

---

# Walt Stanchfield 59

Notes from Walt Stanchfield's Disney Drawing Classes

---

**"Common vs Uncommon Gestures"**

**by Walt Stanchfield**

## **COMMON VS UNCOMMON GESTURES**

My apologies to Ron Westlund for changing his name to Westwood in the last two handouts. When my mind wanders it sometimes takes some strange byways. Years ago I did a paper with illustrations of Medusa, calling her Cruella deVil. That paper has been xeroxed by numerous people in the business and sent to many parts, of the world--too late to retract that one.

At times I may seem to get too involved in subtle and uncommon gestures. I defend that habit with the argument that you are doing uncommon films. If you were working on Bugs Bunny or the Road Runner, or heaven forbid, limited animation, you might get away with about a dozen common gestures: mad, surprised, scheming, a squash or stretch, anticipations, some crazy takes, a bombed-out pose with lots of smoke, and a fast run.

The stories you work on require a more diversified range of emotions and a much more sophisticated style for communicating them. The Disney style of animation goes beyond (in refinement) the "stock" variety. It often requires a little introspection--analyzing your own feelings to come up with an "uncommon" gesture. And at these times it would be well if you knew the "principles" of drawing I so often speak of, so you could get the most out of what you are trying to express. That is also why I suggest reading a variety of writers who are able to describe that vast range of human emotions you as "actors" must deal with. Watching movies, not just for enjoyment, but also for study purposes is a must. The old silent movies are especially good because they were acted without the "crutch" of dialogue to carry the story, or the gags. The gestures had to be caricatured with pinpoint accuracy. In these present times, good snappy dialogue is "in" and very often substitutes for good acting or good pantomime. In Disney feature cartoons mushy animation or weak gestures are not so readily acceptable. Even with good dialogue to help, the acting has to be caricatured--much like the old silent movies. The style of drama and humor has changed--but the need for good visual portrayal is still needed.

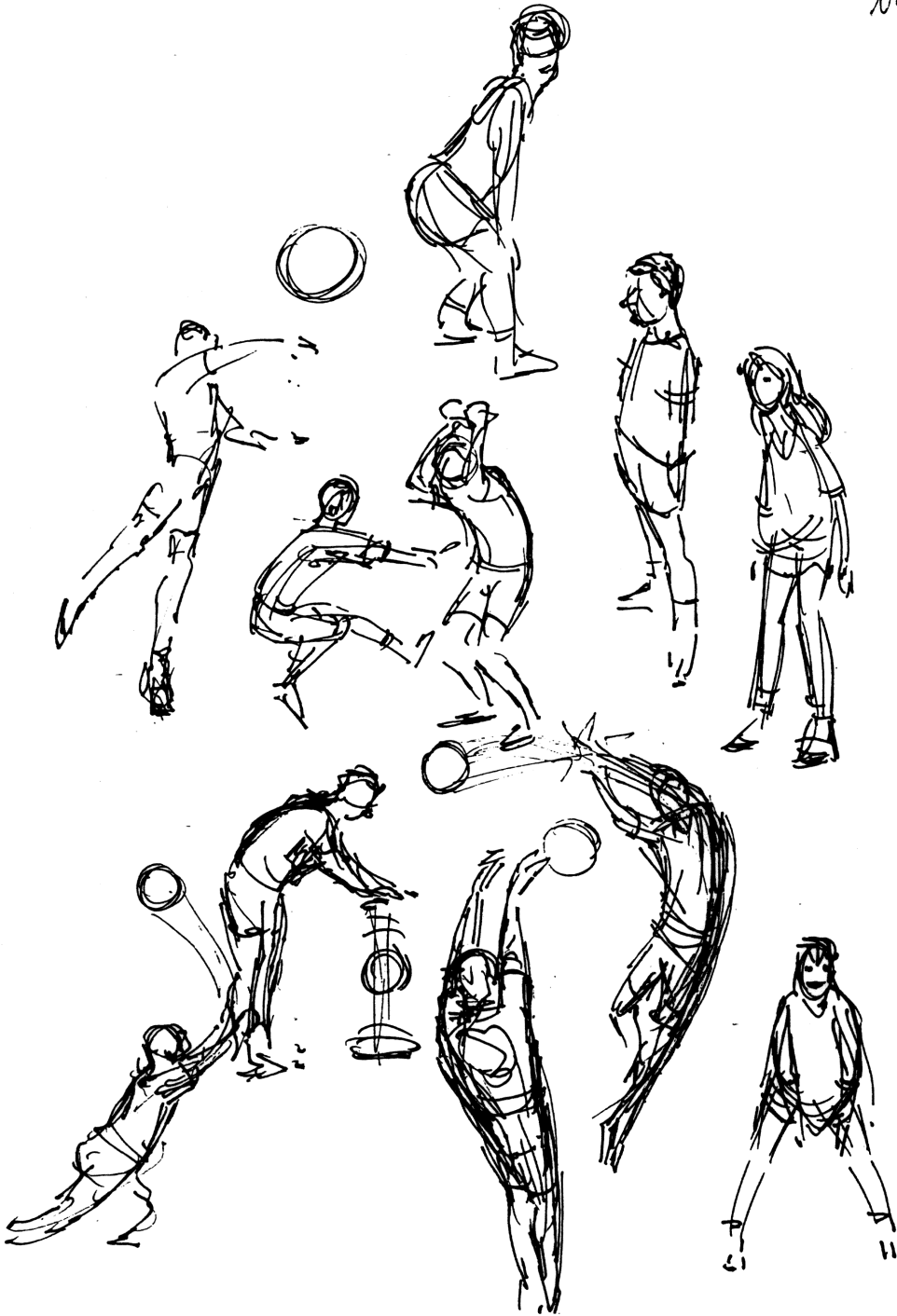
If you neglect to update yourself through the study of good writing, movies and plays, your sensitivity to these various emotions will surely atrophy. More important than just being able recognize or picture in your mind the multitude of body-gestures--you have to be able to draw them, a-a-a-and that is why I so often recommend sketching--constant sketching. That will keep your mind active, inquisitive; your eye sharp, and your drawing dexterity at "launch capability" at all times.

