

Shifting from Realistic Drawing to Self Expression

Teaching drawing course online during lockdown 2020

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INTRODUCTION

In this presentation I would like to share my **experiences with teaching an online drawing** course for students of Faculty of Informatics, Masaryk University **during the national lockdown** due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Evening Drawing course accompanies other courses for the Specialization Graphic Design which is part of the Department of Visual Informatics.

AGD+M

The Studio of Graphic Design and Multimedia (AGD+M) was established within the newly founded Faculty of Informatics at the Masaryk University shortly after the Velvet Revolution in former Czechoslovakia in 1994. Since then it **offers education in disciplines related to graphic design, generative design, animation, photography etc.** Many of the courses are mandatory for Specialization Graphic Design which is part of the Visual Informatics study program.



AGD+M, students presenting projects

EVENING DRAWING COURSE

The curriculum of the course focuses on drawing human figures, portraits, and still life. In this traditional approach **students learn to observe the portrayed subject, control proportions and understanding of spatial perspective in drawing**. Also I try to introduce drawing as a visual expression through which ideas can be communicated.

Mission

I strongly believe that in today's era of visual saturation and communication through photos and images, **the experience is necessary to articulate ideas in drawing, be it a concept, storyboard, character design for a game etc.**

Full overview and course descriptions at:
<https://agdm.fi.muni.cz/en>

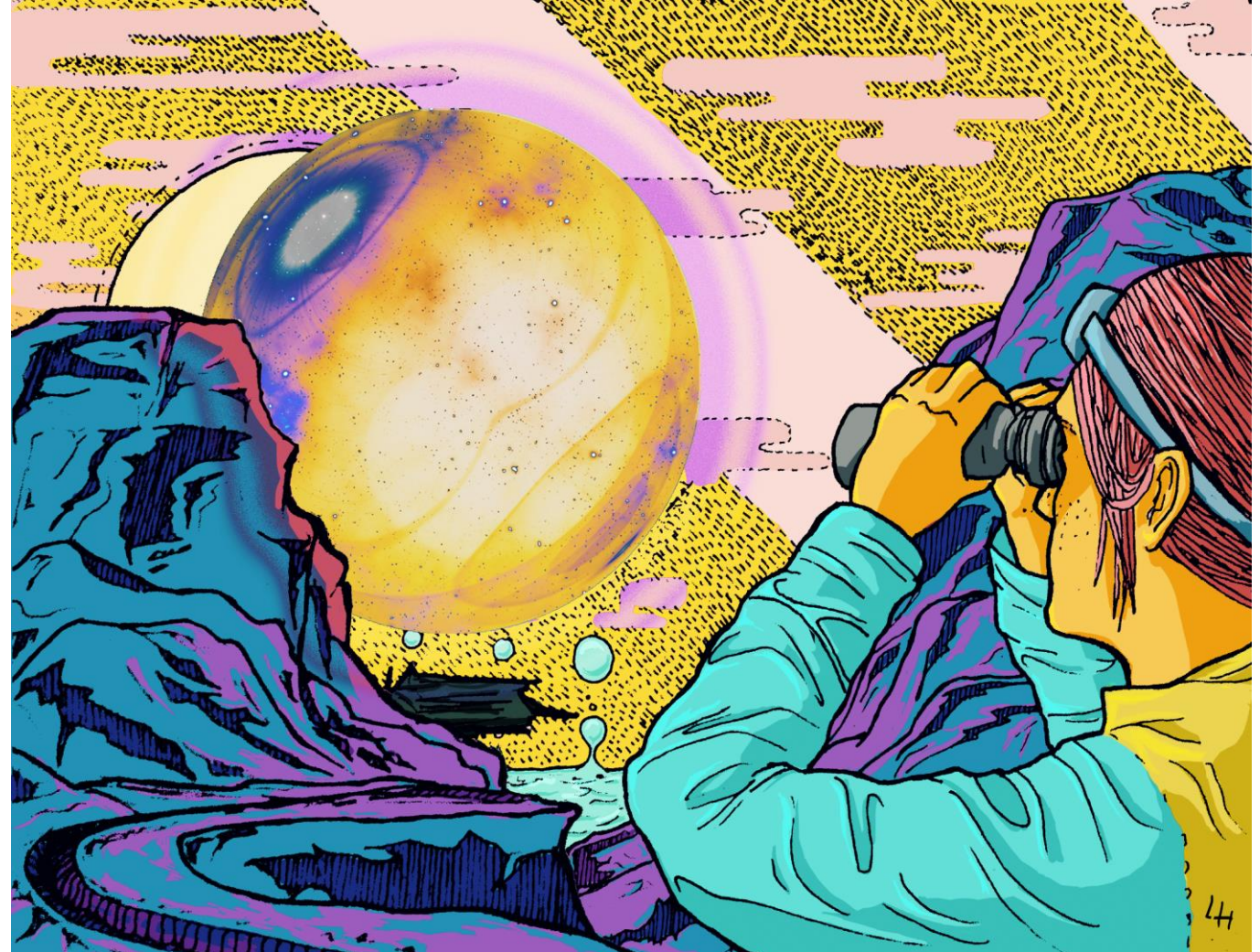


Evening Drawing course

STUDENTS

There are some students who have drawing as a hobby and some are trying to render the human figure for the first time.

I noticed that the **drawing skills are much higher today** than years ago **due to the popularity of anime, video games, role-playing games.** I learned from students that they really enjoy having hands-on experience. Many are experiences in drawing on tablets.



Upcoming, Lucie Hoskova.; digital drawing

EMERGENCY SITUATION - LOCKDOWN

Many students have no previous drawing skills, thus making the position of teaching drawing online even more difficult. I had to quickly **adapt to the new situation and create themes, which make it possible to draw while stranded at home** with parents or roommates, with limited access to drawing tools etc.

This presentation discusses the shift from teaching mimetic rendering of the reality to towards the freedom of expression. As a teacher I **focused on encouraging students to experience the freedom** in drawing activities during the online course at the time of unexpected quarantine lockdown.



Shifting from Realistic Drawing to Self Expression

MOTIVATION

On March 11 the government announced closing universities due to covid-19 pandemic. The country shut down a couple days later. I had no time to think. I had to adapt to the new situation literally overnight. Beside other courses

My first thought at that moment was: We do not know what the nearest future will be. I **need to keep students occupied to provide them with the means of self expression to cope with the reality.**

Students could use any form of drawing or other techniques to create an image.

Looking at the students' drawings now I see them as a document of the quarantine time..



