

Abstract

After debating myself for months, I finally decided to take the art class. I always wanted to create. This dream seemed so within my reach after I read the course description in the continuing education catalog of the local community college. It read,

“Discover the power of a pencil rendering as you explore line, texture, shape, and tone to create three dimensional images. Emphasis will be on tools, techniques, elements and composition. This is the class to take whether you are new to drawing or experienced.”

My aspiration was perfectly articulated by this brief description. I was further convinced to pursue my dream by the supply list.

- Spiral sketch book- 8 ½ x 11, #50 white paper, 100 sheets
- Sharp automatic pencils – 2 pack, 0.7 mm
- American natural wood pencils – box of 10, sharpen prior to class
- Sanford Design multi-pack erasers – 3 types
- Q-tips, one small box
- A few cotton balls

I already had most of the required tools at home and no drawing experience was required. The spiral sketch book, I purchased at Hobby Lobby and although I had many erasers lying around at home, I didn't take a chance and treated myself with a brand new package of multi-pack erasers as instructed. God knows I didn't want to screw up this dream like the previous ones.

I paid \$129 online and enrolled for seven sessions of drawing class to become an artist. When the registration was completed and the non-refundable fee was charged to my credit card, I realized that the first session was held the week before. I'd already missed the first class. It was too late to change my mind anyway. *If a dream can come true in seven sessions, who says it wouldn't in six?* I wondered.

The next Monday evening, I drove forty five minutes across town in freezing rain to get to the high school where the class was held. When I arrived at destination, I faced a massive dark building hibernating under the razor sharp needles of frozen rain. The ice covered structure callously had its main entrance locked perhaps to keep out intruders like myself. The cold wind slapped my face as I walked around the building to find an unlocked door. Finally I noticed a few cars parked by a glass door with inside lights on. Hastily I entered with art supplies clutched in my shivering fist and looked around for the room. I was now ten minutes late.

Anxiously I paced a maze of long corridors desperately turning every doorknobs looking for my art class. The faster I walked, the longer and narrower the hallways appeared to be. The walls were tilting toward me, I could hardly breath. It was getting

too late and there was no sign of art. Maybe I was in the wrong building altogether. Maybe the class was cancelled due to severe weather. I was losing hope when a shiny spot at the end of darkness captured my attention. I rushed toward the light and saw a woman pushing her cleaning cart out of the restroom.

“Excuse me. Do you know where the art class is?”

“No Engles senior,” she smiled.

I responded to her innocent smile with an impure one of my own. The moment I departed the cleaning angel enshrined in the florescent light and sharp odor of ammonia, I wondered maybe learning Spanish had a higher priority than art. Despite this epiphany, I swiftly resumed my search as I realized this was not the time or the place to entice women.

Finally the search ended as I reached a well-lit room with its door ajar. In the eerie silence of the room, I saw three women and two men, each sitting separately behind a large table deeply concentrating on the set of five empty bottles posed next to each other. Each aspiring artist was gazing at the subjects from different perspective. A short and stocky bald man was quietly pacing the room keenly observing his students’ progress. I too sat behind the first available table without saying a word and began staring at the bottles from my unique angle. Either my late presence went unnoticed by everyone in the class or they chose to ignore the new pupil.

Every few minutes, the amorphous shadow of our instructor disturbed my concentration and blocked my view. His words, “Observe 70% of the times and draw 30%” were engraved in his ominous shadow. First I was feverishly cross-hatching the bottom of a short round bottle of whisky and then imposed the heavy shadow of the tall slender bottle of wine on the one sitting next to it.

For two long hours, I delved into the sinful cores of the empty bottles posing naked, leaning against one another to create a taunting image. Their malicious curves, immutable symmetry, and wicked intertwined shadows threw me into a vague abyss of quandary. How could I possibly render their mournful emptiness, capture their obscure remorse and seize their long lost delight? How could I ever portray the haze of intoxication, the mist of madness and the sting of remorse?

With great obsession, I explored the tender angles and timid curvatures of my models and meticulously studied their inherent traits latent in the depth of their shadows. And the more I plunged into their lonely emptiness, the more I was immersed in their abundant history. I’ve self-inflicted a painful wound of observing an ambiguous past entrapped in transparencies of present, doomed to oblivious future. How could I portray the lost elation of a dull reality?

The impulsive strikes of my pen drew thousands of untamed lines morphing into peculiar curves separating me from the veracity of my peers in the class. Gradually, I found myself locked inside the dungeon of my own creation, deeply molded into the core of the bottles I was to sketch. I could see the distorted light through the unrefined layers of seemingly transparent glass between others and myself. The feral contours of the pen rendered the vague outlines of me, an amorphous creature trapped in his rogue imagination.

I was confined to a milieu so incomprehensible to others. To free myself from this quandary, I ran to every corner of the page to break away from the suffocating lines, forms and shadows I'd drawn. Through the thick glasses, I could recognize the blurry images of others consumed by their assignments, utterly indifferent to my conundrum. I could hear the instructor's voice ricochet off the glasses insisting on observing the invisible qualities of our subjects.

Another hour passed. The class terminated, students left the room and instructor turned off the lights and locked the door. In absolute darkness there is no depth perception, shades are absurd and colors mere fantasy. In this horrifying vacuum of light neither can I create nor can I exist.