Chapter 1
Seeing Life

So, what is it that creates life? Force! Force, or energy with purpose, is what we want to recognize in the world around us. I am going to lead you on a force full journey that will change the way you perceive the world you live in. This new perception will clear your mind of the fog of assumption. You will live in a new truth. This in turn will make you appreciate life to a new degree.

Drawing is the profound vehicle for our journey. Through it you will also learn about yourself. Always remember what you put down on the page is a direct reflection of your thoughts and feelings.

There is so much to appreciate and enjoy, so let's get started.

THE AWARENESS OF FORCE

Drawing the body's forces is the least talked about subject in figure drawing classes today, and is yet the most important. The majority of books and instructors teach about copying what you see and not understanding it. I was extremely fortunate to have Jim McMullan as an instructor and close friend at the School of Visual Arts. He taught me to be aware of life in the figure.

The human figure is always full of force – no matter how still it may seem. We are built to move and therefore even when a model is standing straight, there are forces to comprehend and address. We are always under the influence of gravity, which is an all-encompassing force to recognize. When drawing, we need to think about the beauty of why and how the model works, not worry what angle to hold a pencil at in order to shade appropriately.

> "Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is the probable reason why so few engage in it."
> Henry Ford

You want to draw what you know and empathize with. Draw with the mind's eye, not only your vision. If you find you are having a hard time figuring out what is happening in a pose, then assume the pose yourself. This will definitely help your awareness of force. We are all people. If a model takes a pose that radiates joy and you copy that pose physically yourself (all the way down to the facial expression), you will begin to feel what the model is feeling and know physically what the model is doing. When you see someone who is sad, how is it that you know that person feels that way? As a

fellow human being, you know that you take on the same physiology when you feel sad. You experience empathy through humanity.

Never forget that mind and body are one!

The main idea in the figure

Let's discuss the pyramid of ideas that represent the model's pose. Remember we want to deal with the top of the pyramid, the largest idea, first. You will be creating some general statements about the figure. They will be the first step on your road to understanding force. With experience you will become more specific.

An exercise I do in class is to have the model pose for five minutes. For the first minute, I have the students write what their goals are going to be in drawing the model. I have them list the goals in a hierarchal manner. Then, for the last four minutes, they draw the model and achieve the goals they have written.

Directional force: a beginning, middle, and end

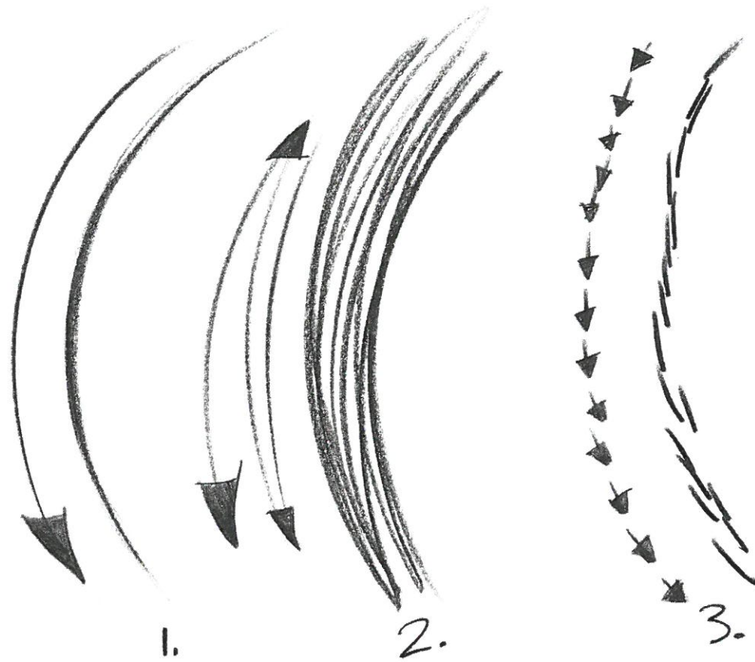
Using the comparison of a writer to an artist, to express our ideas we must understand our drawn language via its own vocabulary. The more vast our vocabulary, the clearer, more intelligent, and expressive our thoughts. There are no great writers without the knowledge to write.

Our language throughout this book is drawing and our understanding of line is our control of that language. The strength of line is immeasurable. To harness its power, though, one must understand how to see force. Draw the verbs of the figure. This is where we want to direct our concentration. Draw what the body is doing, not just the body. While having an internal dialog, think "the stretching arm or thrusting hip," not "the arm is here and it's this thick and look at the shadow on it." Verbs come first and then the noun it is affecting. I will have students bring in a thesaurus to increase their vocabulary and thus their experience of the model.

