# Disclaimer:

The content of this writing may read like a foreign language without a basic understanding of the Digital Image editing software: Adobe Photoshop, and other items mentioned herein, pertaining to that software. However, I would encourage you to continue reading though to, if nothing else, glean knowledge of how an image can come together, utilizing a hybridization of traditional hand-drawn methods of image making and modern, digital methods as well, hopefully to support a positively conceded outcome. This writing may serve to introduce some of the functions of the above mentioned software, and though the conveyance of editing techniques available in the software Photoshop to those who use it, was definitely a part of the intention in writing this, It was not wholly intended to serve as a "How to" submission. However, it does seem beneficial to discuss a methodology that I have spent time, among other things, contemplating. Aside from that, this entry aims to raise questions about the subtle decision-making process specifically around Composition and the Cropping technique, which is a topic that anyone with a basic interest in Visual Aesthetics (practically everyone) could get hip to. I hope the discourse of Photoshop knick-knacks and shortcuts does not frustrate the reader into a state of disinterest. I did write also with the writing in mind, so writers be ware, there is something there for you too.

I drew Michaela in a full-body pose during the last fifty minutes of the session yesterday. Before that I made a few contour studies of her hands and then a color study using Copic (alcohol-based) markers. I used a .03 and .05 millimeter Micron Pen for the line work, Grey markers for the hair, and a splash of brown for the eyes. I rendered the face a little bit using an HB pencil. I started with the legs and worked up to the head. By the time I neared the crown it became apparent that the top of her head would be cropped by the paper.
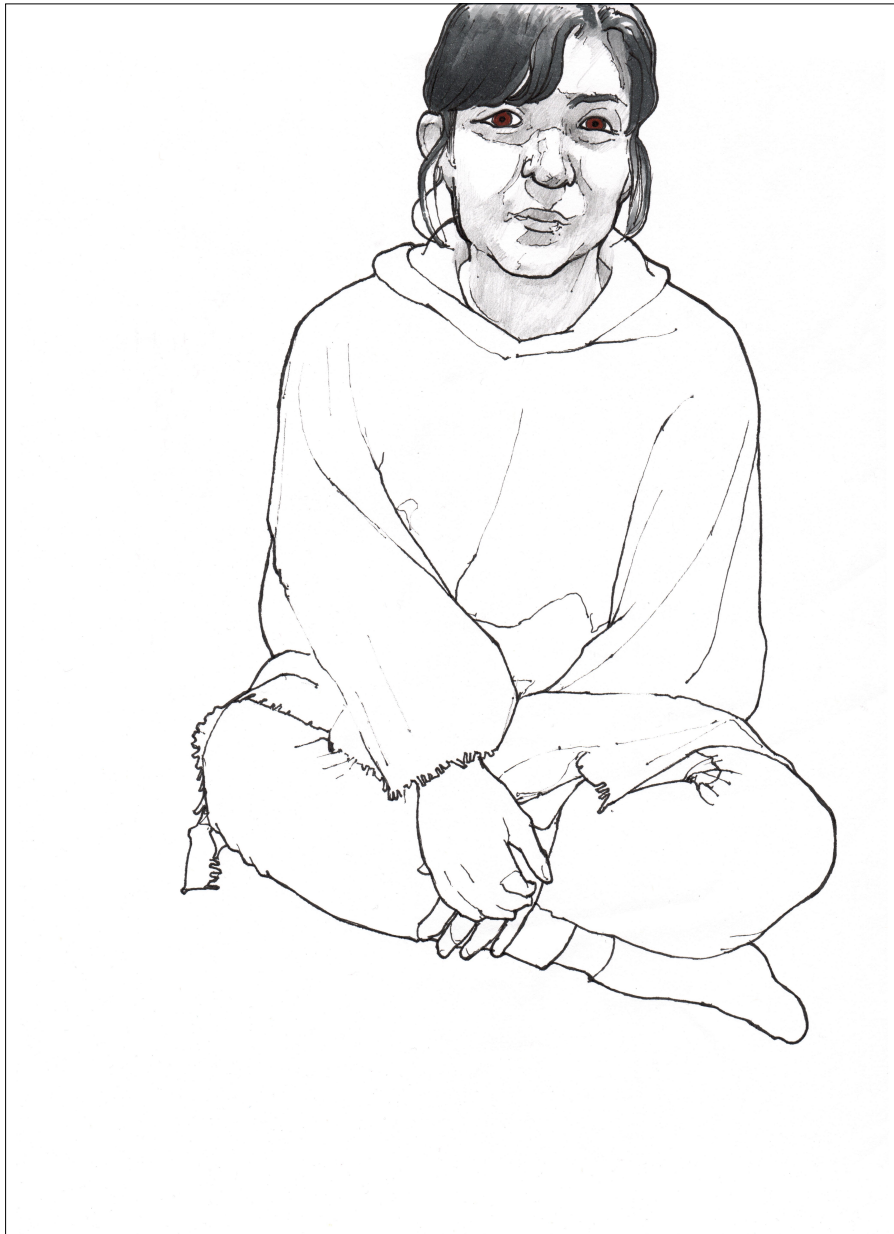

