



Week Three:

This is a well-oiled machine now. In just three weeks the faculty and students have become experts at Zoom classes.

Monday

Barbara Segal invited a second guest into her class. Jago is a friend of the Academy and has been here before, but never virtually. Jago has more or less invented his own art world and spoke to the students about his life as an artist/entrepreneur. He mentioned that, at his death, Michelangelo would have been worth about forty million dollars by today's standards. Truly an entrepreneur. More than anything he wanted the students to take control of their lives and not be dependent on galleries. He made the observation that if a gallery has ten artists they can only give each artist a tenth of their attention, and should therefore only get a ten percent commission on sales. Interesting.

Steve Assael had developed a portrait from a Burnt Umber under-painting to a fully chromatic painting. He was having his students do the same from a photograph but wanted them to delve more deeply into the photo to go beyond just copying it to finding its essence. He encouraged the students to explore their memories of the figure even while having the reference available. This reminded me of one of my favorite exercises. You have a model pose for twenty minutes without painting or drawing and then have them leave the room. The next twenty minutes you work from memory. Then alternate every twenty minutes. It's a challenge!

Wednesday

Cynthia Eardley's Theory and Practice of Composition class was reviewing an assignment to take a historical work of art and interpret it through their own vision. Joseph Zorickian chose Michelangelo's Madonna of Bruges. He had copied the piece in clay before but was working two dimensionally for this project. Part of his attraction to the Madonna was the subtlety of expression that left the viewer unsure of the Madonna's emotions. Alicia Lang presented two options for her future Thesis work. One was a self-portrait in a field of sunflowers at sunset. The other body of work was a series of drawings of light coming through doors, down staircases and through open windows. They were all gorgeous, but an approach she was already comfortable with. An interesting conversation began concerning risk-taking and operatic emotion. It just proved that graduate school is the perfect time to take risks and push yourself.

Thursday

We are all learning our own best practices, but I thought I'd share a few that I saw in Manu Saluja's Painting Class. Manu ordinarily presents very thorough demonstrations for the first half hour or so, of the ideas she wants to cover in class. In the Zoom world, she shares them on Youtube in advance so her students can absorb the information at their own pace. She has them apply the ideas to their work for a week and then breaks up the class into smaller units of no more than four students. She critiques the work using the annotation feature of Zoom. She then has the students take a screen capture of her notations to save for future reference. It's a great way to have a library of videos and notated instruction. Brilliant!

Friday

Zane York was diving back into Pontormo, showing how the artist used his brush-work to help define form. His hatch marks could be easily seen even if the underlying drawing had become obscured. Upon close inspection there were hints that some part of the "Visitation" had complimentary under-paintings. That's something I never would have guessed. Zane then proceeded to show the class his own interpretation of the Durer/Pontormo glazing technique, starting with a red chalk drawing which then got inked in. The next step was to lay down a yellow transparent ground. Much of the painting was blocked in with local color, which he then developed with transparent and opaque shadow and light masses. You start to see how Zane gets such luminous effects from his painting.

The last time I dropped in on Evan Kitson, he was winding up a lecture so I didn't get even a hint of how well prepared he is in class. He shared some great examples of edge-control, even a Michael Grimaldi and a Dan Thompson that were both just stunning. He demonstrated how edge-width and depth can re-enforce shadow masses and open up the edge of light masses. Then there was a great discussion about primary, secondary and tertiary planes. It's a great way to identify the hierarchy of a drawing and keeps you from overdoing detail.

No one thinks this is an ideal way to deliver our rigorous content, but this week I heard two faculty members say, "I really like this system".

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