As important as line is, remember that the drawings are not about line. They are about ideas. The line is your idea. Don't do a drawing for the sake of beautiful lines. Create a drawing that expresses your experience.

Here is the type of line that most describes force in the body.

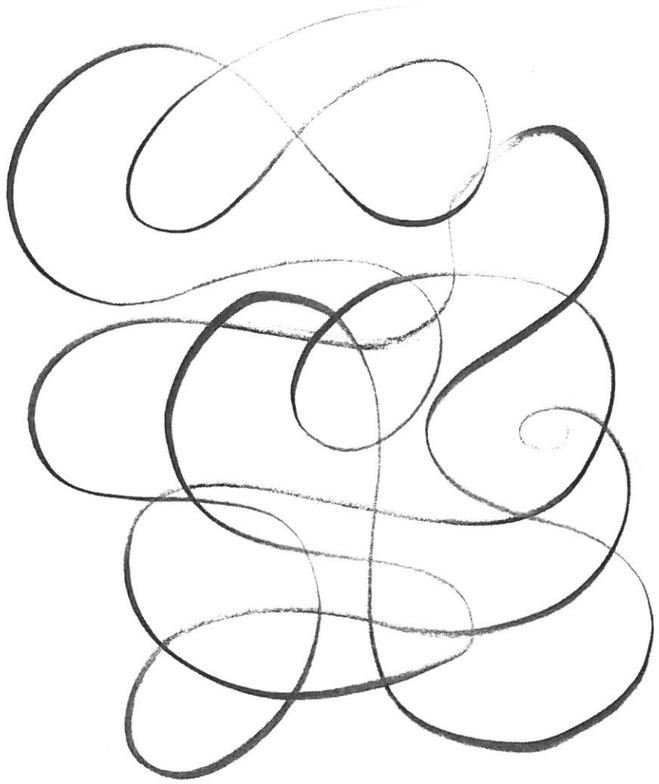
One line per energy or idea



1. Here is our curved line with force and direction. The one line addresses one idea. The line starts somewhere, does something, and goes somewhere. This is achieved with a confident stroking of the paper with the pencil. The arrow example shows you the direction of the energy or its path. This is *directional force*.
2. This is our first student habit. It is sketchy and created by backward and forward motion. No direction. The line, or more importantly, its idea, does not start somewhere, have a purpose, and go somewhere. There is no clear idea.
3. This is the infamous hairy line. Uncertainty takes us from one place to another through thousands of minuscule thoughts instead of drawing one line per idea. Doing this never gives you the opportunity to move onto bigger issues or feel force and direction in your hand and mind.

Forewarning: Don't think that I am talking about being uptight with the line. You don't have to get it right the first time. Let your hand sweep over the paper's surface in the directions the model is moving until you have absorbed the pose's idea. Then start making your marks by slowly applying

pressure to the paper with the pencil while you are still in motion. Notice how you can control the line's value. This discipline of mark making is of tremendous value because when you draw, your head will already be thinking about where energy is coming from, what it is doing, and where it is going. Feel liberated and excited, and be courageous.



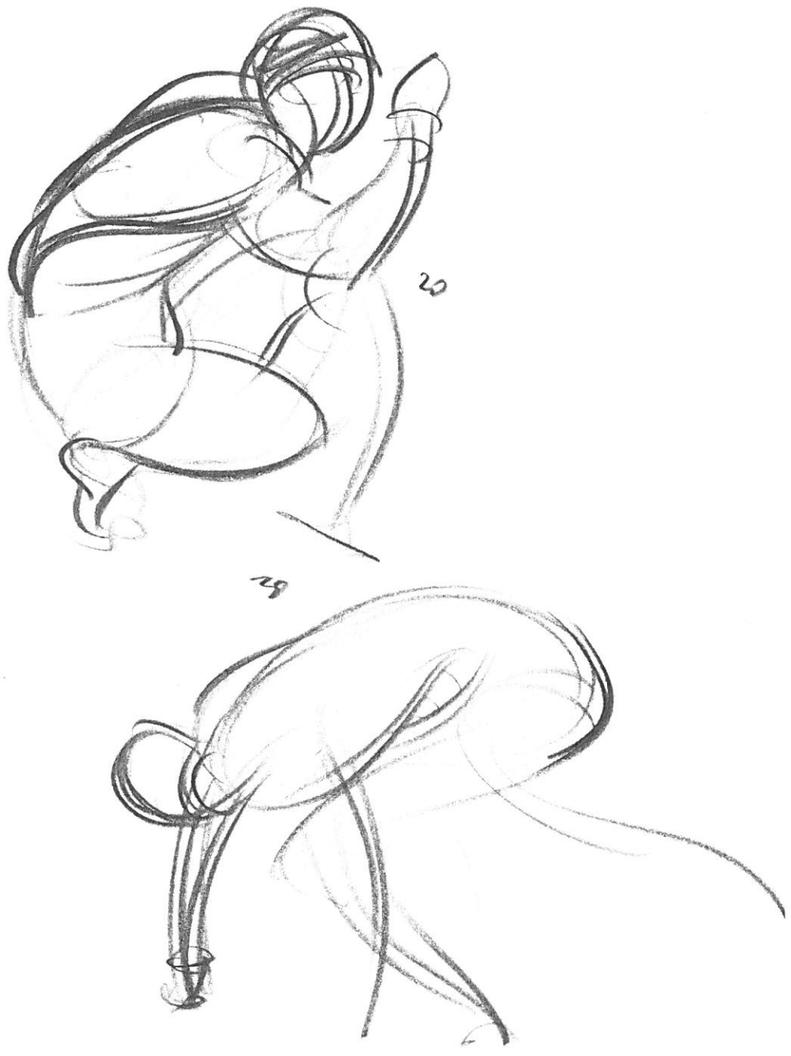
Skating the page

An excellent way to get the physical sensation of force is to close your eyes and skate the page with your drawing utensil. Imagine your speed across the smooth, hard, and cold ice. Feel the blades carve deep as you dig into a curve. Your mark on the page should get heavier as this happens. Notice how fluidly you move. There are no clumsy, pinched moments.

Draw small, think big

A great tactic for understanding hierarchy is to draw small. That will help you think about the big picture. This helps you see the body as one story. It is your time to think and it also helps liberate you from feeling committed to your drawing. It's great to draw and redraw that main idea. Draw small and think big. The down side to this is that you stay distanced from the model emotionally. The ultimate scenario is to fill the page with the model's full figure.

Here are some small one-minute drawings that show the story of each pose.



Here are half-minute drawings. The body's entire pose is the key to understanding it.

So this pose reminded me of a monkey and that was my bigger thought as I attempted getting the full figure's idea on the page. See the simple curves of force in the back and arms.

This two minute shows the big picture. With more time, more information was added. Here we have much more structure.

If you are having a hard time finding a directional force curve, try drawing two curves that are opposite each other, one convex and one concave, to see which resembles the figure's main force the most. One of the curves will fit into the puzzle in front of you and the other will be opposing the model's movement. They are generic now, but this will give you an introduction to force. These drawings are usually done in thirty seconds to five minutes. The first force you should look for is the one that tells us the idea behind the connection between the ribcage and the pelvis. Here are some fast drawings to show you my initial reaction to the model's movements.

See the power of the directional curves. I do a great deal of drawing through the model to understand where forces begin and end. Above the main drawing are simplifications of the pose using curves of force.

1 and 2 are examples of picking a curve for the direction of the upper body.

See how drawing 2 works because the model is obviously moving towards his right knee. Draw 3 is the same as 2.

4 was to show an awareness of tangents, a topic I will cover in more detail later. This is a close-up of the model's jaw and center of the chest. These two moments would have been flattened if the two ideas were drawn with one line.

This drawing by Barrett captures the vigor of the pose. The cumulative energy of the back sweeps up into the musculature of the upper body and disperses to the arms and head. It's like shooting fireworks, as the thumbnail shows.

The model has a pull from his hands up through his back and down into his feet. The focal point of force here, or the apex of the directional curve, is the lower back. If the model were to let go, this is the direction he would fall in.

I am so happy I went through many attempts to understand this pose. Look at these drawings in the order they are numbered.

In drawing 1. we have the beginning of force in the left side of the model's upper back. I was dissatisfied with the mediocrity of this drawing. The model was so much more alive and aggressive than my weak depiction of him. Also, the motivation for the push in the back begins at the right deltoid.

In drawing 2. the directional force is more aggressive. Its curve is stronger. There is more thrust into the left side of the back and here we witness more reaction of this force in the remainder of the back's musculature.

