DAYTON ART INSTITUTE
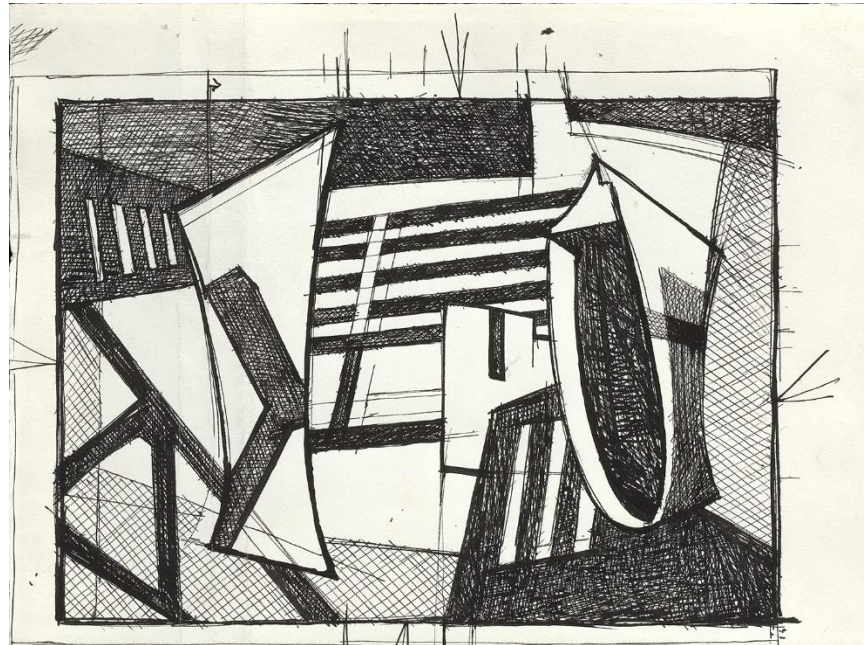
draw from the COLLECTION ... at home!

Industrial Abstraction

Use abstraction to depict industrial objects inspired by Special Exhibition: *Ralston Crawford: Air + Space + War*.

Supplies:

- pencil
- paper
- eraser
- still life objects
- ruler (optional)

Ralston Crawford (American, 1906–1978), *Curtiss-Wright Aircraft Plant Study–Aircraft Factory*, about 1946, pen and ink on paper. Vilcek Collection, VF2013.01.06

Step 1

Gather several industrial still life objects (ex: lightbulb, tools, kitchen appliances, bottles, etc.) to draw from. Pick a variety of shapes and sizes. At least 5-7 objects are recommended. Place objects close together on a table or other flat surface.
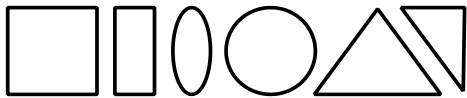
Helpful hint: for best results, use objects that contrast each other in height, shape and color (ex: tall vs. short, round vs. square, light vs. dark, etc.).

Helpful hint: arrange still life objects to create interesting negative shapes between objects and around the still life.

Have time for a short survey? Let us know how you're enjoying our digital resources!

Step 2

Draw the basic forms of the objects using only geometric shapes that most closely resemble each element (ex: circle for lightbulb, rectangles for hammer, etc.). Draw lightly. Allow shapes to overlap each other.

Helpful hint: objects may be partially obscured behind others. Estimate the shapes of any hidden areas as best as possible to keep lines and shapes continuous rather than broken.

