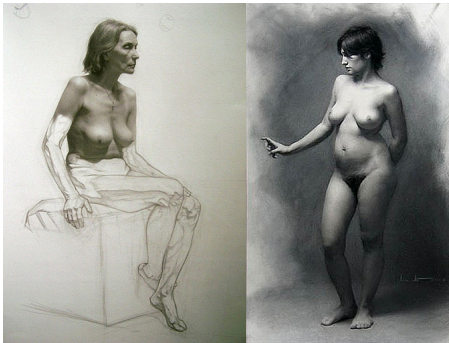


## Why in the crap is there so much mis-information about drawing and art?

Автор: Ефим Репин  
27.03.2011 22:58

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Semi-Lunatic is about to go postal because of the misinformation about drawing. At the risk of becoming unpopular, I'm going to post this possibly inflammatory thread. I post it because I feel very passionately that people just starting out are getting a tremendous raw deal out of places like DeviantART and even here when a load of garbage passing as "correct information" gets handed to them as a critique, or as helpful knowledge.

There IS correct information about drawing out there; it is very difficult to come by, which is a major source of distress and (nearly) anger. I'm passionate to the point of rant, here, so please forgive the savage beating I'm going to apply to one particular "drawing methodology." You may take it personally; I ask that you don't... merely that you read through and reason about my thoughts. Thank you.

## Why in the crap is there so much mis-information about drawing and art?

I can't believe how difficult it is to help beginners understand that there are no great mysteries about drawing. You can't learn art, but you CAN learn to draw. Trying to get people to listen to reason about drawing is tantamount to shouting into a typhoon.

There really aren't any great mysteries about how to draw; and if there are, it's because of huge piles of misinformation that bury the truth about drawing.

My art teachers in high school didn't know how to draw. They made us sit and do drawings of the still life in the center of the room... telling us to do blind contour drawings. If there's one thing that sets my teeth on edge more than any other piece of misinformation about drawing is that blind contour drawings are somehow helpful in teaching people how to draw or "see".

I'm going to try and control the slow burn developing behind my eyeballs by laying out a logical sequence of understandings about the skill of drawing. Hopefully these will prove that for a student wanting to learn drawing, doing blind contours is nothing but a tremendous waste of time.

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Drawing is pure design. It's what painters used to plan their paintings with before ever laying down a brush stroke. In both French and Italian, the word for "drawing" and the word for "design" are the same word. Architects as well as artists used to share the same education.

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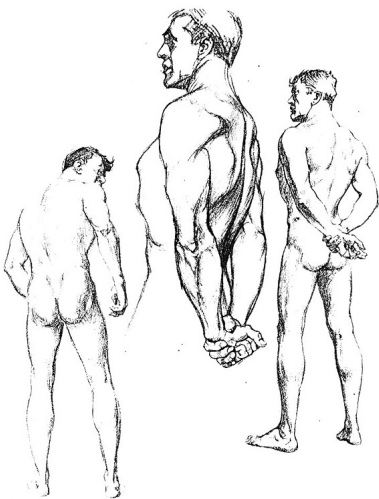
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— You would never think an architect would just start throwing stones around and hope to come up with a cathedral... or even planks of wood around if he were just simply designing a house. They had to design, plan, and reason. Likewise, a true artist never blanks her mind out and starts flailing aimlessly at the canvas.

— There are specific skills you must attain if you're going to try and represent anything with volume on a flat surface. Design takes thought; it takes organization and knowledge. Blind contour says that you have to abandon conscious thought and concentrate on the outline of a form. But therein lies the problem. Tracing the contours of an object is not design. It's not drawing! There's no thought; there's no understanding!

— Painter/muralist Kenyan Cox once said that without design, there may be representation but there can be no art. What that meant is that without drawing and the skillset taught in classic drawing (design), one might be able to copy the appearance of something exactly (like the outline of a hand, or an apple) but there would be no art.



— **He was right. Why is there no art? Because an artist is a thinker.□**

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An artist has a message. Artists re-interpret the world on paper or on canvas or on walls or on ceilings. But to interpret means that one must know the subject; one must understand what one is drawing or painting! If you don't have an interpretation of your subject, all you are doing is copying it like a camera made out of meat. Cameras aren't artists. Cameras aren't thinkers. This is what design is when it comes to art. This "design" is seeing something, breaking it down and understanding it, and then reconstructing it on the flat medium. It's a process of organizing the most important directions, proportions, features, lines, colors, etc until the message the artist wants to deliver is clear. S/he has reinterpreted the subject. This reinterpretation has a chance at being called "art".

—  
The skills you gain when you learn the tools of drawing give you tremendous power to express emotion and ideas. Without these, you're just hoping someone looks at the mess you put down on the canvas and gets "something" out of it. You're hoping someone attributes meaning to something that has none for you; it's just something you "did".

That's nonsense; it's offensive to call that stuff art, because it implies that all "artists" before you, who meticulously designed their masterpieces, were idiots and could have just dipped their brushes in bright red paint and threw it at the canvas randomly.

—  
Drawing is a skill that can be learned if you have medium intelligence, and you get the correct instruction and training. That means that it is possible for anyone of medium intelligence to gain the skills required to become an artist. That is exciting!

But the mountain of bull\$#!+ covering up this truth, created by piles of books by Betty Edwards and the like are threatening to crush the opportunities for new potential artists to learn the real stuff. The ignorance and false information spreading are excruciatingly frustrating.

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People get the wrong idea from "how to draw manga" and cartooning books. They see hard, dark outlines and interpret that to mean that you're supposed to concentrate on contour--on outline--if you want to learn how to draw. Absolutely WRONG.

The hard dark outlines are inked lines for coloring books; they're also to keep Bugs Bunny in the 2D world. But no good cartoon was ever created by drawing the outline of something. NEVER. A good cartoonist draws the volumes, or at least uses subtle variations in line to suggest volumes. Even highly stylized cartoons do this. The inker comes through later and provides that dark outline so that the design will carry.

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Don't buy Betty Edwards' book. It shows you a parlor trick... blind contour drawings sometimes end up looking like what you've seen. Wow. But they're useless to an artist, because there's no interpretation there. An artist isn't concerned with subtle undulations on the outline of a form! That's not art. That's camera work.

Even if you want to work photorealistically... contour is the absolute wrong way to go, because a contour conveys no understanding. Simple shapes and volumes absolutely do, and you can rearrange them to your liking--from your mind, even.

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If you're so certain that contour drawings are the way to learn, try something--a thought experiment.

Draw a person seated in the same position 10 times in a row using blind contours. Now, try and draw this person moving his arm three inches to the right without looking at him. Do it from your mind.

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You can't do it, because the contour taught you nothing. Even if you memorized the contour in only ten times, there is positively NO way in hell you'll be able to come up with the subtle variations in contour created by the movement of the arm. You'll have to set up the model, AGAIN, every time. This means you'll never learn to draw from imagination this way. People drawing from imagination--the ones who do so successfully--most certainly understand the subjects they draw (or at least their shapes). Nobody ever learned to draw from imagination using blind contours.

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Get away from drawing outlines. The outline is your enemy. Contours are the devil. Contours should only show up incidentally AFTER you've drawn your subject. If you're someone wanting to learn how to draw, you should write this down and stick it under your pillow. If you're stuck on the catchphrase "learn to see" from Betty Edwards, you should learn what that really means. Seeing is a form of understanding. Blind contours never offer understanding.

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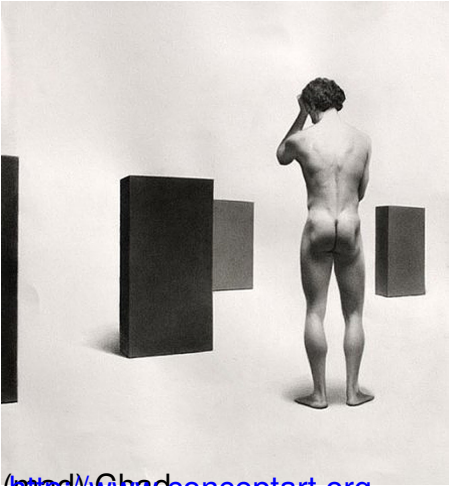
And one more thing... can we please stop using the word "Journey" in sketchbook titles? It's idiotic, frankly.

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