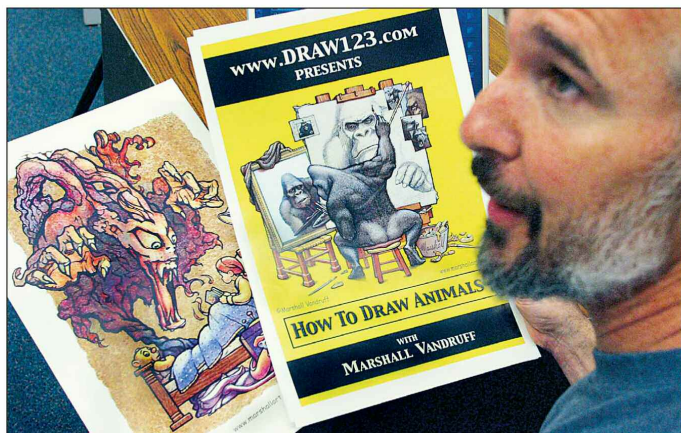


# ART teacher

Marshall Vandruff gives his students the 'table of contents' to a successful art career.

Story by  
Barbara Giasone  
Photos by  
Jack E. Hancock



**MARSHALL VANDRUFF TEACHES THE ART** of illustrating at Fullerton College and Cal State Fullerton. The posters are examples of his art work.

Superheroes streaked through Vance Kovacs' childhood with a *Pow! Bam!* and *Shazam!*

He doodled his way through high school, envisioning the day when his artistic talents could match Superman's thought balloons.

He diligently compiled a portfolio, mustered his courage and drove to a comic convention where professionals critiqued hundreds of hopefuls.

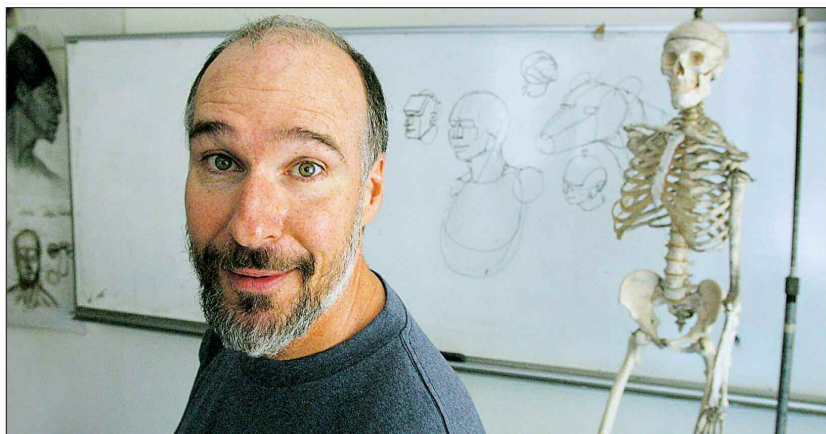
*Pow!* The appraisal punctured all optimism.

"One artist said I needed to learn anatomy, to look at the real stuff," Kovacs recalled. "I went home, enrolled in a class at Fullerton College and still remember that first lecture."