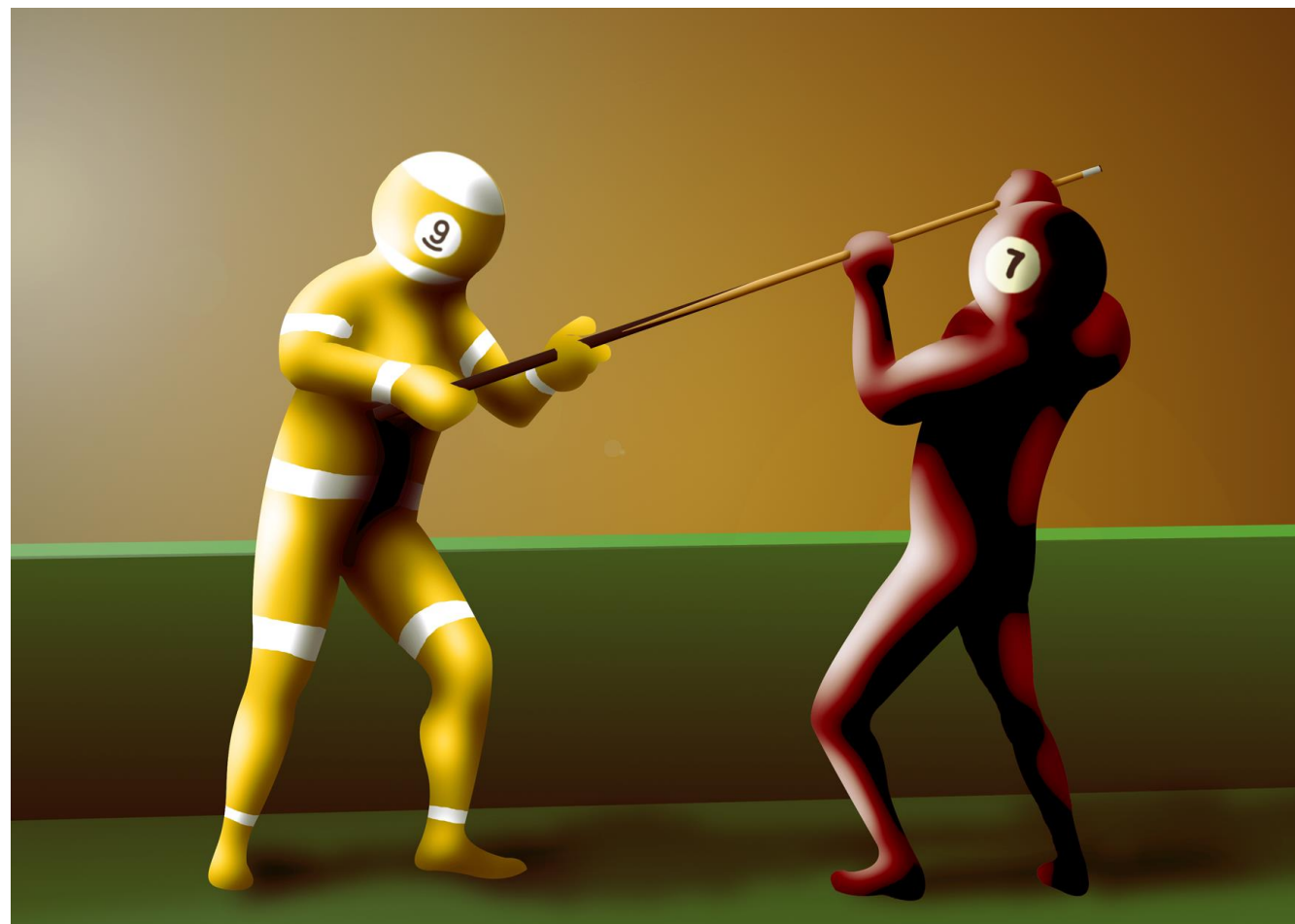
Evening Drawing course

THEMES

1. Interpretation

I shared photographs of weird technical contraptions documented, suits, models of robots etc. with students. I asked them to choose one and make the interpretation of the photo in a drawing, changing the original meaning.

This assignment was design **to reinforce the conceptual creativity and understanding of meaning of the theme of the drawing.**

