



Dear Faculty,

Just following up on a few classes that I missed last week, and it continues to be so inspiring.

Monday

Barbara Segal invited the stone sculptor, John Bizas to her class and it took me a few minutes to realize he was checking in from Moscow. He talked about his career in Italy and Greece and the difference between working on commissioned work, like restoring the Capitol building in Washington, to focusing on your own work. It turns out it doesn't matter where you are, the issues for artists are the same, and in the end the need for community is essential.

Steve Walker's Sequential Narrative class was doing one-on-one critiques and examining cover art that Steve did in the past, describing how the cover sells the story, especially with readers who are new to your work. Julia Tighe Showed a piece that she was working on that filtered her personal vision through Chris Ware's style. It was fascinating how Steve thinks about "Spot Blacks" and how they can be both shadow mass and as visual anchors. He used the term, "expressive anatomy" to describe how the characters have to react physically to their environment to be believable. A great class and it opened my eyes to some devices I could use in my own work.

Ariel Cabrera Was doing one-on-one critiques reviewing a classroom assignment to try several Stand Oil, Venetian Turpentine and Poppy Oil combinations that mimic, to a degree, some, of his watercolor techniques. They were all wet into wet techniques that Sorolla, Zorn and Sargent used. The students seemed to be drawn to working more loosely and appreciated the opportunity to play with the viscosity of the paint.

Wednesday

I didn't realize that Audrey Flack had used an airbrush for her photorealist work, but a student asked her today to describe her process. It was hilarious of course. She went on a tear about being ostracized for using one back in the day and the stigma of using a projector too. She, Chuck Close and Richard Estes started to use them around the same time and in fact she and Estes shared one at first. It was a great class and it included a movie about a Chinese artist who spent most of his life copying Van Gogh before turning to his own work.

Technology showed up in a weird way in Wade Schuman's Painting IV class. We are all trying to adjust to the Zoom world and doing an amazing job of it, but Natalie Terenzini has started a couple of paintings that address it head on. One of her pieces had a figure at an Eighties style monitor complete with that weird green glow. Tedo Rekhvisvili meanwhile dialed in from Tbilisi to show us a large-scale self-portrait with face masks and Wade on his laptop. Wade felt he looked too evil.

George O'Hanlon was a guest in Amaya Gurpide's Drawing II class and took questions from the students about everything from adding marble dust (calcium carbonate) to oil paint to the difference between MDO and ATM panels. It was fascinating and included a discussion about the disappearance of Cassel Earth from some oil paint brands.

Thursday

I dropped by Ted Schmidt's studio Thursday (virtually) for his Painting at The Met class. What a pleasure to go through the collection of master copies he's made over the years. There was everything from Thomas Couture to Raphael and of course all of them exquisite. If there is anything good that will come from this pandemic, it will be the ability to see your friends' studios so easily. Ted was telling us about underpainting techniques that I had never tried, like painting into a wet-into-wet ground of Dioxazine Violet and Thalo Green with nothing but white warmed up with a little Hansa Yellow. So beautiful!

Friday

Not everyone likes to refer to Charles Barque, but Jon DeMartin made a very convincing argument for using his drawings to identify rates of curvature. It was easy to see fast curvature on the nose as opposed to the slow curvature of the forehead. He also showed the class a fascinating drawing technique called graining where he used vine charcoal to block out forms but leaving the grain of the paper evident. Then he used a stumping technique to blend most of the shadow, allowing the grain of the paper to account for the turning of the shadow mass. I felt like a student again.

Chris Gallego encouraged his students to engage in a more philosophical conversation about a life in the arts. He mentioned that whether you are a tight or loose painter is like being born right or left-handed. Neither is more or less expressive, but you have to embrace who you are in order to make authentic art. The conversation moved on to painting an object or the essence of the object. Chris's take on this was that the difference lays in the artist's ability to transcend the object. I mentioned that when you see a transcendent painting of an object, you never ask why the artist painted it. It's only when it's not transcendent that you ask why.

The muscles of the neck were the center of Randy McIver's Advanced Ecorché class. The Scalenus Medius, Splenius Capitis and the Levator Scapulae and all the attending insertions, attachments and origins were being bandied about. Randy had made drawings of them all and referred to a Michelangelo drawing (and his own schematic overlay) to demonstrate how all of the muscles were reflected in the drawing. Randy's knowledge and familiarity with the subject was incredible.

I can't tell you how impressed I have been seeing so much great instruction and the willingness of the students to adapt to this new format.

Oh, remember to shout out for the front line nurses and doctors every day at 7:00, it's heart warming.

Peter Drake
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Monday, March 30–Friday, April 3, 2020