



**THE  
HUMAN  
FIGURE**

John H. Vanderpoel

LIFE DRAWING  
FOR ARTISTS

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THE  
HUMAN  
FIGURE



*John H. Comstock*

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*John H. Vanderpoel*

THE  
HUMAN  
FIGURE

*Dover Publications, Inc., New York*

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## FOREWORD



Mr. John H. Vanderpoel approached nature in a direct and simple manner, his impressions faithfully recorded are examples of his understanding of the human figure of which this book is a living record.

This insight into nature was the result of a lifetime of earnest, patient and persistent study. He analyzed and recorded the human figure both in mass and detail; in good taste and discriminating judgment, with a closeness to nature that has never been equaled. The features; eyes, nose and mouth will always remain a masterpiece in art.

Mr. Vanderpoel also had a clear and defined style, built up by infinite labor, as thousands of pencil drawings in existence show and illustrate his method of study.

The representation of these drawings will not change with time. Mr. Vanderpoel has left behind him a great and powerful influence. True art is not subject to period changes.

GEORGE B. BRIDGMAN

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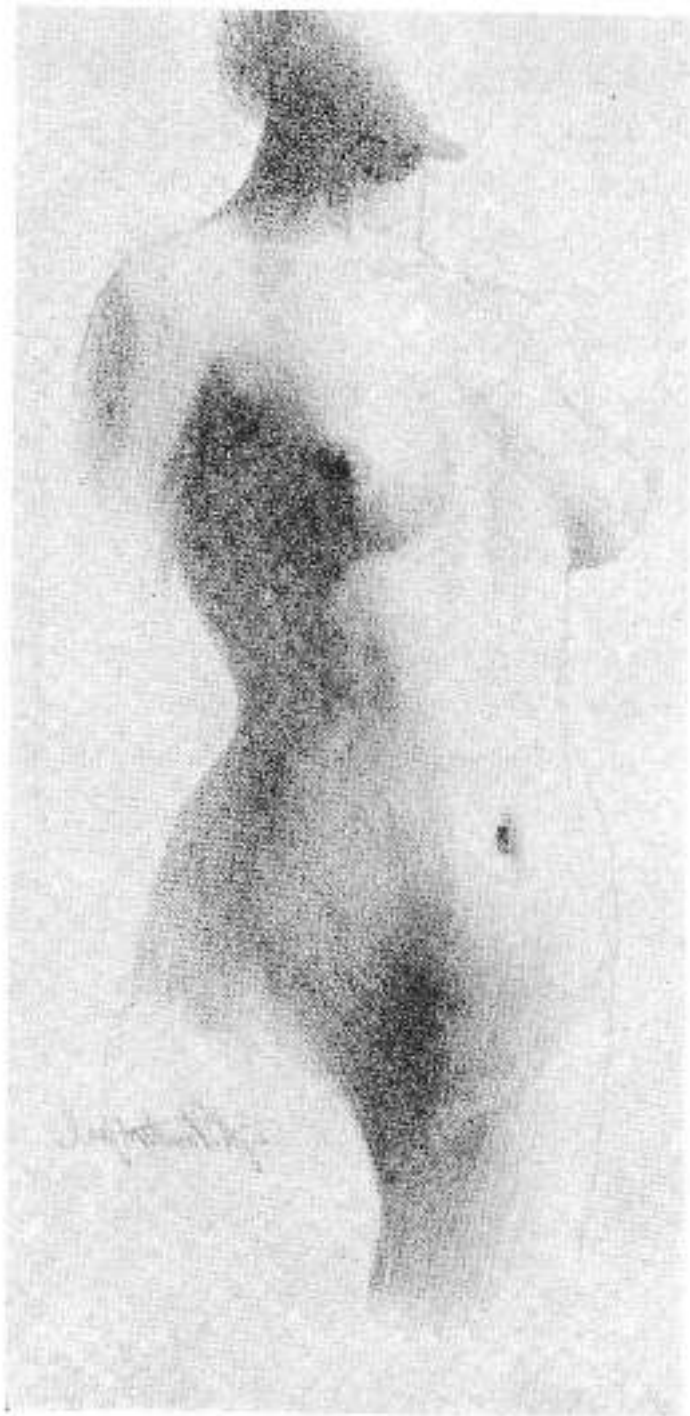


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## DRAWING THE HUMAN FIGURE



**S**UCCESSFULLY to build up the human figure in a drawing, painting or statue, either from imagination or from a model, the artist or sculptor must be possessed of a keen sense of construction.

The human body, with its varied beauty of construction, character and action, is so complex that it is essential for the student, artist and sculptor not only to have a clear knowledge of its intricate forms, but a comprehensive understanding and a habit of simple treatment in order to apply this knowledge to its artistic end.

