

## “Old Hickory” from the new drawing book *Pencil Magic* by PHIL METZGER



1 I've used this old photo as the starting place for several paintings. What I like about such a subject is its attractive variety of textures.

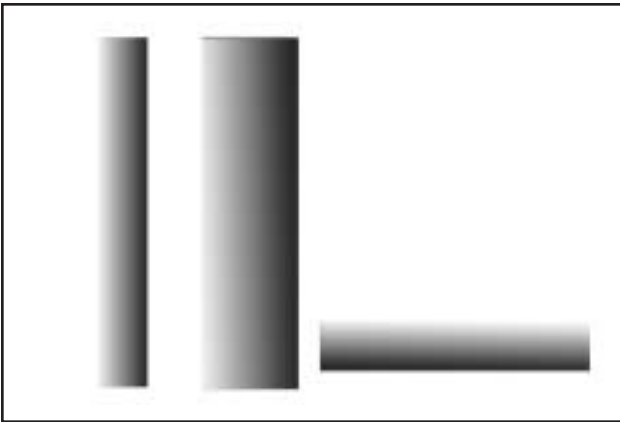


2 I rarely draw or paint a scene just as it is—I take whatever liberties are necessary to come up with a better design. Don't believe anyone who says you can't improve on nature!

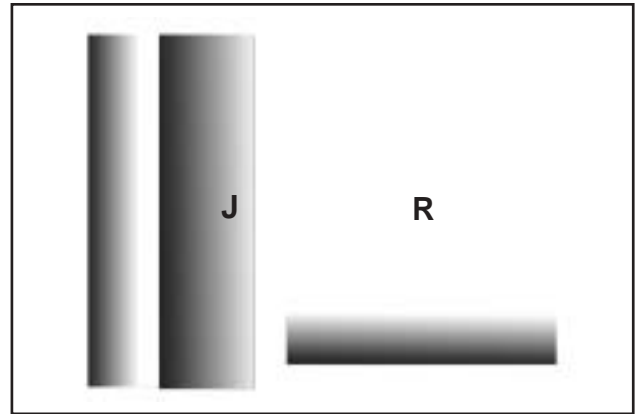
What drew me to this subject in the first place was the textured tree trunk and the tangle of branches—I'd like them to show up starkly against the background, so I decide to leave the background white.



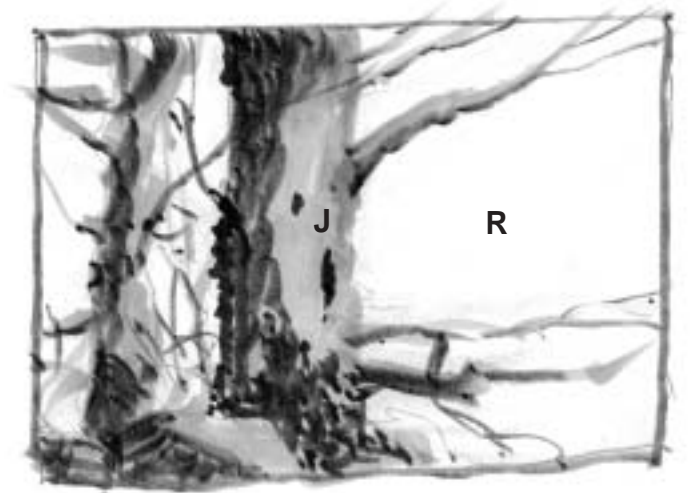
My first stab at a value sketch has the sunlight coming from the left, as in the photo. I try moving the sun to the right and like that position better. Why? Because in the first sketch, the dark side of the main trunk seems to be dividing the picture down the middle. The second sketch moves that dark strip farther left, so now I have an L-shaped design (generally a comfortable design choice) rather than a design sliced down the middle.



This arrangement is reasonably balanced, but it's too symmetrical because of the heavy dark down the middle.



