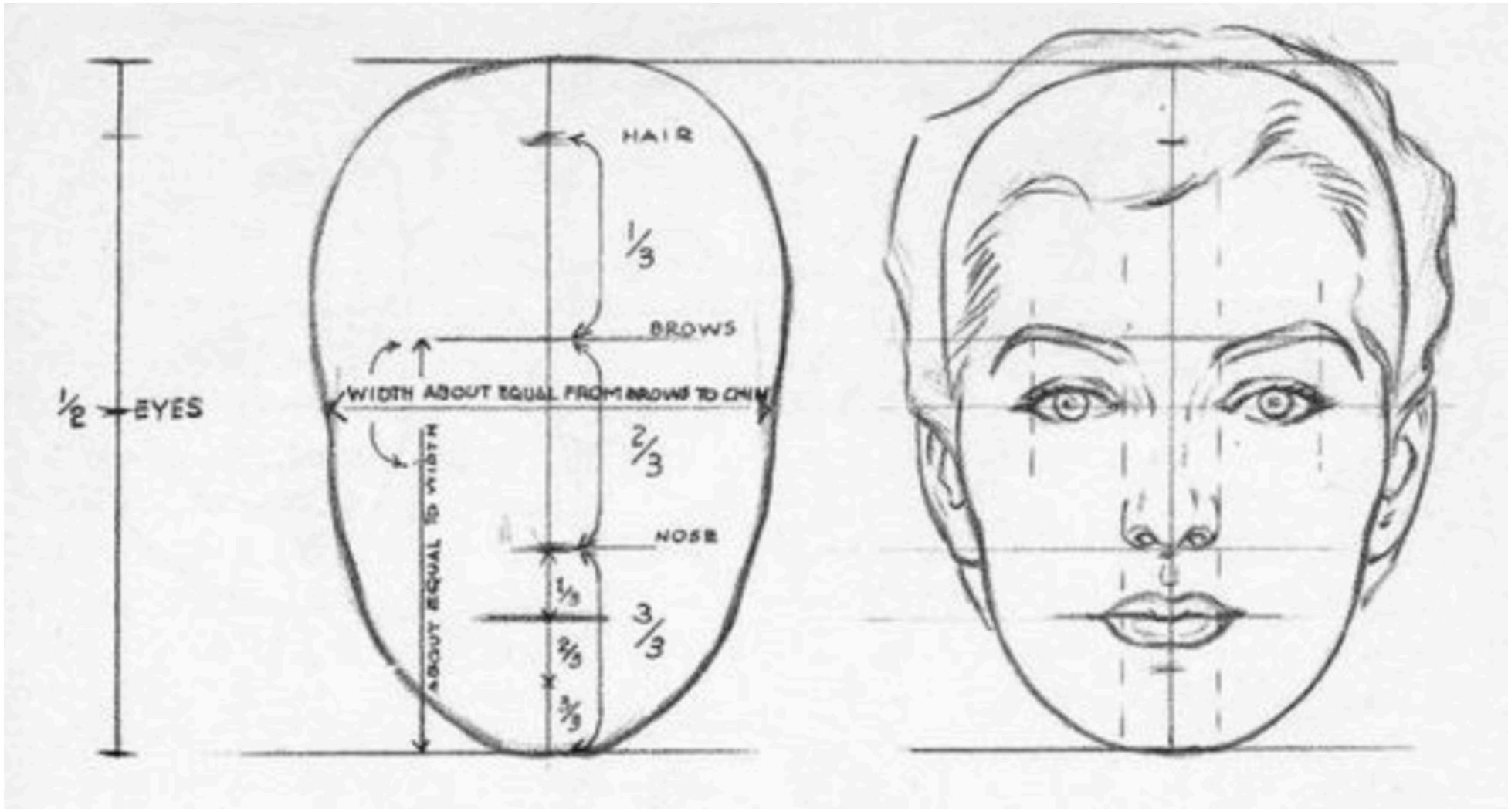
- **Just like drawing the human figure, drawing faces is *incredibly* challenging because it requires at least basic drawing skills, but also knowing about specific proportions.**

- If our proportions are even slightly mistaken (facial features are too big or small, too far apart or too close together, etc.), our portrait is going to look *off* and not realistic.

