
Vorspann | Prefix

Wieso dieses Buch?

Why This Book?

Katharina Serles

Thinking and Inking

Dear Reader,

I would like to invite you to do a little exercise with me. Please follow my instructions step by step, sentence by sentence, as you read. Don't look ahead. If there's someone nearby who can read, ask them to read this text aloud to you. If you're alone, don't worry, the two of us will manage. And don't stress about the time – this will only take as long as it takes to read a page or two. Ready? Let's go. Please take the hand you like to write and/or draw with and make a fist. Open and close it a few times as if you're pumping blood into your veins. Now, make a few circles with your wrist: first some clockwise and then some counterclockwise. Wiggle your fingers as if you're vigorously playing the piano. Don't forget your thumb! Try clapping with one hand. Snap. Give yourself a thumbs up! Now that your hand is warmed up, grab a pen and paper and sit down at a desk or table. Hold the pen in your hand and place the tip somewhere on the paper while you continue reading or listening to your friend. You absolutely do not have to focus on what you do with that pen. If it just wants to stay there, that's fine. Whatever your hand wants to do while you focus on my words, your hand gets to do. Start scribbling, moving your hand up and down, left and right, in circles, in straight or crooked lines. If your hand wants to move all over the paper, let it. Now I'd like you to draw your brain. You probably don't know what it looks like, but that's not important. Maybe it feels a certain way? Maybe it has a lot of round lines and feels all fuzzy? Or are there some sharp edges and spiky points? Again, avoid looking at the paper too much. Don't try to influence what your hand and that pen are doing. "Consider the drawing as a side effect of something else: a certain state of mind" (Barry 2014, 22). Moving on from your brain, start to draw your whole body. Again, focus on how it feels rather than how it looks. "Writing and drawing are thinking. We're

told in school that they're skills but that's wrong. Drawing is a way of thinking. It's a way of seeing" (Ware, quoted in Ball and Kuhlmann 2010, XIX). Where's your focus? Where is your mind taking your pen? "Since drawing can mediate between perception and reflection, it plays a constitutive role in the production and communication of knowledge" (Ganssterer 2011, 21). Which parts are you drawing with a gentle touch, and where are you applying a lot more pressure? "Drawing changes the way I think and see" (Barry 2019, 52). Can you feel the connection between these words, your thoughts, and whatever ends up on the paper? I'll leave you to it in a moment. Keep drawing if you feel like it. You might even close your eyes. Or you might decide to look closely at what your hand is doing. To witness your hand "causing lines to appear, moving fast and slow," to observe "the drawing happening, [see] it turn from one thing into another, based on whatever marks [your] hand [is] making" (23). Don't judge! I'm ending my letter to you here. Thanks for sharing this moment with me. If you have a response to Lynda Barry's question – "Is creative concentration contagious?" (2014, 2) – you could repeat this exercise every now and then. Or send me a photo of your drawing. Or read this to someone else who might need a good (th)ink.

Cheers,

Katharina

PS: This letter was inspired by some fantastic comics artists and teachers – from Ka Schmitz's hand and finger warm-up exercises that formed an integral part of a drawing workshop to Anke Feuchtenberger's assignment to draw your body as you feel it, not as you see it, and Lynda Barry's insistence on "practic[ing] just drawing while listening" (2014, 46). Here's a list of books I quoted from: Barry, Lynda. *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2014. / Barry, Lynda. *Making Comics*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2019. / Gansterer, Nikolaus. "Drawing a Hypothesis." *Drawing a Hypothesis: Figures of Thought*. Edited by Nikolaus Gansterer. Vienna, New York: Springer, 2011. 21–27. / Kuhlman, Martha B. and David M. Ball. "Introduction: Chris Ware and the 'Cult of Difficulty.'" *The Comics of Chris Ware: Drawing is a Way of Thinking*. Edited by David M. Ball and Martha B. Kuhlmann. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2010. IX–XXIII.

