

GIFTED WITH GRAPHITE

Writer  
Twinkle Troughton

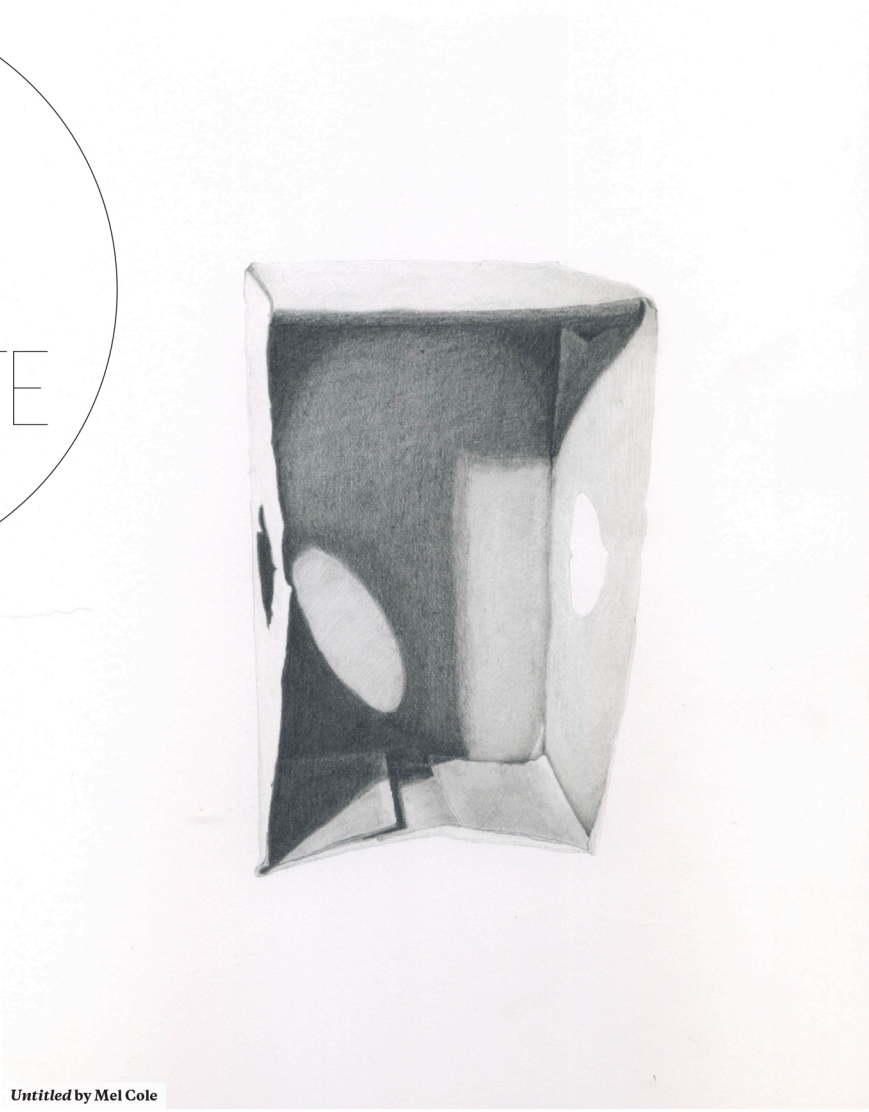
**Drawing is both ancient and contemporary; it can be a serious focus of artistic exploration or a pleasurable pursuit. Four local artists discuss what drawing means to them, and offer tips for your own endeavours**

Some of the oldest drawings on the planet can be found on the walls of caves in France, dating back some 40,000 years, depicting thoughts and ideas that went beyond the lexicon at that time. This ancient art form is also considered to be integral to a child's development and understanding of the world around them. Through the centuries, drawing has been used to document and story-tell, as well as to provide a vital form of artistic expression. Therefore it is through drawing that we can understand a little more about the world around us.

Drawing takes many forms. From the scientifically precise drawings of Leonardo da Vinci to the intensity of Egon Schiele's expressive lines and the personal, intimate works of Tracey Emin, drawing is a language unique to each artist.

But for those who aren't practising artists, drawing can also be therapeutic and pleasurable. Yet it is an activity that many give up on over time, whether that's due to discouragement in early years or increasingly busy lives.

Here in Margate, we meet four artists whose work is steeped in the medium of drawing, and who each have their own distinctive approach.



Untitled by Mel Cole

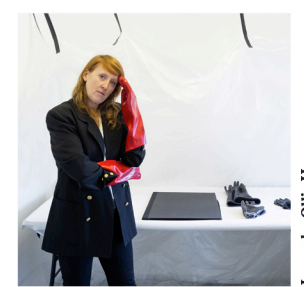


Image by Ollie Harrop

Mel Cole's delicate drawings depict objects people often overlook. The crumpled form of a knotted black bin bag or the frailty of an old cardboard box are sensitively conveyed, while purposely avoiding sentimentality and cliché.

