



# THE MODERN ART OF FIGURE DRAWING

AND  
PINUPS

by Derek Matters

Merging Digital & Traditional  
Techniques Together in Sketching,  
Drawing & Painting the Figure



# THE MODERN ART OF FIGURE DRAWING & PIN-UPS

## **Merging Digital & Traditional Techniques Together in Sketching, Drawing & Painting the Nude Figure**

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ABOUT ME

First off, thank you for picking up this book, I hope you enjoy looking through these pages and maybe some of these contents will spark an idea of your own. I am a professional artist and designer with more than 20 years experience working in this field. I am not nor do I claim to be a master. I do not have all the answers – I just love to draw the figure and want to share my artwork and if you can learn a thing or two along the way, I am glad to help.

## MY EDUCATION

As an art student from 1997-2002, Adobe™ products like Photoshop™ and Illustrator™ had caught on in the professional world but tenured professors had no experience with the software aside from a mandatory class here and there that they begrudgingly muddled through. Those professors expected you to learn to draw and paint the same way they did and in almost every case would not accept artwork that wasn't traditional as 'legitimate'. I will not try and argue that point here, it is a polarizing argument that I have no interest in beating - I've chosen both sides. I bucked the rules where I could and moved on.

## HOW I GOT INTO ALL THIS DIGITAL STUFF

Early on for me the input devices were a mouse, keyboard and scanner so my options were extremely limited. I tried desktop tablets but I could never get past the idea of looking at a screen when my hand was drawing somewhere else – the disconnect was too great for me to overcome. As I spent more time in Photoshop™ I came to realize a mouse would never allow me the freedom to do what I really wanted with it.

Then came the Wacom Cintiq™. This tool has changed my creative process in every way across the board. The Cintiq™ is a monitor that connects to your computer and has a pressure sensitive screen that you can 'draw' directly on using a stylus that feels like a thick rubbery pen in your hand. The Cintiq™ can recognize pressure, angle and tilt.

I will not lie and tell you there isn't a learning curve. This does not feel like pencil on paper and there is a thickness to the screen so your pen tip doesn't exactly sit directly on the drawing surface. I saw a video of one in action and



drove to a comic book convention in LA just to demo it at their booth. The first time I used it I fell in love. Within 5 minutes I knew the \$2000+ price tag was worth it because this tool was the direct link between Photoshop™ and hand drawing I had been missing all this time. I still use a Cintiq™ but as tablets and touchscreen net-books are more popular than ever, there are dozens of options out there at all price points that can get you drawing directly on screen with a stylus. The most important piece of information I can give you in this book is to try a tool like this.



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## WHAT IS DIGITAL ART?

Throughout my career I have dealt with people who don't understand what I do. They ask questions like "is this real art OR computer art" or "did you actually draw this or just play in Photoshop™?". It is true, some people abuse the filters menu and the rest of us have to deal with the backlash, but

most people don't understand that I still use the same knowledge and processes.

I was chatting with a fellow artist on a forum some time ago and we were talking about the places we find inspiration. He was looking at one of my digital magazine cover paintings and he told me that he loved the way I used cool colors to set an object back in the composition. As time progressed he was looking through the rest of my pieces and he realized that some of them were digital paintings. Then the tone of the conversation changed and I he actually got quite upset. He accused me of 'posing' as a painter. "I don't consider any of you computer people REAL painters" is how he concluded his critique. Its as if he thought that I just create a new PSD then hit the 'paint a picture' button and its done.

The stylus is just another tool like an airbrush or Rapidograph, it just happens to be the most powerful and freeing art tool that I've ever used. Yes, I know how to paint with watercolor, acrylic and oil. Yes, I have spent hundreds of hours cutting Frisket for my Badger 150 airbrush. Yes I can draw beautiful pictures with graphite and colored pencil too. I choose to work digitally because it frees me of the constant concern that I'll take a painting too far and not be able to get back. I don't have to worry about tipping my airbrush too far and spilling a big blob of black ink on the drawing and ruining it or waiting for paint to dry. I can create a pencil sketch, ink drawing, watercolor painting and oil painting all on the same file then change the paper type to get the effect I want all with \$0 cost, infinite flexibility and no cleanup!

Yes, I still draw and paint traditionally. A number of my figure drawings start on a sketch pad then end up in Photoshop<sup>TM</sup>. I don't even scan them anymore; I just take a picture with my phone and adjust the levels after the fact.

Years ago, illustrators who wanted to work for big companies had to have multiple hand bound portfolios filled with 'tear sheets' which were pages torn from magazines and books with their illustrations. They were expensive to produce, and impossible to replace. Many Artists would lose them in the mail, or they would get damaged and sometimes not returned at all. Now, some of these same artists have websites. I don't see them complain- ing

about how their digital portfolio has enhanced their careers and improved their reach.

As artists and creators, we should be open to new mediums and embrace them. Let's see the beauty and learn to appreciate the skills that an artist uses to make it beautiful. Below are two drawings that I've done, the one on the right I did using Photoshop and my beloved Cintiq. The one on the left was done with colored pencil on Bristol board. Can you truly say that one of them is complete garbage?

## TRADITIONAL

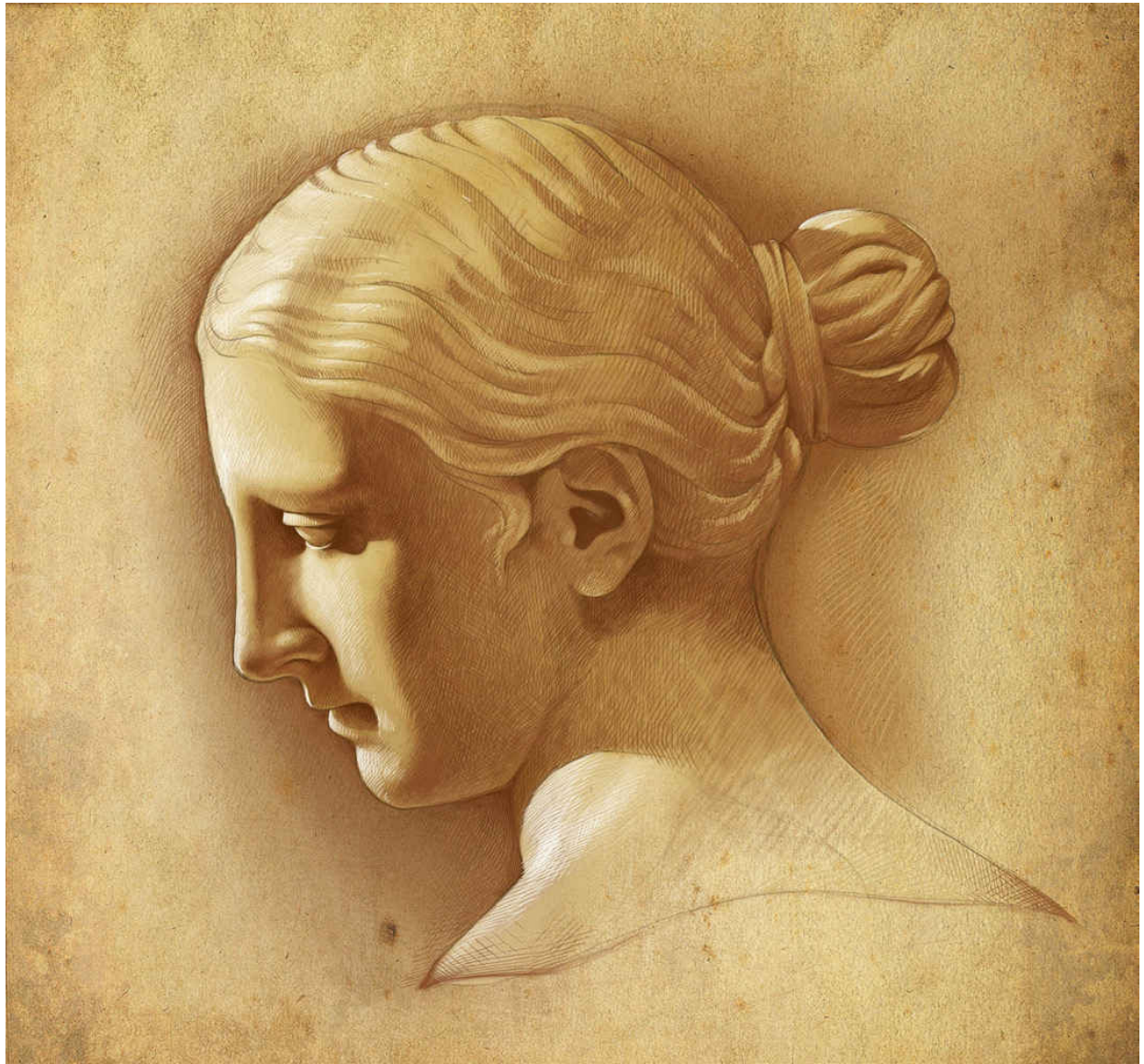




# COLORED PENCIL ON WATERCOLOR PAPER

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

### DIGITAL





# WACOM CINTIQ™ & PHOTOSHOP™

This book is meant to be viewed as a portfolio of drawings that I have done over the years for reference. There are a number of resources online where you can get in depth drawing tutorials and Photoshop™ step by step walkthroughs. Considering how quickly the technology changes I won't get into specific details on every step, I'll just cover the basics of how and why where needed. For the most part, what you will see are mixed digital/traditional drawings and paintings, but you will also see a number of purely digital as well as purely traditional drawings. Due to a large number of requests, you will see my original sketch beside the final color version for a number of digital pieces. My end goal here is to share my work with you and maybe give you a little insight into my process.







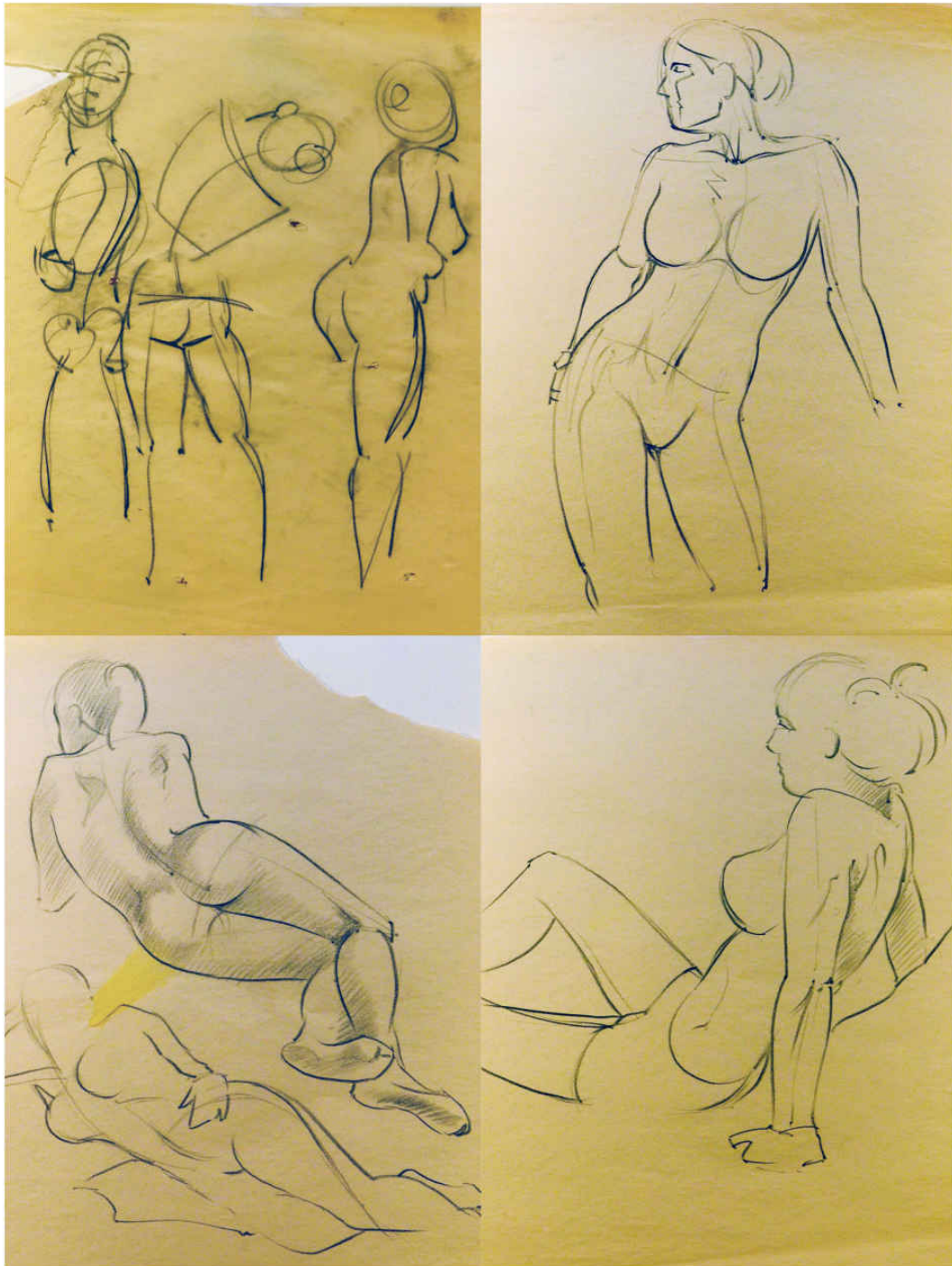




DRAWING FROM LIFE - WARM UPS

I have found this to be a critical step in my process for all types of drawing. If I am drawing from the live figure, I start with quick gesture drawings, 30 seconds, 60 seconds, 90 seconds etc for the first 20 minutes or so, then I graduate to 5 minute poses, then 10-15 minute poses then once I feel I have a good understanding of the form and lighting conditions, I'll do a lengthier pose. This allows me to warm up or 'loosen' up my arm and familiarize my hand with the medium.

I tend to draw on larger surfaces when drawing from life, usually 18" x 24" or larger. I have found there is a freedom that comes from having the space to stretch out and draw from your shoulder rather than resting your hand on a screen. The larger tablets can get quite large, but still can't replicate this freedom. For this reason I still feel like my drawings tend to be more expressive in life drawing.



CROSS HATCHING

This technique has always been my go to when drawing. It is a wonderful way to slowly layer value and color into a drawing. Unlike most other mediums, cross hatching digitally is just as time consuming as in traditional drawings, but the upsides of digital crosshatching are huge.

First, you can adjust opacity, brightness/contrast, color and blend mode later so you never have to worry about going too far. Next, you can apply gradients directly to cross hatch layers which opens up a whole new level of tweaks and experiments to try later.

