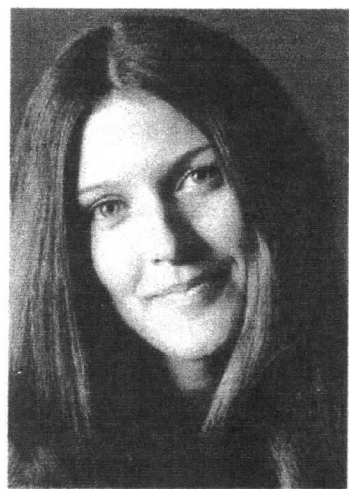


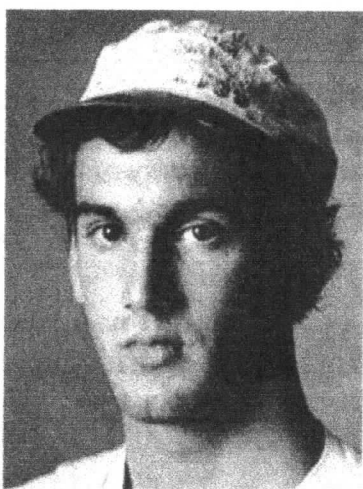
John N. Booth: Art Instruction Course Drawing the head: full face

The head is capable of three types of movement: the **tilt**, the **turn**, and the **nod** (either down or up).

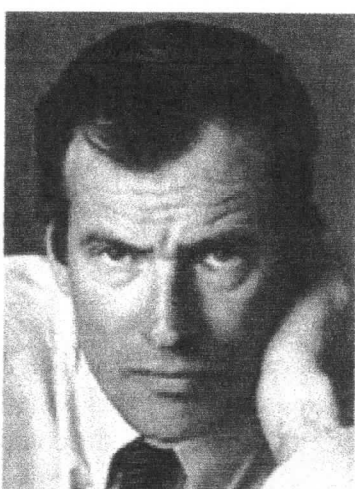
Tilt:



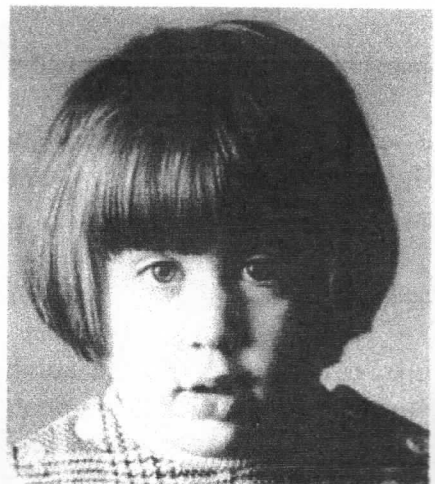
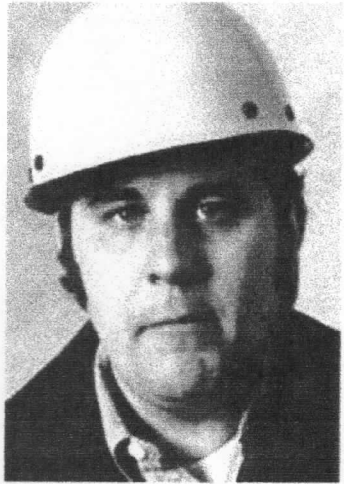
Turn:



Nod:



In everyday life, these three movements almost always happen simultaneously. For our present purposes, however, we will concentrate only on tilting. Look for photos of heads which are "straight on", or "mug shots", i.e., with no turning or nodding, but with different degrees of tilting (or no tilt at all):



You can find reference images on the internet. If there is an open portrait drawing session near you, it's a great opportunity to draw from life. If you're good with a camera, take your own photos, but avoid using family members or friends. I don't want you to have the added pressure of trying for a likeness. The goal is to be able to render a believable human head, and that's enough of a challenge for now.

Lighting:

The photos shown above were taken with the subjects in what I call "three-quarter" light. There is a single, "main" light source placed at an angle of approximately 45 degrees from the center of the face. It should be placed above the subject, but not so high as to cast, for instance, a long nose shadow. If placed too low, the subject will be in "stage" lighting, dramatic and theatrical, but not useful for us right now.