- **Even non-artists who haven't studied facial proportions will be able to tell that something looks off because we see faces probably most of all, every-single-day.** **Which is why it's so important to start building our observational skills, as well as our hand-eye coordination via subjects such as still life.*

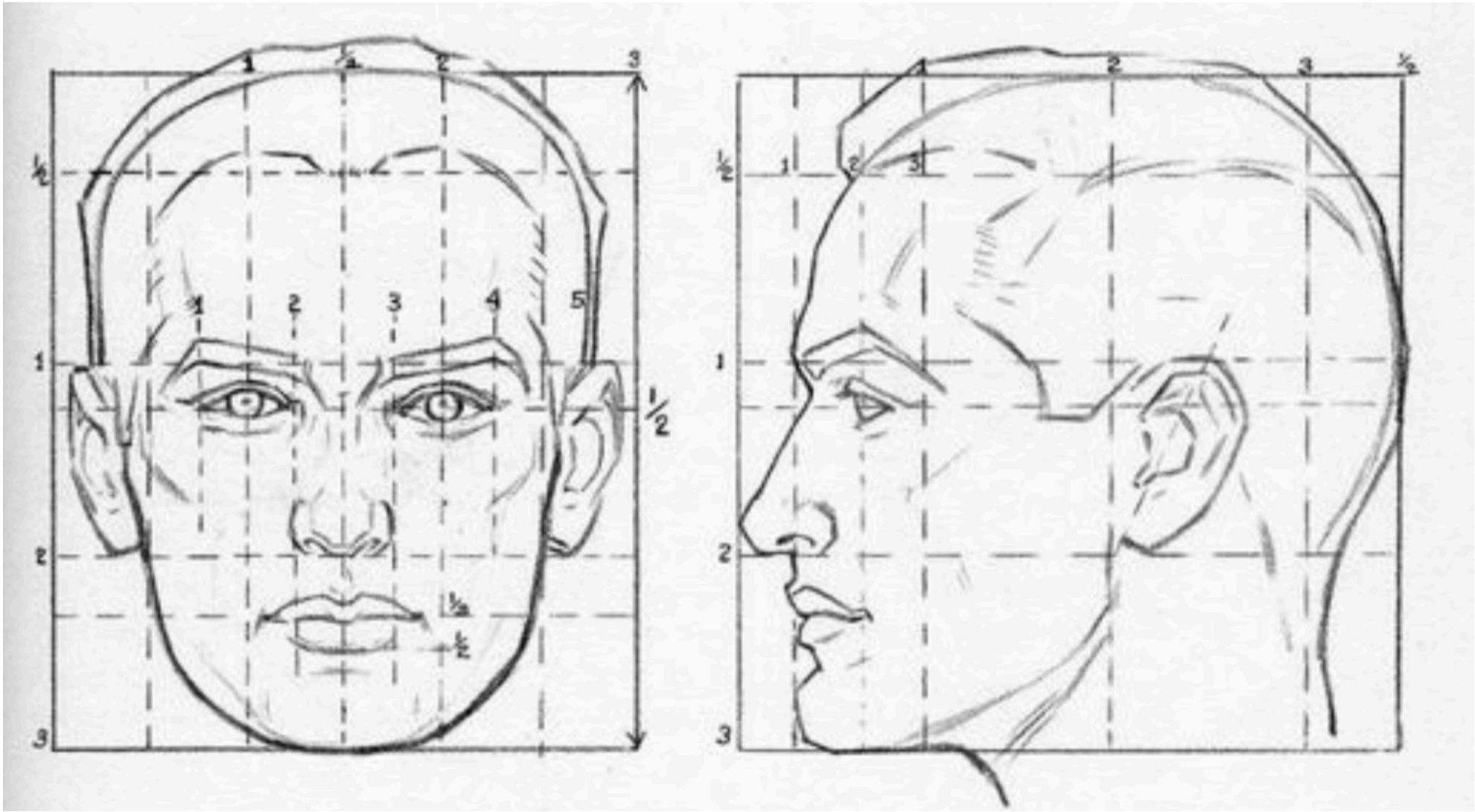


# BASIC FACIAL PROPORTIONS



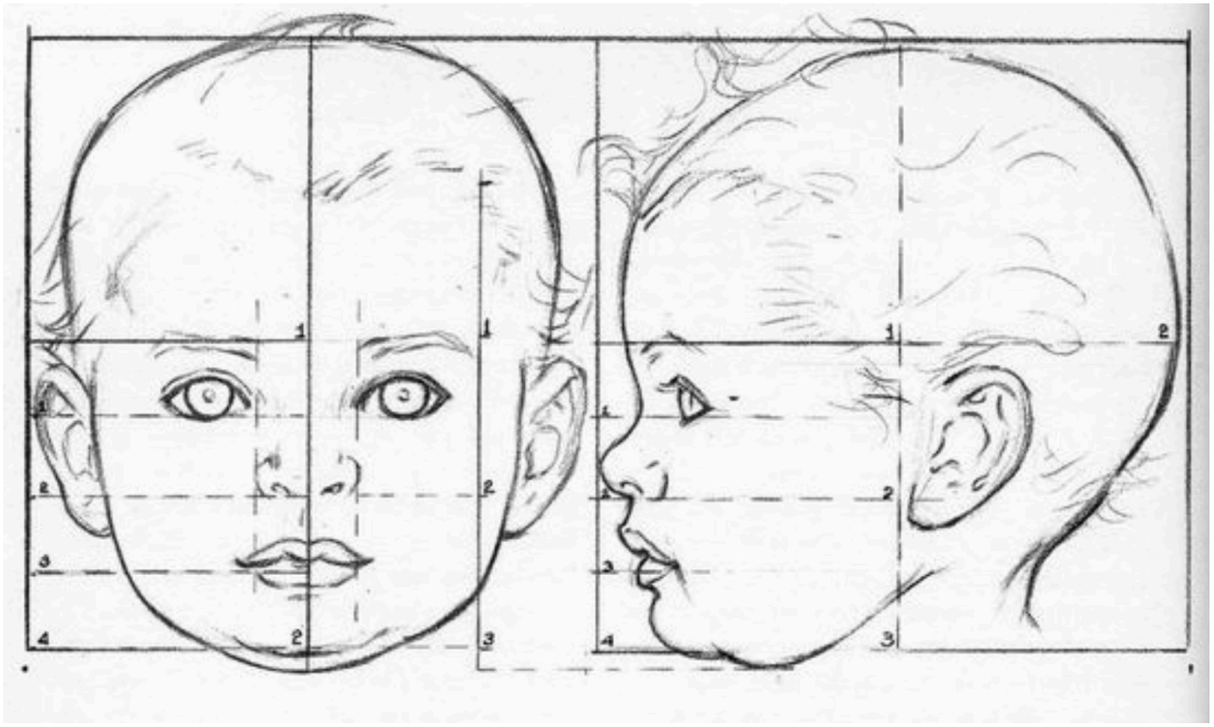

