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Drawing Skills - Becoming an Artist

Becoming an artist . . . is a journey, for some it is a life time journey, for others it is a hobby. Here are a few suggestions to help you get started.

What Materials to use?

First you will need to get a small drawing kit together. View the PDF for ***My Favourite Drawing Kit***.

You may want to over time add to your drawing kit. Experiment with different drawing materials. Such as

- Graphite pencils
- Coloured pencils
- Spirit based markers
- Pens
- Ink and wash
- Pastel
- Paint

There are many papers that you can draw and paint on. Such as

- Zeta layout paper
- Acid free cartridge
- Watercolour paper
- Illustration board
- MDF
- Canvas

One thing to remember is that each drawing and painting material will respond differently to each paper. Every artist has their preference of the materials they like to use.

"I do recommend that you purchase good quality art materials, whether that be student quality or artist quality. Becoming an artist needs to be a good experience. The feeling of using quality materials, can improve the drawing or painting that you do."

Keeping a Sketchbook.

One of the best ways to learn to draw is to start a sketchbook. Draw subjects that you are interested in and along side the drawings make notes, for example, colours and textures. This will help you to learn to see, an important skill for an artist. More information about Sketching, see page 11 of the book *Draw New Zealand Birds*.

Where does an Artist draw?

There are two situations where artists draw and paint. One is on location, for example, out in the bush or by the sea. The second in the classroom or studio, where the artist stands or sits at a table or easel. It is important in either situation that you are sitting/standing comfortably or you will begin to get sore after a while. Being an artist needs to be a comfortable experience.

Also consider the lighting in a classroom or studio. If you are right handed a good light needs to come from in front of you or from your left hand side. If you are left handed a good light needs to come from in front of you or from your right hand side. So that you are not working in your own shadow.

If you have a need to work at night, purchase a 100 watt daylight bulb to replace your tungsten light bulb. This gives out a blue light that is closer to daylight in colour. Note that the light from a tungsten light bulb is orange in colour and florescent tube is green in colour. This is important when you work in colour. You will find your work will be inconsistent if painted in these lighting conditions compared with artwork painted during the day.

Another area to consider is the colour of the walls in the room that you work in. They need to be a light neutral colour, preferably white. If you have a strong colour such as yellow, when the room is lit, the colour of the walls will influence the colours in your work, and again the results will be inconsistent with the artwork painted during the day.

The Drawing Process.

1. Before you begin, take a moment to look at and study your subject.
2. Look for the simple shapes.
3. Start by lightly drawing the shapes.
4. Then check their size, proportion and their position in relation to each other.
5. Once correct, refine the shapes and add detail to the subject.
6. Then add tone, line and texture if desired.
More information about Drawing in the book, *Draw New Zealand Birds*.
7. Before you complete the drawing, stand back and look at it from a distance. Even come back and look at it the next day. This will give you an overall impression of what you have drawn or painted.
Then you can check that it is as you want it to be.
See **Start Drawing** for more information on drawing.

Take Time and Focus.

If drawing is something worth doing, it is worth doing well. So take time to consider the drawing you are doing.

I personally find that there is a fine balance between a rough free drawing and a tight overworked drawing. The best road to take is the middle of the road. A balance between the two.

Be open to receiving feedback and instruction, consider if it is relevant to what you want to achieve. Above all, be patient and your skills will improve with persistence.

Get started and have a go!

Enjoy!

Heather