"Three-quarter" lighting has been used very extensively by portrait painters from about 1600 to the present, and is also used in motion pictures and on tv, in head close-ups. Watch for it. It's a type of lighting which shows very strongly and clearly the personality of the subject, and at the same time makes the artist's job a little easier by showing obvious shapes of light and dark to lay out in a broad way.

If you are not able to set up this kind of lighting for your own photo sessions, or if you have difficulty finding it in outside sources, then any kind of lighting that shows definite areas of light and dark will do. However, avoid "half-light" (where half the face is in light, half in shadow). It's too symmetrical, and not expressive of a complete personality.

Preparing reference material for a drawing session:

Since we'll be working in "monochrome", and concentrating on tonal values and their shapes, our reference material should be in black-and-white, and made to be "life-size".

Your reference material should always be the exact size you want it to be in your drawing. Too many times I have seen students struggling to draw a life-size head from a two-inch high photo! This never works, and will only lead to frustration.

Setting up:

Once your drawing pad is on the easel, place a board of some kind behind it on which to clip your photo. If you're right-handed, clip the photo to the left of the pad, and vice versa if you're a lefty. You do this not only because you don't want your drawing hand and arm getting in the way of your seeing the reference photo. You always want to be standing at the easel with your drawing arm extended almost all the way, and your head back (Always work standing up! You must be able to constantly walk back from your work). Do not get "charcoal on your nose" by standing too close - you can't see properly, and distortions will happen from the outset. With the right arm extended, the only way you can work on the left side of the pad is to turn your head and body slightly to the left - in the direction of your photo. If the photo were to your right, you'd now be turning your head in the opposite direction of your body, your upper body in the opposite direction of your lower body, and little aches and pains would start creeping in!

Make sure you clip your photo at the height you want to draw it on the pad. We use an 18 X 24" pad to encourage a big approach, but because the pad is large, many students unconsciously fill up the entire sheet with the head, making it mural size. You must keep your drawing the same size as your reference photo, and this is where composition comes into play - where on the paper are you going to place it? There's no formula for this, but avoid the obvious mistake of, say, placing it so low that it looks as though it's about to slide onto the floor!

What you'll need:

An 18X24" Strathmore series 400 Drawing Pad - not "charcoal paper"

Very thin Charcoal Sticks (willow)

Medium thickness Charcoal Sticks (vine - softer than willow, it's darker on the paper)

A Jumbo Charcoal Stick (vine - not "compressed", about 3/8" in diameter)

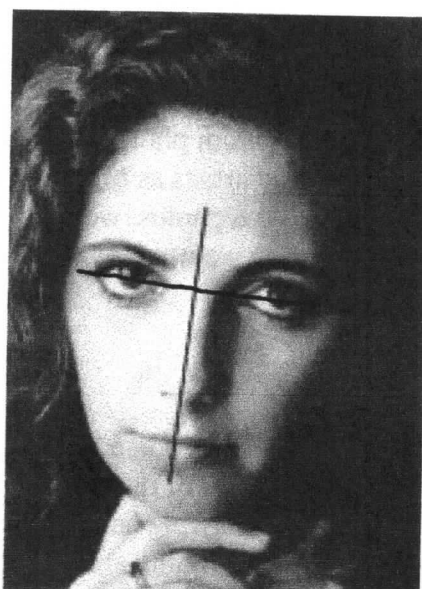
A Kneaded Eraser - the bigger, the better

Tissues

A large Hand-held Mirror (for looking at your work in reverse - an invaluable tool!)

