Gesture and Beginning Approaches
The mark that records the movement of the artist’s implement, a two-dimensional movement in space, is the most basic feature of drawing. In addition to this spatial notation, drawing evokes a time response - the time required to make the movement that creates the mark. Time is also involved in seeing and in scanning objects in space. Think of the movement of your eyes as they dart back and forth, focusing and refocusing on different objects at different times as you glance about the room. So movement and time are two of the most essential features in making and looking at a drawing.
The handmade quality so valued in one-of-a-kind drawings is called facture. Facture is a term that refers to the process or manner of making something. In drawing, facture is of prime importance. The kind of marks artists make hold clues to unraveling the meaning of the drawing. It is important to focus attention on the marks that go into the making of a drawing. What kinds of media are used and what kinds of tools made the marks. Learn to build a descriptive vocabulary to discuss the quality and purpose of the marks, becoming aware of the speed or slowness with which they were made, registering
their physical characteristics, and tracing the signs of facture in the drawing. For example, the crosshatched line, the scribble, the faint trailing line, the boldly stated, ripping mark - all are signs of facture.

In the drawing by Joel Shapiro facture if self-evident.
Joel Shapiro. (American, born 1941). *Fingerprint Drawing.* (1969). Ink on paper, 64 3/8 x 11' 3 1/4" (163.4 x 343.5 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred R. Stern. © 2008 Joel Shapiro / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Exhibited at Paula Cooper Gallery, Summer 2004
Photographer: Larry Qualls
72 x 123 1/2 inches
Joel Shapiro: This fingerprint drawing, I made it using stamp padding and I think my right index finger. I was interested in mark-making. Not using an instrument, but using my finger to make the mark, was very emphatic and direct and there was nothing mediating the image. It was factual. Rather than sit around and make fingerprints that became some other image, the fingerprint—the mark—was an image of itself. So I sort of really didn't care what it ended up looking like. I was more interested in the process of doing it.

There was a certain hesitation and tentativeness about this, and a certain tenderness too, you know, touching the paper. I think that's what the work was about. What interested me in the end was how the accumulation of marks became more than each individual mark. It was a way of establishing scale and size using one's body and using the hand as a measure to develop an image. The image wasn't about anything other than what it was, so it was just my fingerprint. Dots, marks on paper that occurred over a period of time. That kind of accumulation of mark-making becomes very lively, because it refers back to some life and has a certain vitality. There's a lot of movement and there's a lot of play in and out. The surface changes, undulates, the shapes line up, then they disappear.
Gesture Drawing

The formal definition of the word gesture amplifies its special meaning for the artist: the act of moving the limbs or body to show, to express, to direct thought. There is a physicality of motion in drawing that is not always visually evident in other art forms, and as a result of this physical energy, drawings communicate an emotional and intellectual impact. The gestural approach to drawing is actually an exercise in seeing. The hand duplicates the motion of the eyes, making a movement that quickly defines the general characteristics of the subject: placement, shape, proportion, relationship between the parts, a definition of planes and volumes as well as their arrangement in space.
Scientist John Tchalenko considered the notion of time and motion by conducting a study on the interaction between the eye, hand, and brain of an artist while drawing a face. Sensors measured controlled and unconscious responses of an artist, Humphrey Ocean, and nonartists. The researchers compared the results and found that artists indeed see things differently from nonartists. Researchers noted that the artist explores the subject through a rapid series of "short fixations," as many as 140 per minute, lingering for as long as one second at least 12 times a minute (figure 2.2). Another
sensor traced hand movements as they marked both on and off the page, recording the hand’s movement in air, the markings on the page, and the amount of pressure exerted on the drawing implement. An imaging device scanned the brains of the subjects while they drew. The findings revealed that the seeing process for nonartists takes place in the visual cortex at the back of the brain, whereas the artist mainly engaged the frontal part of the brain, the site of emotion. It was here, too, that the artist stored previous information taken from his earlier drawing experiences. “In essence, the control subjects were simply trying to copy what they saw. But Humphrey was creating an abstracted representation of each photograph. He was thinking the subjects,” explains Tchalenko (Alan Riding, “Hypothesis: The Artist Does See Things Differently,” New York Times, May 4, 1999, Living Arts p. 2).
In Kathe Kollwitz’s self-portrait the gestural mark connecting the hand and head is a carrier of meaning.
Mass Gesture

_Mass gesture_, so called because the drawing medium is used to make broad marks, creates mass rather than line.

Use the broad side of a piece of compressed charcoal broken to the length of 1 1/2 inches, or use wet medium applied with a brush. Once you begin, keep the marks continuous. Do not lose contact with the paper. Look for the longest line in the subject. Is it a curve, a diagonal, a horizontal, or a vertical line? Allow your eyes to move connecting the forms. Do not follow the edge or outline of the subject. Coordinate the motion of your hand with the movement of your eyes.
In gesture you are not concerned with copying what the subject looks like. You are describing the subject’s location in space along with the relationships between the forms. Keep your eyes and hand working together. Your eyes should remain on the subject, only occasionally referring to your paper. This procedure will be uncomfortable at first, but soon you will learn the limits of the page and the location of the marks on it without looking away from the subject.
As you draw from the model, avoid a stick-figure approach. Begin your marks in the center of the forms, in the interior of the body, and move outward to the edges. Note the angles of the various body masses - upper and lower torso, upper and lower legs, angles of arms and head. Indicate the most obvious directions and general shapes first. Go from the large to the small. Begin at the core of the subject rather than at its outer edge. Remember to keep the marks wide, the width of the charcoal stick or the brush. Try to create shapes as opposed to lines.
Lauren - student drawing - mass gesture
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Resource:

*Drawing: A Contemporary Approach*
by Claudia Betti and Teel Sale
(pp. 31, 32, 33, 41, 42, 43, 44)

student drawings