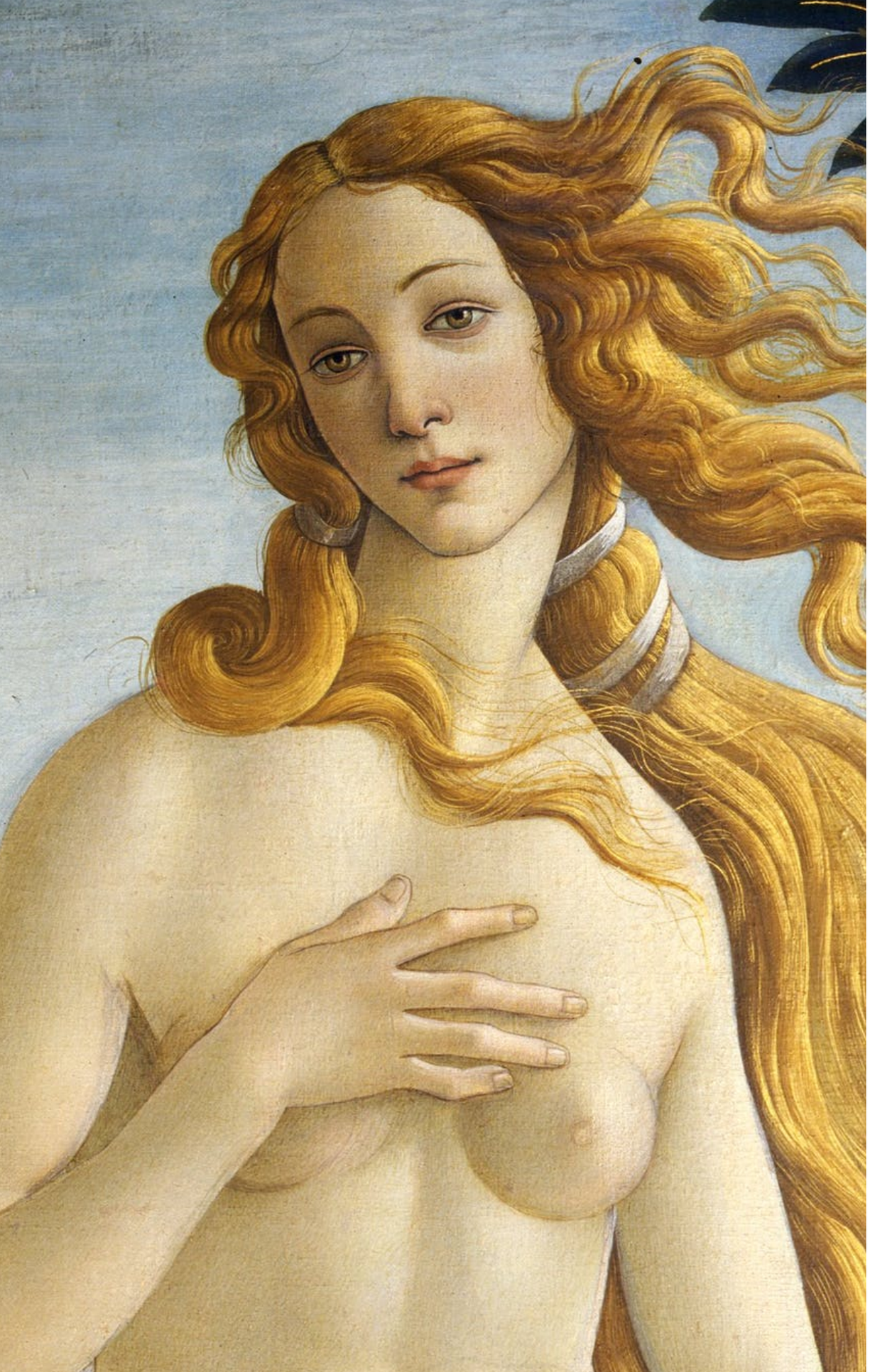


ART ASSIGNMENT #21

Drawing Hair

Sandro Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*, 1485 ca.

