

NEW YORK STUDIO SCHOOL

OF DRAWING, PAINTING & SCULPTURE

Spring 2022

Monday Afternoon Sculpture:

The Hanako Project

Instructor: Brandt Junceau

Class Hours: Mondays, 2pm – 6pm

Dates: January 31 – April 25, 2022

No Class: February 21 AND March 28, 2022

Course Description

Rodin's portrait practice followed a consistent routine, which is as yet unrecognized in the literature. In his first sittings, he made a sober, uninflected likeness, life-size, by the calipers. A mold was made of this state. From that mold, Rodin could have as many clay duplicates as he wanted. Each one was a fresh start. He need not worry about losing the original; he had the mold. He could try anything, starting over and over.

George Bernard Shaw wrote an article about his sittings for Rodin—maybe that is where the literature began to go wrong. He believed that his bust was changing style and epoch overnight. No, in fact Rodin was simply starting over and over without him, and then checking his work against Shaw himself. Rodin's work with the Japanese actress Hanako was more radical. Rodin had watched her performance on stage, a story of jealousy, betrayal, rage and grief, which ended in her character's suicide. In Hanako, Rodin's sitter was a moving target; an actress, sitting in character. His 40-some busts in 8 different modes (A through H) and multiple states encompass Hanako's whole performance. More like writing a single-character novel than a making a "piece."

This course picks up the mold-and-multiple idea, and walks with it. Students bring an existing bust (if you are coming in from the 2021 Fall semester, that would be a terra cotta from Nia) and each student makes a mold—so you learn a bit of moldmaking. From that mold, we produce clay duplicates, and go to work. There are as many ways to advance from the original as you have time and nerve to attempt.

Course Outline

First off, make the mold.

Naturally, we'll take a long look at the portrait practice of Rodin, with special attention to his late Clemenceau and Hanako busts, which were especially numerous and challenging and happened to have survived. If the Metropolitan will allow, we would visit the relevant Rodin heads there.

I sometimes bring a few slides to class, as needed, according to progress, but over the semester, we also meet 2-3 times over a Powerpoint via Zoom, to review more images at greater length, and discuss them.

The hands-on work will be in clay and plaster (maybe wax, maybe something else?) duplicates from the mold. Each fresh start is like shooting an alternate take of the same scene. Additions and subtractions in clay and plaster making the alternative performances. You may expect to leave with a number of distinct works, and, of course, your mold. Your work need not stop with the class.

Learning Outcomes

You get moldmaking (toward a plaster and urethane flexible mold), and modelling skills, usually a bit of toolmaking since you should have a thing of two you cannot buy off the shelf).

Beyond that, I can tell you plenty, but ultimately what you learn depends on what you want to know, what you ask, who else is in the room, and the exchange between us all. Sometimes the thing you walk away with is an answer to someone else's question, or the question itself. Issues of sitter, sitting, physiognomy, likeness, perceived character, caricature, implied narrative, indicated time, sequence, baseline and exaggeration will be discussed.

Readings and Resources

Sometimes I bring photocopies of text and images to the room but the Reading List is essentially the Zooms mentioned above. I will mention and quote texts. Be ready to take a note or two, but citations will be made available. After the Zoom, I send out the Powerpoint, so you have the images. Many are unpublished elsewhere. Our Teaching Assistant records the talks and we post the link. If you cannot make the Zoom date (always an evening), you can catch up via the link.

Materials and supplies

NYSS supplies clay, plaster and mold “rubber.” Tools are your responsibility.

If you have worked with plaster you may already have some of these items, or recognise how to make do with equivalents. Practically any and all forms of plaster/taping trowels are useful, for instance. Practically any kind of flexible plastic pails, take out dishes, or cheap salad bowls may serve for mixing plaster, so it is not essential but worthwhile to get yourself a real “breakout bowl” for small repeated mixes. It will last you all your working life.

All kinds of clay modelling tools are handy, if you already have them. This list will evolve over time. Keep an eye on it.

- Wooden modeling tools (Compleat Sculptor, Sculpture House, or equivalent). Bring whatever you have. Best to make your own.
- Nicholson 10-inch half-round rasp, bastard-cut. Or equivalent. Stanley Sureforms are handy but lack the bite of a traditional rasp. And they leave a weak trail. No matter how much Moore’s guys relied on them, a real rasp is far superior.
- Farriers Rasp (you can get a cheap 12-14” one for under \$10 online).
- Double-ended (oval/oval, or oval/square) steel spatula tool (Compleat Sculptor, Sculpture House #71, for example). You’ll use as many of these as you can afford. Bigger the better, to start. You can always go smaller later, when you know better what you need,
- One 1-inch putty knife.
- One 4 to 6-inch tapping “knife” (flat blade “putty” trowel or “spatula”).
- Snap-blade utility knife (or equivalent).
- Four 6-inch “C” clamps. You can use these for anything. One never has enough clamps.
- Small break-out bowl (Compleat Sculptor, Sculpture House, or equivalent).
- Miscellaneous mixing flexible plastic bowls (at least two), or 1-gallon plastic paint pails.
- Elephant Ear sponge (Compleat Sculptor, Sculpture House, or equivalent).
- A few pairs of (Blue) vinyl gloves are highly recommended. Latex is flimsy.
- One 6-inch diameter cheap plastic funnel.

For modelling, you should have basic wood modelling tools, at least one “elephant ear” sponge all of which can be had from Compleat Sculptor, and elsewhere. Some modelling tools are not available off the shelf. I’ll show you how to make them for yourself.

School, Department & Class Policies

Please be punctual. We have only so much time. Never enough. *Please do not listen to devices in class.* What is said in the room is invaluable. So is the quiet between—it should not be filled up. 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, NYSS Covid-19 protocols, as well as any specific instructions given by the Instructor.