

## **ART SCHOOL ADVICE FOR STUDENTS OR STUDENTS TO BE: (Some things I would have liked to have known before I went to art school)**

*-class in session*

*-with your host speaker- Cojo*

*-feel free to take notes*

If you are currently in art school or are going to be going to art school, while in school, make it a point to meet as many people in the field as possible. If you are an illustration major, make friends with design and advertising majors, fill your extra credits with advertising and design classes and become friends with the teachers, become friends with the kids in those design and advertising classes. Learn how people in those fields think.

Art schools are there to make money. If they can make money with little effort they will. You have to take the initiative to want to learn. YOU MUST talk to your teachers, that's what they are there for, to motivate you and teach you. If you sit idly by then you won't learn jack squat. They want you to be motivated, they want to help you learn. You have to prove to them that you aren't just there to waste their time.

My school experience was a little different so don't do what I did because it was a lot of work, and half of your time will be wasted doing something you don't care to do. I was actually a graphic design major.

I started as an illustration major, but I wanted to get to learning the computers and Illustration majors weren't able to even touch computers till like 3rd year, this is probably different by now (I hope). Not only that, I figured if I had an Illustration teacher, some of their style might rub off on me. Not to mention that they would be a horrible connection for the future. My logic was, why would they want to fully help someone to be their best? Would YOU try to help make someone better than you, so you will have to compete with them for work, and they can steal jobs from you later on?

If you are an illustration major, take some Computer Art classes. Learn the adobe programs. They won't tell you this, they like to push solely on the realism and drawing the form, (Marvin Mattelson clone painting styles). Just remember that Mattelson competes with and loses work to artists who know how to use and implement computers into their artwork. You will be competing with all of the above when you graduate.

Oh, and if you dream of being the next Todd McFarlane...forget it. No matter what they tell you about the comic book industry...the comic book industry is dead. Just trust me on that one. There are only so many Love and Rockets and Acme Novelty library artists out there...everyone else works day jobs bussing tables and stacking comic book shelves at comic book shops. The only money to be had in the comic book industry (other than the lottery winning few that are really spectacular, or get spun off into movies) is to do comic book style work for advertising or print. Such as the Dynamic Duo (seen on ispot). It's sad how many people develop their pencil skill so much to be a penciller for comics, and never go anywhere with it. Then they are stuck with what to an illustrator or a designer in the illustration world looks like a highly rendered sketch. They kind of made themselves so specialized they are obsolete because they don't have the skills to get past the pencil step and create a finished piece.

NEXT:

I unthinkingly switched to computer art (for a year), where I learned the art programs. I mastered the ones I really wanted to know, and ignored the ones I could care less about. I started getting Photoshop work through one of my professors, and realized that the major wasn't for me. They didn't teach composition, color, or design. They basically just taught the programs. I had nothing more to gain from that major.

SO:

I switched to Graphic Design. I took a few drawing courses in college, but my style evolved from drawing on my own, and not what I did in the classroom.

I didn't want to be a designer for a living and I told the teachers that upon entering their classes. I told them straight up I wanted to be an illustrator and I am set on learning how to make my composition stronger, and how to incorporate type into my work.

FUTURE ILLUSTRATORS!!!!

No matter what major you are in, if you want to be an illustrator, you have to draw your ass off on your own free time. While I did the graphic design projects I busted my ass creating my own illustration portfolio outside of class. I gave myself my own assignments and deadlines. You might not be this motivated, and might spend a lot of your time smoking weed out of a bong made from an empty bottle of Aunt Jemima maple syrup. And you might also be competing with the kids who are this motivated when they get out of school. It's dog eat dog, remember that.

An easy way to get some solid samples together is this: go through a magazine or newspaper and take an article that uses a photograph or no image, and read it, then create an illustration to go along with that article.

An even better way is to 1) get a friend to go through a magazine you haven't read, take an article with an interesting illustration, 2) cut out the illustration (without letting you see it). 3) Give you the dimensions and the article, 4) have you create an illustration for the article.

It's fun and also cool to see what the illustrator who was actually commissioned to do the piece did with it after your done.

When you have a solid book together with a consistent style. (around 3rd year) Then start showing it around. Show it to your classmates. Show it to your teachers especially. Present it as you would present it to a client. In school every classmate I had, had seen my book, at least once a month. Ask them which pieces they like best, which they like least, which are strongest. It sounds overkill, but it really helps, they tell you which pieces aren't as strong, which to trash...etc. Before you know it you have a full portfolio that is totally presentable, and with all the feedback you've been getting from your teachers and fellow students, not only will you know that all the pieces are strong, you will be confident in your work, and be perfectly comfortable in presenting your book.

Like an illustrator friend of mine said "If you aren't getting any freelance illustration work by the end of 3rd year, you probably aren't going to make it." I think that third year philosophy is partially true, in that it really is a good gauge of what kind of drive you have in you.

I learned so much about illustration by knowing how designers work, how they deal with illustrators, what they look for in an illustrator. If you are lucky you can even get a teacher to work with you, to help you, and art direct you, not as a designer, but as an illustrator. The connections I made and the skills I developed over that time helped me out so much in the long run.

But whatever you do...don't drop out. You think it's tough, or boring, or you are already getting real work yadda yadda yadda. You feel like you should be getting paid for doing your homework...yadda yadda. I've felt like that too, but even though it's a lot of work...still try to have fun too.

YOUR A KID! YOU HAVE THE REST OF YOUR LIFE TO SCRAMBLE AROUND FOR MONEY PULLING ALL NIGHTERS WONDERING HOW TO PAY OFF YOUR STUDENT LOANS.....ENJOY COLLEGE WHILE IT LASTS, you might hate the amount of assignments you have, but in real life you might be wishing you had that many assignments.

-class dismissed (don't ever say I never helped ya)

art juggernaut-

-cojo

<http://www.cojoart.com>

---

**Topic:** ART SCHOOL 101 - Addendum (2 of 8)

**Conf:** What's Up?

**From:** Nancy White Cassidy (nwcassidy@earthlink.net)

**Date:** Wednesday, November 20, 2002 07:54 AM

And may I add a few remarks to Cojo's excellent lecture:

- 1.) SAVE this thread and READ it from start to finish MANY TIMES. There is no way you'll remember all of this reading it through once.
- 2.) DON'T send e-mails to illustrators, asking them to tell you of their experiences, their advice for getting started, etc, with NO INTENTION of sending a thank-you note or e-mail in return. That's just plain rude.

Nancy White Cassidy

New Milford, CT

<http://www.nancycassidy.com>