

Artist insight

FIGURE DRAWING

PART
2

Learn how to create a digital figure study in Photoshop using an approach that relies on shapes and tonal values. By **Joel Carlo**

There are many techniques available when you're creating a figure study, and a wide range of mediums that you can use when creating your work. But, whether you choose a traditional or digital route, a basic understanding of figure drawing fundamentals is essential for you to progress to creating more believable and life-like figures, and one of these fundamentals is the subject of form.

Like most artists, my introduction to drawing the human figure was based on the use of lines. It wasn't until I began to comprehend the relationship

between form and tonal value that I discovered an easy approach to creating more convincing portrayals of the human body. Today, this is the approach I rely on when creating the majority of my figure studies.

My aim is to introduce you to this non-linear way of creating your figure drawings. You'll learn how to break down an image to 'see' basic shapes, and analyse the tonal values of a subject in order to draw or paint them in a more convincing manner. I'll be using are Photoshop, a Wacom tablet, and photo references made available by www.modelalisa.com (on your DVD).

Artist PROFILE

Joel Carlo

COUNTRY: US

CLIENTS: NASCAR, Dodge, Toyota and Fox Television



Joel Carlo (aka 'Mecha Hate Chimp') is a freelance artist working

out of Denver, Colorado. His client list is varied, and ranges from commissioned work for small studio projects to larger commissions for the clients listed above.

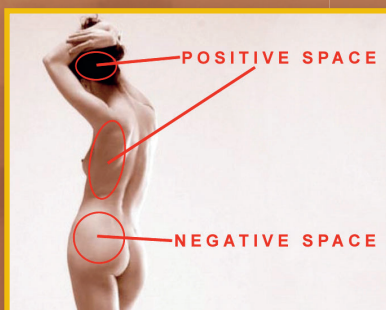


DVD Assets

The files you need are on the DVD

FOLDERS: Aldo Magalia mega 404, Aldo mega 400, Flora sepia 104, Oona sepia 107, Rhonda Marco sepia 152

SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2 (Demo)



1 ANALYSING FORM

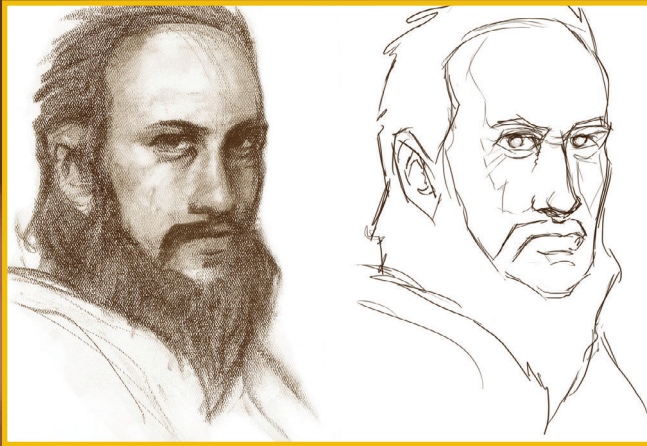
Understanding form is an exercise in both visual and analytical comprehension. Being able to effectively analyse and recreate the lit and shadowed areas of a form enables you to reveal features such as the size,

age and sex of a figure more accurately. And, while the positive and negative areas created by light and shadow may change in a form, these areas must be of the correct size and shape in order to create an accurate resemblance.

2 SHAPE VERSUS LINE

In this example (above right) I've created two headshots: one based on shape and the other with lines. In the line drawing, there's a tendency to develop details in form early on, which can sometimes lead to errors with proportions, while the shape-based drawing gives you a quicker and more balanced representation of the subject. Being able to 'see' shapes as masses

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relative to one another enables you to better gauge your form and proportions, while lessening the risk that you might develop your image incorrectly.



3 BREAKING IT DOWN

Being able to **recognise and distinguish shapes** by tonal value can seem tricky at first, but as you continue to work in this way it will become more intuitive. Remember that there are shapes within shapes, and these shapes in turn create even more shapes. If this all seems a bit daunting, try to think of it as **one big jigsaw puzzle**. The key point is to start by recognising and developing the largest shapes first, the mid-sized shapes next, and the smallest shapes last.

