
Walt Stanchfield 35

Notes from Walt Stanchfield's Disney Drawing Classes

"Mental & Physical Preparation"

by Walt Stanchfield

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL PREPARATION

I would be amiss if in this visit with you, I didn't mention mental attitude or physical well being, along with some possible means of acquiring and/or maintaining it. Much recent research has proven the benefits of pursuing such a program.

All of us have experienced periods of diminished energy and depression. It is possible to have one or both of them creep upon us so slowly that we are unaware of the change, and there we are, dragging our (mental and physical) feet. Over a period of time we may even come to believe that this is the way life is supposed to be. You've heard people when asked, "How are you?", answer, "Okay", meaning of course, not bad enough to say "Lousy", and not good enough to say "Terrific".

If I was selling this program of physical and mental betterment for money, I would do it on a money back guarantee basis, because I am confident that a little physical and mental gymnastics are necessary for an artist's well being. Each one has to find his or her approach. If you are involved in a sport, and do it fairly often that may be all you need. If not, perhaps some simple aerobics will do the trick.

I personally have settled for 25 or 30 minutes of stretching and aerobics each morning, plus (when at home) at least one hour of competitive tennis (singles) every day. This, plus hikes on the beach or in the hills have kept me fairly physically fit. So at 68 I am still quite active.

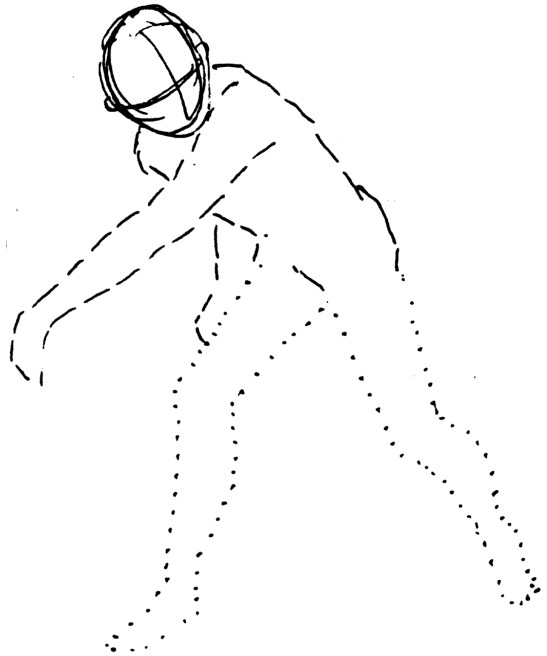
As for food, I am not over zealous about what I put in my body, but I am very careful to get enough of the foods which will rebuild the worn down parts and to maintain the parts that are working well. That in itself takes a little special attention. But in the long run it is worth it.

As for mental hygiene, again it must be a personal choice and one which helps keep everything in perspective. It may be through the use of religious , or a philosophy or yoga, or zen, whatever it is, it should serve to activate! the "juices" and to stir up the desire to improve yourself to reach beyond yourself - beyond where you are now. It has to make you want to express yourself (your self), to create.

You must create. The injunction of life is to create or perish. Good physical and mental conditioning are necessary to do this. Remember this: the creative energy that created the Universe, created you and its creative power is in you now, motivating you, urging you on - always in the direction of creative expression. I have a formula: "Impression minus expression equals depression". This is especially applicable to artists. We have trained ourselves to be impressed (aware) of all the things around us, and in the natural course of our lives those impressions cry out to be expressed - on paper, on canvas, in music, in poetry, in an animated film. So shape up!

“Mental & Physical Preparation“

Dividing the Body into units one way to keep continuity of parts in your sketches is to divide the body into 2 or 3 units. While sketching in unit #1 see unit #2 clearly in your peripheral vision and even, in a lesser degree the 3rd unit. Then while sketching unit #2 keep the 3rd unit clearly in mind plus the unit you have just sketched in. The idea being that the whole pose must be kept constantly in mind - no going off and drawing a head or an arm as something separate, but rather as parts of a whole. The relationship of the shoulders, elbows, hands, etc., and especially the foot on which the whole body is on, must be "mapped out" or planned ahead so the essence of the pose is not lost - or in regard to the weight, the whole drawing be off balance. Let the mind and the eye constantly scan the pose so as not to lose sight of the first impression - which was the fresh, vivid view of the whole gesture before you got involved in drawing the parts.



All too often in sketching, while not seeing the whole figure (the figure as a whole, that is) it is possible to end up with a delightful drawing, but which is at variance with the pose or gesture. This is fine when doodling - to start out with a nothing in mind - somewhere on the paper - and end up with a presentable drawing with a gesture of its own (but not yours). But when striving for a predetermined gesture a measure of discipline is necessary. You not only must capture what's needed but perhaps even push it a little further. In cartooning (animation) we often push the gestures so far they become a caricature. With this kind of discipline under your belt even your doodles will be more meaningful.

You might liken drawing to playing a musical instrument - especially one like a horn or a stringed instrument where you have to manipulate your highly disciplined lips or fingers to produce a tone. The music (what in drawing is the pose) must be reproduced perfectly or something is lost (most likely the audience). Jazz improvisation is more like doodling except that it is produced within a certain structure, rhythm, harmony, key, style, etc., so even here there is discipline. Any of you who play a musical instrument will know that you have to use your peripheral vision to look ahead a measure or two to keep any kind of continuity going. The rhythm would falter unmusically if the notes were read one at a time. Likewise in drawing, the pose must be captured with a continuity of form - a looking ahead to tie all the parts into a rhythmical and faithful expression of the pose.

Walt