



This online edition pdf of Laura Summer's fifty-two weeks is made available by way of The Calendar of the Soul Online www.calendarofthesoul.net

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Introduction

This book is a workbook. It is designed not to be read but to be drawn and by being drawn, to provide an experience of the cycle of the year.

As modern people we live with very little relationship to the cycle of the year. Central heat and cooling, electric lights and modern transportation allow us to be fairly comfortable in any season and therefore unconscious of the great breathing cycle of the earth. The verses of Rudolf Steiner's Calendar of the Soul provide a meditative path for experiencing this cycle. The exercises in this book were developed in relation to these verses but this is not a book of illustrations. Rather by drawing or painting them, the artistic exercises are designed to provide the student with an experience of inner movement during the year; the breathing in of the earth in winter, the out breathing into summer and the subtle variations, spirals, reversals and lemniscates of the process.

When I first encountered Rudolf Steiner's Calendar of the Soul, I tried to understand it as separate verses, one for each week. Looked at this way it was most often incomprehensible to me. Although occasionally the verse seemed to fit something, either in the seasonal situation around me or in my inner condition, as often as not the verse seemed arbitrary when looked at alone. Three years ago I started to try to penetrate the calendar as a continuous sequence. Each day I read the verse and then held it inwardly for a few moments. At the end of the week I took a pencil and drew a gesture to represent the movement that that verse holds.

As the year progressed I noticed that the movement of one verse leads to the movement of the next and all together they form an intricate breathing and weaving. When my first year with the calendar came to a close I decided to continue working with it meditatively for another year to try to experience this breathing/weaving more clearly. At the end of that year I began to create a drawing or painting exercise for each verse.

Each exercise is an attempt at giving the participant an inner artistic experience of that week's perspective in the weaving of the whole. Each week's exercise has both a relationship to the world outside and to one's inner world. I hope that by following these exercises in relationship to the calendar verses the participant will gradually become aware of this overall weaving/ breathing and it's relationship to the exercises. At that point the participant will be able to develop their own exercises, of which I am sure there are unlimited possibilities.

Rudolf Steiner's Calendar of the Soul was written in German. During the process of working with the Calendar of the Soul I often felt fortunate that I did not speak German. I had to work with various translations, often referring to more than one, and sometimes doing a literal translation using a German/English dictionary. This gave me the understanding that the Calendar of the Soul lives not in any one language but in the realm of meaning that must be "translated" into human language. Therefore these drawing exercises can be used with any version of the Calendar of the Soul and it may be more effective to work with more than one "translation". It is perhaps in the space between translations, whether they be from German to English or from word to form, that something beyond the material world can be perceived.

You will notice as you work with the exercises that the process of each follows a sequence of observation. We begin by looking out to the world or in to ourselves, we make an observation or have an experience, we look the other direction, out or in, we see how we are affected, what moves in the world, what moves in us. We work with this observation, letting it change and reveal itself to us.

After you have worked with these exercises you may want to develop exercises of your own. Here is the procedure that I followed:

1. Read the verse.
2. Close your eyes and repeat the verse, go line by line if you need to.
3. Do this each day for a week.
4. As you become more familiar with the verse try to notice the movement. Ask yourself questions such as: "Does it start in the center and move out?" "Does it contain a polarity of above and below?"
5. At the end of the week take a pencil and draw a gesture that, for you, describes the verse.
6. Ask yourself the question, "What drawing would I do?" "Where would I begin, looking inside or outside?" "What colors?"
7. Now draw the answer. Draw it whether you think it is correct or not. Remember that the drawings are footprints left behind you as you tread a path. When walking it is not usual or valuable to expect to create perfect footprints, but it is possible to love your footprints as you gaze back over the path.

Terms and media

Most of the exercises are written without mentioning specific media. That is, an exercise may call for a blue surface or a black line but whether you create the blue and black with water color, pastel, oil crayon or pencil is up to you. The most important distinction is whether the exercise is calling for an opaque or a transparent medium. Some media are opaque such as pastel, gouache and oil, and some are transparent: watercolor, oil or acrylic glazes and ink. Sometimes the exercise asks you to bring something opaque on top of what you have already drawn. You can use any medium that can be seen to stand on top of what is there.

I hope that by writing the instructions to accommodate many media the student is left free to work in a medium in which they are comfortable as well as to explore a medium that they are unfamiliar with.

In order to follow these exercises through the year you will need to be familiar with certain terms. It is a good idea before you begin the weekly drawings to spend some time with these definitions, actually sketching each one as is demonstrated in the illustration. This will enable you to work on the weekly drawings without so often needing to refer back to these definitions.

