

*Everyone knows that even a single line may convey an emotion.*

—Piet Mondrian





*A line is a dot that takes a walk.*

—Paul Klee

## Defining LINE

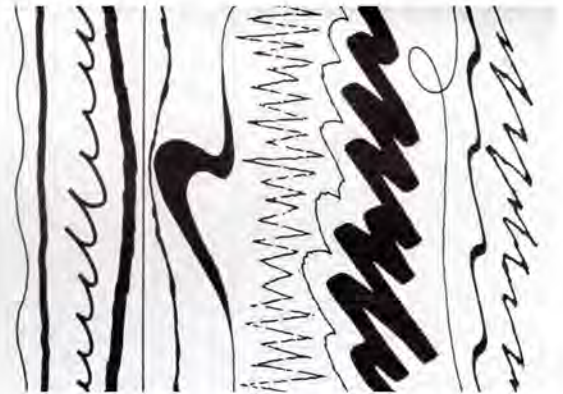
**LINE** is one of the most important elements in art. The power of **LINE** (also referred to as Mark Making) is in its apparent simplicity, variety and command of our attention.

**LINE** can be defined as:

- a point in motion 
- a series of adjacent points 
- a connection between points 
- an implied connection between points 

**LINE** is so much more than simple definitions. **LINE** possesses the power to suggest mood, energy, form, space, motion and thoughts. It is a highly descriptive force that uses variations of length, width, directional changes, attack, texture and rhythms. Every mark made on a surface, whether it be a consciously determined line or just a scribble, will inevitably convey something of its maker as well as the subject.

Throughout art history **LINE** has been the most widely used graphic element. **LINE** possesses the inherent life contained within any work of art. It is the circulatory system of visual composition. **LINE** can be used objectively to record visual observations and to describe forms in space, or subjectively to suggest, evoke, and imply an endless variety of experiences, conceptions and intuitions. **LINE** is also the visual pathway that our eyes travel along when looking at art.



Line has almost unlimited variations.

### LINE Directions



Diagonal



Horizontal



Vertical



Curvilinear/  
Organic

# LINE TYPES

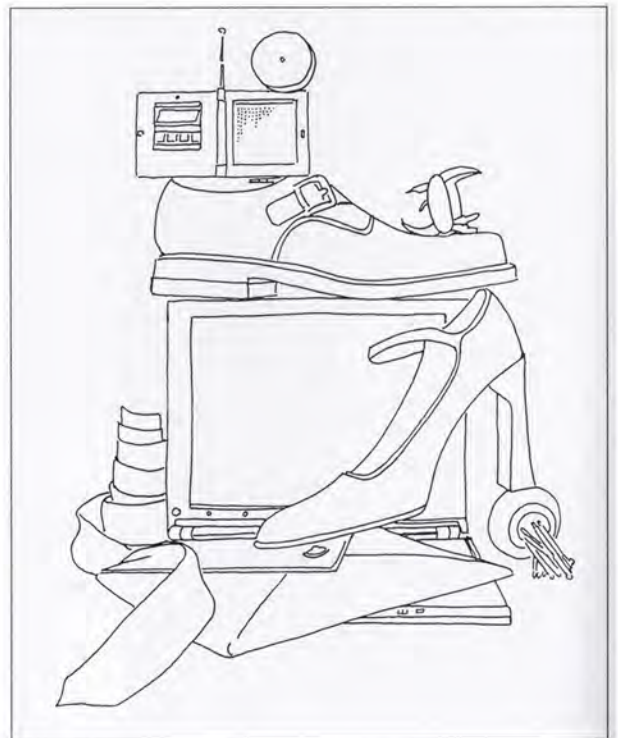
There are several core types of **LINE** that artists study. These line types are employed at various times for different reasons. Understanding the qualities of each line type, how they are created and perceived, will help you to communicate your ideas more clearly and effectively.

## **LINE Types:**

- Contour
- Gesture
- Anatomical/Organizational
- Implied
- Calligraphic
- Networks

## **CONTOUR Lines**

Contour lines define edges of forms and shapes. The contour line is an outline of a visual element - a simplified edge that creates boundaries and establishes the difference between inside and outside of areas. Contour lines are uniform in width and are not used to create depth, value (light to dark) or texture.



Based on the photo above left, contour lines in the drawing above right are used as a kind of shorthand to define the objects' shapes and their relationships to one another.

