

Light and Darkness

An Illustrated Guide to Shaded Drawing

By Gertraud Goodwin

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Review by Michael Howard

As the subtitle suggests, Gertraud Goodwin's book is indeed "an illustrated guide to shaded drawing," but it is much more as well.

While making clear that shaded drawing has a long history of great masters, most notably Rembrandt, Goodwin sets out to build upon the contributions to this art made by Rudolf Steiner in the early part of the 20th century. Steiner was careful to avoid dogmatic pronouncements about style, but he did draw attention to the qualitative character of different kinds and directions of strokes, most notably a diagonal right to left stroke that Goodwin uses extensively, but not exclusively, in her book.

In the first sections, Goodwin introduces the reader to such practical considerations as the need for a full range of hard to soft pencils in order to create a full spectrum of light to dark shading. She then provides a sequence of eight exercises that introduce basic techniques of shaded drawing, as well as fundamental form elements such as having light in the center transitioning to dark at the periphery, compared to having dark in the center transitioning to light in the periphery. With such a beginning, anyone who has never tried shaded drawing before will soon feel in the hands of a teacher who brings a wealth of experience to introducing the subject. However, anyone looking for a book that holds their hand from beginning to end concerning drawing should be forewarned that Goodwin's book offers another direction that is rewarding in other ways.

For example, the section following the eight introductory exercises contains another sequence of eight drawings in which Goodwin has developed motifs related to the intervals of the musical scale. The drawings are simple enough that they could be used as studies to copy and, in this way, develop further technical skill and feeling for the expressive potentials of light and dark shading. If so inclined, one could continue through the rest of the book, copying or creating variations of Goodwin's drawings, either in the order they appear or as the spirit moves one.

Single drawings are not presented by themselves but rather in every section we find a sequence of drawings with a range of motifs. In part, this is because the themes Goodwin introduces are the 8 intervals of music, 7 planetary qualities, 12 zodiacal qualities, 5 stages of loss (grieving and so on) and 10 festivals of the year. Goodwin also introduces the subject of metamorphosis as a fundamental aspect of her artistic work. At first, she brings metamorphosis in relation to finding the right technique and style of drawing for a given subject matter. This leads to another section where Goodwin describes five steps in the creative process that involve an inner metamorphosis that she relates to five

planetary qualities. In the middle of the book, we meet sections with titles like "A Sequence of Metamorphosis in Seven Steps" and "the Metamorphosis of the Cross" where exploring the principle of metamorphosis becomes the primary impetus for creating the sequence of motifs.

Another noteworthy aspect of this book is that the title to many sections includes the year that Gertraud created the drawings – from as early as 1986 up to 2006. In a couple of cases, we are given two sequences with the same theme: Music Intervals I from 1986 and Musical Intervals II from 1993 and two Meditations on the Earth from 1995. It becomes clear that Goodwin is an artist who pursues her art, not as a form of spontaneous self-expression, but as a rigorous and sustained path of investigation in how to make visible what otherwise remains invisible to human experience. Because of this, her drawings, for the most part, are not representational. The book is therefore more than a collection of an artist's drawings; it represents the fruits of a spiritual scientific researcher that works in and through the art of drawing.

And finally, for those who may have little inclination to take pencil in hand, I see good reason to turn the pages of Gertraud's book for the pleasure and satisfaction it will surely give. In simply leafing through, you may find yourself living into the movement and play of light and dark in one particular drawing, and then another. In time, one may discover a dynamic transformation from one drawing to the next and, eventually, through a whole sequence. In this manner, contemplating works of art can become a form of spiritual practice.

I recommend Gertraud Goodwin's book, not only for those seeking an introduction to shaded drawing, but also to anyone, artist and non-artist alike, who may find in it an inspiration to take up one's personal and vocational questions as subjects for sustained spiritual inquiry. I have every confidence that the multiple dimensions contained in *Light and Darkness* will speak to the interest and spiritual needs of many readers.

Michael Howard