

Blind Contour Drawing

Why?

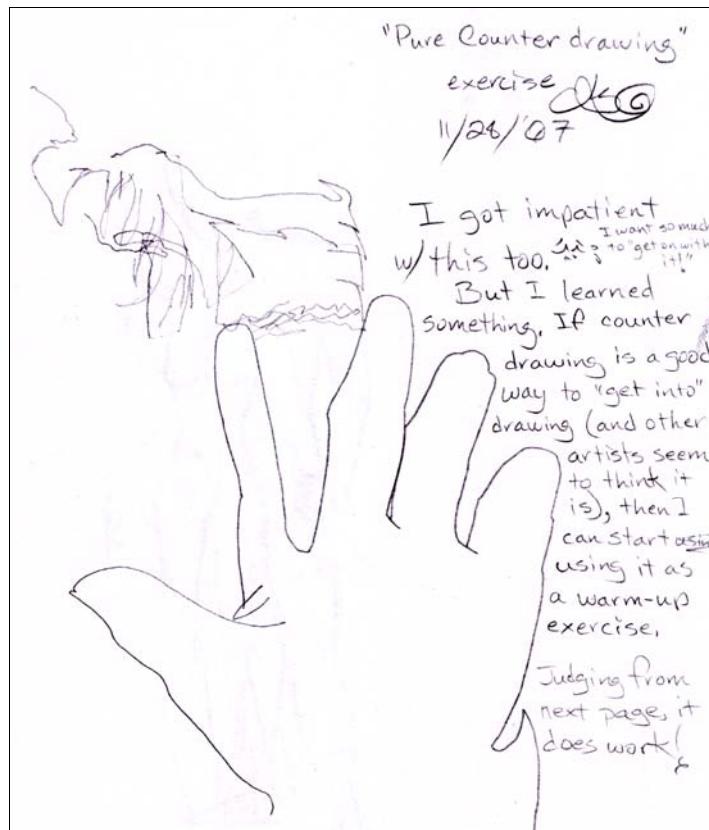


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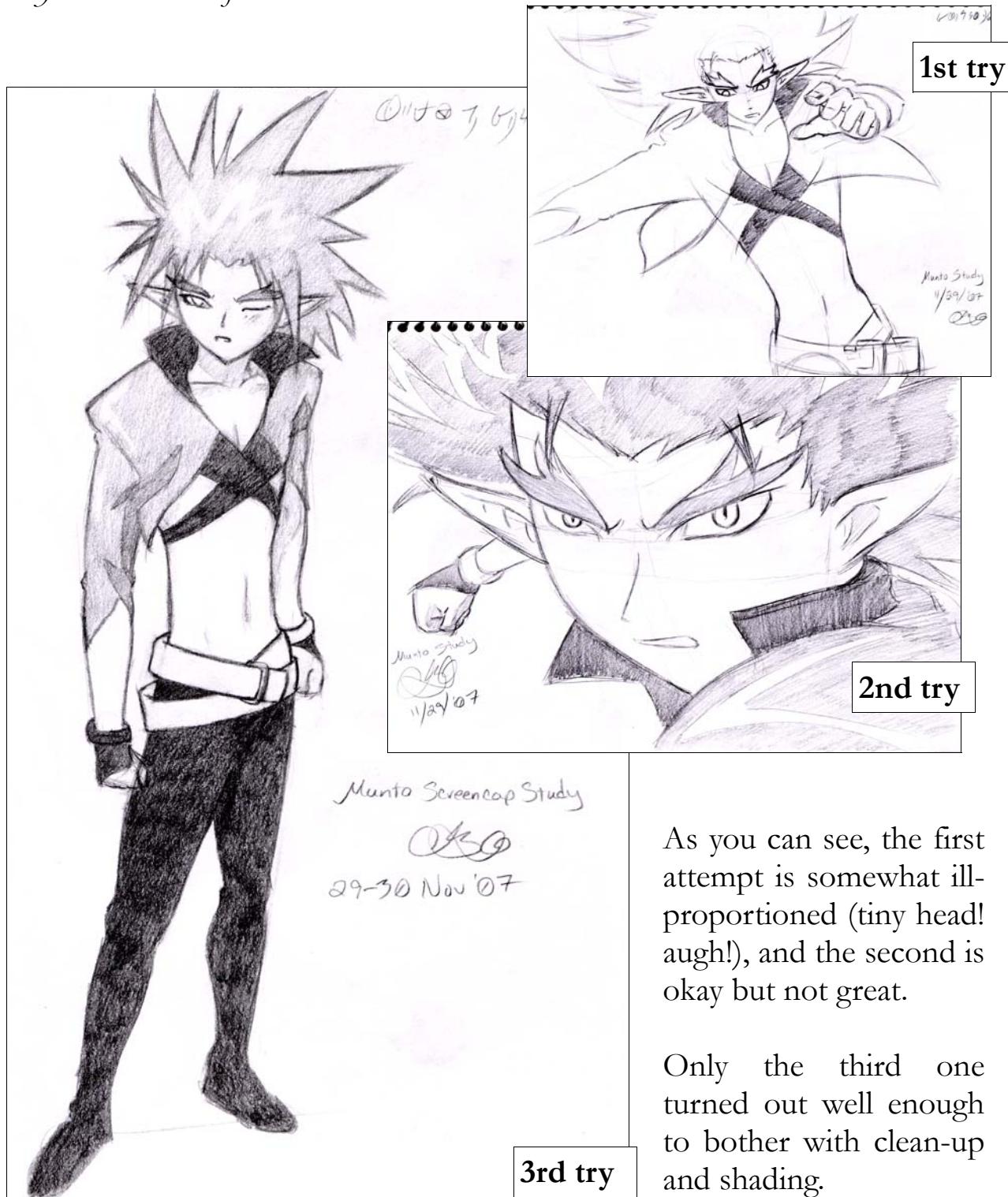
Blind contour drawing is a method of drawing, popularized in part by Kimon Nicolaïdes in his book *The Natural Way to Draw* (1941), which presents itself as an effective training aid or discipline. The student, fixing their eyes on the outline of the model or object, draws the contour very slowly in a steady, continuous line without lifting the pencil or looking at the paper. The student may look at the paper to place an internal feature, but once they begin to draw it, they do not glance down, but follows the same procedure as for the outline.

—Wikipedia.org on Blind Contour Drawing



I learned about blind contour drawing from Betty Edwards' book *The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. I was skeptical at first, but the results have convinced me that a short session of blind contour drawing really will shift you into "drawing gear."

