

# Christine Pilkinton Fine Art

PHONE 615-860-2368

EMAIL [CHRISTY@PORTRAITCREATIONS.COM](mailto:CHRISTY@PORTRAITCREATIONS.COM)

WEB [WWW.PORTRAITCREATIONS.COM](http://WWW.PORTRAITCREATIONS.COM)

*To send light into the darkness of men's hearts  
- such is the duty of the artist. Schumann*

## Foreshortening

Foreshortening is a technique used in perspective to create the illusion of an object receding strongly into the distance or background.

A familiar example of foreshortening would be when you look down a long straight road lined with trees, the two edges of the road appear to move towards each other and the trees look smaller the further away they are. Or if you're painting a person lying on their back with their feet facing towards you, you'd paint their feet larger than their head to capture the illusion. About.com Art Glossary...

## QUOTES

**Michelangelo** A man paints with his brains and not with his hands.

**Leonardo da Vinci** Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.

When you paint look at your work in a mirror; when you see it reversed, it will appear to you like some other painter's work and you will be a better judge of its faults. (Leonardo da Vinci)

Nothing is more apt to deceive us than our own judgment of our work. We derive more benefit from having our faults pointed out by our enemies than from hearing the opinions of friends. (Leonardo da Vinci)

Be eager to lend a patient ear to the opinions of others and think long and hard whether whoever finds fault has reason or not to censure you. And if the answer is yes, correct the fault. If no, give the impression that you have not heard him, or if he is a man whom you respect, explain to him why he is mistaken. (Leonardo da Vinci)

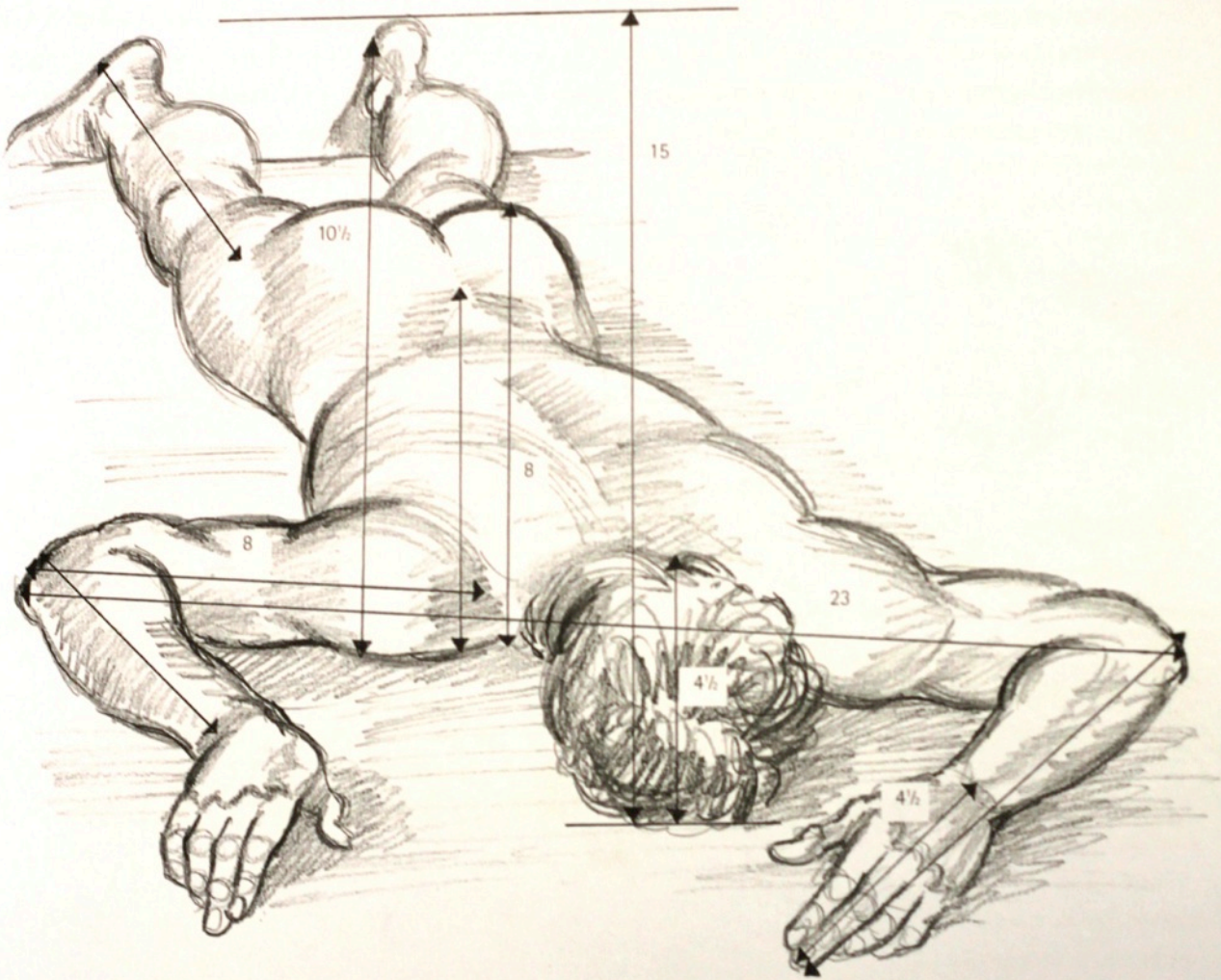
It should not be hard for you to stop sometimes and look into the stains of walls, or ashes of a fire, or clouds, or mud or like places, in which... you may find really marvelous ideas. (Leonardo da Vinci)