Describing her work, Mel says: "My drawings are abstract but object. In the drawings there is an absence of something that suggests a psychological multiplicity, dealing with the dark side of personality. The drawings contain thoughts unsaid."

Working from a table in her bedroom, Mel tells me that each drawing takes a couple of days to make. She sharpens her pencils with a nail file to make an even finer point with which to describe the detail and intricacy of her subject.

Mel studied for an MA in fine art at Camberwell College of Art in 2013, and her work has since taken her to New York as a part of Sluice Art Fair, and the The Wye in Berlin for an artist residency. Her most recent residency was at Margate's Bon Volks Studios, where she also exhibited.

When asked what she loves about drawing, she says: "I like how primal drawing is; I really love the sound of pencil on paper and the feeling of paper. I like drawing's simplicity; it's accessible to everyone. You can draw on the back of an envelope to describe thought and feeling."

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Lilias Buchanan grew up outside Edinburgh where she started drawing from a young age. From a creative family, her gran and great aunt both studied art in the 1950s, and Lilias followed in her Aunt Maggie's footsteps by studying illustration at Central St Martins in London.

Going on to study a diploma in drawing at the Royal Drawing School, Lilias herself now teaches drawing here in Margate, at both Resort Studios and Lovelys art shop.

When asked why she loves drawing, Lilias says: "I love the simple power of it; all I need is a pencil and some paper to jump into the world inside my head. I find writing difficult, so relish that I

can draw to communicate." Intrigued by shadows, and studying lights and darks, Lilias says that keeping a sketchbook is a very important process in her practice, helping to build narrative. She loves the versatility of the pencil, and her favourite is a Faber-Castell graphite pencil, telling me: "They are very smooth and can create a lot of depth."

Currently exploring symbolism within the fractured reality of her parallel world, Lilias is working on an exhibition for 2021, details of which are to be announced.

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Image by Jennifer Pattison



Yukiko and her Cat by Lilias Buchanan



Displaced portrait No. 15 (unknown mother and baby) by Roy Eastland

Lucy Lyons is currently drawing the mummified remains of Maren of Myra for Teknisk Museum in Oslo. This intriguing project is the latest in over twenty years of work focused on anatomy and pathology.

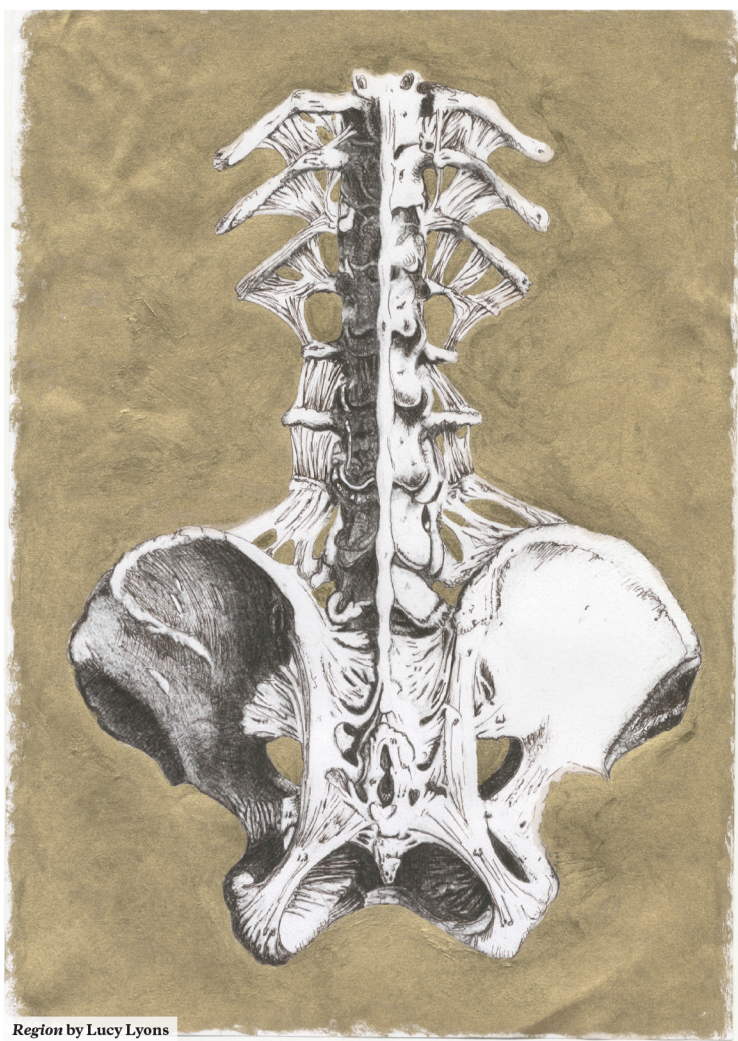
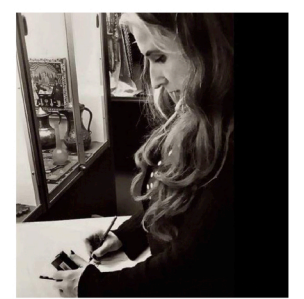
Lucy works directly from medical museum collections, conservation rooms, dissection rooms and operating theatres. She has studied drawing extensively. After completing a fine art MA at City & Guilds of London Art School, she went on to do a PhD in drawing at Sheffield Hallam University, and a post-doc at the University of Copenhagen.