Note: for best results, draw objects as large as possible to fill the paper and create a dynamic negative space around the objects.
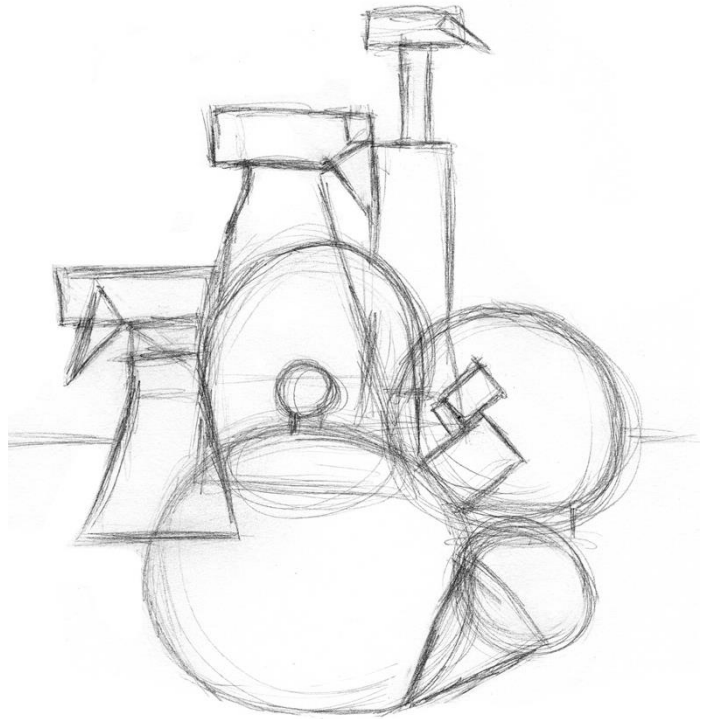
Step 3

Further refine a few or several object shapes to best resemble the outer contour of those elements. Erase or keep any remnants of the former more basic geometric shapes as desired. Draw lightly.

Note: skip this step and proceed to **step 4** if a highly abstract drawing is desired.

Helpful hint: leave a few objects in their unrefined state(s).

Helpful hint: for best abstract effect, do not erase all areas where object shapes overlap each other.

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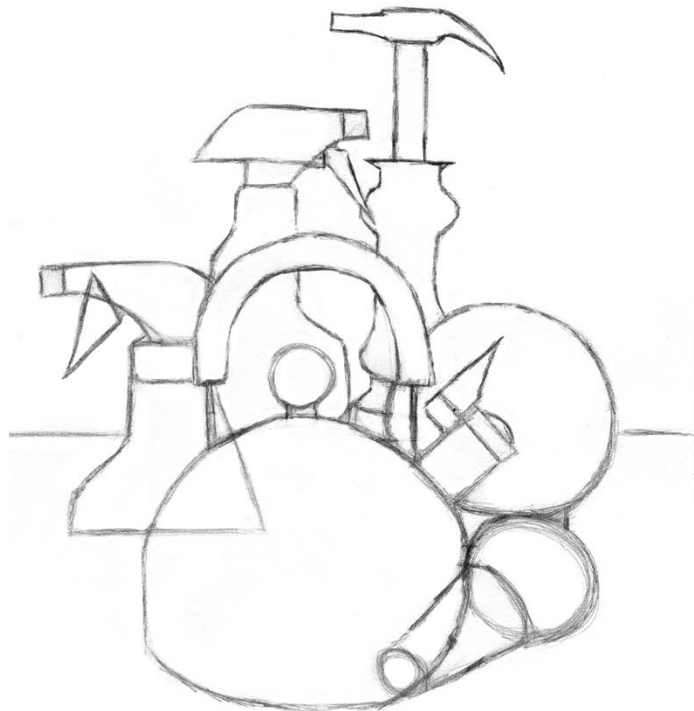
Step 4

