

# When to begin the study of art? Anytime

This is another in a series of lessons on art and drawing by special columnist David Mesling. He has taught for eight years and operates an art store, Art Store and More, 18774 Middlebelt, Livonia. Mesling encourages questions and comments from readers. You may write him at his store or c/o Observer Newspapers, 23152 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.



is one of my best letters! Children learn to speak and develop motor responses at different ages. So when to begin art lessons varies with the student.

I remember Maria, who was 5 years old. After you lifted her on to a 34-inch stool, she could draw with the best of those big league 7- and 8-year-olds.

The most important question to children's art is do they draw from imagination or from what they see? If your child draws only from his or her imagination, there is little you can teach them.

For instance, if you say "Honey, why is that foot so big and this foot so little?" they might say, "Our that's the way I want it... sheesh."

Children are approaching art lessons when they try to draw from comics or real life. And be assured their first attempts could be no worse than Satchel's first look on a trumpet.

**DURING** the sometimes eternal hour of art lessons for children (10 and up), you may hear as many strange things. For instance, "Jamie get out from under that table." "Brian, how did you get bubble gum on your picture?" "Now where did Aaron go?" and "Trisha, honey, please go under that table and tell Jamie to get over here."

So as an answer to prayer, Carol came along and I hired her to teach our little ones. Carol brought a perfect blend of discipline and art instruction. Some day Carol, Andy (her helper) and I will have to get together and write a book. After all, Art Lickletter did it!

Probably the best aspect of children taking art lessons is that it can introduce them to the many media and

techniques in art. For example: pen and ink, charcoal, pastel, scratchboard, felt tip pens, etc. Then they have a good foundation for more advanced instruction.

**ENCOURAGEMENT** can not be overemphasized. Did you ever notice how you clap a little louder for some little guy or gal who suffered through some musical recital?

You do that to encourage them. Well, you rarely clap over art work, but what you say or don't say about their work is remembered accurately in their little heads.

I can spot within weeks who will last and who will be discouraged by the attitude of the parents. Boy, do kids ever talk!

Some will come in and say, "My daddy said he's payin' good money and I gotta show 'em what I do every week."

Speaking of showing them, with some parents you just can't win. For example: If the picture turns out great, they want to know just what part the teacher did. Then if it turns poorly, they want to drop the child out of art lessons.

So, remember, just as you close one ear at musical recitals, learn to close one eye when viewing their art.

**FROM 10 to 16**, interest is the primary goal and art instruction is secondary.

For three years Eric has occupied his art curriculum drawing beads,

## Artifacts

warriors and winged things beyond description. Mom, Dad, family and even his neighbors have begged him for even an occasional barn or flower.

But Eric probably will not draw a very good flower unless a flower can hold a sword or until his interests change. In the meantime, Eric has learned charcoal, pastel and colored pencil (dragons), pen and ink, ink on glass and linoleum block (warriors), scratchboard, watercolor, gouache and coquille board (winged things).

The interests of the student is what brings them each week to the teacher to learn technique. The primary goal of the teacher is to bend the technique to fit their interests.

It is truly amazing how fast students develop in their ability when encouraged by others and inspired with minor successes.

Between the ages of about 14 to 16, art students can actually take giant steps towards their career in art. I recently had one design studio ask me for the phone number of a 15-year-old boy named Shawn.

But I told them I am hiding him for another year or so. I would say around the age of 19, students should begin

building their portfolio. Now here is where interest suffers.

For example, Greg is about 15 and he has worked for three weeks drawing pen and ink renderings of a chain saw... heavy bummer. But, as a young man, Greg sees his need to prepare his portfolio for the future, even if it is not exactly "fun."

From ages 16 to 18, a student really makes a decision for art or some other field. Of course that is the student's decision and should not be influenced by others.

The world will get along fine without another artist. But what bothers me is when a student drops out for temporary interest. I once had a gifted youngster who, upon becoming driving age, wanted a car. So to get the car he had to work part-time. A very good artist is now out of school, stocking shelves at a drug store.

**I HAD** the pleasure of meeting Clair this week at the art store. She is energetic, talented and has a very good sense of humor. Upon showing me photos of some of her work, she said, "For 10 bucks each I can sell these all day."

