

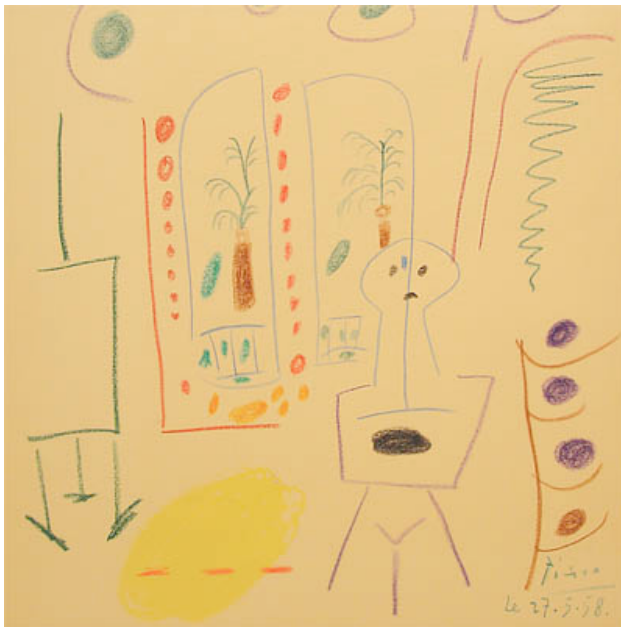
My Two-Minute Drawing Challenge! by Ela Thier

Lots of people say they can't draw. And they're right. Given the amount of corrections, invalidating feedback and apathy that we endured every time we tried to draw, it's amazing that anyone still draws past the age of 6.

Picasso said: every child is an artist. The question is how to remain an artist.

We stop being artists when we're young because the well-meaning adults around us corrected our every creative gesture if it didn't fit a mold they were accustomed to. This wasn't their fault. They just did to us what was done to them.

So yeah, it's true, you can't draw. But the good news is that it's not too late for you to reclaim the artist you were as a child. Picasso would agree with me: you WERE an artist when you were a child. So how do we get this child back?



"Atelier De Cannes" by Pablo Picasso, crayon drawing, 1958

I know I'll get heat for saying this, but Picasso was not more talented than you. I really believe that. He just acquired a few learnable skills. You can do that too. Just takes some time and effort, that's all. Other than that, what made him remarkable was that he wasn't self-conscious; he wasn't worried about "doing a good job". If you reached that level of confidence, if you were pleased with whatever you made to that degree, you'd end up just as creative as he was. Or more so.

THE TWO-MINUTE DRAWING CHALLENGE

The following exercise, which I designed about 15 years ago, has helped many people reclaim the artist that they really are. I remember a 90-year-old woman who followed this exercise after not having drawn since she was in grade school. She liked what she drew so much that she framed it and hung it up.

There are many skills one could choose to learn in order to draw: the anatomy of the human body, lighting and shadows, perspective, botany, etc. these are all entirely learnable skills and anyone who chooses to learn them can. But these skills do not define your artistic talent. What makes someone an interesting artist is the ability to be herself on the page.

You being able to draw has nothing to do with you learning how to make a dog. You being able to draw will come from you adopting a new attitude about drawing. You could, theoretically, shift your attitude about drawing at this very moment, and in so doing, become someone who CAN draw overnight.

So. Try the following exercise and watch yourself draw up a storm:

INGREDIENTS:

A box of crayons: The kind you can get at Duane Reade or anywhere. Color pencils and magic markers have too sharp a point. Crayons are blunt, giving you no control. That's what we want.

A piece of paper: Doesn't matter what kind. Could be newsprint, lined notebook paper, printer paper, whatever. Make sure it's cheap. No fancy paper. And typical notebook size is the right size. Don't go much smaller or much bigger.

Newspaper: This is optional. But I do highly recommend placing a piece of newspaper behind your paper so you can freely end up going off the page without worrying about drawing on the table.

Timer: If you have one on your phone, you're all set. Otherwise, use this one:
<http://www.online-stopwatch.com>

THE RECIPE:

- 1) Look at the box of crayons and pick a color that you don't like.
- 2) Set the timer to 1 minute
- 3) Close your eyes and draw until the minute is up. Keep your eyes closed the entire time. *Do not lift the crayon off the page, and do not open your eyes, until the minute is up.*
- 4) Look at the box again and choose a second color. Pick one that *does not match* the first color that you picked. Be sure that these are two color that you would never put together.
- 5) Set your timer again to 1 minute

6) Keeping your eyes open this time, do whatever you can to destroy, ruin, spoil, the drawing you created with your eyes closed. Whatever picture of composition you created with your eyes closed: do whatever you can to ruin it.

7) Your drawing is done! You've proven that you can draw after all. Your last step is to share what you drew.

Post your drawings on my facebook wall at:

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/Ela-Thier/140270062683988>

I promise to comment on every drawing that is posted there! ;-)

VARIATIONS ON THIS EXERCISE:

A) WHAT TO DO IF YOU FINISHED RUINING THE PICTURE BUT YOU LIKE IT SO MUCH THAT YOU WANT TO KEEP DRAWING?

After you finish the exercise, you can choose a third color and draw over your composition to your heart's desire, taking it anywhere you feel inspired to go with it. But if you sense even the beginnings of judgment or worry that the drawing isn't good, go back to choosing a color you would never use and either draw with your eyes closed or by trying to ruin the picture. This extra step of drawing what you want is advanced level drawing: something you ought to do only if you find yourself enjoying it. If you're not enjoying it, go back to closing your eyes until the enjoyment is back again.

B) AN EXTRA POINTER (LITERALLY)

While drawing with your eyes closed or ruining the picture: you could experiment with the thickness of your lines. Go back and forth between pressing softly and pressing hard to get lines of different thicknesses.

C) THE ELECTRONIC VERSION OF MY DRAWING CHALLENGE

The electronic version of this exercise is the bomb. If you have an iphone, download "Doodle Buddy". It's a free app. Go through the same steps: choose a color you don't like, doodle with your eyes closed. Choose a color that won't match it, use it to ruin the composition as best you can.

All the doodle-buddy stuff on my facebook wall began with this exercise.

ENJOY!

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