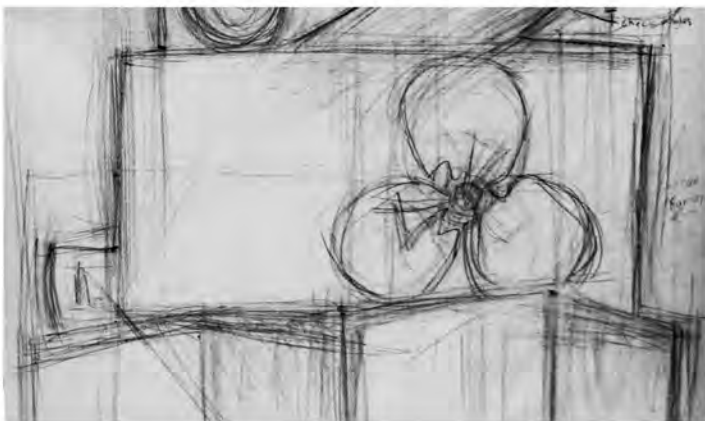
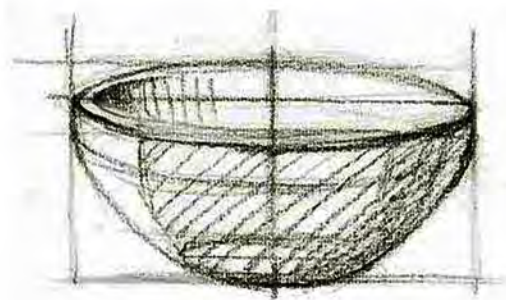
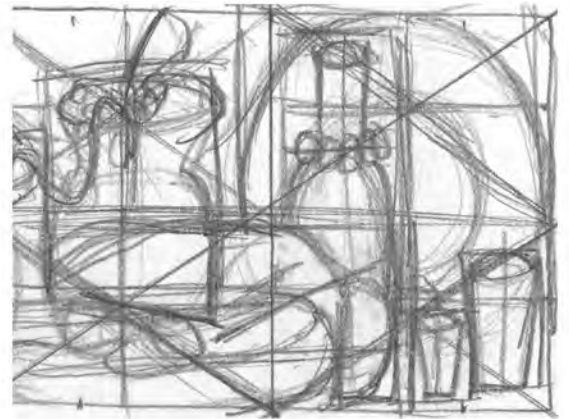
## GESTURE Lines

The Gesture line is active, searching and moves freely to capture the essence of a subject. Gesture lines do not focus on the precise nuances of small details. Although a Gesture drawing can show modeled form, depth and value, that is not its primary goal. The Gesture lines' guiding purpose is to show the process of the artist's search and as a record of that process, give the effect of vitality and life to a drawing. Gesture drawing is often thought of in relationship to its use in figure drawing, however, Gesture is very valuable in capturing the inherent energy and dynamism in any subject, animate and inanimate. When developed and practiced, Gesture drawing helps artists make rapid observations of overall proportions and placements of objects quickly and accurately.



## ANATOMICAL/ORGANIZATIONAL Lines

**Anatomical/Organizational** lines are used to discover and convey the underlying structure of an object or form. This type of linework is used during the process of discovery, very often when an artist uses measuring and sighting techniques in a search for understanding the proportions, scale and relationships in a subject. The **Anatomical/ Organizational** line is messy and chaotic, functioning as a direct connection from the brain to the drawing tool as an artist explores the underlying structure of forms. **Anatomical/ Organizational** lines show primary axis directions, center lines, alignments and basic geometric forms of objects as a means to organize and comprehend the visual forms being drawn. Unlike Contour lines, the **Anatomical/Organizational** line is not carefully executed but rather shows the inside and outside contents of forms all at the same time, 'drawing through' solid forms as seeing through it. Much in common, and used in conjunction with Gesture lines, **Anatomical/Organizational** lines are characterized by energetic, quickly drawn lines that document an artist's immediate engagement with her/his subject.

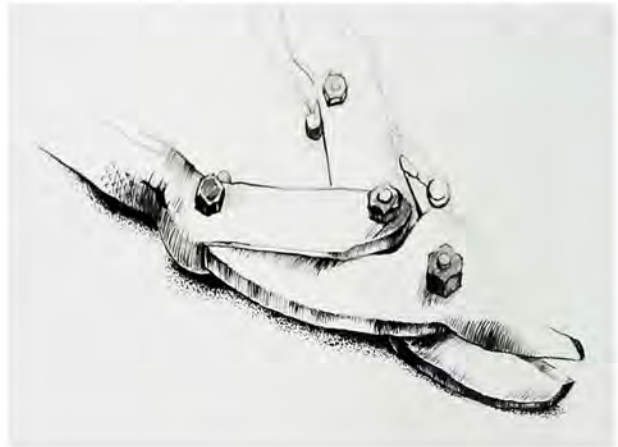


## IMPLIED Lines

**Implied** lines are lines that you don't 'see' - lines that do not make a mark but are perceived by our brains (a perceptual phenomenon in which the viewer participates by visually filling the 'missing' information). There are two kinds of **Implied** lines: the *Broken/Lost & Found Implied* line and the *Compositional Implied* line.