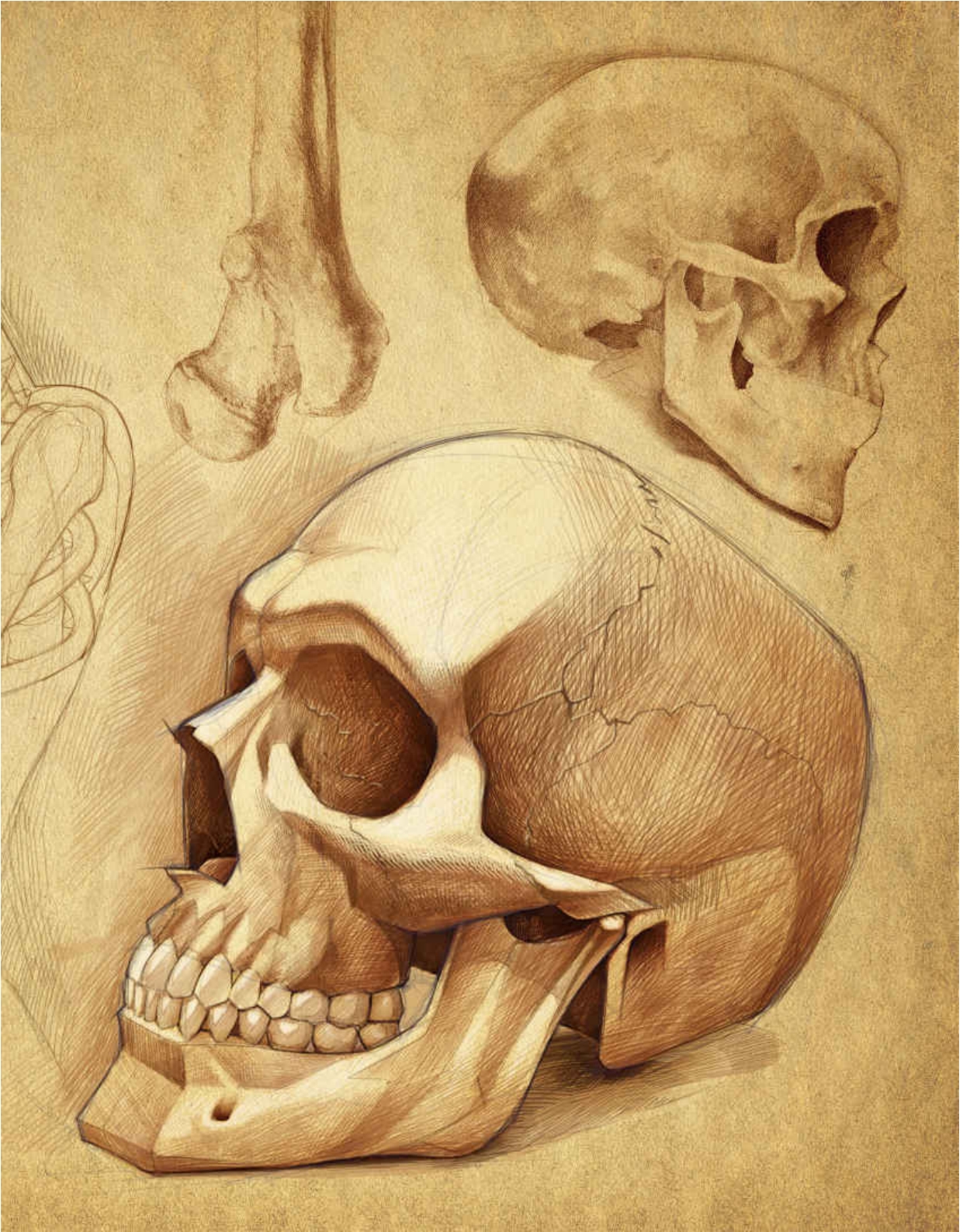
Next, adding pure light color on top of a dark color is simple unlike when working with colored pencil. Adding in a pure reflected color at the edge of a shadow for instance is quick and can help smooth out rough hatching beneath it.

Also, the eraser tool can be used like a pen to remove hatching when it gets too dark or if you want to add a hair line or crease like the fracture highlights to the right. I have found it is best to work with multiple layers of hatching and experimenting with how each interacts with the other.

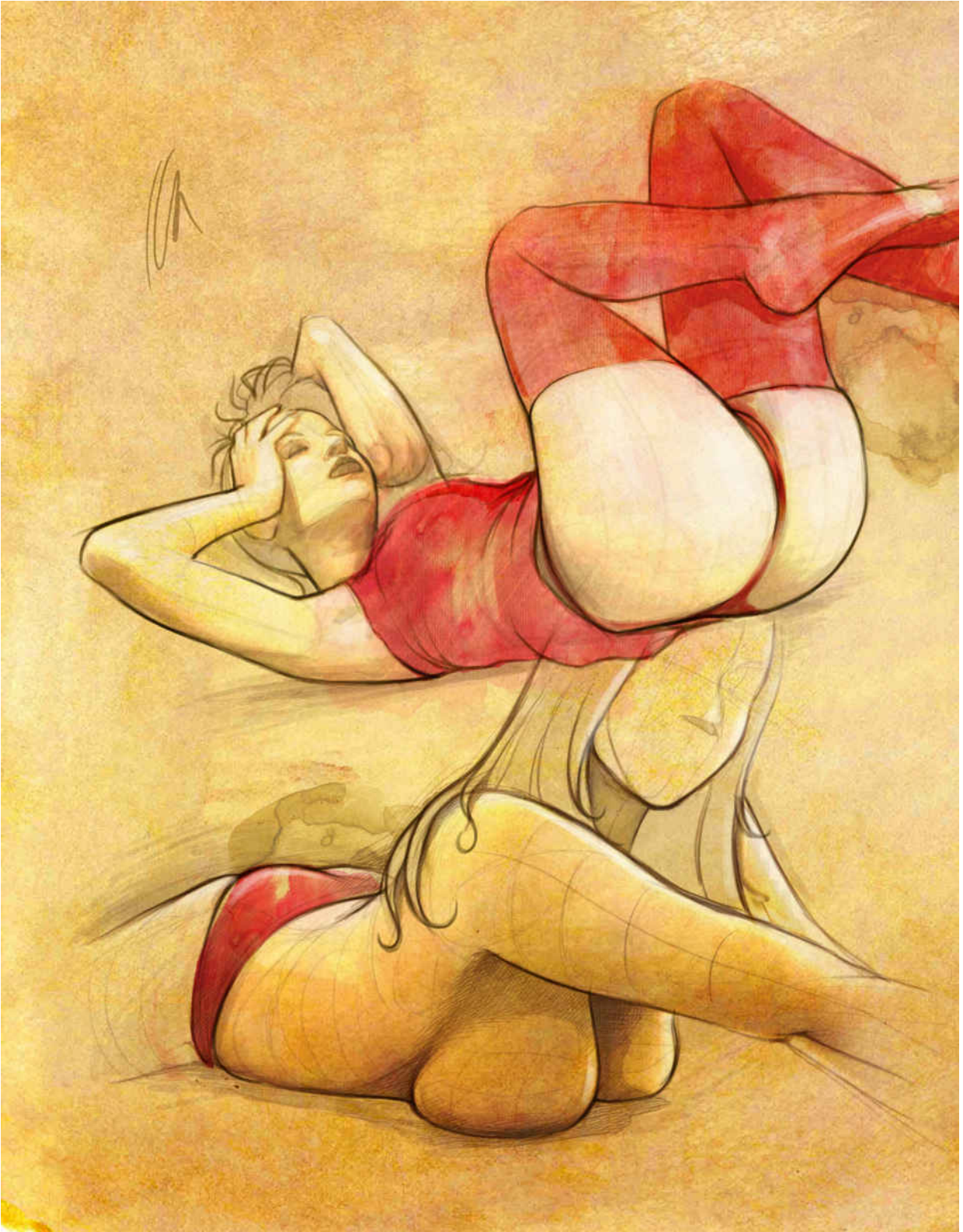
Finally, I often duplicate a hatching layer then apply a Gaussian blur to the lower layer to add some value to the entire piece.



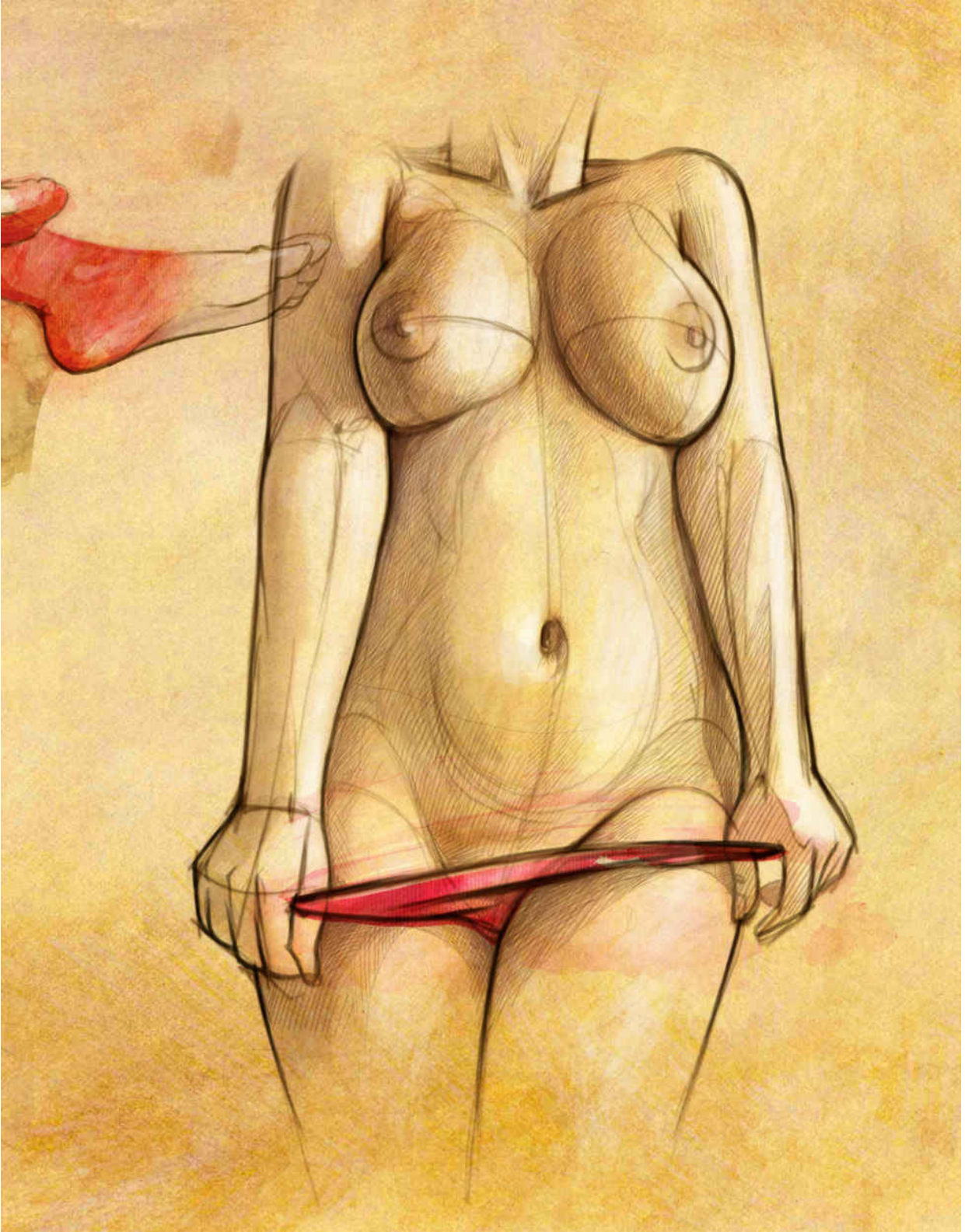




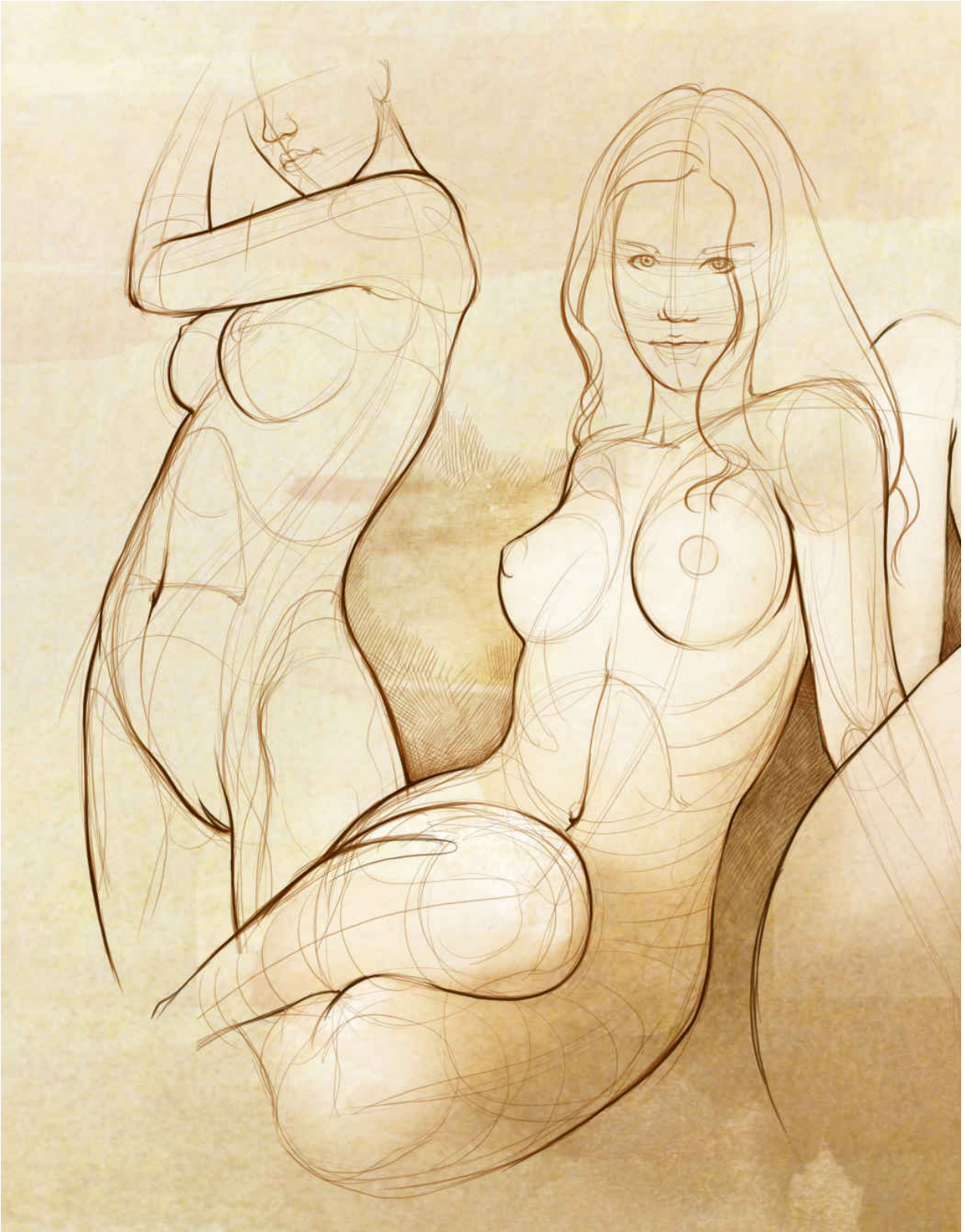














CHARCOAL & PENCIL SMUDGES

Over the years I have scanned or photographed 1000's of drawings and now have a sizable library of smudges, stains and smears. If you are replicating a pencil drawing, try adding graphite smudges around the darker areas like you might see in a traditional pencil drawing. Fingerprints, blurs and scratch- es add authenticity even if nearly undetectable to the viewer.