Take a moment to look at all the shapes of your drawing. Experiment with those shapes to create an abstract look. Stylize, exaggerate and stretch shapes as desired (ex: stretch out shapes to make them longer, flatten the rounded shape of a lightbulb to make it more rectangular, etc.).
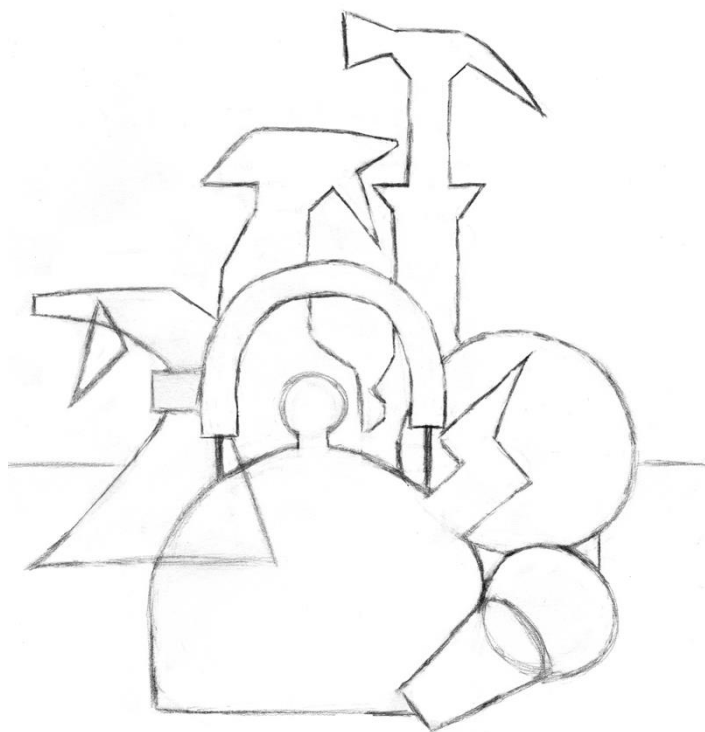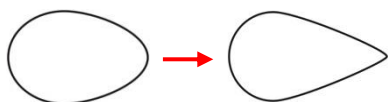
Step 5