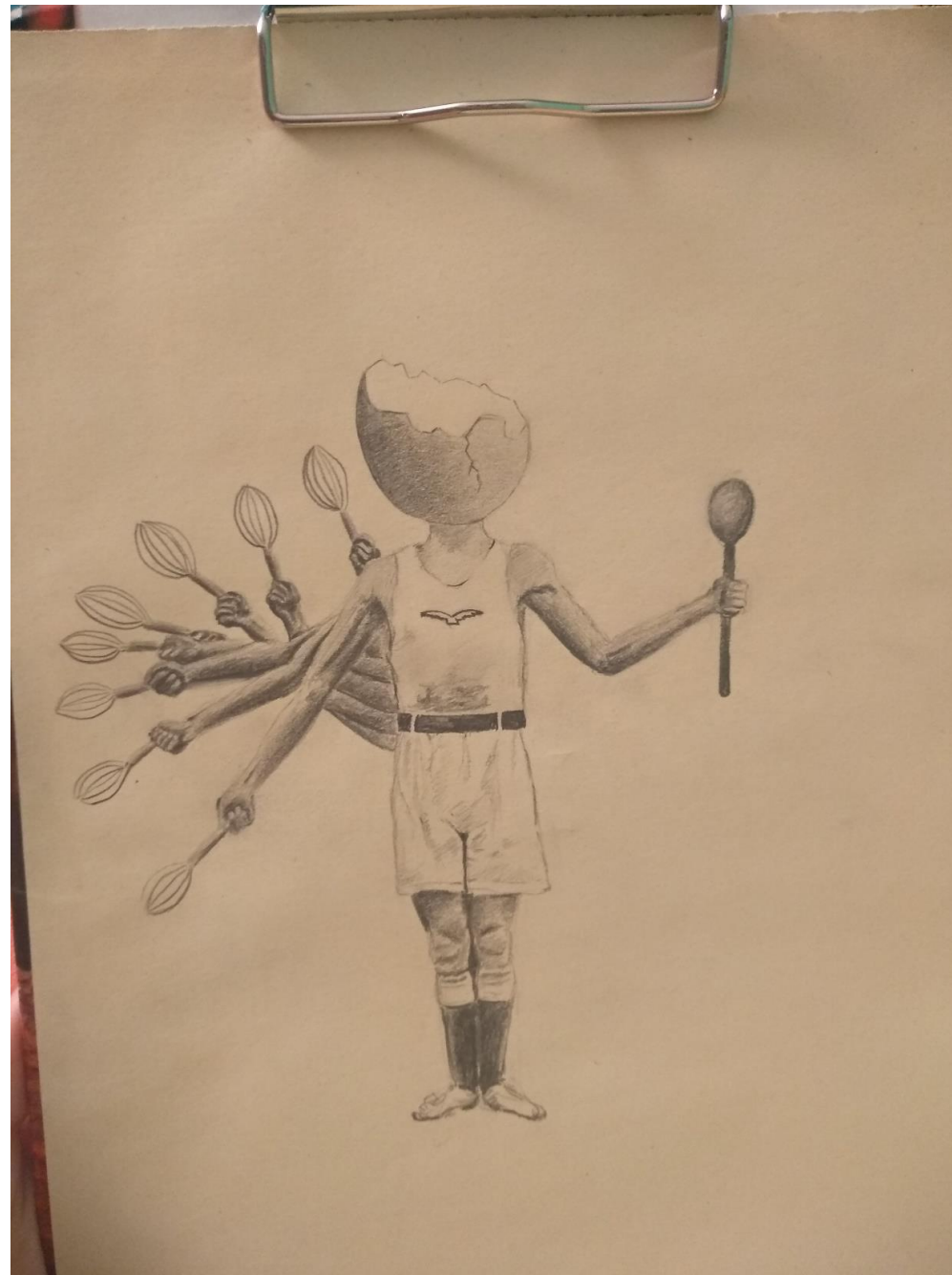


*Stripes versus Solids,
Martin Ruzicka,
digital drawing*

THEMES

1. Interpretation / Conclusion

This assignment was easy to understand. Also it overcomes the insecurities which one may face looking at the empty paper. The original photo triggers associations. Students could use parts of the photo as a template to create new configurations in the interpretation.



Untitled, Anna Klekarova, pencil drawing

Shifting from Realistic Drawing to Self Expression

THEMES

2. Image and Text

I pointed out the power of word – image connection, which students are mostly familiar with from comic books.

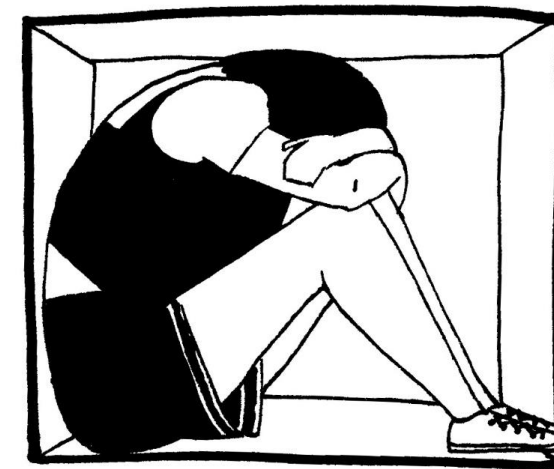
The word can change the meaning of drawing and vice versa. This interplay can create a strong message.

I asked students to think about the image and the text to compile them into a coherent drawing with a clear message.

It's nice to not have to talk to describe how you're feeling. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] it's nice to learn about yourself by, like sitting down, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] It's a whole journey of self-exploration.



*Censored, Martin Ruzicka,
digital drawing*



THEY SAY
WE ARE
FREE

*Untitled, Monika Majdaffova,
black ink drawing*

Shifting from Realistic Drawing
to Self Expression

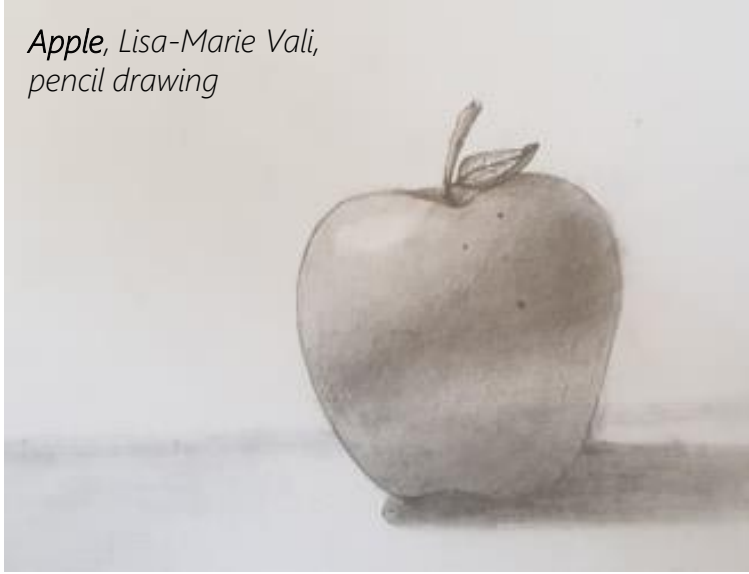
THEMES

3. Drawing an Object Found Around

I asked students to draw anything they find in their environment. Students thus selected the subject of the drawing themselves which became quite an interesting collection of documented everyday objects.