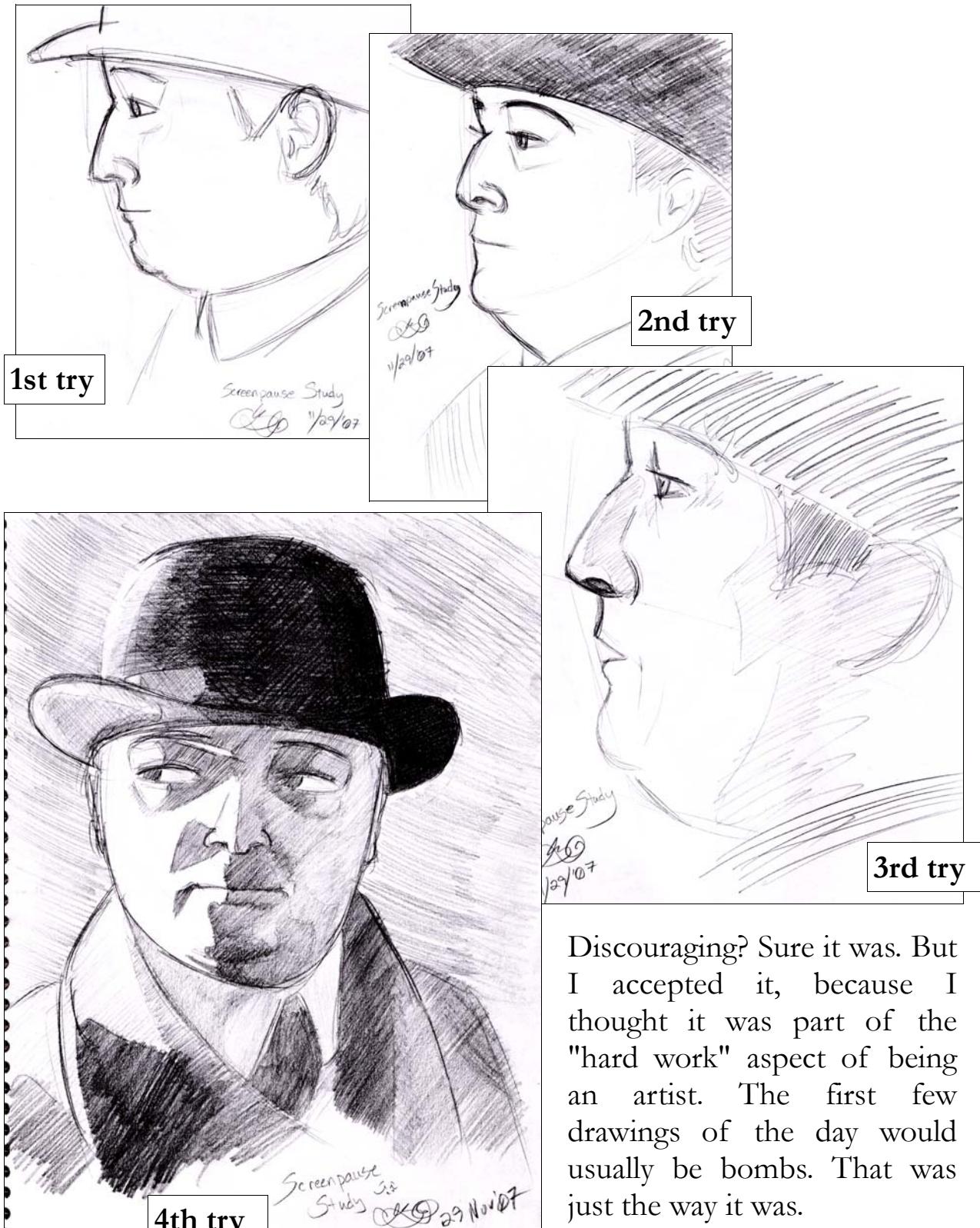
Normally I have to do an average of three "warm-up" drawings before I can get a decent picture for my efforts. For example, here's the results of a typical study session using screencaps from Kyoto Animation's *Munto 2: Beyond the Walls of Time* OVA:



As you can see, the first attempt is somewhat ill-proportioned (tiny head! augh!), and the second is okay but not great.

Only the third one turned out well enough to bother with clean-up and shading.