The artist is immediately concerned with the external and the apparent. He views nature as color, tone, texture and light and shade, but back of his immediate concern, whether he be figure painter or illustrator, in order to render the human form with success, he stands in need of skill in the use of his knowledge of structure, of his understanding of action and of his insight into character. These things require a period of profound academic study.

When we consider the infinite variety of action of the human form, its suppleness, grace and strength of movement in the expression of the fleeting action, and farther consider that the surface of the body is enveloped in effects of light and shade, iridescent color and delicate tone, it is not to be wondered at that the student's eye is readily blinded to the hidden construction of the form.

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At this stage of the student's advancement a careful study of artistic anatomy, as elucidated by Richter, Bridgman or Duval, familiarizing him with the bony structure of the skeleton, and the location, attachment and function of the muscles, will not only be helpful in furthering his own research, but will enable him the more readily to understand the theory of construction of the human body as presented in this book.

The theory of construction of the human figure here presented is based on the pictorial means usual in the expression of the solid, that is, the expression of the three dimensions—length, breadth and thickness—by means of planes. In the simple drawing the boundaries of these planes may be indicated by lines of varying weight, and in a tone drawing by the varying depth of the values. It is the discovery or search for the relative position, character and value of these planes that will engross our attention in the ensuing chapters.

In the making of a thorough drawing of the human body, involving a sustained effort on the part of the student, whether in line, light and shade, or tone, the student goes through two stages of mental activity: first, the period of research, in which he analyzes the figure in all the large qualities of character, action and construction. In this analysis he acquires an intimacy with the vital facts, and this leads, as the work progresses, to a profound conviction. When thus impressed the student enters upon the second period, which deals with the representation of the effect dependent upon light and shade. Impressed with the facts in regard to the character of the model, understanding the action and construction, his appreciation enhanced by research, his lines become firm and assertive.

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In the first period the student's mind is engrossed with the search for the relative place the part shall occupy in conveying the impression of the whole; having secured the position of the part, the second period is occupied in turning the place for the part into its actual form.

The artist's or illustrator's final objective is the pictorial, and he uses any and all technical means and mediums to that end. He studies theories of color, perspective, effect of light and shade, values, tone, and composition; all may be studied separately and exhaustively so that he may learn the full import of each—so, too, the matter of form should be studied for its own sake. Every stroke of the artist's brush should prove his understanding of the form of the subject-matter depicted; this includes insight into the character of the model, understanding of his action, and how the form is put together.

A figure posed in a full light, with its multitudinous variety of high lights, half-tones and shadowed accents, does not disclose its structural nature to the uninitiated student; it does not appeal to him as he stands dazed before it, for there is so little of shadow to go out from. Preferably he chooses a position where the effect of light and shade is strong, not because the construction is more evident, for the figure may have been posed only incidentally to that end, but because the strong effect appeals to him for his work with black charcoal upon white paper. In order that the student may the more readily understand the construction of the figure, as analyzed in the accompanying drawings, its parts and the whole have been so lighted as to show, through the effects produced, the separation of the planes that mark the breadth,

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front or back, of the form from its thickness. In this illumination the great masses or planes that mark the breadth relative to thickness of the human form are made plainly visible. Such illumination divides the planes that envelop the body into great masses of form which upon analysis disclose its structural formation.

The student must learn early to form a vivid mental picture of his model, and the first period of the development of his drawing is but a means to enhance this mental picture through profound research. This mental picture must include the figure in its entirety, so that no matter what minor form the eye may be attracted to or what line the hand may trace upon the paper, the nature of the relationship of the part to the whole may first be established.

An exhaustive line drawing made upon constructive principles, including understood action and strong characterization, will give added quality to the tone and light and shade of the student's work. It might well be suggested in the development of the student's skill as a draftsman that he vary the means according to the end required. Besides the outline drawing suggested above, he might venture into tone by smudging the paper with a value of charcoal and removing it for the masses of light with the fingers or kneaded rubber. Again a period may be spent in swinging in the action, proportions, and construction of the figure with long lines, and also in making quick ten or fifteen minute sketches. These efforts in connection with sustained work requiring a number of days for completion, which means the carrying forward of a drawing from the blocking-in stage to the complete effort, including tone, are commended to students.

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Great skill in draftsmanship is highly desirable, but the student should be warned not to give it his sole attention for too long a period. He should test his skill and knowledge by memory drawing and by applying them to composition.

