

ART ASSIGNMENT #25

Figure Drawing- Dynamic Standing Poses

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril Dancing*, 1893





In our past two classes on drawing the human figure (#14 and #24) we've covered:

- **Basic body proportions and using the head as a measuring unit**
- **Why it's essential to understand *3D form* and *perspective* in order to draw the human figure in a believable way**
- **How to create *armatures* and why they are so important to practice**
- **Simplifying the body into main masses**
- **Why it's important to have at least a basic understanding of the underlying structure of the body (the skeleton)**
- **How to draw simple standing poses freehand that show effective proportions**
- **Why using references and observing people around you in real life is *essential* for progress**



In this class, we'll be covering:

- **How to draw dynamic standing poses and key points to have in mind to stay away from stiff-looking figures**
- **How to determine the *action line/flow line* and why this is important**
- **Visualizing twisting masses and simple exercises to help you improve your angled and rotating body masses**
- **Why it's important to give thought to the *center of gravity* and *weight distribution* when drawing dynamic poses**
- **I'll be taking you through my process for drawing three different dynamic standing poses freehand, stemming from reference photos**

- In later classes, I'll be simplifying the anatomy of the torso, arms and legs. For now, I'd suggest practicing your observational skills to see shapes/forms created by muscles, fat and bones in reference photos and people around you. Practice discerning between muscle, fat and bone and communicating what's what with curved vs. straighter/angular lines.

DETERMINING THE LINE OF ACTION/FLOW LINE

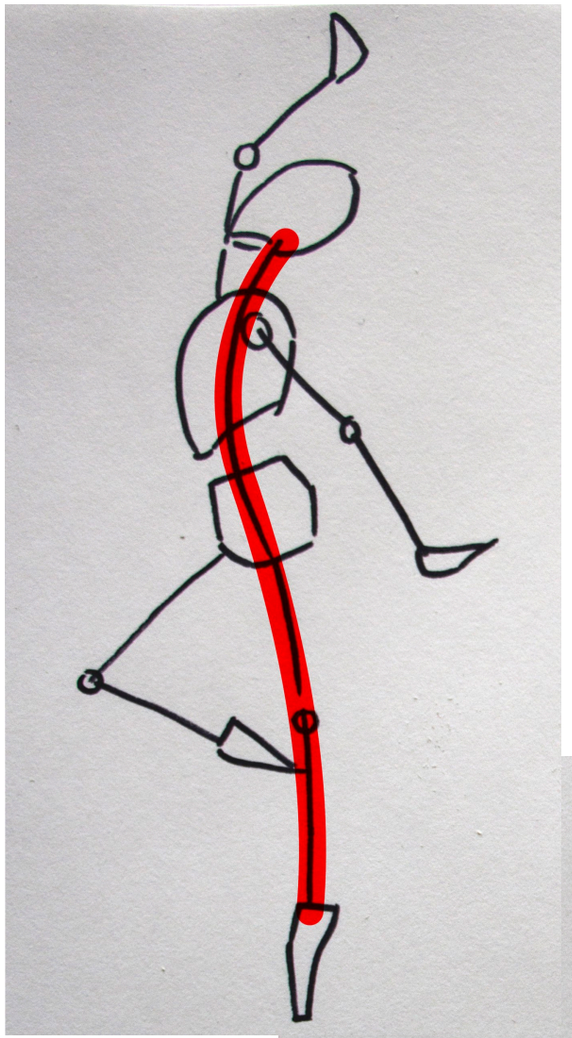
- **In our past class I explained how one of the first things I like noticing before getting started is the *flow line* or *line of action*, which I initially visualize as the spine.**

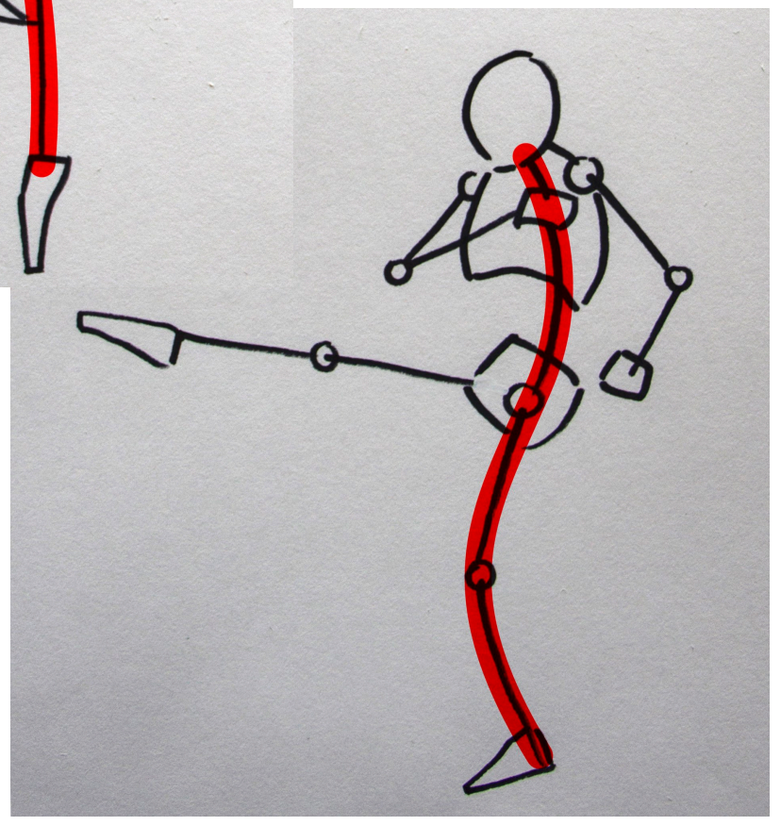
- **Rarely is the *flow line* completely vertical and straight. *Don't force this!* It will create stiffness in your figure drawings.**

