

Computer Contours

Objective

Create a modified contour self-portrait using a computer draw and/or paint program with a mouse or graphics tablet.

SUPPLIES

- Computer with draw or paint program
- Mirror
- Spotlight (optional)
- Drawing board
- Graphics tablet and stylus (optional)
- Printer



Figure 1 Student work.

Understanding the Tools

The Pencil and Paintbrush tools most closely resemble the pencils and paintbrushes used in traditional media. The thickness of the line or brushstroke may be changed by clicking the tool on the toolbar or by using the pull-down menus to set the brush size and type. If you are using a graphics tablet, you can vary the pressure of the pen tool (stylus) on the pressure-sensitive tablet to create a near-lifelike stroke, similar to using a regular pencil or paintbrush.

Special Note: You may find it easier to work with a drawing board across your lap to increase the working area in which to move the mouse. You will be using the mouse in the same way that you would a pencil or paintbrush on paper. A graphics tablet may be used if one is available.

Step 1 Open a new document in a draw or paint program. Make sure you start with a document resolution suitable for your final output. If you are using a paint program that uses pixels and you're going to print the image, use 300 dpi (dots per inch). If your images will be shown only on a computer monitor, then 72 dpi is all you need. If you are using a draw program, often called a "vector graphics" program, set the page size and you can output to a variety of file types and resolutions after the image is completed.

Step 2 Create variety by filling the shapes and the spaces around them with different patterns of line types and line variations. Make perfectly straight vertical, horizontal, or diagonal lines without jagged edges.

Step 3 Place a mirror next to the computer in order to investigate the details of your own individual facial features. A spotlight may be used to create stronger contrasts.

Step 4 Choose between the Pencil or Paintbrush tool and select it from the toolbar.

Step 5 Using a modified contour approach, proceed to interpret the features of your face. Remember, this method allows you the opportunity to glance up and down at your image whenever a contour line ends.

Step 6 Work in continuous lines without lifting the mouse or stylus so that you do not lose your place. Look carefully at both the inner and outer contours of all details of your face and features. Highlights and shadows should be indicated in lines only without any value. Remember to be guided by your sense of touch. Convince yourself that you are touching the spot that you are seeing. In reality your eye is following along that edge while your hand is moving to record what you see. Do not let your hand get ahead of your eye or your eye get ahead of your hand. This should be a slow investigation. A useful analogy is that contour drawing done correctly is like carefully

climbing over a rocky mountain, one small step at a time. Incorrectly creating a contour drawing is like quickly flying over that same mountain in an airplane. Look carefully and slowly investigate your facial features.

Step 7 Focus your eyes on one spot; any spot will do. As your eye moves along the edge, your hand should move to record what you see.

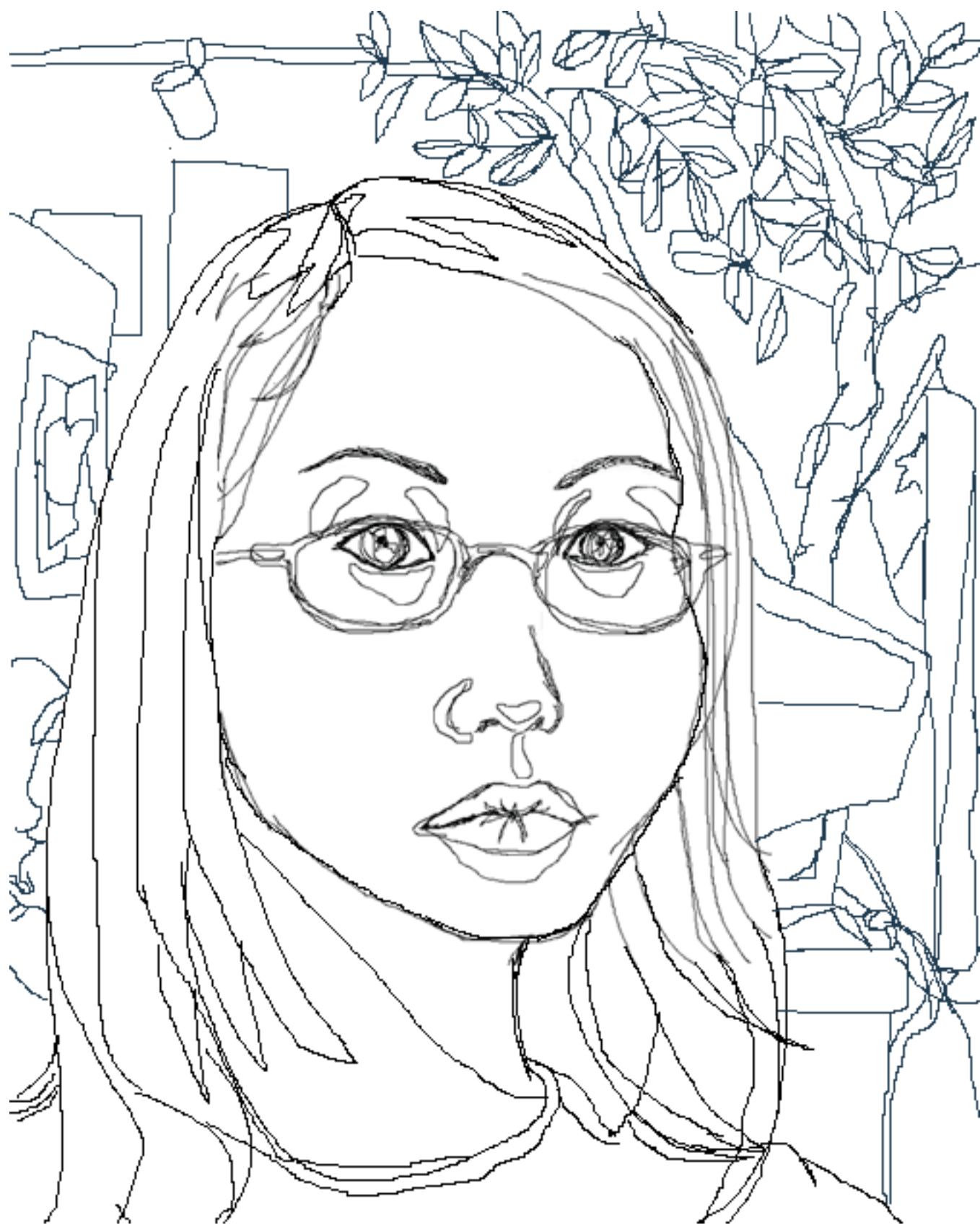
Step 8 Create variety in your lines by using thicker lines for the features of your face that are closest to you and thinner lines for those farthest from you. Objects closest to you should also have more details. Remember that clicking the tool to set the brush size or applying pressure to the graphics tablet with the stylus can change the line thickness.