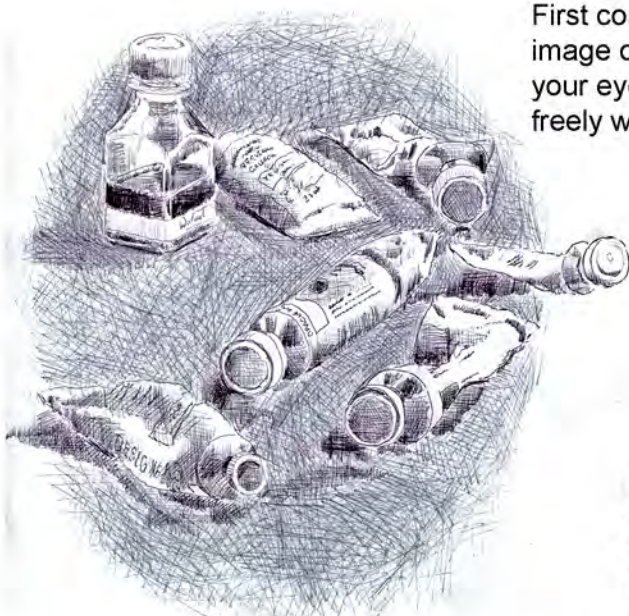
### **Broken/Lost & Found Implied Lines:**

This type of Implied line is characterized by a line that is broken or incomplete. For example, the lines of a drawing where the form is partially in deep shadow or bright light would appear to disappear. Our brain fills in the information where the line is obstructed creates the continuation of the line though we can't actually see them. Omitting lines in a drawing is a useful tool for depicting a hot spot, shadow or other changes in conditions. **Broken/Lost & Found Implied** lines can also be used to give a sense of atmosphere, light and delicacy.

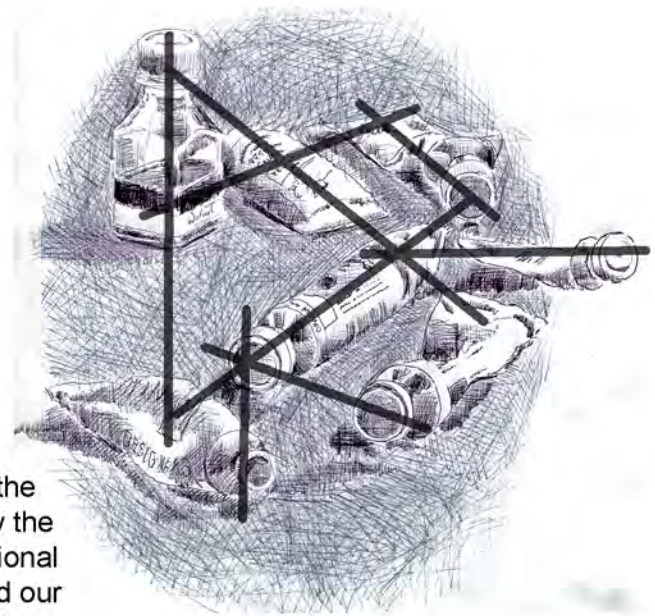


### **Compositional Implied Lines:**

In this type of Implied line, there is no real line, not even dots or intermittent actual lines; yet we feel a line, a mental connection between elements. Artists use **Compositional Implied** lines to purposefully direct our focus in, around and throughout a drawing in order to hold our interest, or create a narrative and/or make the intention of the artist known.



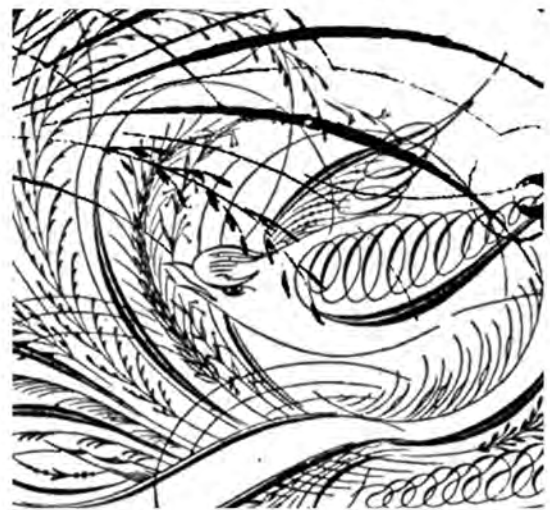
First contemplate the image on the left letting your eyes move about freely without thinking.



