

Learning to Draw Portraits

by Angel Ganev

Step 1: The Lay In



Helps you understand the proportions of the human face by using the rhythm lines.

Builds the habit of you thinking about the face as a 3d object.

Think about drawing a big structure, rather than some flat lines.

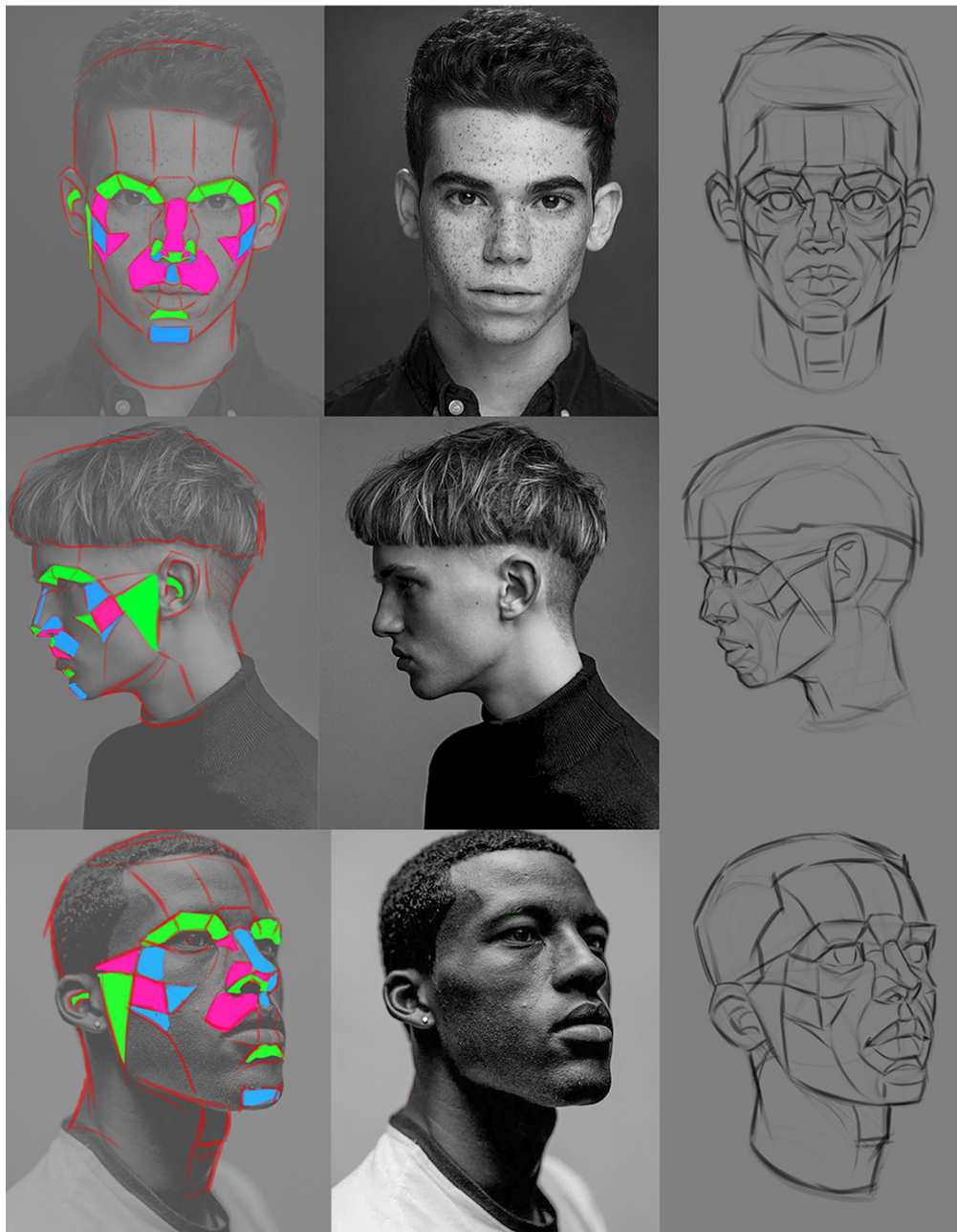
Try to envision where every single rhythm goes in different angles.

Don't rush it, spend time making sure that you have the right proportions. Use the tracing to check your own mistakes.

