Tonal Scale Exercise, due Sept 11

Materials: pencil, compressed charcoal or Conté crayon, piece of drawing paper about 4" x 14"

This standard exercise investigates the subtle powers of tones.

Use a pencil to draw a scale of nine squares, about 12" long. (A fast way is to trace around all the edges of a ruler and then divide the rectangle into nine approximate squares.) Fill in the square on the far right and make it as solidly black as you can. (Note: If you’ve using Conté for the first time, experiment on scrap paper first, building up a rich tone gradually. Conté is difficult to erase.)

Now visualize a tone half as dark, and darken the middle correspondingly. (Warning: Visualizing this tone is the most difficult step. People usually make it too dark!)

Repeat the process, picking half-way tones for the new half-way points.

Continue with the last tones. A perfect scale looks “scalloped,” moving smoothly from white to black:
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