Demonstration:

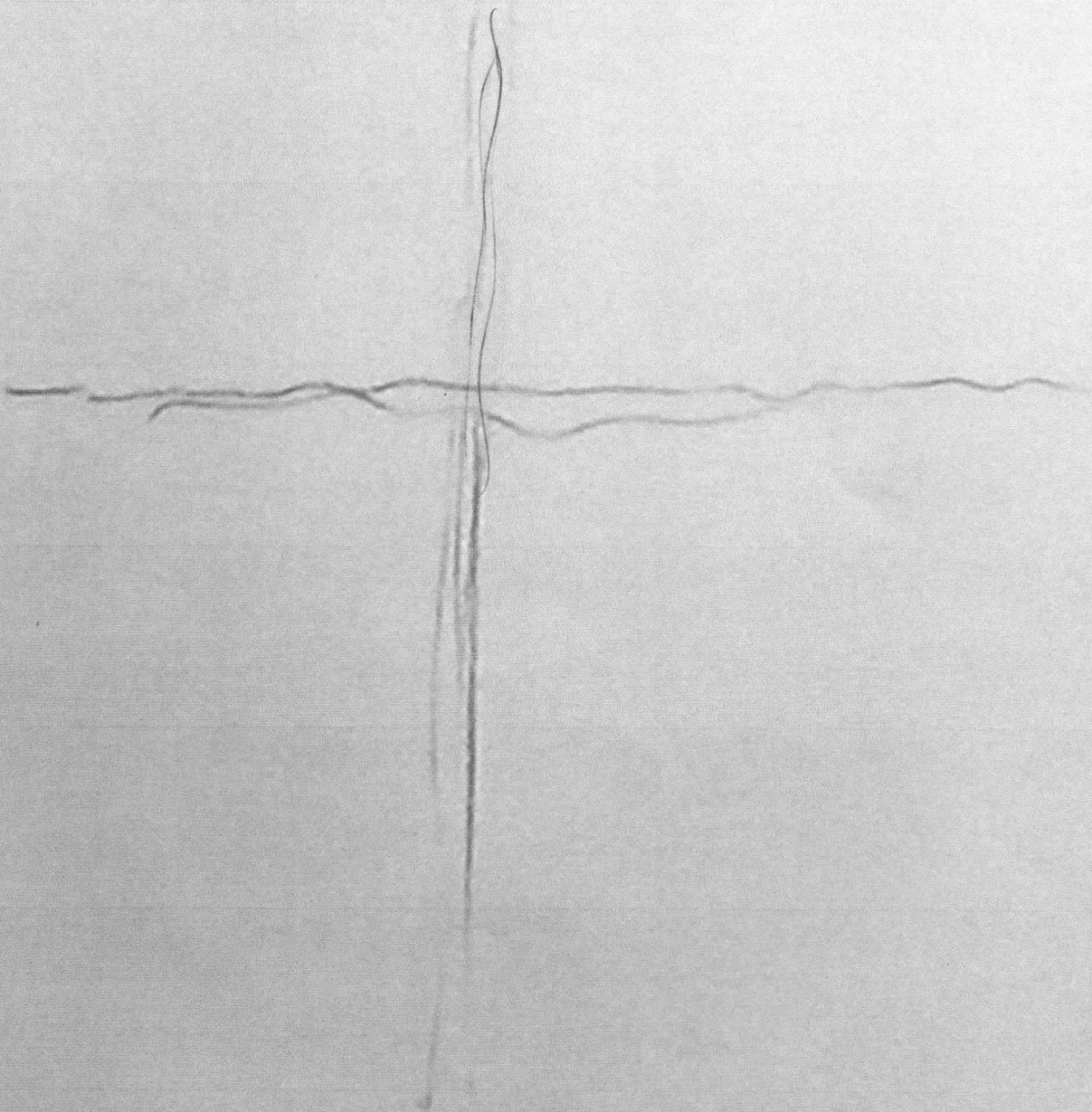
Look at your photo and determine if the head is tilting or not, and if so, which way. The first marks you make with a thin charcoal stick will indicate the "tilt line". Notice I said, "marks" and not, "mark". Do not try to make a single, unbroken, "perfect" line. You're feeling your way along - you want to stay "loose". Walk back as far as your work space will allow, and compare your line to an imaginary line in the photo. You should look for two points on the face to get the tilt line: the notch in the center of the upper lip, and the point halfway between the eyebrows. Those are fixed points, and will always give you an accurate tilt line.