- **Even though there is an infinite variety of face/facial feature types, learning about basic facial proportions and the structure of the skull is going to provide you the solid base you need and refinement comes *throughout* the drawing/painting process.**
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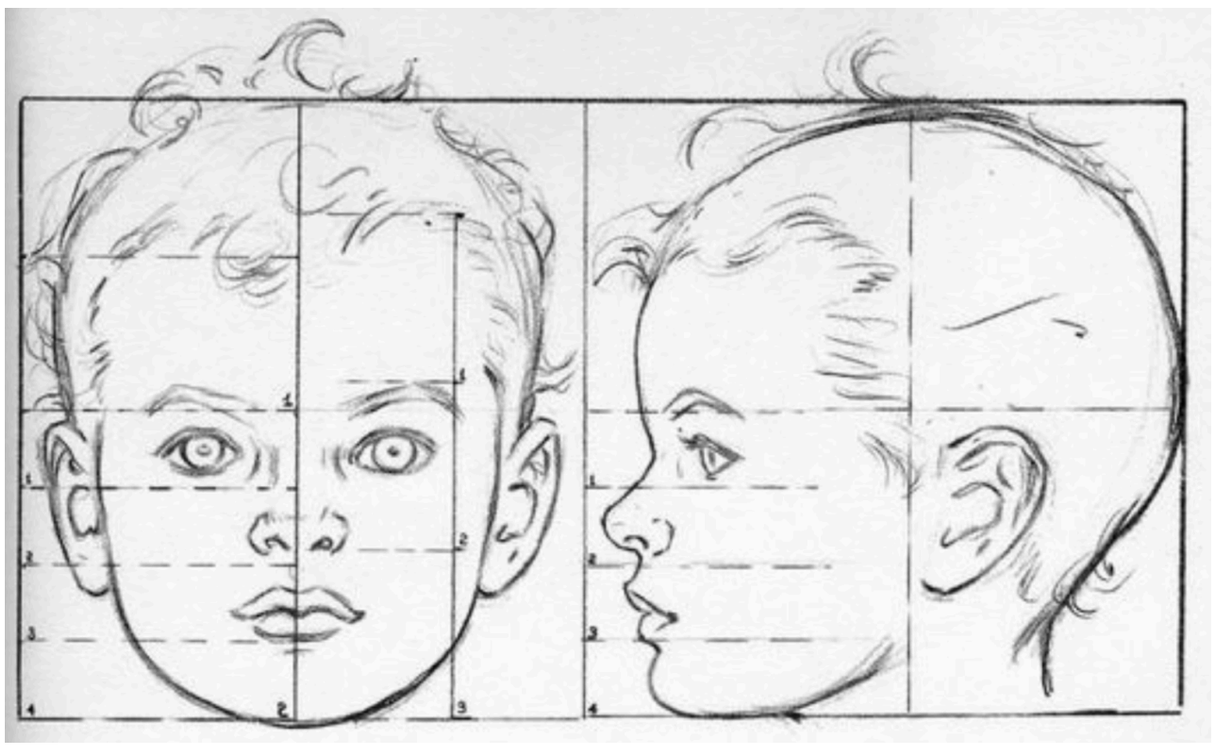
# BASIC FACIAL PROPORTIONS