*Egg, Julia Gurianova,
digital drawing*



*Apple, Lisa-Marie Vali,
pencil drawing*



*Flower, Martin Ruzicka,
pencil drawing*



*Face Mask, Kamila Kopecka,
pencil drawing*

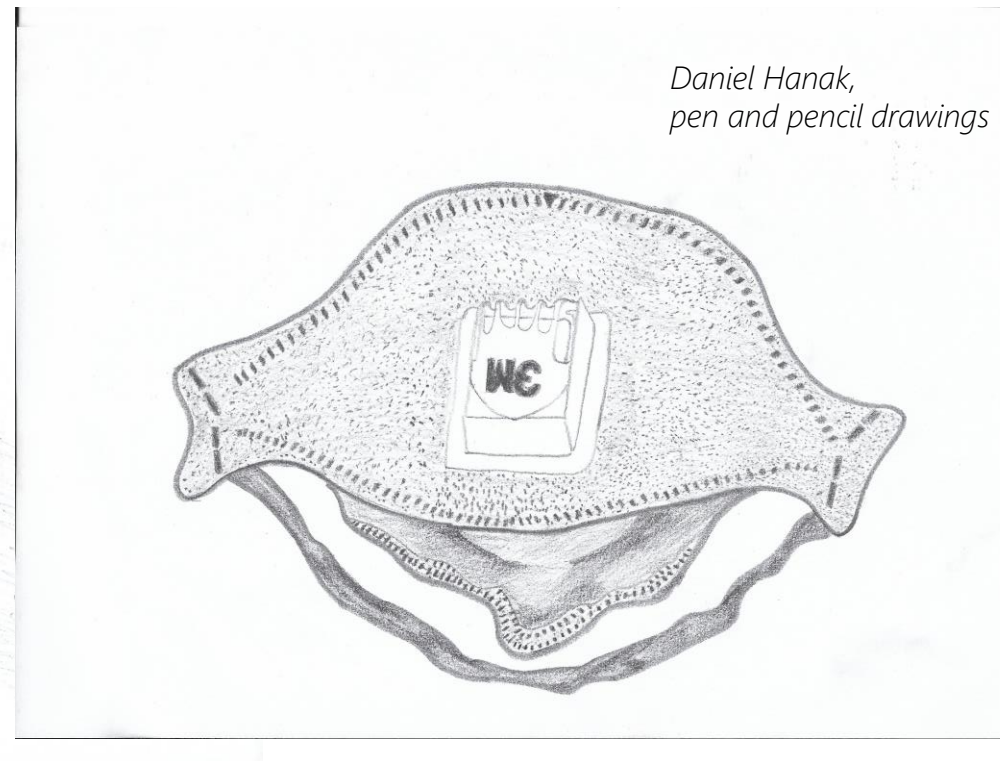
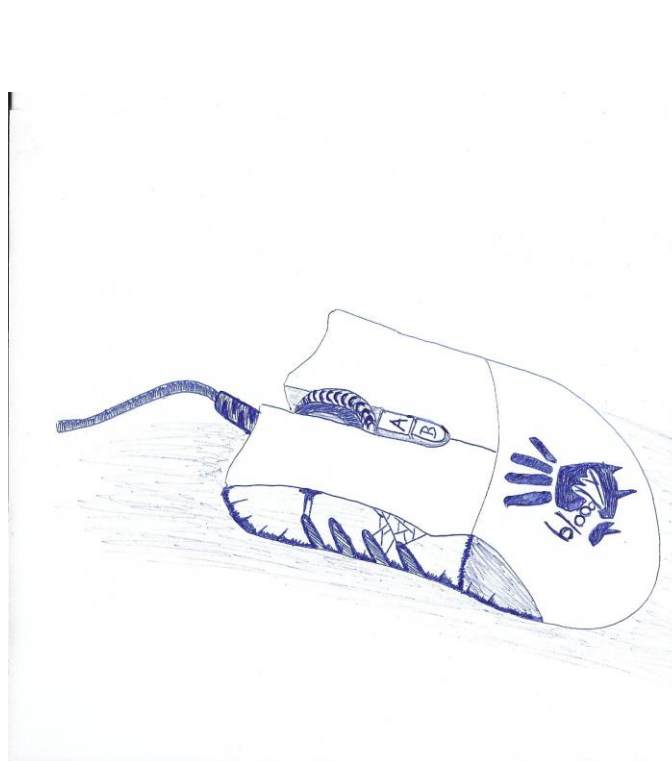
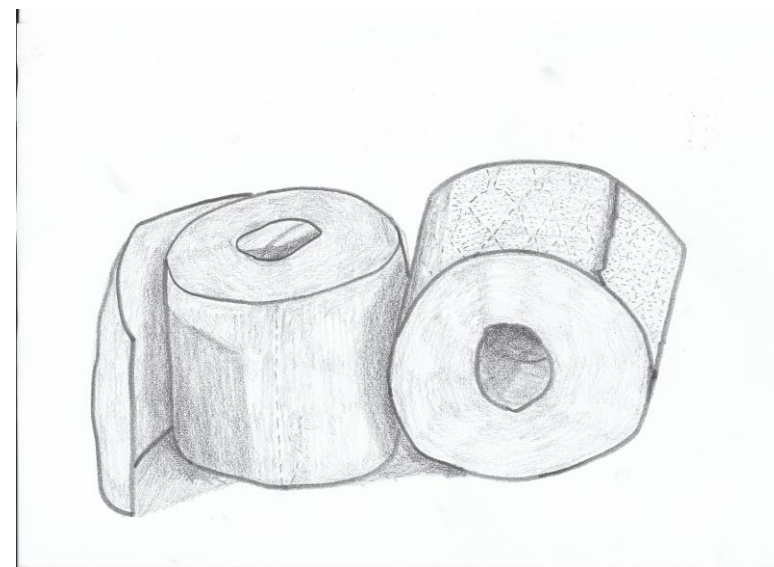
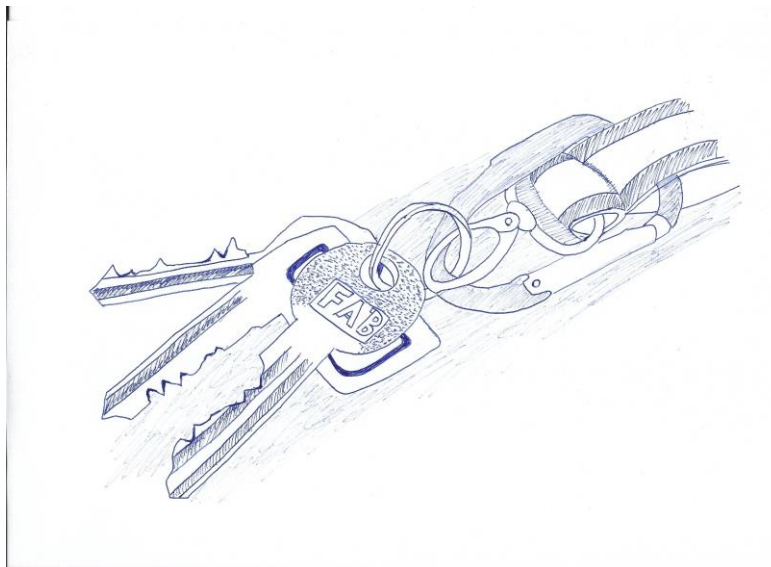
THEMES

3. Drawing an Object Found Around / Conclusion

This assignment was easy to understand. Students mostly picked smaller objects without considering the difficulties of the complexity for drawing.

Some students created very realistic drawings with **attention to detail**. I think it is because students were not preassured by time.

Some drawings were not perfect regarding perspective and shading, but the attention to other qualities had created quite interesting selection of **drawings with individual unschooled styles, which I found very charming.**



