AN ADDRESS TO PARENTS AND GUARDIANS: ON THE NECESSITY OF REDUCING ALL SYSTEMS OF ART TO THE MOST SIMPLE AND PRIMARY PRINCIPLES

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649297979

An Address to Parents and Guardians: On the Necessity of Reducing All Systems of Art to the Most Simple and Primary Principles by I. Jenner

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

www.triestepublishing.com

I. JENNER

AN ADDRESS TO PARENTS AND GUARDIANS: ON THE NECESSITY OF REDUCING ALL SYSTEMS OF ART TO THE MOST SIMPLE AND PRIMARY PRINCIPLES

Trieste

AN

ADDRESS

TO

PARENTS AND GUARDIANS,

ON THE NECESSITY OF

REDUCING ALL SYSTEMS OF ART

TO THE MOST SIMPLE AND PRIMARY PRINCIPLES;

EXEMPLIFIED

IN A SERIES OF OBSERVATIONS ON THE

ART OF DRAWING;

PURPORTING TO SHOW

THE EVIL TENDENCY OF LEARNING BY HABIT ONLY,

AND THE BENEFITS OF A

SCIENTIFIC MODE OF INSTRUCTION.

'Tis thus, if youth are early taught to tread
In paths of art, by science truly led:
See how they spread the praises of their guide,
In their acquired knowledge far and wide.
Where beauty's shown by incontested truth,
Must be the path to point ingenious youth.

By I. JENNER, Drawing Master;

AUTHOR OF FORTUNE'S FOOTBALL.

Southampton:

PRINTED AND SOLD FOR THE AUTHOR BY BAKER AND FLETCHER.

SOLD ALSO IN SOUTHAMPTON BY T. SKELTON;
IN SALISBURY, BY B. C. COLLINS; AND IN LONDON, BY LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME, PATERNOSTER ROW; AND BY I. & G. JENNER, NO. 1, BROMPTON ROAD.

1808.

PRICE 2s. 6d. STITCHED.

Introduction.

It is with regret that the Author of this Address has long observed the injurious effects on the minds of the rising generation, which springs from their being, in too many instances, taught by habit rather than principle, in many of the most useful branches of the liberal arts.

In this address it is not the author's intention to intermeddle with any system but that wherein he hopes to prove himself in some degree a judge, as well as a professor; therefore he wishes to submit to their serious attention those impediments, which, even at this enlightened period, obscure the art of drawing; which art is still much retarded by some, who, for reasons best known to themselves, would persuade the world that it is but a mere art, or knack, without any scientific principle; though it is well known to involve in its capacious field of practice, a multiplicity of sciences, destitute of which, in a certain degree, no one can reasonably expect to succeed as an imitator.

But he hopes that drawing is now too generally and extensively understood, by the discerning part of mankind, for so vague an insinuation as the one complained of, much longer to

retain any credit; the art being at this day so enlarged, that it has been found expedient to divide it into numerous classes, most of which are discovered to be replete with certain laws, that are as free from error as the mathematics.—

Which he trusts he shall prove by incontestable facts, and thereby demonstrate the necessity of teaching them, in the plainest and most simple manner; describing the unerring rules of lineal and aerial perspective, under two of the most distinct and most docible forms, the round and square solids; which, through more than thirty years' experience, he has found to be applicable to most purposes, for defining both the above systems of perspective. Nor does he offer these as any thing new, but as the most useful essentials for forming the inexperienced mind, so as to enable the pupil who is thus instructed, to understand and account for effects, by a perfect knowledge of their causes.

He most readily acknowledges his obligations to those, from whom he had the good fortune to receive instructions; for to their zeal he is indebted, not only for the information he then derived, but for all the discoveries he has been prompted to search after, as inspired by their precepts and examples.

These precepts and examples, rather than his own, are what he wishes to recommend; and will endeavour, in the course of this work, to enable his readers to judge wherein those truly essential principles have been carefully adopted; without which, he will venture to say, no true knowledge of drawing can be attained, however well the hand may have been brought to act as a machine.

AN

ADDRESS.