In the image on the right we see how the use of Compositional Implied lines lead our eyes all around the drawing..

## CALLIGRAPHIC Lines

The **Calligraphic** line used in drawing is often misinterpreted as using writing in a drawing. This confusion is easy to understand because the **Calligraphic** line owes its name to the beautiful calligraphy writing technique (from Greek κάλλος kallos “beauty” + γραφή graphē “writing”) which is described as “the art of giving form to signs in an expressive, harmonious and skillful manner” (Mediavilla 1996: 18). Eastern artists developed the art of calligraphy writing, in which the tool, media, surface and technique are all considered equally important. In drawing, the **Calligraphic** line is characterized as graceful, flowing and lyrical with lines that vary in width from thin to thick within a single stroke.



## NETWORK Lines

Artists use **Network** lines to create value, volume, mass and depth in their drawings. By developing a series of repeated, overlapping or thick lines in a group or pattern, **Network** lines play an important role in the creative and expressive possibilities of line drawings. **Network** lines add sense of texture to a drawing. There are several types of **Network** lines and they can be used individually or mixed together in a variety of ways for different effect. The six types of **Network** lines are: *Hatching*, *Cross-Hatching*, *Contour*, *Cross-Contour*, *Scumbling* and *Stippling*.

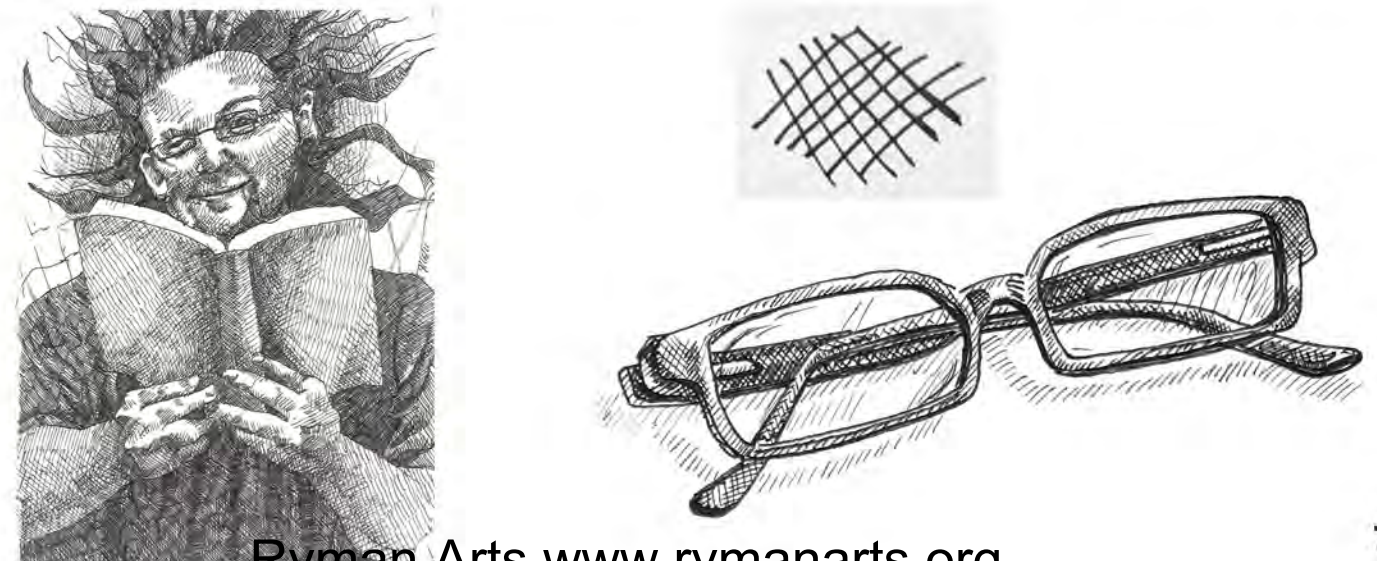
### Hatching Network Lines:

This type of Network line is created by a repeated series of (straight or mostly straight) parallel lines. **Hatching** lines are usually made in clusters of uniform widths. To create lighter values, thin lines are spaced farther apart in a sequence. Darker values and tones are created when **Hatched** lines are spaced closer together. Thicker, densely packed lines will create even darker values.



