

NEW YORK STUDIO SCHOOL

OF DRAWING, PAINTING & SCULPTURE

Spring 2021: Friday Evening Figure Sculpture – In-Person

Instructor:	Brandt Junceau
Class Hours:	Fridays, 6:30pm-9:30pm
First Class:	Friday, February 5, 2021
Last Class:	Friday, April 16, 2021

Course Description

Someone asked Michelangelo, *Maestro, what makes a good sculpture?* Notoriously pithy, he said *if it rolls down a hill and nothing breaks off... it's good.*

This Friday evening course will turn on a fundamental problem: *what is the most compact figure one can make?* We'll talk and argue and work it out from a model. The problem goes back to the beginning, to prehistory in fact, and plays out all over again today. We'll have frequent short slide talks, including Michelangelo's crouching boy, moving up through Rodin's Caryatide, and Maillol's cubic nudes, to Kiki Smith's *Lilith*, among others. Solving the problem introduces techniques of compression, and modelling for amplitude, emphasizing some anatomy and concealing inexpressive details. As Michelangelo said, *not too literal, please.* This is *not* a how-to course. It's a What, Why and How Does That Make One Feel and What Does This Mean how-to course. Each class closes with a group review of individual progress: in effect, a studio visit.

Course Outline

The course is observation, working in clay from a model. We meet 11 times. Please be prompt. We have a lot to do. You won't want to miss anything. The class is learning by doing, and discussion, with art historical context via slide talks. Each student will be making a few figures. The pieces in clay are fireable, here. We recommend firing all work and keeping the terra cottas.

Learning outcomes

The more compact a figure is, the closer it approaches a state of concept, or thing. No less physically human, yet as it is compressed, the more unitary and abstract. A range of feeling comes with that compression, which we'll notice and discuss the figures we see in slide talks, and each other's work in progress and review. Practice of the "compressed figure" is a shapely window into the mechanics of all figural expression.

As a practical matter, this class walks through, investigates and exercises basic construction and care of Form, capital- "F." Among artists, form is more than literal shape, mass and structure. Works of art are heavier than life, rounder than life, hollower, taller, smaller, harder, nervier and more eloquent than life. How is that possible? You'll learn.

Evaluation and Grading. Grading is on a High Pass/Pass/Low Performance/Fail basis for MFA candidates. To achieve a Passing grade, MFA students must demonstrate the full application of their interest, diligence and commitment to address two basic skills and one basic idea. The skills are careful observation of the model, and the construction of a corresponding structure in clay. The basic concept is the matter of difference and exchange between the thing seen and the thing made. My means of evaluation are primarily the things made. Of course, individual talents vary, and everyone's understanding takes a unique path at a unique pace; that's a given. Work, as is practice for a musician, is the essential element. "Beauty" will not be a criterion, diligence, understanding and progress are.

Readings and Resources. The instructor will occasionally distribute photocopied images and text apropos the day's work or discussions during the previous class and will sometimes read aloud during periods of work from the model. Students are encouraged to keep the distributed materials together, for future reference.

Materials and supplies

Students should have:

- basic wood modelling tools
- at least one "elephant ear" sponge
- a 14-inch (open) calipers all of which can be had from Compleat Sculptor, and elsewhere, and online.

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. All students will follow the School's current COVID-19 guidelines and procedures to maintain a healthy and safe working environment for the NYSS community.