4 CHOOSING A REFERENCE

I begin by bringing up several of the figure reference movies that you'll find

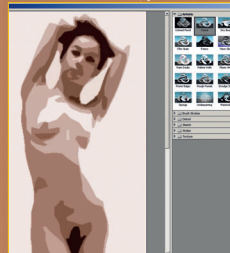
on the DVD, and browse through each model; what I'm looking for is a shot of a pose with good lighting that complements the model's figure and features. Once I decide on a pose, I enlarge the movie to screen resolution and then take a screen shot and bring into Photoshop.

5 PREPARING THE WORK AREA

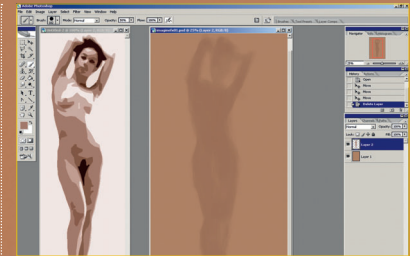
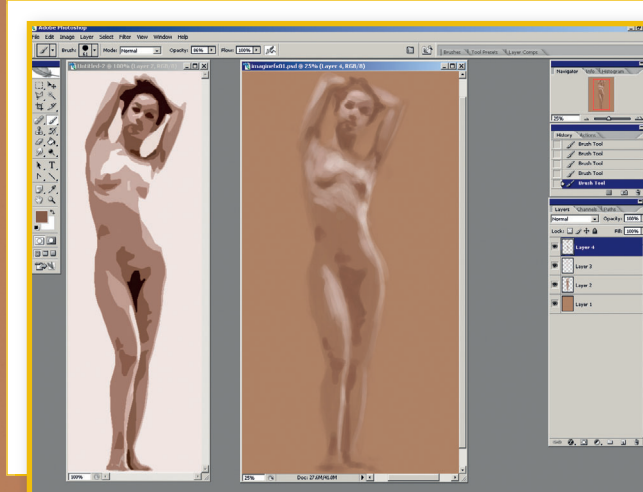
Once in Photoshop, I crop the model, and then make a slight Levels adjustment in order to give the image **more contrast**. This enables me to see the light and shadow placements more easily, and prepare the image for the next step. I duplicate the Background layer, and apply the Cutout filter (Filter>Artistic>Cutout).

6 THE CUTOUT FILTER

The Cutout filter is a great tool, which among other things can be used to break down an image into simple tonal shapes. This helps you to 'see' larger tonal masses and their placement within an image, while indirectly creating a simplified colour palette for you to use. For this photo a Number of Levels setting of '5' gives a good balance of large to mid-size shapes.

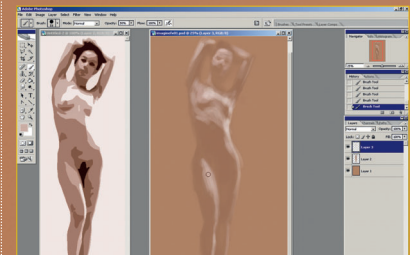


“Being able to recognise and distinguish shapes by tonal value can seem tricky at first, but it will become more intuitive”



7 THE SILHOUETTE

Having applied the filter I create a new file, and choose a background colour of mid-value range that complements my colour palette. I create a new layer, and using a colour from the filtered reference I begin to draw out a rough silhouette using a standard rounded brush with a smooth opacity fade. I keep the file close to the reference image in order to better gauge my silhouette's shape and alignment.



8 EVALUATING THE TONAL AREAS

With my silhouette complete, I now begin to evaluate the positions of the various tonal areas in my reference image, beginning with the largest ones. Once I'm comfortable with their placement in the image, I create another layer, and begin to draw these shapes over the silhouette.

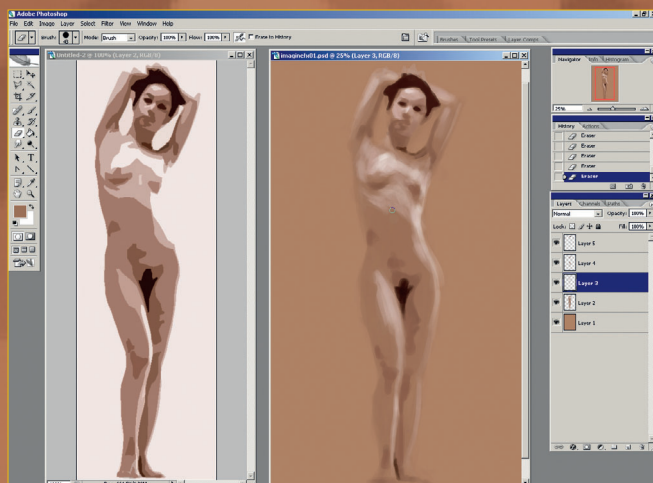
9 LAYING DOWN THE SHAPES

Each shape is drawn in a hierarchical manner, by establishing the **largest areas first** and then working my way down to the mid-sized shapes next, and the smallest shapes last. I **carefully draw** each area incrementally, using new layers, and only move to the next when I feel the previous areas have been established correctly.