- **By knowing these basic proportions and practicing facial features, you'll be able to draw a simple face from imagination.**
- It's always best to begin with a forwards-facing face and move on to drawing it at different angles after this has been achieved successfully.

# BASIC FACIAL PROPORTIONS



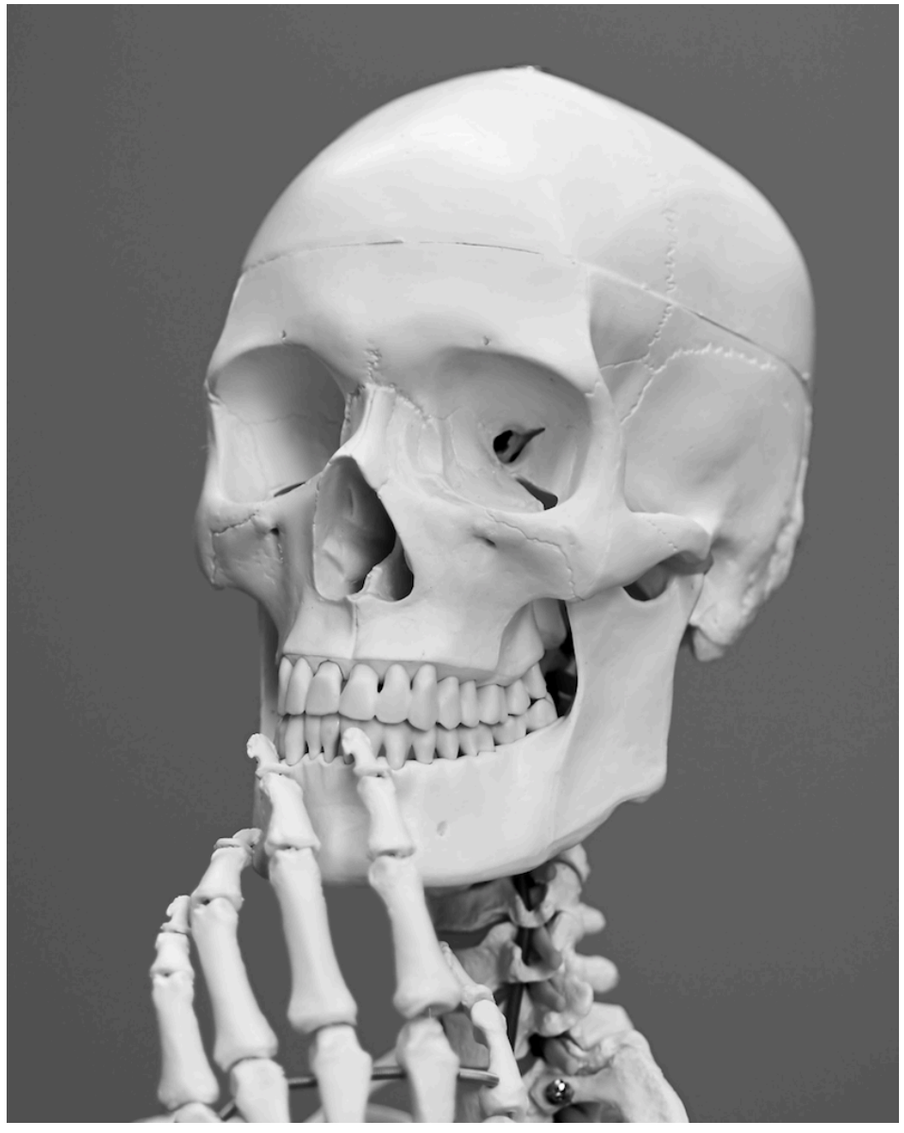


*Facial proportions of baby and toddler.*

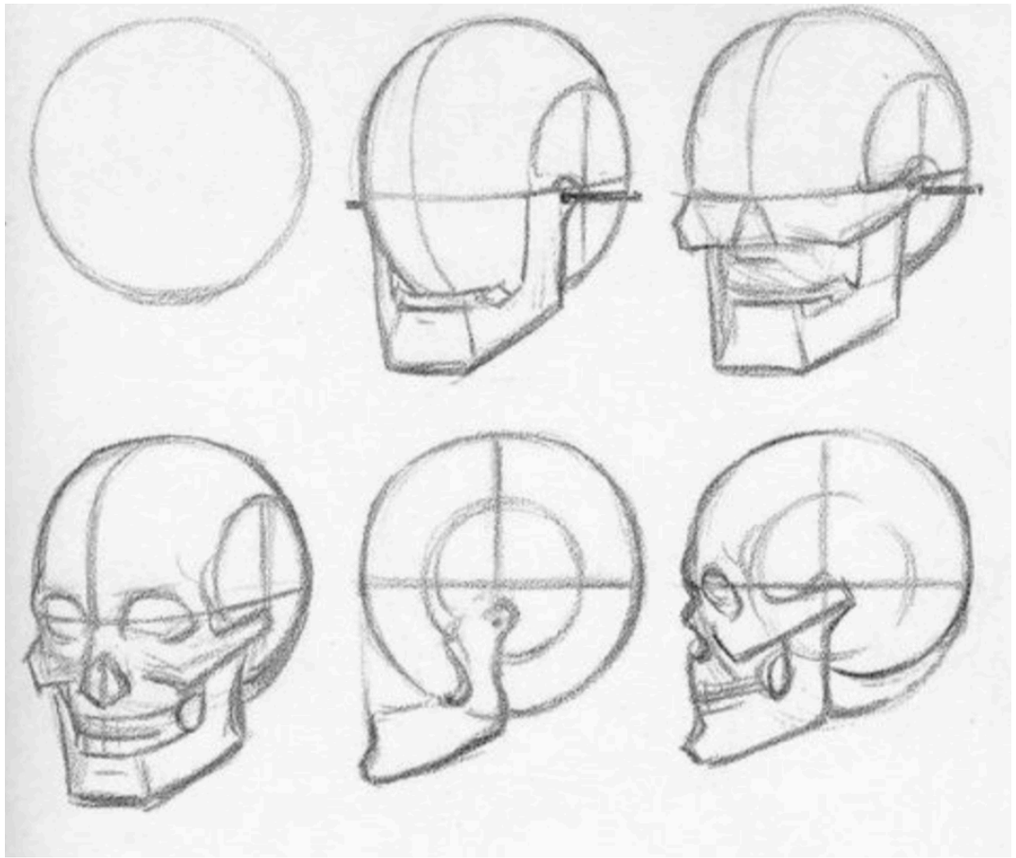
**Loomis's book Drawing the Face and Hands includes more.*

# THE HUMAN SKULL

- Just like when we're drawing the human figure, understanding the underlying structure of the face (the skull) will provide us a solid base to build our drawing upon and will lead to more successful results.
- **By studying the skull, we're able to gain a better understanding of the deepness and level of protrusion of different nooks and crannies throughout, as well as of all of the different planes that integrate it.**
- It enables us to visualize the head as a three-dimensional structure that can be seen from many angles and perspectives.
- **The human skull is divided into two main parts: the cranium and the mandible, and we can start our drawing with these main "masses".**

