

Blanchette

Bruce's Studio News

Process • Concept • Evolution • Solution

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Sketchbooks & Journals...

Probably the most interesting insights into an artist's oeuvre are his journals and sketchbooks. It is clear that compared to actual works produced in a lifetime, many artists have an extensive collection of thoughts, plans, and ideas expressed in their journals which are compilations of just about everything that has meaning to them.

It is not surprising that we know so much more about DaVinci through his notebooks, or Van Gogh through his letters to Theo, or the published writings of many contemporary artists. Artists are, after all, thinkers as well as creators. For the artist, documenting, diagramming, illustrating, imagining, and drawing are part of the process of understanding what drives them, what interests them, what confuses or disturbs them, in the end completes the image of what defines them.

I know that this pile of personal journals and sketchbooks is very important to me for reflection and review. Going back in time to see what I have done before, as well as what I was thinking about at varying times in the past can often be quite eye-opening. In some cases they form a means to break me out of a fallow period when I need a jump-start to get me going again. Sometimes old forgotten ideas can be resurrected and given new life.

My sketches from live models shows me a record of progress that I find continually surprising to me, and much like music can take us back in time, my conceptual sketchbooks for sculpture offer a direct connection to influences pertinent through the decades. Diary entries and poetry do much the same thing.

In the present, other sketchbooks are a source of meditation allowing me to dig more deeply into my creative thoughts and help me validate my work in process. The journals, often combine both diary-like entries as well as drawings and random thoughts, and an occasional clipping of interest from my ever present collection of printed news and art periodicals. Sometimes when new ideas come to me at odd times, or away from the studio, my sketches or notes find themselves drawn on available scraps of paper; even napkins, which I glue or tape into my sketchbook or journal later. Despite my computer skills I find the immediacy of the hand written entry, or the sketch, far superior to the computer for efficiency.

Despite our cultural love for the digital domain, it is my belief that any understanding of an artist's story will always be a second hand one, if "online" is the only way we relate to his work.

Of course, since I predate the technology that I am using to compose this newsletter, I suppose my "programming" for introspection was established years ago, and with a bias for pen and paper over texting and blogging...

