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WINTER SOLSTICE - Edition#8

21st December 2022



I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-grey,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted night
Had sought their household fires.

The Darkling Thrush - Thomas Hardy

Welcome to our December 2022 edition

We hope you've been keeping warm and well during the recent cold snap but as is often the case – well, here in the Forest of Dean, anyway, - the snow came too soon for the Festive season, because if the Met Office's forecast is accurate, it's likely to be mild and wet on Christmas Day. Anyway, whatever the weather, why not put the kettle on or uncork a bottle of wine, then put your feet up while scrolling through our newsletter, which we hope you'll enjoy.

Firstly, following on from the comments we received about his article on drawing perspective, in our last newsletter, Stuart's been inspired to write about another 'drawing dilemma'. Meanwhile, Carmen's been busy devising an 'artsy' crossword, which she hopes you might find moderately entertaining, especially on those days when there's nothing worth watching on the telly. We hope you'll give it a try – after all, what've you got Toulouse!

Going round in circles

Last quarter I went off-beam slightly and wrote about drawing perspective; and whilst some of you might have glossed over it (and I don't blame you if you did), a surprising number of readers said they found it quite interesting.

So that being the case, there are a few *other* off-beam subjects I'd have like to have shared with you in this edition which were:

- The Agricultural Tractor: its development and use in the U.S.S.R between 1922 and 1939.
- Longitudinal rivetted seam stress in cylindrical pressure vessels (and why this is twice the stress found in circumferential seams).
or
- Circles

So there I was, on my laptop, typing merrily away on these topics, when Carmen came in, looked over my shoulder at the screen and said: "Isn't that taking the off-beam theme a bit too far? I mean, tractors and cylindrical pressure vessels! Remember, this is *supposed* to be an ART newsletter!"

Okay, okay! So it was a close-run thing, but the last one got it (just by a whisker!)

Now you're probably thinking: what could there possibly be that's interesting to say about boring old circles. I mean we see them every day, don't we? They're everywhere.

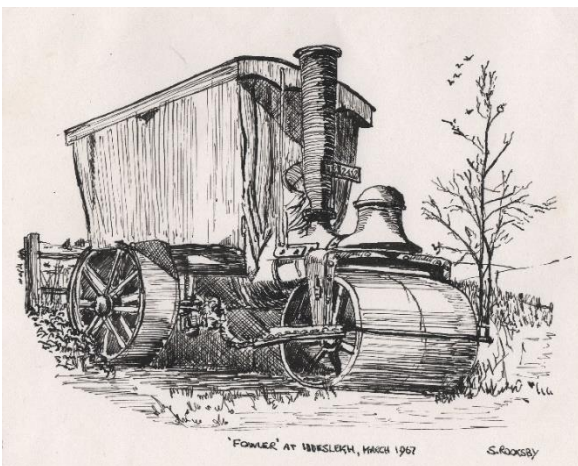


'Shells and Starfish' by Carmen – this picture is a rare art example of an actual circle.

Yes, but nearly all the time they appear in the guise of *something else*.



'Hardwicke on Shap Fell' – by Stuart (some ellipses better than others).



Fowler Steam Roller – by Stuart – a 'You can do much better - See me.' example of ellipses!

You take a round dining or coffee table for example. We know its shape is a circle but unless you look down at it 'dead centre' or tip it on its side, you only ever see an ellipse. Not a circle. The same goes for every other circular thing around us: dinner plates, cups, vases, clock faces, wheels (tractors included!) etc., they are all perfectly circular, of course, but only if you look at them from one unique angle. The rest of the time they always appear, to our eyes, as ellipses. And it's all down to our old friend perspective. (Yes, that again.)

But needless to say, none of this really matters in life unless you happen to be an artist (aspiring or otherwise).

Here's the scenario: You set up your easel, place a nice vase of beautiful flowers and perhaps a couple of books on the nice round table and settle down to draw your 'still life'. Get the curves of that tabletop and vase right and you're in with a chance; get it wrong and it'll shout back at you.



Ellipses - not quite there!

I've found it makes a lot of sense to lightly pencil-in these crucial curves *first*, before you spend *any* time on the rest of the picture - only to spoil it at the end with a wonky-looking vase and tabletop that you feel ashamed of!

So, in case you'd like to try it, here are a couple of alternative ways of drawing a believable-looking ellipse.

Method 1. With a Rule

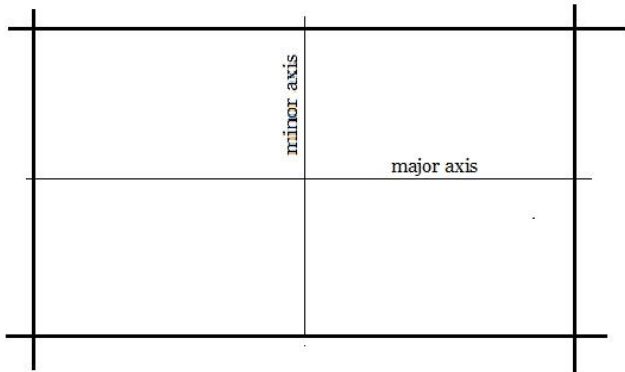
Practice on a spare sheet of paper first.

