

Drawing, for me, has always been a lifeline; the proverbial unbroken string that provided sustenance through my childhood, kept me grounded in the years of teenage angst, offered consolation any time I needed it and remains my solace and my most trusted friend as I navigate the strife and the joy of life as a professional sculptor.



Studies of the Virgin and Child (c. 1522–24), Michelangelo. Pen and brown ink, with copies in red chalk by Antonio Mini. The inscription reads: ‘Disegna antonio disegna antonio / disegna e no[n] p[er]der te[m]po’ (‘Draw Antonio, draw Antonio, draw and don’t waste time’). © The Trustees of the British Museum

To draw is not only to reproduce form; it is to explore and to capture relationships within form. To draw is not simply to let the hand trace contours; it is to see the human condition in the model on the stand, in the composition of chosen objects, in the particular subject embraced by the imagination. In other words, *to draw is to think*. *Drawing is a thinking medium*. Drawing is visual intelligence in action, the very mechanics of pictorial thought that both records and demands. It operates by way of earnest questioning of the world around us that is fueled in turn by insatiable human desire to understand every aspect, without exception, of our physical universe. Initial insights, brainstorming, enquiry, association and development are all visible in drawings by artists working centuries apart, from masters of the past to draughtsmen of today. The sense of urgency in Michelangelo’s ‘*Draw Antonio, draw Antonio, draw and don’t waste time*,’ penned over 500 years ago on a sheet of paper in response to a particularly poor effort by his pupil has hardly been lost on us artists. No matter how much time has passed, we will always remain, in some ways, pupils of Michelangelo.

Drawing is as important to art history as it is to contemporary artist’s studio practice. Regardless of the discipline, sketchbook is an attribute that rarely leaves our side, while in its absence we resort to Balthus’ sound advice of drawing with our eyes. To draw is not only to think; it is to breathe. Even when viewed as a mere skill to develop, drawing informs a practicing artist’s continuing evolution in ways that remain unmatched. It enhances how we see the world around us and how we gather information. “*Drawing is at the root of everything*,” wrote Van Gogh in his letters, vowing to return each year to draw the same tree, likely because he believed that until

he drew it, repeatedly, he has not really seen it. His preparatory drawings possess as much emotion as his finished paintings, often in more expressive or experimental form. Rendered as a sketch, these raw impressions are direct and spontaneous and leave little room for cheating. Drawing is arguably the most unadulterated form of honesty in art.



Pollard birches, 1884 Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), Pencil, pen in black ink, on wove paper, 39 x 54 cm Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Stichting)

Despite being dismissed by some academic and artistic circles as unimportant or too traditional, or being relegated by popular misconception to nothing more than a preliminary study for further work, drawing, without a doubt an essential cornerstone present in painting and sculpture, stands confidently apart as an artistic discipline in its own right. Allowing for a myriad of supports in addition to canvas and paper; with a wide range of mediums spanning from more traditional pastels, graphite and charcoal, to acrylics, oils, oil stick and encaustic; employing figurative, semi-figurative and abstract elements in novel ways; grappling with colour, value, patterns, textures and shapes, all the while bridging classical education with experimentation and never losing sight of singular beauty of a line, drawings come alive in a particularly pulsating, immediate way, the way music does. On par with other disciplines, unique by its very nature, sheer variety within this art form makes for an exciting exchange between its mediums and techniques. Openness that comes from observing the artist's hand actively at work is the added bonus that remains unobscured by layers of paint or process, even after the drawing is completed.



Bruce Samuelson, Untitled 7-1, 2007, Pastel & Charcoal on paper, 24 x 19 in | 61 x 48.3 cm

By providing a shift in perspective even for a moment, art invites beauty and wonder to enter with some permanence into our daily lives. Wonder inspires curiosity, and curiosity keeps the mind free from becoming sick with anxiety and panic by refusing to assume the worst, having seen the best so often. Artist's gift is two-fold: seeing extraordinary in the ordinary and communicating that sense of wonder by way of art. The wonder is in the essence. Drawing, within the realm of visual arts, seems to hold the position of being closest to pure thought. Whether with colour, form or line, it captures the essence particularly simply and surely. It brings us toward greater joy by helping us retreat from cynicism and pessimism and to embrace instead the life full of meaning that offers worthwhile wonders daily for our consideration.



Moe Brooker, *Unspeakable Joy*, 2016, Mixed Media on canvas, 60 x 60 inches | 152.4 x 152.4 cm