

Learning to see as an artist

Member Focus: Ginny Baughman, a freelance artist in Westerville for the past six years, has a bachelor's of fine arts degree with a teaching certification from the University of Dayton. Her noted work includes drawings of many Westerville area homes and buildings over the past several years. Two years ago, she began teaching drawing and other art classes for the Westerville Parks and Recreation Department and at Inniswood Metro Gardens.

By GINNY BAUGHMAN

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When I meet someone and I am introduced as an artist and a drawing teacher, usually their first response is: "I wish I could draw." Why do most people believe that they can't draw? When usually they haven't even tried. With the right type of drawing instruction anyone can learn to draw.

I have come to believe that there are two types of drawing students: those who come to it naturally and those who have to work at learning to draw.

For those of us in the latter group, we are the majority. There is never a student that cannot learn to draw as long as he or she has the

right kind of instruction and an open mind. What the student actually needs to learn is how to better see what they draw. As I always tell my students, "Draw what you see, not what you think you see."

I often find children easier to teach than adults because they worry less about what they can and cannot do. They are not as interested in what their artwork looks like as much as they just love the pure act of creating it. Children of any age should be encouraged to create freely. They should be given plain paper and crayons to work with and not just coloring books with predetermined outlines. I have discovered, however, that a child shouldn't be forced into realistic drawing before they are at the proper stage of development.

Parents are usually so anxious for their kids to learn to draw that they will expect perfectly realistic artwork from them before they are ready to produce such artwork. It seems that 9 years old is the age that students can

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handle learning realism. There are, however, those few exceptional children who can draw at an adult level at an early age. Before this age of reality, though, children should be allowed to create their own interpretations of objects whether or not they are realistic. They should be given tremendous amount of encouragement and reinforcement for whatever they create.

Encouragement for their drawing holds true for an artist of any age. A beginning artist especially should be

given as much positive reinforcement as possible. It is so easy for a new artist to get frustrated with negative criticism and quit. This also is true for personal criticism. An

artist must be critical of their work but not too critical or they could easily give up on their artwork.

The best thing that a parent of beginning artist can do to promote proper drawing development is to always encourage expressive freedom. Filling in coloring book outlines and copying predetermined images, although enjoyable, may do little to encourage artist creativity. A person must be able to learn to see and create as a true artist does. This task may be easier than it sounds, if a student can learn to observe carefully what they are drawing and practice their drawing constantly. Maybe if they don't become the next Leonardo DaVinci, they will, at the very least, derive much pleasure and personal satisfaction from what they have created.

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