

*The Language of Lines:*

*A Development of Patience, Conceptual Understanding, and Personal Ability*

The pen darted across the paper in quick smooth, swift movements that I struggled to mimic, or even comprehend. They entered the page as if through magic, or some sort of trick—something that existed outside of my physical mobility. Even the scribbled and seemingly meaningless lines from my father’s pen fell to the paper with such expertise and purpose. His pen could fill the plane with streams of doodled people; my mom could depict our family’s cat’s likeness, and even my little face, with round eyes and swirling, crayoned curls. However, for some reason, my hand would not conjure the same dynamic lines. I loved to make my own marks, too, and I would freely dive into my imagination. However, there came a time (as I got a little older and past the scribbling stage) when I began to notice the stark difference between my hand’s capabilities and someone’s who had more experience. I was mesmerized, young, and achingly unsatisfied.

I don’t think I was upset with others or myself; I think I was just a little impatient. I wanted to be able to depict not only the object, but also the smooth, dynamic repetition of the lines themselves. However, as I continued to practice drawing, and through different influences in my life, I began to develop patience and an understanding of what it means to communicate through drawing.

I can still faintly remember one of my first “art lessons” from when I was about four years old. Picture a dimly lit room filled with yellow air; an easel sits squarely on our dining room floor with a large, flimsy paper clipped at the top. I sat in my little space, filing different

colors of crayons, catching the television from the corner of my eye. My dad, who at the time was working towards becoming a firefighter and usually had things to do, passes by.

“You want to see how to draw a fish? Look—it only takes one line.” With a marker he articulated a simple, curved figure on the paper clipped to the easel. Once the line closed, a fish was present in the white space.

“I live here now,” it seemed to say. What a momentous moment! The method—demonstrated right before my eyes! Although showing someone the way to draw a fish may not seem like a super complex act, something clicked with the simplicity of the fish and the ease with which the its shape could be manifested, defined, and taught. This fish and others soon littered the pages of my notebooks; I worked on making them the same, and making them different. I created stapled storybooks of red fish, large fish, fish families, and fish schools. Mermaids swam with the fish. The fish’s faces gained eyebrows, developed lips, eyelashes and beards. Their fins carried flags and held forks. The fish turned, faced forward—facing me on the paper, smiling. I built onto the simple outline I first mimicked, and I made it mine.

My mom also left a great imprint on my growth in drawing and art through the layers of her actions. She would read illustrated books to me and reveal images full of colors, characters, and narratives that still float around in my head every now and then. She would write me little notes when I went to school, which consisted of a combination of letters and symbols. She would encourage me to draw my own stories, and then she would label the pictures. Through a collection of these homemade stories we created our own library—a product of mother and daughter. These experiences she initiated taught me to visually interpret an image, and to comprehend and predict a narrative. I grew to love the exhilaration of escaping into a different world with a loved one, and to create different environments and situations with my imagination.

Through her constant encouragement and cultivation of arts, crafts, and stories in my youth, I began to sense, in a consistent rush of determination, that I could create things—things that have gravity—things that have the ability to generate emotions and thoughts in others similar to the emotions that illustrated books and my parents’ drawings generated in me.

With this motivation, I continued to draw whenever I had the chance. Throughout my middle school and high school years, I would have gaps of free time which would facilitate spontaneous and experimental doodling sessions. With more experience, my marks became lighter, smoother, and more dynamic. The more I drew in order to express ideas and enjoy the creations and process, the more I could express. The threads of my mom’s storytelling and of my observation of my dad’s fine-tuned methods began to balance out and become clearer with every push of myself to improve. I could finally put forth so much more in one mark and grasp certain thoughts that weren’t as achievable through words. Over time, I began to notice that different subjects would inspire different sorts of drawings. Poetry would inspire bold, flowing, emotional movement in lines, while chemistry would inspire lines that were more intricate, geometric, and floating. Drawing not only assists me in the art world, but pushes boundaries in other disciplines. The doodles would accompany my notes, and provide comfort as well as insight into how the subjects applied to my life.

Drawings and characters, from the goofy to the dramatic, continue to inhabit the lines of my papers. I am able to closely discuss my ideas and emotions towards different subjects with the paper through a continuous motion. As I place my pencil on the paper, it’s not just an expression, but an interaction with the material, my thoughts, and with what I am creating in that moment in time. Thoughts deep with emotion that I couldn’t quite express with words prove to exist perfectly through the medium of drawing. Unlike words, drawings travel with the motion of

a tool, and although pre-existing characters and symbols may influence an artist, there doesn't seem to be a set vocabulary for drawing. The drawer describe images that have cannot exist until the hand moves, striking the paper, fluctuating multiples of diverging thoughts and personal emotions into space. A language flows not just through the image's message, but in the language and connotative nature of the lines. Throughout history, shapes, color, and mark-making have been utilized for countless reasons and have developed nameless styles of personal language. The artists will not be alive forever, but their ideas and expressions might. Drawing allows for deep and visceral connections to concepts and histories of human creation; these are the more expansive thoughts that underlie and excite my drawings.

It wasn't a burst of magic that sprinkled on my hand that caused me to develop a personal understanding of drawing, but rather an introduction of inspirations throughout my life. Many artistic inspirations continue to beat in and out of my life; however, I've come to realize that some of the deepest influences were my parents. My dad displayed the ability, and my mom cultivated the meaning. Through their introduction, I was able to embark on personal explorations of thinking and understanding as I got older. They unknowingly instilled in me the belief that I could not only improve, but I could create and learn through my own experience. Pencils and pens provide such a fascinating sense of possibility, and with the exploratory connections, patience for my abilities, and exhilaration for drawing, my desire is nourished, yet I am excited to create and learn more.