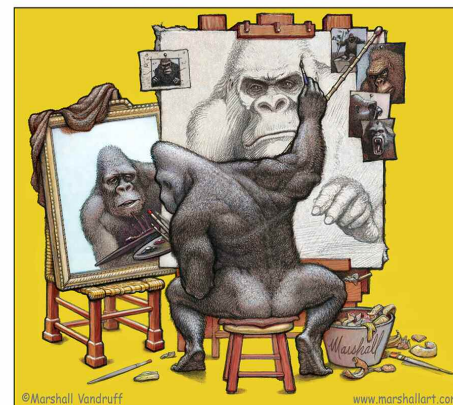
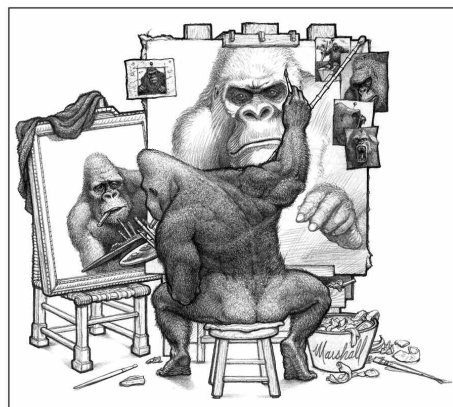
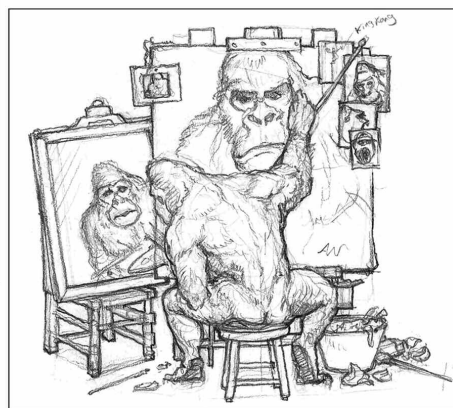
Instructor Marshall Vandruff would impact Kovacs with the same dynamics that influenced dozens of other students ... students who are making megabucks in the video game, DVD, graphic arts and animation arenas.

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**MARSHALL VANDRUFF** recently led drawing seminars at the well-known ComicCon in San Diego. In his Fullerton College classroom he uses a skeleton as a teaching tool for his students.



START TO FINISH



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Vandruff told the class he would see incredible monsters in his dreams, but couldn't put them on paper when he awakened. He lacked the skills to translate what is in the mind.

Kovacs said the experience was like popcorn. "Marshall showed us a table of contents we needed for a good art education."

The advice worked as it would for many of Vandruff's students.

"You can draw anything you want if you know how to draw a ball and a block," Vandruff said last week. "Just think in terms of simplified forms."

Kovacs, 31, would ultimately develop concepts for video games, freelance for Wizards of the Coast card games and

work for Wiz Kids in Seattle.

Another student, Tina Leah-Schmidt, teaches animal anatomy at CSF. She uses her predecessor's nuts-and-bolts curriculum including the art of motion and bio-mechanics.

"Marshall is one of the most important professors with classical draftsmanship," Schmidt said. "He could talk about Jell-O for seven hours and no one would get bored."

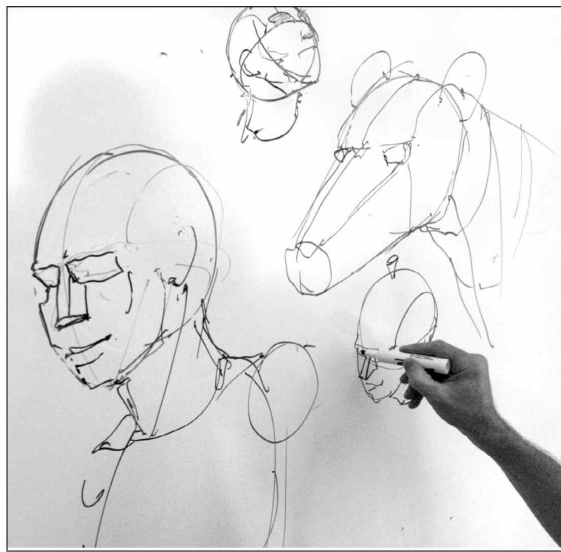
It's apparent Vandruff's confidence reaches aspiring artists.

To further spike his morale, he is the only art teacher at Fullerton College and Cal State Fullerton who doesn't hold a master's degree.

His experience has surpassed credentials.

Born in Anaheim, Vandruff read and stashed away as

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**MARSHALL VANDRUFF STRESSES** the importance of an artist being able to draw simple forms, the rest builds from there. Knowing anatomy can help artists then distort or alter their character.

## FROM THE PROFESSOR

*Marshall Vandruff wrote the following on some of the important aspects of being an artist:*

**Making a picture is like making music - it comes from feeling, but it requires skill.**

Just as a musician should know scales and fingerings, an artist should know some "left-brain" disciplines. Here's my list:

**Anatomy** - An artist who knows anatomy can exaggerate, alter, distort and represent a figure without getting confused. Knowing the bones and muscles helps an artist see the components of a body and draw them with authority.

**Perspective** - Artists learn perspective, not just so they can draw boxes, buildings and railroad tracks, but so they can draw heads, hands and animals at play. A master of perspective can draw a human body from any point-of-view without looking at a model.

**Rendering** - When light falls on a three-dimensional form, whether it's a plaster ball or a face, it "sculpts" the form and shows the surface texture. Rendering is how an artist makes surfaces appear real, so that an object appears rough or shiny, wet, dry or oily.

**Technique** - A musician masters an instrument. An artist masters paint, pencils or pens, and applies them in thick slabs, thin washes or jagged or flowing lines. But the important issue is why an artist chooses to apply a medium one way or another.

That requires creativity. We want more than skill. We want to make works that are alive and surprising. This "right-brain" discipline fits into one big category:

**Composition** - Artists arrange a picture's shapes, colors and tones to evoke feelings from viewers. That's composition. It's difficult to teach because most artists do it instinctively and everyone does it differently.

But here are two hints: Artists design their paintings. They are aware of the underlying structure the way a musical composer is aware of the entire musical "shape."

Artists reflect the masters they love. A blues musician listens to great blues performers until that "flavor" comes out in new work. The paintings you admire and analyze and absorb will influence your own choices when you compose a picture. So look at what you love.

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many Mad Magazines as possible. He earned an associate of arts degree at Fullerton College, then went directly into the field. He worked as a professional illustrator, but soon learned advertising agencies were more lucrative.

"I was doing cut-aways of medical and computer products, all the while learning perspective," Vandruff said. "If there was one benefit, it was learning to draw anything and slice away at any angle."

Through the years, Vandruff has focused on teaching animal anatomy with muscle coordination and simplified shapes.

He has taught the art of feeling - to have passion for a project.

Yorba Linda resident Phil Dimitriadis wasn't sure what art path he wanted to follow.

"When I hit Marshall's composition and perspective classes at Fullerton College, it was a renaissance," Dimitriadis said. "He looks at everything: composition, movies, music, math, science, nature."

Dimitriadis prepared a

### Take a class

**What:** Animal Drawing Crash Course with Marshall Vandruff

**When:** 6-9:30 p.m., Aug. 8-11

**Where:** Fullerton College, Room 199

**Cost:** \$160 for four sessions

**Contact:** [www.marshallart.com](http://www.marshallart.com)

portfolio for the animation industry, but it wasn't accepted.

He found an animation school in Sherman Oaks, sought Vandruff's advice and eventually launched a career that has led to top-notch corporations.

He worked for Sony Children's Division, MGM, Sunbo and Big Idea before tackling the Disney DVD, "Heffalump."

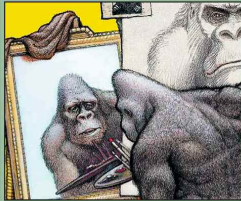
These days, Dimitriadis is the production designer for the upcoming Bratz DVD series, which is based on a popular line of dolls.

"There are really two important things I learned from Marshall," Dimitriadis, 35, said. "I was so insecure and he nurtured me into recognizing I was a hard worker and would go the extra mile."

"He also taught me to be passionate, love what I do and not worry about the money. He said if I look at money first, it will change my passion."

### From Cover:

#### INSIDE



"Making a picture is like making music - it comes from feeling, but it requires skill," Marshall Vandruff stresses to his students. Read more about the Fullerton art teacher on page 21.

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