

Motivation

I chose exploratory sketching for a few reasons, mainly for the mindset and guidance, because I think that generally the pure motor skills can be learned individually. I had always heard of this being a very popular assignment/elective and finding out why was not very difficult.

The biggest reason for me to join the course was to become confident in communicating through sketching. As noted in the lectures, if you are not comfortable with your sketches, sketching might actually detract in communicating ideas. So what I really wanted to learn is how to make sketches that show just enough detail to provoke feedback, but little enough to not get stuck in details.

Furthermore I wanted to learn how to use sketching in a process. Until now I didn't sketch much in a process, because making convincing ones takes me a lot of time and does not give me a lot of return on my investment.

Next I really wanted to learn when to keep a sketch simple, and when to colour it, how to make it pop and how to use rough sketches to create neat ones.

Finally I thought that I might as well

pick up as many drawing/colouring techniques as possible in the elective. I'd drawn perspective before, but cylinders were something I definitely avoided.

Learning experience

Compared to other ID electives, exploratory sketching is very concrete. Next to a pretty abstract project I was happy to have an elective that is crystal clear about expectations concerning homework. I really enjoyed relaxing evenings of sketching, even if failing at ellipses drove me crazy at times.

I really liked learning techniques to draw people, faces, perspective, shading and cylinders. Some of the times they were like tricks, other times grids to construct sketches, all of them help quickly making sketches realistic enough.

At first I was pretty sceptic about uploading all our sketches to Sketchdrive. It seemed like an extra arbitrary step, and I feared getting less feedback than with traditional methods. But when I actually got into the rhythm of uploading all my sketches immediately after a session I noticed that it was actually an extra way to receive individual and group feedback, but perhaps that was because

of the very active use of the platform by Martijn van de Wiel. Feedback during classes enabled me to set up sketches correctly, Sketchdrive feedback gave me pointers for follow sketches after one was done. Getting a “good example” on an upload really made my day.

The classes were very long, but the alternation between individual work, group work, demos and theory kept me engaged.

I also learned that cheating is ok.

Value of gained skills

Obviously I improved my motor skills, compared to the baseline measure my sketches are far cleaner, easier to understand, quicker and more useful. I actually started sketching in my project, which gave me a huge boost in that process instead of it being a burden.

I haven't had the chance to sketch together with others in a real brainstorm, but compared to the insecurity I felt in the sketch battles we did in the second lecture I know that I'd be a LOT more confident in my ability to properly communicate my ideas to collaborators.

Learning about nice ways to quickly brainstorm has already been valua-

ble in my ID project, using a single instrument and being able to build contrast to make wrong lines disappear is a quick and fun way to visually explore an idea, and has helped me get early feedback on ideas that would have been too abstract to put in words. Even though I still have much to learn, I am not near a level where I can trust my every pen stroke (especially in cylinders), it still takes me a fair amount of time, but right now the return on investment of time and effort is positive in my eyes.

Knowing where to build contrast and add colours to attract attention to important parts better is something I consider very valuable. Instead of commenting on sketching errors I can get feedback on the actual concept in a drawing. With the added tool of basic shading and highlighting with markers I can enhance this even more with a more professional look.

Exploratory sketching is an elective that I feared might be about motor skills too much, but ended up being far more about how to get what you want out of a drawing the most efficient way. It provided me with a creative outlet when I needed it, but has also already proven itself as valuable in Industrial Design projects.