

365

Artist Don Higgins

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Did you draw all these?
How long does it take you to draw one?
Where do you get your ideas?
How do you get started?

These are some of the most frequently asked questions I get as an illustrator. Now, I'm not gonna sit here and tell you some kind of hi brow philosophical bull. I can give you technical process and list all the different grades of pencil leads from 6H to HB to 6B. But the important answers.

The short answers are:

Yes.
It varies.
People watching, Photos, Music and if all else fails; I let the pencil lead me, and I see things that most people don't see.

Now, Lets go back. "I let the pencil lead me." What does that mean? When faced with a blank sheet of paper and nothin' in my head. I lay down the guide lines of the head. The egg as I call it.

By the way; guidelines are important. Its ok to put them down first... and leave them. It shows progress, thought and calculation. After all guidelines aren't written in stone. And if you've ever looked at the sketches of DaVinci... guidelines. If guidelines are good enough for DaVinci, they're good enough for you.

But guidelines are also what I mean by letting the pencil lead me. Most of the sketches in this book started with the egg and facial set up. A stray mark here and there, become noses or horns or devilish grins as the drawings progress'. Remember, this is a sketchbook. It is supposed to be for ideas not masters works. Your plucking ideas out of thin air, filtering them through your brain and scratching them onto paper. Its not supposed to be perfect. Let the pencil guide you. Don't erase the stray marks, one of those stray marks might turn into a stroke of genius as the sketch takes shape.

Next. "I see things that most people don't see." Because most people have lost the ability to look for more than reality.

Hear me out now; I am not crazy... well maybe a little. But that's beside the point.

As an artist I am always looking at textures; in bricks, random shadows on the carpet. Clouds. Do you still look at clouds? Do you only see clouds or can you still see animals, ships, creatures, faces.

Faces in the lights and shadows. THAT'S looking at the world and seeing more than what is right in front of you.

Next I will drop my philosophy of drawing on you. That is: Draw what you see, NOT what you know.

When someone points to a flower and says draw me that flower; look at it. Draw that flower not what you know about flowers. THEN store that information in your head you'll need it. Why?

Somewhere out there someone is reading this and thinking (you know who you are), "If you draw what you see not what you know, how do you draw dragons?

I've drawn lots of dragons, I have mental reference. I see dragons why don't you?

Think about it. If a dragon is... a big lizard with bat like wings. Find reference photos of bats and lizards. If you can figure out where to anatomically put them together you get dragons.

With that squarely in place I will ask you again. "I see dragons, why don't you?"

Don Higgins