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Step 2: Planes of the Head



Now that you have the big structure from the Lay In, break down how the planes of the head sit on top of it.

Try to picture how the two work together, it's not just some random lines, it's a puzzle and you have to solve it.

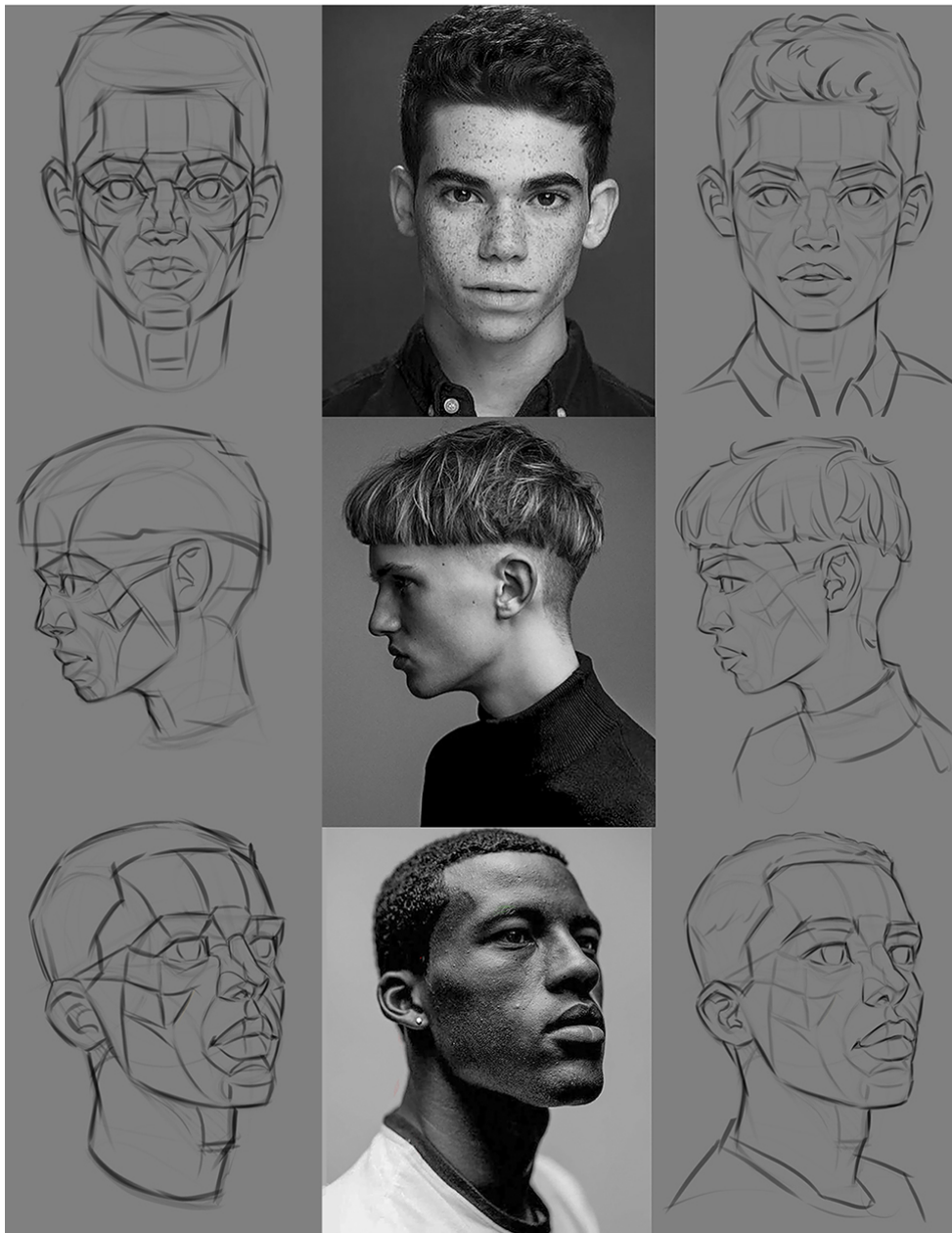
Unless you master these planes, you won't be able to shade because you won't be sure what you are actually shading.

Use the Asaro Head to help you learn and do it countless of times until you start seeing where every plane goes in different angles.

