



Quickness on the Draw

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Scoular Anderson on teach-yourself-illustration books.

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One fine day I went out with my sketchbook under my arm and a nicely sharpened pencil in my top pocket. I had not gone very far when a wicked wizard leapt out from behind a rock. 'Out of my way, politically incorrect creep!' I said, artistically waving the wizard aside with an HB. The wizard raised a hand and 'Vroomsh!' a spell was cast and, to my horror, I found I'd forgotten everything I knew about drawing.

However, being a resourceful soul, I headed straight for my local library where I was sure I'd find manuals on how to draw. But the wizard had another trick up his sleeve - he would make such books the most reviled things in the universe.

And lo, it was so. As I left the library, people pointed at the volumes I had under my arm and said things like 'Really tacky, these how-to-draw books!' and 'I wouldn't be seen dead giving one of those to *my* child!'

Now this puzzled me. What is the mysterious difference between a How-to-draw book and a My-first-recipe-book or Ten-easy-to-make-dinosaur-models? Was it because drawing is ART, something that floats invisibly through the ether like a virus and you either catch it or you don't?

I picked up my pencil, ready to be inspired but not daunted. I didn't want too. much of the 'first-draw-two-egg-shapes-touching-at-one-end'. I wanted *encouragement*, but also to be able to stop and take a breather. Above all, I wanted results, FAST.

Each book in the 'Draw 50' series by Kingfisher starts off solemnly with a page addressed 'To the Reader' then falls silent. Thereafter it follows the step-by-step approach very much in the 'first-draw-two-eggs' mould. I'd be quite happy to draw one horse, let alone 50. It was a bit like being told to sit at the piano and play scales for a couple of hours... a bit dry and best for oldies with stamina.

After that, Usborne's 'How to Draw' titles fairly exploded in an avalanche of images and facts. Written and put together by different teams, they vary enormously. For example, **People, Horses** and **Spacecraft** are for adept teenagers (some of the air-brush and perspective techniques would even tax an art student), while **Dinosaurs and Prehistoric Life**, **Monsters**, and **Ghosts, Vampires and Haunted Houses** are better suited for younger readers. All books in the series explain about materials and effects in a lively, have-a-bash style. And if you get tired they're good simply to read and look at.

Rolf Harris and Neil Buchanan gaze out from their TV tie-in covers, mouths wide as if shrieking with creative joy. Dipping into **Rolf Harris's Your Cartoon Time** and **Your Animation Time** (both from Hodder & Stoughton), I found

myself saying 'Never mind all this text and philosophy, I want to DRAW!' In one book there are 30 pages of tight text, almost unleavened by pictures or paragraphs. To be fair, the latter is about making films-a highly technical subject... and a reasonable standard of drawing would be a prerequisite. Rolf Harris's enthusiastic TV style doesn't transfer easily to these books, but there are plenty of ideas for older children or children/adults with nimble brains and patience.

Neil Buchanan's **Art Attack** (Hodder & Stoughton) is filled with excitingly messy concepts - Instant coffee and PVA (wicked!) - bandages and paint in squidgy bottles (Wow!). I didn't learn how to draw, but I could make bangles and fat spiders and do fancy lettering. Easy, fast and satisfying results providing plenty of sticky fun for younger children with minimum adult meddling.

Frank Rodgers has written three how-to-draw books for Hippo - **Cartoon Fun**, **Animal Art** and **Comic Fun**. The first leads the reader on at an exhilarating pace, the text is minimal and the examples not dauntingly glamorous, Pencil at the ready, I felt comfy and confident. The other two books are in the same style, but slightly more advanced. All three are user-friendly and funny.

'Well,' said the wizard, chewing on a sliver of putty-rubber, 'Did you find the ANSWER?' The answer, I told him, is as illusive as ever, which is the nature of art. What makes these books such a draw... is their offer of bright hope. A few readers might make that leap from copying to creativity - others can go for Frank Rodgers' get-out clause, 'If you can't draw these figures in your own way? just copy them. Phew, what a relief! It's just fun taking part, as they say.

Book details:

'Draw 50' series, by Lee J Ames, Kingfisher, £3.50 and £3.99

'How to Draw' series, Usborne

People, 0 7460 0999 2, £4.50; 0 7460 0998 4, £2.95 pbk

Horses, 0 7460 1001 X, £4.50; 0 7460 1000 1, £2.95 pbk

Spacecraft, 0 7460 0294 7, £3.95; 0 7460 0293 9, £2.95 pbk

Dinosaurs and Prehistoric Life, 0 7460 0674 8, £4.50; 0 7460 0673 X, £2.95 pbk

Monsters, 0 7460 0082 0, £3.95; 0 7460 0081 2, £2.95

Ghosts, Vampires and Haunted Houses, 0 7460 0292 0, £3.95; 0 7460 0291 2, £2.95 pbk

There are many more titles in the series, together with some combined volumes.

Your Cartoon Time (0 340 39223 1) and **Your Animation Time** (0 340 56160 2), Rolf Harris, Hodder & Stoughton, £2.99 each

Art Attack, Neil Buchanan, Hodder & Stoughton, 0 340 58372 X, £3.99

Cartoon Fun (0 590 76422 5, £2.95), **Animal Art** (0 590 76476 4, £5.95; 0 590 76564 7, £2.99 pbk) and **Comic Fun** (0 590 54049 1, £7.99; 0 590 55112 4, £2.99 pbk), Frank Rodgers, Scholastic/Hippo.

Scoular Anderson taught Art in secondary school before becoming a full-time illustrator. His own latest book is **Puzzling People**, Puffin, 0 14034796 8, £2.99 pbk, and just published is his fourth Harry book on which he collaborates with BfK's Editor - **Harry Moves House**, A & C Black, 0 7136 3701 3, £4.99.

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