Next comes the eye line which, in a "mug shot", will always be perpendicular to, or at right angles to, the tilt line. Walk back again. At this point it's important to make sure that these two lines are as accurate as you can make them. (Example A, next page)

If you need to wipe out with a tissue and start again, by all means do so. Make sure you use a tissue to do this, and not the kneaded eraser. The eraser will "rough-up" the paper, and the charcoal won't go onto the paper the way it should. Also, no matter how much you want to, *never* touch the paper with your hands - the oil will ruin the paper for the type of charcoal we're using. Whenever you want to wipe the charcoal, or "push it around", use the tissue. (there is one exception to this rule, which I will explain later)

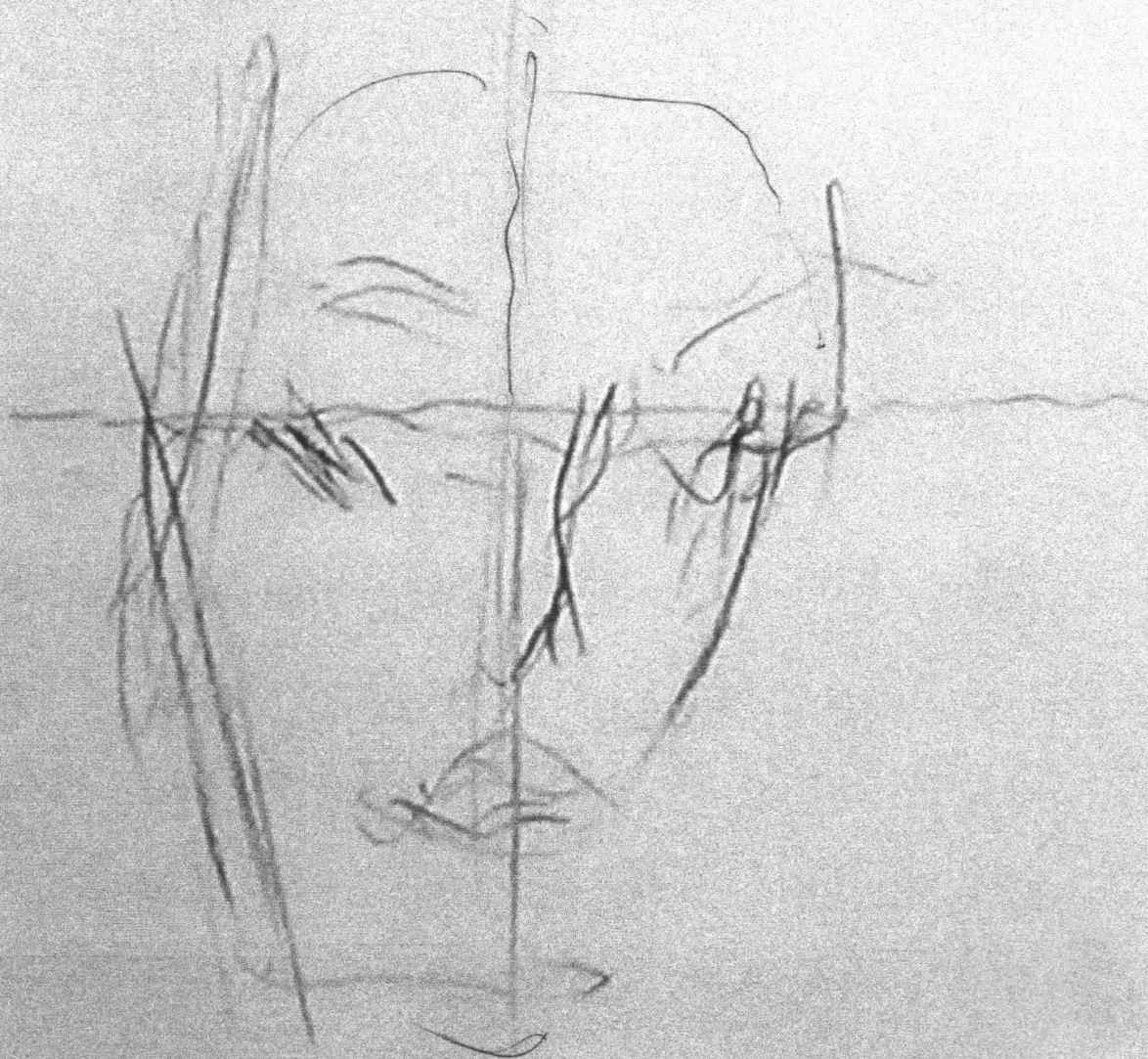
A.



