Strathmore 2019 ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

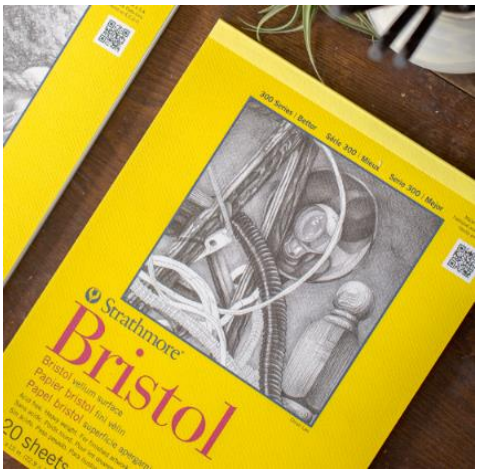
REALISTIC DRAWING WITH CHARCOAL

with **Kirsty Partridge**

Part 4 - Drawing Portraits with Charcoal

In this final lesson, we will be drawing a full portrait using charcoal. I will be giving you tips on how to draw different facial features, skin, and hair.

SUPPLY LIST



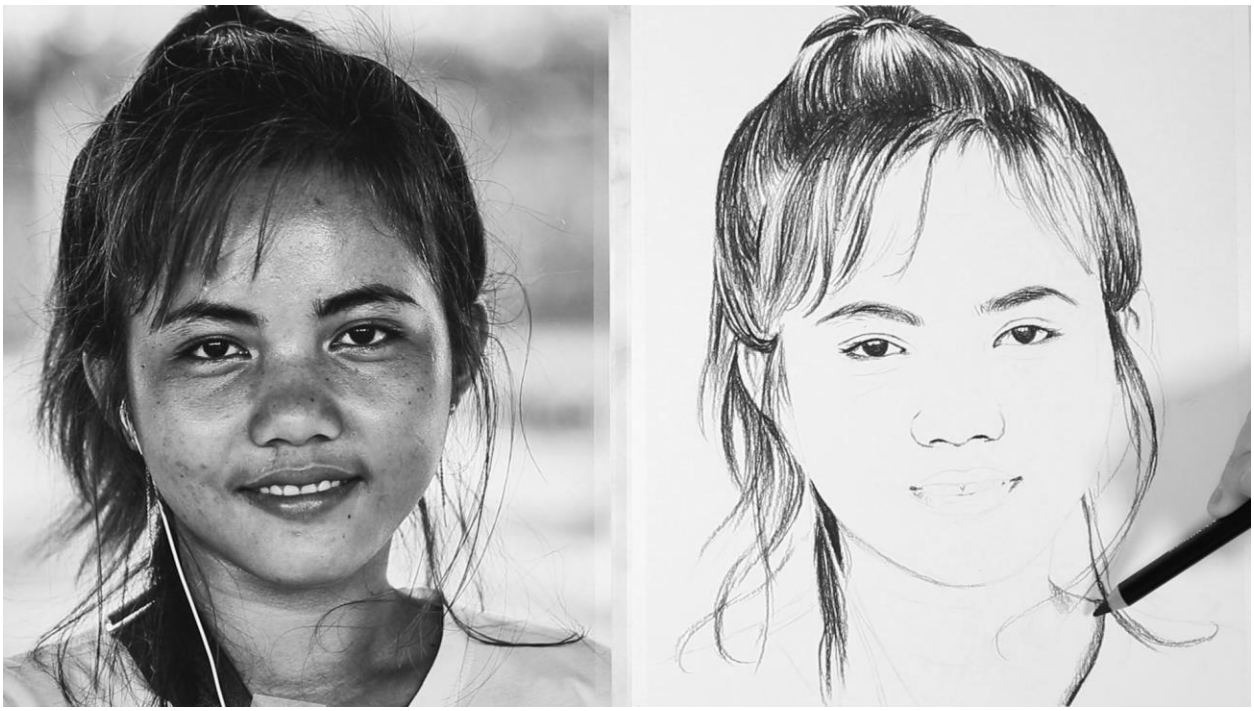
- Strathmore 300 Series Bristol Vellum Paper
- Lyra Rembrandt Charcoal Pencils 2B & H
- Lyra Rembrandt Charcoal Block
- Kneaded Eraser
- Sharpener
- Blending Stump
- Tissue
- Daler-Rowney Aquafine Brush, 4 Round
- Mono stick eraser

