

# SMART SCHOOL: THE ART of VISUAL STORYTELLING

Welcome Friends, old and new!

For the next three months, we are going to be Storytellers together. Story is our Muse, She Who Must Be Obeyed.

As Artists, we seek answers to questions: What shall I draw? How shall I compose and light it? What does a friggin' Hippogriff look like, anyway? The answers often seem so subjective, we fear people will discover we're just making it up. Well, no longer. Starting today, the right answer is 'The One That Best Serves The Story'.

The fact that we are going to tell our Stories mostly in Pictures instead of Words is irrelevant. A picture IS a word—in fact, it's worth thousands of 'em. But only if you use your pictures to tell your audience things, things that reveal hidden mysteries, things that add up to tell a Story.

As your pre-class Assignment, I want you to tell me a story about you. This time, you'll be using words AND pictures. But let's do it as Storytellers, which means there's some very specific things I (your audience) want to know about you. Most stories are driven by Characters: what they want, why they can't get it, what crazy plan they come up with to get it anyway. Storytellers call those MOTIVES, OBSTACLES, and CRAZY PLANS—the basic engine of a story.

So that's what I want you to tell me.

WHAT do you want by the end of this course? Make it tangible, something you can wrap your hands around. 'I want to be a good storyteller' is too fuzzy; 'I want three astounding Character Designs and two gorgeous Keyframes for my own Blockbuster Movie' is rock-solid.

WHY haven't you done that already? What's holding you back? Be honest here—no one is going to judge you, and even if they do, if it helps you to get to your goal, who cares?

WHAT is your crazy plan to get what you want, despite your goal? Okay, I already know that one—you're taking this course, aren't you? Boy is that a pretty crazy plan! But guess what? If you put in the hours and miles of paper and the Muse is with you, it might just work.

One more thing...

I need to see the Main Character in the ‘Story’ you just wrote. Yes, I mean YOU. Draw me a SELF-PORTRAIT please—something that tells me something about you. You can do it traditionally or digitally and you can use all the reference you want, but try to go beyond just copying a photograph. Costumes and invented elements that reveal who you really are, are HIGHLY encouraged.

Post your words and pictures to your SmArt School Dropboxes no later than next Saturday (August 30<sup>th</sup>), so I have time to lay out your individual battle plans. Then I’ll see y’all for our first Story Session on Wednesday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10am PST (1pm EST)!

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John", with a stylized flourish at the end.