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Step 3: Lineweight



When the planes become second nature to you, start thinking about lineweight.

That means, pay attention to where your lines are thicker and where they are thinner.

The more weight there is in an area, the more you're showing it's importance.

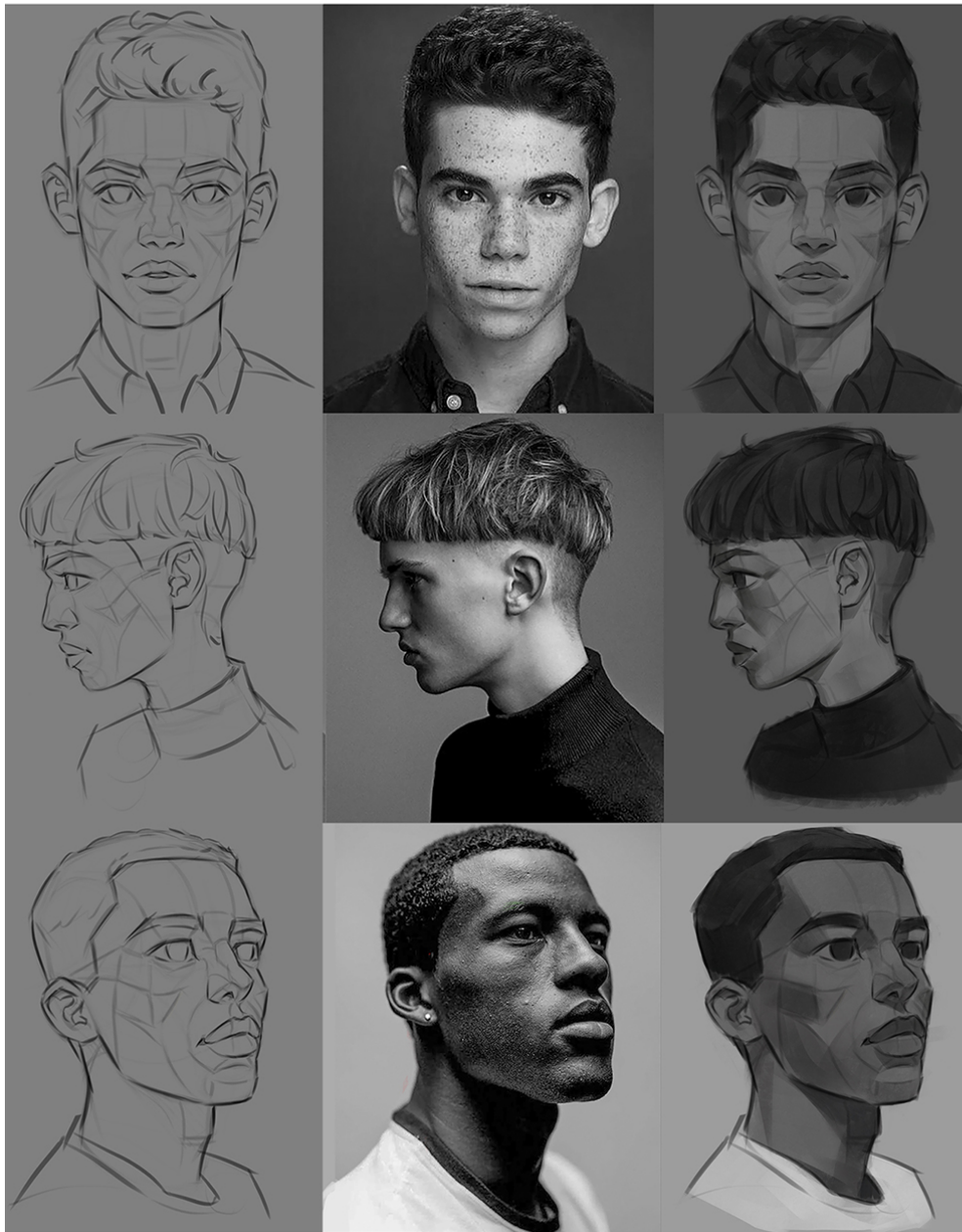
So all of the features, along with the hair and places where there's more shadows, are going to be thicker.

Look at different sketches and analyze what makes them beautiful. Be confident and press hard. Make sure your brush has 'transfer' and 'pen pressure' turned on.

