Welcome back to Summer of Drawing

class no.19: ALL MEDIA MEMORY & IMAGINATION
Memory:

The faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information.

Imagination:

The faculty or action of forming new ideas, or images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses.

The ability of the mind to be creative or resourceful.

- Oxford Languages

Joseph Farquharson (1846 – 1935)

*The Shortening Winter’s Day is Near a Close* (1903)

Farquharson had constructed a painting hut on wheels, complete with a stove and large glass window for observing the landscape...he used a flock of "imitation" sheep which could be placed as required in the landscape of his choice.

- Wikipedia
Artists are translators and communicators.

**Visual imagery is our language.**

A writer has a written language. We have pictures, patterns, shapes, textures, etc.

**Our goal: communicate effectively, even if just to ourselves.**

Frustrating when we can’t ‘speak’ clearly, think of witty, profound, or clever concepts, or respond to events that move us.
Step 1 is developing our ability to communicate effectively involves OBSERVATION and PRACTICE using our chosen materials of visual expression ... for us this summer, it’s drawing.

Practice will help you develop your technique – a steady hand, control of the pencil, becoming adept at various means of mark-making (hatching, blending, etc.) It’s like learning how to speak in words, then sentences, then paragraphs.

Closely observing the world allows an artist to use that technical skill to create artwork that is captivating.
Your artistic expression could vary quite a bit depending on the situation – it could be sketchy, detailed, simple, or complex, depending on your concept or subject, just in the same way you might write a text, an email, or a book. You are not tied in to any one way of drawing.

Your **style** encapsulates your **technique (colors, strokes, degree of detail, etc.),** your artistic **point of view** or ‘voice,’ and any other factors that make your work distinctive. As you continue to draw, you will find yourself making choices as you are drawn towards favorite methods and materials. You will want to draw certain subjects and ideas more than others.

Over time, your style will develop by itself. No need to force it.
How we draw naturally is the starting point for developing this style. As we observe and practice drawing, technique improves and technical likes and dislikes start to emerge (Do you gravitate towards soft shading? Cross hatching? A light touch? A heavy touch? Detail?)

Eventually, a distinctive drawing style will start to emerge. But you can’t get there without ‘putting in the pencil miles.’

Charles White (1918 – 1979)
Awaiting His Return
Learn what you choose to by studying the masters who you admire, reading books and art history, visiting museums and galleries, but refrain from following the style of other artists too closely, or your own style may never get a chance to bloom.

Andy Warhol (1928 – 1987)
*Four Marilyns, 1962*
Step 2 is developing our own visual point of view to express in that language.

- What we like (and don’t like.)
- What has particular meaning to us.
- What captivates us (and what doesn’t.)
- How our experiences have shaped us.
- What we might visually want to convey to others.

This is the advantage the mature artist has over the younger artist: a greater number of life experiences to pull from.
A point of view doesn’t have to be a BIG IDEA.

In fact, often the most clearly articulated ideas are the well-known, universal ideas such as beauty, peace, grief, sadness, joy, etc. – the spectrum of human emotion.

Likewise our reactions to the world around us, such as experiencing grandeur, splendor, quiet, stillness, etc.

Your point of view might encapsulate a whole selection of ideas and subject matter over many works of art, however the mix will be yours alone.

Thomas Cole (1801–1848)
The Oxbow, View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm (1836)
As adults, information crowds our brains.

Because of this, it can be a struggle to compose a work that conveys what you are thinking, what captivated you about a scene.

You may feel your lack original subjects or concepts to draw. You may feel unsure how to make a drawing that is truly your own.

It is easy to fall back on emulating other’s work, other’s techniques, hoping that will substitute for creating our own.

It’s great to learn from others, but there are perils to not charting your own course.

J.M.W. Turner (1775 -1851)

Fishing Boats Caught in a Storm
What often happens when an artist is pursuing a universal idea such as sadness, the first idea tends to be formulaic and unsatisfying.

In a panic, the artist retreats to a safe harbor, relying too heavily on photography, on copying from life exactly, on technique without a good idea behind it, on reproduction rather than interpretation of a scene.