*Daniel Hanak,
pen and pencil drawings*

Shifting from Realistic Drawing to Self Expression

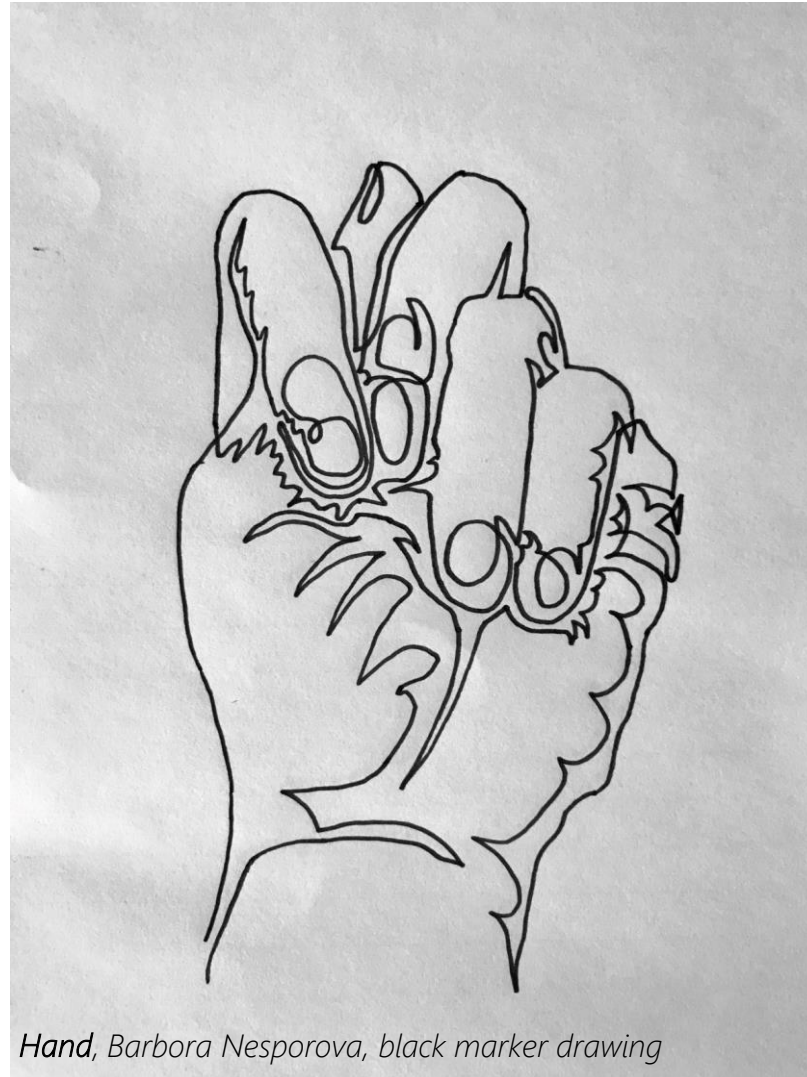
THEMES

4. Drawing with One Line

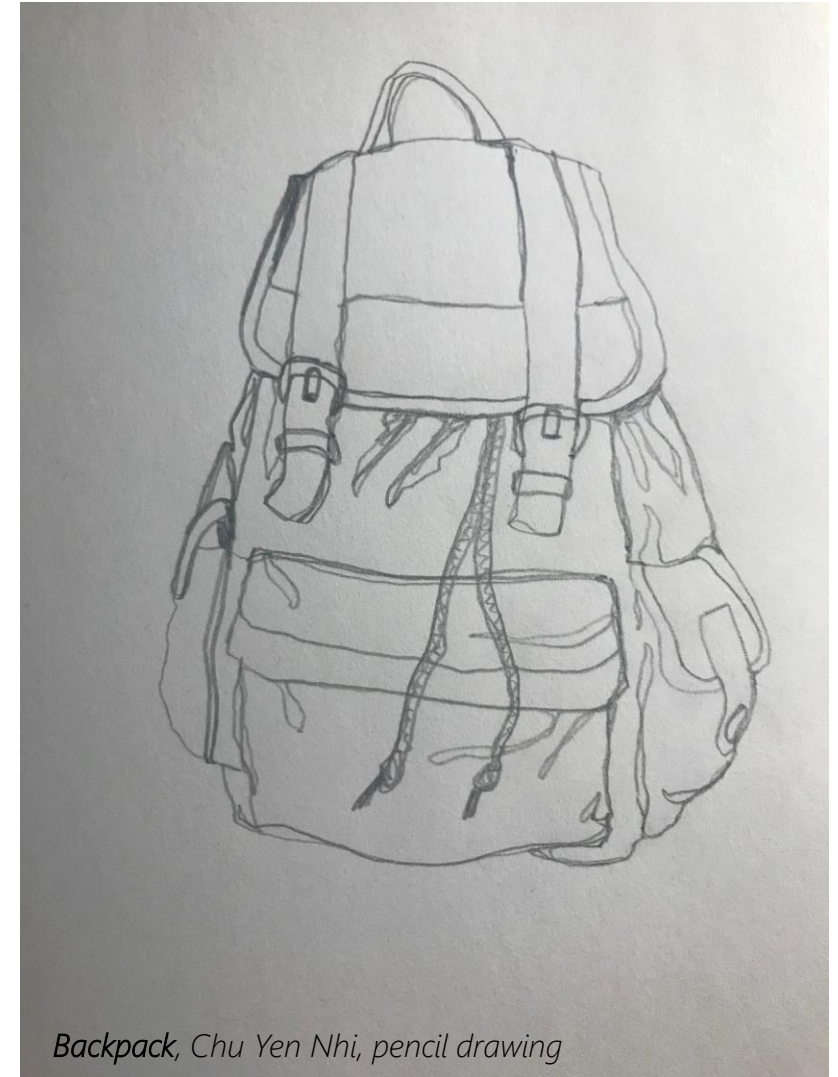
This task prevented students to use their drawing habits. The request to draw with just one line severely restricted the usual drawing style.

Drawing with One Line /Conclusion

Even though the assignment sounds difficult, the outcomes proved that students understood what I am asking them to do. In many cases the drawings were much more interesting than their previous ones for their simplicity and boldness.