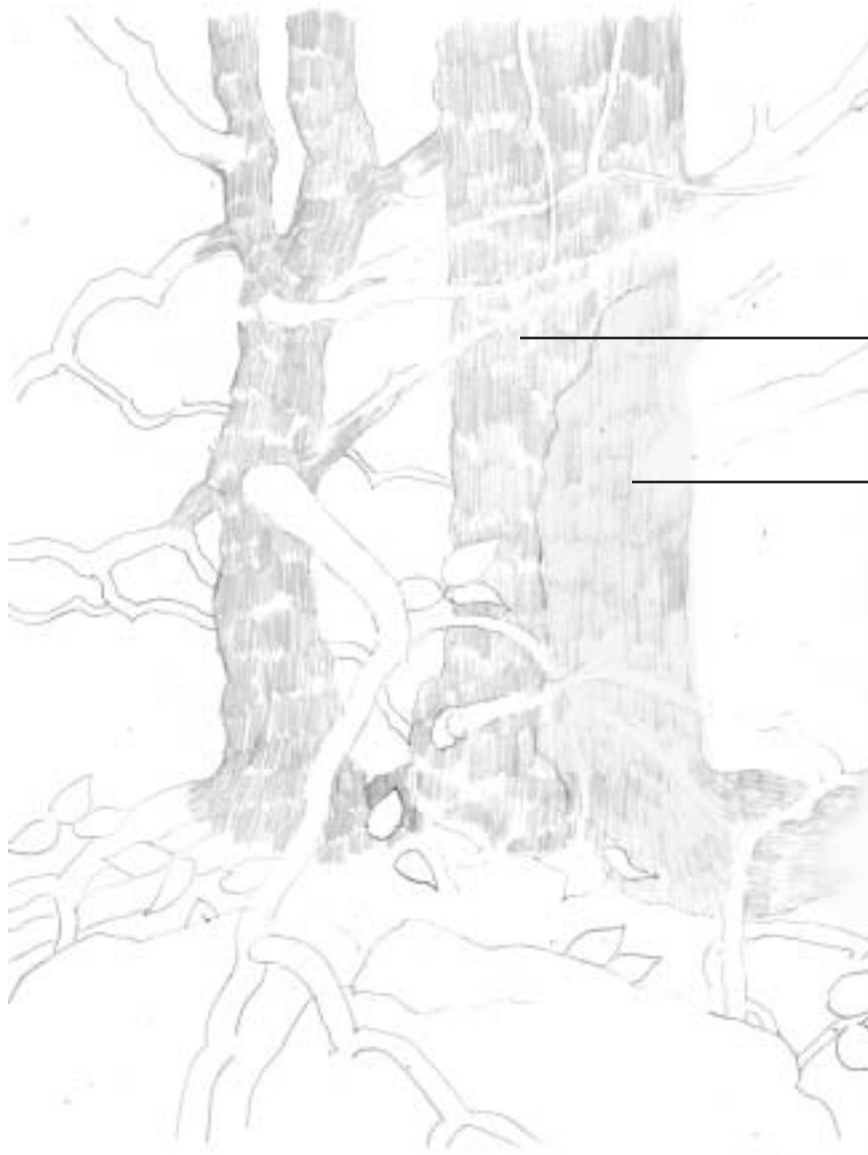
This L-shaped design feels better. It's still balanced, but not symmetrical.



Another reason I like this design better than the other is that the big white area (R) and the sunlit part of the main trunk (J) kiss each other gently—they're not aggressively separated by that dark vertical strip. While it's good to have places where dark values and light values adjoin, it's generally best for those contrasts to occur in places other than the center of the picture.



- 3 Above is my outline drawing. The actual scene in the photo has much more detail, but I don't include it all because I like to add (and invent) detail as I go along. Notice there is a whole section at the far left in the photo that I'm not including because I want to simplify the left and focus more on the main trunk and the smaller trunk next to it. I add a couple of rock shapes in the lower left-hand corner to provide some relief from all the tangled branches and twigs in that corner of the photo. I also add some leaves to the drawing, using their ovoid shapes to break the monotony of all those linear twigs and branches.



bark area  
(to be roughly textured later)

exposed wood, no bark  
(fairly smooth)

- 4 I begin texturing the two trunks. First I apply vertical hatching with a 6H chisel pencil over the entire area. This is essentially an “underpainting,” done rapidly as a base for more intense strokes to follow. On the part of the big trunk representing smooth wood from which the bark has peeled away, I use a little lighter pressure than elsewhere.



5

I draw a second layer of chisel HB hatching over the first layer in the bark area. I try to work fast enough so I don't fuss over any particular area, but instead let things develop as freely as possible. I'm aware that I'm concentrating on the trunks and ignoring all the rest of the drawing, and this may disturb some readers. If you feel more comfortable working all over the drawing, there is no reason not to do so. My own inclination is to bore in on an important area and get it looking interesting as early as possible (otherwise, I might get bored and chuck the whole project!). Proceed in any way that keeps you excited and involved in the drawing.