It’s just a lack of confidence, and there’s an easy fix.

This is where MEMORY and IMAGINATION get to play a part.

Jan Matejko (1838-1893)

Stańczyk during a ball at the court of Queen Bona in the face of the loss of Smolensk
Step 3 is developing the ability to change, add, edit, exaggerate, remove, replace, elements to create the most excellent version of your idea that you can.

The idea might be the beauty of light on the bowl of fruit, it might be the grandeur of the mountain range, it might be a commentary on a social situation, or your version of a famous tale.

Whatever it is, you want to be able to communicate effectively and freely.

Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640)

Samson and Delilah
How to do that editing? How to decide what stays, and what goes?

This is what ties artists up in knots, and the safe way out is to hew closely to reality, leaving nothing out and putting nothing in.

To add to the confusion, when we see a beautifully composed drawing or painting, we have no idea what they might have done to get to this place!

James McNeil Whistler (1834-1903)

Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1
Memory:
The faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information.

Artists can exercise their memory functions to store the high-level information about objects and scenes, to use as needed.

Imagination:
The faculty or action of forming new ideas, or images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses.

The ability of the mind to be creative or resourceful.

Visual memory: observing and drawing all types of objects as a database of information, concentrating on accuracy and values.

Emotional memory: observing the big picture of the scene; feeling, listening, smelling, experiencing the scene; keying in and remembering what MAJOR factors played a part in creating that response.

Imagination: using a combination of memory and artistic inventiveness to FOCUS on the idea of the scene, ENHANCE the idea, eliminate anything that is not contributing, add in elements that support the idea.
Visual Memory exercise #1:

Pick 1 object to stare at for 45 seconds.

Close your eyes, and try to see that object in your mind.

Draw the scene in the air or on your paper without opening your eyes.

Now try to draw it on paper from memory. What you miss, your brain will look for next time to improve the results.
Visual Memory exercise #2:

Stare at the whole scene for 1 minute.

Stare at the individual objects for 30 seconds.

Close your eyes, and try to see the scene in your mind.

Draw the scene in the air or on your paper without opening your eyes.

Now try to draw it on paper from memory.
Visual Memory exercise #3:

Stare at the whole scene for 1 minute. Don’t get distracted by the individual objects.

Close your eyes, and try to see the scene in your mind.

Draw the scene in the air or on your paper without opening your eyes.

Now try to draw the feeling of the whole scene on paper from memory.
WHAT?

WHY?
Exercise # 4

Imagination: using a combination of memory and artistic inventiveness to focus on the idea of the scene, enhance the idea, eliminate anything that is not contributing, add in elements that support the idea.
Homework:

1) **WHAT?**
Write down ONE subject matter you are excited to tackle next in your own drawing time. Can be anything at all, not what you ‘should’ be drawing, but what would be fun to draw and reasonably attainable at your current level.

2) **WHY?**
Write down why that subject matter is of particular interest to you.

Mark Bremer
*Lower Yosemite Fall*
*Graphite*
*17 x 11”*

3) **HOW** (composition) using memory and imagination, and

4) **HOW** (materials and technique).
All Drawing Media: Memory and Imagination

• Our goal is to communicate, even if just to ourselves.

• Step 1 – Observe the world around you – big picture, as well as details, shadows, form, value, and Practice your drawing technique by sketching and drawing constantly

• Step 2 – develop your own Visual Point of View to express in drawing or painting. What do you like to draw? Why? What captivates you most? What is the most fun to draw or paint?

• Step 3 – Use your Memory and Imagination to edit, rearrange, replace, create the most excellent version of your ideas (WHAT you are focusing on in your drawing and WHY) that you can.

• Draw objects and scenes with an emphasis on observing, build your mental database.

• Use your memory to collect ideas you want to convey – bring all your senses in to remembering and recording the scene – hearing, smell, touch, sensation, emotion.

• Use your imagination to rearrange elements to create a composition that gets across the point you want to make, the focus of your drawing.
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