

John Baselmans

'Drawing courses'



Curaçao, 2008

These courses were written by John Baselmans
Drawings and illustrations are from the hand of John Baselmans

I hope that you will be one of a new generation of artists.
With thanks to all those people who have supported me.

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I won't put all the usual 'don'ts' here, but I hope that you respect my work.
At least let me know when you use any part from this book.
For my address, please visit my website <http://www.johnbaselmans.com>
There you can also find other free courses and explanations of my drawings.
Thank you.

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**Course 2
Part 1**



‘Materials’

**A GOLDEN RULE:
DO NOT GIVE UP**

Keep drawing from your heart and from your soul.

Introduction

Having learned to see and deal with our fears, it is now time for some more things we should know. What materials do we need to make a drawing?

What do we have to look for?

In this course, I will only talk about materials we need for pastel, pen, and watercolor drawings or sketches. The required materials are: pen, ink, pencil, crayon, color pencil or watercolor. Later, I will tell more about paintings and other materials.

In the beginning, I will show you primarily what color is and where and how to use it. Then I will discuss a variety of paper and other material you need to know about in order to decide where and how you want to work.

This is a basic introduction. If you know more kinds of materials or find other ways to put your images and feelings on paper, that is fine, the more the better.

If you have other suggestions, that is okay and maybe you want to share them with us. Please let me know and if it is interesting, I may publish it on my website.

I want you to know what you have to look for and say when you go to an art store.

Do not always take for granted what the sales person says.

First of all, they want to sell you their goods!

We learned in another course that we have our own points of view and our own ways of putting things on paper. This course is only a guideline, nothing more.

It is the beginning of a journey in your new life. It will be more of a reading course to learn about the materials we use. But you can draw in your own way what I taught you in my first course.

Keep drawing – that is the important thing – and do not listen to anybody.

Others often think that they know everything better.

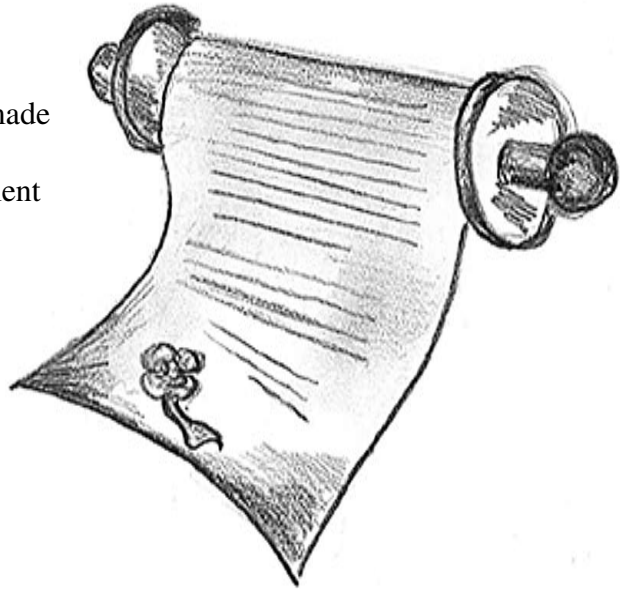
Session 1

Paper

What is paper? The only thing you know, is that white big sheet in front of you, which is telling you ‘do not touch me’. But there is more.

Paper has a long history

Just a few details: paper was made for the first time over 2000 years ago. In the beginning, it was called parchment and was rolled up in scrolls. Later, books were made from sheets of paper by binding them. Today, in the 21st century, this is still the most common manifestation of the paper we see around us. There is a wide variety of sheets of paper, made with new fibers and new techniques.



What paper is made of

The basic material is cellulose fiber, which comes from a wide variety of plants. These plant fibers are reduced to pulp. Some harmful substances are removed, before it is felted together to form a sheet of paper.

The quality of paper depends on the plants used. This is the reason why there are so many different kinds of paper.

Traditionally, paper is made from line rags and the most commonly used is cotton.

The best paper today is made from wood pulp, which has been bleached to get the characteristic white appearance.

Recycled paper is also becoming popular, with its different structures and therefore each of them has its own way of working with it.

Papermaking

The quality of paper depends on water. Water is of primary importance when it comes to determining the characteristics of every sheet. Sheets of cotton linters or wood pulp are immersed in water and blended for ten minutes. The pulp goes through a machine that puts the fibers on a plate and arranges the fibers in one direction. This is pressed in order to eliminate the water, until the paper is as hard as it needs to be. The more pressure, the harder the paper. After pressing, the needs to dry.

This was done by hand for over 1000 years. People pressed the water out of the pulp with manual presses.

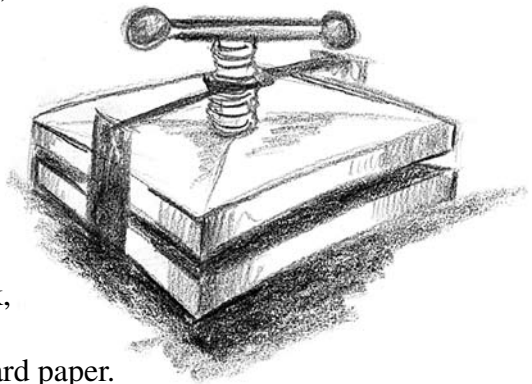
Most kinds of paper that we know have a problem, which is that after a few years they start showing brown dots. This problem is caused by the pH, which is normally around 7. It is the acid that has remained in the paper, called rosin fixed with alum. In modern papers, an 'alkyl ketene dimmer' is used, which allows the paper to retain its color longer without the brown dots. But even today, papermakers are still looking for solutions to this problem. It is a natural medium, and the pH problem is very difficult to solve. The best quality paper today is cotton rag paper.