Finally, in my third venture, the main idea has extended much further. Now we see that the pose is about the inward thrust of the lower ribcage against the upward energy in the right arm. This combination of forces is what creates the strain in the upper back and pushes the left shoulder out. This page is a great example of:

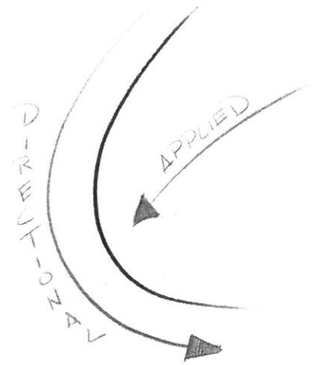
1. Investigating a pose to gain understanding.
2. Searching for how far a force travels and its true motivation.
3. Not settling for the first attempt. Keep working at a drawing until it feels like the model's effort. It is easy to obtain mediocrity and challenging to stare into the visage of splendor.

"I am not discouraged, because every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward."
Thomas Edison

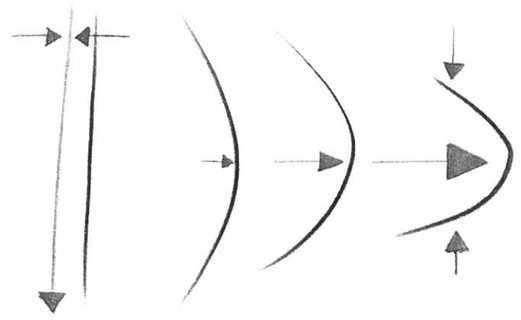
Applied force

Besides the line giving us a linear direction or path of force, it also tells us how much force is being applied upon it. This is extremely important because the force applied upon the line will be a previous directional force. That previous directional force dictates how strong the applied force is.

These concepts are proven to us in everyday reality through physics. If these lines were roads, you would obviously be able to drive your car through a straightaway faster than you would through a curve. The tighter a curve is, the more you have to decelerate to drive through it. When driving through the curve, the place where you would feel the most amount of force would be at its apex. The force would diminish as you pulled out of it, allowing you to gain speed. Let's look at this in line.



The drawing above presents us with a line that starts with much speed (by its straightness) and then slows through the curve. We also see that the line shows us a mass that is bottom heavy because of where the apex of the curve is located on the line. The attitude or direction of the mass is pushing in the direction of the gray arrow on the right, which represents applied force. Now, if we look at both of the arrows, we get a sense of purpose from the line that takes the mass down and to the left and then directs us to the right.



In talking about the amount of force being applied upon a line, we can use the analogy of a flexible metal bar. The curvature of a line tells us how much force it is revealing to us. The line on the left is stretched between two points and shows us speed. The line on the far right has the most amount of force applied to it because of how strong its curvature is. In animation terms, it is "squashed," which tells us that there is force pushing on it from above and below. The mass being pushed on is thrusting out, shown to us by the curve. This curved directional force is also slower than the first force.

Curved lines are more forceful than straights since they clearly show us directional and applied forces.

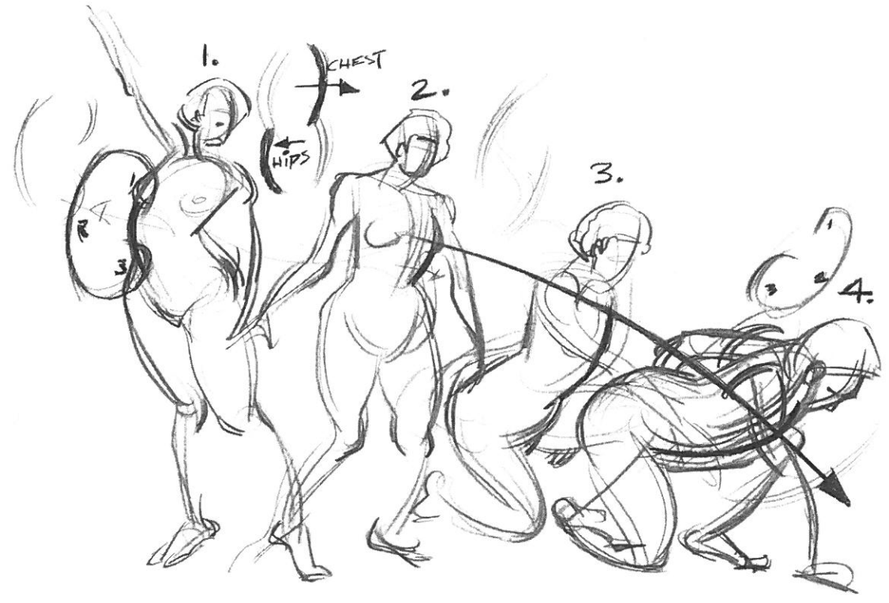
Here is a clear example of applied force. Look at how strongly it is pushing up into the hip. I also described the rhythm of the right leg shooting up into that hip.