*John H. Tanner*





## THE EYES



**B**EFORE taking up the study of the planes which form the structural solidity of the head, the features and their environment may well be analyzed separately. However, the student must fully realize that no matter how intimate his knowledge of a part may be, it is only of value when it coexists with an appreciation of its relation to the entire structure.

The eye, or any part of the human figure, must, be truly placed and bear a true relation to the larger planes. A degree of knowledge of the inner construction of a part is absolutely essential, but this knowledge becomes significant only as its effect on the external form is made manifest in truthful relation to other parts.

The eyeballs enveloped by the lids protrude partially from their bony orbits. The plane of the orbits or sockets slopes inward from the frontal bone as it descends, making a decided angle with the plane of the forehead and cheek, giving the effect of the forehead being a step in advance of the plane of the cheek. The sockets are somewhat rectangular in form, and descend slightly from the nose outward; this drooping effect in the skull is counteracted in the living model by the eyebrows as they rise from their origin to the outside of the socket.

From this orbit or concavity, the convex or spherical form of the eyeball, with its enveloping lids, presses outward, but rarely extends sufficiently to disturb the inward slope of the plane in which it is contained.





Open or closed, every part of the eye, and its immediate surroundings, tends to the preservation of this plane; the eyebrow protrudes beyond the orbicular muscle below it, which in turn overhangs the upper lid; the upper lid, in virtue of its thickness, projects from the cornea, the exposed portion of which slopes slightly downward, and this slope is greatly increased when the eye looks downward; the lower lid, thinner than the upper, terminates the orbital plane in its contact with the cheek.



A plane formed not unlike a keystone, facing slightly downward and similar in direction to the orbital plane, descends from the center of the frontal bone, connecting the forehead with the nose and separating the eye sockets.



The eyebrows originate at the sides of this keystone, and together mark the lower boundary of the plane of the forehead. Rising, in part from underneath the frontal bone and where it is heaviest, the eyebrow travels outward and a trifle upward, diminishing in width until at the approach of the temple it turns upon the outside of the bone, following the arch along the temporal border of the orbit to its termination. In describing the arch of the orbit the eyebrow makes a half turn upon itself like a spiral curve.



Having studied the orbital plane and the manner in which it affects its contents, the eye itself may be further considered. Directly below the eyebrow, from the point where it turns to the outer surface of the bone, is found the orbicular muscle, filling the space between the eyebrow and the upper eyelid, leaving the inner portion of the orbit depressed. This is indicated by a triangular shape of shadow on each side of the junction with the nose, when the head is fairly lighted from above.

Below these retreating forms, that is, below the deep bony depression just above the inner corner of the eye and the convex muscle immediately above it, the eyeball, enveloped by the lids, presses slightly forward. The eyeballs being considerably smaller than the cup from which they protrude, cause the corners of the eye to set well within the border of the orbit, so that the outer corner is found, steplike, well inside the plane of the temple; the outer corners also retire more deeply than the inner.

Starting at the base of the nasal bone, the eyelids have their origin at the inner corner. The corner itself, located between the ball and the nose, is in the plane of the face, being unaffected by the convexity of the ball. The upper lid rises abruptly from the inner corner, and sweeps with graceful curve over the spherical form of the eyeball to the outer corner, while the lower lid starts continuously with the direction of the lower border of the corner, curving but slightly until it sweeps upward to the upper lid, which overlaps it. The inner corner of the eye is farther forward than the outer, so that a section of the exposed portion of the eyeball from corner to corner would slope backward from the center of the face; this enables the eyes to swing sidewise for observation without turning the head. The outer corner also is somewhat higher than the inner.

The upper lid folds upon itself so strongly that it becomes a distinct form when the eye is open, widening from the corners to the middle and extending beyond the ball a distance equal to its thickness, which is greatest in the center. The lower lid, being capable of but little movement, is more softly defined as it comes in contact with the cheek. The upper lid is thicker than the lower, as it must



be to support the heavy lashes as a protection and screen to the eye. The thickness of the upper lid and weight of lashes have much to do with giving depth and mystery to the eye through their shading.

When working in masses of light and shade and tone, the eye, as enclosed by the lids containing the pupils, iris and white of the eye, had better be kept well in tone, from which the value of the white of the eye should be lifted, care being taken not to make it too white, and also the catchlight on the cornea of the iris should be lifted in the same way. In section the lids are slightly but reversely beveled from front to rear, and fit snugly in contact with the ball.

The eye possesses free rotary movement, and as each change signifies a readjustment of the lids over the ball, an intimate structural knowledge is necessary in interpreting varied action. The iris is covered by the cornea, which is raised from the ball, forming part of a smaller sphere, and as the iris in ordinary vision is lapped over well-nigh a third of its diameter, the cornea affects the form of the upper lid delicately, raising it slightly in whatever direction the cornea is turned. The circular form of the pupil found in the center of the iris is rich and dark in tone, being greatly affected in life by its dilation or contraction.