6 Now I use a 2B to apply a third layer of hatching, using more pressure and denser strokes at the left (the shadowed side of the tree) and getting lighter as I go around to the right side of the tree. As I work over the bark area, I begin to add knobby shapes and branches to break up the severe vertical left edge of the main trunk.

Next I use a sharp 4B to add dark cracks, crevices, holes—whatever I can think of to give the bark more texture and dimension. I do most of these strokes quickly with jerky motions, striving for a ragged effect. Then I add more HB hatching to strengthen the smooth wood area on the right side of the main trunk and use a sharp 2B to add some cracks.





7

I've been glancing at the lower left corner of the drawing while working on the other parts. As I mentioned earlier, I planned to stick a couple of large rocks in the left corner. Now I'm having other thoughts. Instead, I think I'll steal some roots from a drawing I did of an old hickory and see if that doesn't work better than rocks. If not, I can always erase and go back to my original idea.

I've always been intrigued by such passages in nature—not only do those little dark holes seem mysterious (what lives in there—hobbits, maybe?), but they are a great excuse for some deep darks to enliven a drawing.

I feel my way along, using an HB to lightly sketch in the roots. Then I darken the holes among the roots with HB and 4B hatching.



- 8 Time to leave the left corner and begin developing the right. I hatch all over the protruding lower branch with chisel-shaped 6H followed by HB and finally, 2B, just as I did in the early stages of the upright trunks. In this case, however, my hatching is horizontal, following the direction of the object. Generally, it's a good idea to make your hatching follow the directions or contours of the subjects. The hatch marks in this case actually represent the grain of the wood.



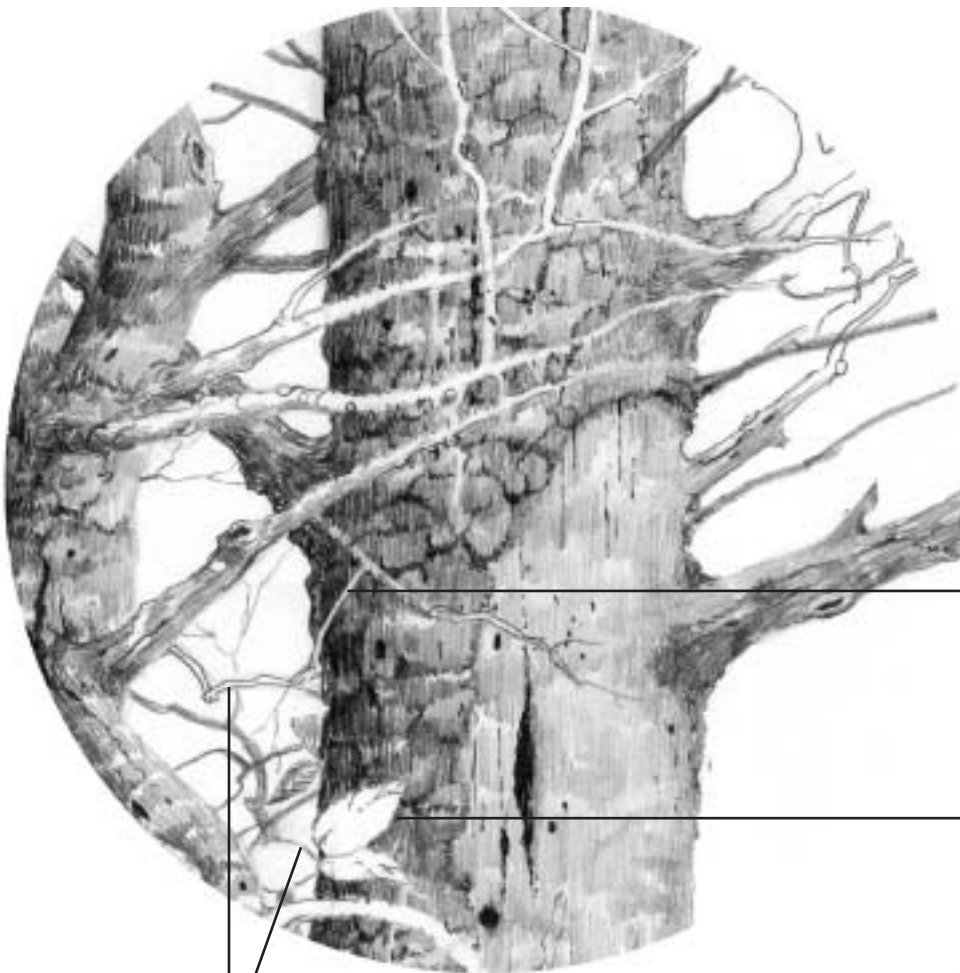


9 Using HB, 2B and 4B pencils, I develop the ground area, forming roots, rootlets, leaves and grasses as I go. I keep looking at the original photo for clues. More important, I count on my familiarity with this subject to help me imagine and invent details as I draw.

