

NEW YORK STUDIO SCHOOL

OF DRAWING, PAINTING & SCULPTURE

Fall 2019
Sculpture Marathon
Figure-Figurine

Instructor: Brandt Junceau
Class Hours: 9am-1pm ; 2pm-6pm
Dates: Tuesday, September 3 – Friday, September 13, 2019
(no class on Sunday, September 8)
Contact Info: Program office
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

Mankind's earliest human images were milestones in our concept of self. We know that they were small, made in the hand, and many of them could be handled between just two fingers. At the start, they could not even stand. Our modern concept of the figure began in the figurine, and returns to it periodically, sometimes to reinvent the body, sometimes the image, sometimes the self, as seen notably in the later work of Elie Nadelman, frequently in Gaston Lachaise, Alberto Giacometti, Louise Bourgeois, and Kiki Smith.

This course is a working conversation, hands-on, in the studio, with occasional slide presentations that refresh and extend the conversation. We begin with found items, natural and manmade, with some degree of figural association; a leaf, a twig, a pebble, a stone, a doll, a crumpled or broken bit of anything. By modelled additions, carving and cutting subtractions, moldmaking and casting, those suggestive objects are made to talk figure and image. *What is the body: how much of it "counts"? What must stay, what can we do without? And what is an image? What does it ask, what does it answer?*

Course Outline

During the first morning, class will begin with a slide talk. Three or four, maybe five or six talks to follow, typically mornings. The trend of our work will determine the number of talks, steer the subject matter and contribute to the pictures included. What happens one day steers the talk the next morning. Most of our work will probably be small. *Small* is one of our subjects of conversation, actually. Working smallish, we'll be working at tables as much as at stands. When the moment is ripe we'll break and review class-wide. Much of the time what I might say to one person is apropos and audible to us all. We'll make the days as seminar-like as possible, given that we're working with our hands: speaking up when something arrives in our head, and replying to what others offer in progress. At the end of the first week we'll have an

afternoon sit-down thorough review of work to date, and at the end of the second week, the same.

Learning Outcomes

The key outcome that participants will learn will be to create, broadest terms, a germ of lively figure-ness, that could persist somewhere in any figural image you might make, of any kind, thereafter, along with a sharpened eye to slight and unexpected qualities of body-ness and person-ness. Participants will learn to recognize suggestion and tolerate ambiguity especially in the earliest stages of new work, when suggestive features are most fleeting and fragile. Along the way participants will build skills in handling wet media, carving, abrasion, moldmaking and casting.

Assessable Tasks

Throughout the Marathon, students will both draw (with charcoal and pencils) and create small sketches in clay through observation of the human figure. Select works in clay will be fired as finished pieces over the course of the two weeks. There will be a group of visiting instructors to provide alternate versions of how to approach the task.

Evaluation and Grading

MFA students participating in the Marathon will receive grades. Grading is on a High Pass/Pass/Low Performance/Fail basis. To achieve a Pass grade, students must demonstrate perceived awareness of form in drawing and sculpture in relation to experience. Student work made each day of the Marathon, in the form of both drawing and sculpture, will be the basis for demonstrating this awareness.

Readings and Resources

- *Art of the Ice Age (with reference to the earliest formation of depictive images of people, and what they were made of, and the estimated time and attention involved)*, British Museum, 2013, London.
- *The Poetics of Space (with reference to the pages on smallness and miniature)*, Gaston Bachelard, Penguin, 2014.
- *Louise Bourgeois (with special attention to the vertical wooden figure-ish works of works of the 60's, which are essentially mounted non-standing items, the smaller figural works throughout, and the relevant drawings, often petal-like)*, Pamela Wye, MoMA, 1982, NY.
- *Juxtapositions (the smaller and weirder late figures of Lachaise, and the smaller, as usually weird figures of Bourgeois)* Cheim & Read Gallery, 2014, New York.
- *Elie Nadelman, the Late Work (the Kertess essay is typical of his thinking on the dolls, the third and last essay is the most informative in print)*, Salander O'Reilly Gallery, 1999, New York.
- *The Life of Forms in Art*, Henry Focillon (basic text on the persistence and shape-shifting of forms), Zone Books (MIT), 1989, New York.
- *Voices of Silence*, Andre Malraux, 1953, Doubleday, New York.

- *On the Marionette Theater*, Heinrich von Kleist, in *Fragment for a History of the Human Body, Volume One*, Zone Books (MIT), 1989, New York.

Materials and supplies

The Studio School will supply clay and plaster. Plaster is the likely best material for what we'll be doing, but depending on the start-up found object, many options are available.

Please bring a found object or objects. The key material item is the found object, which will be the likely point of departure for all your work. What is it? It could be anything. It needn't be a single item. More than one will better triangulate what you are moved to work by. Smaller is better, but really anything less than life-size standing height is applicable. A quite long twig, for example. Overall, practical matter, twigs and branches are the most readily available sources. Pebbles are another source, but much less frequently suggestive. Any thing, natural or manmade, that has any suggestion of the body is a viable starting point. Set time aside for pawing the ground (the sidewalk, the attic, whatever) for something useable.

Along with your found object(s), please bring:

- Snap-blade knife, and extra blades.
- A 1-inch and a 4, 5 or 6-inch taping knife.
- A ¼ to ½ inch wood chisel.
- Coarse rasps of any sizes you can find and afford.
- Stanley (or other make) "sureform" rasp, flat or round, or both.
- Double-ended modeling spatulas (from Compleat Sculptor, locally), both ends oval, or oval/square.
- Breakout bowl(s). A store-bought purpose-built bowl from Compleat Sculptor (or online, or whatever) is a good investment. Pint-size, for starters. Additional bowls may be any roundish-bottom plastic yogurt container, as many as you can save, you'll use. For mixing, and scooping plaster.

All the tools are available through ordinary hardware stores, or the Compleat Sculptor. The things you need for this course, you will find useful hereafter. Once you acquire a skill and a tool, you use it ever after.

School, Department & Class Policies

Please refer to the Student Handbook for information regarding the School's policies on academic integrity and plagiarism. All students must abide by the general health and safety regulations laid out in the Student Handbook, as well as any specific instructions given by the Instructor. We expect excellent studio practice from all students. This encompasses respect for models, fellow students and faculty. The concentration of fellow students must always be respected, therefore, in the atelier, students should not talk loudly, nor should they have music players of any kind and all telephones must be turned off.