Once you've found the position from which you are going to draw your (let's say) round tabletop, you should measure how tall and

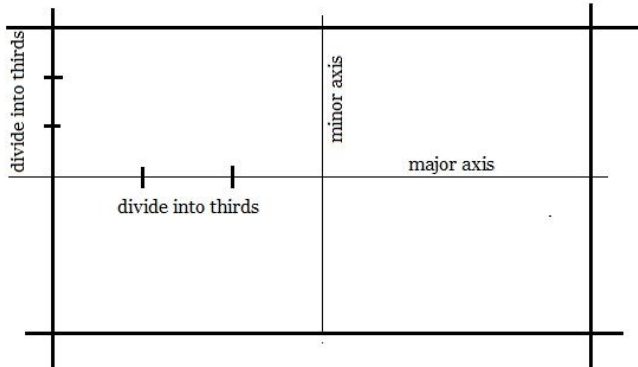
how wide the ellipse will be. Do this in the usual way by holding up a pencil at arm's length, *lightly* marking the paper with the height and width.

Lightly construct a rectangle using these points. Your ellipse will fit exactly inside this rectangle. Then draw in the major and minor axis centre lines as shown below.

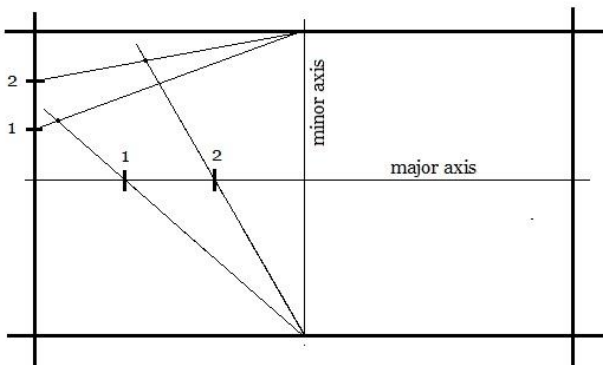
Now it requires a few more lightly pencilled construction lines which you can also rub out later.



You'll see you now have four small rectangles. Taking the top left small rectangle first, divide the sides into equal thirds as shown below.

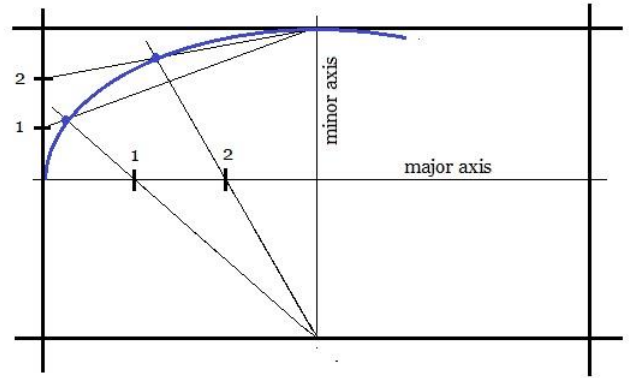


Then lightly draw construction lines like this.



And where the lines (of the same number) cross is where you make a dot. Smoothly join up the dots as shown below and you have the

first part of your ellipse. Repeat this for the rest of the small rectangles.



Tip for joining dots on a curve.

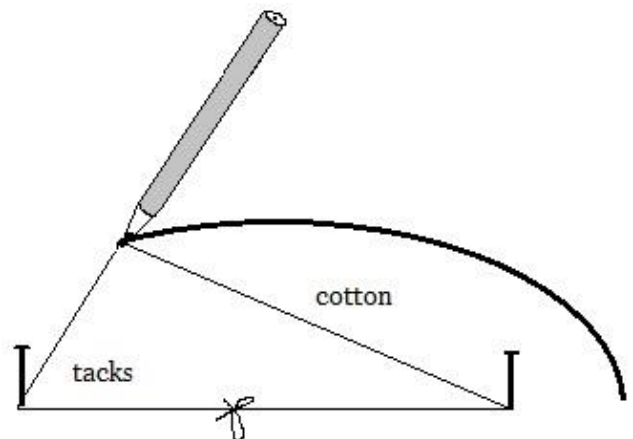
Start with your pencil on the first dot and look at the second dot. But before your pencil reaches the second dot be looking ahead at the third dot and so on. This way you'll get a smoother curve. Then rub out your construction lines.

P.S. You can divide the axes into four, five or six equal parts if you want to.

Method 2. Loop and pins

Fix a piece of tracing paper onto a back-board of some sort.

Firmly press two tacks or pins through the tracing paper into the board and pass a loop of cotton around the pins.



By adjusting the length of cotton and the distance between pins, you can change the size and viewing angle of the ellipse.

With the pencil tip inside the loop you can draw out the ellipse. Once you've got the right shape and size you can trace it onto your working sheet of paper.

Having done so, you can now concentrate your creativity on drawing the beautiful flowers, the sides of the nice vase and the woodgrain in the nice round table, confident in the knowledge that your drawing won't be let down by wonky ellipses.

