Values & Shadows

Shading can be one of the most challenging aspects of drawing, it makes the difference between a flat image and one that jumps off the paper. I've been doing proper research for you as I've noticed that for me it's become now intuitive; and I think the result is a series of interesting exercises that I think will help you as they have done me!

"The main purpose of shading is to convey volume, mass and three-dimensional shapes and forms" (Alphonso Dunn, Pen & Ink Drawing)

To start we'll be looking at 2 key aspects of shading:

- **Values -** The core of shadows: You'll learn how to understand them, simplify and use them. Values are independent of colour.

- **Light -** If there's no light, there's no shadow. Let's understand how it create value patterns and reveals shapes and forms.

Afterwards, it's all about practicing!

Seeing Values

It is not possible to talk about values without talking about light. Values range from black to white, so from dark shadows to light areas. Being able to simplify and group values is key for shading. We will be working mainly with monochromatic drawings to begin with.

EXERCISE 1: VALUE SCALES

Before we can properly begin, let's start by creating a value scale. I recommend you use a **black fineliner or ink pen** instead of pencils. Why? Because graphite can change depending on the pressure we add when drawing, and for now we want to have an even colour.

1. Draw a rectangle with four square

2. Apply an even stroke on all of them except the last one (this one will represent the lightest value) *You can see in the example I use different strokes to see their effect.*

3. Apply a second layer of strokes leaving the second square empty. Repeat the process.

3	**2**	**1**	**0**
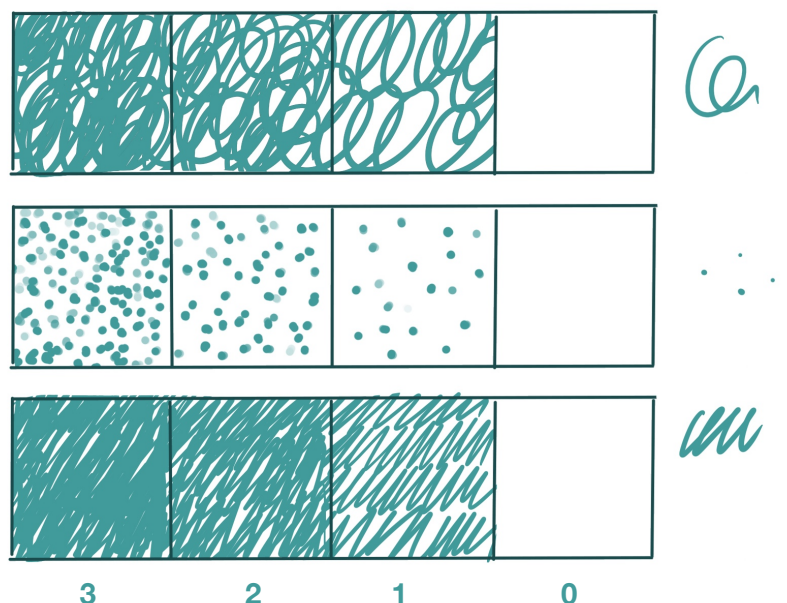
EXERCISE 2: SIMPLE STUDIES

So for our first exercise we will make simple studies of three to four values. Let's warm up with a simple box drawing.