IT ſurely muſt be allowed, that in thoſe claſſes of drawing that relate to the imitation of the productions of art, we never can ſucceed unleſs we are thoroughly acquainted with that part of the mechanical theory which belongs to the viſible conſtruction, or that which preſents itſelf to view, whether we are to depict it externally or internally. We may at leaſt ſubſtantiate this in the inſtance of naval and civil architecture; without which, in ſome degree, it is vain to attempt a repreſentation of any marine or territorial buildings, as ſhips, boats, houſes, churches, &c. And equally as eſſential are the principles of perſpective, for both orders of buildings, through every deſcription, whether in a perfect ſtate or in ruins: for this uſeful ſcience is ſo intimately connected with all the laws of viſion, that we are unable to group together any objects that are produced by nature or art in the manner we ought, unleſs its points and lines are familiar to us. In ſhipping, in-

deed, we have need of a knowledge in many nautical operations. I am certain, that though ſome may deride, yet no one can diſprove my aſſertion; they can only urge that genius ſhould not be ſhackled: though in this they ſhould be right, yet it appears plain, that to be deſtitute of knowledge in the different parts of purſued practice, occaſions numerous difficulties which are the heavieſt fetters that an ingenious mind can be loaded with; and, ſurely, true well-regulated ſyſtems of knowledge are the only means of ſetting the mind at liberty. Such ſyſtems, though they lead the pupils, are only guides within call to the well informed.

The immortal Sir Joſhua Reynolds was certainly of this opinion, when he adviſed his pupils to have the compaſſes in their eye, rather than in their hand: but he did not then ſpeak to thoſe who had never held a pair in their hand; no! he ſpoke to ſuch as had uſed them ſo judiciouſly, that he ſuppoſed their mental perception was become ſo perfect, as to anſwer the purpoſe even of dividers, to their corporeal organs. To ſtrengthen this, does he not, in another place, blame his younger graduates for preſuming to draw from their own heads, as they termed it? He admoniſhes them firſt to collect a ſtore of knowledge therein, before they make the attempt.*

* Vide the seven first lectures to the Royal Academy.

What is this knowledge? is it merely how to manage the pencil?—I fancy not! Though even this is uſeful, when we know for what and for why: but, in order to this, there ſurely muſt be a predetermined motive, as well as a preſent moving intention; and it muſt precede the act, or it will be to no more purpoſe that the hand is in motion, than for a man to move his feet without knowing a ſtep of his road, and therefore forbearing to proceed; in which caſe, I ſuppoſe they will both arrive at their deſtined end together.

And how is this knowledge to be obtained? is it to be acquired by habit only?—Moſt aſſuredly it is not! It muſt be from well-adjuſted principle. It muſt be attained either by attentive reading with cloſe application, or by ſyſtematic tuition, faithfully communicated by the teacher, and earneſtly adhered to by the pupil.

This, I hope, will appear clearly rational, when conſidered in the different points of view; in which I ſhall endeavour to ſhow my reader ſome of the pleaſures and benefits as are the reſults of a ſcientific mode of inſtruction in any of the arts, and the unprofitableneſs of waſting the time in learning habits only.

In thoſe ſubjects which we ſtudy from nature, where, like ſome of Euclid's elements, which are evenly odd, and oddly even, theſe are moſtly regu-

larly irregular, yet the figure and proportions in each ſpecies are ſo certain, through all its variety of productions, that, with a little attention, we may trace each to its claſs; and, if we are acquainted with the uſes for which the ſubject before us is deſigned, we may ſoon diſcover the production that is moſt perfect or moſt beautiful in its kind, and thereby fitteſt for our imitation; in which we cannot ſucceed, however we may flatter ourſelves, till we have well conſidered the form of its contour and the proportions of its parts: otherwiſe, the beholder might have cauſe to doubt whether we have meant hereby to prefigure a cow or an aſs, a tree or a cabbage.

This proves the truth of an aſſertion which I am ſorry to make, that, in general, we are ſuch heedleſs ſpectators, that we ſee without perceiving. As artiſts, who ſhould wiſh to excel in our profeſſion, this is an inexcuſable folly; for we are often called on to draw, or paint, that which at the moment we want it is not to be met with even in a print; and if we attempt it, from the imperfect impreſſion of ſo tranſient a glance, we do worſe than nothing; for we loſe our labour and our time, together with the good opinions of our friends.

But the deſign of this little work is not to make out a liſt of the foibles of human nature, but to prove the neceſſity there is to inform the minds of youth, while we train their hand to the practice of