And so it was.

Call it "Poor Planning" or chalk it up to "Flavorful Composition". Perhaps it is a "glass half-full" or "glass half-empty" scenario.

In any case, I knew something could be done about it, this "perceived error", what, with being equipped now with a few basic Photoshop skills, as I am, after a couple semesters of attendance, at the local Community College. Though, basic, my repertoire may be, these skills are no less useful in resolving at least a few issues involved with the making of images. So in the following I will describe my use of them, in order to achieve a certain result that I think at least some may most certainly appreciate.

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The Solution for the cropped head looked like this:
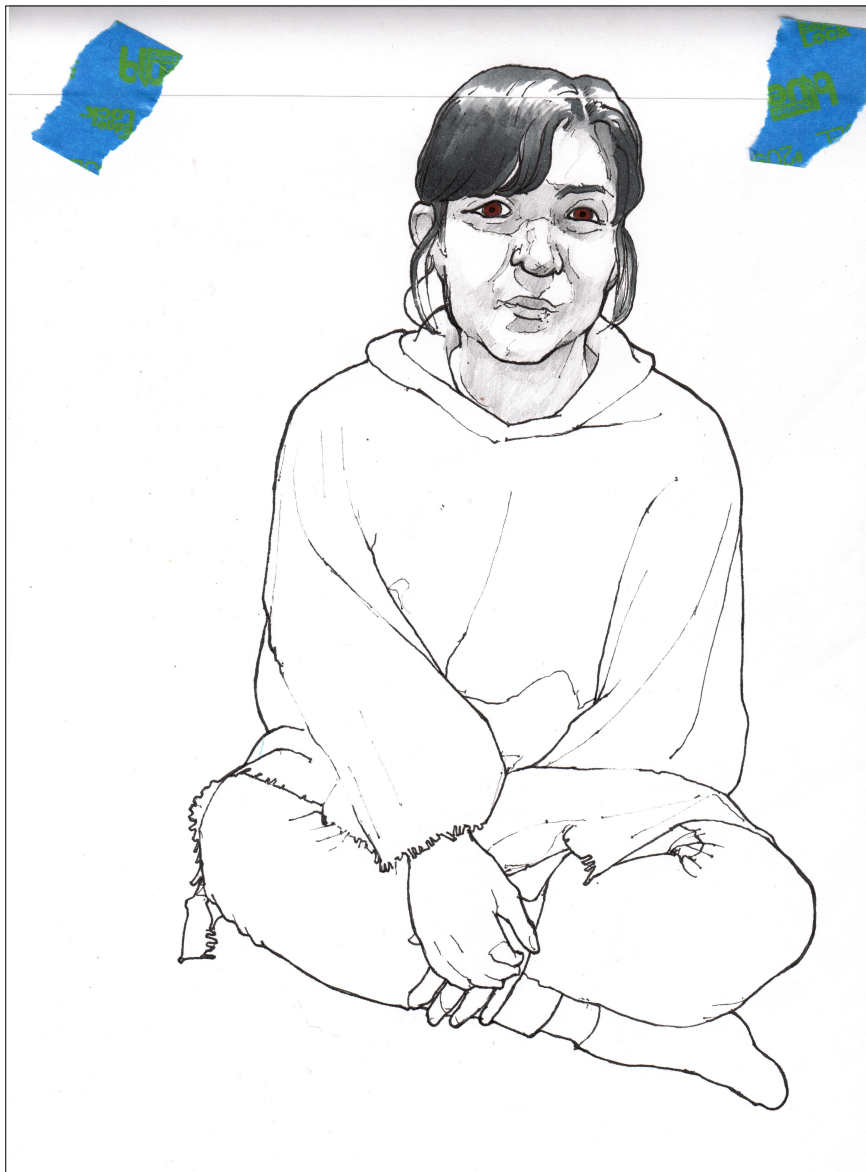
If you can't tell, a section of paper was added, and taped on with painter's tape, before concluding, by drawing the crown of the head. I then colored the addition with grey marker, for consistency, and proceeded to make a scan. The above image is that of said scan, which was then dragged into Photoshop for edit.

