

Drawing Mushrooms with Pat Buchanan and Carol Govan

Article by Jason Karakehian

Photos by Jason Karakehian and Pat Buchanan

A Boston Mycological Club workshop held on Sunday, May 21, 2012 at the seminar room in the Harvard Herbaria building.

We had great fun with this well-run workshop. Carol and Pat were entertaining, encouraging and highly informative. They systematized the skill of drawing for the inexperienced artist in a way that was digestible and easily implemented while mycologizing out in the field. They began with the important details of date, place, habitat, size, and colors that any observer of fungi in the field might occasionally forget to record while on the “hunt.”



Class participants huddle around Pat Buchanan.

Photo by Carol Govan

When drawing, begin with a quick sketch to capture a sense of the fungus and then go in with a clear plastic ruler or gauge of some kind to correct your measurements and angles of lines.



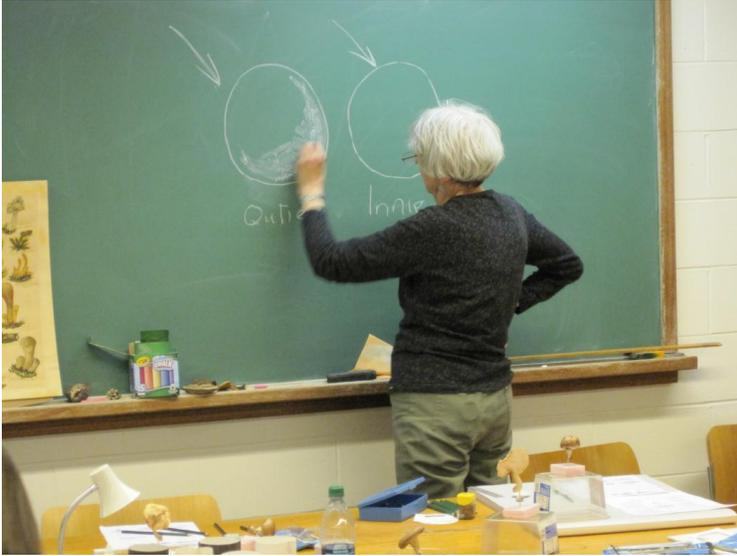
Carol Govan (center) demonstrates drawing techniques.
Photo by Jason Karakehian

If you're new to drawing, it's often easiest to draw life size than to enlarge or reduce, as this is a more complicated operation to get the proportions right. Next draw the edges of your mushroom while regularly looking up to carefully observe its surfaces. Feel free to erase! Now look at how the light falls on the subject, what areas are recessed and cast in shadow?



Pat Buchanan demonstrates how light falls on an object.
Photo by Jason Karakehian

What areas are exposed to the most amount of light? Lightly shade in the areas where the shadows are then go back in and progressively darken the regions that are most shaded.



Pat Buchanan demonstrates how light falls on concave and convex surfaces.

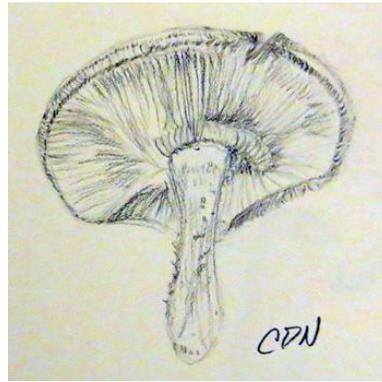
Photo by Jason Karakehian

Finally, add details and textures. You don't have to draw every single gill or fold but draw enough until you get the "sense" of what they look like and fill in the rest by imagination.



Shiitake drawing by Barbara Seeber-Wagner.

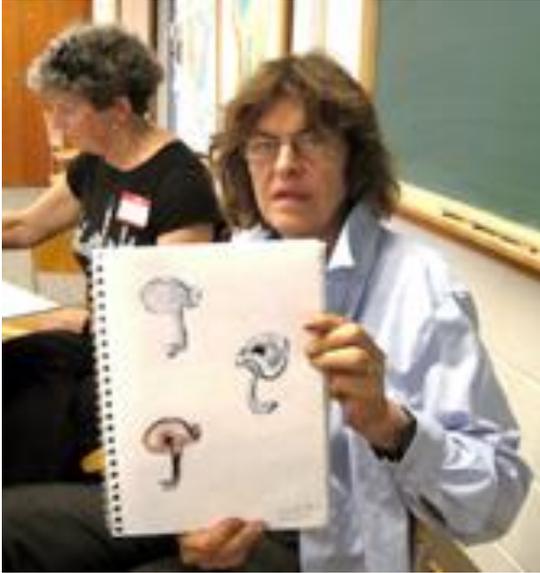
Photo by Pat Buchanan



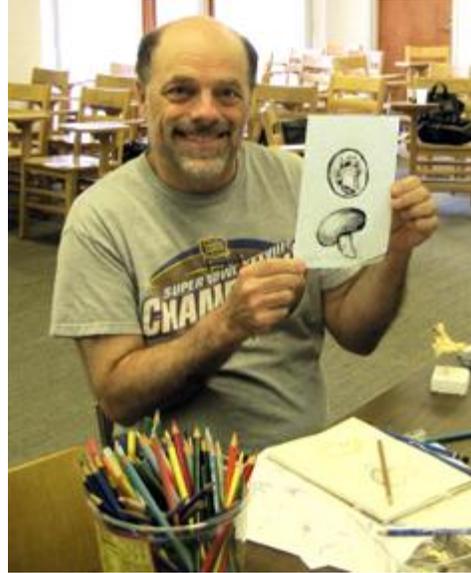
Shiitake drawing by Chris Neefus.

Photo by Pat Buchanan

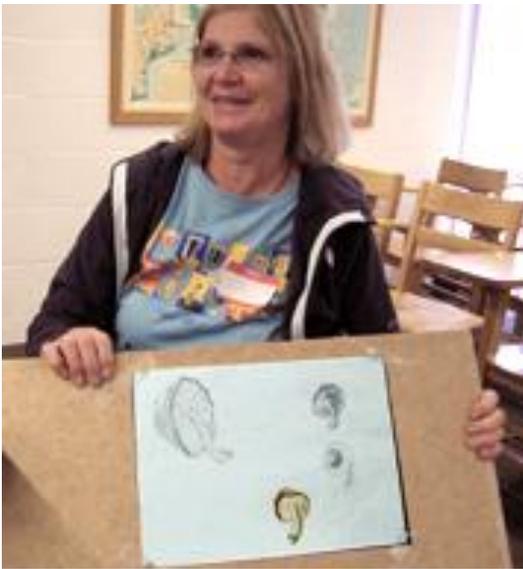
If you want to add color with watercolor pencils or regular wax colored pencils, try matching colors in a little swatch next to your drawing. When you get the color right, make a note of what colors you used to get it for future reference.



Mary Nicholson displays her sketches.
Photo by Pat Buchanan



Rich Gill presents his sketches.
Photo by Pat Buchanan



Elis Murphy displays her sketches.
Photo by Pat Buchanan

Remember while you work that you are not obligated to produce a masterpiece - enjoy the process and remember to keep looking up at your subject. The great thing about drawing what you see is that it hones your observational skills. Regardless of how you might feel about your drawing, you have a record of your personal moment out in nature. Your vivid memory of your mushroom along with your good notes will help you to identify it later. You'll be surprised at the amazing and beautiful details your subject will reveal to you when you take time to contemplate and record.