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## Drawing from Observation - Brian Curtis

From [Helen South](#),  
Your Guide to [Drawing / Sketching](#).  
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Guide Rating - ★★★★★

### The Bottom Line

In 'Drawing from Observation', Brian Curtis investigates all the aspects of the drawing process, from perception and memory to the articulation of marks on the page. A rich and academic book, it thoroughly covers the depth and breadth of drawing theory and practice. Recommended for students of the Arts, as well as those studying drawing independently.

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#### Pros

- both thorough and extensive
- many well-chosen, useful illustrations and photographs
- in-depth analysis of technique

#### Cons

- academic language may be an obstacle for some readers

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- tips on creating a convincing illusion on a two-dimensional surface
- Foreshortened circles, drawing ellipses and finding the axes of cylinders
- Chiaroscuro - how light works, how to make it work in your drawing, using light and shade
- Biomorphic form, using schemas and creating illusions

### Guide Review - Drawing from Observation - Brian Curtis

'Drawing from Observation' aims to fill a gap in art texts by focussing on basic spatial perception and rendering skills - in other words, realistic drawing. It is a product of Brian Curtis's long experience in teaching University drawing, resulting in a thorough and intelligent analysis of perceptual drawing.

Curtis explains perspective, that most essential tool of the artist, at some length. He covers both perspective from observation and constructed perspective, as well as foreshortening and ellipses. An associated exercise, 'drawing imaginary birdhouses' is quite a delight, inviting the reader to play with the concepts explained in the chapter. Gesture, proportion, cross-contour and chiaroscuro (light and shade) are also explored in detail.

'Drawing from Observation' goes beyond drawing in some places, including a chapter on the Golden Mean and Fibonacci sequence. This, along with short tangents into symbolism, myth, mathematics and history, while not always completely relevant, will be interesting to most readers, and serve as a reminder that art doesn't exist in a vacuum.

For me this wasn't an 'easy' book to read. Brian Curtis tends to use an academic style that calls for a certain confidence with the language of art. However, it's well worth the effort. Because of the density of the text, I'd recommend this book for tertiary-level arts students, as well as adult artists who wish to add depth to their understanding of the drawing process.

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- [Mike Sibley: Drawing from Line to Life](#)
- [Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain](#)
- [Charles Barque Drawing Course](#)
- [The Natural Way to Draw](#)

#### Suggested Reading

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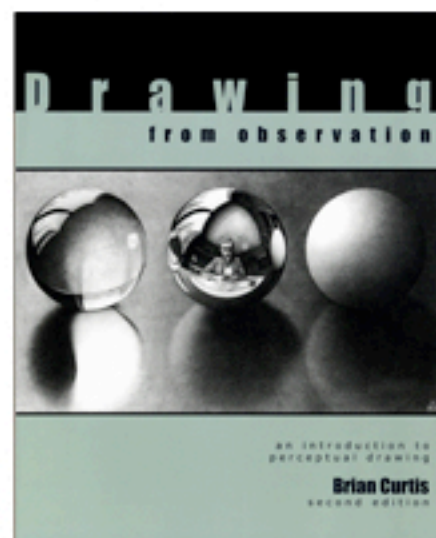
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Drawing from Observation 2e  
B. Curtis



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