

Dare to Draw: La Passion du dessin, By Sean B. Murphy,
Foreword by Alex Colville, Visual Arts Centre/McClure Gallery,
Printed in Canada, 120 pages

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mother. There is some of that quality of line we see in George Grosz's ink sketches to a sketch of *Bedroom with Stolen Socks, 1940* with its awkward angles, disjointed perspective, and mysterious oversized head in bed. When we look at a simple sketch of an oil lamp from 1940 it becomes a universal artwork. The lines are self assured, waver, and there is character to the hatch marks. Freud's intimate ink sketches tell a story of sorts, however minimal, or ephemeral they are. Some of these works, like *Peter Watson in a Fur Hat, 1941* or *David Gascoyne, 1942* have something of that Ron Kitaj or David Hockney intimacy, Freud's studies of a *Dead Monkey or Rabbit on a Chair, 1944* are riveting for the contrasts in line, pattern, detail.

An interesting special feature to this book is Richard Calvocoressi's essay on *The Graphics of Lucian Freud*, where we learn of his ongoing youthful foray into book jacket design and illustration. The books included *The Glass Tower* (1944) by Nicholas Moore, with contributions in the form of animal and sea life illustrations and the remarkable jacket illustrations for *Cards of Identity* (1955) and *Two Plays and a Preface* (1958) by Nigel Dennis. Freud made remarkable illustrations for *The Equilibriad* by William Samson published by *The Hogarth Press* in 1948. Detailed and near obsessive in their dense attention to subject, these graphics were to continue until the mid-1950s whereupon Freud gradually chose to work in a more freeform manner. He returned to this pastime in the late 1980s and early 1990s and it has continued. From sketches of the painter's mother, or father to hastily sketched and youthful Francis Bacon, to fine portrait studies of Cecil Beaton,

George Balanchine and a deathly ill Christian Berard (1948), this book reveals a seldom seen side of Lucian Freud's work. What we can see is that his skill as a draughtsman raises it all to a high art as significant as his paintings, as witnessed by his *Girl in a White Dress* (1947). These works have a stillness and concentration but equally are obsequious and cheeky. Freud has fun drawing. It's obvious. The later etchings are equally some of the finest to be made by an artist of our times. So it is interesting that having left drawing and sketching for painting, later in life, Freud regains that art form but in reverse, for the inspiration now evolves out of the paintings that become their point of departure, so to speak. A worthy book for the collection.

John K. Grande

DARE TO DRAW

LA PASSION DU DESSIN

By Sean B. Murphy
Foreword by Alex Colville.

ISBN 978-0-9734462-6-5
Visual Arts Centre/McClure Gallery
Printed in Canada
120 pages, bilingual,
with illustrations.



The English title of Sean B. Murphy's book, *Dare to Draw*, reads like a challenge, while its French version, *La passion du dessin*, speaks of vanquishing obstacles and giving rein to one's calling. Somewhere in between lies the true story of Dr. Murphy's love affair with art.

A distinguished ophthalmologist, a respected patron of the arts and philanthropist, in his retirement Dr. Murphy has in a sense returned to his childhood, a childhood spent with artist parents, renowned printmakers Cecil Buller and John J.A. Murphy. Perhaps unconsciously, through a kind of osmosis, that early introduction to the bohemian, colourful, inquisitive lifestyle his parents embraced, the caliber of the artwork they produced, the art that surrounded him like air took root.

Independent of spirit, Sean B. Murphy charted his own path in life, one of equal fulfillment and service to society, but so very different from the abandon and endless horizon of an artist's vision.

It is actually not that unusual for people in Dr. Murphy's profession, men and women of medicine, to take up art in their later years, or at times, concurrently with their other careers. It fulfills an understandable need for something beyond structure, invisible even under the most powerful microscope, something that allows the hand to slip and still create beauty.

In his foreword to the book, the eminent Canadian painter Alex Colville alludes to this connection, writing: "He once told me that all his teaching of eye surgery had to be done on a one-to-one scale – one pupil at a time. I think the teaching of art is on that scale – by necessity – so it is not surprising that he is so good at his profession – and at his hobby."

Dr. Murphy's drawings and

watercolours are closely linked with his many travels, serving as a second pair of eyes, and providing each time a unique set of memories, noted by hand rather than by the lens of a camera.

Thrilled with the pleasure, no, with the pure joy of drawing, Dr. Murphy is now sharing this passion with his readers, with a caveat, that the book is not one of instruction, but rather inspiration.

And so it is, filled with his delicate, unpretentious watercolours and drawings, images of strange lands and colourful landscapes, jewels of architecture, and simple huts, foreign cathedrals, and quiet pebbly beaches of Quebec...

The pictures are accompanied by text written with a large dose of humour in Dr. Murphy's gentle, no-nonsense style, as he invites the reader to partake in his adventure, without ever losing the magic of it all.

"You pack your sketch kit in your bag, grab your folding chair and head out in the early morning. It is particularly fun to go with a friend. You can each choose your spot, get lost for hours sketching, then reconvene to check each other's masterpieces. Just a slight shift of the chair one way or another and the entire scene and feeling of the land is transformed, especially as the light slowly moves from east to west, drastically changing shapes and hues and intensities of colour." (p. 65)

Although not meant to be didactic, *Dare to Draw* is, nevertheless, filled with useful information on drawing and watercolour techniques and the importance of a sketching kit. A chapter will help you find your personal style, but others will tell you the story of Dr. Murphy's own creative beginnings, as well as his sojourns in foreign places. It is a wonderful book for the summer, but not only.

Dorota Kozinska