Lucy says she is "at her happiest spending hours silently lost in observation, drawing fascinating examples of the human condition" and describes drawing as a slow intimate act, explaining: "It slows us down and allows us to engage in 'slow looking'."

Lucy's work is as likely to be found in scientific settings as any gallery. She has previously exhibited at the Museum of Natural History and the Old Operating Theatre in London, among others. She currently has work in the group exhibition *Under the Skin: Anatomy, Art and Identity* at the Royal College of Physicians in London (online until 1 January).

As well as lecturing in anatomy and drawing at UCL, and in drawing and critical context at The Margate School, Lucy runs artist residencies and exhibitions in her home, Gordon House Margate.

[lucylyons.org](http://lucylyons.org)  
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Region by Lucy Lyons

Roy Eastland specialises in silverpoint drawing, which is drawing using the trace of a metal point across a prepared surface. He describes silverpoint as a gentle and subtle medium, which is indelible and has a slight range of tones that oxidise over time, changing the hues of the marks.



Roy tells me: "Drawing is an affectionate act of paying attention to the presence of things." His series *Displaced Portraits*, which was exhibited as part of Margate Now in 2019, was based on photographs of people taken in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Roy found the photos in a Margate second hand shop, explaining that "sometimes I think of drawing as making ghosts. There is a beautiful uncertainty to things which drawings are able to show us. I think I'm trying to draw 'presence'."

Having studied across the UK, from Rochester to Stourbridge, and then to Edinburgh College of Art, he now lives and works back in Thanet, teaching drawing at Kent Adult Education and as an associate lecturer at UCA.

His drawings have been selected for the Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize and the Jerwood Drawing Prize on four occasions, and have been included in the BP Portrait Award and Discerning Eye Drawing, among others.

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WANT TO TRY YOUR HAND AT DRAWING?

**Our four artists offer you advice on what to do if you want to try drawing again or start as a beginner. And if you already draw, their words are likely to provide inspiration for you too.**

**MEL COLE:** "It's difficult being a beginner at anything, but trust your own way of drawing. Drawing is like handwriting, there are so many different ways of drawing there's no right or wrong. Drawing is a skill; if you want to draw in a particular way it takes a lot of practice. But the same applies if you're drawing in your own style; it takes time and practice to find your own language of drawing. Practising something can be boring, so draw something that excites you, freaks you out, or makes you laugh."

**LUCY LYONS:** "Drawing is looking. 'Slow looking' is key to seeing and engaging with the world and drawing is the touch that corresponds to each person's unique experience of this. I try to show students how incredible the world is by helping them see it in greater detail and touch it through the act of drawing."

**ROY EASTLAND:** "Hold a pencil and drag its point across a piece of paper in a line, zigzags, loops and scribbles. Feel your body performing those movements and see the trace of your line taking shape on the page. Now look at an object and choose two points on it and then imagine a line running between them. Pay attention to its angle and make your hand mimic its trajectory across your line of sight. Get used to that movement and, when you're ready, make that same movement with your pencil-point touching the paper. See, you can draw! Enjoy it!"

**LILIAS BUCHANAN:** "Draw the things in your life that mean something to you. It might be Christmas trees or it might be ketchup bottles; if it's something close to you then you will draw it with more enjoyment and it'll make a stronger drawing. Also remember to have fun when you draw. Be loose and bold, don't get caught up in details. Over time you'll find your way. Stick at it; even if it's just ten minutes every couple of days your drawing hand will get stronger after every drawing you do."

CLASSES YOU CAN TAKE:

Follow [@Resortstudios](https://www.instagram.com/Resortstudios) and [@lovelysgallery](https://www.instagram.com/lovelysgallery) to find out more about the online drawing classes with Lilias Buchanan

Follow [@squirrelartsltd](https://www.instagram.com/squirrelartsltd) to find out about their life drawing classes at Westwood Cross

Go to [kentadulthoodeducation.co.uk](http://kentadulthoodeducation.co.uk) and search Roy Eastland to sign up to Roy's drawing classes