Surface

A patch of color, not any particular shape:



Surface made of slanted strokes



Surface made of chaotic scribbles



Surface made with even tone



Surface made of smooth wash of color

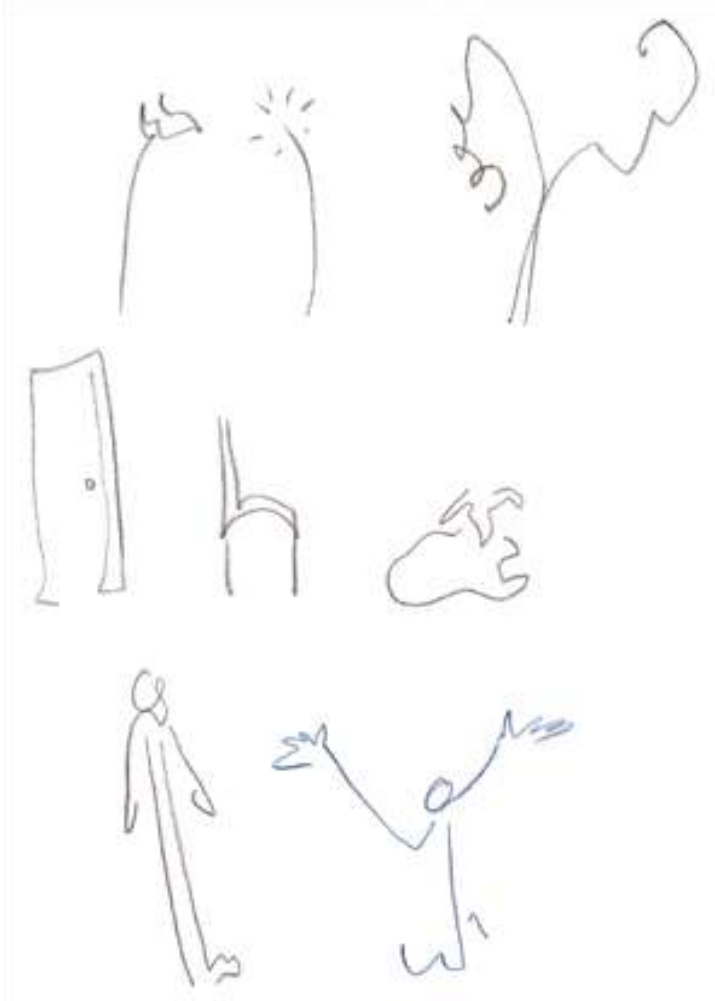
Line

Practice making lines varying the pressure and width so that your lines are interesting.



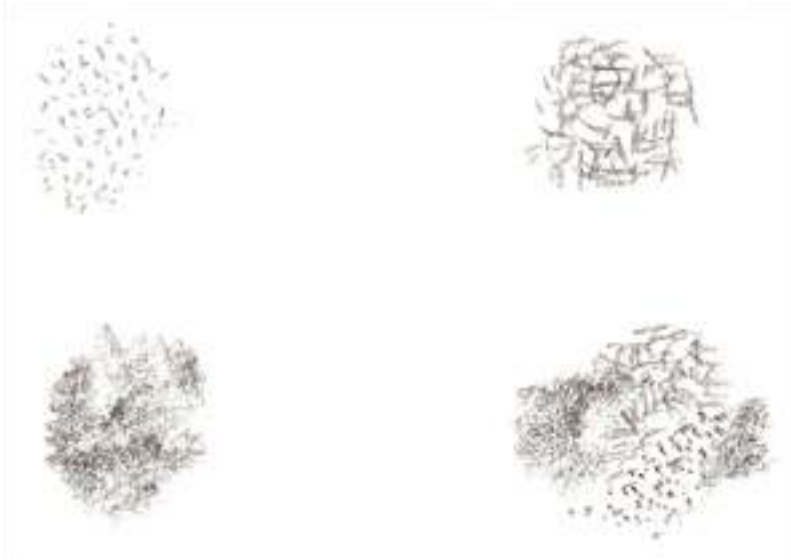
Gesture

Practice with a flower – begin at the bottom of the stem and with one quick line capture the gesture of the flower. Now try a doorway, a chair, an animal and finally the human figure. Do not worry about how the gesture looks, just move your hand and draw it.