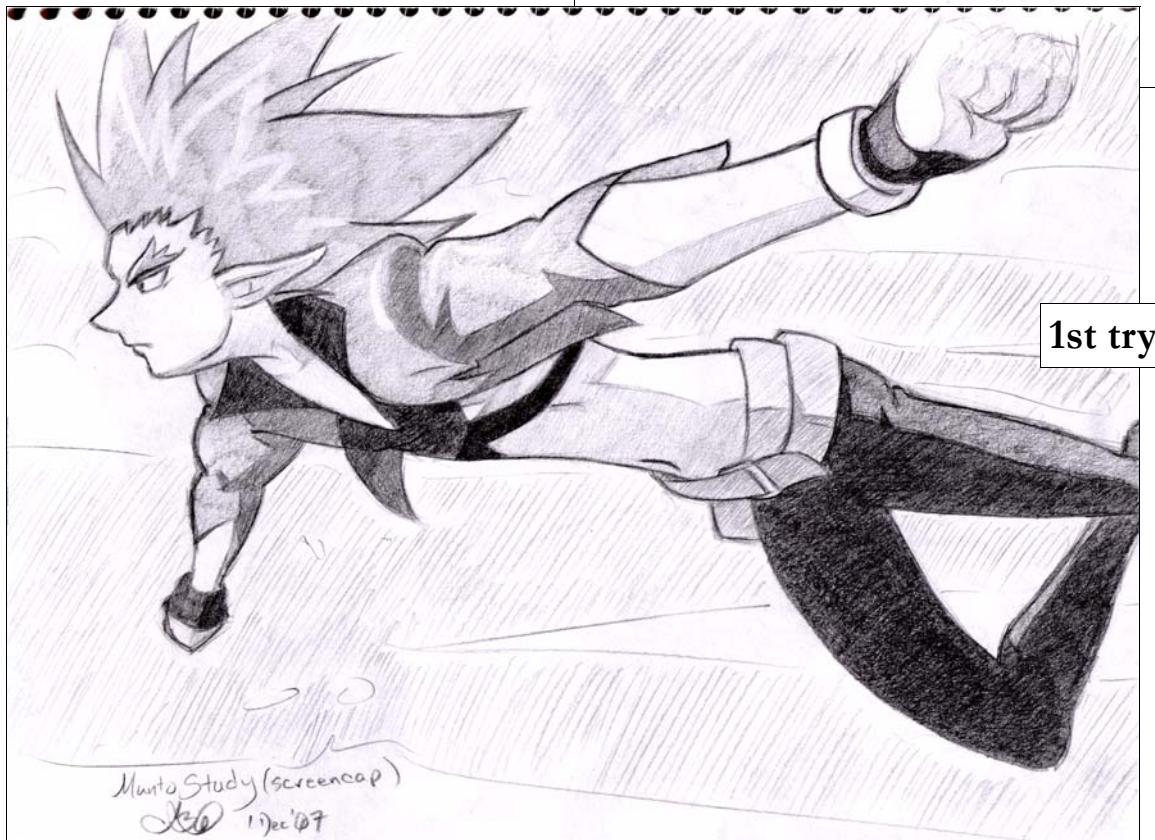
It was the same story with portraits. These were done in front of the TV with one finger on the pause button.



Then I began studying Edwards' book, which contains a blind contour drawing exercise using the skin wrinkles of the