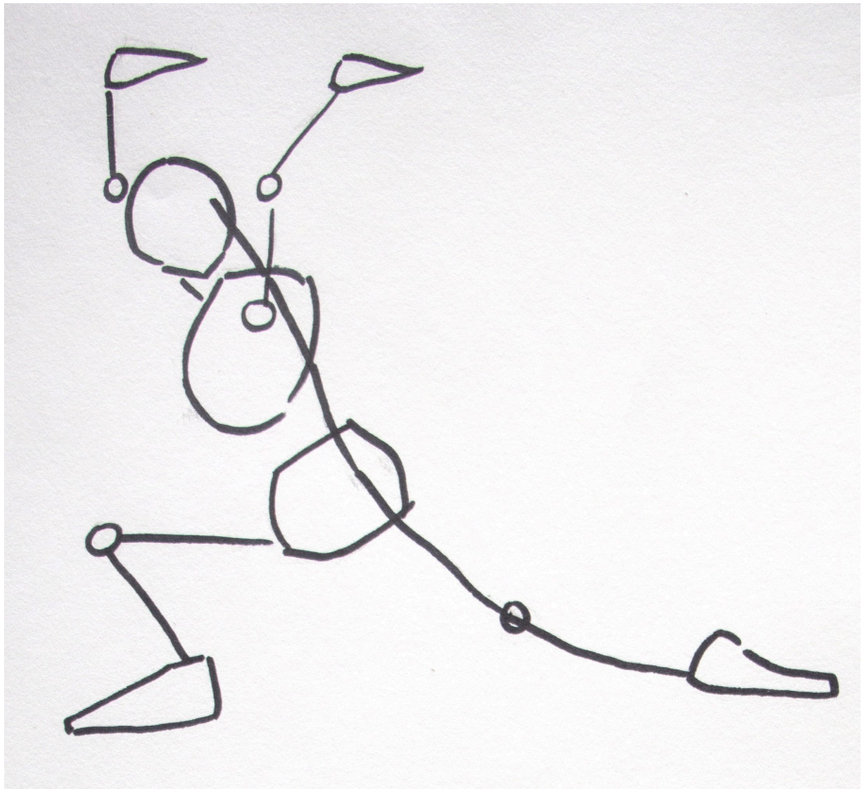
- Even in standing resting poses, there is at least a slight curve. In more dynamic poses, curves are even more noticeable.

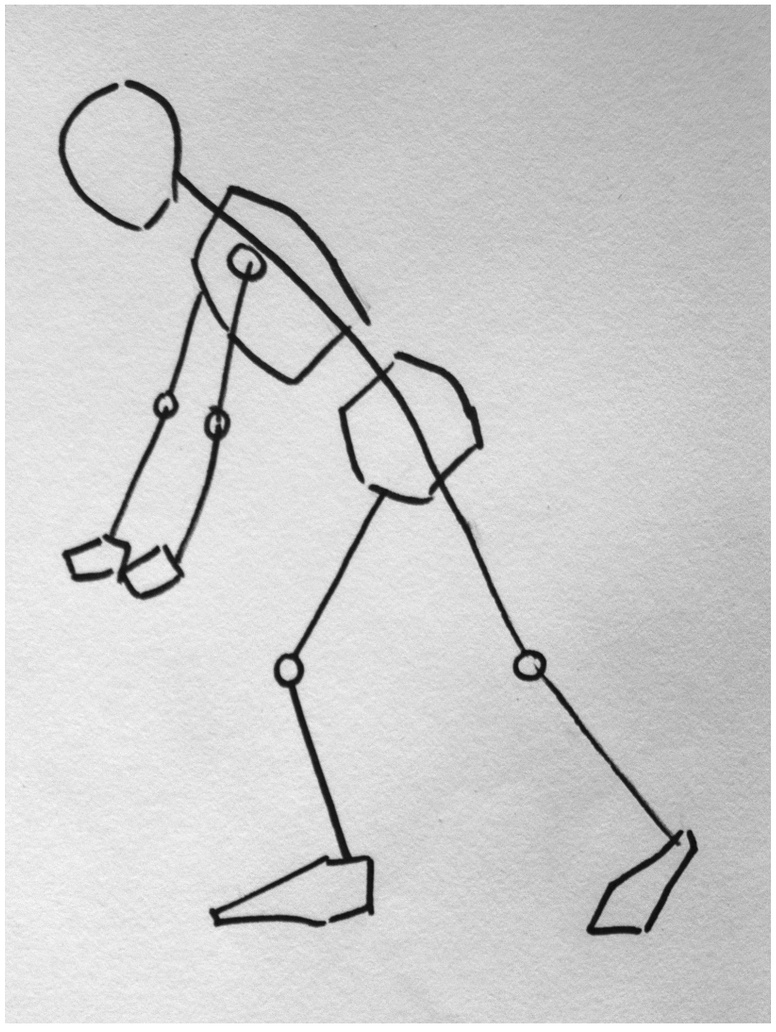
- **The *flow line* starts right beneath the head shape and goes down to the crotch, crossing the two large masses in the torso (ribcage and hips).**

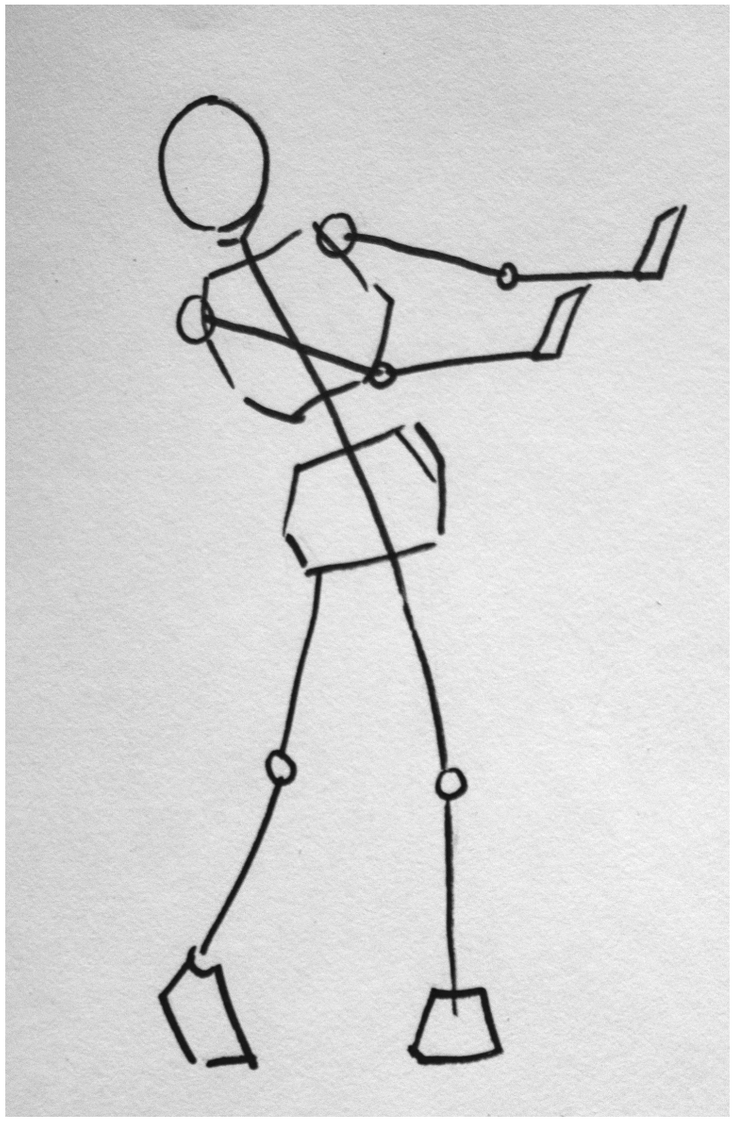
- **Then, notice which leg is sustaining the majority of the body's weight and bring the flow line down that leg. Imagine this leg is exerting force on the ground.**