*Note the shadow along the top of the image (from a slightly ajar scanner lid), the painter's tape, and the line connecting the added piece and the original paper.

I first motioned to make disappear the aforementioned line, connecting the sheets of paper. Opting for an editing tool called the 'Spot Healing Brush' (shortcut: "J" key), I held the Shift key, and clicked at the beginning of the line and clicked again at the other end. Holding the Shift key, when using this (and other) Photoshop tools, creates a dead-straight line between two points, defined by a first and second left-mouse click. The job at hand was a perfect occasion to employ this nifty trick, and in an instant the two pages were one.

Next, I created a new layer and employed the 'Brush' tool (shortcut: "B"), dipped it in virtual white paint, and proceeded to "erase" any trace of the blue painter's tape from the scan by "painting" in white, directly on the layer. This proved to be an easy enough solution, namely because the paper was white as well, which prevented any major noticeable contrast between the white (virtual paint) and the background.

The original drawing has Michaela leaned to the right of the page. I thought a slight adjustment was in order, namely because there is no background drawing to help provide further context, necessitating the lean as fundamentally important to preserve.

I used the 'Lasso' tool (shortcut: "L") to trace a loose pathway around the figure. The Pathway turns into a Selection as soon as you let go of the mouse (a click-and-drag thing). When the Selection was made (indicated by the "marching

ants"), I pressed Transform (shortcut: Command + T), and a box formed around the Selection. I hovered the mouse over a corner and "grabbed" it, then adjusted via a few degrees counter-clockwise rotation.