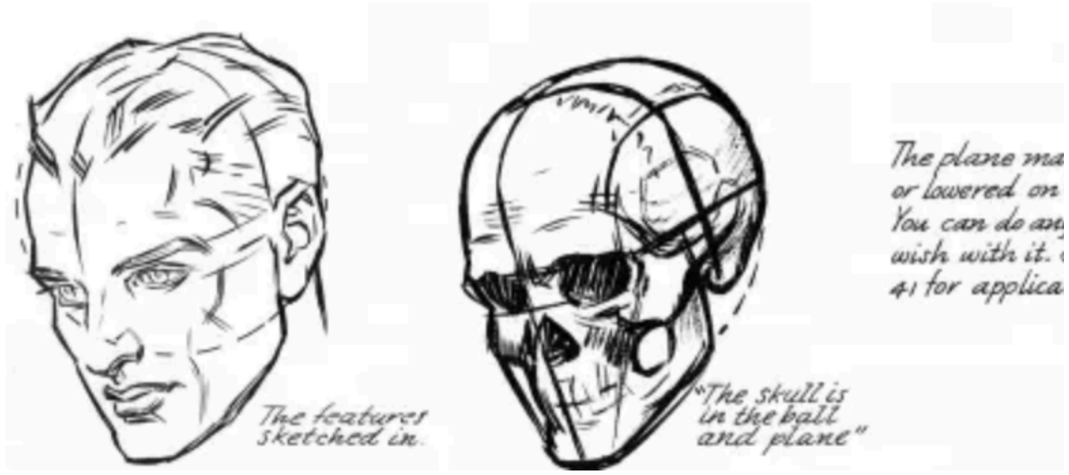


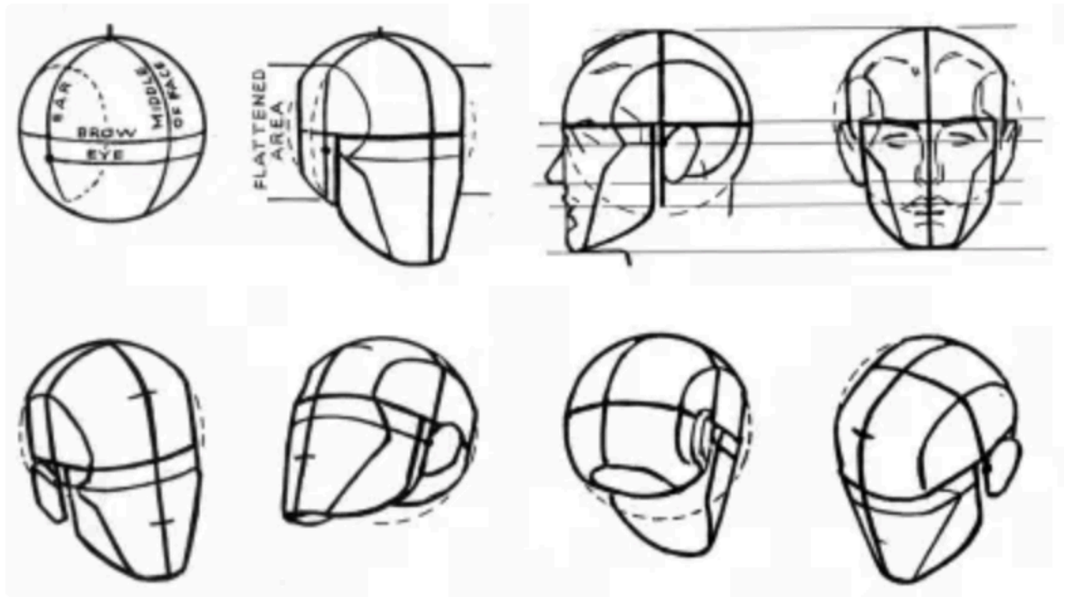
# VISUALIZING THE HEAD AS A THREE DIMENSIONAL STRUCTURE



**Loomis's method allows us to start with an understanding of the head's