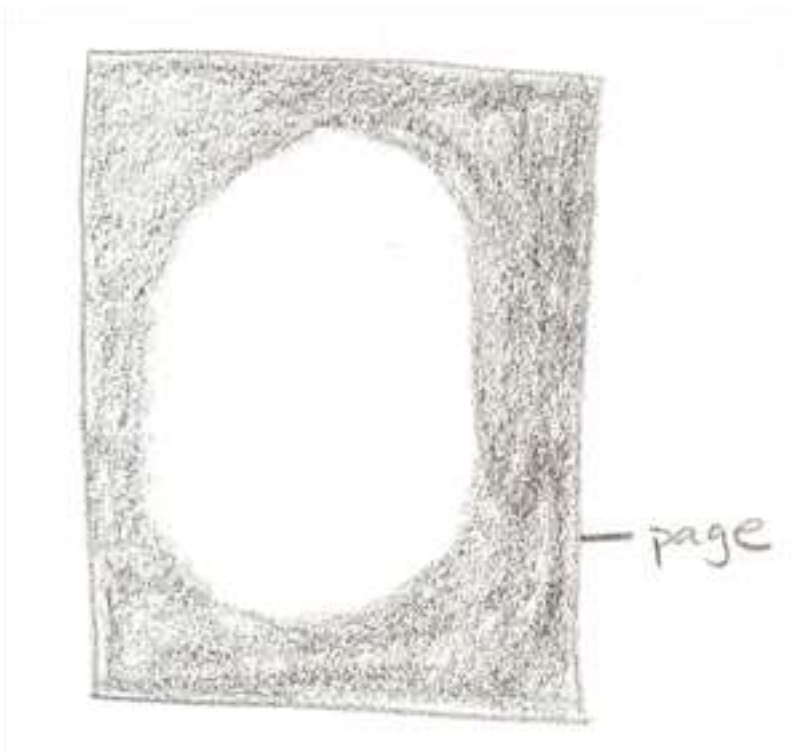
Texture

Make a small surface of texture. Try using small marks or dots, short lines, shading and combinations.



From the Negative

Begin at the outer edge of your page and shade inward toward the center.



Tone

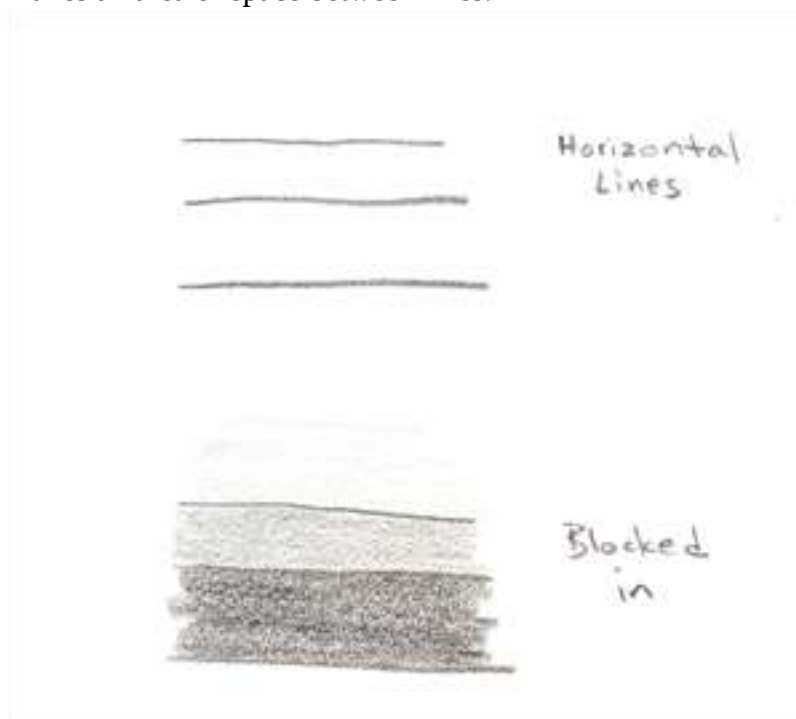
A surface of one color, usually not too dark

Tone the page

As evenly as possible bring a pale tone of color everywhere. this provides a base for the rest of the drawing.

Block in

Bring a tone of color or gray between, or in relation to a line in the composition. This makes an area of space between lines.



If you don't understand a step in an exercise such as, " build a composition using 3 colors", just do something using 3 colors. If you have no understanding of a step just do something else, draw from nature or your imagination. Then look again at the instructions, maybe something will be clearer. Any trouble with comprehension is more my fault than yours and the "fault" of not being able to demonstrate. In the end it will work out because new directions will come from experimenting.

If an entire exercise seems too complex or difficult to understand start by only doing the first step. In the next days add another step. At the end of the week if it is still obscure, leave it, maybe you will return to it next year.