

# NYBG

## “Rendering textures in Graphite”

Workshop with Rogério Lupo

### Detailed information

— **Brief introduction:**

A drawing done purely in graphite can by its very nature provide a spectacular result. But besides that, mastering the graphite technique yields us the tools for a detailed investigation of the subject by doing previous studies, so we can grasp the essentials of light and shade before working with other media such as colored pencils, pen and ink, or even watercolors. This workshop offers the fundamentals for that as well, but focuses specifically on the richness of textures found in nature with all their diversity, and how to represent them artistically either using only graphite on white paper or else graphite plus a light-colored pencil on toned paper.

— **Workshop aims:**

- understand the behavior of light which generates the effect of textures when reflected by the objects, and to correctly represent it
- examine how the quality of reflectivity of an object is intrinsically linked to our presumed tactile sensation
- work from the general to the particular view, thus avoiding waste of time
- investigate, understand, and correctly represent the surfaces' microstructure in order to achieve the accurate overall effect
- comprehend the universal systems of shading that work for rendering most textures
- achieve the synthesis and balanced simplicity when representing complex patterns
- learn and use accessory tools that allow for handy and easy ways to render certain patterns

- accurately observe and represent conspicuous and subtle aspects of the patterns of feathers, fur, thorns, hairs, scales, ridges, knobs, grooves, cavities, striations, clumps, grasses, trees, groves etc.

— **How this course works:**

There will be meetings online live via the application [Zoom](#) with all the students and the tutor.

As for the classes' content, biological subjects are examined and explained regarding their form, light and shade, and especially further details such as texture, indument, ornaments etc. Demonstrations provide methods for rendering all these aspects in graphite while describing how to make the best use of this technique. The students are encouraged to practice online, ask questions, optionally film their own hands while working and show their results afterward to receive advice.

At the end of each meeting, some tasks are assigned, students may continue to practice, drawing appropriate objects of their own choice – or only parts of these objects –, and post their results on a group organized via WhatsApp, so that all works can be assessed by the tutor.

In order to take the best advantage of the live meetings, the assessment of exercises and the individual advice is mostly furnished through extra video classes that are recorded and posted on YouTube as unlisted videos. Thus, every participant can also learn from the guidance offered to all the other students. Our main focus during live meetings then is the teaching of lessons and concepts, as well as the demonstrations, questions & answers. But of course, there may be some comments on the students' exercises even during these meetings, especially when the tutor recognizes the need for teachings that will help everyone at once.

— **Program and dates:**

The workshop consists of a series of 3-hours meetings (18 hours total) to occur during six non-consecutive days, on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 3 weeks.

— **Pre-requisites:**

It is very recommendable that students have a good practical understanding of observational drawing and of the fundamentals for perceiving and representing light and shade. Should one have no experience on that, it will be possible to benefit even so, but then I recommend the previous study of the basic concepts provided by my guidebook on graphite, as well as the practice of the exercises proposed there. This

guide is further explained by a public video class (download the guide [here](#) and watch the video [here](#)).

— **Technological apparatus you will need:**

The application [Zoom](#) must be installed either on your PC, notebook, or mobile phone, and this is enough for you to participate in the classes. If you use your PC, you will need a webcam. The application WhatsApp must be installed on your mobile phone too so that you can share the result of your exercises and have them assessed by the tutor. In case you prefer not to use WhatsApp, you can send me your exercises by email.

— **Supplies list:**

Below you find a list of some materials necessary for your practice as well as suggestions of specific brands and editions. All suggestions are based on my personal experiences, so keep yourself open to subverting the list. If you already have a good set of supplies, it is not necessary that you search for further variety only because of my recommendations.

1. Use a piece of parchment paper or paper towel under your hand to protect your drawing from your skin oils and humidity that can cockle the paper. Also, I recommend you avoid speaking over the paper before, during and after drawing, as invisible saliva sprouts can cause yellow spots of contamination in the long run.

2. Pencils:

2.1. Graphite – (2H if possible) H, HB, 2B, 3B, 4B and 6B (7B if possible). Lately, my personal preference has become the Staedtler's edition named Lumograph Mars Black, which I highly recommend. Unlike traditional graphite, these pencils feel a little waxy like chalk. The lead is thick and has a high proportion of carbon. They provide an intense shading with a mat finishing, tending not to produce the undesired effect of glare, even after overlapping many layers. The range of gradations is limited though, being HB the hardest, but the traditional H and/or 2H graphite can complement the set. Also, there is now the new edition from Faber-Castell named [Pitt Graphite Matt Pencils](#), which allegedly avoid the effect of glare in a very efficient way. Though I have never tested those, I think it is worth it to try them.