## DEVELOP YOUR OWN STYLE

Easier said than done. I finally feel like I have developed a style that is recognizably my own. This took most of my life and I still feel like I am just getting started. Don't get discouraged if it doesn't happen right away, in fact expect that it won't. Every time I start a drawing, I hit a 'wall' about 30% of the way in and I don't feel like it is not going to work. I will come up with a dozen reasons to stop and move onto another idea. The drawing on this page almost died at step 3 because I felt like the composition was dull and wouldn't work. I have learned over the years to force myself through this wall and just keep working on in and I'll get it done.

## I CAN MAKE TWO PROMISES TO YOU

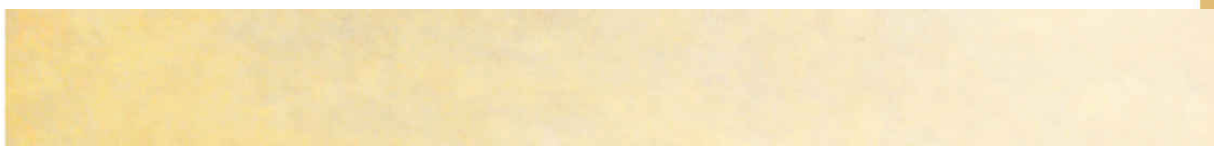
1. If you don't push through it and keep moving forward you will never get better.
2. Every time you draw something you improve. By this rationale, the more you draw the quicker you will get there.

## ENVY PROMOTES GROWTH

Ever since I can remember, I have envied other artists. I have always looked at drawings and hated myself because I couldn't do what they did. I spent most of my early childhood copying comic book drawings of artists like Jim Lee, Dale Keown, Todd Mcfarlane, Stan Lee and more. I can't speak for anyone else, but this might have been the single most important driving force that got me to where I am today. As an artist, if you ever feel like you have mastered anything, you should quit. The insatiable need to be better than you are is what pushes you to continue. Many artists have inspired growth in my work without knowing it.











## USING PURE WHITE

Often times I see a drawing that sits on a pure white background. Personally I like to have some sort of texture in the background even if it is just a very

subtle paper grain or gesso canvas texture. Pure white/black do not exist in nature. If you use pure white they eye reads it as a purely digital image even if that isn't your goal. The same goes for any pure color. If you want a red background, try a red construction paper texture instead and see how it looks.







## USING FILTERS

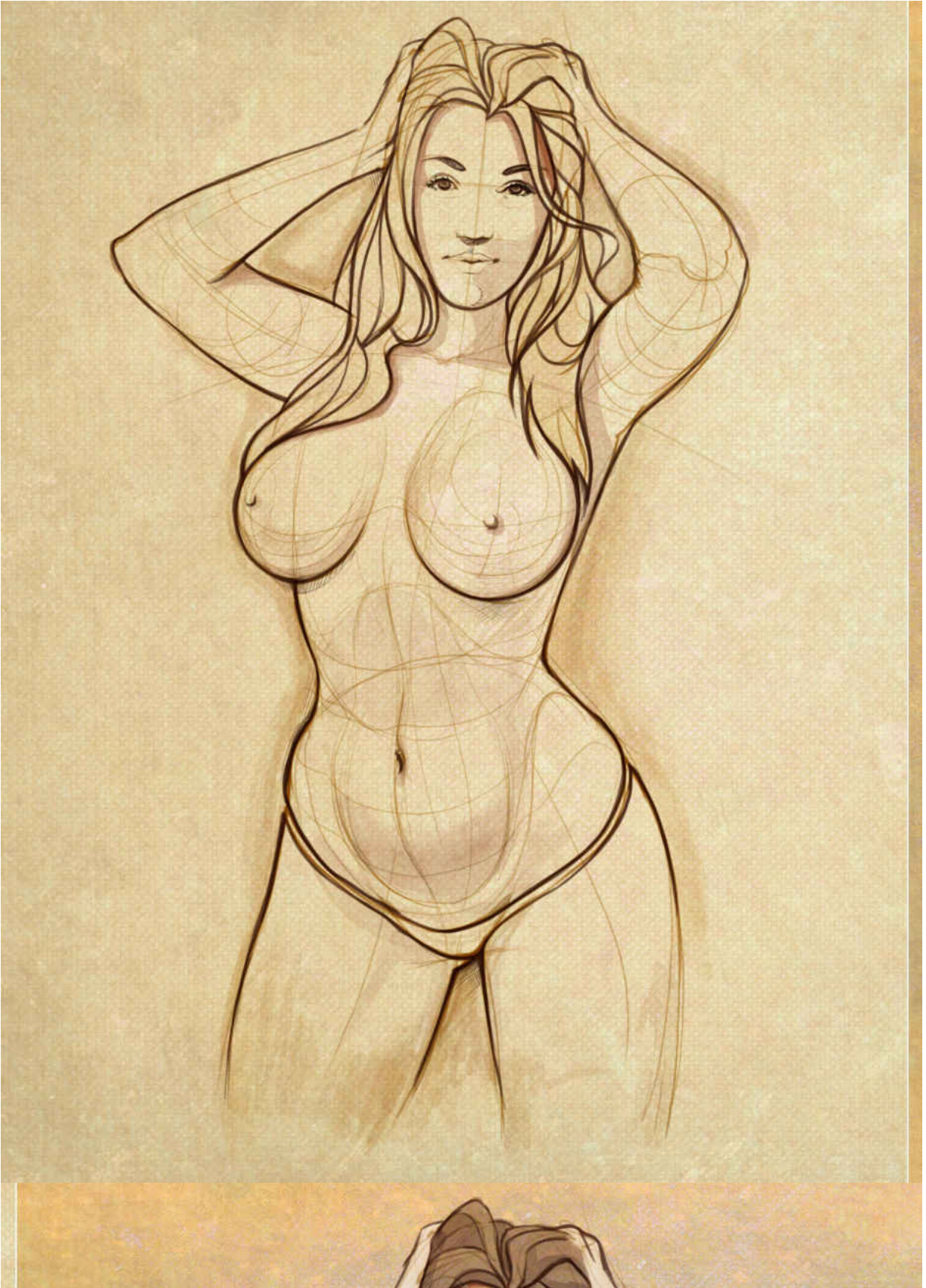
In my opinion, filters should be used sparingly. If I see a drawing that is using an obvious filter



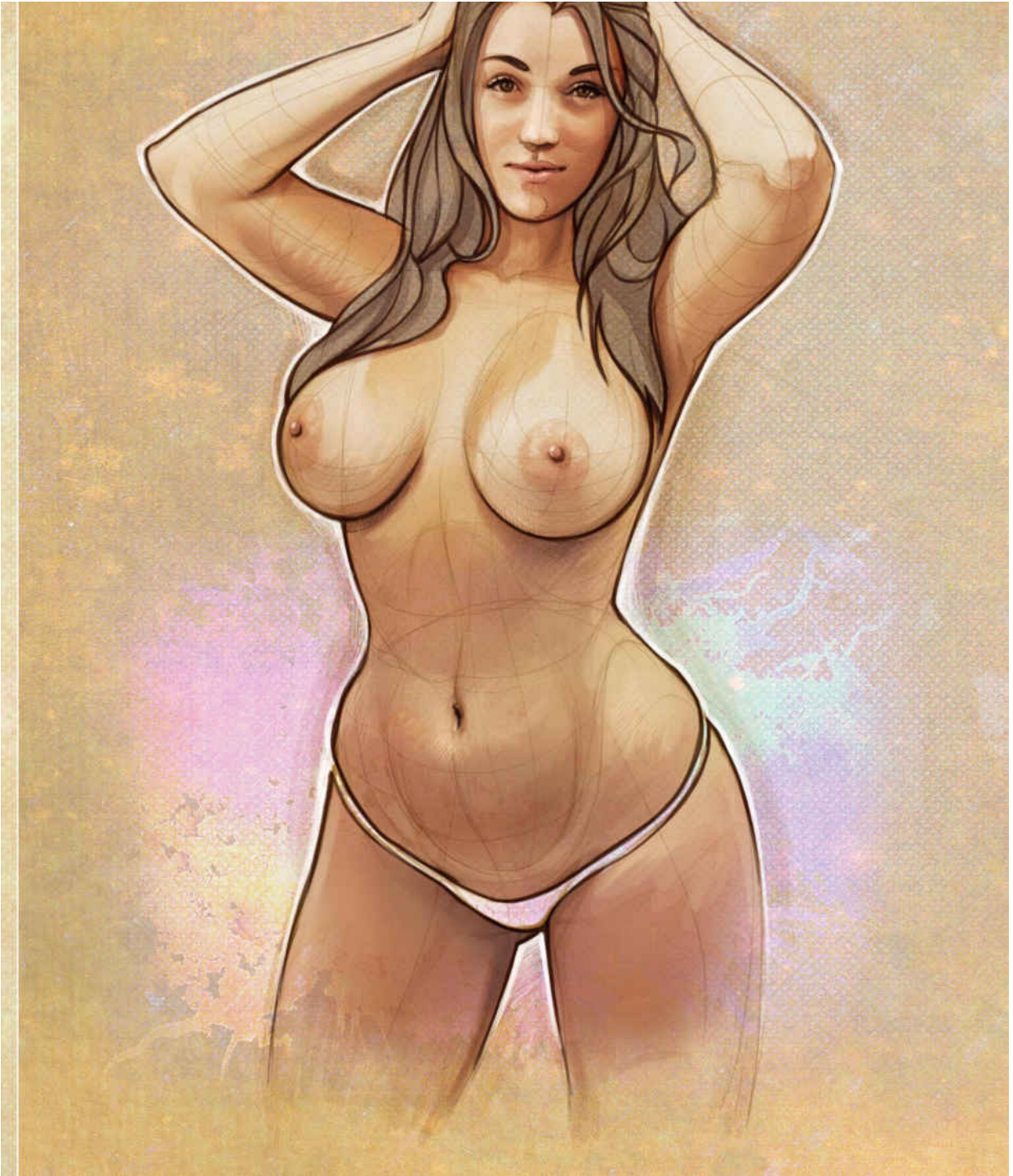
that I can pick out, I consider it a failure. The oil paint filter is one that I see all the time and its obvious. If you use that filter, try using the smudge tool at different sizes and strengths to lessen the effect and make it something unique. If your goal is to make a drawing look traditional, then don't leave breadcrumbs for the eye to pick out.

Ultimately you will do whatever you like, but taking the extra step to cover your tracks and make it difficult for a pro to spot your tricks adds to the beauty and mystery of a piece. This is based on my style; your results may differ depending on your goals.









## STICK TO YOUR GOALS

Remember what you are trying to do and do it. If your goal is to replicate a charcoal drawing then look objectively at what steps you have taken to get there. Compare your drawing to a traditional charcoal drawing and see what

you can do to get it to look the way you want it to look. If someone has to ask 'is this digital' because they can't tell then you did your job.









BACKGROUNDS AND PAPER SELECTION

There are so many resources out there where you can find textures it would be silly to list any here, but things to watch for are:

**Resolution** – Make sure you are using background textures that are as large as possible. It is always best to have more detail than you need.

**Mixing** – Try mixing different textures together using blending modes and opacity to create a new texture that is unrecognizable from the source.



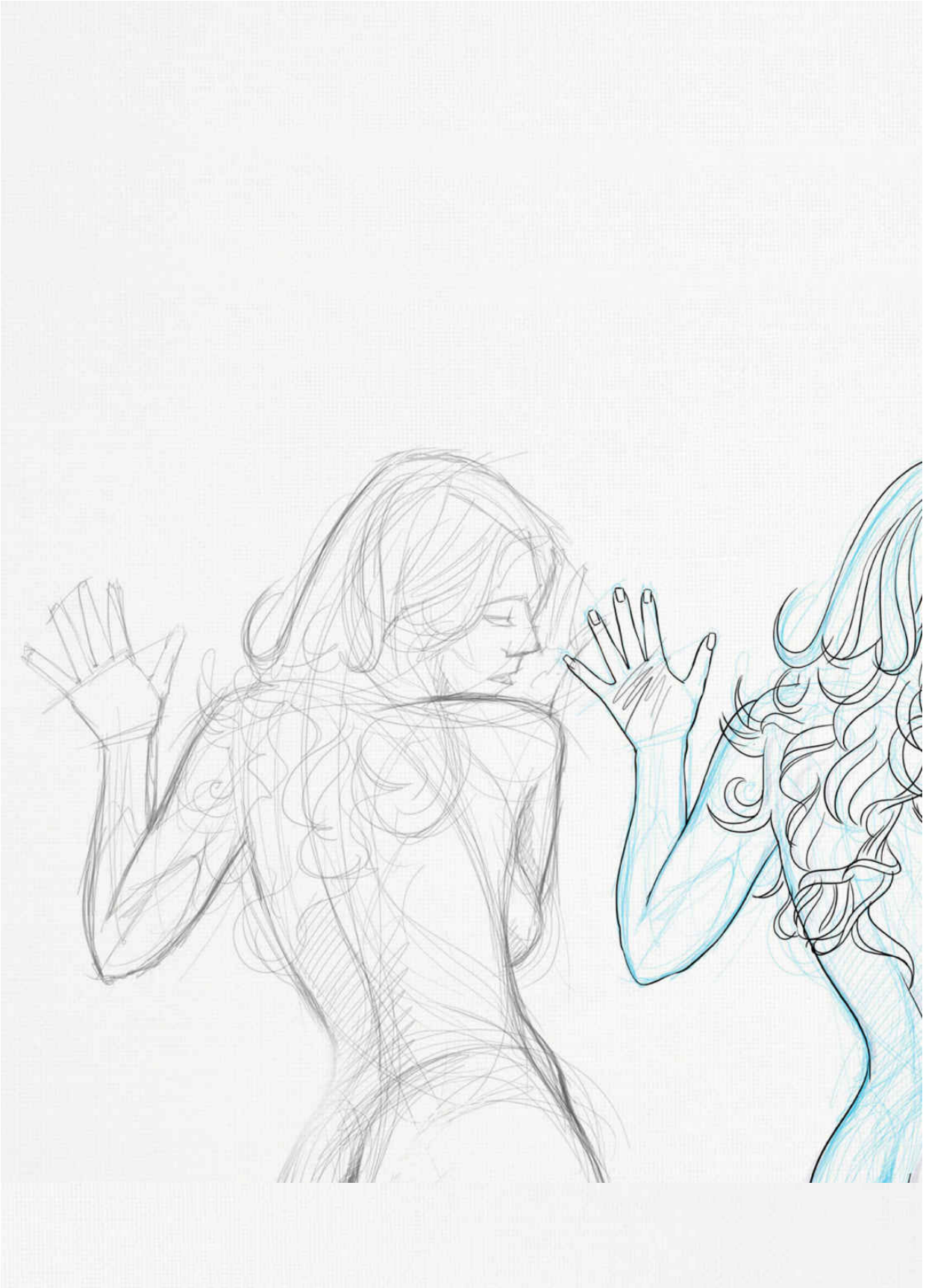


DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A TASTEFUL NUDE  
AND A PIN UP

