Grizzly Bear Sketching with Robert Bateman
Robert Bateman is a Canadian artist and naturalist living on Salt Spring Island, BC. He has been painting and traveling since a young age. He is now 89 years old and still painting, writing, and drawing. Mr. Bateman believes that everyone, especially children, are naturalists and artists at heart. By learning to observe, notice, and appreciate our natural surroundings, we pay attention to the beauty and importance of nature. After all, Robert Bateman says that “nature is magic”! Robert considers grizzly bears to be one of the largest and most impressive carnivores, and has painted and drawn them many times.
8 Types of Bears

There are 8 different types of bears:

- Grizzly bear
- Black bear
- Polar bear
- Andean/Spectacled bear
- Sloth bear
- Sun bear
- Panda bear
- Asiatic Black Bear
A male grizzly bear can stand up to 10 feet tall (on their hind legs) and can weigh up to 900 lbs! Their coloring varies from blonde to nearly black, but typically is brown with darker legs. A grizzly claw is longer than that of the black bear and made for digging. Grizzlies hibernate for 5-7 months of each year. During this time, females give birth to their cubs, who consume milk from their mother and gain strength for the remainder of the hibernation season. Grizzly bears are omnivores, eating both plants and animals. Their main food is fish.

Grizzlies are very important to the ecosystem. They stir up the soil when digging for food, they spread seeds, fertilize the forest, regulate prey species, and help spread nutrients such as nitrogen by carrying salmon from stream to forest.
Robert Bateman is an avid painter and sketcher, and is often out drawing in nature. He keeps a nature journal, and records what he sees. A favorite of Robert’s is the Grizzly bear!

When it comes to drawing in nature, Robert Bateman likes his sketchbook to be MESSY. That means his sketches aren’t always complete, the ink can be rubbed, leaves can be pressed or traced, and he can pick and choose what parts he would like to draw. See how scratchy and rough his pencil sketches of the bears are? None of them are complete, either!

Your sketches do not have to be finished works of art that you would hang on the wall, a sketchbook is just for practice and can be as messy and unfinished as you like. Recording like this, forces you to really look at what you are seeing.

There are some key elements of art that can be used while sketching! These include: line, shape, colour, value, texture, and form. Using these six techniques, we can build up an art piece!
Line & Shape

Line:
Artists use shapes and lines to help them draw what they are seeing. We can use a variety of different lines in our drawings. Lines can also represent emotions. Create a page in your sketchbook using lines that describe the following: thin lines, thick, straight, curved, happy, sad, nervous, scared, excited, calm, etc.

Think about your knowledge of Grizzly bears. Use lines to represent your feelings about them. Do this once before you start to learn more about Grizzlies, and then again after you have finished the unit. How have your feelings changed about Grizzlies? How have your lines changed because of this?

Shape:
Everything that you see around you can be broken down into shapes in order to make drawing it easier.

Something more complicated can be broken down into smaller, easier shapes. We can then gradually go back to refine and add details. Notice how the light is hitting the shapes, notice the shadows, they will follow the form of the shape.
Let’s look at the shapes that make up a Grizzly bear. Place a piece of tracing paper over one of Mr. Bateman’s grizzly images, break the bear’s body down into smaller, easy shapes. Now using your tracing paper as your reference, draw the same shapes in your sketchbook (without tracing). Now see if you can add more details by gradually refining your shapes and lines.
Value:

Values reflect the lightness or darkness of an area. Values include the various shades of grey that fall between white and black. Light and dark values give our sketches depth and dimension, creating a more realistic image. Capturing highlights and shadows, and observing subtleties in our subject matter such as the direction of the light source, all help to create depth and dimension in our sketches. Noticing values in nature and comparing them with a value scale in your sketchbook is great practice for seeing subtle changes.

Values can also be created by hatching or cross-hatching. The closer together the lines are, the darker the value that is created.

Hatching  Cross-hatching
Try creating a few different value bars in your sketchbook.
Texture:

Notice the use of small lines drawn together to create the texture of fur. The process of hatching and cross hatching (building up small lines to create texture and tone) is an example of the art style Robert Bateman uses. Because this is an etching print, this work was actually made almost entirely out of just small lines! A simple technique can create depth and texture.

Bear hair is fine and wavy. It has long coarse outer hair called guard hair as well as an underfur. Grizzlies are often dark brown, but can vary from very light cream to black. The long guard hairs on their backs and shoulders frequently have white tips and give the bears a “grizzled” appearance, hence the name “grizzly.” Its legs and feet tend to be even darker in colour.
Let’s practice sketching some fur!

Feel the fur sample, look at the texture of the fur, the direction and the value of the hair (is it straight, curved, what pattern does it follow, where is it lighter, where is it darker). Draw a small swatch of grizzly bear fur in your sketchbook.

Your pencil strokes should follow the direction that the fur is growing. Layer your strokes to create depth and thickness to the fur. The more strokes you create, the darker the value will be. You can also use an eraser to “draw” in lighter fur with a sharp edge or press & lift with your eraser to create a gradual lightening of the fur strokes.
Paws:

A bear paw can be broken down into **SHAPES**. Circles for each toe, a rounded rectangle for the palm, and thick, curved lines for the claws. Use the photo and the bear track as a reference and sketch out a bear paw. First, start with the big easy shapes, then start to look at and create the values with shading.
Eyes:
Grizzly bears can see very well at a distance, at least as well as humans. When you are drawing a bear eye, think of it as a ball. As it goes back into space (the edges of the eyeball that go into the eye socket), it will get darker in value. The main part of the eyeball will be medium in value, and there will be a highlight on the eye where the light is bouncing off of it & reflecting the light off of the liquid on the eye. They also have a layer that reflects light while in the dark, similar to cats, dogs and many nocturnal animals that make them appear to shine at night to help them see.

Eyes:

Nose:
A bear’s best sense is their sense of smell and they will trust it more than their eyesight. A grizzly bear can smell 2100 times better than a human. Its nose contains hundreds of tiny muscles than can move in all sorts of directions. A bear smelling something, might be like us touching and feeling something that is far away. A grizzly can smell something up to 30 kms away.

Look at the interesting shapes that make up a bear nose. Watch how the light and dark values help to show the nose’s form.
Now let’s put all of the parts together to sketch a grizzly bear!

Use one of Robert Bateman’s images or one of the photos to sketch your own grizzly bear in your sketchbook.
The Bateman Foundation, a national public charity, inspires a lasting relationship with nature through the lens of art, and is currently one of the only non-profits in Canada primarily using artwork to promote a connection to nature and the environment.

Established in 2012 by world-renowned artist and naturalist Robert Bateman, the Foundation grew from his philosophy that by helping people reconnect with nature, they will be inspired to conserve and protect it. Through educational programs, community collaborations and gallery exhibitions, we are inspiring a generation of people to build a deeper relationship with the natural world.

For more information please visit batemanfoundation.org