



figure

HOW TO DRAW &
PAINT THE FIGURE
WITH **IMPACT**

SHARON
PINSKER

To my mother and father,
Ana and Harry Pinsker

A DAVID & CHARLES BOOK
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INTRODUCTION

Painting and drawing people has been the motivation behind my work for as long as I can remember. I have never yet found anything more addictive and challenging than trying to capture the complex beauty and mystery of the human figure.

I was very fortunate to have been taught figure drawing by inspirational artists like David Carr and Sargy Mann. In retrospect I think it was also lucky that when it came to applying for a degree course at the London based Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, I opted to study what was the less obvious choice for someone obsessed with life drawing and painting people – fashion design.

I only did that because I couldn't imagine fitting into the Fine Art department. In the late 1970s my interest in academic figure drawing was considered conservative and surplus to requirement in the days when, 20 years before Brit art, 'found sculpture' from the contents of rubbish skips and putting rotting fish in perspex box frames was all the rage. So I opted for the Fashion department because here understanding the human form and how it moved was essential to being able to design clothes for it. This provided the means with which I could pursue my real passion.

Having long been inspired by painters like Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele and Henri Matisse, now I was introduced to the work of fashion artists like Rene Gruau and Rene Bouche. It was never a secret that I was more interested in drawing the models in the clothes than the clothes themselves. Again I was lucky to win a place at Parsons School of Design in New York for a postgraduate degree, where they had a separate fashion illustration course.

Striving to capture the essence and personality of a model, maintaining spontaneity with expressive gestural marks; of silhouettes; of details; the





LULU AND LYDIA
Lulu opposite and Lydia
on the previous page
are examples of images
combining the abstract
with the literal in order
to illustrate a fictional
character.

figure in motion, its beauty and elegance; learning to design the figure on the page; the importance of white space – these things all led from figure drawing to fashion, portrait painting and into film storyboard, commercials animation design and art direction. It seemed like a natural progression of events. Thinking about the requirements for drawing the figure in one situation gradually led to the next but it was always completely accidental and unplanned.

The vast majority of the work I have done is rolled up in tubes or in big black portfolios gathering dust in a cupboard under my stairs. If a few images manage to end up on a book cover or displayed on the sides of buses or on hoardings over a motorway, or occasionally make an appearance on TV in the form of an animated commercial or music promo; then again this has been largely due to luck rather than judgement! One thing is certain though – almost every image I can remember being employed to do has required me, in one way or another, to draw on the thought processes and exercises I have laid out here in this book. Things that have occurred to me over the years that are useful cross references between the different experiences I have had working in these particular fields.

The book is divided into three main sections, each broken down into subject areas that deal with the challenges of drawing and painting the figure with impact. I have included thought processes and ideas, exercises and incidental experiences that have proven helpful to me; accompanying these are examples of my work to illustrate the hows and whys. No matter who you are, whether you have some experience of figure drawing and are thinking about taking it further or in another direction, or even if you are just curious about approaching the same problems associated with painting and drawing the figure from another perspective, then I hope this book will prove useful to you.

Rather than being a list of technical hints and formulae, this book is intended to be, I hope, like having a discussion about your work with someone who shares a fascination with the endless challenge in drawing and painting the figure; the attempt to continuously study something and yet to always try to see it as if for the very first time . . .

THE BODY

It would be impossible to describe a figure in words – how it works, its complex components and the way they work together – without first truly understanding it. In the same way, it would be futile to attempt to create a convincing image of a figure without having a good understanding of it. Modigliani and Matisse, for instance, knew the body so well they could draw it with only a few perfectly shaped and placed marks.

