

A Brief History of Healthier Comic Making

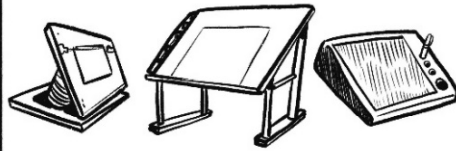
Abstract

Angled work surfaces—drawing boards, drafting tables, and writing slopes—have been used by artists for centuries. These innovations have long helped comic artists preserve their bodies' capacity to create. This comic describes one artist's overcoming of repetitive strain and injury and traces a history of earlier comic artists' strivings to align their creative practices with their bodies' needs.

Figure. *A Slanted Surface—Health & History of Drawing Boards*



THERE IS A LONG HISTORY OF ARTISTS USING SLANTED SURFACES FOR WRITING AND DRAWING. THESE SLANTS HAVE MANY NAMES: DRAWING BOARD, DRAFTING TABLE, WRITING SLOPE.^[3]



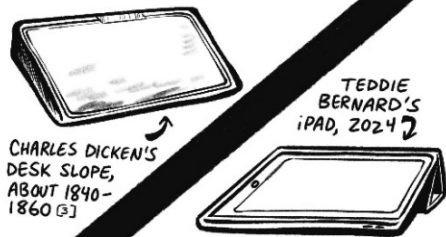
ALL HAVE VARIED ANGLES AND USES BUT THE PURPOSE IS THE SAME: TO GIVE THE ARTIST A SURFACE THAT AIDS ARTMAKING AND REDUCES PAIN.

THE USE OF SLANTED SURFACES CAN BE TRACED BACK CENTURIES. THE ARTISTS WHO PRODUCED ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS DEPICT THEMSELVES AND THEIR PEERS WORKING ON ANGLED SURFACES.

Jean Mielot
MEDIEVAL SCRIBE
CIRCA 1460



WRITING SLOPES HAVE A MORE GENTLE ANGLE AND ARE PRIMARILY USED FOR TEXT.



CHARLES DICKEN'S
DESK SLOPE,
ABOUT 1840-
1860^[3]

TEDDIE
BERNARD'S
IPAD, 2024^[2]

A CONTEMPORARY SOLUTION MIGHT BE A WEDGE, CASE, OR PLATFORM USED TO SLIGHTLY ELEVATE A LAPTOP OR A TABLET.

PUNCH MAGAZINE'S "FIRST CARTOONIST," LINLEY SAMBOURNE, CREATED HIS WORK ON A DESK WITH A BUILT-IN DRAWING BOARD THAT COULD BE ANGLE ADJUSTED.

LINLEY'S
DESK IN HIS
HOME STUDIO,
AS IT WOULD'VE
BEEN AROUND
1900-1910.^[6]



IN FACT, CARTOONISTS HAVE ALWAYS MADE USE OF DRAWING BOARDS:



AND MANY
MORE!

WHAT MAKES THESE SLANTED SURFACES GOOD FOR ARTISTS? BY CHANGING THE ANGLE OF THEIR WORK SURFACE...

... THE ARTIST CAN IMPROVE POSTURE...

... RELIEVING PAIN ACROSS THE BODY.



AFTER ALL, THE WHOLE BODY IS CONNECTED.



HEALTH IN ART IS NOT JUST TELLING PEOPLE TO HAVE "GOOD POSTURE" BUT ALSO CREATING SPACES WHERE FULL-BODY HEALTH CAN FLOURISH.



ONE SIZE WON'T FIT ALL, BUT ARTISTS HAVE HISTORICALLY FOUND WAYS TO MITIGATE PAIN THAT WE CAN STILL LEARN FROM. WHAT NEW SOLUTIONS WILL WE DEVELOP OURSELVES?



SO IF YOU'RE FEELING LIKE THIS...



SEEK OUT WAYS TO CHANGE YOUR PRACTICE AND SPACE TO ACCOMMODATE WHAT YOU LOVE TO DO!



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Media

Digital in Procreate.

Teddie Bernard graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a bachelor's degree in fine arts in 2023. Their editorial comics and graphic journalism have been recognized by the Society for Professional Journalists (Mark of Excellence, 2023), the College Media Association (2023, 2022, 2021), the Illinois College Press Association (2024), and the Associated Collegiate Press (2021).

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