Reference and sketch outline

As always, I started off by creating the sketch outline using a graphite pencil. I sketched out all of the main facial features, as well as sketching in the different clumps of hair (using a few lines to indicate the direction the hair is going in.) Avoid including too much detail when sketching the hair. Keep your sketch light to make it easier to erase mistakes.

Shading in the shadows

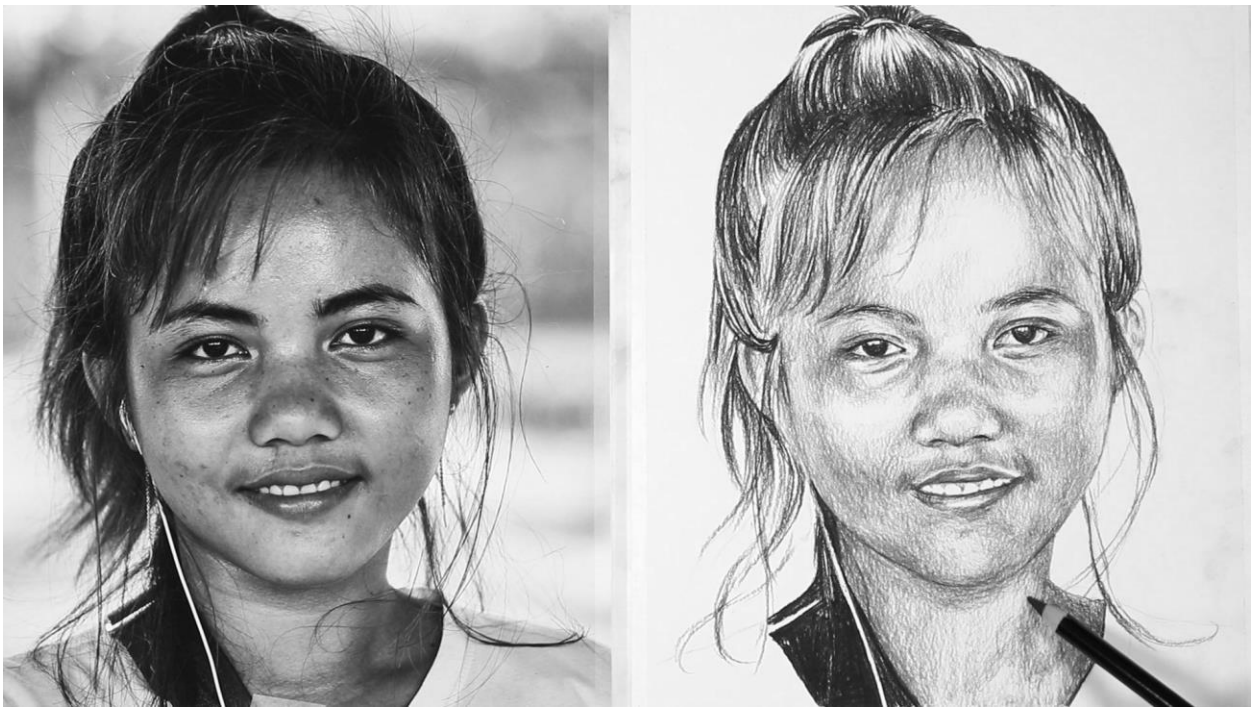
Even when drawing portraits, I still follow the same method and steps as I did with the flower and dog drawings in previous lessons. I first use the 2B charcoal pencil to block in the darkest values. I work my way from the top to the bottom of the drawing, to avoid smudging the charcoal with my hands. I block in most of the hair, only leaving the highlights white. It is important to work on the hair in sections and not draw in every single hair. Shade in the hair using lines that go with the direction each section of hair is going in, just like we did with the dog's fur. I start my pencil strokes at the root of the hair and stop as I approach the highlighted areas or the other side of that section of hair. To get natural looking highlights in the hair I stop my pencil strokes at slightly different points as I approach the highlighted section. This gives a natural transition from the shadowed parts of the hair into the highlights. When I am drawing in the messy loose bits of hair I try to keep my pencil strokes loose to achieve that natural messy look.