Take another moment to look at your drawing. Add extra shapes for detail or remove shapes and lines to further simplify and make abstract your objects as desired (ex: add small circles to represent screws for detail or erase all interior details to reveal only an object's outer contours). Experimentation is strongly encouraged.
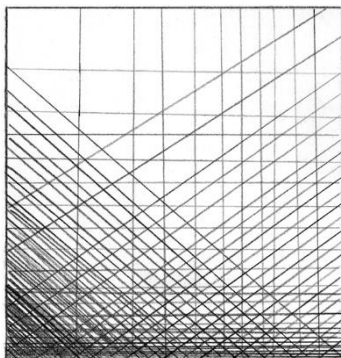
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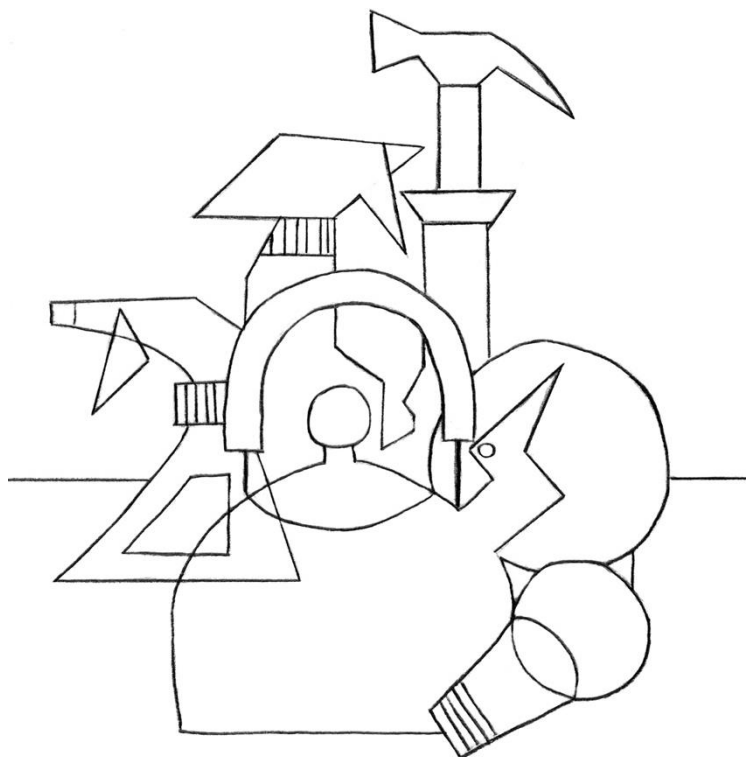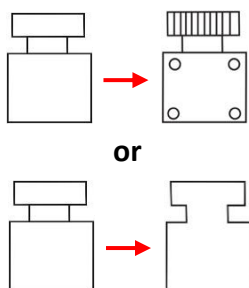
Helpful hint: for best abstract effect, trace over all final lines of the drawing, pressing hard to create dark, bold, uniform outlines that will flatten all the shapes together. Use a ruler as needed for precise lines.
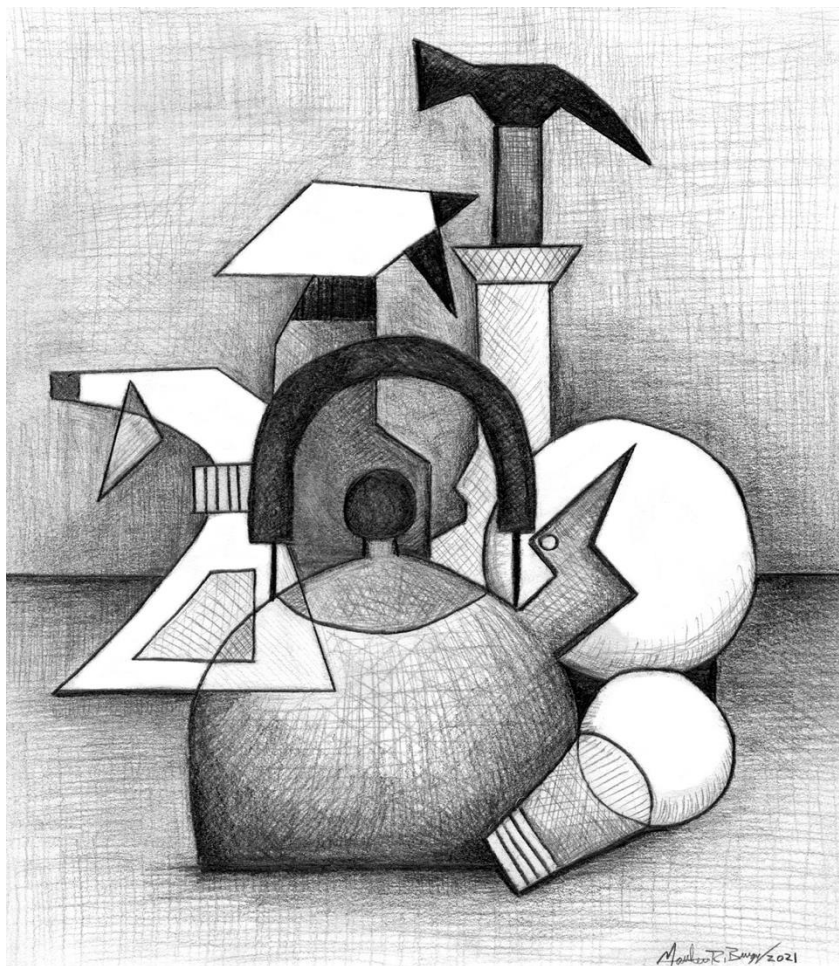
Step 6

Use the **cross-hatching** technique of layered parallel lines to add texture, value, and detail to the drawing as desired.

cross-hatching

Helpful hint: use a full range of value, leaving a few shapes without any value, a few shapes as dark as possible and the rest in varying mid-range levels.

Helpful hint: for best visual effect, avoid making areas where shapes touch the exact same value. Allow the background to be a mid-tone and use the brightness or darkness of the objects be a guide. Add dimension with value where desired.

Note: darker values will push into the background, lighter values will pull forward to the foreground. To pull a shape forward, darken areas around that shape or erase the shape itself. To push an object backward, darken the shape itself or lighten all shapes around it with an eraser. For extra dark lines, use a darker leaded pencil (6B or 8B pencil).

Resources

Learn more about DAI's Special Exhibition *Ralston Crawford: Air + Space + War*
Watch an artist create a drawing using the cross-hatching value technique