A block has the simplest value pattern because of its flat sides and straight edges. This is why it used often to simplify forms.
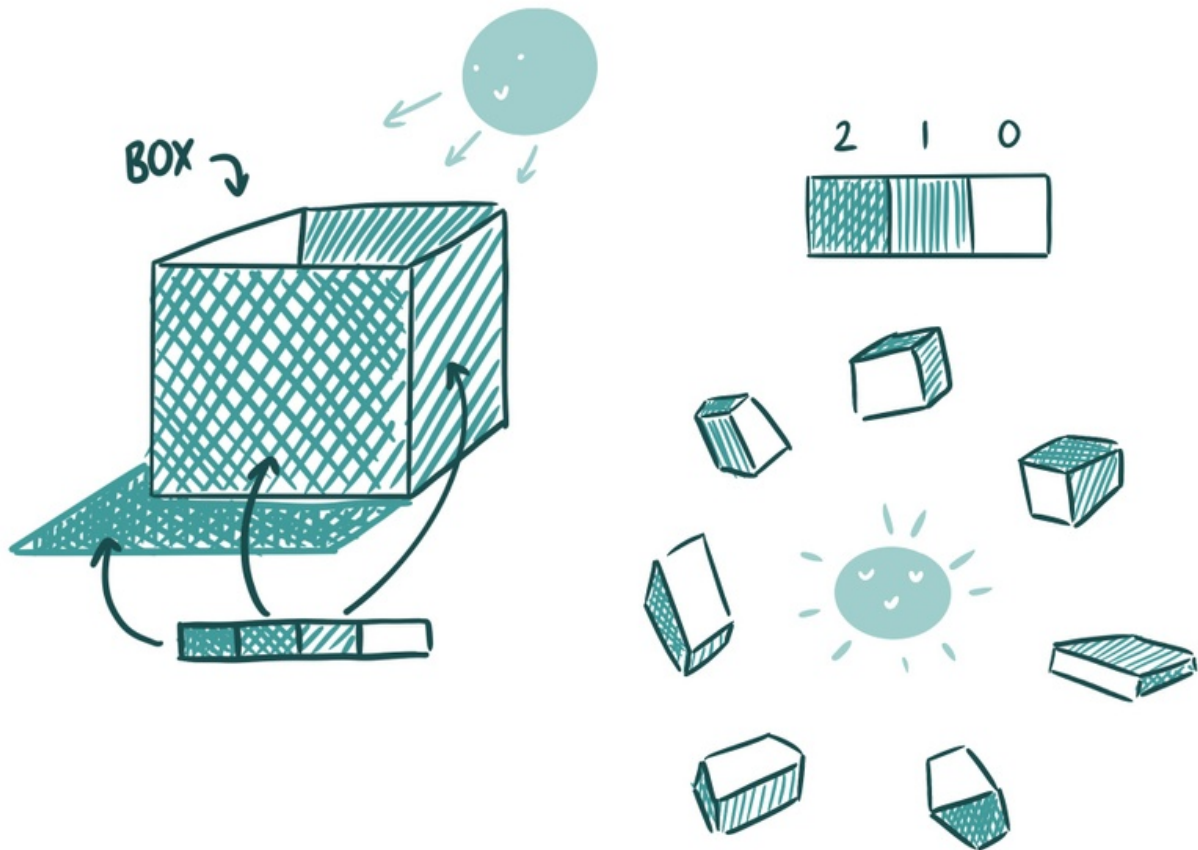
For complex drawings 6 to 9 value scales are normally used to create dynamic compositions, but for now we will be working with 4 to simplify our process while learning.

EXTRA EXERCISE: SQUARE PLANETS

Draw as many simple block forms as you can around a 'sun" and shade them based on their orientation. The sides most directly facing the light source is the lightest value. The side most facing away is the darkest, and the lest over is in-between.

SIMPLE THUMBNAILS

Let's now make 3 or 4 simple thumbnail drawings. Use simple shapes, as we are only placing values and not looking at drawing accurate. You can find images of landscapes, your house or any subject you like. Try to use for now real life inspiration instead of imagination. If you are finding hard, try black & white pictures.

Pro Tip: squint your eyes to make the image blurry. I find you can see better the shadows and light instead of catchy details.

Also, I did all these drawings with the iPad, but I have to say that working with analogue materials is SO MUCH MORE intuitive!

Shading Round Forms

We left off with shading exercises with simple blocks. But we are now moving onto organic shapes, starting with a circle or sphere.

Why is this STEP 2? Because a curving surface create a *gradual transition* between light and shadow. With the blocks we worked on separate ares that had a specific value. But we now need to bring those together.

EXERCISE 1: FLOATING SPHERE
We will start with a simple 4 value scale.