The below image is the result of these basic edits.
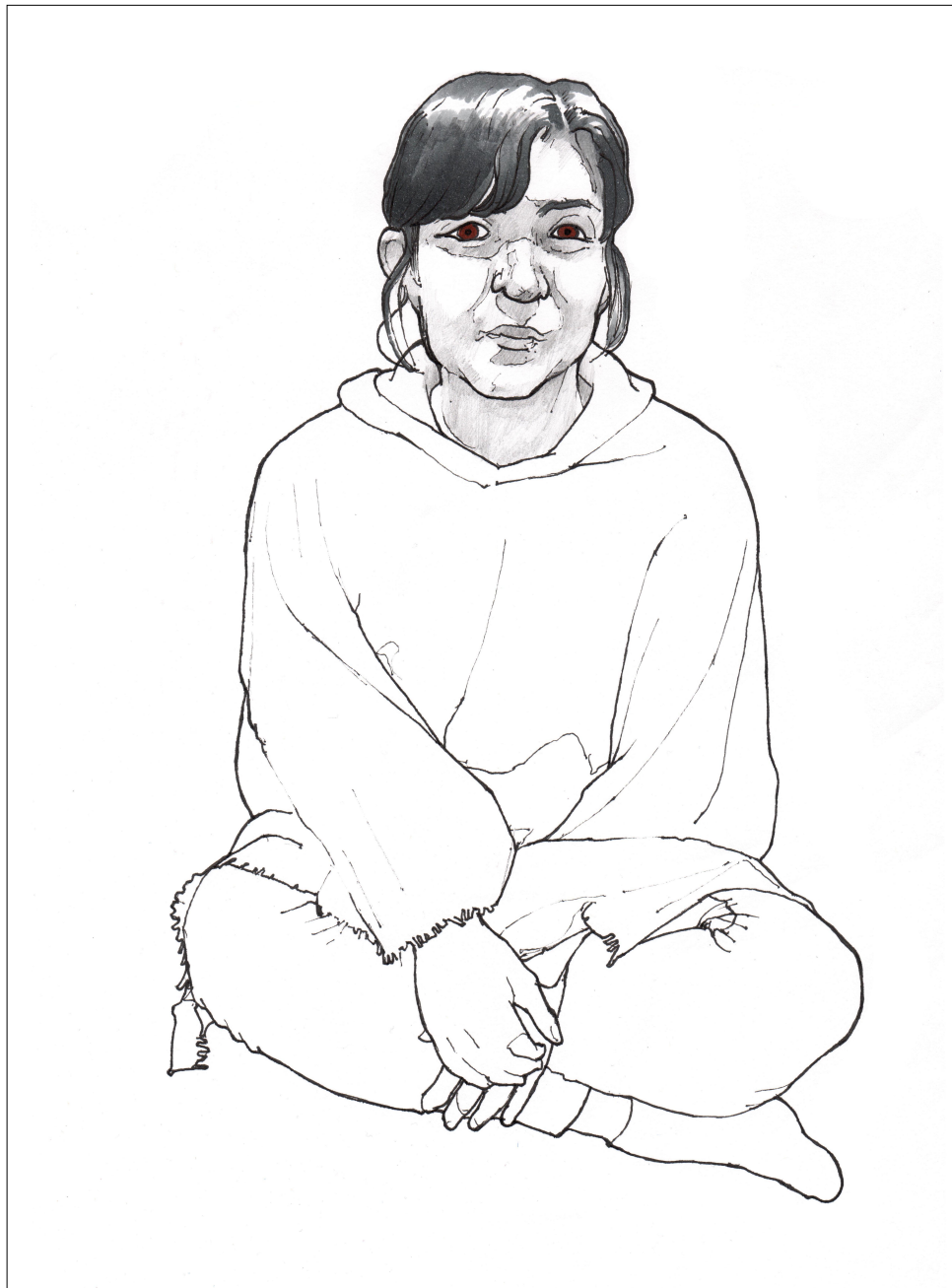
I thought of some other things I could do with the software and decided to push further.

I snapped a photo of the poncho Michaela wore while posing and uploaded it to the google drive. Then I downloaded it to my desktop before dragging the photograph into Photoshop. This took all of two minutes.

This is the very photo used. Pretty basic, right?

I then used the 'Lasso' tool again, this time outlining the poncho line work in the drawing. The 'Lasso' tool requires a steady hand, and concerted effort on the part of the Photoshop user because of the indirect functions of the tool.

For example, When beginning to trace an object with the 'Lasso', one must left-click and drag (while holding the mouse "clicked"), and navigate around the desired pathway to complete "the circuit" before letting off the mouse, otherwise an indirect function of the tool will have the point, where you "un-clicked", automatically connect to the starting point (initially clicked), creating an active Selection. In other words, the 'Lasso' tool's indirect function will close the circuit wherever you let off the mouse, and create this closed circuit via the shortest route, which may be inconveniently placed in regards to your intended shape of the Selection. In other, other words, if you don't close the circuit, the indirect function of the 'Lasso' tool WILL (and it may be in an inconvenient path that you will then have to correct)!