AN ESSENTIAL PART OF PORTRAITS

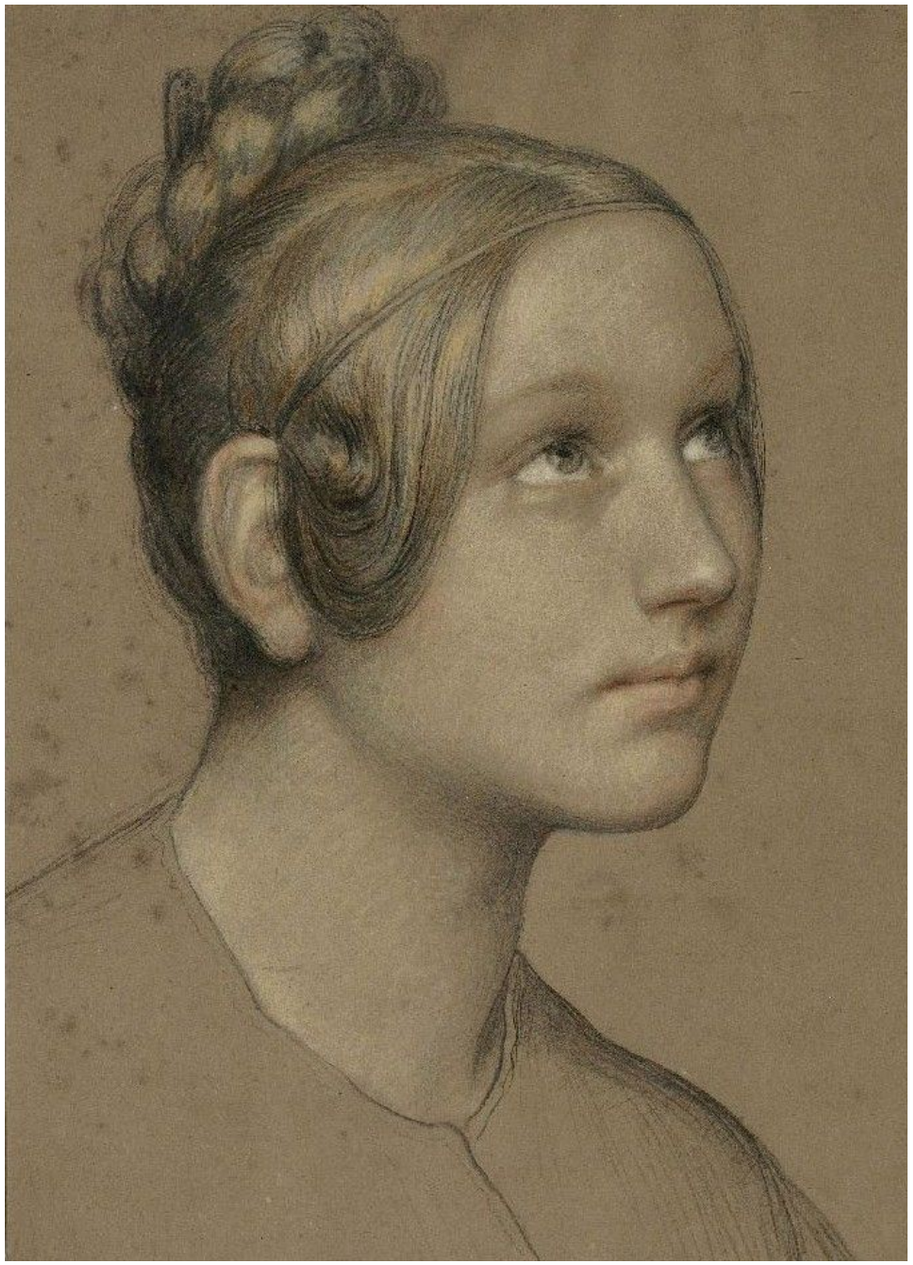
- Throughout the past few classes, we've been delving deep into drawing the human head using the Loomis method, as well as facial features.

- There's another *incredibly* important (and often neglected feature) that comes along with drawing and painting portraits, and this is hair.

