
Walt Stanchfield 45

Notes from Walt Stanchfield's Disney Drawing Classes

"Problems of Drawing in Line"

by Walt Stanchfield

“Problems of Drawing in Line“

PROBLEMS OF DRAWING IN LINE

One of the problems in using line alone to draw with--there are very few lines in nature. Even the outline of an object is not truly a line, since if the object were turned 1/4 on its axis toward us, what was the edge would now be the center.



If we think of that circle as a head and put a round nose on the profile, when it is turned toward us it will still be a round nose.

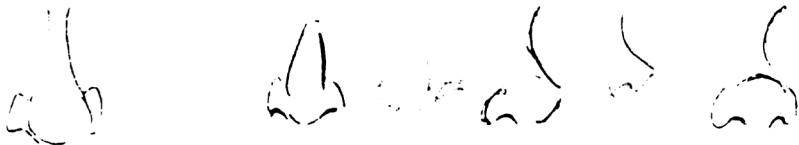


But if we have a real human head with a real human nose on it, the complex shape of the nose changes drastically as we look at it straight on. What was a line on the profile becomes a non-line on the front view. The principles of perspective help to overcome this dilemma. For instance the rule of overlap (⊙) tells us what is in front and what is behind, and helps us differentiate between the two and to draw them that way. The human face (head) is a very complicated set of planes with very few areas that can be described by line alone. But if the areas that are in front (closest to us) are seen and drawn as such, then at least it presents something to work with.

A face straight on in reality is a conglomerate of planes molded on top of each other--very few lines. So for a line drawing we invent some symbols to indicate which shape or plane is closest to us and its general shape. For instance a nose in rendering might be drawn this way:



While in line alone it might have to be done so:



Depending, of course, on the type of character being drawn.

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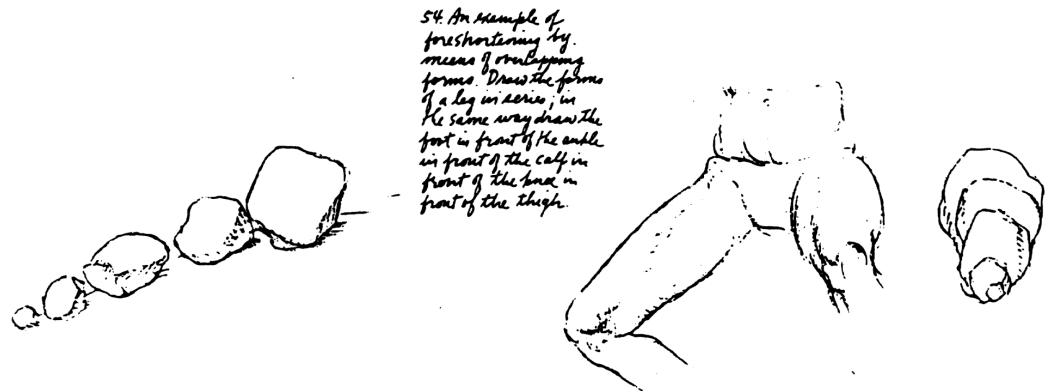
In animation the symbols we use for noses are kept simple. The fewer lines there are the less chance of jitters, and when lines have no anchor point, it is hard to keep them from "drifting".

I didn't mean for this to be a how to draw noses paper, it is really about drawing layers of things in line alone, using the simple rule of perspective, overlap:



There are many ways of stating it and infinite ways it can be used, for it happens on all parts of every drawing you will ever make. Knowing the problems you are dealing with and- better yet, how to deal with them is what we are really getting at.

I came across this page in the book, "The Act Of Drawing.", by Edward Laning.



He uses the principle of overlap to illustrate an example of foreshortening. What I am suggesting is: everything in a 3rd dimensional environment is one thing overlapping another in space, whether they are connected like the parts of a leg (or a nose) or are separate. Even then, nothing is really separate, for all things are connected by the matrix of space that they occupy. In painting we can use atmospheric perspective to show where the objects are in space if they don't overlap. In drawing with line we can use another of the principles of perspective: diminishing size or surface plus diminishing size:



SUPERFICIAL APPEARANCE V.S. CREATIVE PORTRAYAL

In the course of animating on a picture, you will be called upon to draw many different actions, each one calling for a distinct set of gestures. Your character might have to display a variety of expressions like happiness, anger, confusion, determination, etc., with actions that match each of those emotions. The character will no doubt have to walk, turn, stoop, stretch, extend arms, etc. There will be a number of characters in the film and each one of them will have different personalities that will require appropriate gestures, none of which will be repeated - at least not in exactly the same way.