Had I never seen an old tree with exposed roots and scraggly branches and leaves, how could I hope to do justice to a drawing of such a subject? If you want to draw (or paint) a subject competently and confidently, get to know it intimately. Look carefully at the subject every chance you get, studying it from every conceivable angle, photographing it and, of course, drawing it over and over.

What remains now is to refine the drawing by:

- (1) adding more branches to enhance the subject's raggedy look;
- (2) adjusting values for better value contrast;
- (3) reducing some value contrasts where they are too distracting;
- (4) sharpening some of the twiggy branches; and
- (5) inspecting the picture in a mirror to look for design problems.



*sharply drawn edges*

*erased edge*

*soft edges  
(values butted against one another)*



10 Here are full-size details of the finished drawing. To provide variety, I form some edges softly by butting two areas of differing values against each other and I make other edges by using a sharp pencil. Still other edges are made by erasing, usually with the aid of an erasing shield.

**Old Hickory**

Pencil on Strathmore Bristol, plate finish, 11" x 14"  
Collection, Marah Heidebrecht, Montgomery Village, MD

**11**

I decide to vignette the bottom of the drawing, allowing the bleached roots to fade off into the white of the paper. What I like about vignetting is the airiness it may give a picture. That's an arbitrary personal decision—you might well prefer to "finish" the drawing all the way to its borders.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

The drawing study you just read is an excerpt from the book *Pencil Magic*, written and illustrated by Phil Metzger. *Pencil Magic* is divided into two parts:

- PART I: GETTING STARTED
- tools and materials
  - basic strokes
  - drawing styles
  - measuring
  - landscape elements
  - perspective
  - design
  - putting it all together
- PART II: DEMONSTRATIONS
- a simple still life
  - farm buildings
  - city montage
  - bare trees
  - woods stream
  - old house
  - people
  - animals
  - open landscape
  - tree close-up

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Canada, add \$4.00 for shipping; in Maryland, add  
\$1.25 for sales tax.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Metzger started his art career late. When he was forty he left a comfortable job in computer programming and management to try his hand at painting and drawing. He had had no art training at all. Within a few years he was being accepted by major art exhibitions and art societies around the country. For years he sold his work at traveling art shows in cities mostly in the east, but sometimes as far west as Texas. Along the way he discovered a knack for writing—his first book was a best-selling work called *Managing a Programming Project*—and gradually he cut back on shows and concentrated on writing art instruction books. His first art book, *Perspective Without Pain*, has been on North Light Books' best-sellers list for over ten years. He has now published eleven books, most of them through North Light. His latest, *Pencil Magic*, is published by his own company, LC Publications, and it reflects his love for black-and-white art, especially pencil drawing.

Phil lives and works in Rockville, Maryland, where he also teaches watercolor classes. He can be reached at [philsymetz@aol.com](mailto:philsymetz@aol.com) or by calling (301) 460-4071.

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Phil Metzger uses Strathmore Bristol and Illustration Board for many of his pencil works. Later on in the newsletter is an article to help you choose the right drawing board for your art project.

If you have an art project that you created on Strathmore paper and would like to share it with our readers, we'd love to hear about it. Contact us by phone at 1.800.353.0375 x3261 or by email at [paula.rogalski@ipaper.com](mailto:paula.rogalski@ipaper.com).

## Travel Journal Project

Vacation season is upon us and we have a great project for holding those vacation photographs. The Travel Journal project uses our Pure Paper, 8.5" x 11" sheets to create a keepsake that will last for years.

The project suggests that you mount your photographs on Pure Paper White Craft paper and bind between Pure Paper Corduroy covers. It also explains how you can use the Translucent Vellum envelopes to hold memorabilia like show tickets. Personalize the cover of your journal for each vacation adventure.

Digital camera users don't have to be left out. Substitute the Pure Paper White Craft paper used on the inside of the journal with Strathmore Artist Inkjet Paper Matte or Satin Board. These Artist Inkjet Papers allow you to print your photographs on both sides of the sheets. After you print out your photographs, punch the printed sheets with the hole punch, interleave with the vellum envelopes, and bind between the covers.