Hand, Barbora Nesporova, black marker drawing



Backpack, Chu Yen Nhi, pencil drawing

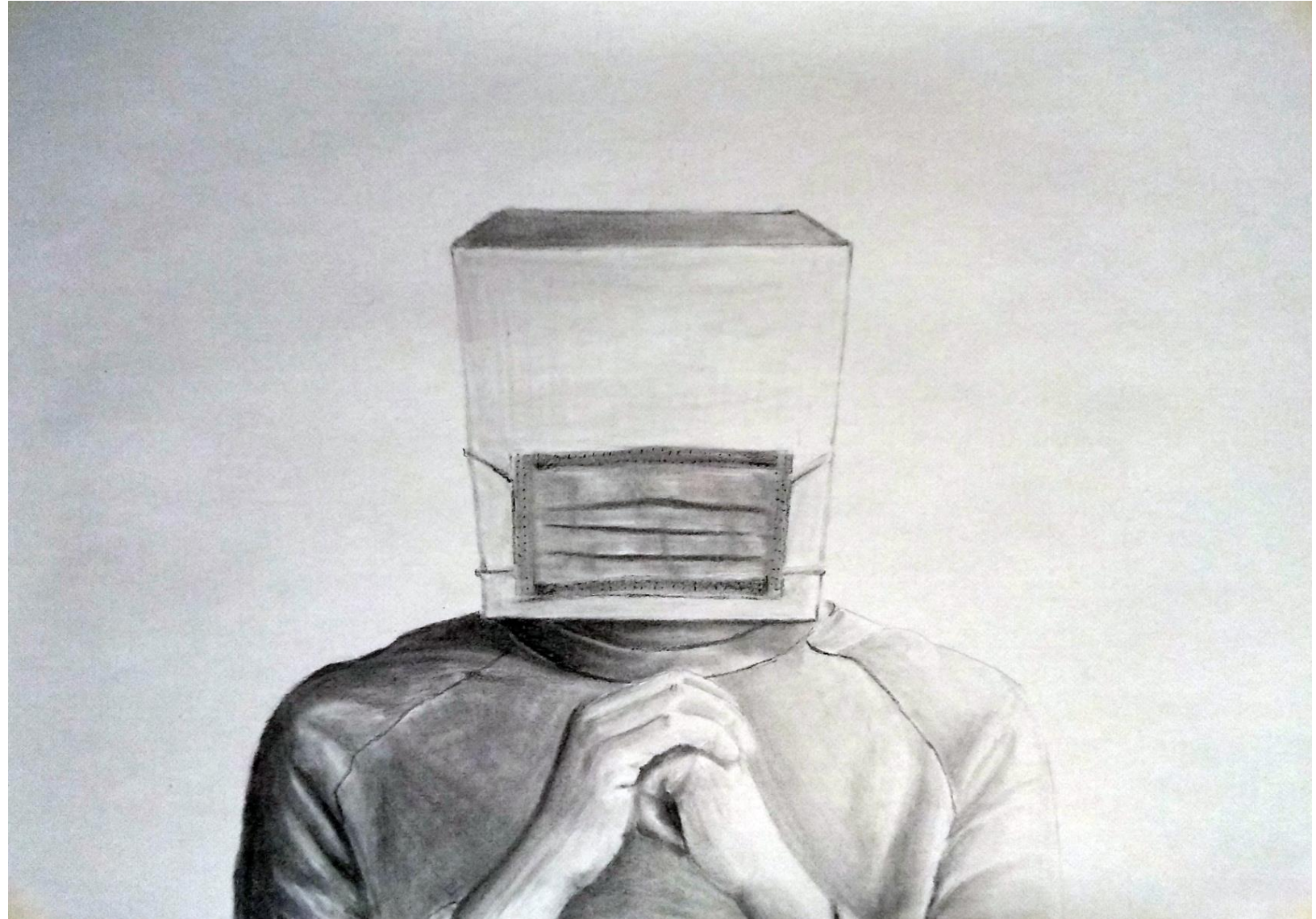
THEMES

5. Current Situation

I asked students to think about the situation, **think about personal feelings and come up with the visual description in drawing.** This was very difficult, since I asked to face their own situation. I must stress that the society at that time shared the feeling of vulnerability and fear of what may come next regarding the global covid-19 situation.



*Covid 19, Julia Gurianova,
digital drawing*



THEMES

5. Current Situation



Untitled, Daniel Hanak, pencil drawing



Insomnia, Lucie Hoskova, pencil drawing

THEMES

5. Current Situation / Conclusion

I thought this task might be difficult to some because it asks to really dive deep into the emotions and to reflect on the bleak atmosphere of the lockdown. Surprisingly **students created quite strong personal testimonies** documenting their state of mind.

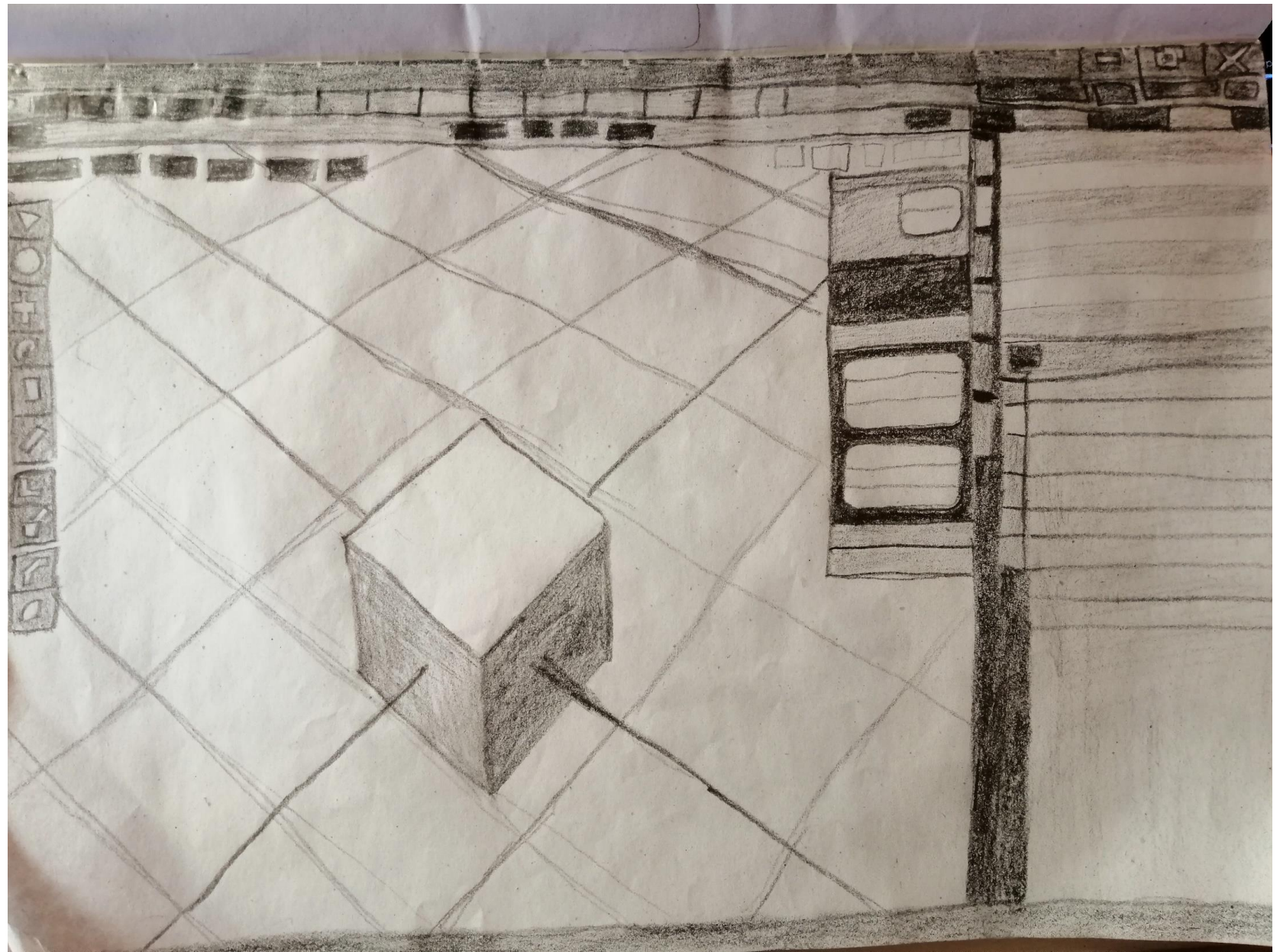


Evening News, Marcel Otruba, color pencils

THEMES

6. Comfortable Space

In this assignment I wanted students to imagine a space which is comforting and translate that into an imaginative drawing.



