

Moves of the Month



for drawing

By Robert Turner
Photos by Shaun Ring

WHEN PRACTICING THE ART OF DRAWING, IT'S IMPERATIVE TO BE MINDFUL OF YOUR OWN BODY AS YOU STRIVE TO ADD TO YOUR "BODY OF WORK." After all, drawing can cause repeated minor stresses on the human body that can potentially lead to major issues for an artist.

Faulty postures, such as slouching, rounded shoulders when seated, hiked shoulders when standing and having a forward head are some of the main reasons the human body endures repetitive stress patterns as the artist works. A drawing has the ability to quite literally draw the artist so deeply into his or her work, that it may inadvertently draw the body out of alignment, too, which over time may result in muscle tension, pain or injury. As an artist myself, I have suffered from chronically tight upper-trapezius muscles.

Practicing the art of Pilates is an excellent way to correct these injury-causing patterns, and to establish, strengthen and maintain a positive postural

practice. That is, a practice that can help prevent the artist from being hindered with aches and pains in the first place.

The following series can be practiced to enhance your posture, strengthen and lengthen your body, whether you call drawing your art...or you're just an avid doodler. **PS**

GENERAL GUIDELINES

PROPS Magic Circle; chair

BREATH Make sure that you're breathing naturally or according to the suggested pattern.

REPS Varies.

TIP Begin each exercise, whether sitting, kneeling or standing, with excellent posture.

SEATED ROLL-DOWN

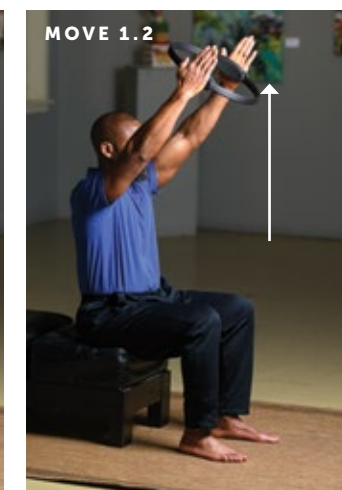
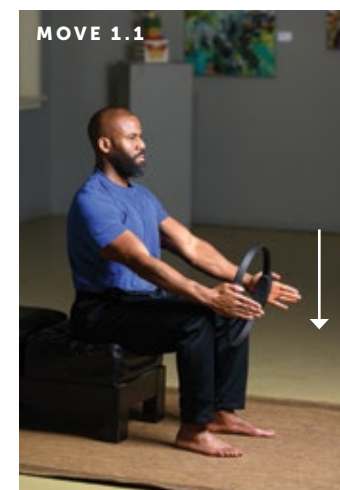
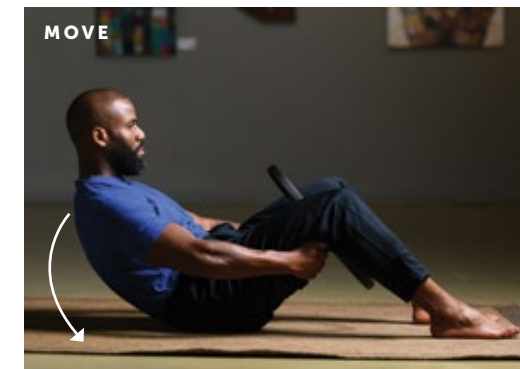
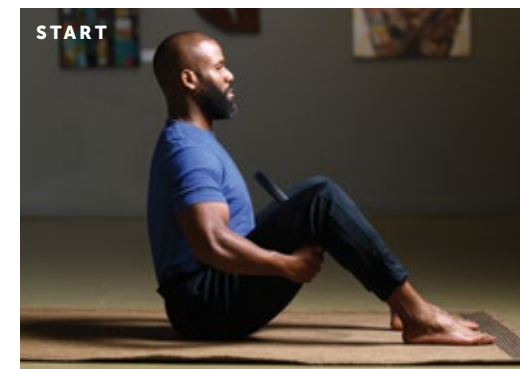
HOW YOU'LL DRAW BENEFIT

- Strengthens the abdominals and inner thighs.
- Stretches and develops articulation of the spine.

START Sit with your knees bent, feet parallel and hip-distance apart on the floor. Place the Circle between your inner thighs, with your hands behind your thighs and your elbows slightly bent out to your sides.

MOVE Exhale as you roll back, articulating through your spine, until your arms are almost fully extended, all the while squeezing the Circle; inhale as you hold the position, maintaining the C shape. Exhale as you return to start, inhaling when you reach the top. Do 3–5 reps.

TIP Allow the effort of gently pressing your feet into the floor to assist in connecting to your seat/glutes, as this will help with releasing your hips as you roll back.



SITTING ON CHAIR ARMS FORWARD

HOW YOU'LL DRAW BENEFIT

- Improves posture.
- Strengthens the arms and wrists.

START Sit upright on a chair with your feet parallel and hip-distance apart. Extend your arms out in front of you at waist level while holding the Circle with the palms of your hands.