1. Draw a circle & light source,

2. Draw rings around the shape, the same amount as your values scale.

3. Make a grid around the shape - this is called **rendering**. We do this to see the direction of our lines.

4. Add your hatching, gradually increasing as you move away from the light, into the darkest value.
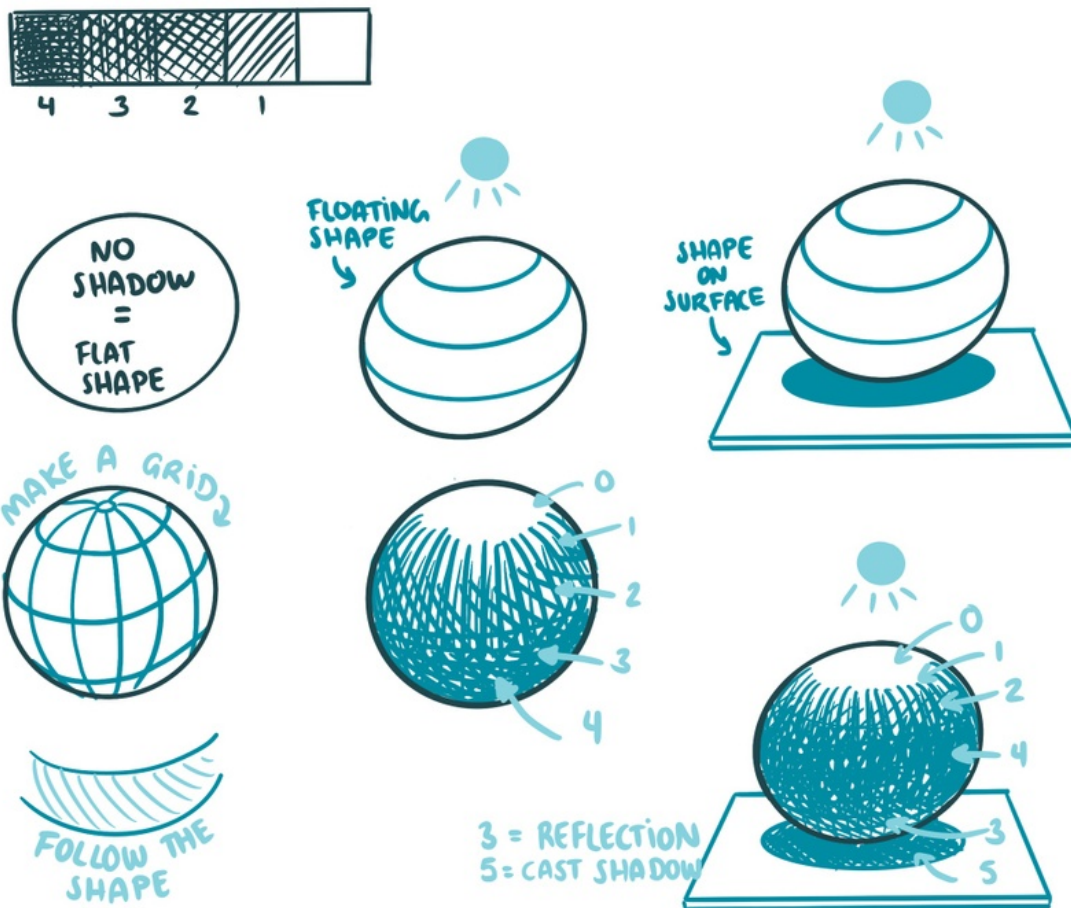
EXERCISE 2: SPHERE ON SURFACE
Things change when our object is on an actual surface. We have to deal with reflected light (light that bounces off the surrounding surface)

Repeat the first 3 steps.

4. Add your hatching, gradually increasing as you move away from the light, which will be in the lower part of the sphere. But the area closest to the surface will be lighter.

5. Rule of thumb: the shadow the object casts is always the darkest value.

If you'd like to understand better how the values work in curved shapes you can also re create this exercise below. Remember to follow the curvature of the shape to create a smooth transition into the area that shadows begin (also called the shadow border).
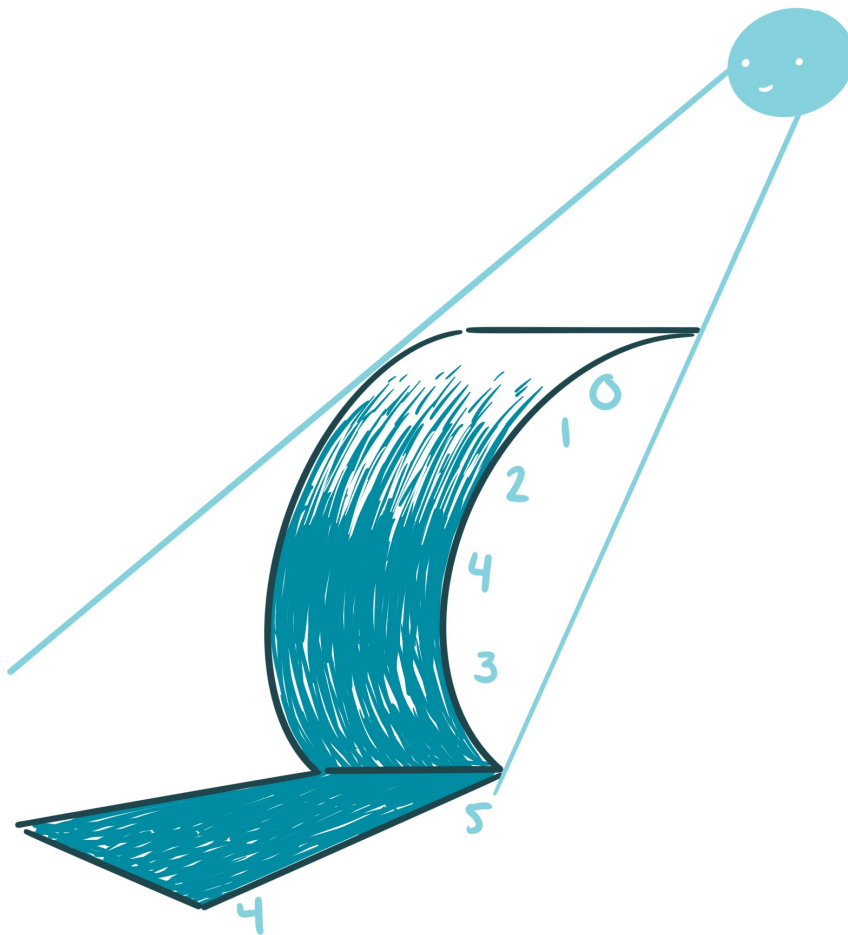
Values in Scenes/Complex Illustrations

