

Tip #34

Feature Focus - Lips

Mouths are wonderfully expressive. Think of the range of emotions they're capable of displaying without uttering a word - from a big happy grin to intense concentration, from a sad, down-turned mouth to a relaxed, tender look. Get the mouth right and you've gone a long way toward catching a likeness, as well!

Art 34-1

I love painting and drawing mouths, sometimes just as a feature focus all their own. Here, I tried to capture as many different expressions of the SAME mouth as I had room for on the page. Smiling, laughing, working, singing, tasting, kissing and even chagrined or giving a raspberry! I couldn't resist doing one with the brush in my mouth, as I worked, and yes, of course it's all mine. I'm a handy model!



Art 34-1

Art 34-2

Watch out for stereotypical thinking-the topmost mouth is just that. It doesn't look like ANYone, it's just a cartoon. Below, I paid attention to the shapes, planes, and shadows of a very particular mouth. Watch for those changes of direction and angle, and you'll find it's much easier to capture a likeness as well as a sense of life.



Art 34-2

Art 34-3

The various proportions of the mouth and the areas around it will help you to capture a likeness, too. Some have a very short upper lip that becomes even shorter when smiling, while others have a much longer one. Notice how far beyond the edges of the nostrils the outer corners of the mouth is, at rest or smiling. Notice, too, whether the upper and lower lip are approximately the same depth, or quite different. The peaks on the upper lip may be quite pronounced, or softer and broader-we're all different. (These peaks smooth out some when the person is smiling, of course.)



Art 34-3

Art 34-4

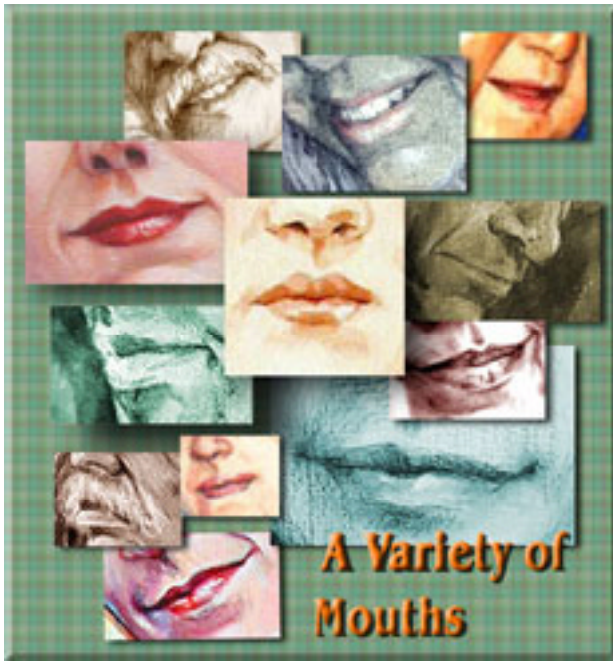
Notice that the upper lip almost always appears darker, as it curves inward - it's in shadow. The lower lip catches the light, so appears much lighter in value. Watch for highlights here, too, and pay attention to roundness. The little details AROUND the mouth also help capture likeness or emotion.



Art 34-4

Art 34-5

Here's a selection from some of my paintings and drawings-notice how varied these are, not only in shape but in expression. They're an essential part of any portrait.



Art 34-5

You can find more on painting people in several of my North Light books, including *Creating Textures in Watercolor* - from your local bookstore, from North Light Books, <http://www.artistsnetwork.com/nlbooks/index.asp> , or from Amazon, <http://www.amazon.com> - or buy it direct from me and have it signed, <http://www.cathyjohnson.info>. For more on painting and drawing people, check my online art classes, <http://www.cathyjohnson.info/>, or go direct to my Drawing and Sketching signup, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/drawing_sketching_online/, or Watercolor signup, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/watercolor_online/, for further information.

You'll find my artwork on new products in my Cafepress store (including that crazy mouth montage) at http://www.cafepress.com/cathy_johnson and original fine art auctions on eBay at <http://members.ebay.com/aboutme/cathyjohnsonart..>