Types of paper:

- Non-pressed paper (not hot-pressed and good all-round paper).
- Mould-made paper (machine-made paper, looks like handmade).
- Hot-pressed paper (machine-made paper, smooth/hard surface).
- Rough paper (naturally dried without being pressed).
- Woven paper (with rough toothed surface).
- Laid paper (shows impression of chain lines of the mould at regular intervals).

It is important to find your own paper, one which you think works best for you.

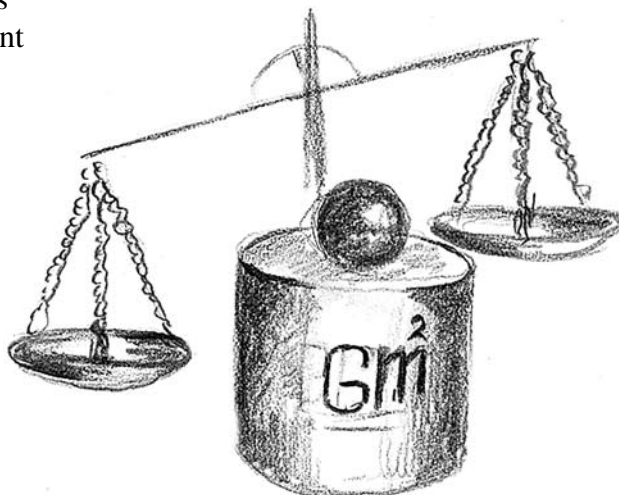
Paper not only has texture, you also have to think of its absorbent qualities. Paper for watercolors is softer than pen and ink paper, which has to be very hard to allow the highest degree of detailing. If you use soft paper, you cannot work with pen and ink, because the lines will be thick and dirty. Pencil drawings are usually made on semi-hard paper. Not too hard, but not too soft either.



Paper weight

The paper's weight depends on its thickness and the kind of fiber that has been used. Its unit of measure is gm² (grams per square inch). Japanese paper can be as little as 12 gm², but there is also paper going up to 640 gm². All papers have their own weights, to suit different purposes. Drawing paper is heavier than printing paper, which is usually between 60 and 80 gm².

Drawing paper is from 150 up to 640 gm², which is better to use for different techniques.



Paper fibers

Fibers always go in one direction across the paper. If you tear a piece of paper, you can see how the fibers are going. Paper has also a front and a back. It is important to find out which side is up, because you need to work on the upper side.

- Most papers have a watermark. If you can read it, you are looking at the front.
- You can also see that paper has a sharp edge at the other side, the edge is going down. If you see the edge is going down, this side is up and it is side to work on.
- You can also determine from the structure of the paper. You need to work on the side on which you can see the structure.

Pen and ink papers are usually very hard papers without any grain. For pastel drawings, you may use sticks and you can work with these on all different kinds of paper. Soft, medium, hard, non-pressed or mould paper are common kinds of papers.

A piece of advice

Paper is something personal. I mostly use 'Schulerhammer' and 'Duifjes' paper, because I like details and hard paper. But this is my personal preference. You need to find out by yourself what matches your techniques to get the best results.

Session 2

Charcoal

Charcoal is normally soft and you can use it to create various gray scales.

Charcoal comes in three forms:

- Charcoal made from willow in its natural state (fine medium thick).
- Compressed charcoal set in wood in different ranges.
- Porte-crayon holds a short piece of charcoal.



Technique

Normally, when you work with charcoal, you use your fingers a great deal. You get flat, soft areas and the only way to get hard, fine lines is by sharpening the charcoal. Having drawn fine lines on paper, you can put some fixative on the paper.

Drawing with charcoal has to be spontaneous. No details. Draw rough lines on your paper. Start making a drawing with only a few lines.

You can work with a small piece of charcoal and put it flat on paper, thus covering large areas parts in one go.

Charcoal allows you to make your first sketches, before you make your final work, using a different medium. It enables you to work freely and fast, and you will come to love this medium.

By working on large pieces of paper, you are able to transfer your idea to paper quickly.

Session 3

Pencils

Pencils are very common articles that we all have at home. You do not have to be an artist. Pencils are clean to work with and cheap to obtain.

Black pencil

Black pencils come in many different grades, sizes and shapes.

First of all, the following grades are distinguished:

6H, 5H, 4H, 3H, 2H, 1H, H, HB, B, 1B, 2B, 3B, 4B, 5B, and 6B.

These are the most common ones. But I have a set that ranges from 12H to 12B. H is the hardest pencil (H12 is like drawing with a piece of rock). HB is regular. B is the softest (B12 looks dusty). The H series pencils are ideal for technical drawings with a lot of details, while the HB and B series are better suited for artistic work.



Sizes

There are pencils with thin leads, but there are also pencils with leads over 3-4 mm thick. Your choice depends on what you want to do. Artists normally use the regular and thick ones. We need to work with different shapes of lines.



Shapes

There are many different shapes. The wood around the carbon can be thick or thin; it depends on what you like and what you want. Some pencils have paper around the carbon. Other ones, you can refill with small thin 'carbon' (refill pencil).



Working with pencils enables you to use a variety of techniques. You can draw lines, smooth them with your fingers or use your eraser. You can use thick lines and thin lines, covering small or large areas, et cetera. Personally, I think that the pencil is the most important item we work with today. Most schools teach students to draw and start with pencils. It is the easiest and cheapest way, because pencils may cost as little as 10ct. You may even take a newspaper and start drawing on it.