I "flip" when I get to peruse other artist's sketchbooks. It's like looking into their personal thinking. It's like observing their whole personality funneled into a series of drawings. It's like being shown, "This is what I know, and how I draw it." Last week I had the privilege of xeroxing these drawings from one of James Fuji's sketch books. I have been drumming angles and tensions and squash and stretch, etc., at James for many a month in the evening classes--he often attends. both the Tues. and the Wed. night sessions--and I'd like to think that some of it has something to do with these delightful action sketches. Look hard at these drawings--every part of each one is doing it's bit to tell the story--to focus the eye or the mind on the idea behind the gesture, pose, or action. Each drawing, like a good actor or a highly skilled athlete, expresses the action with integrity and life-like meticulousness.

**“Common vs Uncommon Gestures“**

There was no time to do much planning or thinking while doing these sketches--it all happens pretty fast. The thinking was done in the months of study and preparation preceding their execution. At this point it was a matter of freeing his emotional energy and opening the adrenaline valve. I don't know about you, but I'm thoroughly impressed, (and pleased).

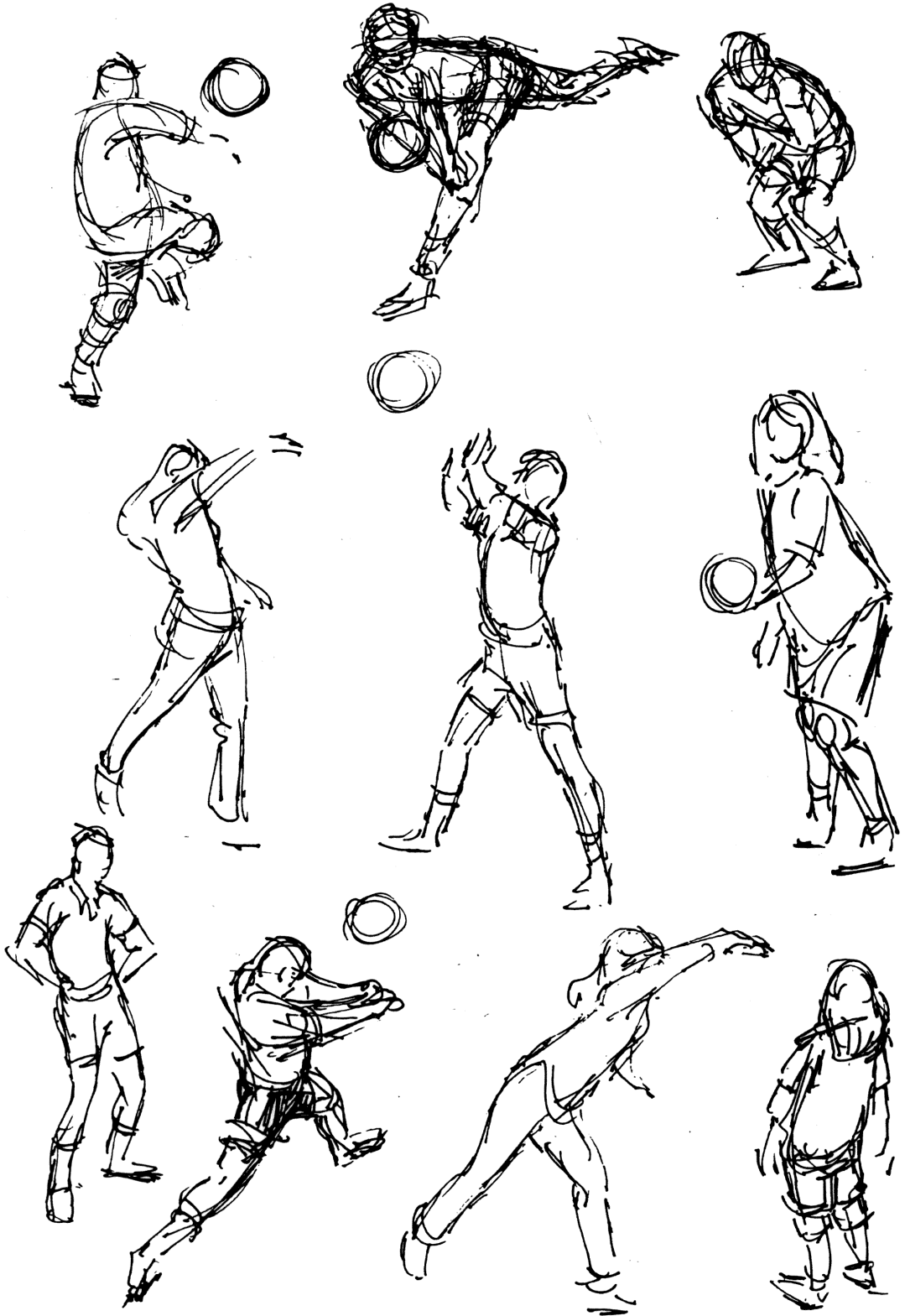
*Walt*



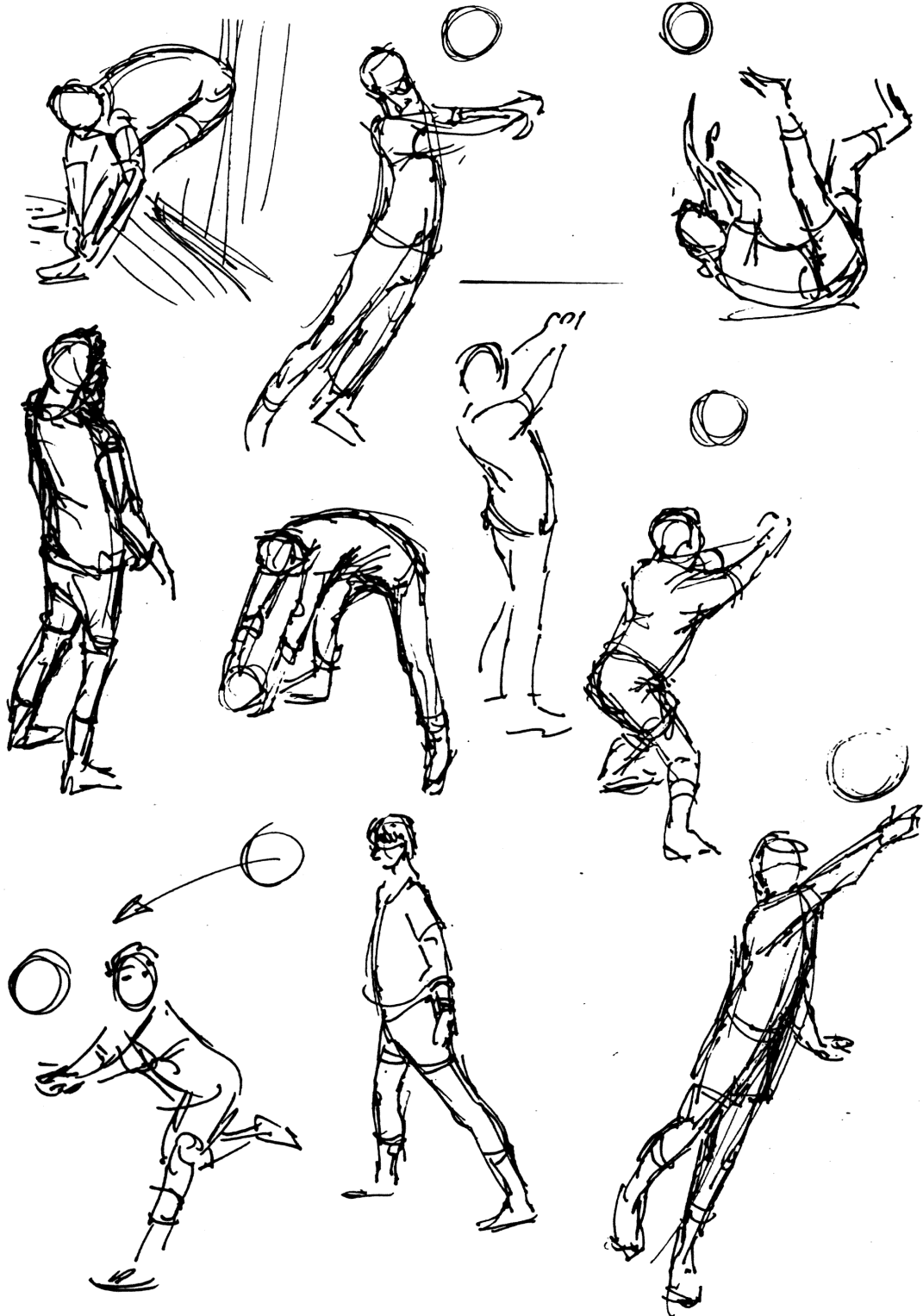
“Common vs Uncommon Gestures“



“Common vs Uncommon Gestures“



“Common vs Uncommon Gestures“



“Common vs Uncommon Gestures“

