
Walt Stanchfield 46

Notes from Walt Stanchfield's Disney Drawing Classes

"Purpose in Drawing"

by Walt Stanchfield

PURPOSE IN DRAWING

The study we are involved in is gesture, and is designed to help us when the need arises (which is on practically every drawing) in animation. It seems that old seducing habits prevail when new goals are not clearly stated, re-stated and kept constantly in mind. Some of those old habits or tendencies that are likely to creep into one's drawings are:

1. Thick and thin lines. They are hard to perform with a ball point pen-which is one reason why we are using them. I think a heavy line is fine to emphasize a tension, or thrust, or a pull, if it serves to delineate the gesture, but not for the purpose of creating a shadow or to balance a lopsided drawing, or for texture.
2. Shading. Shading may enhance a gesture in a painting or a rendered drawing, but the animator does not enjoy the luxury of such devices--best to reserve shading for portrait study.
3. Putting more details in one area than others. Sometimes one becomes fascinated by some detail, or the mind wanders or is marking time somewhere on the drawing. Or perhaps it is an attempt to raise the whole drawing up into the minor master-piece level. Sufficient for it to be a simple gesture drawing.
4. Adding texture under the pretext of locating key points in the drawing, such as the positions of outstretched hands or feet, or dots that profess to locate balance or other alignments. This becomes obvious when there are a lot of marks where there are no key points. Sometimes a stipple effect is charming in illustrations for children's books and other stylized drawings. Spattering with a pen is a much used technique in ink drawings. Watercolorists often throw spatterings and drippings of paint by flicking their brushes at their paintings. It adds a kind of loose and exciting texture, and also suggests the artist was so inspired and exuberant in getting down his creative impulses that he was lost in a flurry of involvement--heedless of his surroundings, the time, the neat, the mosquitoes, and neatness was far from his mind. This is not to suggest that animators should not become exuberant and totally involved, but for our study purposes we need to direct our attention to our particular goal.
5. One of the most offensive habits is putting down lines simply to get lines down. For instance tossing in a couple of lines for legs with no thought of which leg is supporting most of the weight of the body. It takes no longer to draw the lines in the right attitude--it just takes a little prior observation and thought.
6. The same goes for a multitude of lines where one line would have done the trick, which could have been avoided with a little more searching out the gesture before the pen or pencil is applied.

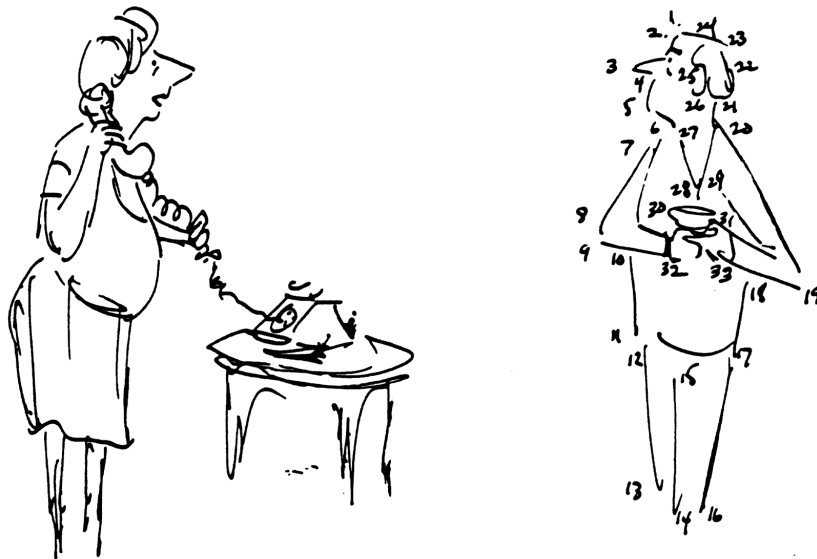
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7. This one is not a devious way to achieve a nice looking drawing but it is a sure way to miss the gesture: drawing down one side of the body or working on isolated areas with no thought of their correlative opposite. One should never draw one elbow, or hand, or knee, or foot without considering the relationship to its opposite. I should say to its "companion part" for all joints and parts work in conjunction with their counterpart. They are either complimenting, balancing, opposing, or in some way relating to one another.

8. One of the commonest techniques used to accomplish what "seems" to be gesture drawing is copying the model. An artist who has drawn a lot and has a good hand/eye coordination, can simply by multitudinous looks at the model and back to his drawing, reproduce fairly accurately what is before him-- without ever noticing or feeling the gesture. This is almost like photography. Later, of course, when one is called upon to draw Mickey or Donald or say a mermaid in some particular gesture, there will be nothing to copy or "photograph". One may be required to conjure up a multitude of gestures, heaven forbid, from one's imagination.

So there in 8 nutshells (an incomplete list, to be sure) are some tricks we need not concern ourselves with in the study of gesture. We are not striving for drawings that say, "Look at me, aren't I an attractive drawing", But that will say, "I have life, and feeling, and purpose", and the drawing will reveal that purpose.

Walt



“It’s Mr. Stanchfield from the Disney Studio -- wants to know if you’ll pose for a drawing class.”