
Drawing

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Together

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Awakening the Artist Within through drawing and painting

LESSON 4: Trusting YOUR Heart, Hands and Eyes



The rules for drawing begin with trust. Trust your eyes. Trust your hands. Trust your heart. Frederick Franck says in his book, *The Zen of Seeing*, “Don’t think about what you are drawing. Just let your hand follow what your eye sees.”

This sounds so simple. Why is it often very strange and difficult?

In mathematics there is one right answer. In drawing there are as many right answers as there are points of view. You must trust your point of view when you draw. TRUST grows in a person who draws. How exactly does this work in drawing? In drawing, you are simply observing something and following what you observe. You are not forming a belief, defending a prejudice or making a judgement about what you observe. The artist is not a preacher. The artist is more of a disciple following the guidance of form, flowing with the energy of edges.

Ordinary seeing leads us to believe we are separate from our world. Drawing cuts through this lie or error of perception and leads us straight to the Truth about the Oneness of all life. We are intimately connected to our world. Drawing something as simple as a cup on a shelf helps you ponder the more abstract nature of life.

“The activity of art is the activity of transformation,” says Jan Valentin Saether, the master narrative painter and Gnostic priest with whom I apprenticed for five years in Malibu, California. As you practice drawing, you begin to trust something deeper inside yourself. Your paper and your marks become energized fields documenting your thoughts and feelings about your world. You realize that you are always related to the world around you. Realization is transformation.

A student who had never drawn before said to me after reading my book and practicing drawing on her own: “I can make sense of the outside world when I see in this way. I feel safer in the world.” Wow! Can drawing do all that? Find out for yourself!

Gertrude Stein asked Henri Matisse whether, when eating a tomatoe, he looked at it the way an artist would. Matisse replied: “No, when I eat a tomatoe I look at it the way anyone else would. But when I draw a tomatoe, then I see it differently.”

To increase YOUR TRUST in your heart, hands, eyes and point of view, it is important to create a safe environment when you draw. At home this may mean asking housemates to give you privacy and playing soothing music that opens your heart. At work it may mean taking a 5-minute break, finding a quiet space, maybe even in your parked car. If you are waiting for a bus, sitting in the doctor’s office or in a restaurant waiting for your meal, you can mentally create a safe space, pull out your sketchbook and draw the corner of a room.

My goal with these drawing lessons is to guide my students (online and in person) toward trusting in themselves and their unique point of view. Know that wherever you go in life, you can be yourself, you can feel your feelings, you can create a safe environment, and you can draw lines that express your feelings, and reaffirm your truthful relationship with the world around you. Make it okay to test things out, to make mistakes, to learn, to ask questions, to take a break when you need one, to erase lines when necessary, to laugh, play, and to do nothing at all but sit and look at things differently.