So what I usually do, when using the 'Lasso' tool, is essentially build the Selection in parts. When the 'Lasso' tool is selected, and a part of the Selection has been made (indicated by a "closed circuit" of "marching ants"), you can combine it with another pathway or otherwise augment the current Selection's pathway by Adding (hold Shift key before clicking) or Subtracting (hold Option key before clicking), depending on the intended shape for the overall Selection. Correcting the shape of the Selection usually utilizes a combination of the two (+ and -).

There are other tools in Photoshop you can use to draw a path for a Selection, like the 'Pen' tool (shortcut: "P" key) which comes with a different set of functions that may be better suited for the task at hand, but since I personally used the 'Lasso' tool on this project, I chose to elaborate on it here.

Ideally one can draw the path and complete the shape for the Selection in a single go, but if it is a large and dynamic pathway, that you are required to draw, then you may need to Zoom in and out (using 'Zoom' tool; shortcut: "Z" key), to properly trace the sections accurately. The hand can cramp or fatigue too during a "long-winded" attempt at a continuous "click-and-drag" situation. This is another common reason a pathway tracing may require sectioning, so I would recommend getting familiar with the Shift key (Add) and Option key (Subtract) shortcuts, when using 'Lasso' tool to draw a pathway for a Selection, so you can

break up the task into more palatable chunks. Again, because of difficulties that can arise (hand cramping), and adjustments in Point of View (potentially required for accuracy of the trace).

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So, after tracing the Poncho line art of the drawing in sections using the 'Lasso' tool, making it a live Selection ("marching ants"), I clicked the layer that had the uploaded photo, highlighting it, then pressed 'Copy' (shortcut: Command + "Z" key) and then 'Paste' (shortcut: Command + "V" key), which automatically added a new layer, combining the shape of the Selection (in this case, her Poncho in the line art), with the image in the layer that was highlighted (or selected; and in this case, the Photograph of the Poncho).

I then decided to do the same with the pants, so I took a close-up photo of some jean shorts with my computer-phone, and uploaded that to the google drive. Then brought it to the desktop in the same way as the other photo (poncho). This was the photo used.

I drew another pathway-turned-active Selection, using 'Lasso' tool, on the line art (drawing) layer, around the pants, then I selected the Jeans Photo layer, and pressed Copy and Paste, again.

And again, a new layer was created, automatically. I then made the Jeans Photo layer invisible (by clicking the eyeball icon in the Layer window, associated with the Jeans Photo). What was left was the jeans photo "cut-out", inside the contours of the "pants" part of the drawing, in the new layer.

I duplicated the jeans "cut-out" and reduced the opacity on both, as well as selected different 'Blending' modes (located in the 'Layers' widow). I chose the modes that would enunciate the jean fabric's visual texture, while still working harmoniously with the line work of the drawing beneath (which is to say, not obscuring it).