Space, Vojtech Kovarik, color pencils

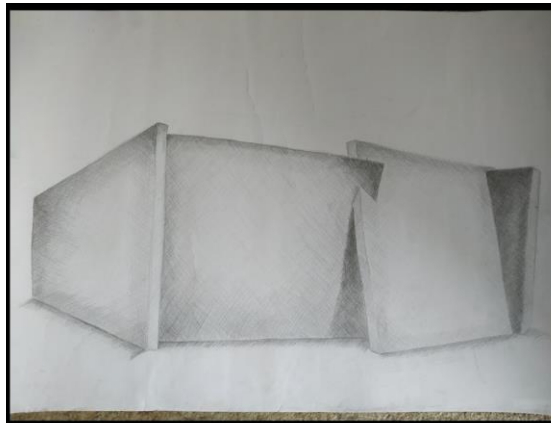
THEMES

6. Comfortable Space /Conclusion

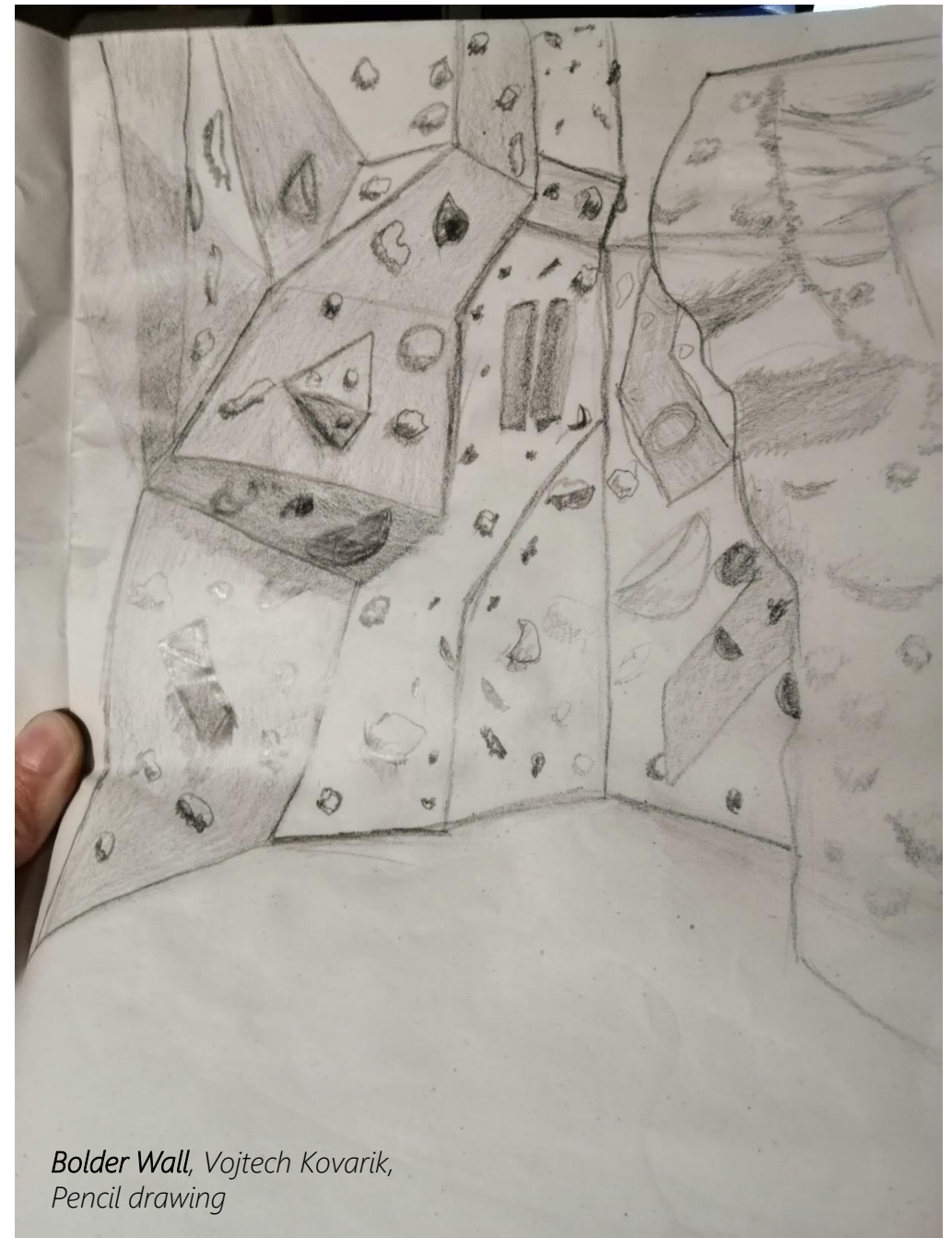
Surprisingly this was the **most difficult task**. **One reason might be the lack of ability to render the illusion of perspective.** Also I think students are more capable to draw small objects rather than whole interiors and spaces where is necessary to select an imaginative point of view.

Of course **many students drew landscapes** which I was not sure if it was the subject of the choice since it is easier to draw than conceptual space or if it was the result of longing for being in the nature, missing that contact, since the rules of the lockdown was quite restrictive.

One student surprised me with drawing of the computer screen with 3d modeling software user interface. Even though I found this drawing very interesting. I think it was misunderstanding of the assignment. Anyway after all we are at the Faculty of informatics and the computer might be the safe heaven for these students.



*Architecture, Kamila Kopecka,
Pencil drawing*

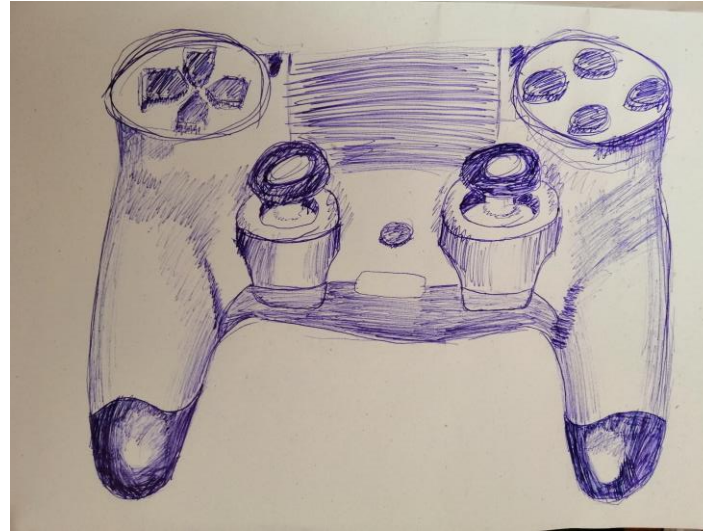


*Bolder Wall, Vojtech Kovarik,
Pencil drawing*

THEMES

6. Memory of an Object from Childhood

In this assignment I was curious what kind of personal memorabilia will be selected as a subject. This subject may be preserved just in memories. This recollection of loved object, silent companion with personal signification is a positive way of looking into the past.