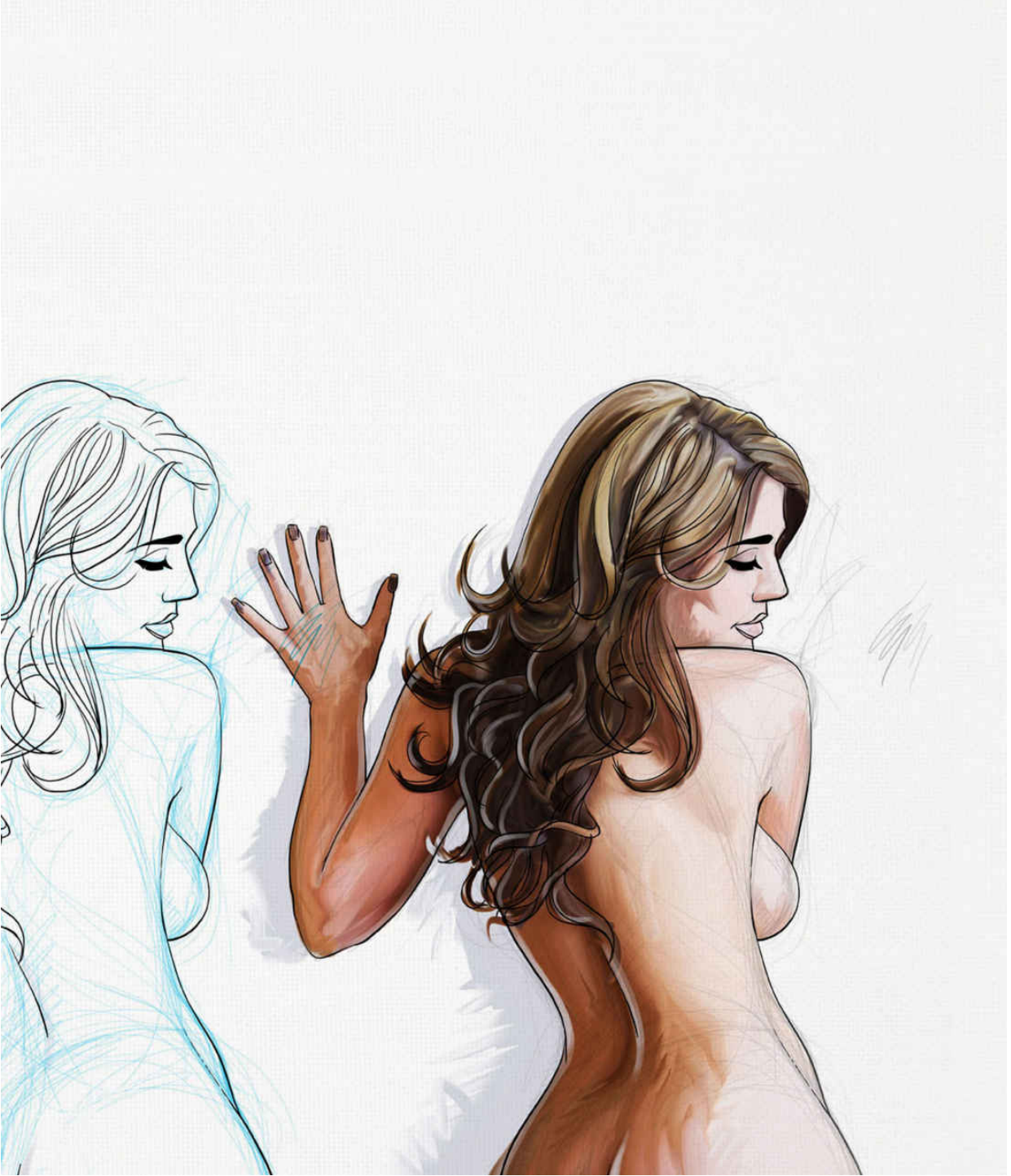
I am aware that there is a line between them and that some people are very sensitive about that line. I understand that some of my drawings can be viewed as objectification and not everyone will like them.

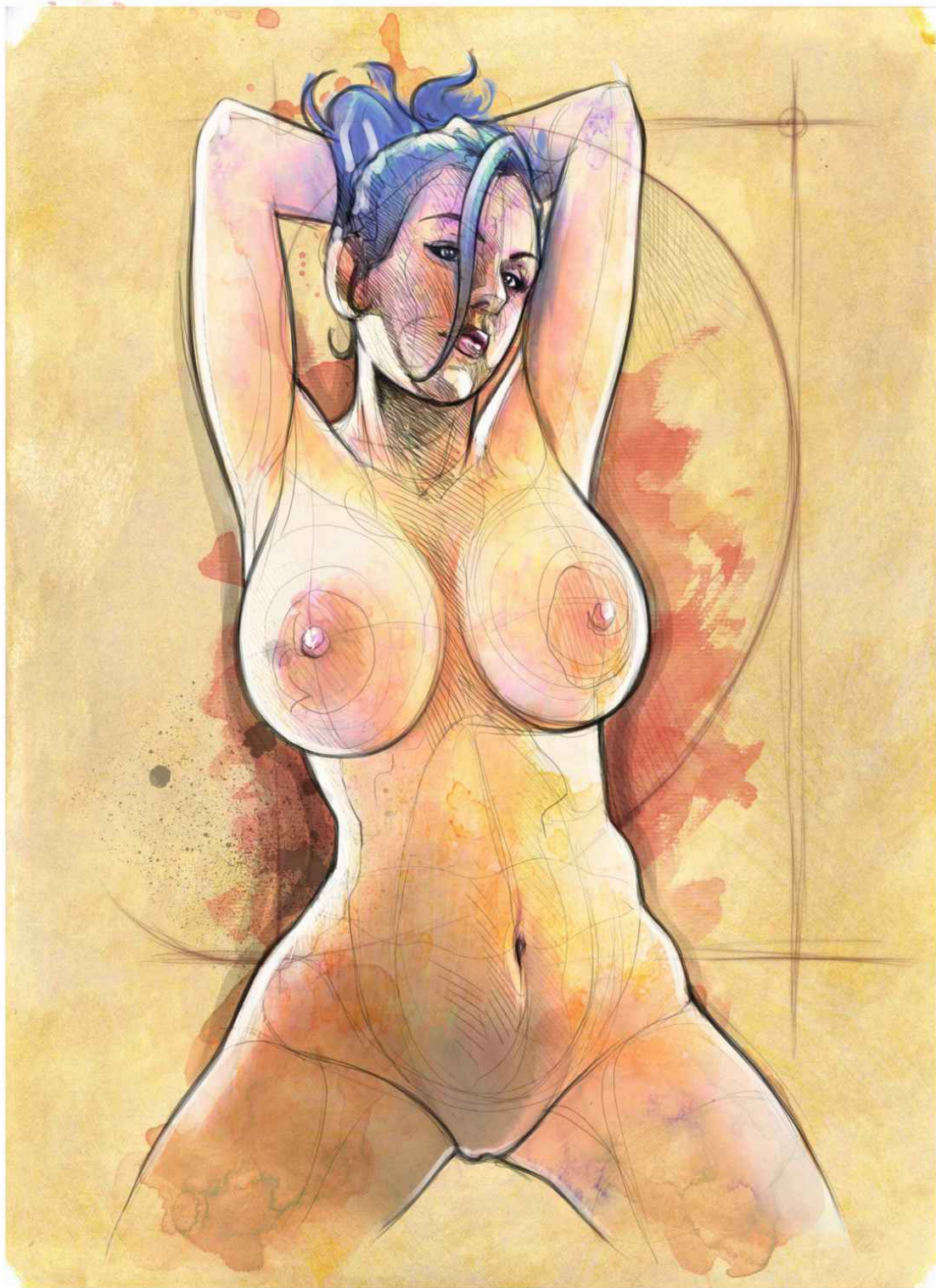
My answer to this has always been the same, i draw what i like. If i see something that I want to draw, I will draw it the way my mind wants it to be seen. Draw what you like and let the negative comments roll off your back. For every angry internet rant I've have also received dozens of compliments. You will never be able to satisfy everyone, so do what satisfies you and let them sort each other out. Some of my drawings are sexy and alluring, some are simple classical poses - I love them equally.











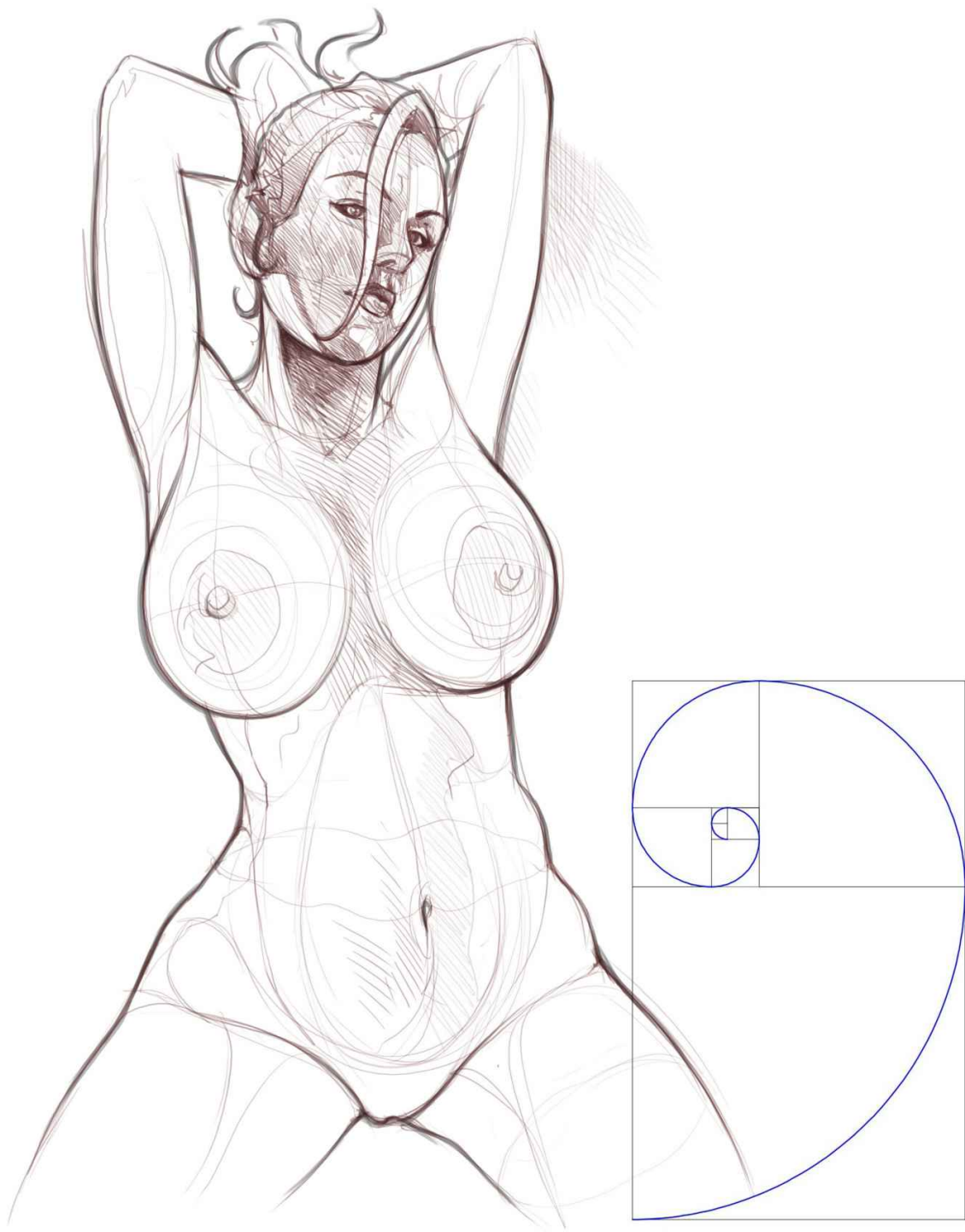
COMPOSITION

This is another subject that could (and should) be a book on its own. It is also impossible to teach. You need to learn it over time, there is no cheating this.

There is a lot to be said about the rule of thirds as used in photography. The golden ratio (AKA divine proportion, Fibonacci spiral etc) is a tool that I have worked into a number of my paintings and drawings and in some cases is part of the composition itself.

Try using repeating shapes and patterns in your compositions. Practice practice practice.



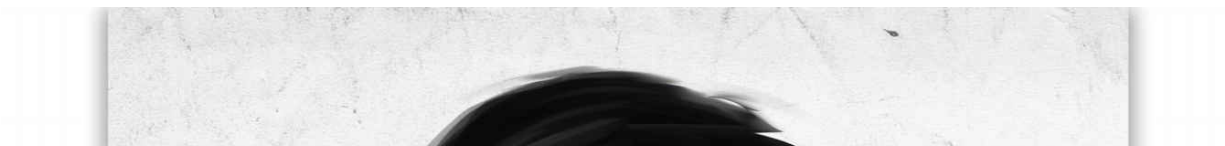


DRAWING FOR FUN



There are times when I see a photograph that sets off a spark somewhere and I feel compelled to draw or paint from it. In this case it was a photo of Eva Green (photographer unknown). I did this entire painting directly in layers in Photoshop<sup>TM</sup>. Since this was only done for portfolio purposes, I kept the palette to black and white so I could focus on the tone rather than spending time picking color.









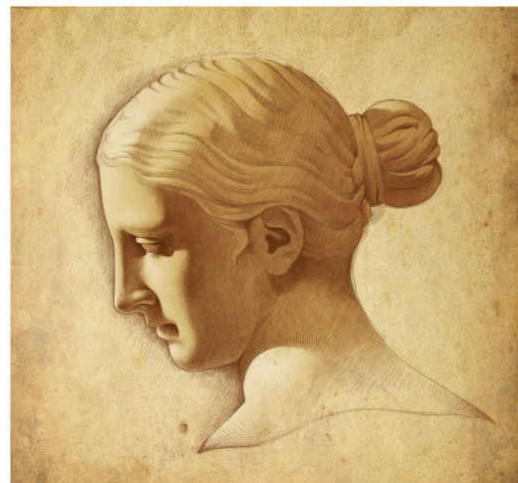
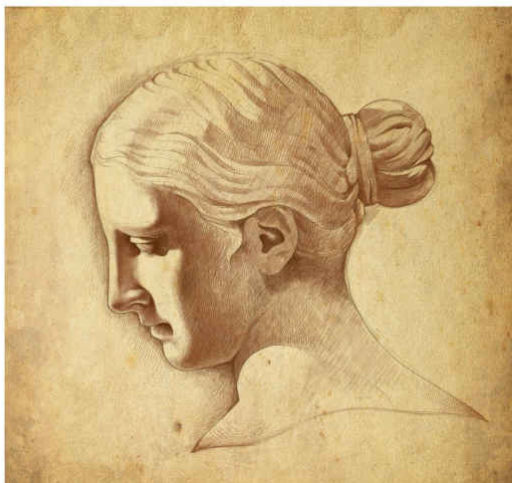
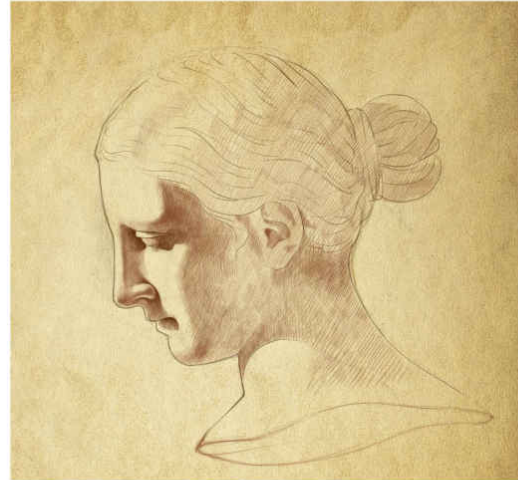
# **DRAWING FROM ‘THE GREEK SLAVE’ BY HIRAM POWERS, ITALY 1843**

## **STEP 1**

Here I create the framework and anatomy. I draw this over two layers using a very low opacity brush. The second layer is shown here where I have most of the markers fleshed out.