Workshops

10 PROPORTION AND ALIGNMENT

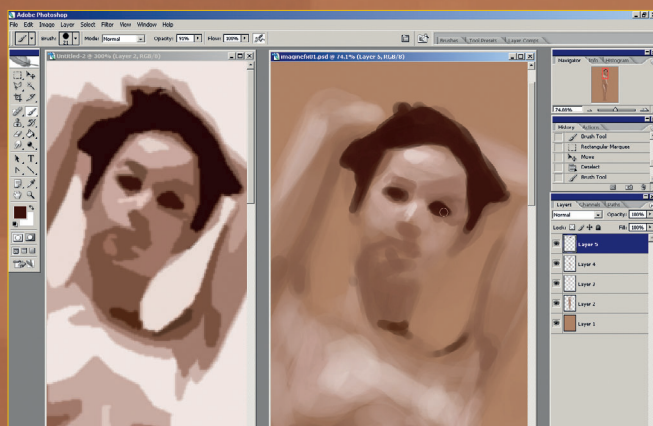
Once I've established a solid foundation of shapes, I begin to check for overall **proportion and alignment**. Aligning shapes over existing tonal masses will create additional shapes, and this is why establishing a shape's proportion correctly is extremely important. If a large area is off, each successive area within it will also be off.



“As I define my figure, I periodically flip my canvas to evaluate the image from a different perspective”

11 REFINING SHAPES

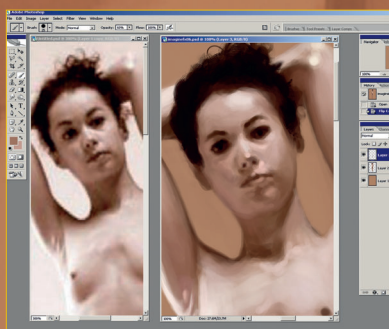
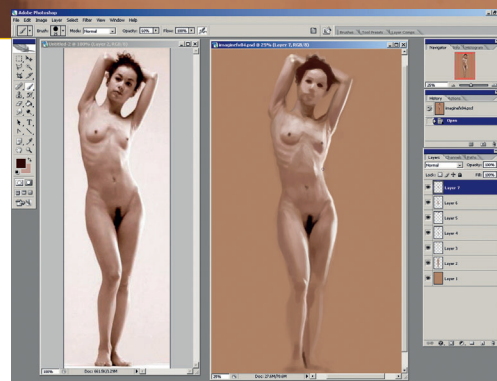
When I'm satisfied with the overall proportion and alignment of the shapes in my rough, I carefully begin to refine the outer edges of each tonal mass. I continue to work in this way, referencing each individual shape that I've created against the filtered image, while keeping a careful watch on the placement of each shape in relation to those around it.



12 CREATING FORM THROUGH SMALLER TONAL AREAS

Now that the bulk of my work is complete, I switch back to the original reference photo to begin **developing my form**.

Again using the reference image as a colour palette, I create yet another layer, and carefully start to lay down brush strokes over my established areas to pick out **subtle differences in tone** revealed in the photo.



13 CHECKING FOR DISTORTION

As I gradually define my figure, I periodically flip my canvas to evaluate the image from a different perspective. This enables me to view my work with fresh eyes, and check for any distorted areas that may have developed but which I hadn't noticed.

14 FINAL EVALUATION

At this point my image is close to completion. I go back and work through the image, looking for slight differences in tone or shape I may have missed, or could have developed better. I shrink the canvas down to the size of a thumbnail to judge the image's readability, and continue to make adjustments as necessary.



15 COMPLETION

Satisfied with my overall effort, I sign my work and consider it a **completed figure study**. I hope that this workshop has been informative, or at least has helped to introduce you to a different approach that can be used when creating your own figure drawings.●

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PART 3:
HEADS
AND FACES
ON SALE
31 AUG