In this drawing, the model's left shoulder is an obvious apex of applied force. Look at how it fluidly connects to the direction of the neck.

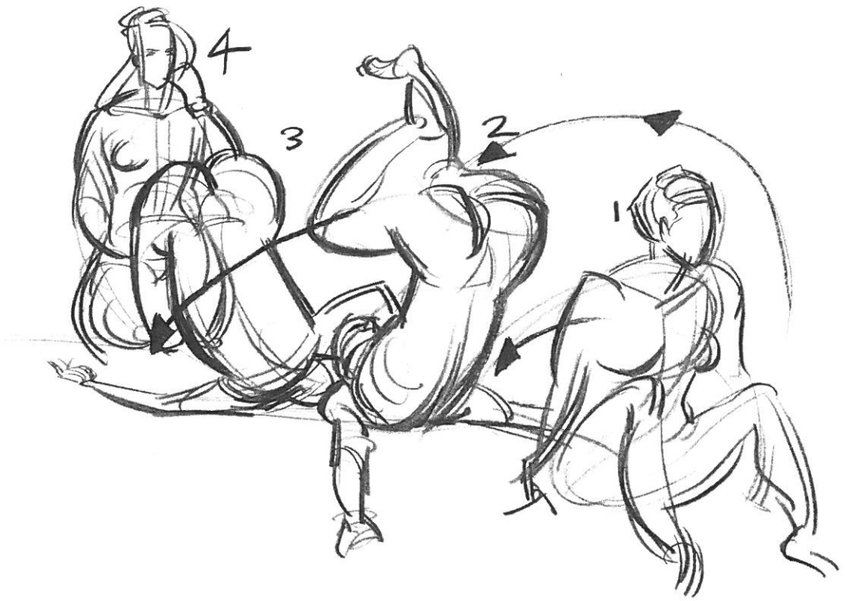
In this drawing by Mike D., you can see directional force apply itself into the model's left shoulder and back.

The leading edge

The leading edge is the edge of the body that leads a motion. This is where the largest amount of applied force can be found. A past force that directs itself to this moment in the body creates it. To help students understand this idea, I describe it as the bow of a ship or a catch of force. A simple way of finding this is to watch the model go through a movement. The direction of his or her motion gives you the answers.