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Step 4: Shading Planes



When your lines finally look solid, and you understand lineweight, start shading *planes*.

Remember, this not about it looking like the reference, it's about you understanding how to shade.

Don't render or blend, try to only seperate the shadow from the light.

There's two type of shadows, core shadows and drop shadows.

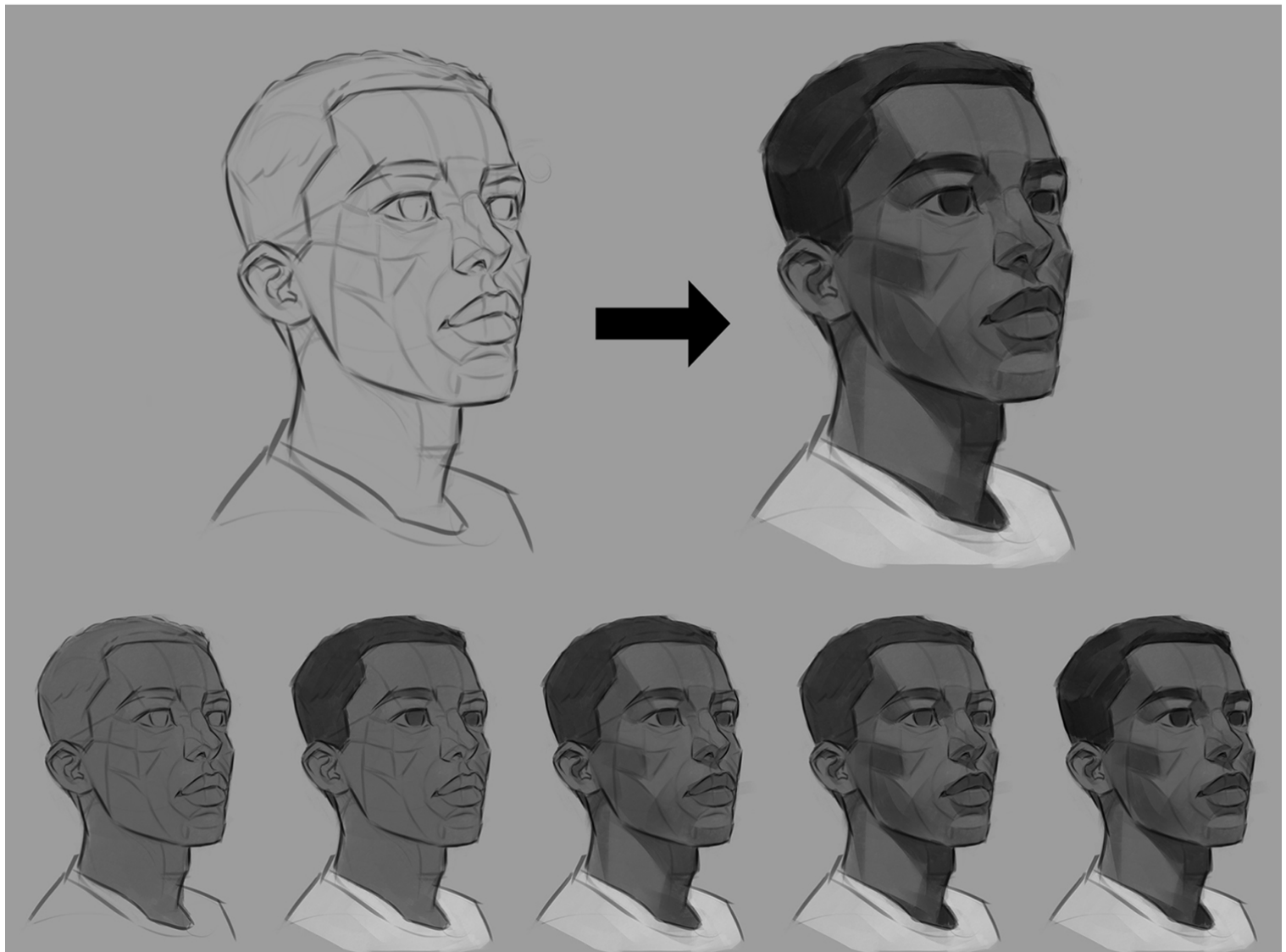
Core shadows come from the turning of form. Drop shadows come from other objects. Always know which one you're shading.

