



# The Drawing Club

Master the Art of Drawing  
Characters from Life

Bob Kato





The  
**Drawing Club**

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Characters from Life

**Bob Kato**



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# Introduction

On August 1, 2002, in a rented space behind an architect's studio in Los Angeles, The Drawing Club was born.



The Drawing Club, 2005

# Not everyone can come out to L.A. to be a part of The Drawing Club. So with this book, I'm bringing some of that group energy to the page.

I didn't plan to start The Drawing Club. It found me. In 2001, I was working as an illustrator and teacher at the Pasadena Art Center College of Design. On the side, I held industry drawing workshops for artists at places such as Disney and Universal Studios Creative. The artists would draw from costumed models. (We are lucky because here in L.A., we have the best models!)

Although Hollywood was shifting from 2-D to 3-D animation, artists were constantly asking me to start a similar workshop they could attend outside of work. Being able to capture storytelling on paper is a core, essential skill for these artists. It trains your eye and teaches communication—and, if it's set up in the right way, it can be a lot of fun, too.

So on August 1, 2002, in a rented space behind an architect's studio in Los Angeles, The Drawing Club was born. We established ourselves as a place where anyone who was serious about drawing could come, pay the admission fee, and draw cool characters acting in costume. We put the characters—Tank Girl, Edward Scissorhands, Steam Punk, to name a few—in custom-built sets and played a themed soundtrack specific to that character.

Since then, The Drawing Club has become part of the fabric of the character-drawing scene in L.A. Master artists, such as animation director John Musker and character artist Rich Tuzon, come to practice their craft, working alongside students who are fresh out of school and eager to get to the next level.

The tone of each workshop depends on who shows up. But probably because of my background as an illustrator and teacher at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, we always have a serious working environment, even when we have an over-the-top theme.

Illustrators, animators, story artists, art directors, production designers, producers, directors, students, fine artists, and hobbyists have all found their way here. Whether they are famous, infamous, up and coming, or like being under the radar, I've noticed that they are all enthusiastic about being a participant in an event. People now see drawing as an entertainment activity, a social and networking opportunity, and a way to express passion for a character.

Not everyone can come out to L.A. to be a part of The Drawing Club. So with this book, I'm bringing some of that group energy to the page. With the help of some of the artists who participate in The Drawing Club, we'll explore how professional artists approach a subject, what they've done to hone their technique, and how a great drawing comes to be.

I'll share insight on what makes a great drawing, ways to translate the world from 3-D to 2-D, how to tell a story through your work, and how to tap into your improvisational side. We'll also look at how to choose materials, explore comic approaches to drawing, and take a peek at artists' sketchbooks. Exercises will expand on the ideas in each chapter, helping you improve your skills and find your voice as an artist.

Whether you're a full-time commercial artist or a fine artist, or you just like to draw, this book will help you think differently about drawing, try new approaches, get a fresh perspective from people in the industry—and, in true Drawing Club spirit, have a good time doing it!

## Chapter 1: What Is a Good Drawing?



*Shaft*, ink on Japanese Bachelor's Button paper, John Puglisi



*The Gangster's Girlfriend*, charcoal on paper, Mike Barry

### *What makes a drawing cool?*

Different artists have different ideas about what's cool. It makes for a lively discussion. Some might love to see beautifully refined skills, while others look for some kind of fearless risk taking.

For example, this drawing by Mike Barry shows technique that takes years of hard work to refine and develop. It is cool in a timeless, "How did he do that?" way. Other times, a drawing is cool because it takes chances and is irreverent and in the moment, such as this one by April Connors.

It's like classical music versus punk rock—both can stir your soul and get you excited, whether it's for an impressive array of notes flowing together or for raw feeling.



*1960s Soul Singer*, ink and ballpoint pen on paper, April Connors



*Maleficent*, charcoal pencil on paper,  
George Stokes

At The Drawing Club, George Stokes's work is cool because of the beautiful line quality he has been perfecting for years. Bret Bean's characters are cool. Aaron Paetz and Sean Kreiner are hilarious-cool. John Tice's pastel harmonies are dynamically cool. And someone new might walk in and amaze us. I love all of these drawings, and the funny thing is I might think they are cool for reasons the artists never intended.

Artists who do cool drawings can have years of experience or be totally untrained and unpracticed. Some of them work in animation, video games, fine art, or illustration, while others might just draw for fun. Some are very calculated and technical, and some just let things happen to see what happens.

You can like drawings for your own reasons. Just remember—if you think a drawing is cool, then it *is* cool—and it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks.



*The Cowboy*, black colored pencil on paper,  
Sean Kreiner



*The Huckster*, colored pencil on paper,  
Brett Bean



Above, *The Hobo*, colored pencil and marker on paper, Aaron Paetz  
Opposite, *Barbarella*, pastel on paper, John Tice