hand. She also mentioned that many artists do a session of blind contour drawing to warm up. (I really recommend the book if you haven't read it yet.)

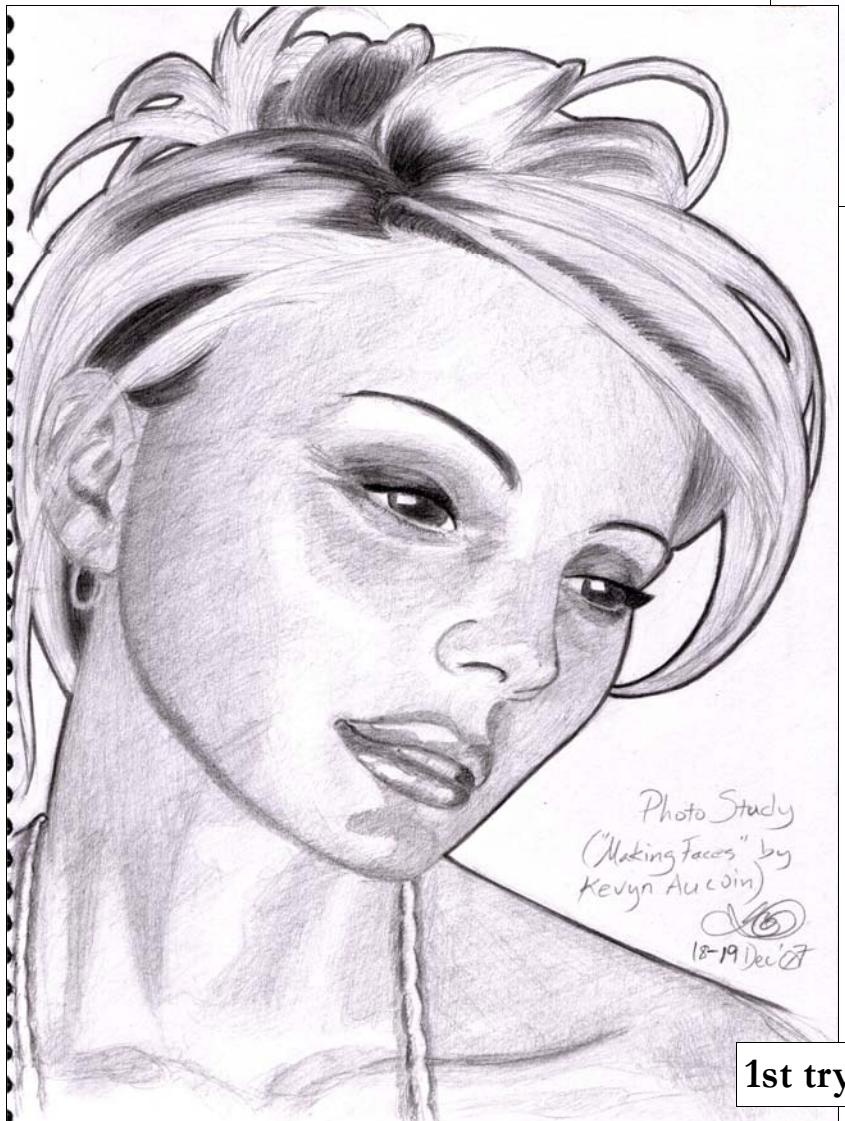
I decided to try it. I started my next drawing session with a blind contour exercise.