Use a hard brush and hard edges. Keep it simple.

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Step 4: Shading Planes



1. Local Value
+Background

2. Darker Local

3. 1st Shadows

4. 2nd Shadows

5. Hair + Eye
Shadows

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Step 5: Shading Transitions



Only proceed to transitions if you're super comfortable with breaking down shadows.

Think about this step as „coloring by numbers“.

You're trying to assign every plane a specific value. Don't go the full spectrum of values because you will only confuse yourself.

Instead pick 5 different values - Dark Shadows, Regular Shadows, Shadow Transitions, Light Transitions, and Highlights.

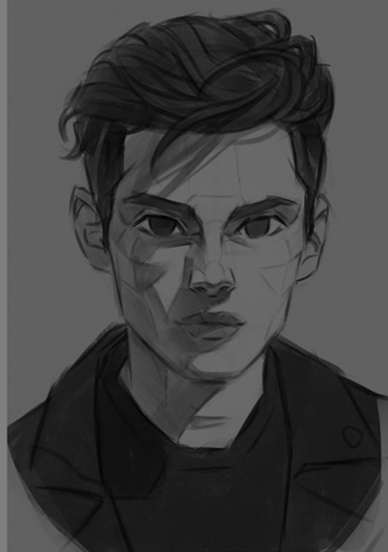
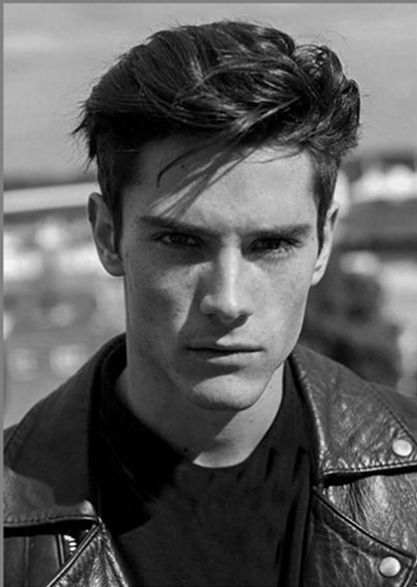
Don't be tempted to render or blend over the planes because you will destroy the structure that you've built.

Think about the transitions between the planes but keep them separate.

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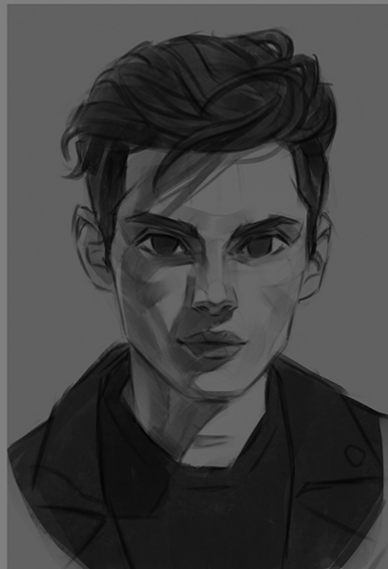
Step 5: Shading Transitions



1. Light&Shadow
breakdown



2. Fading lines



3. Refining planes
& halftones



4. Highlights

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Step 6: Rendering



I know this is the step that you've been waiting for and I don't even know your current level, but trust me, *you're not ready.*

You see that there's a very small difference between the last step and this one.

And that's what rendering is supposed to be about, just further refining your edges and transitions.

It's not about adding details or trying to fix your older mistakes.

You're only refining what you've already *built*.

And if you've practiced the steps before until you get sick, this one should be easy.

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Masters' work and Conclusion



Credit: The amazing Chinese artist - Yanjun Cheng

It's not about you creating the most realistic painting ever, so you can impress some goofy people on Instagram. The camera will always beat you in realism.

It's about you understanding the human face and shading so well, that you can simplify things and show more with less.