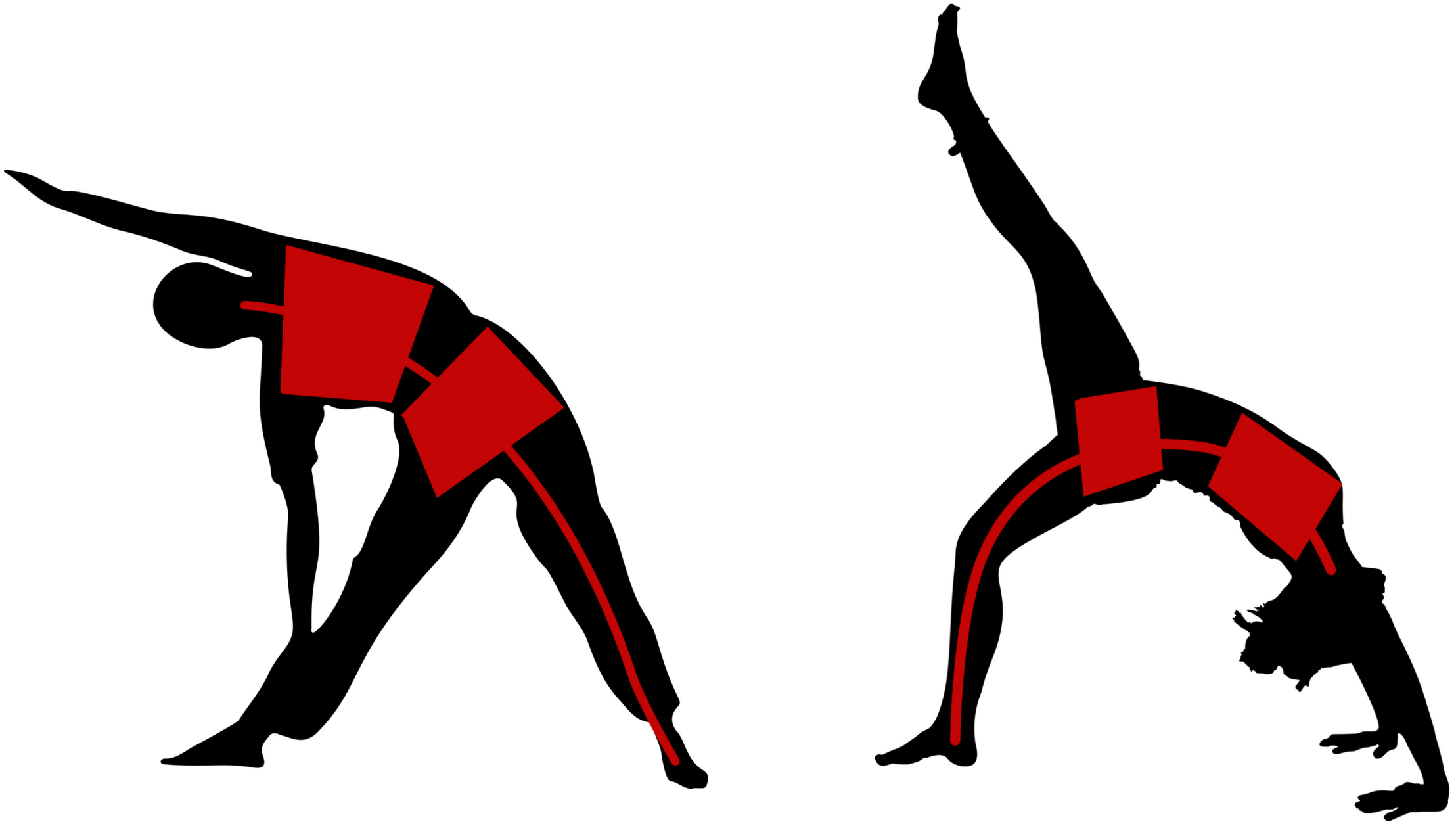








We cannot practice simple armatures enough! Using photos or people you have in front of you, sketch out quick armatures to make sense of their poses.



Figures with simplified ribcage and hips. Curved flow line is also shown.