- **Hair is often neglected because it's thought of as being secondary to facial features, or because it's difficult/ time consuming to draw. Whatever the case may be, we cannot shy away from developing our skills in this area if portraits are a subject that interests us.**

- **Just like the other facial features, someone's hair (or lack thereof) is an important physical characteristic that helps us, as artists, transmit the person's essence or personality.**

In today's class, I'll be explaining the bases that will help you draw hair in a more believable way, and I'm also sharing step-by-step tutorials for both female and male hair at the end in which I'll be simplifying the process.



Anna Marie Ellenrieder, *Self-Portrait*, 1842 ca.

IT TAKES PRACTICE, PATIENCE + TRAINING OURSELVES TO SEE WHAT COUNTS

- **As with everything else we may choose to draw or paint, remember to take it a step-at-a-time, start by laying down a solid foundation (focusing on largest forms or masses *before* smaller ones or details) and *simplify, simplify, simplify*!**

- Drawing hair in a believable way is time consuming, as there are lots of little shapes, lines and values throughout, and they can be difficult to see. It's easy to get overwhelmed and/or not know where to start, as well as to get impatient/sloppy when trying to finish things faster.

- **This process entails us visualizing hair as *groupings* with 3D form and tuning out unnecessary details in the beginning as we're designing and sculpting. It's also about having the underlying structure of the hair (the human head) in mind, as well as its volume and gravity.**

- It's *not* about mindlessly laying down marks or about trying to copy every single strand of hair.

- **Hair has *volume* and *mass*, and by simplifying it into groupings or separate little structures affected by light, we can make the process *a lot* easier for ourselves and achieve great results.**

- **Remember that it's important to work from *general*, and make our way towards *specifics*. In this case, we're noticing major groups/clumps of hair first, using our artistic license to design whenever needed, and *then* moving on to developing values and texture.**

- Though 3D forms are hidden by hair texture (and the large amount of it), once you train yourself to see things in this way, things get *way* easier!

BASIC IDEAS FOR BELIEVABLE HAIR DRAWING

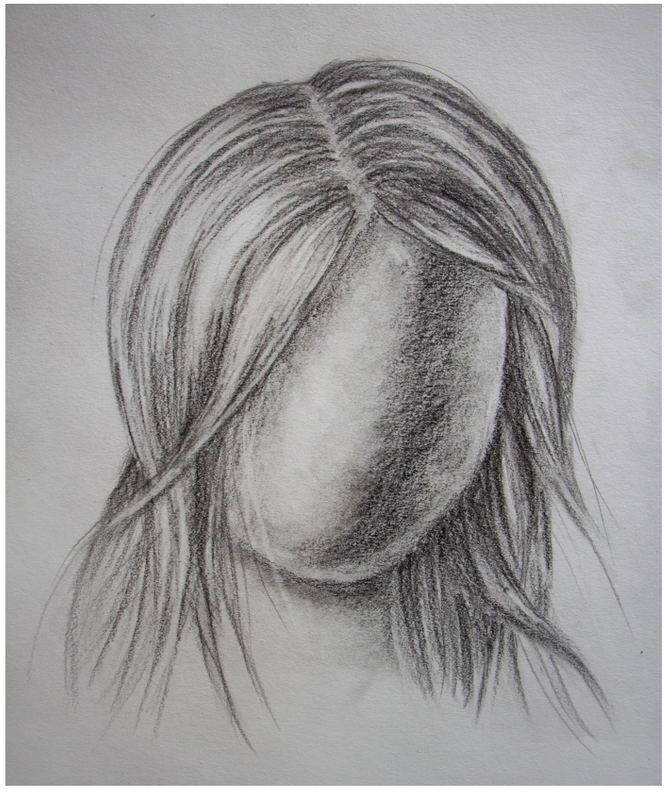
- To begin, here are the main things to consider when getting started with drawing hair:

1) Hair *wraps* around the head and therefore is affected by this underlying structure (in some cases more than others of course, depending on hair length and hair type).



Hair inherits the general light patterns that the head it's on has.

2) Hair has *volume* and is not flat, and therefore must be drawn slightly *above* the head shape, not directly on the head shape (unless there is no hair or the hair is wet).



3) It's important to visualize hair as separate clumps/groupings or as small separate masses, as opposed to one large mass.