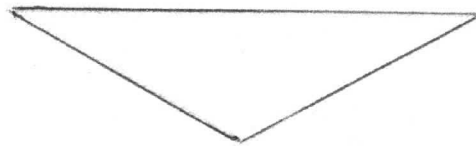
From now on, you must assume that everything you do is wrong, and will probably need to be changed and adjusted as you go through the process. This attitude immediately removes the pressure to "get everything perfect" from the outset - an obsession which most of us have. It requires patience, and a belief that eventually everything will be resolved. It's as though you've got all these elements swirling around, and you're gradually bringing them into their proper relationship. This is accomplished by having a willingness to change, or move, anything at any point in the process, even at a fairly late stage - this will be evident later in this demonstration.

Next, as in Example B, coming straight across from the reference photo, mark the hairline, tip of the nose, and the chin. Draw an oval where you think the mouth should go. Don't worry about the hair. For now, concentrate only on the part of the face that's in the light. This is what will carry the drawing to either success or failure - that part of the face which is framed by dark values. Walk back. If anything needs to be re-stated, wipe out the inaccurate marks, and try again. Imagine how difficult this would be if you took the time, possibly as much as twenty minutes to a half-hour, to do a perfect "portrait" of the mouth! Having invested that amount of time and effort, if you noticed that if it was too high, or too low, you wouldn't want to wipe it out - the tendency would be to leave it as is, and that would be the end of the drawing! Mark off salient points, abbreviations of things, then walk back. Actually, walking back, as far as your workspace will allow, is a very important part of this approach - another of the many tools you will use. When you're satisfied that your proportions are broadly correct (remember, we're not trying for "exactitude"), go on to the next step.

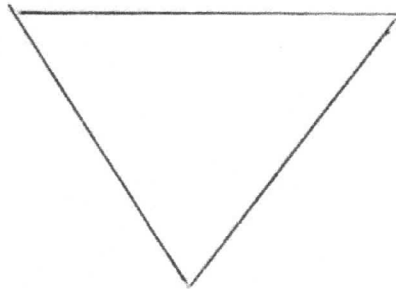
B.



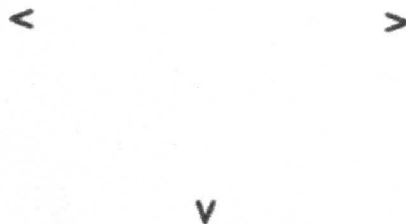
Now, set up the "Triangle". This word is capitalized because it's the key to the proportions of the face. It extends from the outer corner of one eye to the outer corner of the other, down to the tip of the nose, and back up to the outer corner of the eye we began with. Each person has a Triangle unique to them. A person with wide-set eyes and/or a short nose would have a Triangle that looked something like this:



The Triangle of a person with close-set eyes, and/or a long nose would look more like this:



Next, make marks, like those shown below, where you think the outer corners of the eyes and the tip of the nose should be. These marks should be darker than those previously made, so that they're easily visible from a distance. Indicate the inner corners of the eyes, the outer corners of the mouth, as well as the notch in the upper lip, and the eyebrows. (Example C)



C.



So far, you've used the thin charcoal sticks. For the next step, you'll use the large stick. First, break it in half length-wise so that it's a little more manageable. You'll use it as the equivalent of a large paintbrush, loaded with paint. Lie it on its side near the bottom of the paper, and rub it back and forth until you've worn a flat spot all along its length. Then, in the same way, lay-in the big dark values all around the head. Never mind the top of the hair - the tone should encompass background and hair, right down to the hairline. Also, the dark tone on the shadow side of the face will encompass background, ear, and the side-plane of the face, right up to the edge where the light value begins. In this early stage, and through most of the process, think in terms of two big tonal values: light and dark; thus keeping everything as simple and "obvious" as possible.