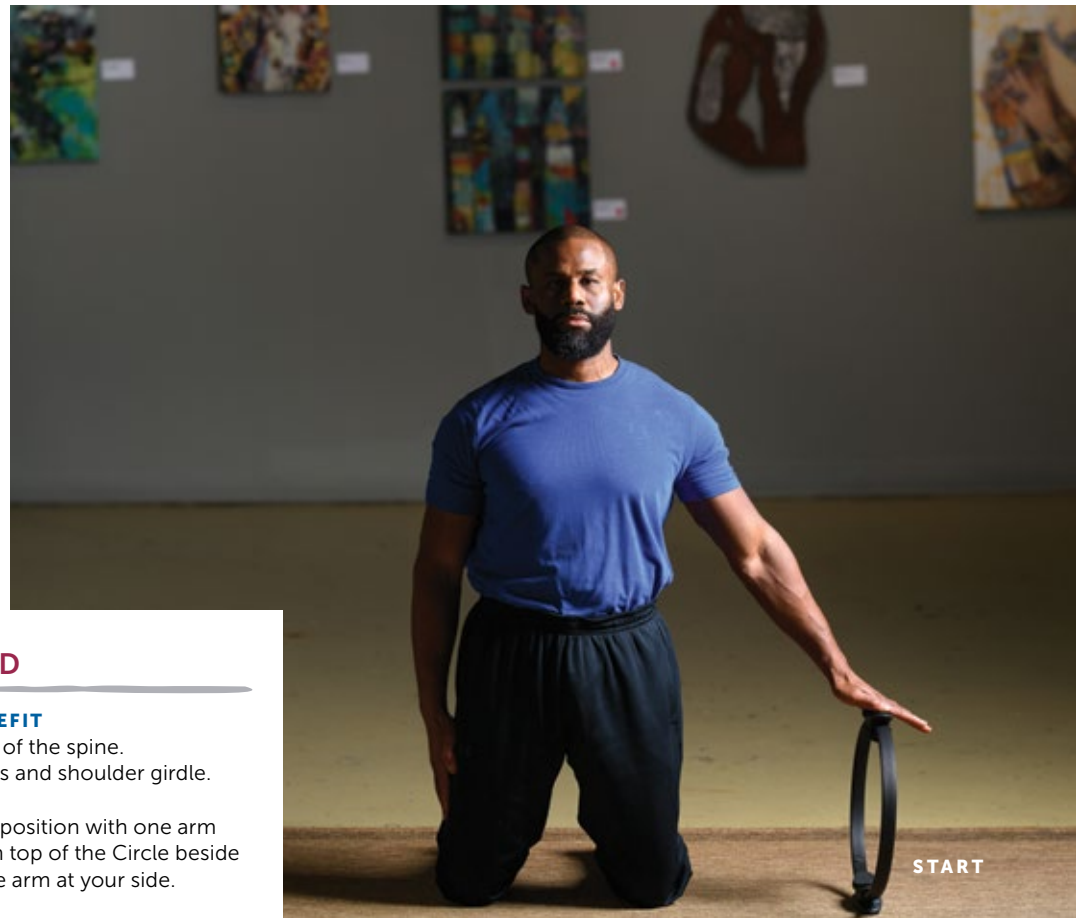
MOVE Inhale as you press into the Circle, and hold for 3 counts. Exhale as you lower the Circle, until your hands are slightly above your knees. Inhale and repeat this pattern. Exhale as you lift the Circle until your arms are in line with

your ears. Inhale as you press and hold for 3 counts again. Do 3–5 reps.

Add a pulsing pattern: Begin with your arms in the lowest position and begin pulsing the Circle while lifting your arms to the highest position for 8 counts. Keep pulsing as you lower the circle back down for 8 counts. Do 2 more reps, maintaining your natural breathing rhythm.

TIP Ground through your feet and lengthen through your spine the entire time.

VARIATION This may also be done standing or while lying on your back.



