

WHY DRAWING IS IMPORTANT

Recently I was looking at a you tube interview with artist Steve Cox who was talking about the importance of drawing and the neglect of it in our art schools. Any one who considers drawing important should have a listen to what Steve says.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=aC7Y7M1OZuw

Why many people in the art world think drawing is anachronistic could be linked to a number of reasons - the influence of technology, the reliance and overuse of words and the breaking down of barriers (the legacy of the Duchamp), all of which have encouraged the conviction that you can now be a fine artist without being able to draw.

Forming an image from the seed of an idea and developing it into maturity, which is what nature does and what drawing is, is substantially different from manipulating an image that has already been manufactured for you. Processes are important and they define the meaning of achievement. Images that are made by machines should be separated from painting, drawing and printmaking because its processes generally have little in common with hand-made work.

Drawing is the means where mark making not only plays a part in forming things visually, but also transfers energy from the artist to the image, something a machine cannot do. The static forms of a machine made image aren't the same as the breath we find in hand-made art. But drawing isn't really mark making either, nor is it the same thing as design or composition. Designing and composing is like arranging furniture in a room but drawing is the space within which the furniture is arranged. Without light and space, mark making can only result in patterning. The claim that drawing and writing is the same thing, does not have meaning. When Joseph Beuys said "when I write my name I am drawing", all he was doing was creating patterns. The kind of drawing needed to create the Sistine Chapel frescoes goes way beyond the art of pattern making or being able to write your name.

Sometimes art exhibitions seem to place more importance on texts rather than the language and power of the visual work. It's as if words are assumed to be a suitable substitute for drawing, that a textual explanation dismisses the need for drawing ability. Although the written word creates images within one's mind, this is not the same thing as extending an image into the same space we inhabit. We often see the misuse of terminology such as fine art digital printmaking, or fine art photography, but a digital printout is often closer to photographic collage than it is to printmaking, and photography is different to fine art altogether.

We live in an age where the phrase *breaking down barriers* has influenced how people regard art practice. Barriers give meaning to actions and achievements and we need barriers to reflect this. If a game was played without rules (barriers), then it would have little meaning. Drawing should be seen in a similar light, as the barrier between the created image and the manufactured image.

Duchamp's example has encouraged many people to believe that drawing is unnecessary, that through the use of wordy claims, anything can be deemed art. His philosophy that by thinking

differently about something makes it art is merely thinking differently about something and little else.

There are drawings done on a computer which may or may not be printed out, but in this case people can draw. It's where drawing is avoided that is the concern here.

Drawing adds quality to a work of art. When we use the word excellence, it is the drawing that makes it so. Drawing is not a medium but the process of forming things within a space regardless of the medium. Drawing determines how brilliantly an idea is created. The idea alone is not enough.

There are a number of artists in Melbourne who have their own art classes in their studios because there are many people who want an opportunity to develop their interest in hand-made art for its own sake. Perhaps that's where the future of fine art schools will be.