Now carry the dark out, connecting with the eyebrow, and continuing down the side of the nose, to the tip. Connect the shadow on the right side of the eye on our right with the big dark area.

"Scribble" the iris, or colored part of the eye in, and connect it with the shadow on the right side of the eye. "Scribble" some tone onto the mouth, the inner side of the eye on our left, and the iris of that eye. (Example D)

I say "scribble" because I don't want you to start "drawing" anything yet. You will see the reason for this in the next step.

D.

11



This is where your courage will be tested! Using a tissue, wipe down the entire drawing. Wipe up-and-down, rather than side-to-side, and don't spare any part of the work. There are two reasons for doing this. The first is to soften both the tonal values and the edges where they come together, so that subsequent corrections will be visible enough for you to "read" from a distance. The second reason has to do with what I mentioned before, about assuming that everything you do in the beginning stages is wrong (after the tilt-line, eye-line set-up), and will need to be adjusted. After this, you really start to do the "serious" work. You should feel like a sculptor - you've now got your material, whether it's clay or stone, and you're ready to start shaping it. Drawing and painting are like sculpting in this respect: until you have enough on the paper, you can't "begin"! (Example E)

E.

13



With a thin charcoal stick, start making adjustments. I prefer to use the term "adjustments" because it carries no connotation of something "gone wrong", and needing to be corrected. Not that this doesn't occur, but I dislike using negatives in thinking about drawing. For the same reason, I do not use the term "negative shape". I believe that all shapes are "positive", no matter what they depict, whether it's the shape of the arm and side of the body, or the shape in between them.

Begin by re-stating the outer corners of the eyes and tip of the nose, and refining the Triangle. Does the mouth need to be adjusted up or down, left or right? Are you remaining true to your tilt line? If it has become hard to see after wiping-down, it will need to be re-drawn. Re-state the borders of the light part of the face, starting on the left side along the neck, jaw, and cheek, along the temple and hair line, across to the right, and coming down the edge of the shadow around the eye, down the cheek, jaw, and chin, etc. This is also the time to start indicating the outer edges of the hair. (Example F)

Compare this example with Example D to see how, instead of fussing and worrying that things were going "wrong", we surged ahead with the same positive process.