Regarding traditional graphite, keep in mind that different brands may present different standards, thus be alert not to purchase, without testing, an HB and 2B pencils from different companies (or from different product lines of the same company) which might possibly present the same grade of shade. Good brands in

order of my personal preference are Staedtler, Lyra, Mitsubishi, Bruynzeel, Faber Castell, Caran D'Ache, Cretacolor, Koh-I-Noor. Derwent is a good and soft pencil, but the ones I have tested may have their lead's tip crumbling down while we work, thus leaving small pieces of graphite on the paper (that was long ago, this may have been improved lately). Do not take that into account, though, if you own and appreciate the Derwent pencils and want to use them, in which case you do not need to purchase new pencils.

I remark that rare has been the pencil, even among the best brands, which does not eventually present crystals that grit the paper while stopping to scribe. Some brands get better from time to time, some worse, and even the most expensive pencils may disappoint us. We should then swatch constantly, rarely breaking relationships definitely with any brand.

2.2. One light-colored Faber Castell Polychromos pencil (like ivory, cream, or white – preferably the former ones, as white is too cold), or any similar pencil from the same brand or others.

2.3. A mechanical pencil 0,2 or 0,3 mm with a B or 2B graphite to be used for contours and details is not indispensable but is welcome.

3. Soft white eraser: Sakura high-quality FOAM or Pentel hi-polymer SOFT. Avoid Staedtler Mars plastic, for it causes excessive friction, harms the paper and usually crumbles off in pieces.

4. Kneaded eraser: Milan, Sanford Design, Cretacolor, Faber Castell, in order of my personal preference among the ones I know. The video lesson mentioned above provides the demonstration of the use of a kneaded eraser. The precise moment of the video is on [this link](#). Remember to enable English subtitles.

5. Paper: section 2.4 of my free Graphite Guidebook (download it here) offers some quite detailed discussion addressing various aspects to be taken into account before making decisions regarding papers. There are many different companies producing several sorts of paper and each one has its own traits, advantages and disadvantages. My personal preference is the middle ground between textured and smooth papers. Good possibilities are the Strathmore Bristol 300, 400 or 500 series (vellum or smooth surface – you would have to test them all to check which you prefer), Canson (Graduate Bristol or Fine Face), Hahnemühle Dessin Lana. But again, it is worth it researching whatever you have available in your country, swatching them, and learning other artists' experiences. Remember to test both sides of each paper for they often present different surfaces.

Toned papers suggested are Canson Graduate Multitechnique or Canson Mi Teintes (the back face of the latter is smoother and more appropriate than the front face). Also Strathmore Toned Tan or Toned Gray, or any other toned paper of your preference.

In the video lesson mentioned above, you will be able to see how I proceed during swatching. Notice in the video that some textured papers cause spontaneous dark spots to arise and this can become inevitable. The outcome can therefore be out of control in such cases. The test on the front face of each paper is always followed in the video by the test on its back face. Personally, I consider better papers are those which provide a relatively even texture (without unexpected stains) when we apply graphite in a constant and uniform manner, as I do in the video. Click on [this link](#) to access the precise moment of the video when these tests take place.

6. Artistic Ball Burnishers: this is a tool that can be very helpful for grooving the paper with minimum damage. It is not essential for this course, as it can be replaced with a dry ballpoint pen or a polished dry metal tip, or even by a mechanical pencil without graphite. But of course, the ball burnisher is quite specific and it is coined precisely for the kind of maneuvers we want to make on the paper.

7. Desk sharpener: I suggest Derwent, Derwent Super Point or Rapesco. You can also opt for using a snap-off cutter blade, in which case I recommend watching [this](#) if you are not familiar with that use (enable English captions).

8. Natural objects with attractive or intricate texture: a seed, a fruit, a vegetable, a densely nerved leaf or flower, a piece of bark, a piece of a twig, an insect, a shell, a rock, a nest, a bone, an animal skull etc. I recommend obtaining an object that you will be able to handle and draw from life rather than photos, which might often lead to misinterpretations of the object's form. Besides that, if you were to use photos, you would not be able to look closer at it, turn it, or move the light to investigate its details. The texture may be anyone you prefer, from thorny, hairy or woolly objects to ridged, grooved, bulged surfaces... or else objects presenting knobs, cavities, protrusions etc.

Observation: We have plenty of stores selling good material, either via the internet or locally, and many artists share their experiences on websites and videos. Be careful though, because the experience of an artist with any given material can be thoroughly different from yours. Use their tips and advice, but trust only your own tests (that is, do question my own tips too). I have seen many artists definitely disappointed with excellent materials, myself included. Sometimes they have tested defective stuff or it is just that they do not find affinity with the results that some specific material

provides. Different artists may either worship or curse the same exact material, thus do not be afraid of experimenting.

Some further helpful information on papers can be found [here](#).