BASIC IDEAS FOR BELIEVABLE HAIR DRAWING





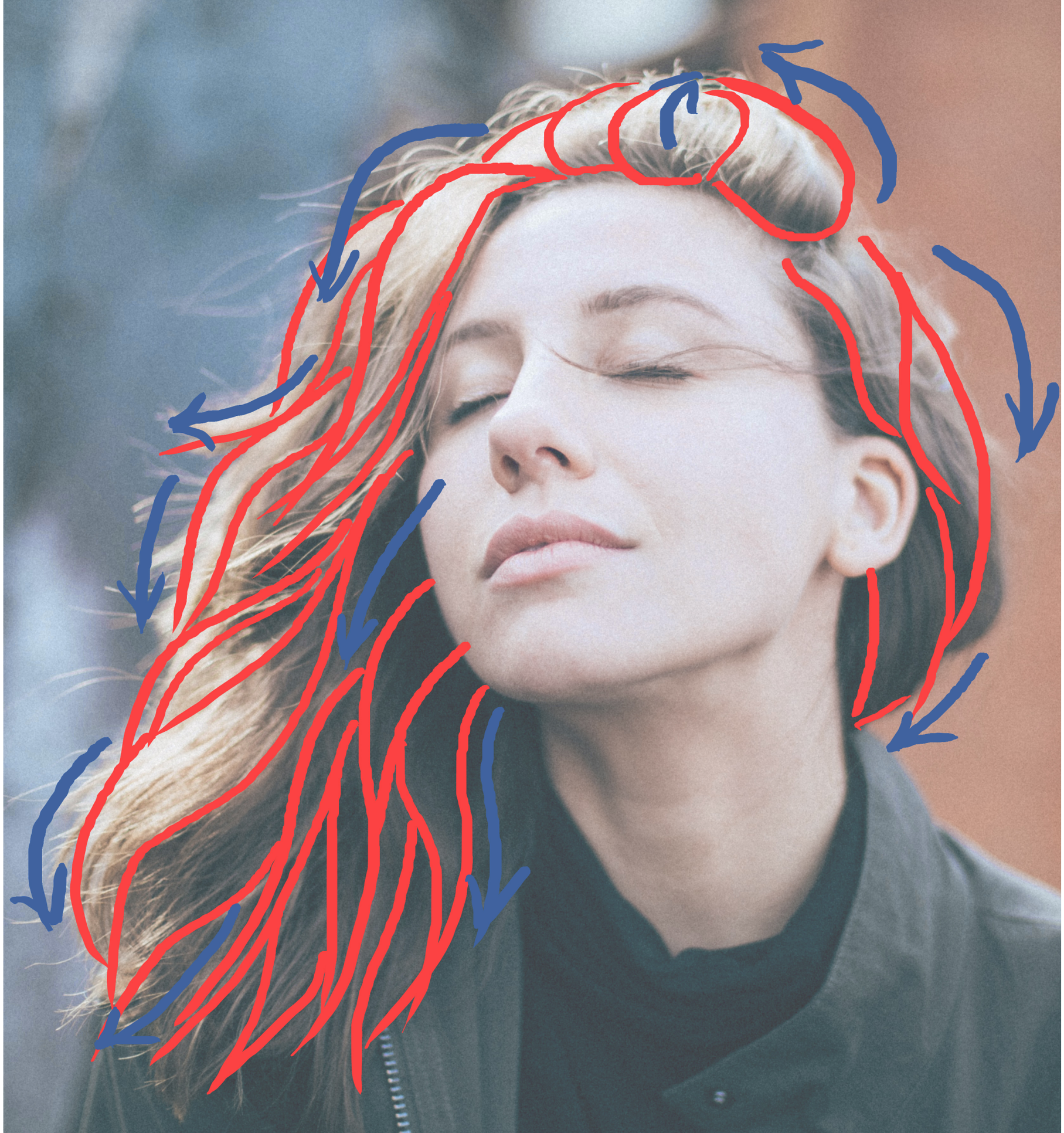
Hair wraps around the head and has volume.

It is also affected by gravity, of course!

Begin training yourself to notice main groupings of hair and noticing their flow lines.

4) There's no need to slave over the photo and try to draw in *every-single-strand* you see. In fact, there's not only room for us to use our artistic license when it comes to drawing/painting hair, but *almost always* we're going to be doing at least a bit of designing in order to add interest to or enhance our composition.