This handsome journal will bring back memories for years to come. Visit our [project page](#) to learn how to make your Travel Journal.



## Paper Weight: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

We're not talking about the glass object that sits on the top of a stack of papers to keep them from blowing around. We're talking about the weight of a particular paper and how it relates to other papers. It sounds confusing, but hopefully we can clear things up for you.

Did you ever go in the store and compare a couple pads of paper? Both say 80 lb., but one feels lighter than the other. You stand there wondering how this can be when they both say 80 lb. Well, the weight can be based on a drawing weight, text weight or a cover weight, just to name a few. Confusion plus!

The method of determining paper weight in the U.S. has been basis weight. The pound weight description found on paper packages refers to what we papermakers call basis weight. The basis weight is the weight of 500 sheets of paper of a particular paper's basis size (standard size). In the example above, if the paper were an 80 lb. drawing, the weight would be based on 500 sheets of 24" x 36" paper that would weigh 80 pounds when placed on a scale.

A better way to compare the weights of two papers is by using grams per square meter ( $\text{g/m}^2$ , gsm). This weight is constant no matter what the paper type is. If you compare an 80 lb. drawing paper ( $130 \text{ g/m}^2$ ) with an 80 lb. text paper ( $118 \text{ g/m}^2$ ), the lower  $\text{g/m}^2$  tells you that the text weight paper is lighter than the drawing paper. Grams per square meter refers to how much one square meter weighs, period.

Strathmore uses both US pounds and metric grams per square meter for describing the weight of the paper used in our pads. This gives you a better weight comparison.

Visit our [paper terms page](#) for more papermaking jargon.

## Selecting a Strathmore Drawing Board

Bristol and Illustration Board provide a strong, stiff drawing surface that is more durable than single-ply drawing paper. Choosing the correct board for your piece of art depends on the type of medium you will be using, whether you are practicing or creating finished work, and the desired effect.

Drawing boards come in two surface types, vellum or smooth (sometimes called cold press and hot press). The vellum surface board has a lightly textured surface that is great to use with dry medium like pencil, charcoal, and pastels. The smooth surface is ideal for mediums like pen and ink, marker, or airbrush. The smoothness is created by pressing vellum paper between steel rollers that press out the toothy texture. This creates a uniform smoothness and a hard surface.

Strathmore offers three different types of board in both the vellum and smooth surfaces. They can be recognized by a series number, the higher the series, the more stringent the performance measures. That means a smooth 300 Series Bristol would not be as smooth as a 400 or 500 Series Smooth Bristol and the performance measures would be less than the higher series boards.

- **300 Series Bristol** is a student grade Bristol weight paper which is great for beginning artists and practicing techniques. It is economical and comes in a single ply, bristol-weight board.
- **400 Series Bristol** is an intermediate grade board great for final artwork. This grade is a wood-fiber board with a higher standard of performance than the 300 Series. It is pasted in the tradition of original Bristol in 2-ply, 3-ply, and 4-ply weights.
- **500 Series Bristol** and **Illustration Board** are professional boards made with 100% cotton fiber. They have the strongest surface and the highest performance standards of all our drawing boards. This series of boards is the best choice for finished artwork and comes in 2-ply, 3-ply, 4-ply Bristol, and lightweight and heavyweight Illustration Board.

Bristol and Illustration Boards are great for any drawing project, like the one shown in the demonstration by Phil Metzger. The heavier the weight, or the more plies in a Bristol, the stiffer the drawing foundation. Drawing board also provides a more durable surface allowing for repeated erasures. Use the chart below for choosing the right surface for your needs.

<i>Strathmore Drawing Board Guide</i>	Pencil	Colored Pencil	Charcoal	Pastel	Oil Pastel	Marker	Technical Pen	Air Brush	Light Wash
300 Bristol Smooth	VG	VG	G			VG	VG	VG	
300 Bristol Vellum	VG	VG	VG	VG	VG	G	G	G	G
400 Bristol Smooth	VG	VG	VG			E	E	E	
400 Bristol Vellum	E	E	E	E	E	VG	VG	VG	G
500 Bristol Plate	VG	VG	VG			E	E	E	
500 Bristol Vellum	E	E	E	E	E	E	VG	VG	E
500 Illustration Board Plate	VG	VG	VG			E	E	E	
500 Illustration Board Vellum	E	E	E	E	E	E	VG	VG	E

G - Good  
 VG - Very Good  
 E - Excellent