I also fill in the basic shape of the eyebrows (at this stage you don't need to add lots of details) and I fill in the darkest parts of the eyes. The darkest parts of the eyes tend to be the pupil, edge of the iris, upper crease, tear duct, and upper lash line. I then fill in the nostrils and the side of the nose, where it is the darkest. Next, I shade in the outer corners of the mouth and the gums between the teeth. Finally, I shade in all of the shadows on her neck, ear, and jawline, as well as blocking in the strap on her shoulder.

Shading in the midtones

I start adding in all of the midtone values with the H charcoal pencil. This is the pencil we will be doing most of the shading with. I start by working on the skin, shading in light circular motions to help get an even layer of shading. To help you control your shading I recommend holding the pencil further back and using the side of the pencil to shade. I add a layer of shading everywhere, using the same technique, only missing out the highlights. The main highlights are on the cheekbones, the center of the forehead, the tip of the nose and the middle of the chin. I also look for the darker parts of the skin and add a second layer of shading using the H pencil. Finally, I shade in the top and bottom lips.



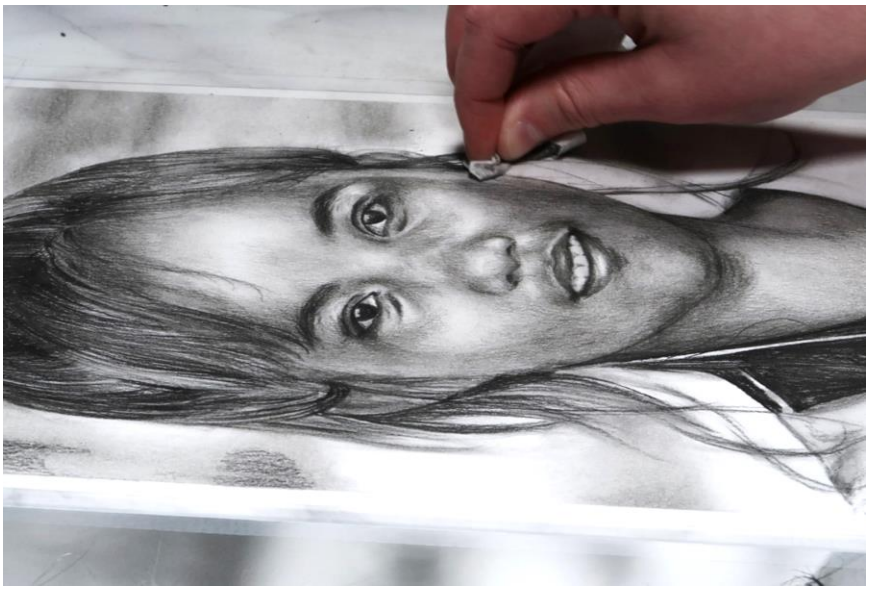
I finish this step by going back in with 2B pencil and adding more layers of shading to the darkest areas. It is important to make sure you are happy with your first layer of shading before we go and blend it out. So, if you need to go back in with your 2B pencil and tweak certain areas, go ahead!

Blending

I move on to blending out the shading using the round paintbrush. I start by blending over the hair, sweeping the brush in the direction the hair is going in rather than in circular motions. I blend out the hair in the same way we blended out the dog's fur. Don't worry if the darkest sections of the hair become a bit lighter. This is completely normal and we will be adding more shading later on. Then, I blend over the entirety of the skin. This time I do use circular motions to blend the skin, as I want to give the skin a smooth finish and we don't want the pencil strokes to be visible.

