
Walt Stanchfield 64

Notes from Walt Stanchfield's Disney Drawing Classes

"The Wonders of the Right & Left Hemispheres"

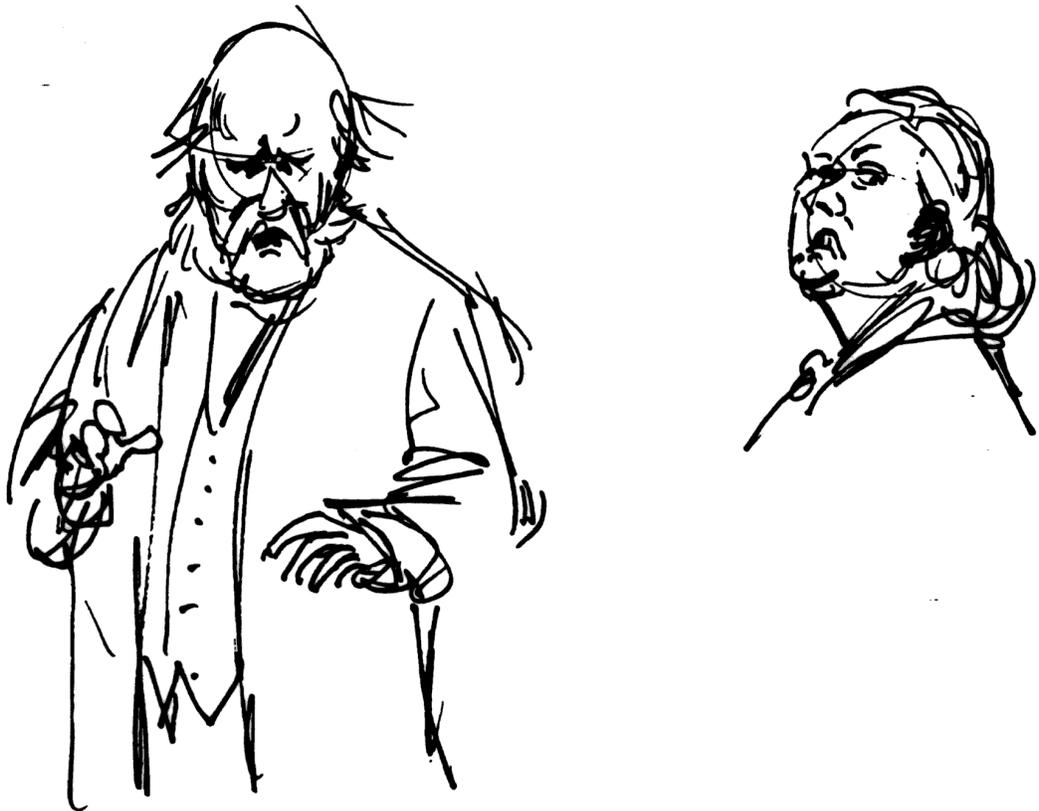
by Walt Stanchfield

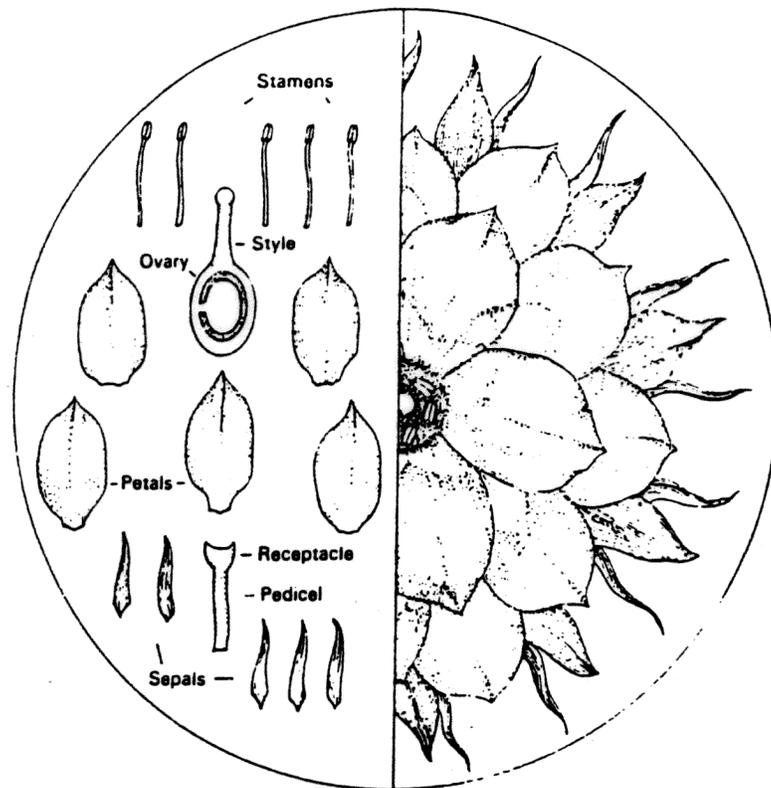
THE WONDERS OF THE RIGHT & LEFT HEMISPHERES

