

Advanced Drawing- the Art of the Sketch

WHAT TO BRING ON FIRST DAY OF CLASS

- 1) Examples of your art: real examples or photos of your work
- 2) Examples of other artist's work that inspires you
- 3) Something to write notes with
- 4) Bienfang Mixed media Pad 8.5" x 5.5"
- 5) If you already sketch, bring your supplies.

****Sketching is personal. The supply list should also be personal. For that reason, you will not receive one until after you introduce yourself on the first day of class.****

First, what is a sketch? A sketch is defined, not by materials used, but by effort. A sketch is thought of as an unfinished, quickly executed rendering that is used as a reference for making more refined works. Long ago, sketching was considered such an essential skill that the 19th century French academy required all students to pass a "concour croquis" or "thumbnail sketch exam" and then a "concour esquisse" or "color study exam" before they could advance to the coveted Prix de Rome competition.

Sketching is practicing. This class is based on the following premise: Sketching is to the visual arts what rehearsals are to theater or practice is to music. A sketch can be thought of as a rehearsed work of art. The purpose is quite simple: to avoid wasting time and materials on a finished piece. There is nothing worse than to discover half way into a painting that proportions are off, or placement is wrong or the colors don't work. A simple sketch can preempt those kind of mistakes. Imagine trying to build a house without blueprints!

Sketching must have purpose. What determines your choice of sketching materials is purpose: the problems you're trying to solve or skills you're trying to develop. If you are a painter interested in color relationships, then it is important to use a color medium. If you are a sculptor interested in form, a two dimensional, black and white medium may suffice. The purpose for sketching can be both immediate and/or long-term: to design a specific work of art or collect and develop ideas or to practice materials. You might be inventing images or planning an exhibition.

Sketching is making ideas. It's good to keep in mind that a sketch is basically an idea. Nothing more nothing less. Even the most realistic drawing is the result of ideas: what you found worthy of putting on a page, how you placed it on the page, what you left out, etc. Remember, too, that an idea cannot be judged until it's viewed. It has to be tried out. That's why production studios employ storyboard artists. Sketching is an insurance policy against wasting time and resources on bad ideas. For many artists sketchbooks are the repositories of their creative life. Paintings to Picasso were like thesis papers; they were the products of his experiments in notebooks. So crucial was sketching to Picasso that he had written on the cover of one of his sketchbooks "Je Suis le Cahier": "I am the notebook".

Sketching comes in many forms. Throughout history, artists have used a variety of materials to develop visual ideas: journals, sketchbooks, canvas, board: and done in pencil, charcoal, pen and ink and paint (oil, watercolor, gouache, acrylic, pastel). Thomas Hart Benton used modeling clay and made bas-relief sculptures to design his most famous murals. Matisse used colored paper and a pair of scissors to design with collages. Anything can be used.

Sketching must be easy. What also determines your choice of medium is convenience. It has to be simple, immediate and even portable. One of the most important qualities of sketching is that it be effortless. Sketching is a form of brainstorming and the biggest enemy of brainstorming is distraction. And a time consuming, complicated medium can be a big distraction.

ACTIVITIES ON FIRST DAY OF CLASS

- 1) Introduce yourself: What kind of art do you make? What gets you excited?
- 2) See examples of other artists' sketches and sketchbooks
- 3) Watch demos in different media
- 4) Experiment with sketching supplies/tools such as brushes, cigar box easel, compact kits, wet and dry media.
- 5) Develop a goal if you don't already have one and choose sketching supplies to bring to class the following week.