Human subtlety will never devise an invention more beautiful, more simple or more direct than does nature because in her inventions nothing is lacking, and nothing is superfluous. (Leonardo da Vinci)

## Foreshortening

When drawing objects or people seen from one end and looking along the length of the object or figure, the parts of the object nearer to your eye will appear much larger when compared to those at the further end. Many beginners find this truth quite difficult to grasp. The belief that the head cannot possibly be as large as

the legs tends to influence them into disregarding the evidence of their own eyes and amending their drawing to fit their misconception. However, it is easy enough to make a simple measurement to help convince the mind of what the eye actually sees. Try it for yourself after you have studied the next drawing.



## THE STRANGE PROPORTIONS OF FORESHORTENING

Note the depth of the head ( $4\frac{1}{2}$  units), which is the same as the open hand, and the foreshortened forearm and foreshortened leg. At 8 units the torso is only just less than twice the size of the head. The full length of the body from shoulder to ankle ( $10\frac{1}{2}$  units) is just over twice the head. The upper arm is the same length as the torso (8 units). The distance from elbow to elbow (23) is longer than the distance from head to heel (15).

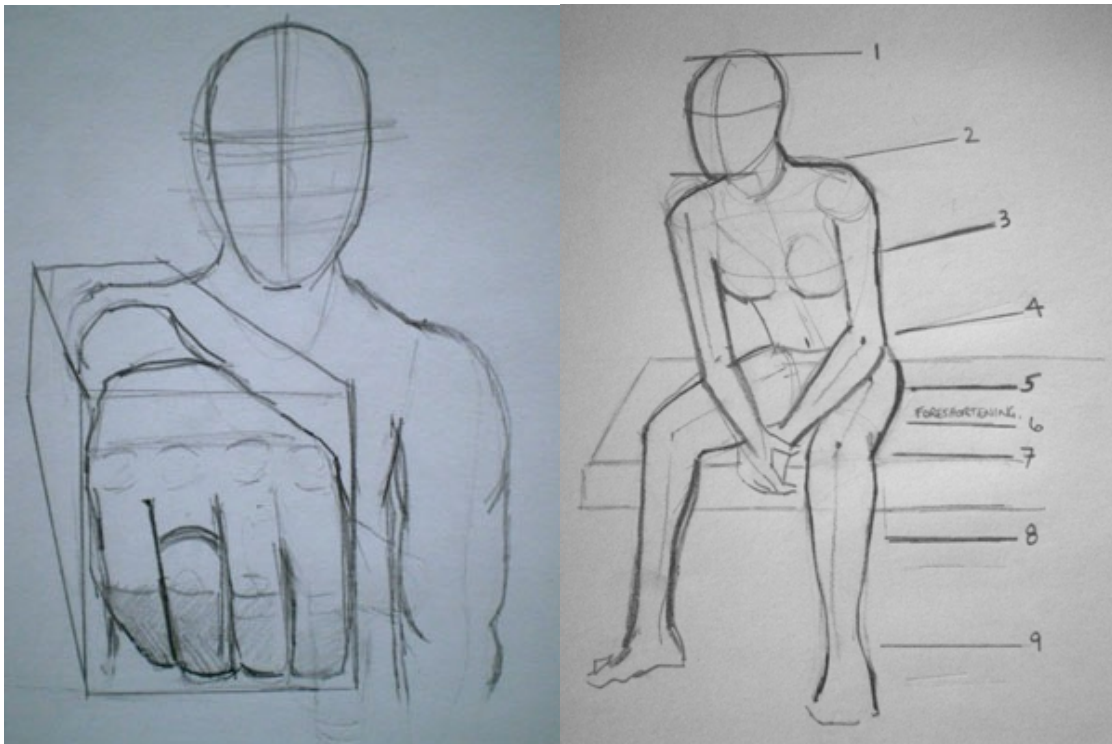
# Foreshortening [www.drawingprofessor.com](http://www.drawingprofessor.com)