## **STEP 2**

I add another layer called ‘hatching’ and put all my base hatching here. I usually keep hatching and drawing layers separated so I can adjust them individually later.



STEP 3

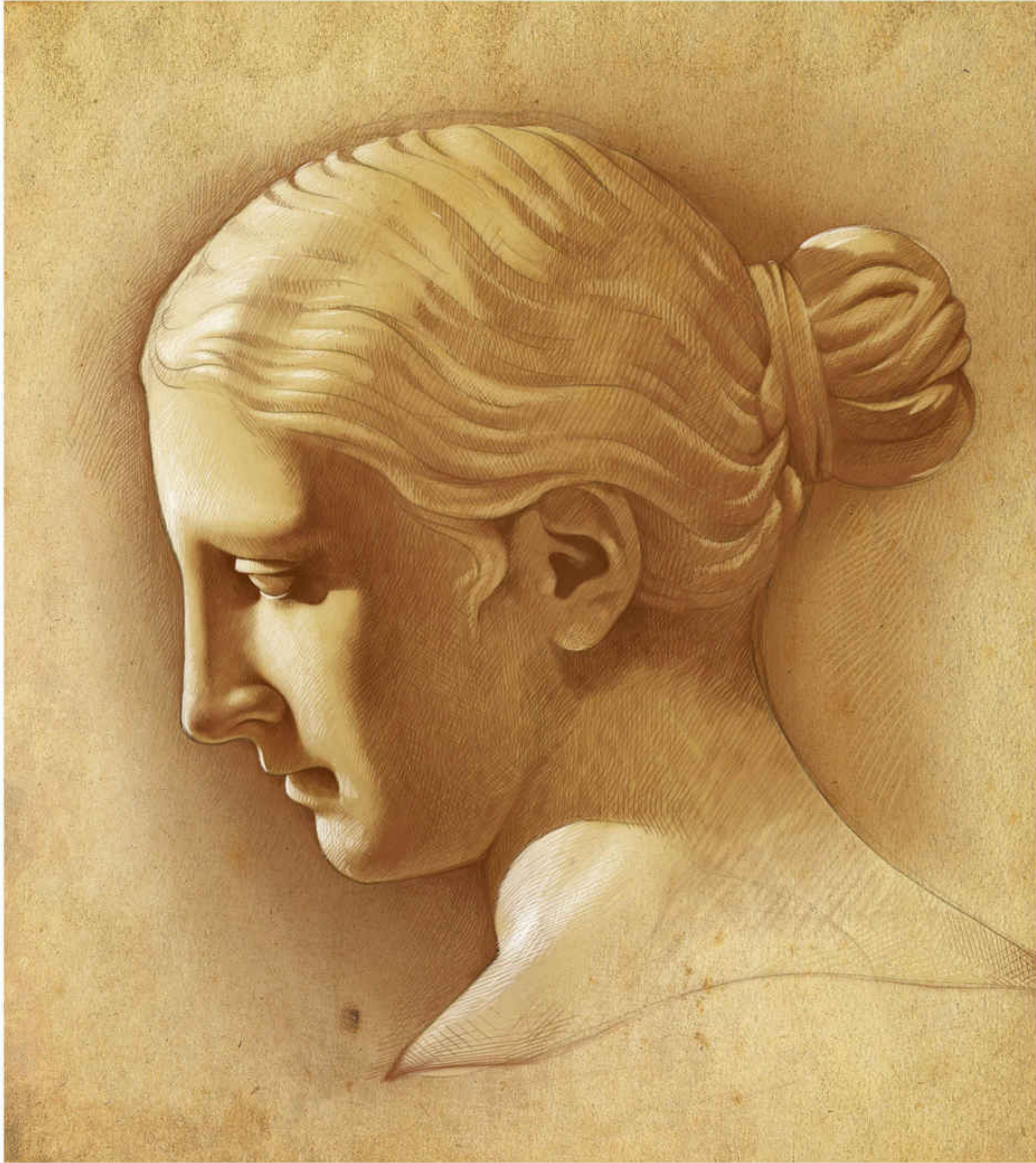
Finalizing the lights and darks is the tedious part of the process. You will undoubtedly draw thousands of lines to get the mix smooth. I tend to get dark and precise in the focal points only.

## STEP 4

Here I use the airbrush tool to paint in some value and color behind the hatching and drawing layers. Sometimes I do this as step 2 but in this case I wanted the hatching to do the majority of the work.

## FINAL

Usually I save the highlights for last and use them sparingly. I also finalize the hatching and shading behind the subject to help the highlights stand out a bit more. Honestly, of all the drawings in this book, I would have to say this one is my favorite.



WARM UP DRAWINGS FROM 2D SOURCES



When drawing from 2D references I also do warm up drawings. I'll do 3-5 quick figure sketches from the same model (if possible) to familiarize myself with the form. I do these on successive layers then converge them together into one drawing. At this point, I take the source and the sketches and put them down to a lower opacity and start working on the detail outlines on a new layer over all of this. Eventually I'll adjust the blending mode and opacity to each layer individually or just turn them off depending on what I want the final to look like.

Sometimes I draw directly over the figure set to 50% opacity, in some cases I keep the reference(s) off to the side and just draw them by sight. This is a hot button subject for many artists - don't concern yourself too much with this, do what works best for you. I really like to mix this process up and try different things depending on the individual drawing. If I am drawing figures, I will rarely stick closely to the source material. If it's a magazine cover for a client, I will often stick very closely to the reference material if a photo-realistic likeness is needed.











WATERCOLOR SNIPPETS

If you are faking a watercolor look, try building up a library of watercolor backgrounds, snippets, drops, stains and smears. Add them to your painting in the background or as an overlay to add a 'painterly' texture to a drawing.

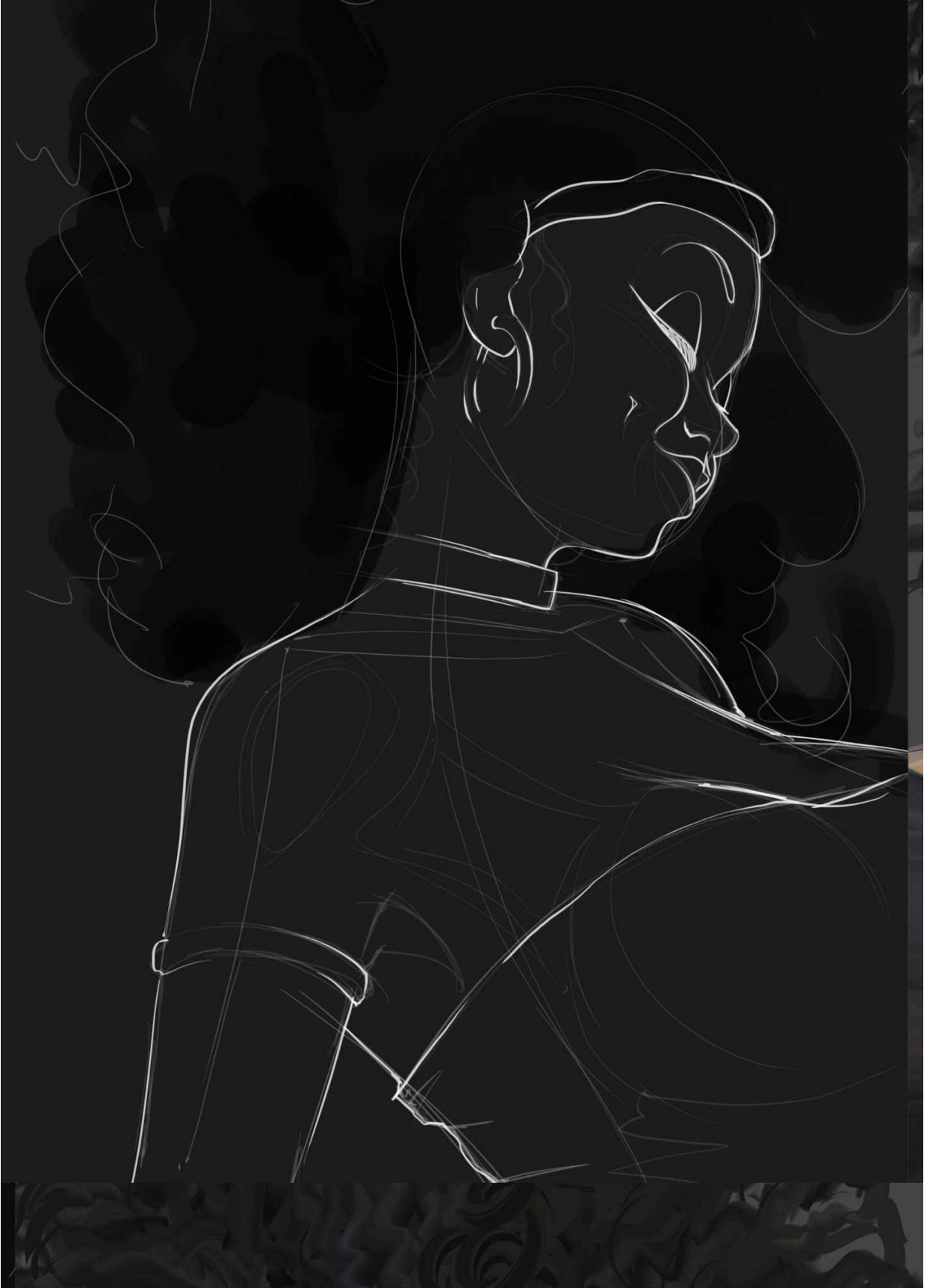


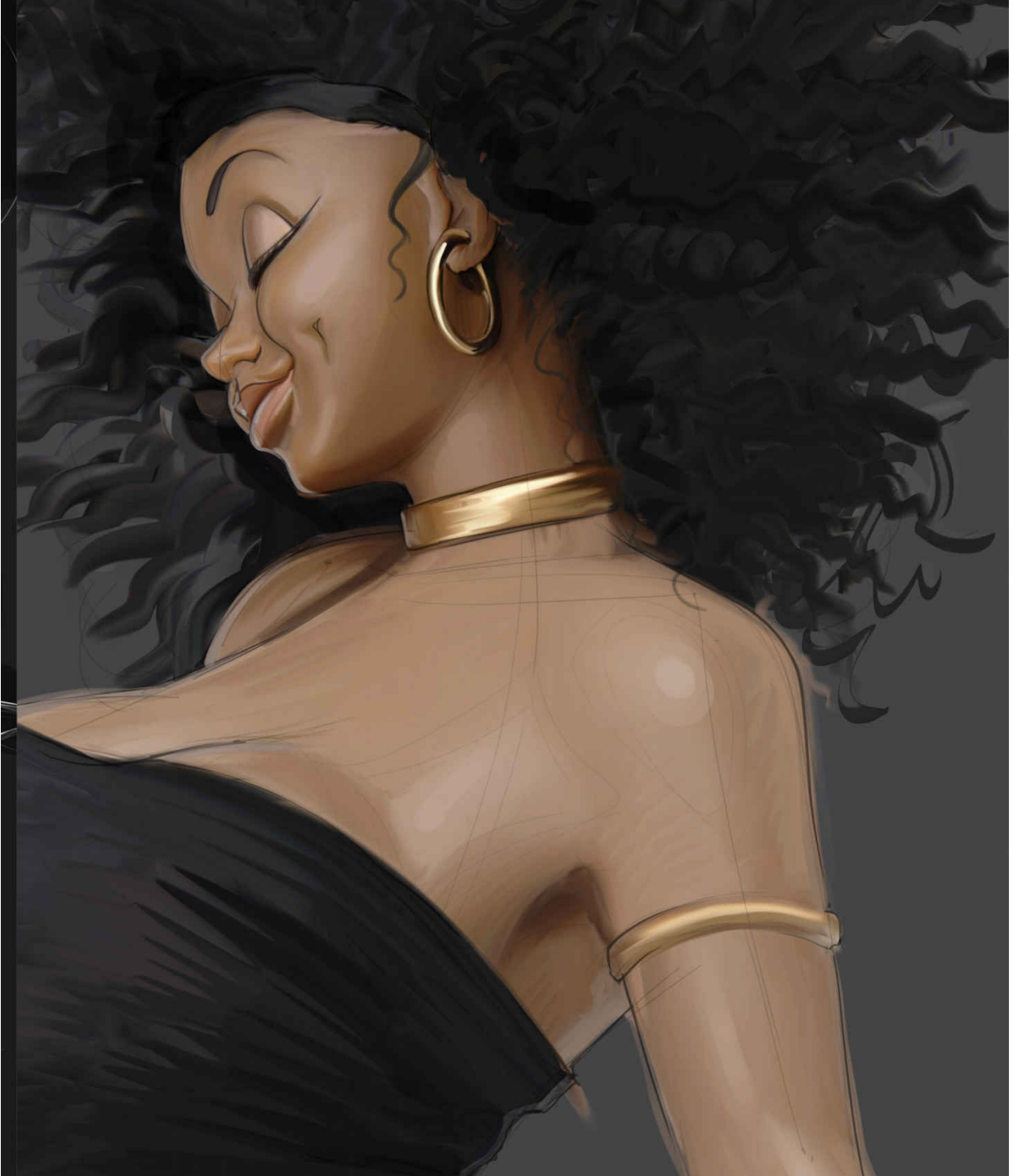
“WHAT BRUSHES DO YOU USE?”

I have had a lot of luck using the pre-defined brushes that come with Photoshop™ and rarely need to add additional ones. Try experimenting with the powerful brush editing tools that are included with your software, you will probably find just about everything you need there with a little digging. If you need to download additional brushes, just read the fine print and give credit where credit is due.