The draftsman's problem in conveying a pictorial representation of a living form lies in his understanding of the structural form depicted. The drawing of a symmetrical inanimate form in a simple view presents difficulties of its own, but when we change symmetry to diversity, transform the inanimate to the living in action, and add the complications that come through choosing a point of view which involves foreshortening, the artist's



structural knowledge is keenly taxed. In truth, strength of draftsmanship lies in the degree in which structural form is understood.

In strong illumination, it is readily seen what portion of a form belongs to one plane and what belongs to another, at least as far as the big planes which are at right angles are concerned.

In the three-quarter view of the eye-socket and eyes, every form sets back of the plane of the orbit. The eyebrows come well from underneath the frontal bone and rise to the outside at the approach of the temple. Observe the fullness of the orbicular muscle as it overhangs the eyelid, and the eyelid as it projects beyond the ball.

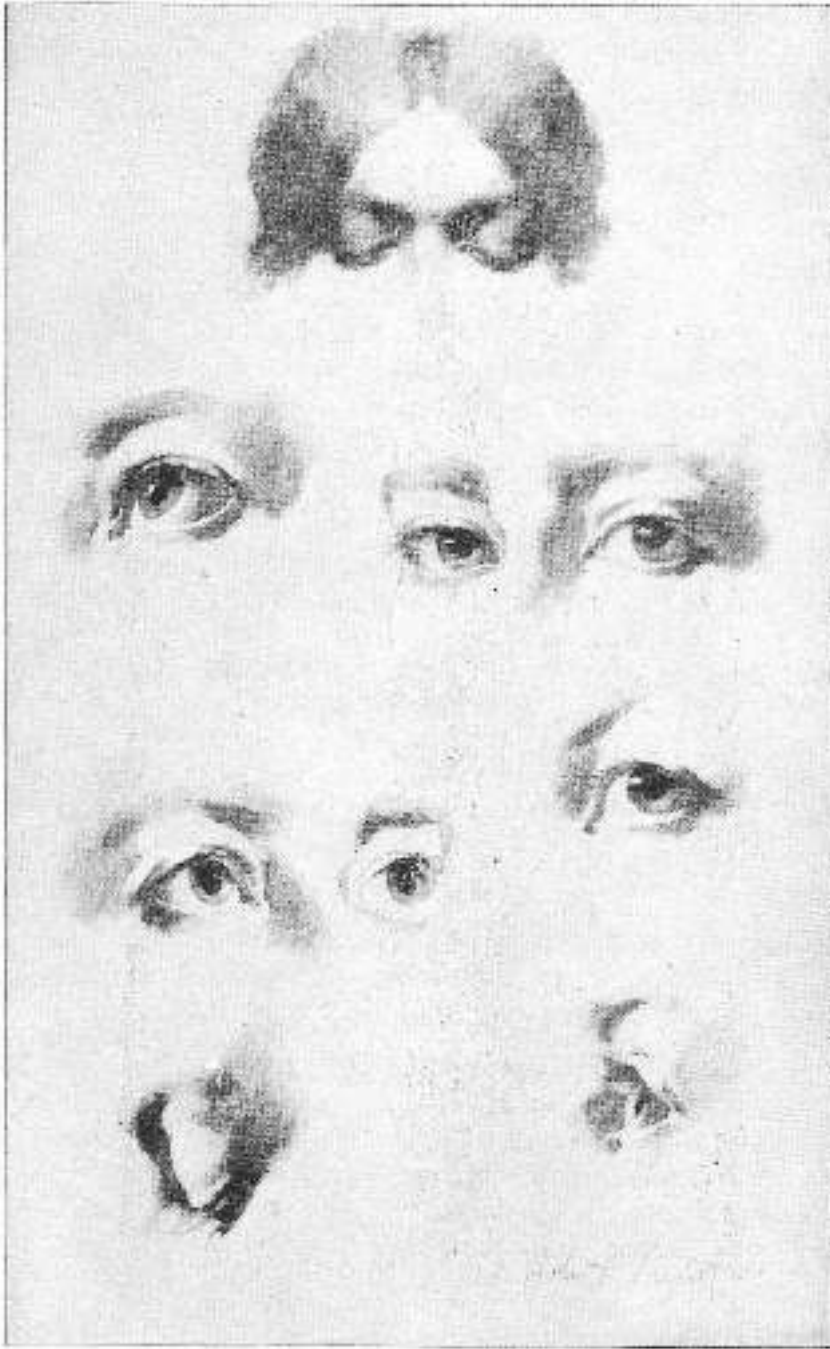
The variety of curvature in the lids not only because of their own character but also as expressed in the three-quarter view, emphasized by the eyes looking out of the corners. The apparent difference in the outer corners as the lids come together, the corner of the nearer eye being quite angular, whereas in the corner of the farther eye, the lids together describe the convexity of the ball perfectly. The tendency of the cornea to raise that part of the upper lid under which it rests.

