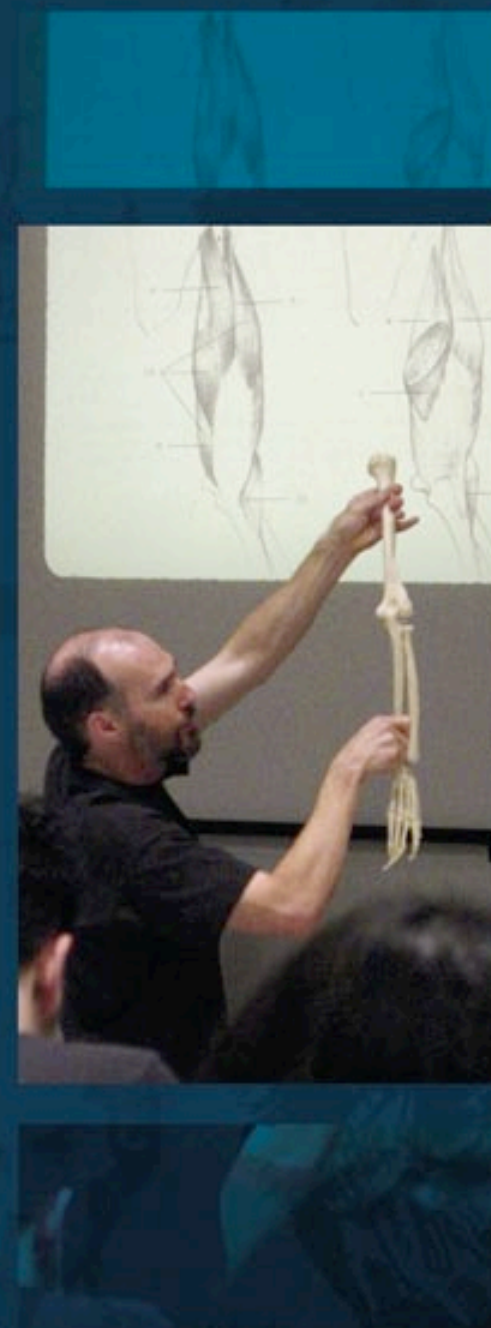


# Marshall Vandruff

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Marshall Vandruff has been a free-lance illustrator to over forty advertising agencies and publishers including MAD Magazine, Warner Bros. Entertainment, Hanna Barbera and Dark Horse Comics. Since 1984, he has taught nearly 200 drawing and composition courses at colleges, universities and in the art departments of entertainment and game corporations including Disneyland, Ingram Micro, Interplay, Rockstar, Troika, Insomniac and Blizzard Entertainment.



## Professional Endorsements

I'd say without reservation that Marshall Vandruff is the most informative, interesting instructor I ever had the good fortune to study with. He has an unparalleled ability to distill the essentials of any topic into focused, easily assimilated elements that can be instantly applied. Put simply, you can have 40 bowls of university level education, or one bowl of Marshall Vandruff instruction to acquire an equal amount of academic nutrition. My only regret is not having met him earlier in my career, it would have saved me vast amounts of time, money and frustration.

*- Edward Eyth, Former Director of Creative Services, the Jim Henson Company*

"In twenty-odd hours I learned more about human anatomy in Marshall's class than I was able to learn on my own in thirty-five years as a self-taught artist."

*- Bernie Wrightson*

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE: Fullerton College, 2003  
WHO'S WHO AMONG AMERICAN TEACHERS: 10th Edition, 2006

### COMMUNITY EVENTS:

Marshall hosted AN EVENING WITH BERNIE WRIGHTSON in 2001 and 2003 at CAL STATE FULLERTON

He also hosted AN EVENING WITH JUSTIN SWEET in 2002 and 2003 at CAL STATE FULLERTON

His panel presentations at the SAN DIEGO COMIC CONVENTION have included THE TRAINING OF MASTER ARTISTS, THE ROLE OF THE SKETCHBOOK, and HOW TO DRAW MONSTERS.