Foreshortening is the modification of an established scale in a drawing of the human figure to represent perspective. Unlike linear perspective, there is no need for vanishing points, however one has the option of using such methods if the figure is lying down or standing up in such a way that a three dimensional rectangular cube could be drawn in perspective to encompass the figure and be used as a guide.

More often than not, foreshortening is a matter of observation and drawing what you see, as opposed to what your logical brain thinks you see. When you start to draw an object that is foreshortened, your logical side of your brain kicks in and tries to convince you to draw what it knows the object looks like. You need to be able to override that left brain function and let the right side, the creative side, take over and draw exactly what you see.

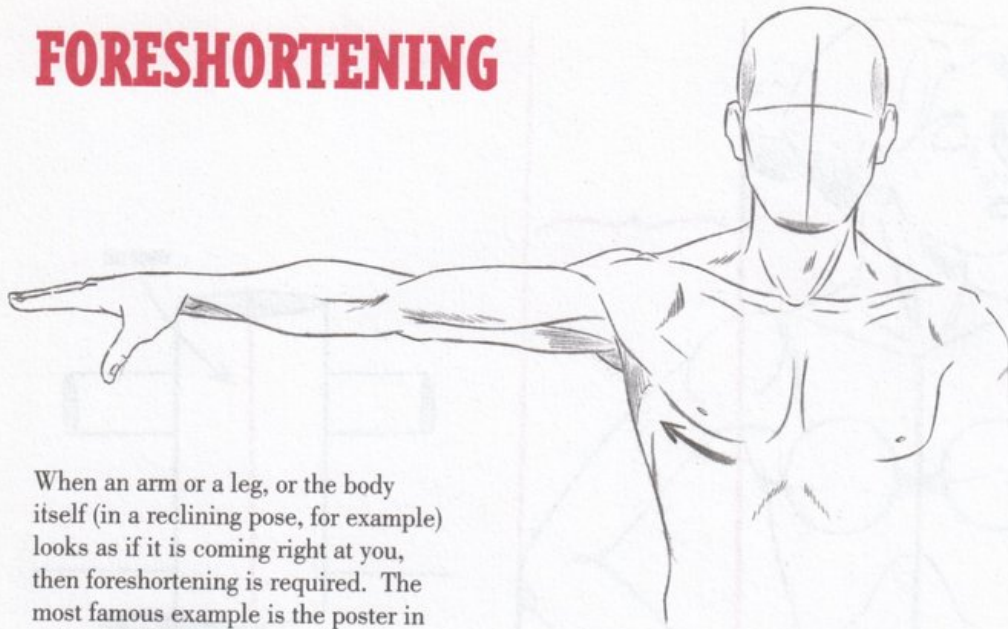
Foreshortening is when an object appears to be receding into the distance or coming straight out at you. When something gets foreshortened, proportion is skewed and the size of the object is distorted to make the object appear closer to you. Foreshortening can be remembered easily by its descriptive nature because whether an arm or leg extends backwards or forwards it appears to be shorter than its actual dimensions. Another rule of thumb goes as follows: part(s) of the figure closest to the viewer should be drawn larger, almost exaggeratedly so. Also, a common technique for drawing the foreshortened figure is to incorporate greater definition and detailing to the foreground while leaving the middle and background sketchier.

Below are two sketches which demonstrate foreshortening. In the first sketch you will note that the fist is drawn in a somewhat exaggerated fashion and the arm appears somewhat shorter. The three dimensional cube is used as a guide for the size of the fist. In the second sketch, the thigh is somewhat foreshortened because it is receding into the distance.