After understanding the basics, you might want to know how to apply this in an actual illustration. So last but not least I wanted to share with you just some basic concepts when working with landscapes or scenes.

The first thing is to understands how to use the same value scale = depth equation. So what is closer to us will have a darker value, while objects far away will be lighter **(we are talking about values, not colours!).**

It is important to know where our light source is coming from, and build our value scales. Source of light or sky would be value 0

Value 1: This is the background and so far from our view that it's lighter and less detailed.

Value 2: Is the midrange, details and where our eyes tend to go.

Value 3: Is the foreground and the darkest value, closest to us so we can see more detail. Used for framing.
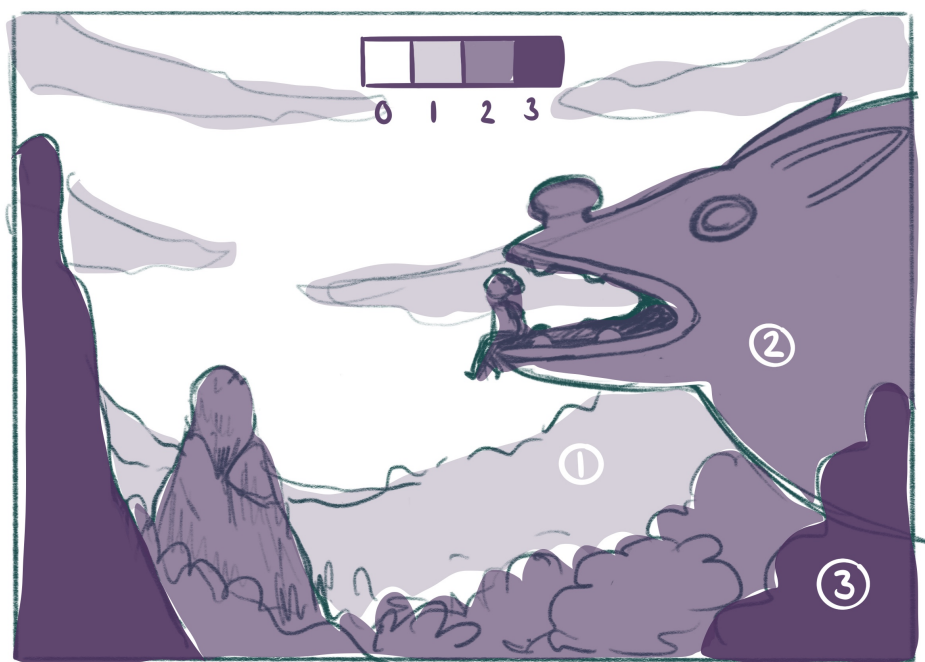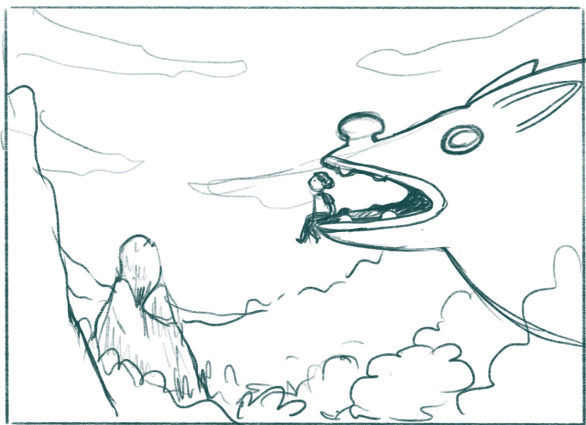
The classic question is then: *How to use colour?*

We want to try and use less saturated colours in the low values and more bright and saturated ones on the foreground. Shadows will also be more accentuated and clear in these layers.

Here's some quick thumbnails that show the use of values with colours. The light source in this case was coming form the sky, like a sunset.