
Walt Stanchfield 25

Notes from Walt Stanchfield's Disney Drawing Classes

"Enthusiasm"

by Walt Stanchfield

ENTHUSIASM

Having been brought out of retirement for the 4th time, I have been trying to impart some of the drawing knowhow I have gathered in these past years. (I started at Mintz's Cartoon studio on Sept. 13, 1937). I have incorporated the weekly "handout" which I think works better than lectures. They allow me to more thoroughly express the salient points that come to mind. Also they do not interfere with the already too brief time we have to draw from the model. What's more, they are "collectables" that, in the future may be reviewed when the need arises.

These handouts allow me to delve deep into my experiences and observations and come up with something that may be of help to you. I have concentrated on gesture drawing because that is one of the foundations of good animation. Necessary to good gesture drawing are acting, caricature, anatomy, body language, perspective, etc., so from time to time these topics are isolated and discussed.

At times I even play the "guru" and deliver a sermon of a positive thinking nature. I approach the subject cautiously for I realize each person's background is different and sometimes deeply meaningful in terms of life style and psychological undergirding. But psychology there is, and it cannot and should not be ignored. Your mental and emotional processes are you.

Your mental and emotional processes are what motivates you and without motivation you would accomplish nothing. And without enthusiasm, motivation would atrophy before you could make a quick sketch. Your mind is like a projector - whatever you choose to put into it is what will be seen on the screen (the choice is yours and yours alone). The switch is motivation and the electricity (power) that keeps the whole show moving along is enthusiasm.

Wally "Famous" Amos, the chocolate chip cooky man, in his inspiring book, "The Power In You", said, "Enthusiasm is the mainspring of the mind which urges one to put knowledge into action." In his book he put key thoughts into boxes (which reminds me of a jewel in a setting) like this:

A BIT OF INTROSPECTION

We are all beautiful people but also strange in some ways. We all have psychological quirks that whisk us through life, along many paths that often are not really of our own choosing. Why did we choose art for a career--certainly not because we were good at it. If we were good at it we wouldn't have to struggle so hard to make a go of it. But we plug along, each at our own pace, some eager and industrious in improving ourselves--some of us sit back and wait for the "light" to come on. Some of us are driven by some invisible urge to create. Others of us need some project imposed on us from outside us to stir us into action.

Animation has a unique requirement in that its rewards are vaguely rewarding and at the same time frustrating. We are performers but our audience is hidden from us. We are actors but there is no applause. We are artists but our works are not framed and hung on walls for friends to see. We are sensitive people whose sensibility is judged across the world in dingy theaters by a sometimes popcorn eating audience. Yet we are called upon day by day to delve deep into our psyche and come up with fresh creative bits of entertaining fare. That requires a special kind of discipline and devotion, and enthusiasm. Our inner dialogue must be amply peppered with encouraging argument. We sometimes have to invent or create an audience in our minds to draw for.

Enthusiasm

Our fellow artists only partially serve us in that respect. We go to them for criticism not for praise. The directors are necessarily merciless. We at times almost connive rather than create to get a scene by them. I used to sing in operettas, concerts, etc., so I know what real applause is. It is heavenly. A living audience draws something extra out of the performer. A stage director once said to the cast of a play on the opening night, "You've had good equipment to work with, a theatre with everything it takes to put on a show but you have been handicapped--one essential thing has been denied you. Tonight there's an audience out there, now you have everything you need."

Well, we do have an awaiting audience out there. We'll be denied the applause but at least there is a potential audience to perform for; one to keep in mind constantly as we day by day shape up our year dress rehearsal. Even as we struggle with the myriad difficulties of finalizing a picture--what is the phrase, "getting it in the can", we can perform each act for that invisible or mystical audience. We can't see our audience but it is real and it is something to work for.

So, all you beautiful people, if you are the kind that needs a little mental manipulation to keep your creative juices flowing, perhaps this has been of some benefit; if not, well, so be it.

Walt