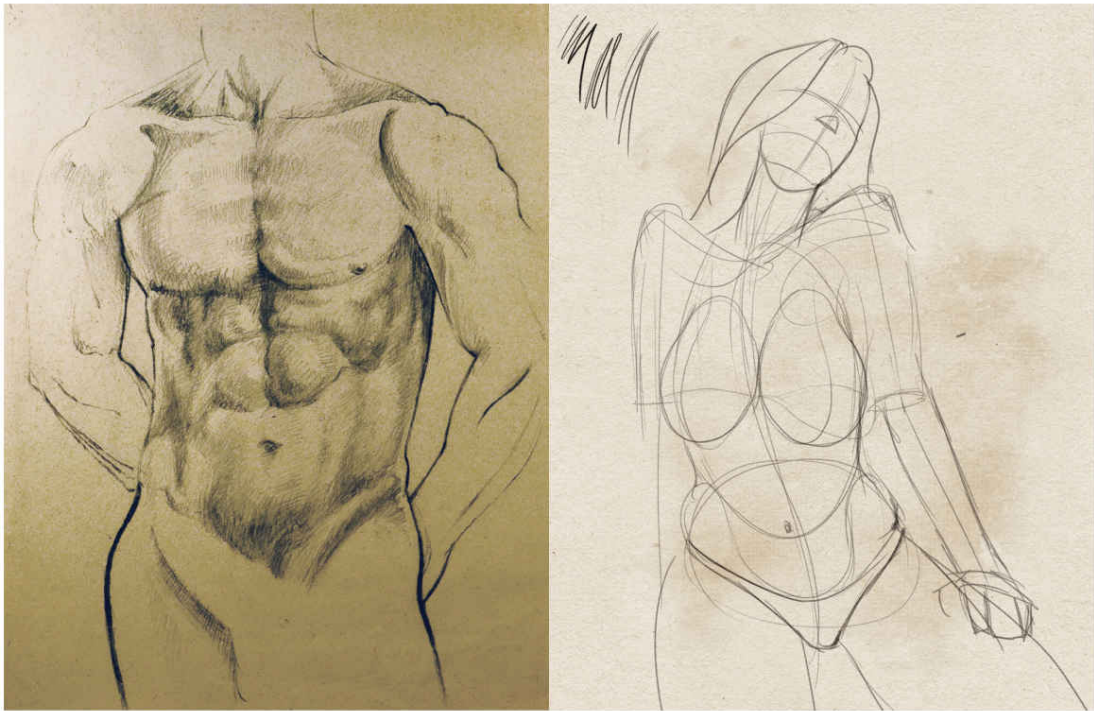






TRY NEW STYLES

Everyone has a group of artist that they love. If you have a specific artist that you continue to re - turn to for inspiration, try mixing their style with yours. I have been a fan of Audrey Kawasaki's for some time and for this drawing I decided to try wood as a substrate but without directly ripping off her style. I love the way this drawing ended up jumping off the page. Because I added it to my portfolio, I have received a number of requests for this style simply because I tried something new. As always I would caution you from paddling too closely to someone else's wave, always try to make it your own.



ANATOMY & STRUCTURE

I won't get into too much detail here, there are 1000's of pages on this subject elsewhere. What I will say is that you need to learn your anatomy if you are going to draw figures. I took Human Gross Anatomy, Embryology, Micro-anatomy, Physiology, Surgical Illustration and more in my search to understand the human body. I have been drawing the human form relentlessly since I was a child and I still feel like I am learning something new every single time I draw the figure. Spend time drawing hands, feet and faces. Learn your anatomy.

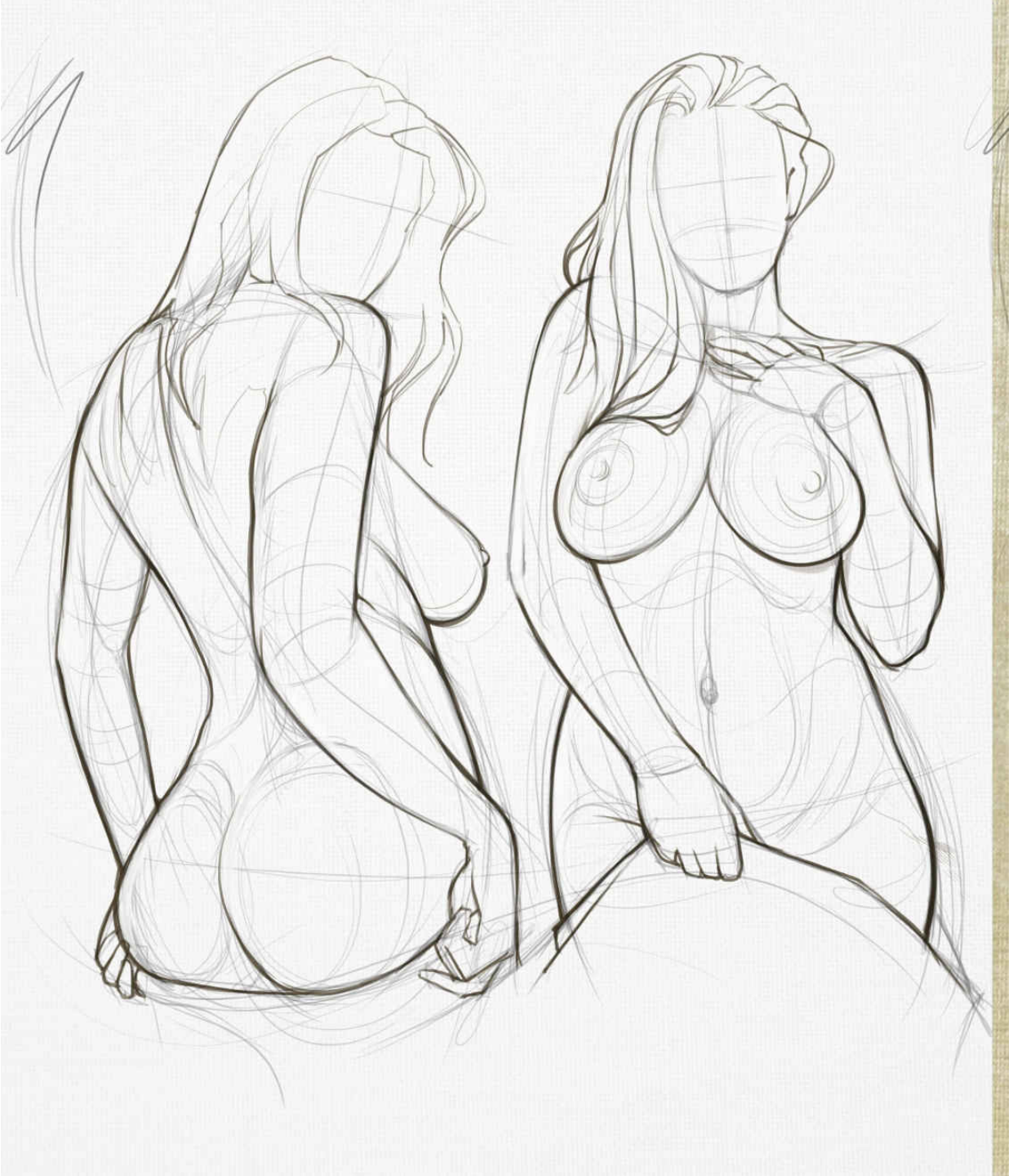
My style that I have developed over the years is all based on the Line of Action. This is the gesture line that tells with a single stroke what the spine and leg(s) are doing. This is the very first thing I draw and everything else hangs off of it. Sometime I exaggerate it to make the pose more dynamic, sometimes I understate it to relax the pose. I usually follow this with an egg shape for the head, and a line depicting the shoulders/collarbone then another for the hips. After that I tend to draw a 'dot' to represent the elbow and wrist joints as well as the knee and ankle joints. From there, the ribcage and pelvis roughed in and so on. When fleshing out the mass of arms and legs, it's helpful to view them as individual cylindrical shaped posts. I also tend to draw lots of surface contour lines to help my mind understand what the subtle rounded surfaces are doing, this helps when creating dramatic lighting.

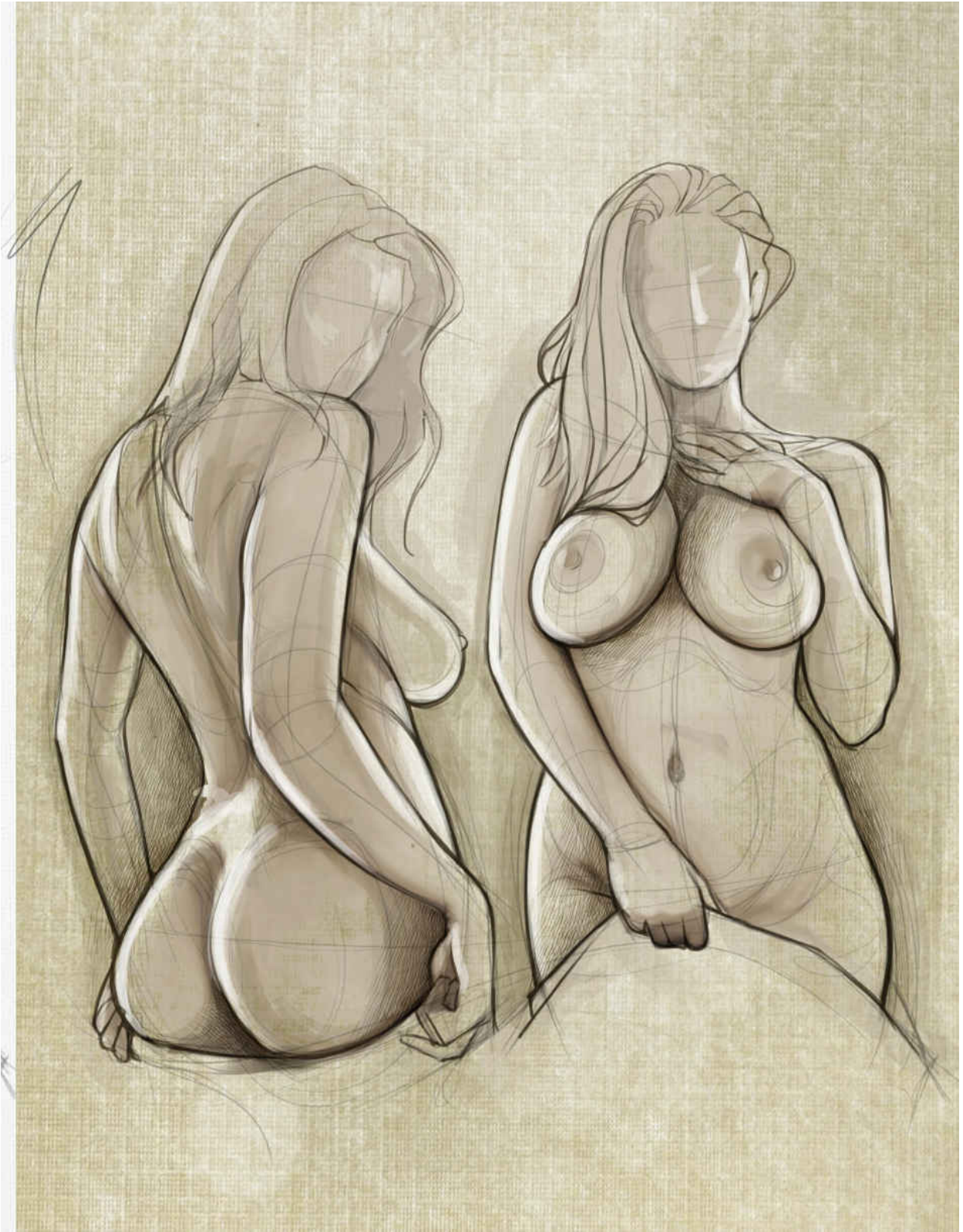
TIP: Mirror your drawings to see if the reflection looks right. Often times this technique will point out the flaws in your perspective. Correct them from this angle, then return to normal and continue. Also, make sure you are viewing your drawing straight on. As a child I used to lay on the floor and draw and my perspective was always skewed because I was looking at the pad from an unusual angle. It took me a while to figure out what I was doing wrong and the result was my first drafting board.



