



Hello again,

After spending five days sitting in on most of the classes the Academy offers, I am more convinced than ever that we have the most talented, supportive and extraordinary artist/instructors anywhere in the world. They have had to turn their classes from intensive studio classes into virtual classrooms in almost no time. Katie and her crew got the program up and running with nonstop tutoring and I suspect a sip or two at the end of the day, but you faculty are all heroes in my book.

Today started off with Zane York giving a presentation comparing Pontormo to Dürer. It was really brilliant. They both used comprehensive drawing as an underpainting and then applied super-clear washes of color that result in gem-like luminosity. On the surface they seem so different from each other, but it was like Pontormo was looking north while Dürer was looking south and they somehow met in the middle.

Michael Grimaldi and Bob Simon nerded out on anatomy. It was like dueling dissection banjos. There were conversations about whether or not Michelangelo actually did dissections or just relied on ecorchés. There was a wonderful moment when Michael described the evolution of dissection classes from being illicit to accepted to almost abandoned. The Repin Academy and NYAA being two of the few exceptions to the rule that art schools don't teach anatomy anymore.

If you haven't seen Roberto Osti teach, you have to make time for it. He literally makes new drawings for every class delineating muscle attachments, insertions and just about everything else in different colored pencils. They're beautiful and so instructive.

Evan Kitson presented a crosshatching demonstration in Photoshop today that gave his students a clear method for turning form that, weirdly enough, looked very similar to the Pontormo and Dürer paintings I had seen in Zane's class. This is part of what makes the Academy so special, the connections students observe between the classes they take.

One thing I learned about mezzotint in Fred Mershimer's class today is that you have to be prepared to spend at least a couple of days rocking the plate. It's a bit grueling, but the results are worth it. There is a deep inky quality to the blacks in mezzotint that is unlike anything else. Working from dark to light is my sweet spot and I have to say, Fred is a master at it.

Randy McIver has been teaching Comparative Anatomy for years now, but his current class is as much about composition as anatomy. He spent the day examining drawings by Delacroix looking for tonal structure, counterbalancing diagonals and the difference between tactile and open forms. Once he mapped it out, you could see how much strategy there is in Delacroix. It was insightful and totally surprising.

What better way to end a digital week than sitting on our master of Z Brush, Collette Robbins? She had the entire class working on newly purchased Surface Pros that Harry got for the school. The machines are amazing and it's incredible how fast the rendering engines are these days. But the real treat was watching Collette racing around the interface like it was just a lump of clay.

This has been a challenging week for all of the faculty, but you proved that you are more than ready to meet the challenge. I am in awe of all of you. You are talented, rigorous, thoughtful, funny and empathic. I am honored to call you my friends.

Peter Drake
Provost
New York Academy of Art

Friday, March 27, 2020