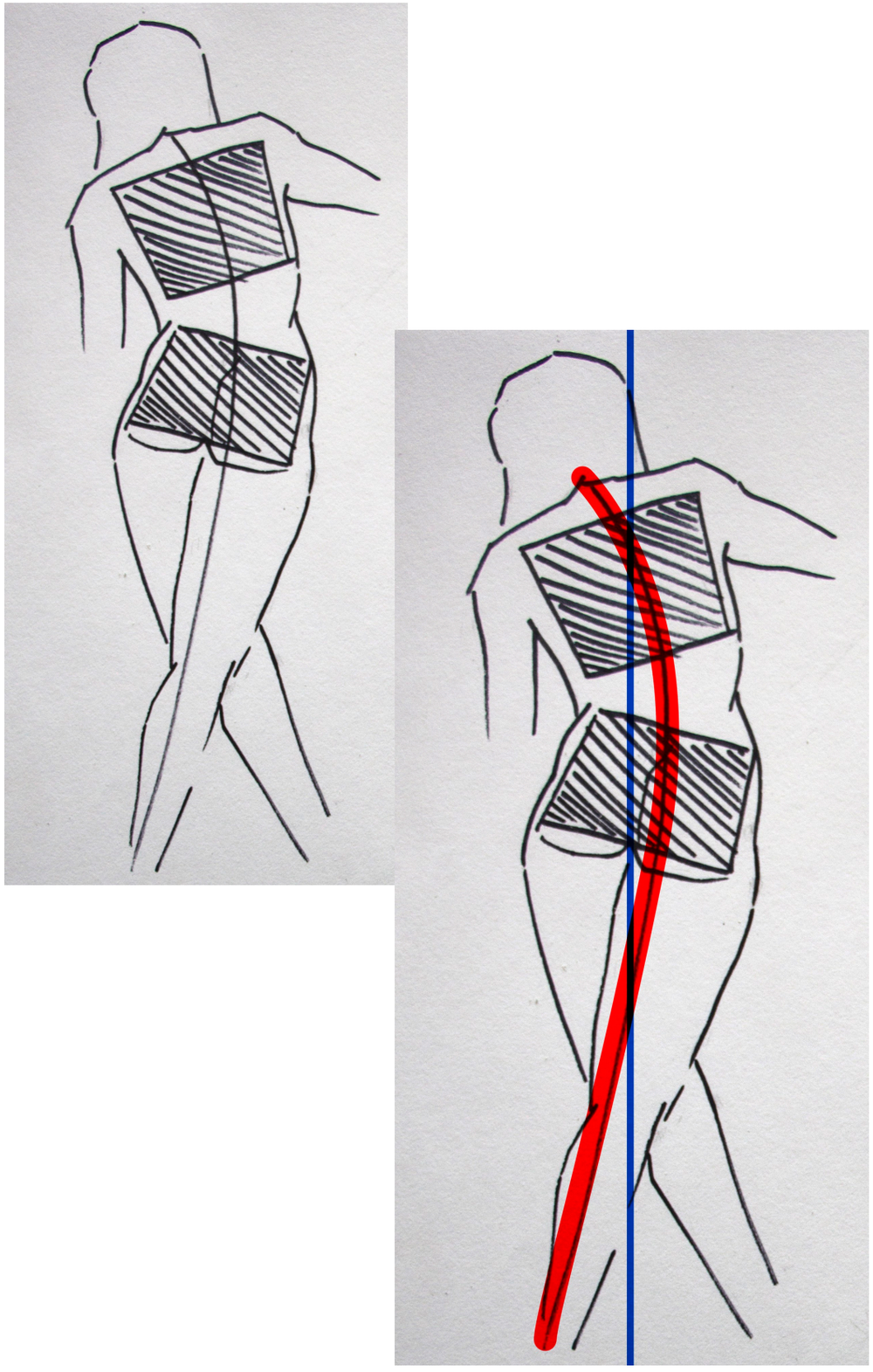
CENTER OF GRAVITY & WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION

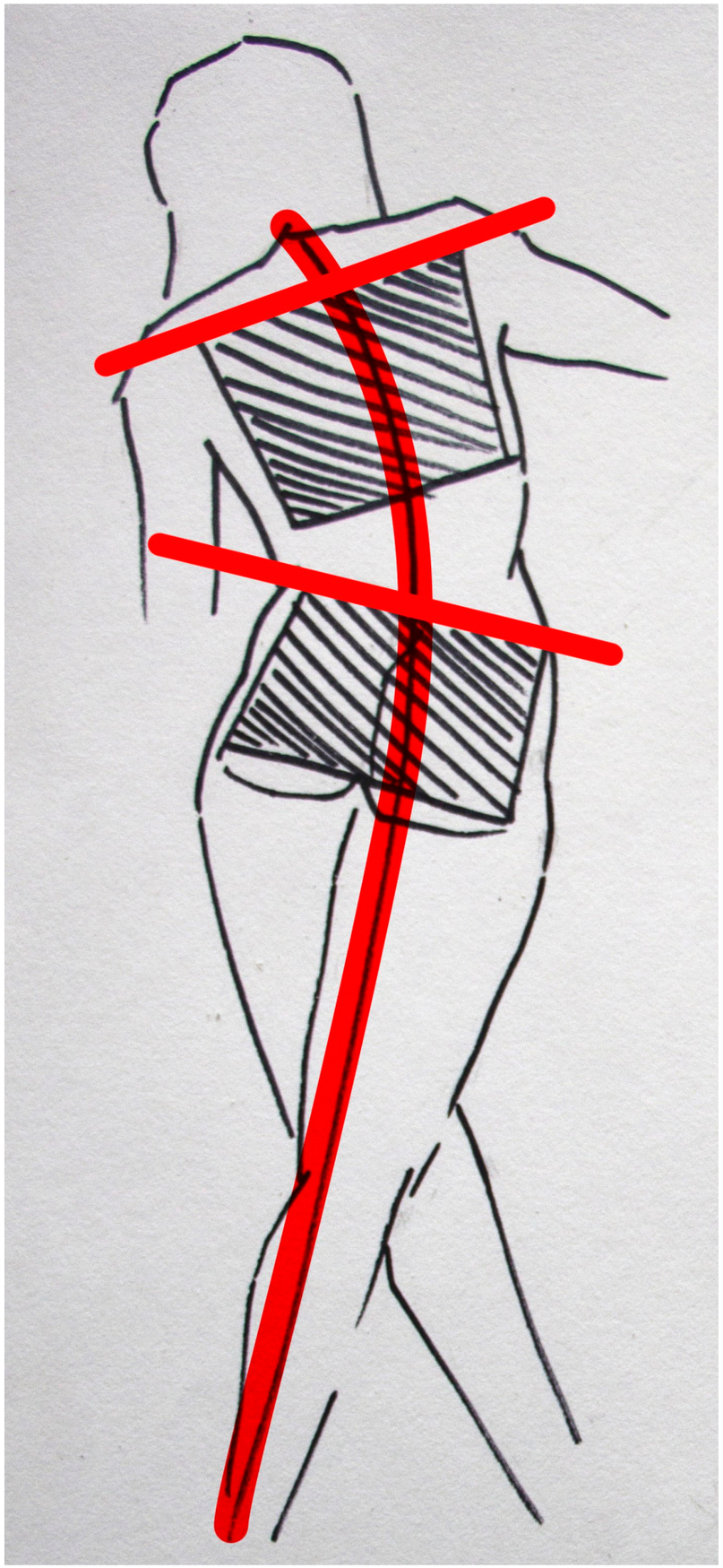
- **A couple of key factors to have in mind when we're drawing dynamic/action poses, are the body's *center of gravity* and *weight distribution*.**

