

# Starting Out

For Artists' Exercises, it might be best that I recommend Kimon Nikolaides. A Hungarian teacher who lived in America in the 1930s. His devoted students compiled a book, after his untimely death called 'The Natural Way to Draw'. It is very enlightening and though strict it is packed with wisdom.

I also would look closely at Stanley Spencer as his technical ability has such a great breath to offer and he mastered different languages in his painting work. A great teacher for any novice to study.

Starting a new picture for myself, can be a very challenging thing. I use my memory foremost to recall and record the more meaningful themes of my life.

The most important thing is that I make a piece that I want to engage with, a piece that resonates deeply and leads on to further thoughts, recollections and emotion. It can't be a superfluous decoration or it just becomes a cul de sac.

How do I ensure this?

Testing the durability of a certain idea with small scale preparatory works. The use of drawing is fundamental. Through economy of line there is great honesty and direct access to both emotion and intelligence.

Sometimes it is hard to get it right. One needs to hone skills or warm up. Attending a life drawing class is perhaps an artificial or pedestrian way to start something so personal, but it does work.

It throws out questions that you are forced, in that regulated environment, to address within a given three hour limit. You get results and then you can evaluate from there. I know I sound very plain, but it should not at all be complicated. Art is as much about thought as about action. One needs to train at it, to practice, and refine.

I have gone through many stages since I began, and I seek to continue to learn more about humanity and nature through an empirical approach. Being at peace with the state flux is also a very useful tool when I work.

Almost as much as the classics of fiction (right now, Pamuk and Dickens) I enjoy reading autobiographies. Some favourites of mine include: Walter Sickert, Isadora Duncan, John Skeaping, Sally Mann.

I have yet to read de Chirico, and so many others are also on my list.

I hunger for good writing and think so much can be learned from the descriptive powers of writers to extend the artists visual imagination (and vice versa).

But for any young person, starting out, I would just say to let the books

come to you organically reach to what speaks to you. The exact same applies with looking at images.