"I'm kind of slow but I have plenty of time. I'm 70 and I paint for fun... I'll let my grandkids sell my paintings."

I guess, just like we underestimate young children, we also underestimate older folks. The difference, however, is that it is the older folks that underestimate themselves.

Remember, as I stated several weeks ago, art ability never leaves you. It is a part of your perception, thinking and attitude. Even if it is left dormant for many years, it can be revived very easily, much to the surprise of the holder. Usually a break is very good for a student. Parents will carefully study that their son or daughter would like to drop out of art classes for a while.

They are sometimes surprised at the comment of "good." I feel that if a child has lost interest in art, it has at least been good exposure for him or her.

Usually this interest is revived within a year or so. As in any instruction, it is nice to take a break from time to time. It is no accident when the student returns that the level of ability seems to have increased. Of course, this is primarily due to rekindled interest.

So, if you have studied art in the past, consider taking a class somewhere to revive and polish your talent.

If you have never studied art but have played with the idea, then stop playing and start drawing.

**ARTFUL HINT:** Don't judge the field of art as a lost cause because of one or two class failures. Many times your failure can be traced to an uninspired teacher.

The word "inspire" means "to breathe life into," and believe me, some students need a lot of breathing.

down to earth  
Alice  
Burlingame

## Nice to get away — good to be home

This cycle of the year is ideal for a review of your garden area. The shortcoming "pop out" for your attention, but there isn't the thrust to work as hard as we do in the springtime.

Your columnist keeps delaying the planting of new bulbs due to the activity of rodents, doing their harvesting for a cold winter.

October is an ideal time to review your trees relative to pruning. Watch those pruning shears around spring flowering shrubs as most of them are budded up in this cycle for spring flowering.

If you are going to relocate or close up areas which have held vegetables or flowers, aerate the soil, add peat if needed, fertilize and seed now after reviewing if the site will not be covered with leaves.

Your columnist has just returned from the annual meeting of the Garden Writers in Williamsburg. I have been there many, many times and always stay at The Lodge, the center for transportation and activities on the grounds.

**ONE OF** the highlights was to go to the woodlands of Bassett Hall which is behind the John D. Rockefeller Jr. home.

As you enter the woodlands you see an immense "great oak" where Nov. 27, 1928, Rockefeller and Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin discussed the possibility of restoring Williamsburg to its colonial appearance as they relaxed on the bench at the base of the great tree.

In 1960 the citizens of Colonial Williamsburg gathered under the mighty oak for a memorial service to mark

the death of John D. Rockefeller Jr. The woodland trails have a wealth of native trees, paths, streams, wildflowers and a large exposure to nature's wealth. The paths are marked with yellow diamonds painted on tree trunks.

The Governor's Palace on the grounds which was used by seven royal governors and lieutenants, has been opened since 1934 to show some of the findings from the early era.

This year it has been refurbished with the finest collections possible of the early era. It is a gem for those who appreciate the finest of early silver, furniture and fabrics. Visitors to The Governor's Palace may view the finest of early Americana.

**THE CARE** of the trees, shrubs and gardens were prime to please the visitors as well as the Garden Writers.

We spent a few hours at the botanical Gardens of Norfolk. Their speciality is those plants liking acid soil. In the spring the azaleas and rhododendrons are beyond description with their wealth of beauty.

Norfolk is the home port for 130 ships of the Atlantic and Mediterranean fleet, plus 45 aircraft squadrons. There are many naval museums.

Norfolk has a new festival marketplace with live music activities. Norfolk, with its famous Botanical Gardens, naval base, and marketplace is an additional lure for those who wish a vacation spot along with Colonial Williamsburg to satisfy many family interests.

But do you know, between you and me, home looks good after waiting for planes and rushing to appointments.

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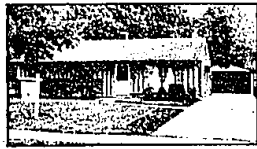
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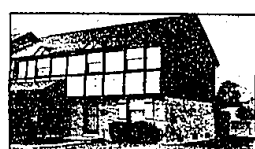


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