three-dimensional structure right-off-the-bat, as opposed to starting with a flat shape.**

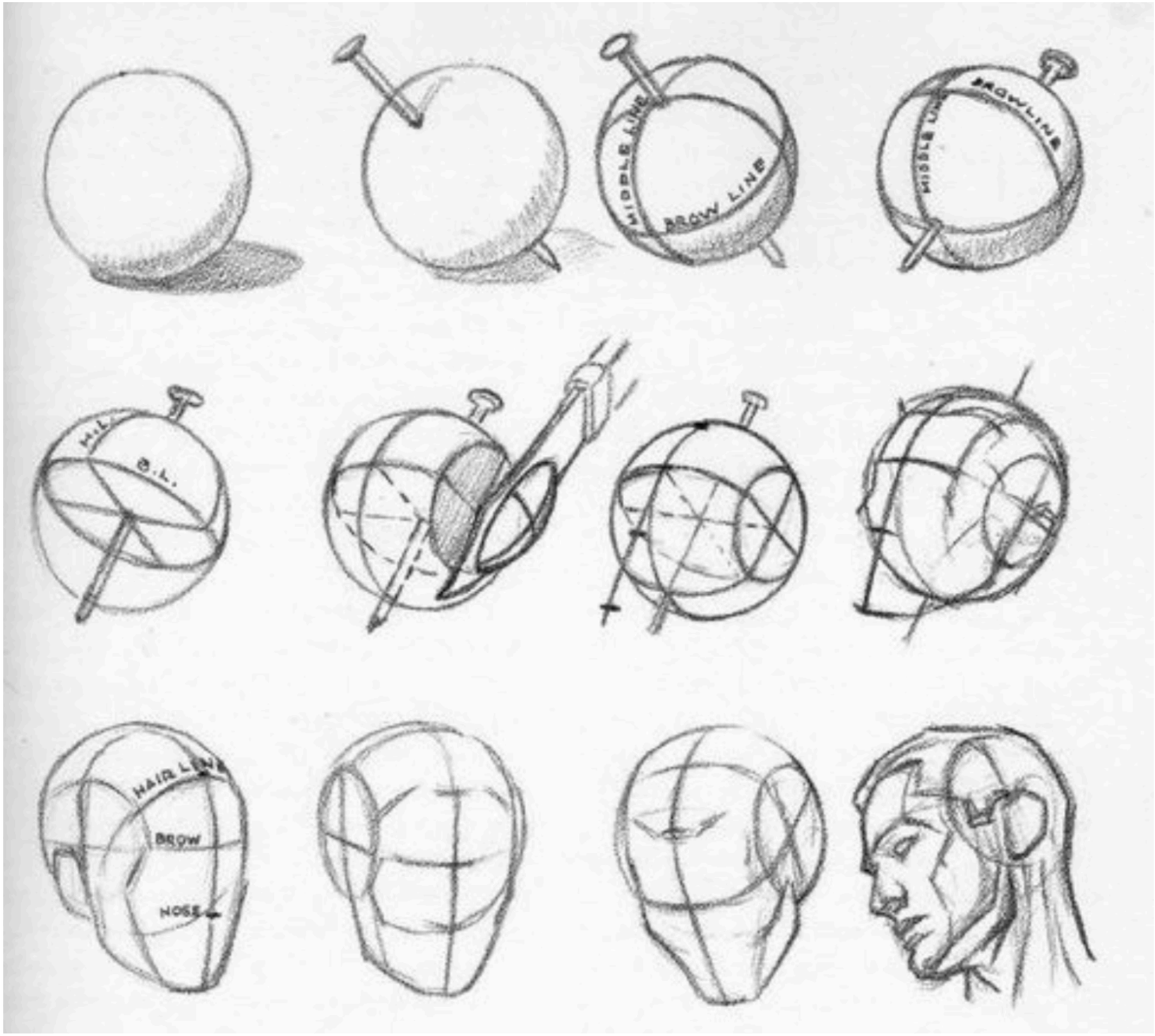
**The head shape is created and then facial features are placed upon it using guidelines.**