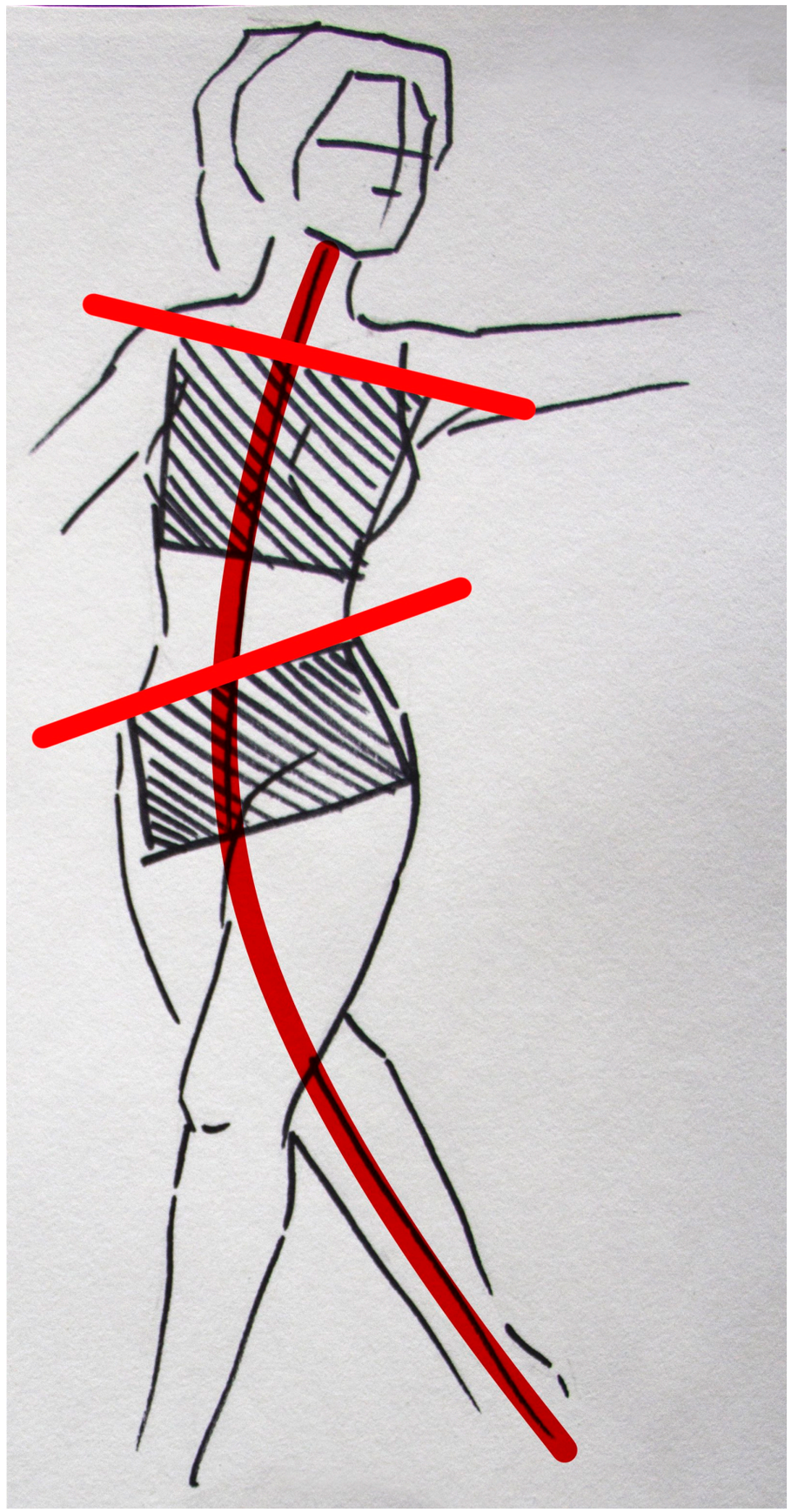
- **Proportions in our drawings can be effective and everything can be in its right place, but things can still look very stiff, even when we're showing movement throughout different body parts.**

- This usually happens because our brain wants to lay down straight(er) horizontal and vertical lines (shoulder line and hip line, etc.), and we want to stay on the safe side, distributing the figures' weight equally on both legs and keeping things very symmetrical.

- **Rarely is our weight distributed equally amongst our two legs (or upon the limbs that are coming into contact with the ground). Always notice which leg or limbs are sustaining the majority of the person's weight.**







Notice the slanted shoulder lines and hip lines. Notice these angles and stop yourself when trying to draw them as perfect horizontals!

CENTER OF GRAVITY & WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION

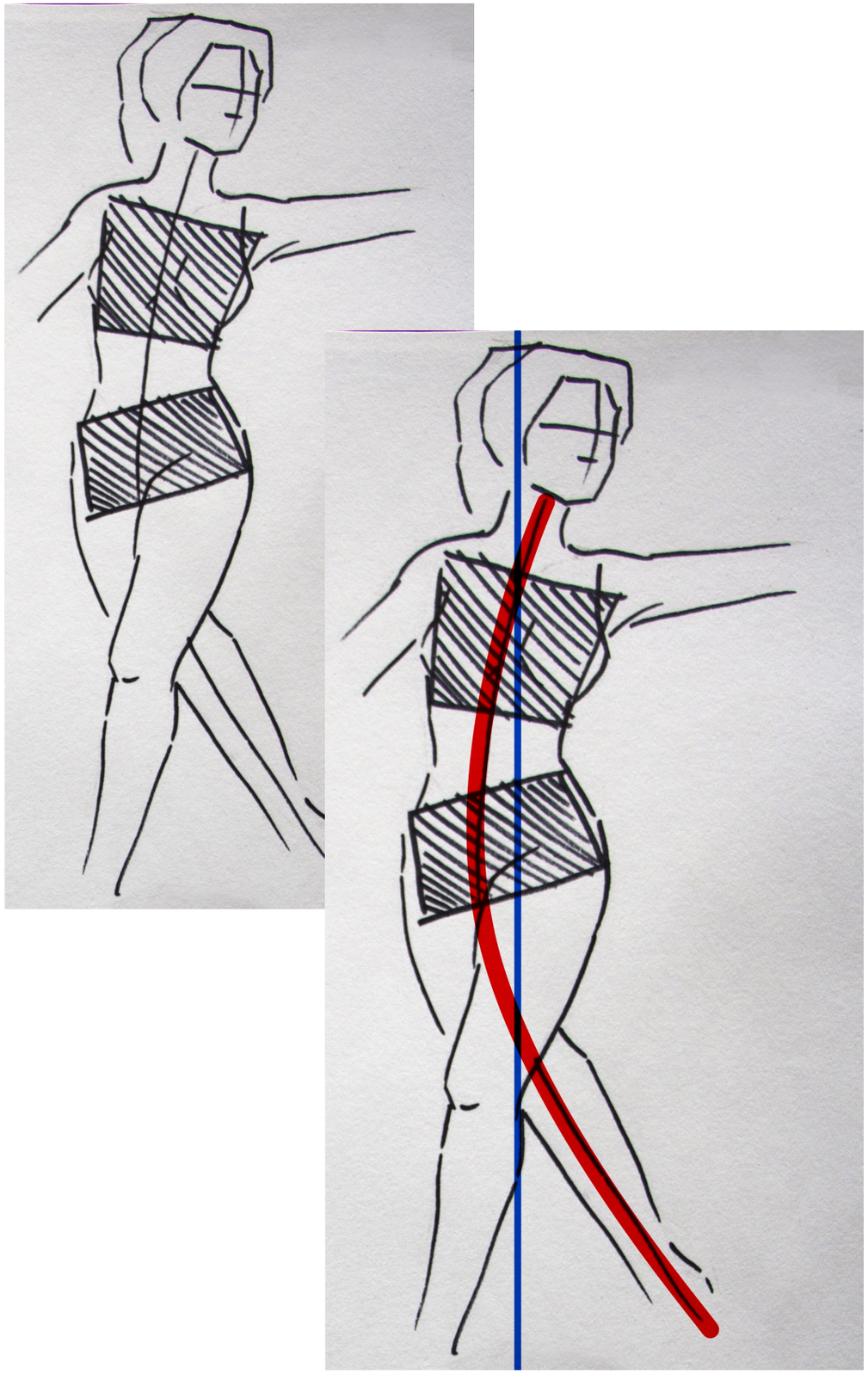
- Simultaneously, we want to make sure that the figures we draw don't look like they are going to fall or topple over.