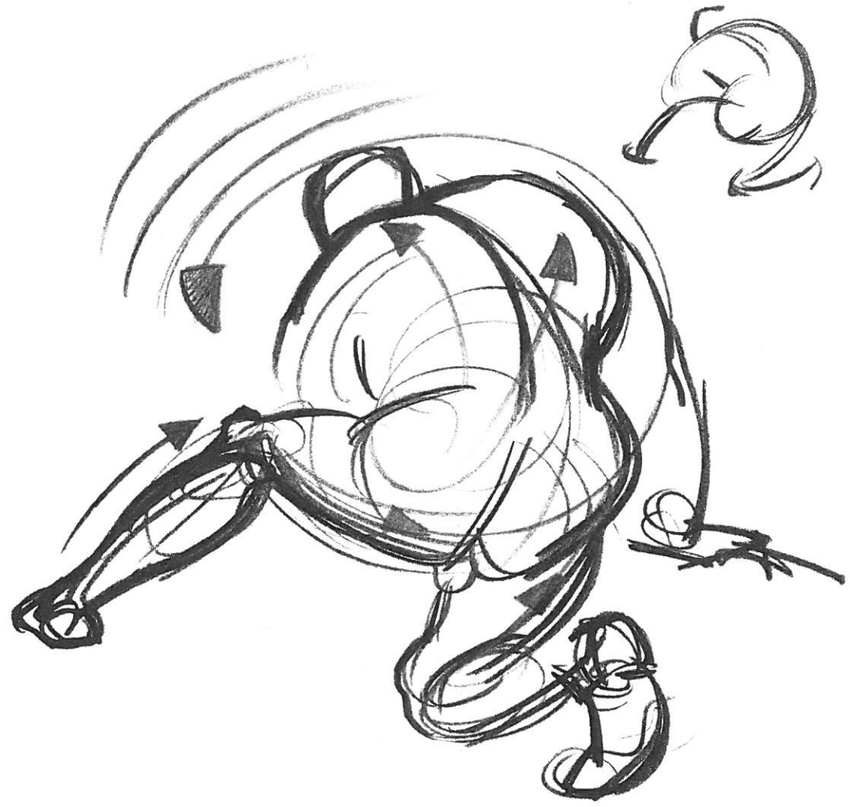


In these drawings, see how the leading edge is the ribcage. In drawing 1. the ribcage directs us to the left, as the head looks right. The model's upper body turns in the direction of the head in drawing 2. When it does everything follows it. The arrow from 2. through 4. represents the direction of applied force that creates the strengthened curve of the ribcage.



This was an adventurous and daring motion. The model executed a backward roll on the platform! At 1 the leading edge is her upper back. It initiates the drive down to the platform. At 2 her legs become the leading edge. They help continue the momentum over her upper body and get us into 3. Here her right knee brings us down to the platform and the ribcage shows what direction (from left to right) she rolls in. Then finally in 4 her upper back returns her to the seated position.

The following drawings are the model standing still. Nonetheless, we want to see movement. Pay attention to he or she getting into the pose to help recognize the leading edge of applied force. The repetitive lines in some of the drawings show also the direction the model would have moved in. I have drawn thumbnails to show you what my approach was on these poses. Enjoy the energy.



The model here takes an aggressive counter clockwise rotation. His left leg is the brace for this motion. Applied force is constantly pushing against the directional curve. The leading edge is where you see the repetitive lines above his left shoulder. Think of this concept as deciding where the model is going.

I love the upward rotational thrust into her ribcage. Again, the leading edge is the place with the three lines. It feels as if she would push herself forward to continue the motion of the pose. The applied force found here originates in the hips.

It is obvious here how much applied force there is in the model's shoulders. See the strength of the curve. Here is our catch or ship's bow from all of the force she is using to pull back on the rope. This is also the peak of our leading edge. She would continue this pose in the direction of her shoulder.

Here the model's stretched arm acts like the arrow that relates directly to the applied force and leading edge of the back.

In the first half of this chapter, we discussed directional and applied force. Now we will see how the union of the two creates rhythm and harmony.

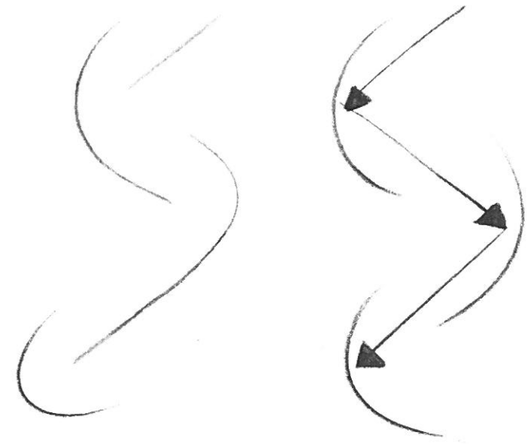
THE ROAD OF RHYTHM

A rhythm is the beautiful and seamless interplay of different forces in the body that helps it stay in balance, or creates equilibrium. Rhythm exists in all living things. Your understanding of rhythm will help you create living drawings.

Gravity is the reason we have rhythmic balance in our bodies. Our anatomy is not linear but asymmetrical in its musculature. This allows us motion against the force of gravity and equalization when standing still. Understand this will help you draw a living, grounded, balanced figure.

> "The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later, when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life."
>
> William Faulkner

One line or idea is a force; two forces create rhythm. To draw rhythm, we must understand the relationship between two directional forces or ideas. The attitude or direction of one line or force will apply itself towards the next. In the first part of this chapter, we discussed directional and applied force. The applied force is actually part of the body's rhythm. It is the result of an earlier directional force. Energy is coming from somewhere and sweeping into the main idea of the pose. Some students understand this better as action, reaction, or moments of pressure.



In the drawing on the left, notice at the top we begin the same way we did in our description of applied force. On the right, we see applied force represented by the arrows pushing into directional force drawn in curves. The directional force then directs us to another place in the body. The directional force becomes applied force. When this energy hits its next exchange and needs to be redirected, it hits a new directional force and then turns into an applied force once more.