Notice how Loomis starts with a circle for the cranium and a simplified mandible. Horizontal and vertical guidelines are added to know where to place different facial features.

# VISUALIZING THE HEAD AS A THREE DIMENSIONAL STRUCTURE




Imagine a styrofoam ball with two slices cut of at either side.

**No matter what angle or perspective you're viewing a face from, it's proportions *do not change.* Guidelines always stay in the same place and should be taken into account for facial features.**

However, what we're able to see of a face changes depending on the angle or perspective we're viewing it from.

*Foreshortening comes into play.

# A TIP TO TAKE YOUR PORTRAITS TO THE NEXT LEVEL





- Each individual facial feature is a small complex structure in and of itself.
- **Making time for isolated studies so that we're able to focus on smaller details and characteristics that we would otherwise look past when drawing or painting a face in full, will improve our portraits monumentally.**
- Look for quality pictures of the particular facial feature that you'd like to improve upon in different angles and lightings and draw them to the best of your abilities, preferably in grayscale.

# TIPS FOR SELECTING GREAT ART REFERENCE PHOTOS



- When we're just getting started with realistic portraits, it's especially important to find great reference photos that have the following:

  **a) Great resolution that allows you to see detail (not blurry or pixelated)**

  **b) Great lighting (not over or underexposed and not taken with flash - good balance of darks and lights)**

  **c) You're able to see the face fully (not cropped at strange places - the person's face shows fully)**

  **d) Always start with forwards-facing photos. Not tilted!**

# SUGGESTIONS TO MOVE FORWARD

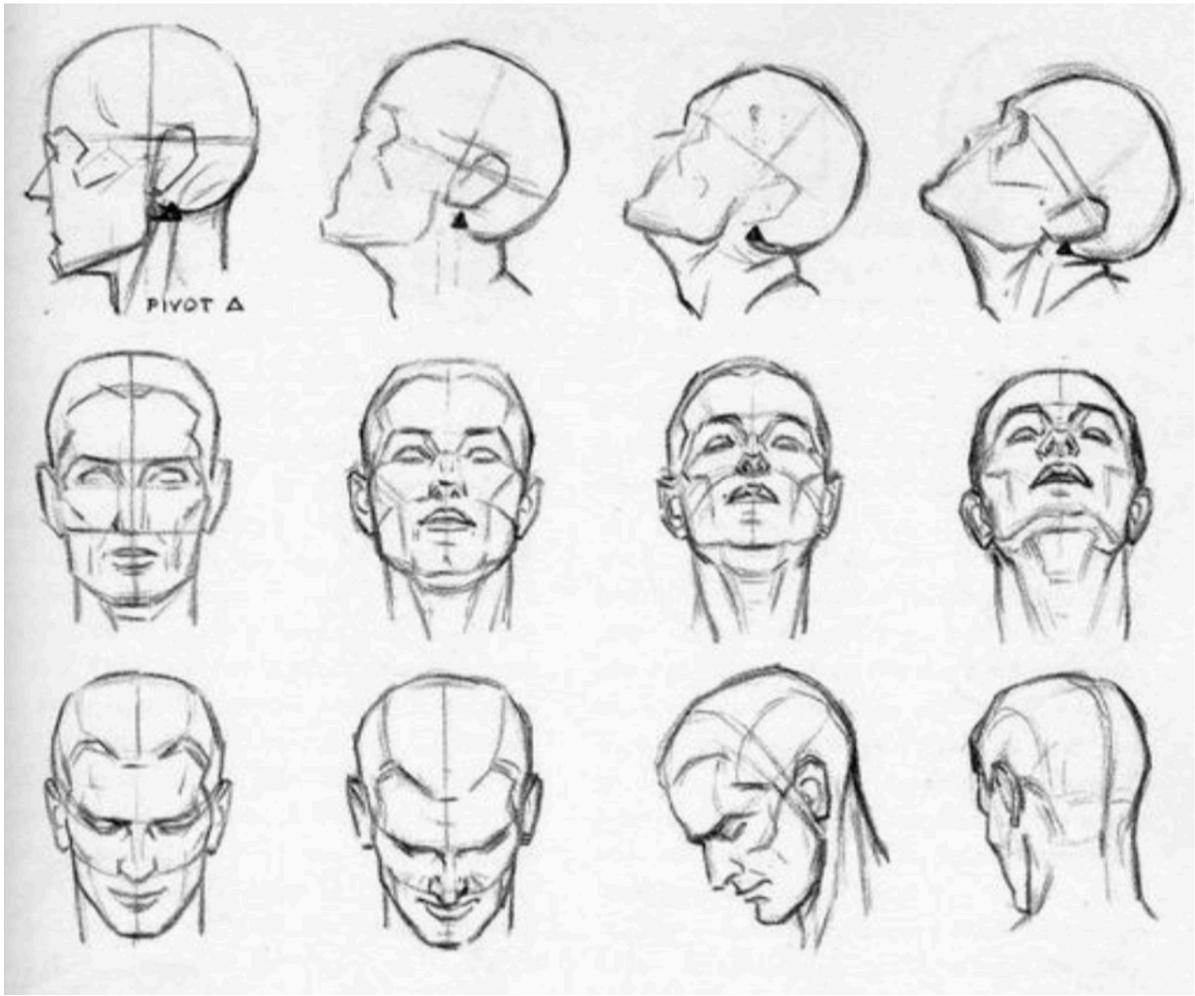
- These steps are going to allow you to develop solid bases and move forward in incremental steps:

**1. Learn basic facial proportions and practice drawing believable faces facing forward (no direct likeness to any specific person).**

**2. Create oversimplified sketches of heads in different angles (starting with 3/4's), focusing on understanding the three-dimensional structure of the human head. **See Loomis's examples****

**3. Start adding more detail and shading to your drawings using pictures, taking different planes of the head structure into account.**

**4. Create studies of individual facial features using references. Study their nuances and smaller parts.**




*Remember that, as with anything else we draw, proportions and perspective has to be achieved first, before jumping onto smaller details and shading!

# IS TRACING AND USING GRIDS WRONG?

- While tracing and using grids isn't wrong by any means, and there's certainly a time and a place for it in any artist's journey, if it's our goal to be able to draw a face freehand, it's important to see these methods as training wheels we're looking to move beyond.

- **When we trace and use grids, we're not only not developing our observational skills and our ability to recreate proportions effectively, but we're not progressing our hand-eye coordination and are purely focusing on copying parts of shapes and parts of lines.**

- **We're also not learning anything in regards to the three-dimensional structure of whatever it is we're drawing or painting, but only focusing on copying shapes, lines, colors and values.**

- This said, we should always work *incrementally* towards drawing a portrait in full-likeness. As our observational skills improve, likeness will improve. It takes time and practice.

- Lots of professional artists use projectors, tracing and/or grids when asked to create a portrait in full likeness due to practicality and lack of time. But they already know how to draw and would be able to complete the task if they had the time!

# CREATIVE ASSIGNMENT #15:

- Create a drawing or quick sketch of a forwards-facing face that shows believable proportions and locations of facial elements.
- You can decide whether to use a specific reference photo as loose inspiration, but make sure to start with Loomis's base structure and don't focus on achieving total likeness to the person.
- If you're more advanced, use a 3/4's angle.

- ***Recommended Resource:***
- Andrew Loomis- *Drawing the Head and Hands*
- **Link to free downloadable book will be left within this Patreon post.*