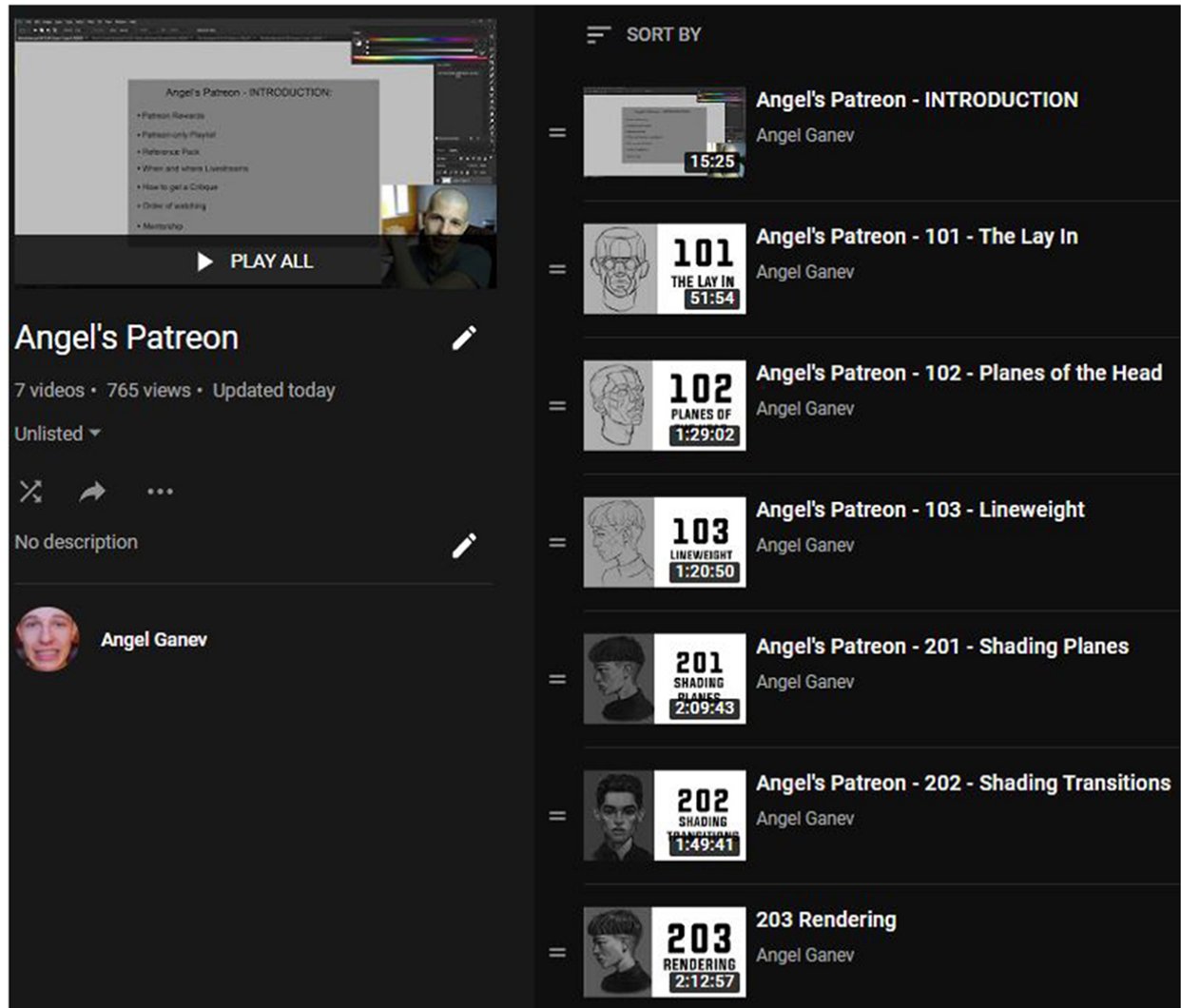
Aesthetics don't come from detail, they come from good decisions on what to paint and what *not* to paint. The power that you have as an artist is the ability to choose what to leave out of a painting.

And the best way to know what to leave out is to understand what you are actually painting, rather than just trying to copy it.

So this exercises were created exactly for that, to understand the human face and get better as artist, not to learn how to create a 'realistic' portrait in 6 steps.

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I've created a detailed in-depth video for every single exercise.
You can find all of the tutorials on my Patreon.
www.patreon.com/angelganev

Remember, even though these are 'steps', this is not a step-by-step tutorial.
Every one of these takes weeks, if not even *months*, before you get to the next one.
You can't just follow some goofy steps on the internet and expect to get better in
couple of days.

Luv u and go for yourself <3
Yours truly,
Angel