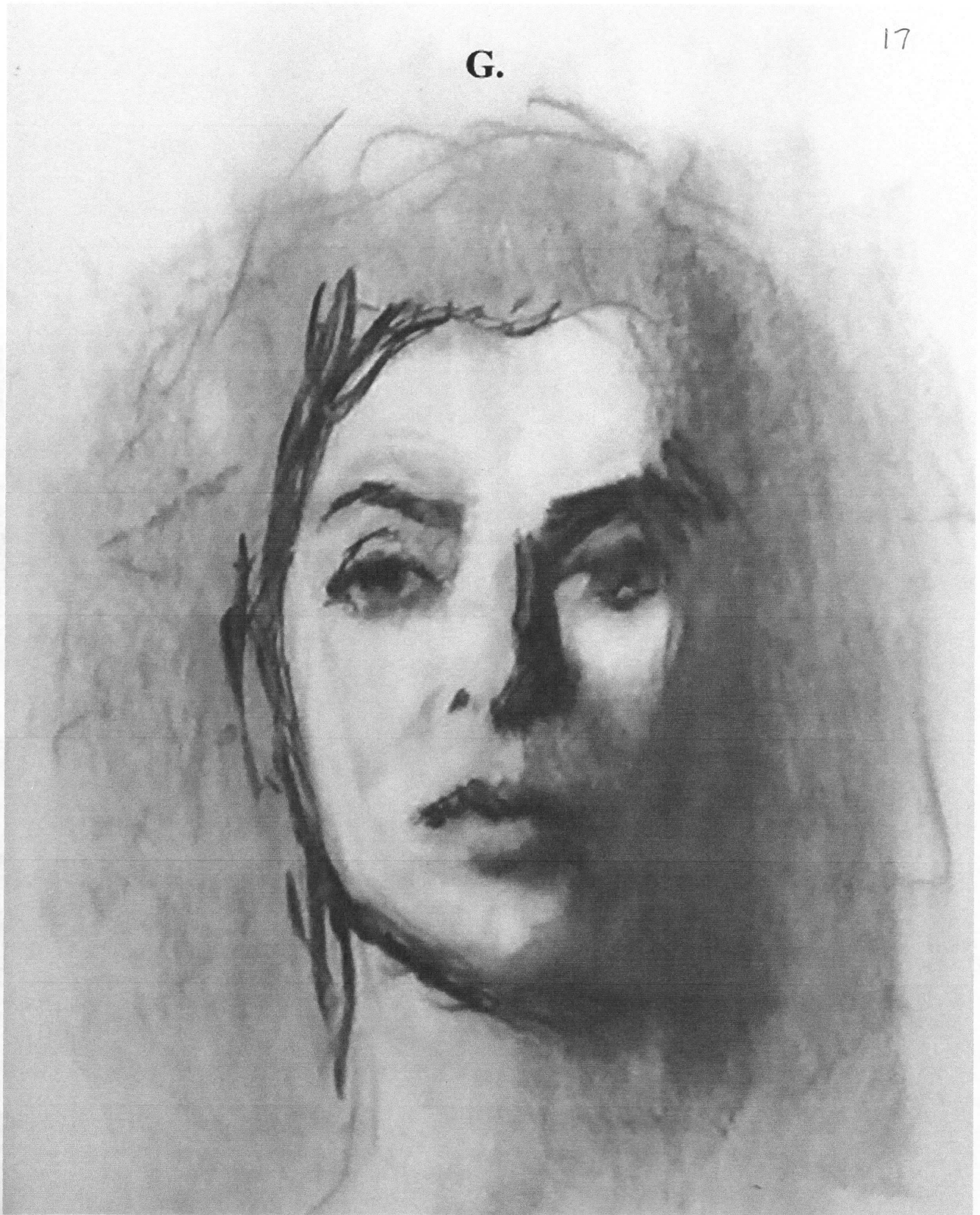
F.



Once again using the large charcoal stick, broadly mass-in the areas of dark tone. Because you have previously wiped-down the drawing, you have thereby created half-tones which will be useful to bridge the gap between the lights and the darks. Up to this point, we haven't wiped out or erased anything, and we won't until the next and final stage, when we "finish". Don't be timid about making the darks very dark - they should start to take on a velvety look, as a result of the preparation you've made for them. The irises are still to be loosely indicated, but darker, and with a little more attention paid to "drawing". The same with the mouth, tip of the nose, and the shaping of the edges where light and dark come together. (Example G)

G.

17



Here you're looking for more adjustments to make. Remember, it's never too late to wipe out an eye entirely and re-state it, if you know it's not quite right. One of the worst things you can do as an artist is to deliberately ignore an adjustment which you know needs to be made because you're afraid you'll "ruin" it! It takes a lot of courage to make a drawing or painting succeed. At this stage, you can refine as much as you like - that's the advantage of this approach. You work from big to small, crude to refined, rough to polished; a kind of "funneling" effect. It allows for your own individual style, because you can stop whenever you feel you've said enough. At this "finishing" stage, as well as refining the features, I've added texture to the hair. Hair is best treated very simply, so as not to distract from the face. One of the worst first reactions a viewer can have about a portrait is to say, "Nice hair"! Most of the work on the hair should be done on its edges, keeping the inside of the form as flat tone. One or two swipes with the tissue to suggest some strands that are catching the light are all that are necessary within the form.

The kneaded eraser was used generally for "cleaning-up", for example, the original tilt line, and whatever other smudginess has crept into the lights. The only other thing it was used for was to place the highlights in the eyes. Also, in this "final touches" stage, we can use our fingers for gently making the delicate tones that soften edges here and there. The tissue is not capable of such subtlety, and there is no longer any danger of spoiling the texture of the paper, as mentioned earlier.

H.

19



The Finished Drawing