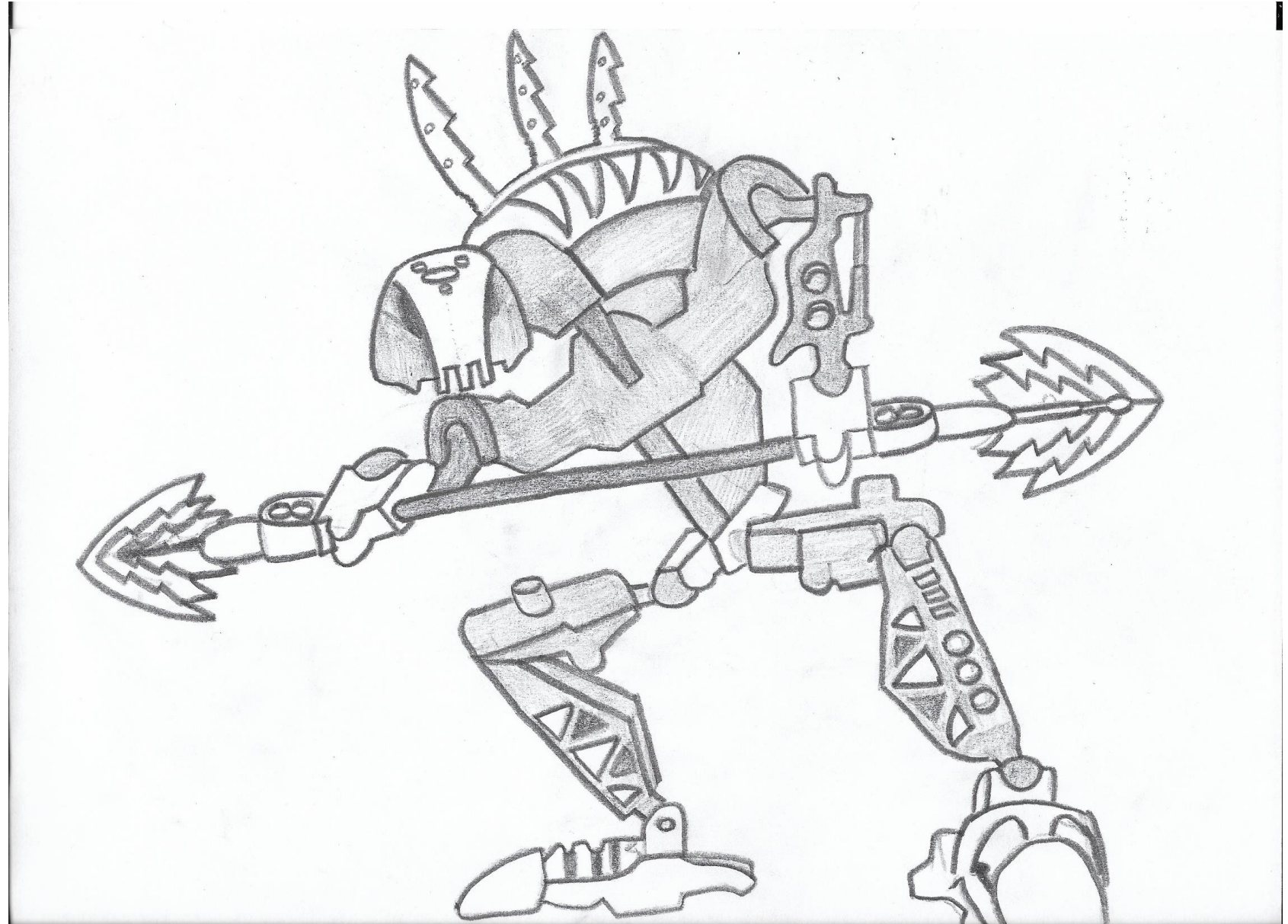


THEMES

6. Memory of an Object from Childhood / Conclusion

Well, this assignment turned out to be the parade of **children toys**. I had no reason to be surprised. I was hoping for more variety of objects with strong personal meaning. I think I did not describe my intention well enough. Or I just underestimated the importance of a toy as a companion in early childhood.

Anyway, **it helped me to see students' childhoods, their toys and interests.** It was very positive experience for me. We all were children afterall.



First Lego, Daniel Hanak, pencil drawing

Art Education

Every week I introduced via mail some artist to introduce to students. I sent links to documentaries and recommended movies to show the variety of approaches and thinking about the drawing.

I tried to show also **artists on the fringe** of the art history radar such as artists of the Prinzhorn Collection or Kiki who was rather the muse for the Parisian artists of the first half of the 20th century.

I introduced the rich **history of graffiti** art back to the Hobo Sign language, to contemporary graffiti artists. In connection to graffiti I also presented Mexican mural painters since they represent not only the important part of the art history, but also the represent the political struggle.

I also point at the **process of a drawing as a form of meditation**, which the intense observation of the subject of the drawing is. I presented works which could be more understood as a process -performances with

the drawing as an outcome. I introduced artist such as Jackson Pollock, Yves Klein, Tony Oricco, Jiri Straka.

From **contemporary artists** I presented Dan Perjovschi, Raymond Pettibon, William Kentridge.



Drawing from Prinzhorn Collection

Jackson Pollock
Yves Klein
Tony Oricco
Jiri Straka.
Dan Perjovschi
Raymond Pettibon
William Kentridge.
Los tres grandes
– **Diego Rivera**
– **David Alvaro Siquiios**
– **Jose Clemete Orozco**
The Prinzhorn Collection
– **Adolf Wolfli,**
– **Agnes Richter**
Jean Debuffet
Kiki
Hobo sign language
Bozo Texino
Keith Haring
Jean-Michel Basquiat
Banksy
Timo

CONCLUSION

Even though the experience of teaching online the Evening Drawing course was very enriching **I still prefer to see my students at school.**

Nevertheless I learned more about my students through their self expression in submitted drawings during the lockdown than seeing them every week discussing formal qualities of study drawing.

Every week I **shared selected drawings on our Facebook** page so other students of the AGD+M and public could see them. I have got very good feedback. I think that also **kept students motivated and inspired.**

It helped me to see students with all their human complexity which was very refreshing after years of teaching.