*Game art continues to demand greater expertise across all artistic disciplines. With the increased visual capability of games comes the need for increased aesthetic ability and understanding of core principles. Expectations for new talent have increased dramatically, and so have educational opportunities for developers.*

*Marshall Vandruff represents such an educational opportunity and is one of the best kept secrets available to artists. He commands a vast understanding of various artistic disciplines and shares decades of hard-earned insight and knowledge in digestible, entertaining, and enlightening presentations. Many artists I respect deeply in the gaming industry swear by his uncanny ability to communicate the basic principles of construction and anatomy. I decided to contact Marshall for some personal enlightenment on the benefits his particular lectures afford the gaming industry.*

**– Jonathan Hales**

**Hello Marshall, can you give us a brief introduction to yourself, where you currently live? Are there any fun facts you might like to share?**

I'll start with some non-fun facts. I was born in Anaheim in 1958 and raised near Disneyland. I moved to Laguna Niguel ten years ago when my son was four. I've hardly traveled beyond Southern California. I've lost the terrific head of hair I had years ago, an un-fun fact that I think about daily if not hourly.

If you want fun facts about me, you might do better to ask other people. I'll tell you positive ones which get boring fast. The negative ones are far more interesting. And fun. At least for the listeners. So ask around.



**Please share a little regarding your education and background in art.**

I read MAD all through my childhood and it formed the core of my aesthetic sensibilities. Harvey Kurtzman, Bill Elder, Wally Wood and Jack Davis were my artistic ideals, and I took in a lot of Dr. Seuss as well. Then later Ed Roth and Rick Griffin. Then I went to Fullerton College to study art and I learned enough technique to imitate them. Then I fell in love with Escher and aped his style.

But the airbrush renderings in my portfolio got me my first jobs for advertising agencies. I poured thousands of hours into airbrushing cutaways of blood pumps and heart valves and intra-ocular lenses. I got fast at meeting deadlines, got to work in all sorts of visual styles, got to solve stylistic and perspective problems under pressure and made lots of money. But the intense deadlines, which were often all-nighters, wore me out. In my mid-thirties, after a non-stop week of rendering a bunch of television screens, I collapsed. I had to stop working for six months. That was the beginning of my retirement from illustration.

It wasn't all like that. I did some fun projects, too, including nine jobs for MAD Magazine - my adolescent ambition realized.

All during those years I taught at Fullerton College as a hobby. Teaching kept my social and speaking skills active, and I poured myself into those classes with a zeal that is now paying off in my new career as an itinerant teacher.

I still do some advertising work when it's for a favorite art director, but I have little time for it now. I animated a television commercial last year with some former students and it won an award. It was fun to collaborate, but having to draw a talking Tortilla chip 500 times is a bit more than I care to do again.

**Who are some of the most influential teachers you have studied under or worked with?**

Don Richardson, the television director, influenced me as much as anyone. I studied with him at UCLA and in his private class from 1987 - 1990. He was one of the most fascinating and articulate men I've ever known and though I was studying scene development with him, I was actually learning to teach. He poured out practical knowledge in large clumps, unvarnished, constant and generous. He never bored. He never blustered. He taught useful techniques and whenever he stated large abstract maxims, like "Your talent is in your impulses, not in your intellect!" they didn't make sense to me then but their truths reverberate in me to this day. He was also fearless - something I lacked and wanted, but it had its bad side. He offended students. He made enemies every few hours and cared nothing about it.

Robert Beverly Hale died before I could meet him, but I learned from his anatomy videos and I love his graciousness, his economy of words and his depth of understanding. Two others are C.S. Lewis and Robert McKee, Lewis for his use of analogies, McKee for the force of his presentation. They both entertain without compromising the material - in fact, they make the material come alive by presenting it with mischief as well as passion. But I've learned from them at a distance. These days, I consider Don Lagerberg, the drawing and painting professor at CSUF, a mentor, both for his knowledge and for his personal, emotional support.