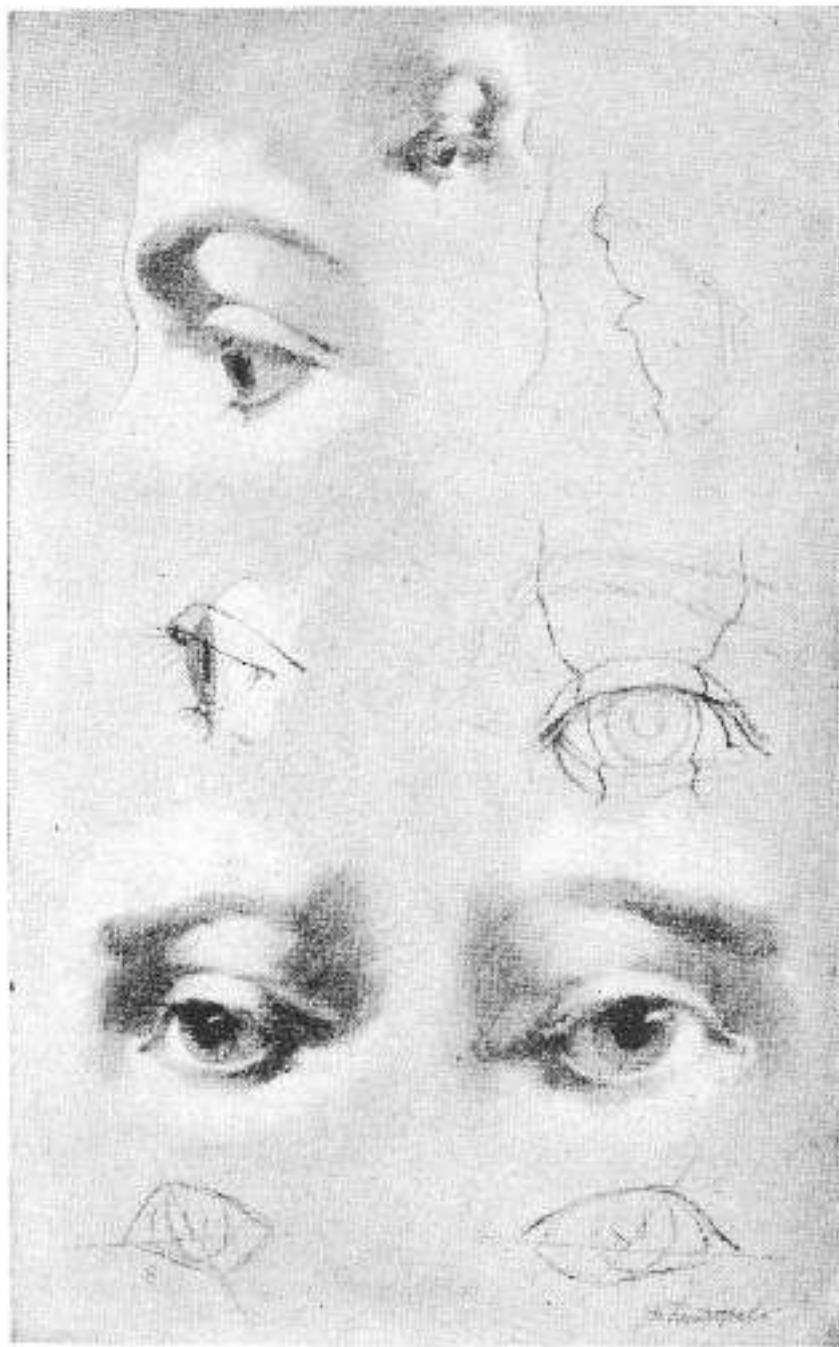
The great thickness of the upper lid fringed with its heavy lashes shades the upper part of the iris and gives added depth and beauty to it.

In the three-quarter view of the eyes the irises are raised above the level, showing an amount of the white of the eyeball below them. The iris in the three-quarter view becomes oval, and when the eye is raised slopes in an opposite direction to the plane of the orbit.

In the spiral turn of the eye the lids upon the ball is particularly noticeable in the upper lid; the









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