5) As with all realistic drawings, developing a wide range of values is *essential* in order to create a sensation of three-dimensional form and depth, so we must always consider the location of the light source. In this case, it's also important to acknowledge how clumps of hair overlap and intersect.



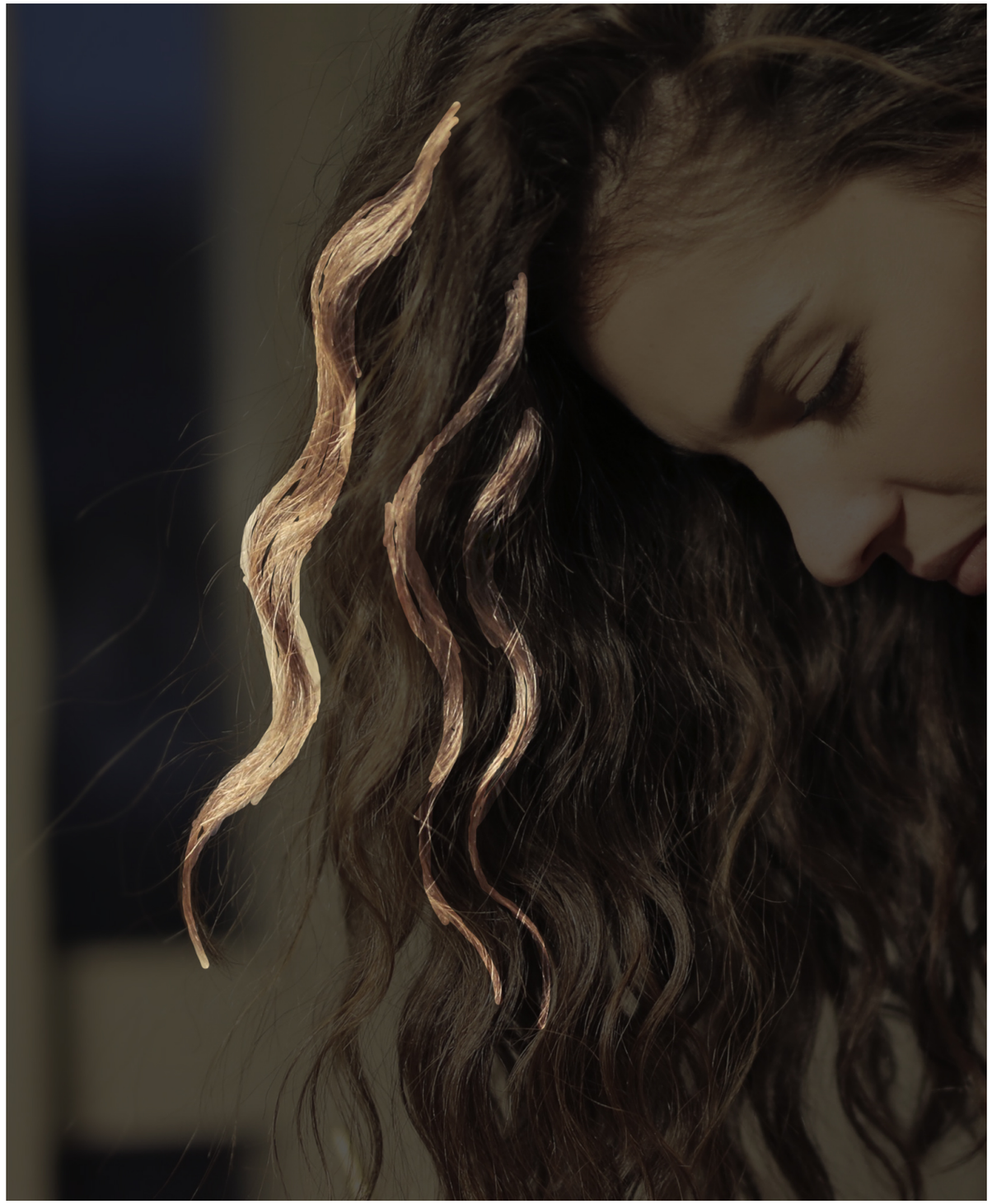
VISUALIZING HAIR GROUPINGS AS FORMS





Notice how there’s room for interpretation, especially with smaller/ secondary groupings of hair?