**Do you have a favorite subject to draw, paint, or study?**

Yes. My sketchbook is filled with bones, insects, monsters, contraptions, little gesture studies, twisted forms, delirium and a thousand other expressions of middle-aged angst that college students find entertaining.

As a teacher, my favorite subject is whatever I'm teaching at the time. Every day I wake up excited about the day's subject. At the colleges I'm teaching Sequential Art, Drawing from the Masters, Children's Book Illustration, and Watercolor. I'm teaching Composition at Insomniac. What a privilege. What a kick.

I never chose teaching as a career. I chose teaching as way to get paid to look at my favorite art and talk about it and learn lessons from it. After 22 years, I now have an incredible collection of master drawings and paintings, children's books, comics, animations and films, and a lot of lessons to teach from them.



Are there any current or past artists that you respect or admire deeply?

A lot of old masters. Rembrandt, Heinrich Kley, William Blake, Stanislav Szukalski. George Herriman. Homer & Sargent & the Wyeths. I admire Winsor McCay more than I can express. For about a decade I've been drunk with his **LITTLE NEMO IN SLUMBERLAND** images. One of my life goals is to develop a story world with that kind of sumptuous imagery.

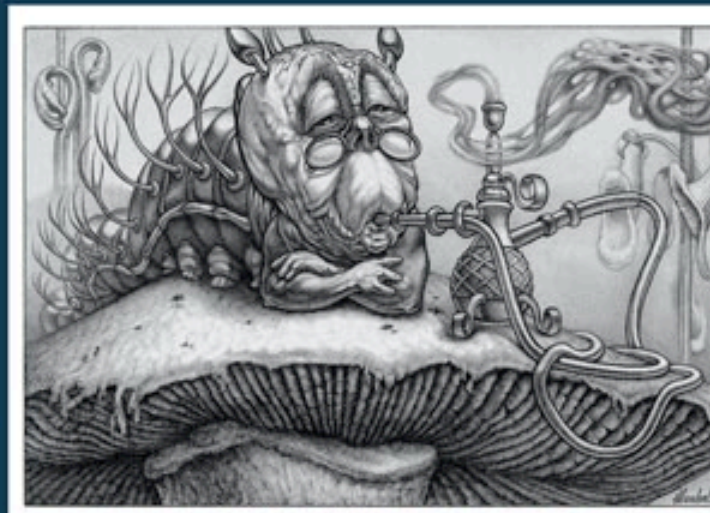
When I discovered Drew Struzan and Bernie Wrightson's work, I spent the next few years pursuing their "secrets". Drew was as close as I had to a mentor for teaching when I began - he pointed me toward what was worth teaching. Bernie never went to art school and exemplified how little theory it took to be a master - if it's sound theory. That theory, perhaps a hundred hours of instruction, is what I teach.

I admire a lot of the young graphic novel artists that Kazu Kibuishi has congregated for the **FLIGHT** graphic novels. Chris Appelhans, Khang Le, Israel Sanchez and a dozen others of that bunch. I taught a number of them.

In fact, I admire and respect some of my former students as much as any artists. Justin Sweet amazes me - his talent roars. His colleagues, Vance Kovacs, and my college buddy John Dickenson, who are both better artists than I am, credit me as their teacher. It's a big reason why I've embraced this path. I've been affirmed by my favorite artists.

**Word on the street is: you are the man to bring in for a fresh study on anatomy to help artists. Can you share a bit about the services you offer?**

I taught anatomy in colleges for ten years, trying to sink it into my own brain, then quit in 1999. Some students wanted more and offered to pay me to teach them outside of school. I told them "If you get ten of you together, we'll do a class in my friend's living room this summer." They got nine and we did it anyway. The next year I took a chance and rented



All Artwork ©Marshall Vandruff www.marshallart.com

a room that held 25. I got a check from Bernie Wrightson. His girlfriend, Liz, told me he'd heard about my teaching and wanted to take the class. I mentioned it to two students at Cal State Fullerton. 36 hours later, the class filled. One student told me "You know, I wasn't that interested in your anatomy class, but I figured this would be the only time in my life I'd ever get to be in the same room with Bernie Wrightson." Imagine my gratitude.