- **When positions of major masses of the body move and shift, there has to be a *counterbalance* created by other parts of the body so that the person doesn't fall over.**

- **We have to think of how we'll be *balancing* the pose so that it makes sense with gravity. As long as the person is not jumping or falling, body parts *always* have to move and shift to compensate and retain the body's *center of gravity*.**

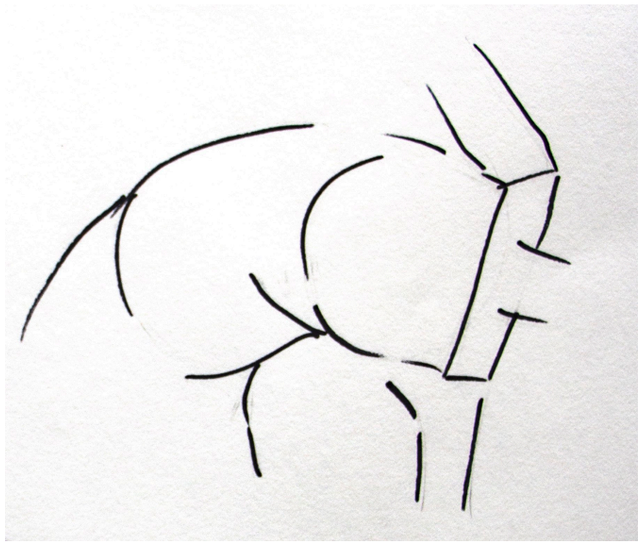
- **Drawing a vertical line straight down the figure and noticing how it crosses the major masses and the legs can help us notice if there's a balance and the weight is distributed in a believable way.**

- In order to accentuate movement and force, many figure-drawing artists exaggerate the flow line, as well as angles of body masses, which can add a lot of interest and a very dynamic look.

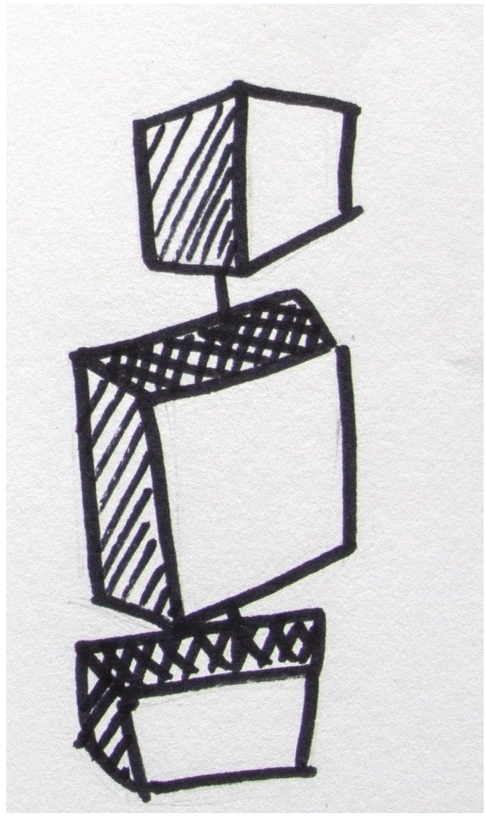


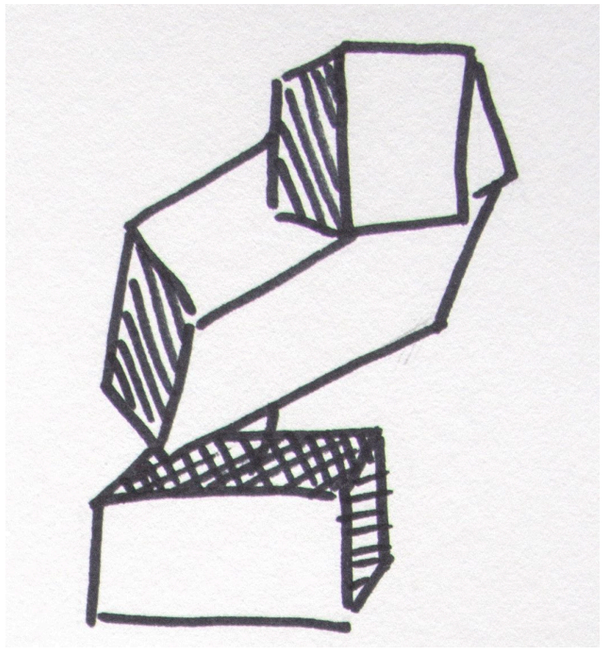
THE TWIST

- **Another thing to pay attention to, is how different parts of the body are tilting and rotating in space. It's important to acknowledge different masses as being separate from each other (but connected). Starting with the main body masses is the way to go.**
- **Observe the twisting that occurs in the spine, and how the position and angle of the ribcage and hips relate to each other.**
- After this, also notice rotating forms throughout the limbs.
- Remember the exercise in which we simplified the body into boxes? If you're able to visualize and rotate simple rectangular prisms, you'll be better able to do it with complex forms like the torso and the limbs.
- Once you draw boxy shapes and have deciphered angles and perspectives, make them more curved and organically shaped, simulating actual body parts.