You can see how blending with the brush has added a nice base tone to the highlighted areas. This is good because in the reference the highlights aren't white.

I lightly blend over the lips and the eyes, to soften out the shading and add value to the teeth and the white of the eyes.



To soften out the shading, even more, I use a tissue, which is great at removing graininess and pencil marks. First, I blend over the skin with the tissue, giving a realistic, smooth look. I also shade the 2B pencil onto the darker patches of the background and blend it out with the tissue.

Adding more shading

Once you have blended everything out and added in the background, it is time to move on to the second layer of shading.

I use the 2B pencil to build up more shadows on the hair and forehead. I use the exact same technique as I did when I added the first layer of shading to the hair. Adding this second layer of shading really starts to increase the contrast in the drawing and makes it pop more! You can also use the charcoal block to deepen up the shadows in the hair even further.

I also use the 2B pencil to darken up the eyes, eyebrows, nostrils and the lips. At this point, you can start to add in more details, like the eyebrow hairs and eyelashes. To make the eyebrow hairs look realistic really focus on the direction they are growing in. Also look at how the eyelashes curve and the length of them. The top eyelashes tend to curve up and out. They are also more sparse at the inner corner of the eye and then get thicker at the outer corner of the eye. The bottom lashes are normally a lot more sparse than the upper eyelashes.

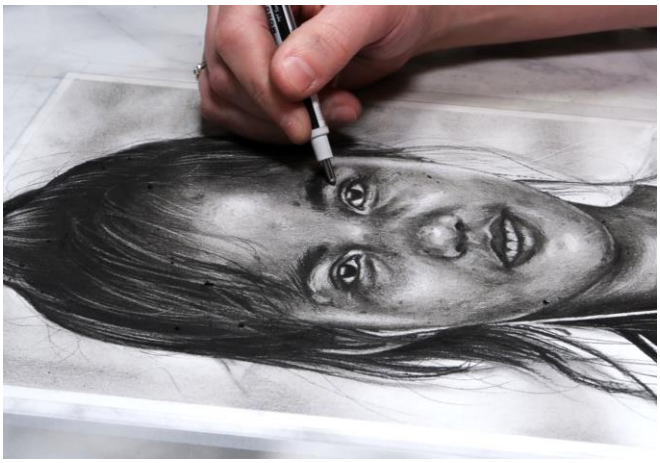
I lightly blend over the shading again. I first blend out the hair using my fingers (for the darkest areas) and the paintbrush (for the highlights.) Finally, I use the paintbrush to blend over the skin.

Adding Details

Now it is time to finish adding details with your charcoal pencils. Her skin had a few little blemishes/ moles, so I marked these in using my 2B pencil. You need to be very light doing this, as you don't want them to be too dark. I use my paintbrush and tissue to soften over them so that they look like a natural part of the skin. If you don't blend them into the skin then they will look too harsh and unrealistic. This is also the time to add flyaway hairs that overlap onto the background. It is very important to add flyaway hairs to stop the hair looking too uniform and rigid. It is time to move on to the highlights.

Adding Highlights

I add highlights with the Tombow Mono eraser. I add some highlights to the hair, making sure to work in sections. I also use the eraser to add loose flyaway hairs, especially on the fringe and over the top of the background.



Next, I move on to adding highlights throughout the face. There are highlights in the center of the forehead, the chin and on either side of the face. I also brighten up the eyes, nose, and lips. I add some final highlights to the ears, neck, headphone cable and the clothing.

After I finished this step I thought the drawing was done. However, after leaving it overnight and looking back at it with fresh eyes I noticed something that I needed to change.

I noticed that the blemishes on the skin were still too dark and the skin looked a bit patchy. So, to make the drawing look more accurate to the reference photo I smoothed over the skin using a tissue. This made the blemishes more subtle and the value changes more gradual. You can see what a difference this small change made to the final result of the drawing.

Final Drawing