

## THE TEACHINGS OF HOWARD PYLE

Pyle's school particularly sought out students who exhibited **Imagination** and **Enthusiasm**, **Artistic Ability**, and **Drawing Technique**.

"His teaching method consisted entirely of endeavoring to instill in his students a love of the beauty of nature and of life although he never used the words 'nobility' or 'beauty.' He spoke only of the underlying spirituality of the subject. We were told to throw ourselves into the subject that we have chosen heart and soul."

*Finish* your work - but do not *labor* it

Begin finishing on the eyes of the principal figure

Study proportion

Avoid giving a brand new look to things

In sunlight exaggerate the simplicity of effects

Avoid copying the strained expression of the face of the model

Strength is *not produced* by strong contrasts

Project your mind into your subject until you actually live in it.

Throw your heart into the picture and then jump in after it.

Paint ideas, paint thought.

"Try and make your picture so that a single word or at any rate very few words, would be its title."

"You haven't got to make pictures different. They're bound to be different because you make them.

"The idea is not to "simplify" a picture. Keep your thoughts about it, simple."

Will you come with me, sweet Reader? I thank you. Give me your hand.

My objective in teaching my pupils is that they should be fitted for any kind of art.

Your subjects have had a history - try to reveal it in your picture.

Paint your picture by means of the lights. Lights define texture and color - shadows define form.

“People say to me how wonderful it must be to be an artist, how I must enjoy my work, etc... Not knowing how we have to slave and sweat and struggle and swear before that picture.”

“Don’t make it necessary to ask questions about your picture. Howard Pyle used to say it’s utterly impossible for you to go to all the newsstands and explain your pictures  
He who jumps for the moon and gets it not, leaps higher than he who stoops for a penny in the mud.

You will have to scrutinize the model sharply to find the proportions - how the weight is supported, how each joint is functioning... Look for the color and tone and texture... how the light falls on the figure, especially the face.

If in making a picture you introduce two ideas, you weaken it by half. If by three it weakens by compound ratio. If by four, the picture will be really too weak to consider at all and the human interest would be entirely lost.

The student learns rules but all the rules in the world never make a picture.

Young people, don't get the idea that you have an artistic temperament which must be humored. Don't believe you cannot do good work unless you feel in tile mood for it. That is all nonsense. I frequently have to force myself to make a start in the morning; but after a short while I find I can work. Only hard and regular work will bring success.

Art is the expression of those beauties and emotions that stir the human soul.

Develop a sense of history.

Seek your training close to home.

Respect books, picture-books and reading.

Engage in writing as a parallel skill.

Research your interests thoroughly.

Seek truth and correctness in settings.

Put in time to get your drawing right.

Sketch first to find the focal center.

Be vigorous and stand up to work.  
Commit to the highest of possibilities.  
See the drama and theatre in your subjects.  
Depict basic emotions – grief, pride, greed, etc.  
Look for new ways to see and tell a story.  
Don't let reality destroy your imagination.  
Be an eyewitness to vivid experiences.  
Simplify compositions and waste little.  
Don't ask opinions from those you don't respect.  
Be idealistic in your life and picture making.  
Be willing to share and pass the torch.  
Be willing to mentor and teach without fee.

### Illustration at the Drexel Institute

Class I, which met on Monday and Friday from 3 to 5 P.M., consisted of lectures on composition and practical illustration, a logical outgrowth of the earlier Saturday lectures on composition. Class II assembled on the same days from 10 A.M. to 12 noon to study the draped and costumed model. Another life class met to study the draped and costumed model in the Evening School on Mondays and Fridays from 7:30 to 9:30 P.M. Instead of coming to Philadelphia one day a week, it was now necessary to spend two long days at Drexel.

The following year there was a further subdivision into three classes embracing essentially the same material. Class I was to study from the draped and costumed model; Class II was a class in illustration in which the student was to make a finished picture using the draped model; Class III consisted of critical lectures in practical illustration and was broken into three groups: composition, facial construction, and costume instruction.

### Howard Pyle's Main Credo:

1. To realize as hard as you possibly can the situation that you are about to depict.
2. To realize as hard as you possibly can.

### 3. To realize!

How well was the essence of the emotion captured and the composition mastered? These were the foundations. It is easy enough to learn to draw; it is very difficult to learn to think! Many times has Mr. Pyle told us that, and many more times he has needed to retell it, as this statement expressed his deep conviction of the only way to make vital pictures. Of course Mr. Pyle knew that, in reality, it is not easy enough to learn to draw. But what he meant to express was that, for us younger art students, the enormous difficulty of putting into a picture the essential qualities of deep feeling, sympathy and sincerity far outweighed the lesser difficulty of accurately learning to draw.

There was the same emphasis on projection and composition. All students were told to **'Dig Deep!' Be disappointed in what you have to work with [the mediums used] but work hard for your effect.**

"Project your mind into the subject until you actually live in it. Throw your heart into the picture and then jump in after it—Don't take my criticisms as iron clad rules but more as suggestions because while you are there [pointing down] and I am here [holding arm horizontal] nature is away up there [pointing up]. . . ."

"I think of the sky as the source of light and this light lifting things out of the world's gloom produces form. The great clouds of smoke and the engines I saw crowded about the Broad Street Station were very picturesque in the sunset; but not until I depict the laborer and his wife returning from work—or somehow suggest the love and trials of human life do I make a picture that interests Humanity. . . ."

"When you make a picture for a Magazine put yourself in the place of a person who opens its pages and glances on them—is your picture interesting?" "The real painter paints for Humanity—not for technique or to please his fellow artists.

"Make your pictures live! There are 50,000 'artists' but how many make their pictures living? Have an aim in your art. . . ."

"Do the people in your pictures have names?!"

"Oh! if young illustrators would only tell what they know of life and of God's beautiful world instead of what they know about applying paint to canvas. . . ."

Throughout the entire Wilmington school period, Pyle continued to stress the ability to project one's ideals and thoughts indelibly into the picture. All of Pyle's students seem to agree that the composition class was a major element in his teaching. It gave them a new outlook on life and a new philosophy on which to build their futures. Sidney Chase stressed this fact. "He opened my vision to a philosophy of living that has inspired my whole life. Even if I never painted another picture this remains true."

Another heritage that he bequeathed was the axiom that the artist must live in his creation. Pyle wanted his students so to project themselves into the picture before them that they would become a part of it. Art, true art, is not cool and detached. It is a transfer of emotion. The more noble the emotion to be expressed, the more lofty the result should be. He did not teach them to be sentimental, but to be unashamed to show those feelings which deserve to be preserved and recorded. The artist is the medium through which that which is true and spiritually worthy is conveyed to the onlooker.

In order that the emotions to be portrayed in art should not be crass or vulgar, Pyle stressed the principle of living a worthy life. Art was a window to the soul of the artist, and it could enrich others only when the soul of the artist contained noble and enduring qualities.

Pyle remarked at the progress exhibited by his Summer session students: "All the students have shown more advance in two months of summer study than they have in a year of ordinary instruction, largely due to their free and wholesome life in the open air." The sessions would begin from 8 AM to 5 PM each day and concentrate the whole time drawing from life.