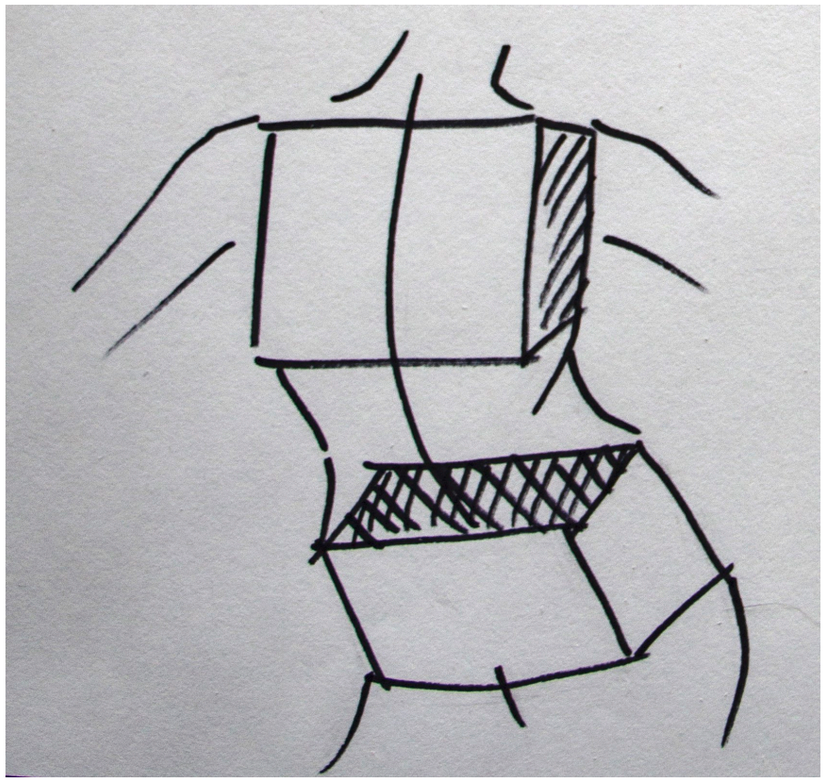


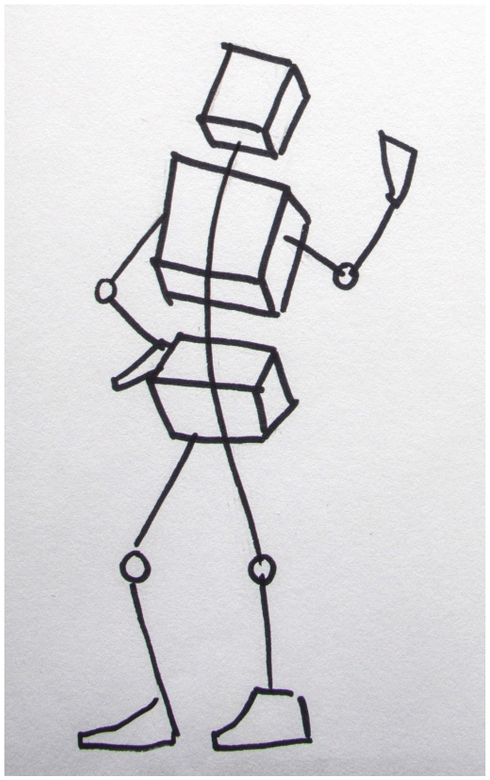


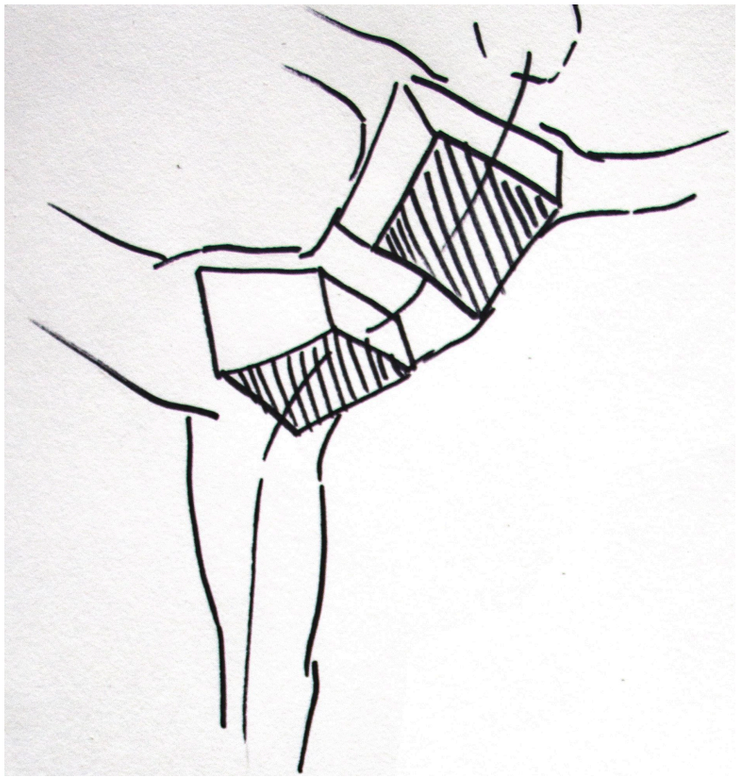


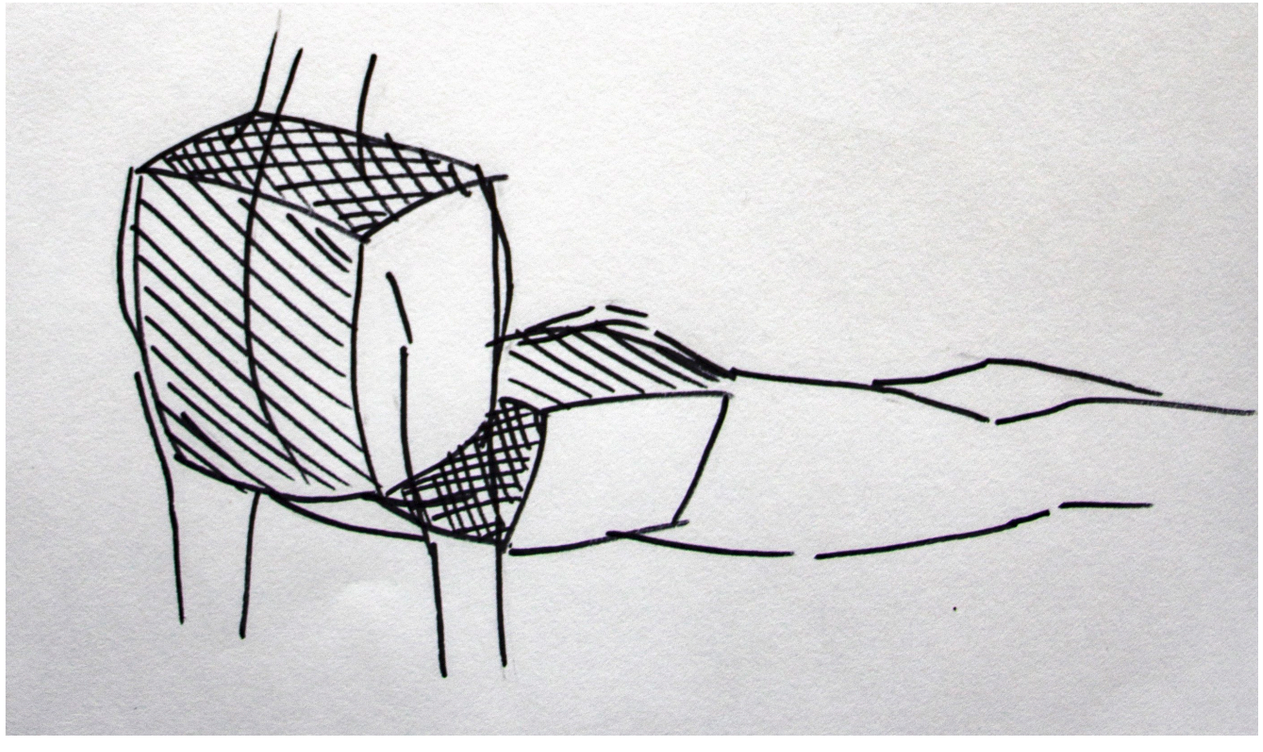


THE TWIST









Practice drawing armatures and different body parts as boxes, as this will help you add believable perspective and form to your drawings, as well as make sense of how things move and bend.
*Use references for your practice!

FORESHORTENING

- **The more complex and dynamic human poses get, the more likely it is for there to be higher degrees of *foreshortening*.**

- As we've talked about in the past, when *foreshortening* comes into play, we have to bring in our knowledge of form and perspective, as well as anatomy, in order to make up for the information we're lacking (body parts overlap and cover each other in different ways).

- **When we've been studying the figure and anatomy for a bit, we can draw figures from imagination that show *foreshortening*, but initially its important to stem from references.**

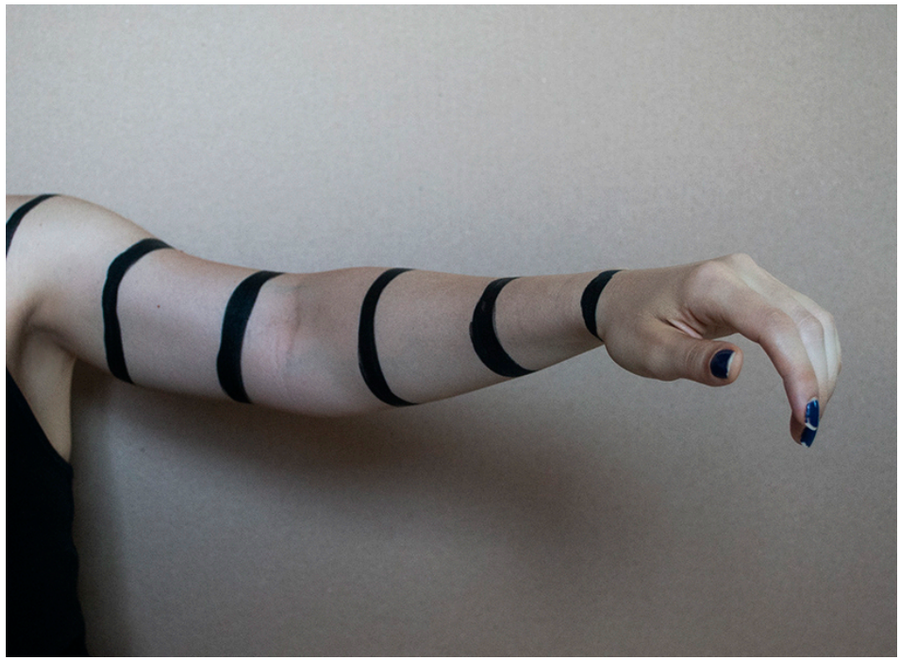
- When you're drawing a complex pose, notice the overlapping that's happening, as well as how things get smaller as they recede away from us. Ask yourself what you have to do to make that happen in your drawing.



CROSS CONTOUR LINES

- **Finally, when it comes to drawing limbs that are outstretched or moving in different ways, it's very helpful to visualize *cross contour lines*.**