Lastly, I made a Selection (again with 'Lasso' tool), of the "socked foot" and "painted" it grey using 'Brush' tool (shortcut: "B" key). This was made on a separate layer called 'Sock'. I lowered the opacity to preference.
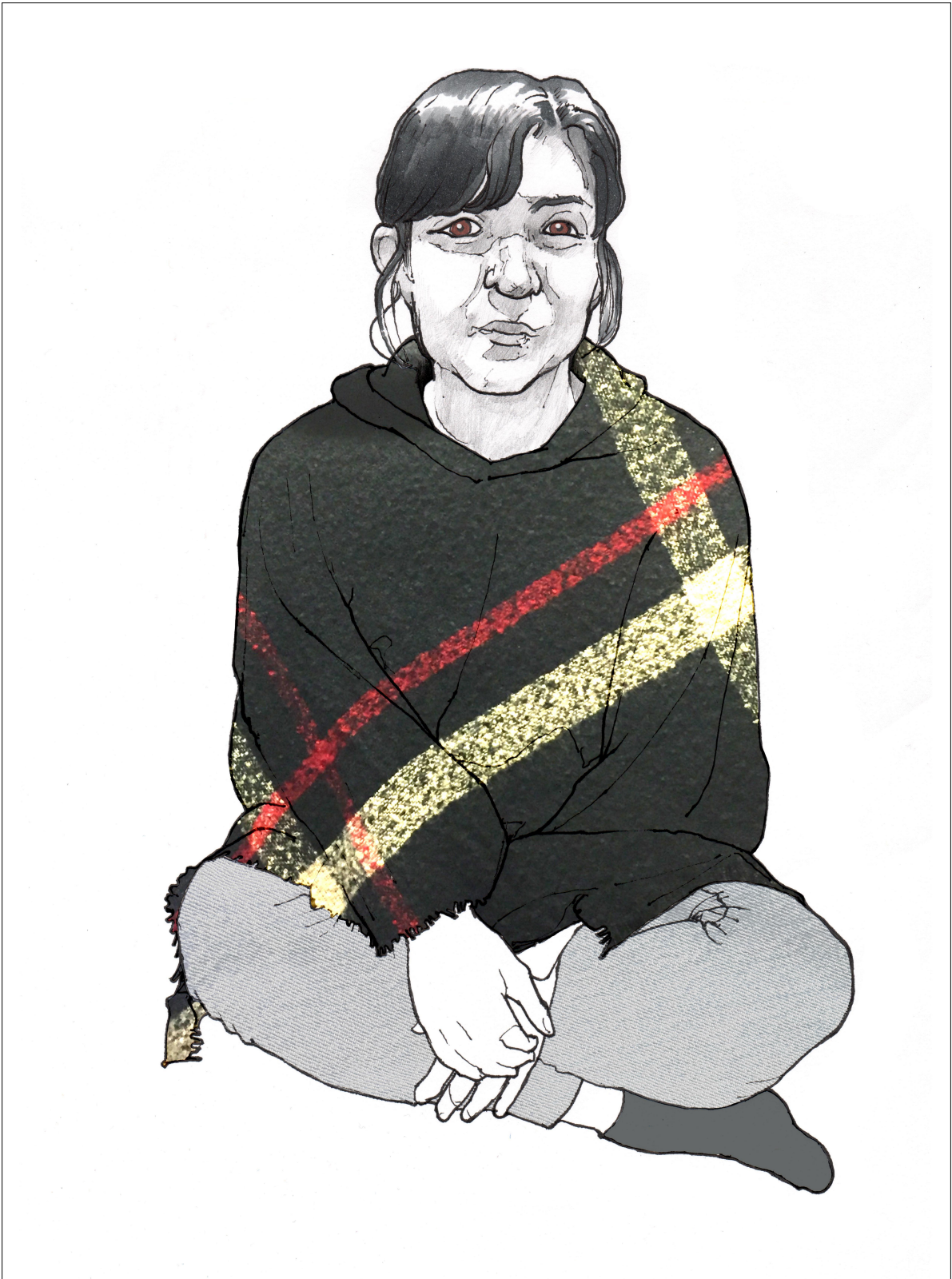
Voila! This was the result.

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I began to feel sentimental about the original drawing (with the cropped-off top of head) and wondered if I was excluding something essential by "correcting" it (i.e. drawing top of head, centering subject, and rotating subject).

I quickly made another scan of the original drawing without the taped on addition, and uploaded the image into Photoshop for edit.

The dimensions and scale of the drawing were identical to the first upload, so I could basically dress-up this new drawing with the assets created from before (Poncho, Jeans, and sock cutouts), and in a fraction of the time.

I copied and pasted the asset layers from the first file to the second file (original cropped, uncorrected drawing), then used Transform (shortcut: Command + "T" key) to adjust them and rotate to fit evenly within the drawing's line work. In a matter of five minutes I had a finished example to compare to the first, side-by-side.

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Which says what?