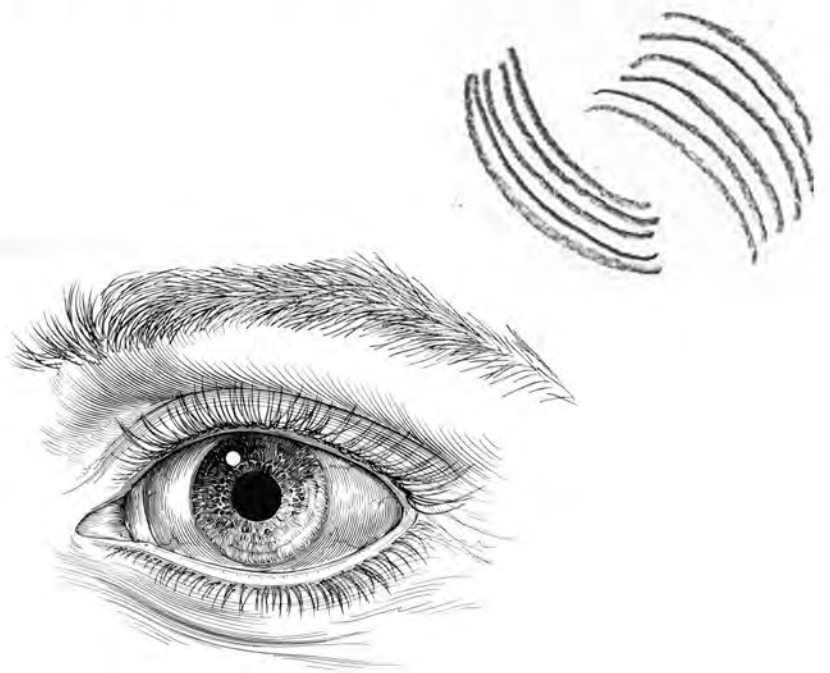
### Cross-Hatching Network Line:

**Cross-Hatching** Network lines are created when Hatched lines cross each other at diagonals. As with the techniques used in Hatching, **Cross-Hatching** creates a range of values by building up the quantity and quality of the line strokes. Hatching and **Cross-Hatching** lines are often used in conjunction with one another.



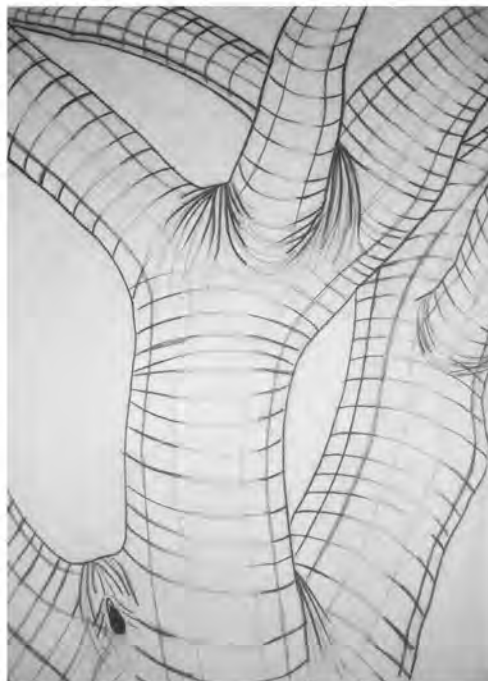
### Contour Network Line:

**Contour Network** lines are just like Hatching Network lines except that **Contour Network** lines follow the form of the object being drawn. **Contour Network** lines provide an excellent and simple technique for giving a sense of volume, especially for cylindrical and spherical forms. The techniques used in Hatching also apply to **Contour Network** lines when creating a range of values. (see Hatching Network Lines).



### Cross-Contour Network Line:

The beauty of using **Cross-Contour** Network lines is that forms, volumes, mass and the illusion of three-dimensionality can be rendered with finesse and an immediate believability. However, Contour and **Cross-Contour** Network lines are difficult to master. While Hatching and Cross-Hatching are fast and easy to use, meaningful and successfully creative **Cross-Contour** Networks demand careful analysis of an object's form.



### Scumbling Network Line:

The **Scumbling Network** line (also called scribbling) is characterized by random, multidirectional and disorganized lines. To create a range of values and tones, **Scumbling Network** lines are built up and overlapped without a sense of methodical order (but of course in accordance with the logic of the object being drawn). As with the other line network types, the denser the line overlap, the darker the value range. Scumbling Network lines share a close kinship to Gesture lines.



### Stippling Network:

Made from a multiplication of dots, the **Stippling (also called Pointillism) Network** technique creates smooth value transitions and soft textures. Lighter values are created by smaller dot sizes placed farther apart while darker values are made by placing dots (small and/or large) closer together. Drawings made using the **Stippling Network** technique capture a certain sense of serenity and calm, however, this technique can be tedious and patience is required!