CURLY AND WAVY HAIR

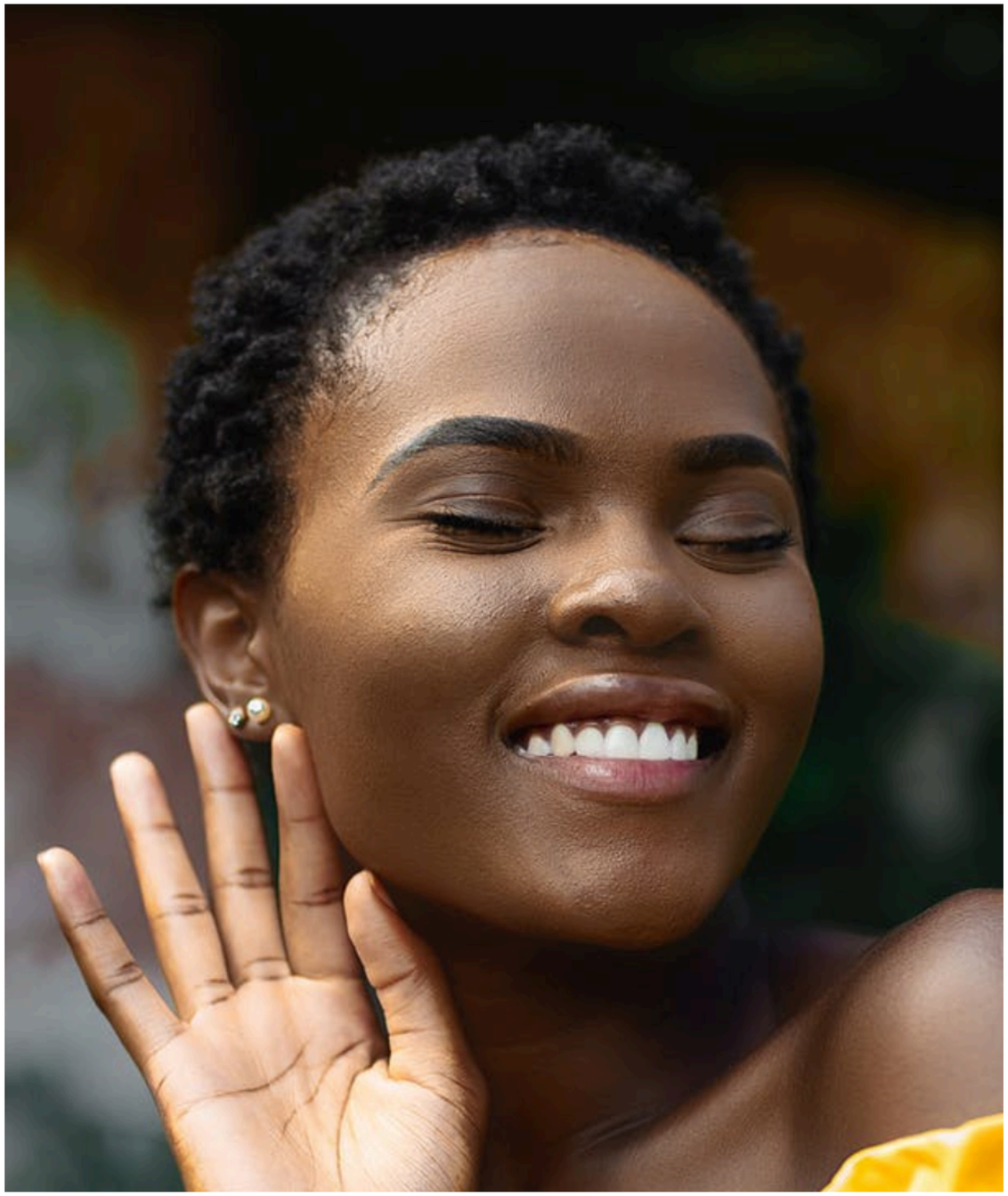


Curly hair (especially tighter curls) can present more of a challenge, but remember not to get overwhelmed with trying to copy everything exactly as you see it and visualize largest clumps as *ribbons*.