Step 9 Save your work often and upon completion. Print a hard copy for critique.

Special Note: A line drawing can be an exciting and powerful end result. One of the benefits of using computers is the many ways that you may continue investigations on copies of the original image. We call this original image the "mother-piece." Copies of this image may be opened and saved using another name while the artist experiments with as many approaches as his or her imagination will allow.

Examining Your Work

1. What challenges did you have to overcome in using the mouse/graphics tablet to interpret your subject in contour line drawing?
2. Did your lines effectively capture what you were seeing?
3. Were you successful in using the modified contour approach?
4. Did you use a variety of thick and thin lines to create the illusion of depth?
5. Were you guided by your sense of touch?
6. What quality of drawing resulted?



Drawing Simple Conclusions

Objective

Simplify an original drawing into a more stylized composition by tracing over it with the Freehand or Pencil tool.

SUPPLIES

- Sketchbook and pencil
- Scanner
- Computer with draw or paint program
- Printer

Special Note: The Freehand or Pencil tool adds the right feel to create a hand-drawn look for shapes of objects and letters. The final product has the look of a creative book illustration or a simplified cartoon.



Figure 2 Student work.

Understanding the Tools

The Freehand or Pencil tool creates a line path based upon the movement of a mouse or a stylus used with a pressure-sensitive graphics tablet. This tool allows you to draw subjects as if you were using a pencil on paper. The resulting line appears as a thick, rough overlay of the line that is traced. Here are some tips:

- **Extending the existing path:** Using the Freehand or Pencil tool, position the tool over the path's end point. When the tool's pencil eraser icon turns black, continue pressing your mouse and continue to draw over the line.
- **Erasing the path:** Continue holding the mouse as you use the Freehand or Pencil tool, press the Command key, and drag over the dotted line to where the line is to be redrawn. When selecting the part of the line to be edited, the pencil icon changes to an eraser. Anchor points, which define the path, can also be erased with the Delete key and moved as necessary with the selection tool.

Step 1 In your sketchbook, draw a landscape or a nature study of plants or animals.

Step 2 Scan this drawing so that it may be imported into a computer. Follow your scanner's instructions. For this project, it would be best to scan at 100 percent of the original at 75 dpi (dots per inch) and save the scanned image as a TIFF file. As this image will be used as a template for the vector program drawing, the resolution is not important. If you use the image as a template in an image editing program, begin with a scan that is 266 to 300 dpi.

Step 3 Open this new scanned document in a draw or paint program.

Step 4 Click on the Freehand or Pencil tool. As you drag this tool, your path is

shown as a dotted line. Releasing the mouse button ends the freehand path; the dotted line changes to a solid line.

Step 5 Continue to draw over your original line drawing with the Freehand or Pencil tool until you have learned to extend, edit, and erase the path.

Step 6 Once you have completed the line drawing, use the Fill tool to add colors, patterns, or gradient values to the different shapes in your drawing. This will give the drawing the look of a simplified book illustration or cartoon.

Step 7 Have fun and create the illusion of either a real or imaginary landscape or nature study. Print your final work.

Examining Your Work

1. Did you observe a more simplified and more stylized image after having traced it?
2. Did tracing over your image enhance the original image?
3. How do the repeated lines unify your overall composition?