...and now it's time to look at *squares* - well, 169 of them, to be precise!

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Still Life with Daffodils – by Carmen –good ellipses here.

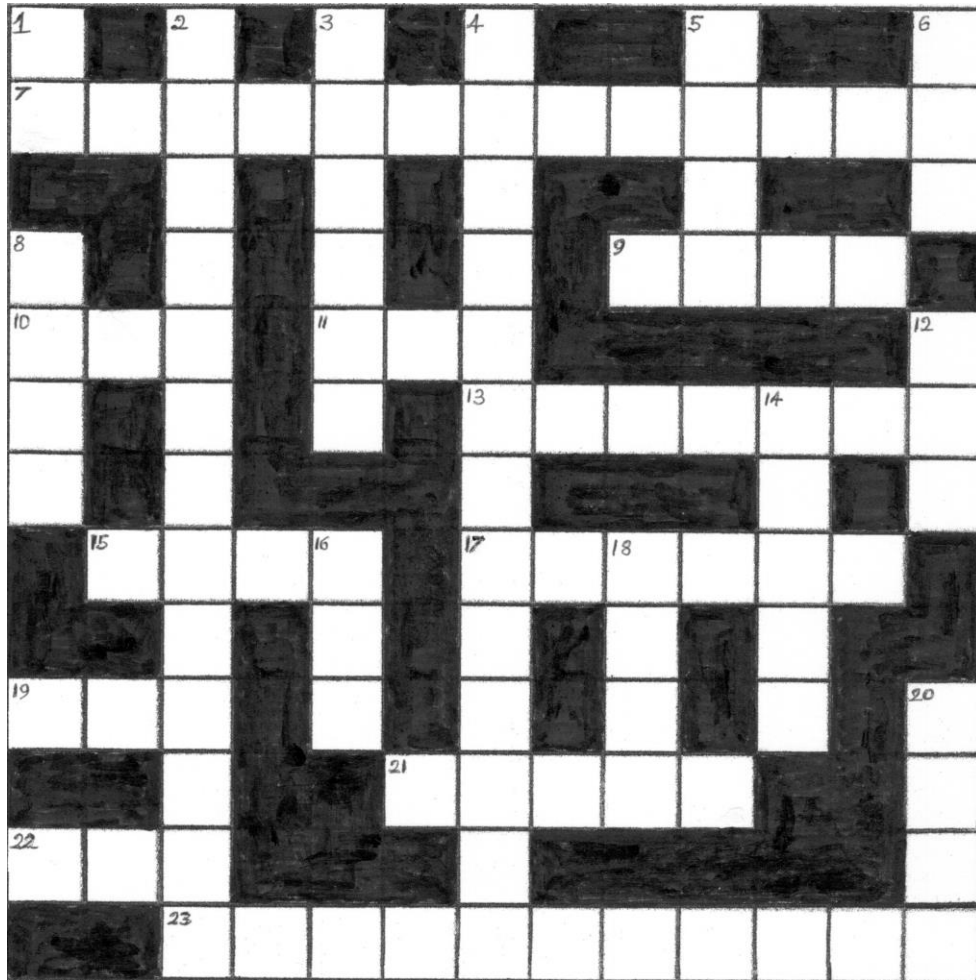
Carmen's 'ARTSY' Christmas Crossword

Clues Down

1. Acronym of a prestigious London Art Gallery (2 letters)
2. Munch, Kandinsky and Matisse are known as (13 letters) painters
3. French neo-classical painter who also had a type of drawing paper named after him (6 letters)
4. 19th Century artistic movement, of which Rossetti was a founder member (13 letters)
5. Paula _____ Portuguese-born British artist, who died earlier this year (4 letters)
6. In English this Renoir painting is 'The Umbrellas'; in French it is '____ Parapluies' (3 letters)
8. First name of Leonardo's 'enigmatic lady' (4 letters)
12. French word of refusal or rejection (3 letters)
14. Rejected by the Académie, the impressionists set up their own _____ in 1863 (5 letters)
16. '____ for art's sake'. It's what this crossword is all about! (3 letters)
18. (See 19 across) The artist who painted 21 across (4 letters)
20. The _____ St Lazare. Monet painted a dozen views of this Paris railway station (4 letters)

Clues Across

7. French town and region where Cezanne was born (13 letters)
9. Famous 18th/19th Century Spanish painter (4 letters)
10. (Abbreviation) L.S. Lowry was awarded this honour in 1955 but he turned it down (3 letters)
11. Monet, Manet and Cezanne were all artists during the same ____ (3 letters)
13. This surname is synonymous with cubism (7 letters)
15. The last name of the lady in 8 down (4 letters)
17. Apt surname for the artist who painted chapel ceilings in the Vatican? (6 letters)
19. ____ See 18 down (3 letters)
21. 'The Starry _____' by 19 across/18 down (5 letters)
22. (See 14 down) ____ Refusés (3 letters)
23. Controversial annual British arts award (11 letters)



Solution: Next Issue.