Then, within those ribbons, notice the upturns and downturns and different values throughout.



VERY CURLY AND SHORT HAIR



When it comes to shorter, very curly hair, we can go straight into developing texture. **I'd use the scribbling technique.*

However, as we're developing that texture, we must have the direction of the hair growth in mind, as well as the creation of a wide range of values. *It's still important to acknowledge lighter areas, midtones and darker areas.

There's also irregularity when it comes to the edges. Avoid helmet hair!

(VERY) STRAIGHT HAIR



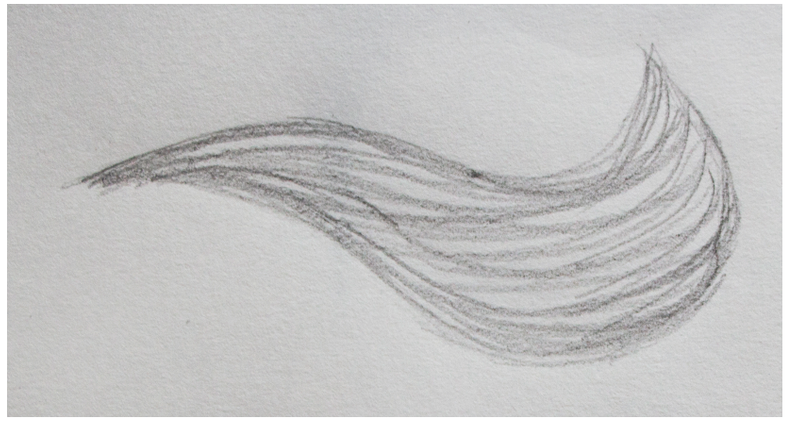
On the other hand, if the person has super straight hair we can visualize the entire mass as one large grouping, but it's still important to acknowledge it as a simple 3D form (such as a cylinder) first. This will help us with the development of our values.

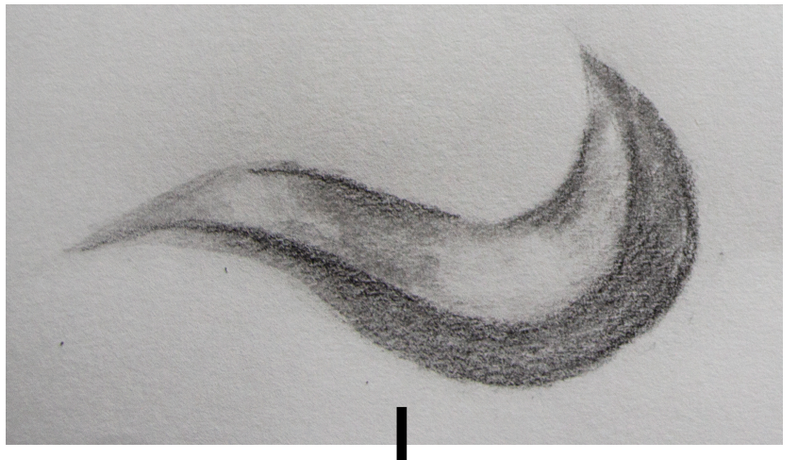
Perfectly straight hair rarely happens as there's always at least *a bit* of hair that is waving off in a different way, it is moving due to wind, it is bending or curving because it reaches the shoulders, etc.

Plus, a lot of regularity makes things boring at times, so we might want to do some designing in these cases.

VISUALIZING HAIR GROUPINGS AS FORMS

- **Once we've separated the different groupings of hair, it's helpful to visualize that clump as a 3D form with *planes*. This will help us better understand where different values (lights, midtones and darks) have to be developed.**
- **Then and *only* then, comes developing texture!**
- **Observe references and people's hair in real life. You'll notice that the parts of the strands that recede are usually *darker in value* and the parts that protrude are *lighter in value*.**
- **Also, no matter the hair color, there will *always* be a wide range of values throughout. The overall general values are usually lighter in blonde hair, but there are very dark values in there, too! Same thing happens with dark hair. The general values are darker, but there are also very light areas of highlights.**
- **The parts of hair that are closer to the light source or extend outwards are likely to catch more light, resulting in an area of lighter value.**
- **While areas that recede or are covered up by other groupings should be darker in value.**