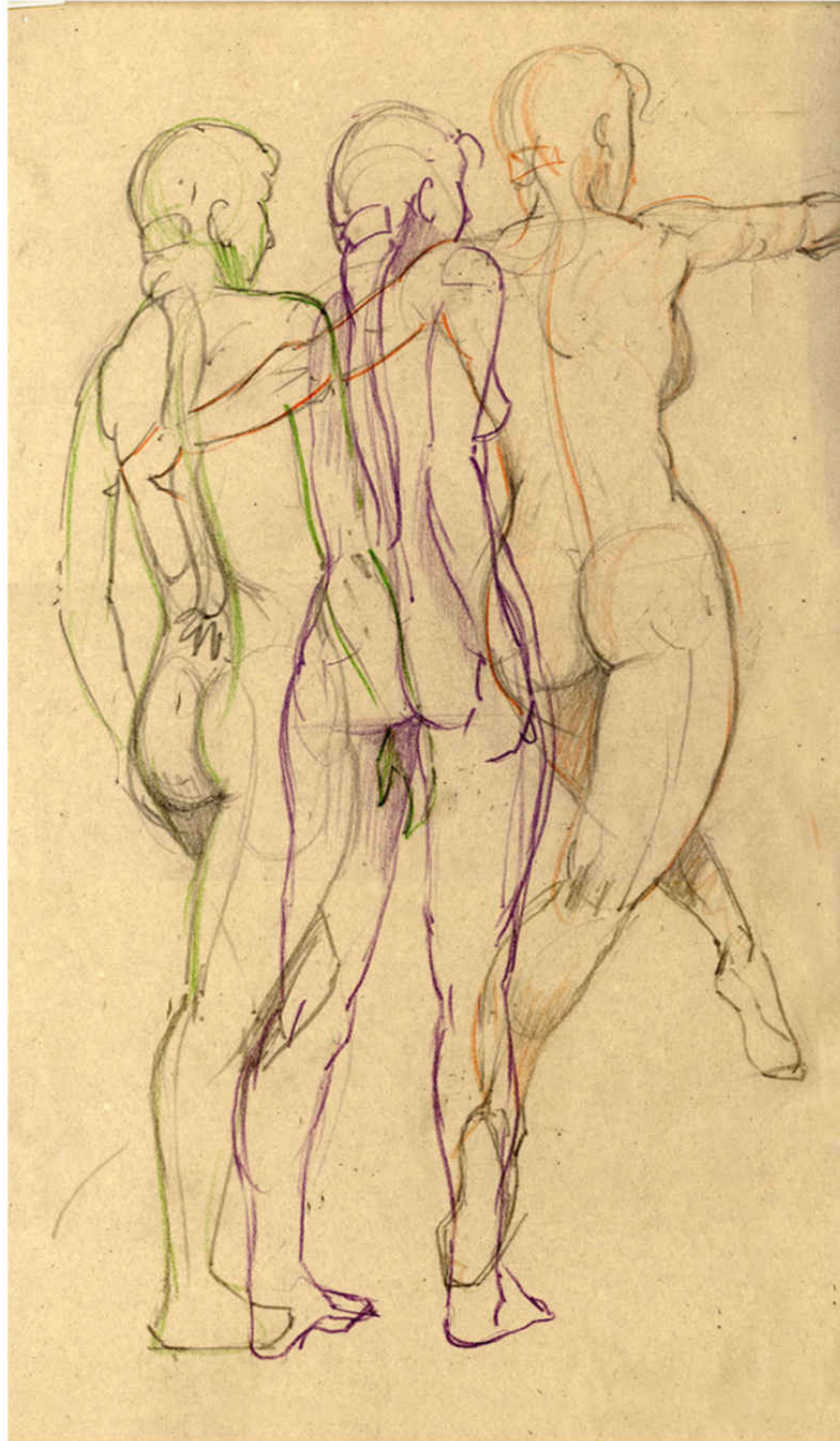












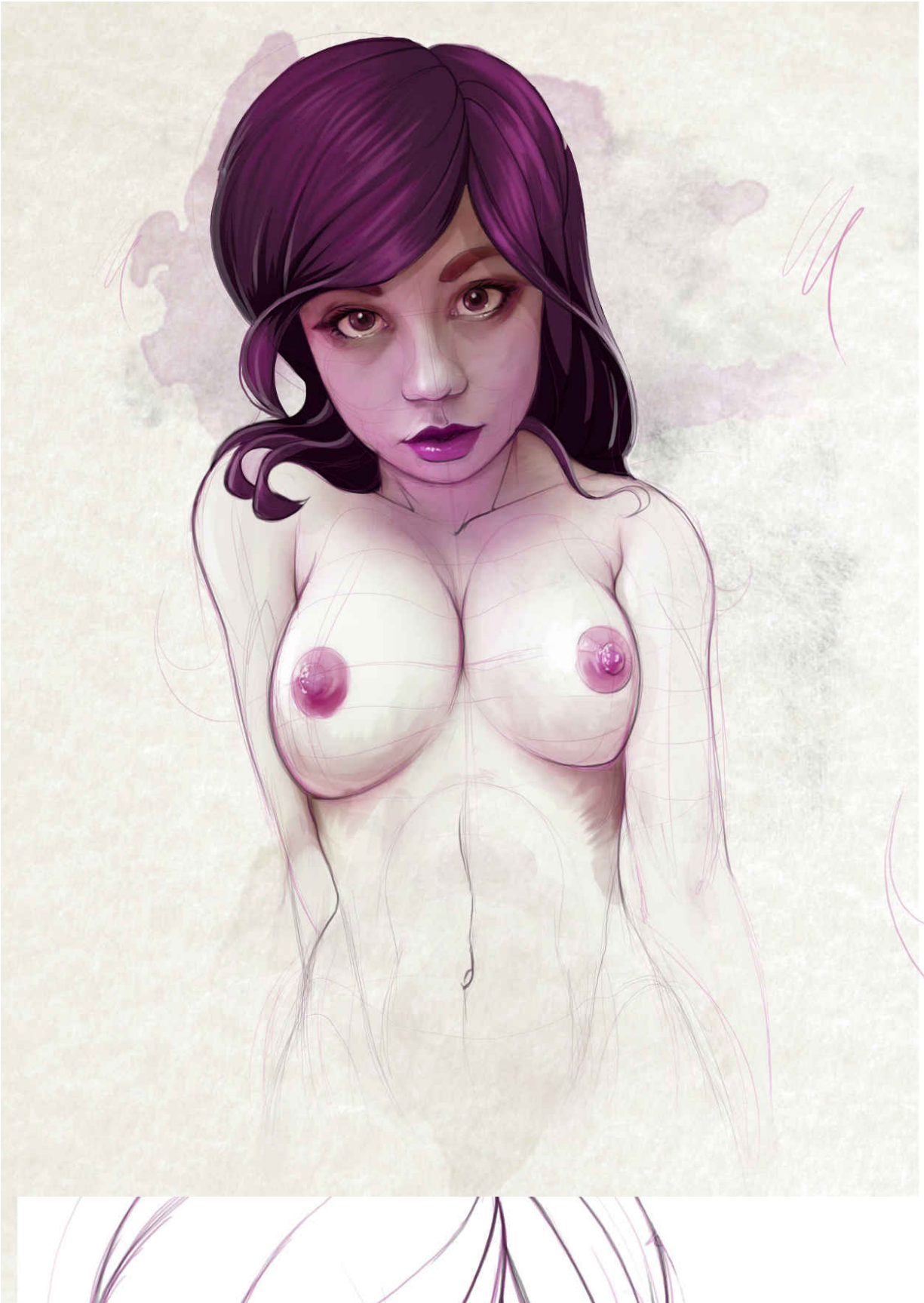
TRADITIONAL DRAWING FROM LIVE MODEL

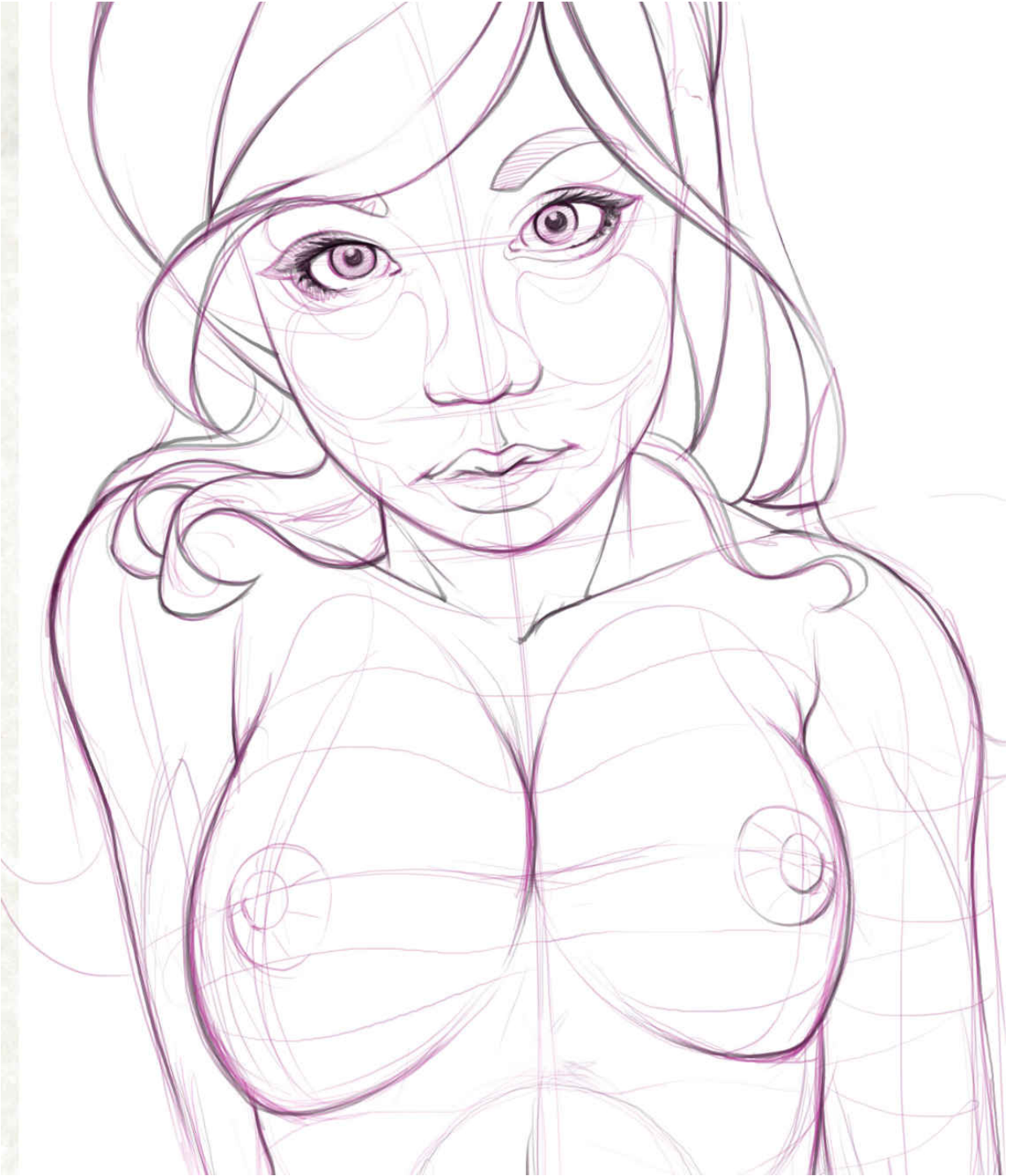


**DIGITAL DRAWING FROM MODEL SOURCE PHOTOS**

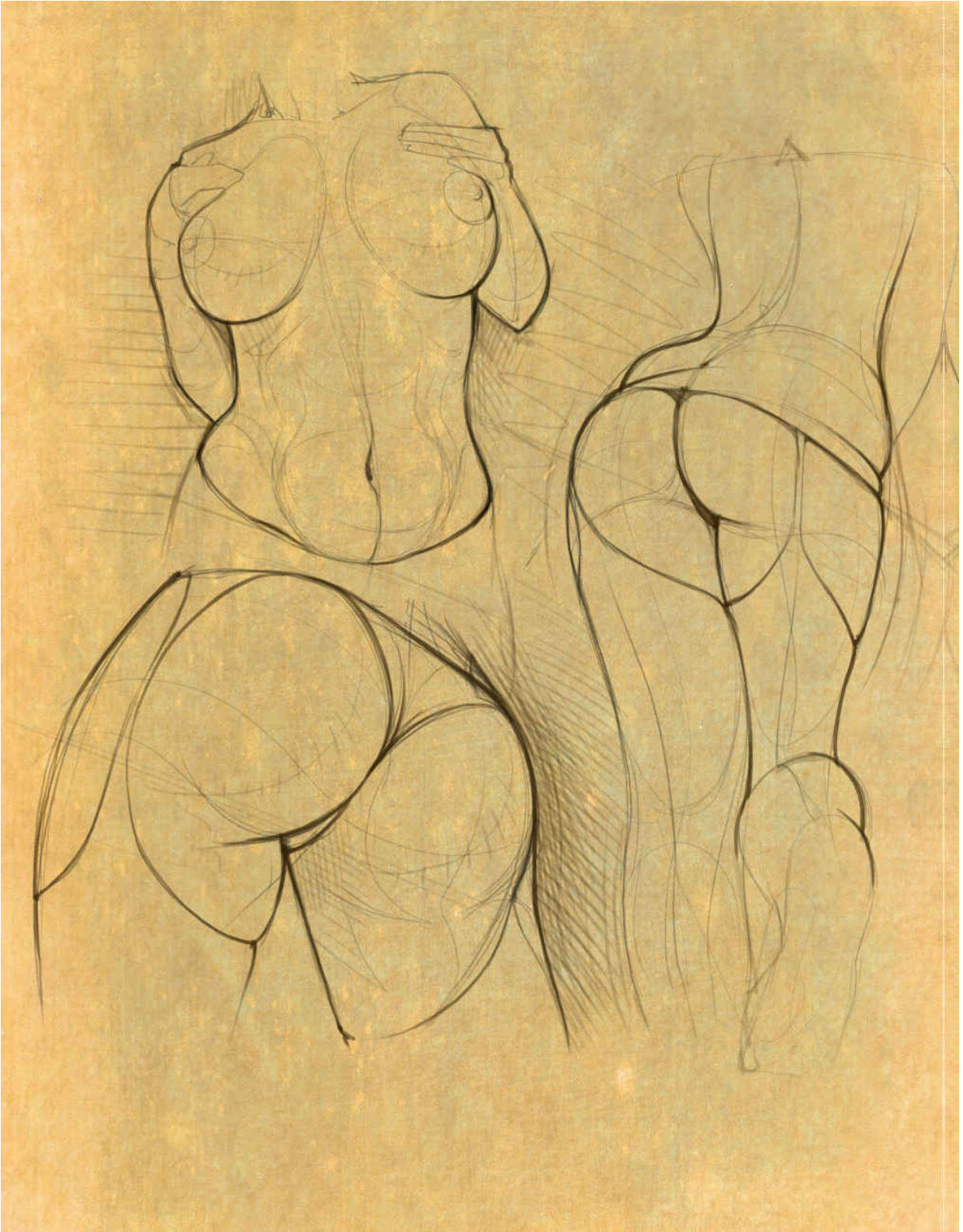


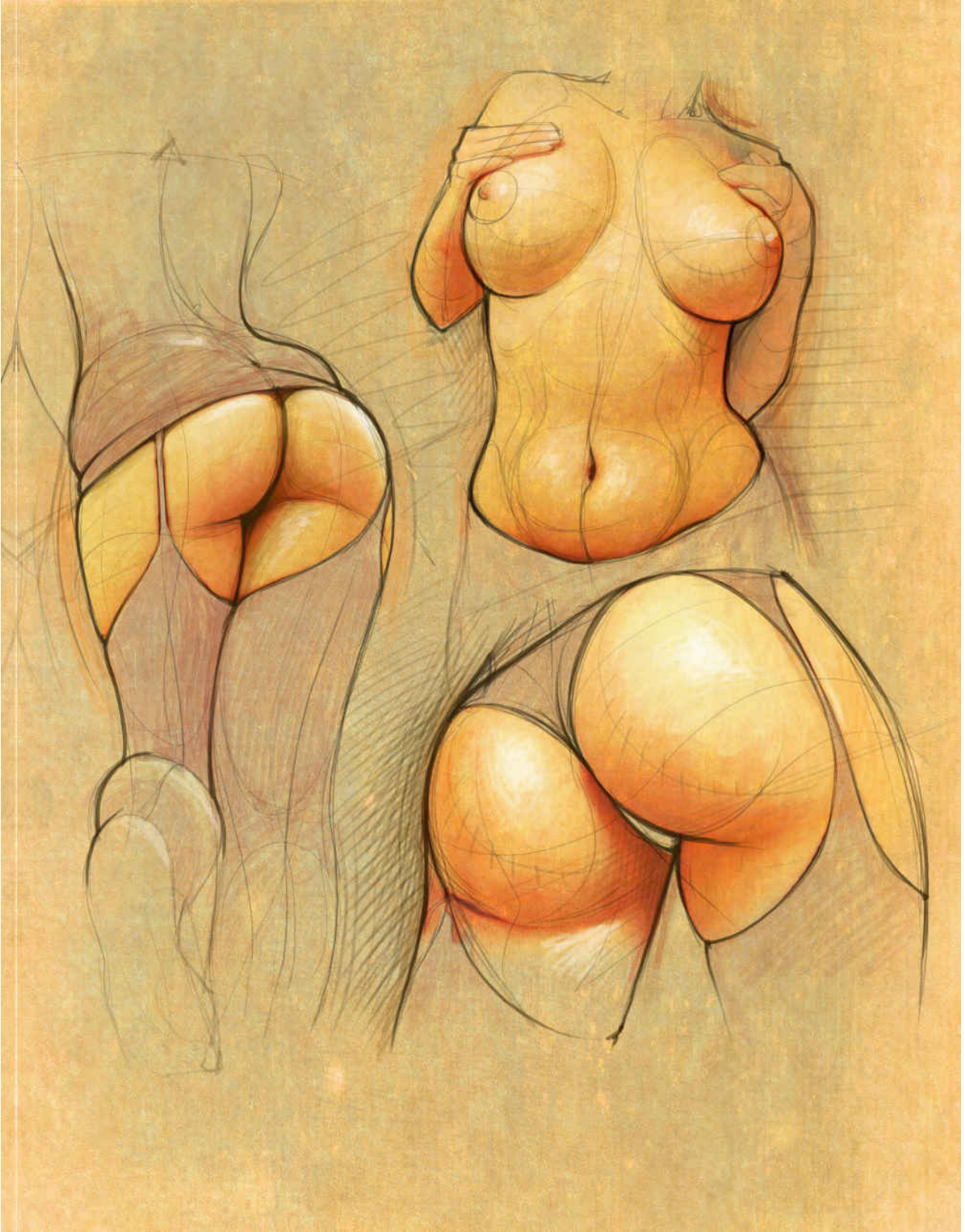




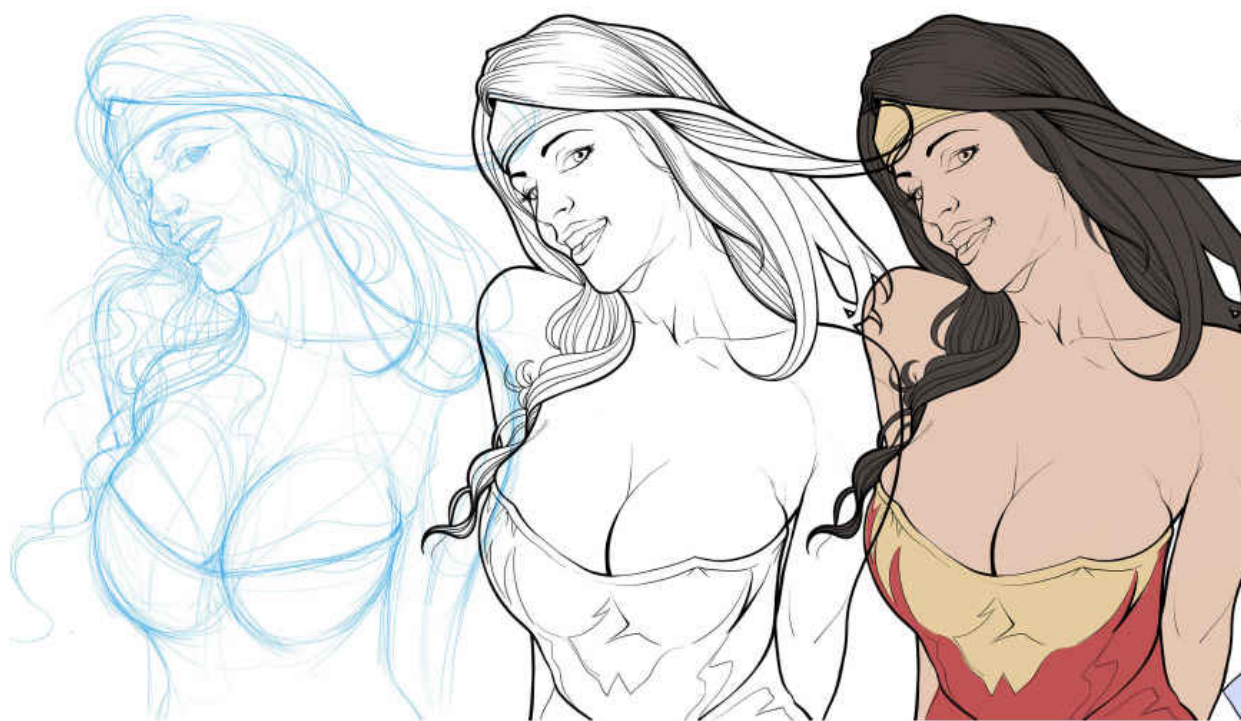


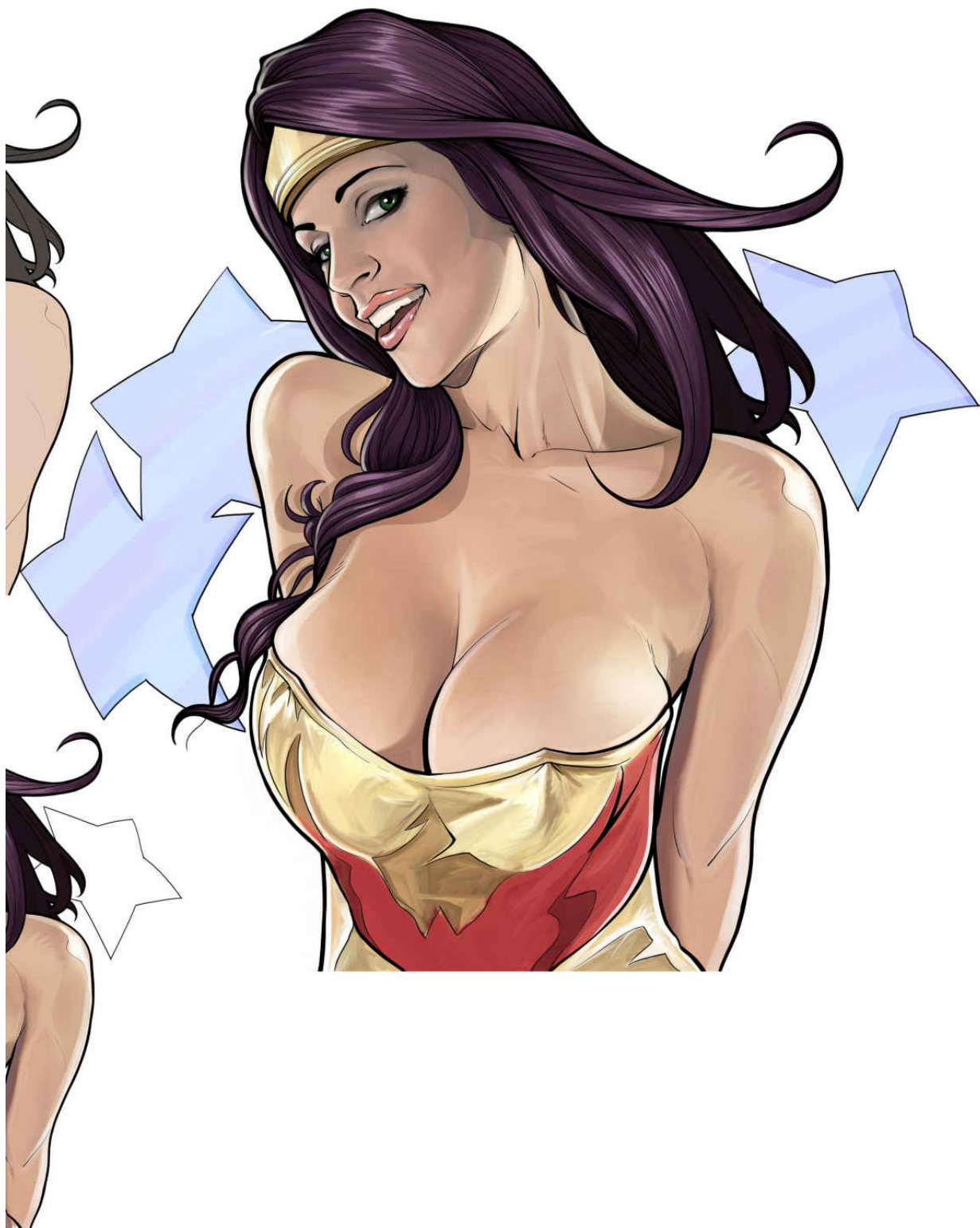












DRAWING FOR FUN

Here is another case of a drawing that was inspired by a photograph of a model. In this case it was a photograph of Denise Milani (photographer unknown). She was wearing a wonder woman costume and I really wanted to draw my own version of it. I changed the head/hair considerably as an exercise on drawing and inking hair.

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## TYPES OF WARM UP DRAWINGS





These examples show a number of traditional drawings done with graphite, charcoal and

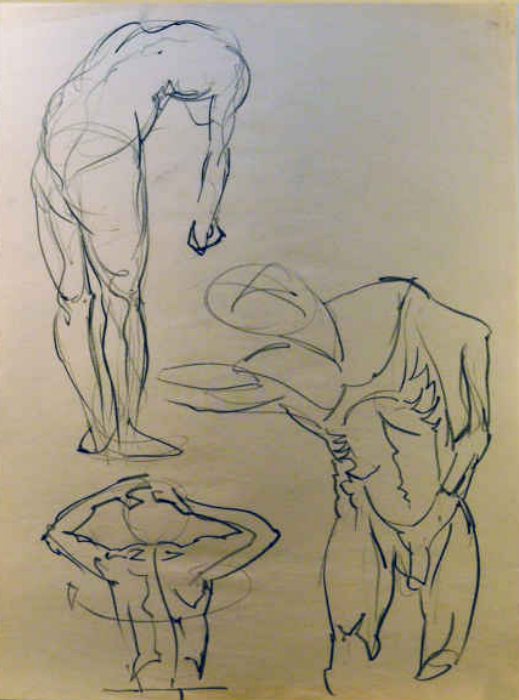
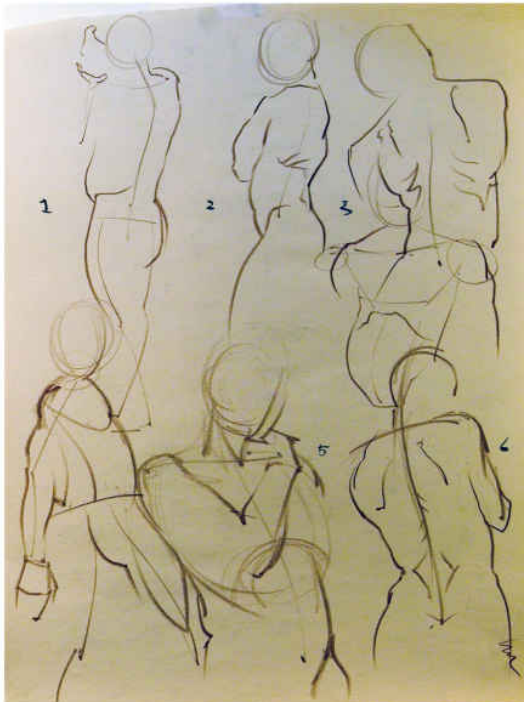


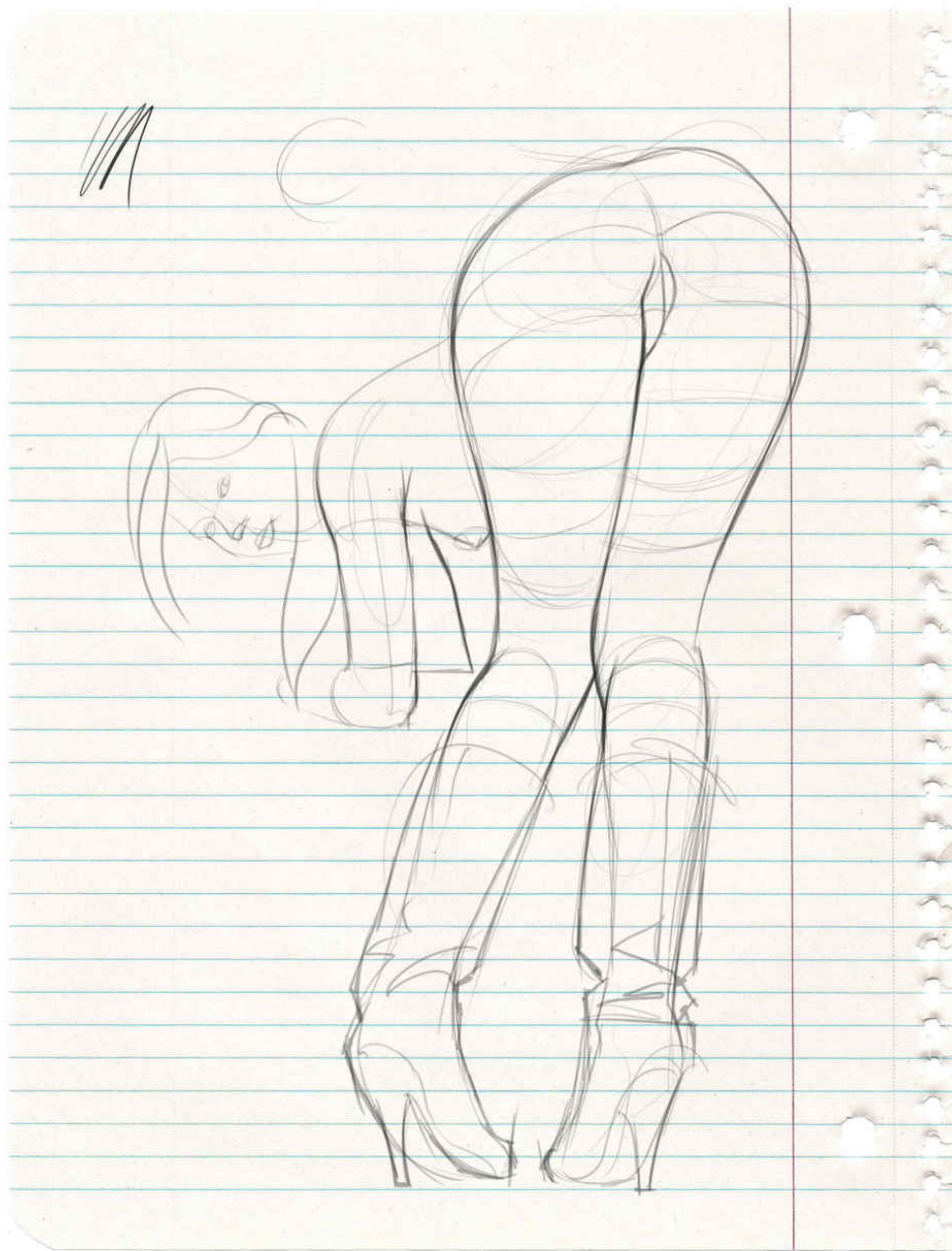
china marker on newsprint. Here you can see a breakdown of different types of warm

up drawings. When drawing the figure from life I usually use an 18" x 24" newsprint pad

for loose drawings then graduate to a nicer drawing pad for long poses.

1. 30 minute pose done with pencil on textured drawing pad.
2. A series of 30 second gesture drawings.
3. Blind contour drawing. Draw a single continuous contour line to describe the entire figure. The trick is you cannot look back at your drawing once you start.
4. Charcoal drawing focusing on hands and feet.
5. Another series of 30 second gesture drawings.







EXPERIMENT WITH MEDIA





I discovered this technique by accident. I used a permanent ink pen to draw the outline then started shading using

a water based blue marker. I spilled a drop of water from my drink on the page then tried to save the drawing by spreading the marker around with a brush. I have since created a watercolor looks using a number of different types of markers and pens with varying degrees of success. I guess the point is don't be afraid to ruin your drawing by trying something new OR trying new ways to save a drawing that you thought you ruined!