- **By visualizing and even lightly drawing these cross contour lines along the limbs, we're able to see different body parts as having 3D form and not being flat.**









LET'S DRAW FIGURES!

- Next, I'll be sharing, how I draw dynamic figures, first making sense of the pose via a simple armature, and then moving on to the following steps. You'll notice these steps are a tad bit different than the more static poses, as I'm starting with the flow line.

Here are the main steps:

1) **Notice primary flow line (spine) + Notice supporting leg**
2) **Draw simplified head shape**
3) **Draw shoulder line and hip line *Notice slants!**
4) **Add in simplified largest body masses (ribcage and hips)**
5) **Add in joint landmarks (shoulders, elbows, wrists, knees, ankles) and connecting lines**
6) **Flesh out shapes, noticing overlapping forms**

LET'S DRAW SOME FIGURES!







ART ASSIGNMENT #25:

- **Using reference photos, create quick sketches of three different (standing/moving) figures, practicing simple armatures first.**

  Links to my own reference photos will be left along with this class but you can also look for full body photos of people (preferably with tight fitting clothes which will allow you to see the form of their bodies).

  Here are some helpful resources with tons of poses:

- **line-of-action.com**
- **unsplash.com, pixabay.com, pixels.com**
- **Pinterest (look for "gesture photo pose", "references for figure drawing", etc. boards)**
- **New Master's Academy YouTube channel**
- **Croquis Cafe YouTube channel**