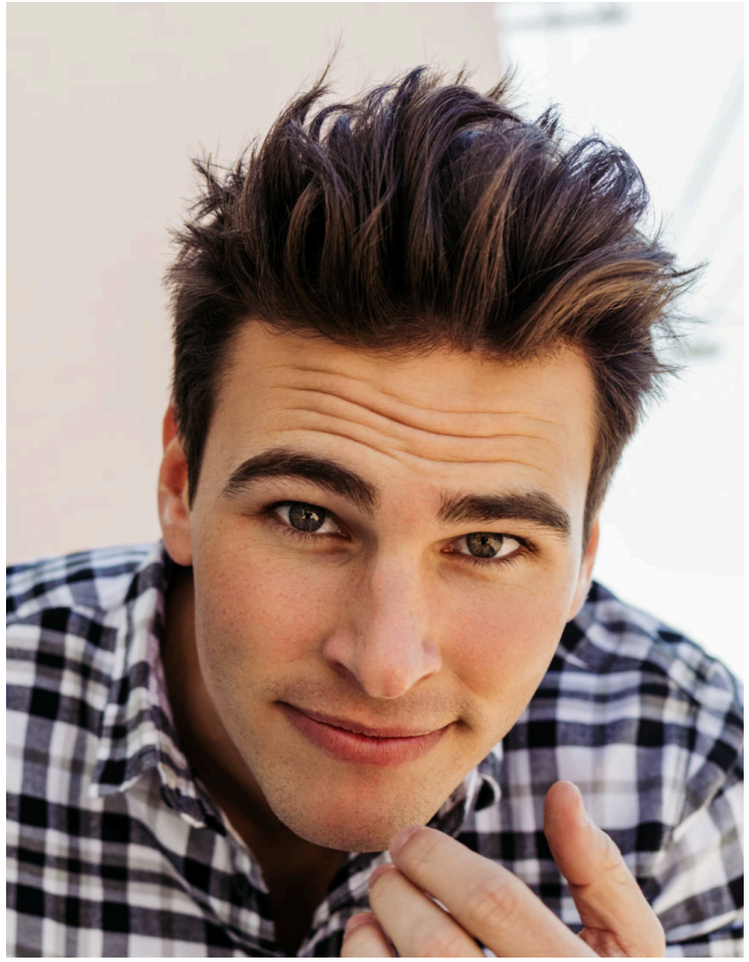
FINAL NOTES

- **Use different pencil grades to your advantage (start with a harder pencil grade and move on to softer grades as you start developing darker values).**
- **Create your strokes in the direction of your highlights (tapered pencil strokes with line weight variation). *Usually we start at the roots.**
- Move your arm with confidence (lines that are more free and dynamic are going to look better than tight, controlled lines). *Work on drills with different types of lines.
- Textured paper leads to a different effect than smooth paper.
- Observe references!
- ***Always* keep in mind the direction the hair is growing towards or moving towards and do your strokes in this way (whether with a pencil, blending stump or your eraser). *Remember that erasers are also mark-making tools when drawing hair.**
- The white of your paper is going to stand for your highlights.
- In order to avoid helmet hair or stick on hair/beard effects, *always* gradate into the hair. The edges where the hair starts should get lost into the skin.
- **Stay away from patterns or organized arrangements. Irregularity leads to a more natural and interesting look. Don’t repeat the same kinds of lines again and again.**

LET'S DRAW SOME HAIR!

- **As with all of the other face/facial feature drawing exercises I've recommended so far, it's advisable to use quality reference photos, even if you're not intending to create a hyperrealistic drawing or make your drawing look like the person in the photo.**
- Using the two photos below, let's practice drawing female and male hair!





CREATIVE ASSIGNMENT #21:

- **Create quick sketches of, at least, 3 different hair styles. Find some good photos online or in magazines (make sure you're able to identify the light source and areas of general lights, midtones and darks).**

- *unsplash.com*, *pexels.com*, *pixabay.com*
- You can decide whether to create simplified head structures beforehand the way I did in today's tutorials, or if you'd like to take it a step further, you can also practice drawing faces!