In a classroom situation where you are studying a live model, it is nearly impossible to anticipate those action requirements, so you have to concentrate on the ability to capture those gestures the model performs for you. This, in effect, hones your sensitivity for seeing bodily actions, so that you are better able to apply your skills to future needs. It is nearly impossible also to find models who are "look alike" to match the characters in the various stories. This may be a blessing in that if you could find them you would surely be tempted to copy the superficial appearance of the model, rather than using the time and opportunity to further your skills in gesture drawing. After all, gesture drawing to the animator is what acting is to the stage or movie actor. What the actor portrays on the stage or before the camera is what the animator draws on paper.

So a perceptive and keen observation in regard to gesture (acting) is essential to the animator.

*"Completion (of a drawing) does not depend on material representation. The work is done when that special thing has been said."
Robert Henri*

The purpose of working with a live model is to sharpen your awareness of the possibilities of the human figure to tell a "story" with body language. In my estimation, anyone (all of you) who has made it past the "board" with your drawing portfolios, has enough knowledge of basic anatomy. You know, where the knees are, how they work and their general functions - likewise all other parts of the body. At this point, to merely copy what is before you would be just to solidify your position on a plateau, short of your potential.

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Now is the time to transcend that ability to make a carbon copy likeness of the model, and to discover, reveal and disclose the rich assortments and subtleties of body language. Then you will be better equipped to formulate the future needed variations and apply them to whatever character you happen to be working on.

“The wise man brings forward what he can use most effectively to present his case. His case is his special interest - his special vision. He does not repeat nature.”

Robert Henri

All the above to try to convince you to stop tiring your eyes by glancing back and forth from model to paper in an attempt to make a pretty copy but rather to "shift mental gears", looking past the flesh to the spirit of the pose - and to draw that. Think caricature, think essence of gesture, think going beyond to a better than average drawing, one that blows up in your "emotional face". There will be rejoicing in the village if you can draw not the facts, but draw the truth.

My apologies if I sound preachy, such is not the intent. I consider myself more a kind of coach than a teacher. You've all had teachers. They have "taught" you to draw - I'm just trying to help you see more clearly so you can put that drawing ability to a more fulfilling use.

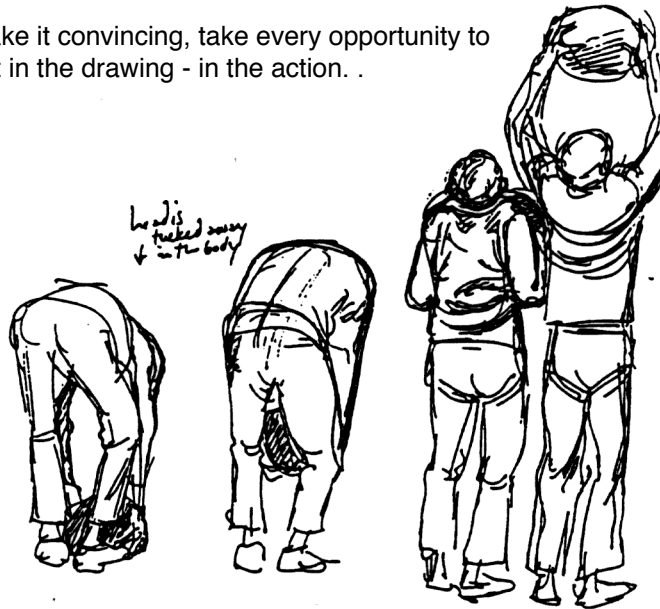
Reproduced on the following pages are some drawings that came from one of Art Babbit's lectures. They show how he thinks in terms of caricaturing live action for use in cartoon action.

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Go far and if you do it convincingly the audience will accept it. Go beyond!

Go beyond and make it convincing, take every opportunity to exaggerate not just in the drawing - in the action. .

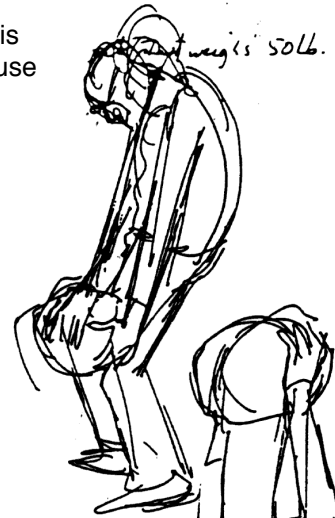


Most animation is done in profile - because that is the easiest way to do it. now is the chance to tackle these things in a front or back view.



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Key Poses Character picking up a very heavy object. He is not picking up a pebble - knees are bent at all times because of the weight.



You're caricaturing reality. You're not trying to imitate reality for that you have a camera. Go further than you would. Be inventive, you're not stuck with actuality.



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Here's a bonus page with a caricature by Dan Haskett. He captured the spirit of my "Teaching" many years ago at the "Disney School of Animation". It's quite a prophetic drawing too, for out in the audience are two of your current directors - Clements and Musker. Spot any others? Maybe Jerry Reeves? Ed Gombert? Bluth, Pomeroy and Goldman? Even the artist himself is there - Dan Haskett.

Different faces out there now but the sentiments are the same.