I got a good result — the first time! I happily cleaned it up and shaded it.



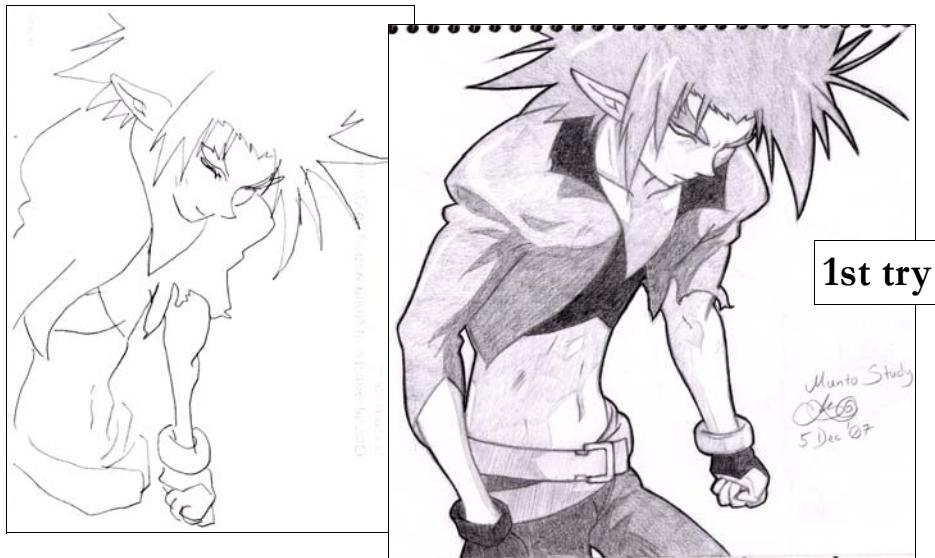
I tried it before drawing portrait photos, too.

Again, it worked! After a blind contour warm-up drawing, my first try at a portrait photo study was accurate enough to be well worth refining.



These drawings were referenced from Kevyn Aucoin's beautiful *Making Faces* book.

I can't tell you how encouraging it was (and is) to triple my returns on my limited drawing practice time. Not only are my drawings better, but because they're better, I want to draw more.



I've been dabbling in art for years, so I'm sure there are others out there who don't know about the potential benefits of blind contour drawing.

Well, now you know! Go try it. =)



—Tripleguess
 extremeclipper@yahoo.com
<http://www.made4usa.com/rev>
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References

- Screencap studies referenced from the *Munto* OVAs by Kyoto Animation

- Portrait studies from *Berkeley Square* series DVD and Kevin Aucoin's book *Making Faces*

- The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* by Betty Edwards