KNEELING MERMAID

HOW YOU'LL DRAW BENEFIT

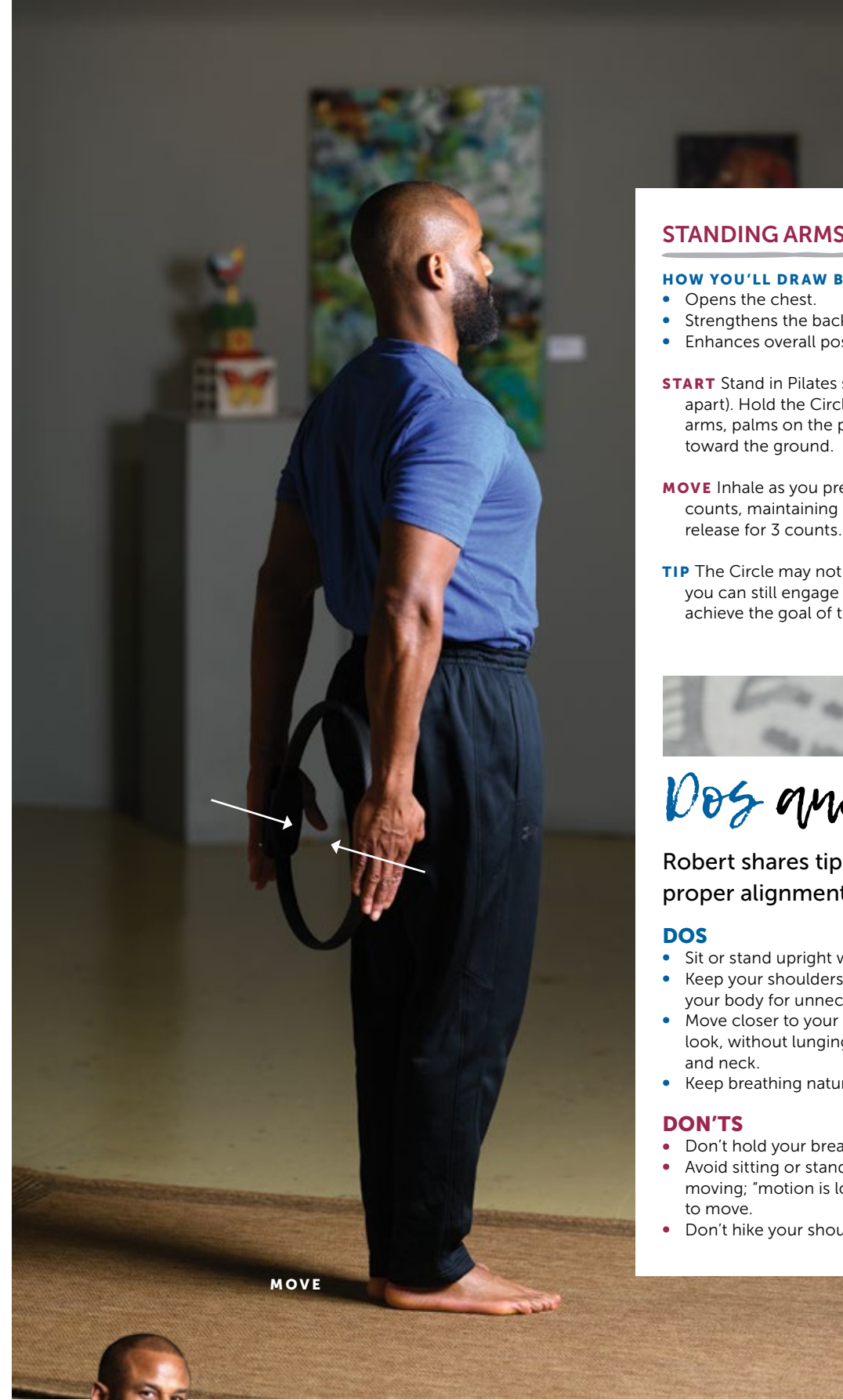
- Promotes lateral flexion of the spine.
- Strengthens the obliques and shoulder girdle.

START Kneel in an upright position with one arm out to one side, palm on top of the Circle beside you. Relax your opposite arm at your side.

MOVE Inhale as you lift and reach your opposite arm toward the sky. Exhale as you laterally flex your spine, pressing down onto the Circle and holding for 3 counts. Inhale as you return your arm to the sky. Exhale as you lower your arm to start. Do 3 reps, and then repeat on your opposite side.

TIPS Press the Circle while keeping your shoulder girdle stabilized; don't just use your hand. Reach with "intention" with your opposite hand.

VARIATION This may also be done seated with your legs crossed.



STANDING ARMS BEHIND BACK

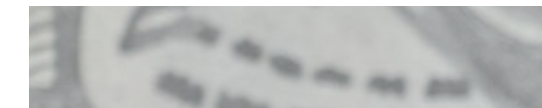
HOW YOU'LL DRAW BENEFIT

- Opens the chest.
- Strengthens the back.
- Enhances overall posture.

START Stand in Pilates stance (heels together, toes apart). Hold the Circle behind you with extended arms, palms on the pads and fingertips pointing toward the ground.

MOVE Inhale as you press into the Circle for 3 counts, maintaining good posture. Exhale as you release for 3 counts. Do 3–5 reps.

TIP The Circle may not move while pressing, but you can still engage the target muscle group to achieve the goal of the exercise.



Do's and Don't's

Robert shares tips for maintaining proper alignment while working.

DOS

- Sit or stand upright when practicing your craft.
- Keep your shoulders relaxed periodically scan your body for unnecessary muscle tension.
- Move closer to your art in order to get a closer look, without lunging forward with your head and neck.
- Keep breathing naturally.

DON'TS

- Don't hold your breath.
- Avoid sitting or standing for long periods without moving; "motion is lotion" and your body needs to move.
- Don't hike your shoulders.



» Robert Turner, NCPT, enjoys drawing whenever he can find time in between being a husband, father of teenage twin daughters and studio owner. In addition to being a U.S. Marine Veteran, Robert initially studied with STOTT Pilates, before graduating from Lolita San Miguel's Master Mentor Program and Atlas Pilates in Seattle with Lori Coleman-Brown. Robert owns breathe, a Pilates studio in Lexington, KY. For more information, visit pilatesatbreathe.com.