Some time ago I did a handout on DRAWING VERBS NOT NOUNS. Just now, two or three years later (I'm slow and steady) the thought occurred to me that nouns may be dealt with mainly in the left hemisphere of the brain, while the right hemisphere prefers the verbs. A short, easy experiment will verify this premise: think of a noun--dog, man, deltoid muscle. Your mind immediately presents you with some familiar breeds of dogs, or man in some form, and the deltoid muscle probably conjures up an anatomy book illustration. (typical left brain conceptions) Now think of some verbs: running, cooking, or acting--suddenly there is activity, life, and gesture on your mental screen. (right brain reflection)

So it stands to reason anytime you face a drawing project, whether it be training oriented, or work related, approach it mainly through the right brain channel and it will be more like an actor on stage, and less like a display in a wax museum.

Even our language evokes gesturing. Words, plus the way we say them, work together to produce a double-edged expressiveness. Charles Darwin was evidently interested in such things. In his book, THE EXPRESSION OF THE EMOTIONS IN MAN AND ANIMAL, there is a photo of a man saying, "Ugh!" and a lady saying, "Sn...", probably the first two letters of the word "sneer." Here are some crude pen sketches of them:





When you don't have a model to draw from, you have to visualize the pose or action. Visualization is in cahoots with kinesthetics, for when you visualize--you are not using your eyes, but you are using every cell in your body. It's as if you create a whole 'nother world in your imagination--one that can be translated to an audience through your drawings. But even with a model in front of you, the same process has to take place, otherwise it is just copying. In the book PSYCHO-CYBERNETICS, by Maxwell Maltz, he says," your nervous system cannot tell the difference between an actual experience and one that is vividly imagined.

"If we picture ourselves in a certain manner, it is nearly the same as the actual performance. Mental practice helps to perfect."

He tells about, "C.G. Kop, of Holland, a recognized authority on teaching piano, recommends that all pianists 'practice in their heads.' A new composition, he says, should be first gone over in the mind. It should be memorized, and played in the mind, before ever touching fingers to the keyboard."

Alex Morrison said, "You must first clearly see a thing in your mind before you can do it. When you see a thing clearly in your mind, your creative success mechanism within you takes over and does the job better than you could do it by conscious effort or will power."

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Maltz tells about how many athletes, who practiced by imaging while I suppose that's how we form those first impressions of a pose. We see the model dressed in a certain fashion, gesturing in a certain way, then after intellectualizing about it for a second or two --voila! " in a moment of insight," the first impression forms like a flash of lightning.

But it's not all that simple. Gestures are always performed for a reason. They are not just mere movements of body and limbs in some haphazard way, divorced from inner participation (motive); it is the visible manifestation of man's emotional or intellectual state. Also movement involves weight, time, space, and gestural significance, so actors, dancers, mimes, and animators have to be aware of all the things involved in an action, and be able to synthesize them into a meaningful and communicable gesture.

Gads, what a lot of text! But I'm only around for a little bit, so I have to pour it on when I get the chance. Perhaps it's time now for some esthetic relief. For the last two noontime classes we had Allen Chang, a martial arts pro, kick-boxer, and modern jazz dancer pose for us. They were exciting and inspiring sessions. I managed to confiscate a few of the excellent drawings to share with you. These first few are by Dan Galieote:



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Here are a few perceptive sketches by Jane Misek, who has an uncanny ability of capturing a gesture with a minimum of lines and details:

