

April 13, 1959

Mr. Al Capp  
33 Beaver Place  
Boston 8, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Capp,

I've thought a lot about your letter, and before it came I had thought many times about its subject. I am not an artist, though I once thought I might have the talent to become one and even attended art school for a time so you must take my remarks as those of one not fully qualified but not wholly unqualified to comment.

I don't agree with you that anatomy and perspective are "the basic rudiments of art." They are important elements of art, but in the long history of man their importance has varied and is perhaps less today than at any time since the Periclean Age. Nevertheless, I will agree that a professional artist should be trained in anatomy and perspective.

When and where they should be taught are then the questions. This is a liberal arts college. We have a good many students who study the arts for their liberalizing influence (let's not go into what that is) and a few who major in art. Among the majors there are a very few who will become professional artists. Our view is that both the non-majors and the majors benefit by being introduced to art through various studios, drawing classes and courses in design and materials, moving, as they come to know the problems of the media, into more advanced studios, art history and criticism. We are not an art school. The prospective professionals must get their anatomy and perspective elsewhere during Non-Resident Terms or later when they have graduated. Our experience is that we turn out non-majors who are sympathetic to the arts and knowledgeable, and majors some of whom do first-rate professional work.

Any one of our artists could teach perspective and several, perhaps not the two whose training was in architecture, could teach anatomy. We do what we do for considered reasons, not to avoid rigor, though we do feel that starting with rigorous anatomy and perspective can be deadening to creativity in the same way that the conservatory approach to music instruction can restrict the musical invention of those who are subjected to it.

Mr. Al Capp, 4-13-59 - #2

I'm glad you enjoyed your stay, glad, too, that you took the trouble to write. If you'd like to answer this letter, you may have the last word, a privilege ordinarily reserved for women, but properly the right of artists as well.

Cordially,

William C. Fels  
President