

NOTES TO TEACHERS

Drawing is a large subject to cover and I have taken a limited approach to the most fundamental skills and concepts. The first video on four kinds of lines, seeks to encourage a sensitivity to lines and to demonstrate four different functions for lines. It also teaches some fundamental skills in observing objects as they are being drawn, and how to transfer what one sees onto a piece of paper. I used pen and ink technique in the second video to prepare students for the bookplate unit that follows.

The importance of requiring students to annotate work in their process journal may not be obvious. But the practice accustoms students to thinking and evaluating what they do. Making art is both an intuitive and rational process. Annotation makes students more familiar with the process of formal critique and requires that they work on the right and left side of their brains at the same time. Early efforts students make with this may seem unproductive and forced, but I have found that this practice makes students more aware of what they are doing, makes the vocabulary they learn habitual, and deepens the whole process of creative work.

All drawings express something between what is objectively observed and what is internally felt or intuitively known. And each artist finds his place on that spectrum. It is important in art training, to expose students to both ends of that polarity: of objective reality and a total abstraction from appearances. This present unit focuses on “realistic” representation, but the next unit on designing bookplates moves more into abstraction.

Most abstract drawings still borrow from the world of appearances, it is conversely true that objective drawings are still an abstraction, no matter how carefully they follow appearances. There is always some sort of interpretation of the visible world in a “realistic” drawing, for a drawing is already an abstraction

It is of importance that students learn that there is a fundamental difference in drawing a composition based on the natural appearance of objects, related together in space (a still life, for instance), and a vignette, where the space surrounding an object is neutral, not part of the composition.

It will be easy for any teacher to re-design both the assignments and the schedule to suit the students being taught. Practice is essential. And to make the process meaningful, which means that all of the practice is not done the night before the due date, compel students to date and number their notebook pages. This requirement is the most effective thing a teacher can do to promote student learning.