Observational Drawing Workshop – Inspired by: 'How to Be an artist, 33 rules to take you from clueless amateur to generational talent (or at least help you live life a little more creatively).' By Jerry Saltz.

Lesson 1: Don't Be Embarrassed

"I get it. Making art can be humiliating, terrifying, leave you feeling foul, exposed, like getting naked in front of someone else for the first time. **You often reveal things about yourself that others may find appalling, weird, boring, or stupid.** People may think you're abnormal or a hack. Fine. When I work, I feel sick to my stomach with thoughts like *None of this is any good. It makes no sense.* **But art doesn't have to make sense. It doesn't even need to be good.** So don't worry about being smart and let go of being "good." (Saltz, 2018).

Lesson Plan:
Session Length: 20 minutes
Group Size: 5 participants & 5 Objects
Materials: Paper, Pens and Pencils, Timer, Recorder, Objects.

Lesson Structure & Timing
2 min | Introduction

- 'This workshop focuses on trusting instinct, close observation, and releasing control. It is also an icebreaker to help loosen up and feel creative.'
- **Emphasise expressive lines mark-making over perfection**
- **Explain object rotation process**
- **Draw one item per page**

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2 min | Object 1: No-Peaking Drawing

- Looking away from the paper
- Continuous line drawing

Pass object to the next participant

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2 min | Object 2: Non-Dominant Hand Drawing

- Participants draw the object using their non-dominant hand
- Eyes open, continuous line encouraged

➡ **Pass object to the next participant**

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2 min | Object 3: Closed-eyes Drawing Through Touch Dominant Hand

- Non dominant hand explores object
- Dominant hand draws without looking at the object

➡ **Pass object to the next participant**

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2 mins 30 Sec x4 | Fast Observational Drawing

- Eyes open, dominant hand
- 3 rapid drawings (30 seconds each)

➡ **Pass object to the next participant**

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1 min | Feedback & Reflection

- Drawings laid out on table together

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8 mins Reflection | Prompt questions:

- **"What surprised you?"**
- **"How did it feel to draw without control?"**
- **"Did your observation change over the rounds?"**

Reinforce:

- **Expressive lines over perfection**
- **Value of shared experimentation and risk-taking**
- **Break down previous learnt experiences, child-like and freeing, creating unique drawings. Icebreaker?**

Learning Intentions

- To encourage expressive, exploratory drawing through sensory-based observation
- To reduce fear of failure and increase creative confidence
- To develop observational and tactile awareness
- To support collaboration and group reflection

Intended Learning Outcomes

Participants will:

- Draw with increased confidence and spontaneity
- Demonstrate improved observational and perceptual skills
- Engage in creative risk-taking and non-traditional drawing approaches
- Reflect critically on their drawing experience
- Builds confidence and spontaneity
- Strengthens drawing and observational skills
- Supports relationship building
- Ideal for warming up or breaking creative blocks.

References

Saltz, J (2018) *How to Be an Artist*. *Vulture*, 27 Nov. Available at: https://www.vulture.com/2018/11/jerry-saltz-how-to-be-an-artist.html (Accessed: 10 February 2026).