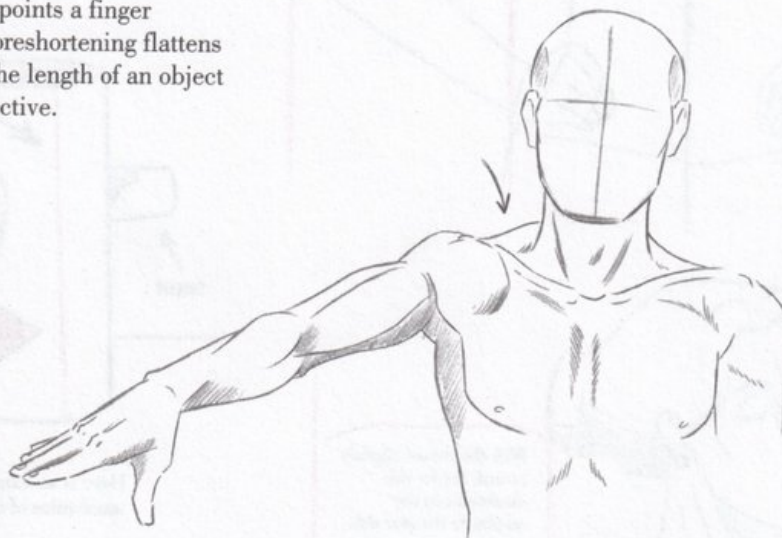
# FORESHORTENING



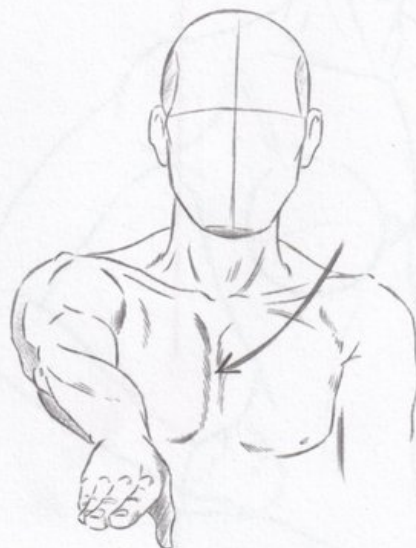
When an arm or a leg, or the body itself (in a reclining pose, for example) looks as if it is coming right at you, then foreshortening is required. The most famous example is the poster in which Uncle Sam points a finger straight at you. Foreshortening flattens out and shortens the length of an object to simulate perspective.

## THE ARM

In this pose, there is no foreshortening because the arm is parallel to the picture plane. It is neither traveling toward nor away from us. Note that when an arm lifts, the pectoral muscles also lift.



Some foreshortening now occurs, as the arm starts to point toward the viewer. We begin to draw the arm shorter and overlap some muscles. The trapezius tenses to aid in raising the arm.



This position shows significant foreshortening. The muscles of the arm sharply overlap, but all the landmarks of the arm are still evident: the shoulder muscles, the upper arm muscles, the elbow joint, the forearm muscles, and the hand. The pectoral muscle nearest the raised arm tenses.



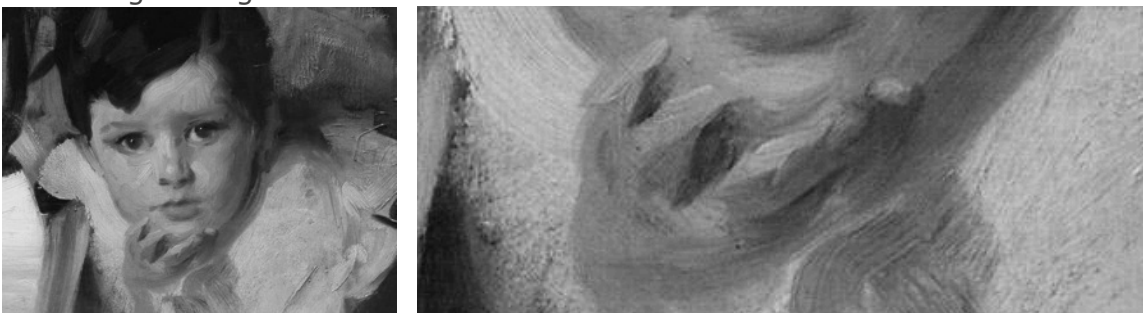
Some famous examples of foreshortening in Old Master works...  
The Dead Toreador by Eduard Manet



Cassatt and Zorn Painting below



John Singer Sargent





Frans Hals Young Man with a Skull



The Dead Christ by Annibale Carracci

