

washingtonpost.com

## Design software weakens classic drawing skills

Advertisement

By Jim Christie

Reuters

Wednesday, April 5, 2006; 8:31 AM

BERKELEY, California (Reuters) - It's not a pretty picture.

U.S. art students spend so much time toying with computer graphics these days that many wind up without needed drawing skills, university instructors say.

Students are more comfortable manipulating computer graphics than doodling, drafting and drawing with pen on paper, and this has created a sharp decline in drawing skills in recent years, teachers say.

Additionally, tech-savvy students simply lack the initiative and persistence developed by drawing, resulting in uninspired work -- at least work on paper.

"I see an increasing passivity on the part of students," says Marc Treib, a University of California, Berkeley architecture professor who hosted a recent conference on the state of drawing in an electronic age.

Computer graphics allow artists to move briskly. By contrast, drawing on paper can be frustrating, forcing concentration, introspection and revision as an idea or vision takes shape. The process hones essential skills and sensitivity and personality that make artwork unique, instructors say.

"It doesn't happen right way," according Chip Sullivan, a professor of landscape architecture at the University of California, Berkeley and conference speaker. "Drawing to me is a sense of consciousness ... a spiritual existence."

Aspiring artists no longer need to spend hours with pen and paper. Now they may produce polished drawings quickly on-screen with software such as Adobe Creative Suite 2 by Adobe Systems Inc., which allows users to incorporate photographs, graphs, text and images for special effects to create electronic files for print, Web or mobile use.

### TRADITIONAL DRAWING SELLS WELL

While art instructors may lament drawing skills of today's students, they are not dissuading students from developing digital skills. The trick is to improve drawing to develop a solid foundation for digital skills, says Charles Pyle, director of the School of Illustration at the Academy of Art University.

"If you don't draw and think well, your art career will be short and unpleasant," Pyle says. "The basics serve the digital end and give the kids a vastly superior portfolio when they leave here."

John Woodbridge, director of the San Francisco-based university's School of Computer Arts-New Media,

says traditional art skills are important but students aspiring to become commercial artists must be conversant with software because employers say they want artists and "production people" capable of working with an increasing number of programs.

"You need to know coding issues, scripting, interactive design," he says. "It's a blurring of lines between design and production ... We're all wearing more hats these days."

Still, traditional drawing by itself can pay off. While students are shelving sketchbooks for laptops loaded with graphics software, collectors are snapping up drawings.

"There is a high demand for works on paper," says Alex Rotter, a vice president of the contemporary art department at Sotheby's in New York. "Some people prefer the sensibility of a drawing."

Price is another reason for the demand. Drawings are cheap compared with paintings and sculptures. Drawings by up-and-coming artists can be bought for about \$1,000.

Drawing is easy on the pocketbooks of artists as well. Materials are inexpensive and it does not require much studio space, reasons an increasing number of artists are concentrating on creating works on paper.

"It's affordable," says Los Angeles artist Russell Crotty, noting he gave up painting in 1989 in favor of drawing as his primary medium. He adds: "All my shows can be all drawings, whereas 20 years or so ago that wasn't acceptable."

© 2006 Reuters

Ads by Google

[GoToMyPC Free for 30 Days](#)

Access Your PC From Anywhere! Balance your life & Work from home.

[www.GoToMyPC.com](http://www.GoToMyPC.com)