

ON DRAWING AND SKETCHING: WHY EVERYONE SHOULD LEARN TO DRAW

BY ROBERT BREKKE

There is a difference between being a draftsman and an artist. Anyone can learn to draw with proper instruction, discipline, and practice. Though one can be taught about art theory, perspective, color, composition, and techniques, etc., one cannot be taught to be an artist. I believe that the artistic-genus resides in the heart and soul of all people, implanted in them by their Master Artist-Creator.

I also believe that the artistic-genus will not find coherent expression without proper training in drawing. Without the ability to draw, one cannot adequately depict ideas/concepts (even the ones that exist in the imagination) that are begging to find a voice.

For almost 200 years, drawing was considered a core discipline in American elementary and high school education. Students acquired critical and visual thinking skills necessary in forging a healthy and vibrant national creative brain-trust that spawned an era of unprecedented invention and business ingenuity.

Development as an artist actually begins while a little crumb cruncher, scribbling crayons and paints on any and all surfaces within reach. (Kids can explain their seemingly random messes in great detail.) However, at some point, all proficient draftsmen and effective artists got formal instruction followed up with years of daily practice in sketching. (Picasso claimed he started each day with over 100 warm-up sketches.)

Since drawing requires no special talents or gifts, almost anyone can learn the skills necessary to become an effective draftsman.

The Necessary Activities: Seeing, Analyzing , and Applying

Proficient draftsmanship is the result of being trained in and practicing the following activities:

1.) properly seeing (through trained eyes or imagination), 2.) analyzing (critically thinking visually), and 3.) applying skillful marks (through disciplined, trained hands) on a surface. These three come into play at the same time during the drawing process. Drawing is a skill that can be taught and learned, much like learning to play the piano or guitar.

Learning To Draw Has Benefits Far Beyond Just Drawing

Almost anyone can learn to play piano by practicing scales and learning to play famous songs. However, that does not make the pianist a song writer or composer-creator. In the same way, practicing drawing and becoming a good draftsman does not make one an artist-creator.

However, it has been scientifically proven that practicing a musical instrument and/or routinely drawing are crucial in developing healthy “creative” neural transmitters where the left/right hemispheres of the brain meet. These transmitters atrophy when television and movies are watched more than rarely, especially in children and adolescents.

It also has been discovered that children and adults can develop strong “Visual Thinking” skills if they often read well-written fiction, especially literary fiction. If children are too young to read, an adult should read to them. This exercise forces the listener (and reader) to actually construct, or create, the scenes in their imagination. Everything from clothing, facial expressions, walls, trees, rivers, animals, streets, scents, wind, and colors are vividly created in the mind. Having these things portrayed in movies made from the same books requires no imagination and therefore does nothing in developing strong “visual thinking” abilities. As soon as an image is shown in an Early Reader book (or any fiction or story book), the reader’s imagination surrenders to the publisher’s depiction and the process is aborted, short-changing the reader of the full experience.* Without them knowing why, this is the main reason we hear people say, “The movie was not as good as the book.” The movie was most likely as good as the book—great photography, acting, direction, music, and set design. However, when watching the movie, the viewer is merely a passive spectator and not a participant.

Human beings were created to create, to make order out of chaos, and to solve complex, abstract problems. Drawing has proven to be one of the best avocations that fosters success in all fields of study and career.

- Picture books are very useful for the youngest ages (up to about 3-4 years old). At the earliest ages children do not have a visual vocabulary in which to connect images with words. Picture books help them to develop a visual-verbal library.



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