
Walt Stanchfield 24

Notes from Walt Stanchfield's Disney Drawing Classes

"Draw Verbs not Nouns"

by Walt Stanchfield

DRAW VERBS NOT NOUNS

A sure way to keep from making static, lifeless drawings is to think of drawing “verbs” instead of “nouns”. Basically, a noun names a person place, or thing; a verb asserts, or expresses action, a state of being, or an occurrence.

I speak often of shifting mental gears, and here is another place to do it. The tendency to copy what is before us without taking time (or effort) to ferret out what is happening action-wise, is almost overwhelming.

Let’s say for example, the model (and this also goes for making a drawing without a model) is leaning over with her elbows extended. If you approach the pose from the standpoint of drawing nouns, you will name and draw the parts (humerus, radius, ulna, scapula, biceps, triceps, deltoid, etc.) and place them as best you can in the positions suggested by the model. With good hand/eye coordination, or a good memory, or either a model or a good anatomy book handy, you can produce a fairly handsome drawing of nouns. If you approach the pose from the standpoint of drawing verbs, you will simply be using those nouns to produce a drawing that portrays a woman bending over, stretching her arms, pulling her hair, about to push the towel over her hair to dry it. You feel the hair below her left hand hanging, you feel the right arm cocked and ready to push forward. You feel the back stretching and the left side squashing, you feel the downward motion set up by the angles of her forearms. The body is also balancing, twisting and angling. You feel she is thinking about what she is doing--not just frozen into a still life.

Now there is a list of verbs that should develop into a drawing that has the breath of life in it. The pose could be described by nouns: “woman after bath”, but verbs would charge it with the life giving qualities of bodily movement, rhythm, motion and action allowing the viewer to participate vicariously.

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