Bernie spoke so highly of that anatomy course that it almost doubled the next year. Then Drew Struzan took it, and lots of other pros began signing up. Daren Bader just had me teach it to his staff at Rockstar. I just began teaching it at Blizzard.

I've boiled that material down to where I'm sure it is the most concentrated artistic anatomy course on earth. I go through all the bones and muscles of the body to show how they work, what bends or stretches and what doesn't, and how it's all "shaped in space". I use about a thousand slides to show how artists have interpreted the components and forms of the figure. There isn't a wasted moment. Occasionally I get criticized for cramming in too much information, like the mom who keeps stuffing you with food until you're bloated. But I'm sensitive to that. When students faint, I back off.

### Example of Marshall's Sketchbook Pages:







Photo by Cuyler Buckwalter

#### Why do you think your teaching style is so memorable?

I love these subjects. I've never taught a class that I didn't want, *really* want, to teach. And apparently, I have some gift for organizing and communicating thought. And Don Richardson said I was well-cast as a teacher because I have a large forehead.

#### In what ways do you give a unique perspective to your students?

I teach practical stuff. It helps that I'm a craftsman. I want to do excellent work and I assume that students do. I don't try to train critics or theorists, but craftspeople and masters.

I care little for trends, and I think that "style", though valuable, should bow to the great traditional skills of envisioning, composing, mastering light, form and color, mastering tension and timing, evoking emotion.... all those old disciplines. I teach what's old.

And I'm a slow learner which makes me empathetic.

But mainly, my classes are about the masters. I teach lessons from great art. Gazing at great art, hoping to reflect it. Feeding on great art, hoping to digest it. Enjoying great art, hoping to make babies with it.

#### Have you dealt with many artists or companies in the gaming industry?

Yes. It began in 1998 when Justin & Vance brought me in to Interplay to do texture-mapping, modeling and technical chores. Then I taught workshops there. It's grown since then, and though I'm still at the colleges, now I spend a lot of time teaching concept artists, designers, modelers and animators in gaming industry conference rooms. I go into those sessions feeling great knowing that I won't have to give grades.

#### Drawing from your experience and in respect to where the gaming industry is headed, how might your services aid artists in game development?

I help in two areas. One is technical. I teach human and animal anatomy. Anatomy gives authority. Without it, an artist can look foolish. An artist who knows anatomy can exaggerate, distort or be subtle, but you can't be subtle if you don't know what you're doing. Whispering doesn't compensate for not knowing how to pronounce a word.

The other area is creative. Gaming employees get immersed in technology and often neglect their creative sides. Creative people make choices. In my Composition and Sequential Art classes, I teach the principles behind good choices. I think professionals appreciate these courses because they remind them of the old stuff - that "first love" - the reason they went into the arts in the first place.

#### Any insight on additional services you plan to offer, or what the future may have in store for you?

I'll keep teaching as long as I enjoy it. I hope someday to train students and then work alongside them on projects, aiming to make the projects extraordinary. I don't know how I'll find that. But I'm looking for it.

#### What words of comfort, terror, or advice might you give to aspiring artists for the gaming industry.

Terror: There are thousands more people who want the job than jobs.

Comfort: Most of them aren't that good. Be good. You'll stand out.

Advice: Study what's good. Set the best as your standard. Hire me to help.

#### Do you have any educational recommendations?

I have a list of book recommendations on my website at:

<http://marshallart.com/seminars/resources>

And anyone who wants to be on my e-mail list for seminars can sign up at my website.

#### Any insight or advice for game development management?

No. It's out of my arena. But if they want to hire me to train and inspire, I would advise them to do so and would admire their insight.

Please see Marshall's website for a full schedule of seminar and lecture events, or contact Marshall to schedule an internal course. 