

# NEW YORK STUDIO SCHOOL

## OF DRAWING, PAINTING & SCULPTURE

Summer 2022  
Sculpture Marathon - In-Person  
Life-size Figure

**Instructor:** Brandt Junceau  
**Class Hours:** 9am - 1pm ; 2pm - 6pm  
**Dates:** Monday, June 6 – Friday, June 17 (class meets daily, excluding weekends)  
**Contact Info:** see Program Office

### Course Description

The life-size figure is a touchstone of sculpture. To make something one's own size, standing like oneself, with every surface, every feature-- a head, a face, a gaze like our own-- that's a peculiar proposition, unlike everything else mankind makes for itself. It must have been very strange and intimidating the first time, in prehistory. Done right, it continues to be.

Since Rodin, the life size figure walked away from rhetorical demonstration, toward daily life. Which has recently been perhaps best exemplified in photography-- the *Beach Portraits* of Rineke Dijkstra and the *Museumgoers* of Thomas Struth, for example. Likewise, the figure of this course is the body as lived-in today.

For the quickest possible start, the armatures will be ready for work the first morning. The pose is nearly at rest: very little implied motion, very little gesture, so "signing," behavior trending to zero, so the body speaks for itself. This class is not an anatomy lesson, though of course anatomy is employed and learned. We ask what can be carried from the model to the clay-- *not* everything. We think through what tells and what suggests-- what makes "message" of a body? One need not have done this before to try it in June. Bring readiness to try for trying's sake. Pure working experience is on offer—the 10 days do not include preservation of the work in clay. One takes away a creative confrontation with life, and everything it took to make *Form* of confrontation.

### Course Outline

At the end of our ten days a figure is made but class time does not allow for firing, moldmaking and casting. Typically, the work is broken down again in the pug mill. We can discuss the options for firing fragments and/or mold-making, but it must be understood that said work would necessarily have to happen post-class, at individual initiative.

This Marathon is essentially an investigation. Every working hour in clay, putting it on, taking it off, bending it here, scrubbing it there, is question and answer: *what makes this thing live? and what am I looking at?* In practical terms, we're making an inanimate thing, yet the undertaking is only worthwhile if that made-thing is implicitly animate. *How does that happen, why is it so necessary, and at what point did it swing from dumb matter to lively image? What made the difference?*

This matter of image is *the* matter. It could work, in theory, by employing *every* aspect of the model-- a very literal correspondence, but art is in fact a matter of leaving things out. What gets left out, has changed over generations, down millennia. We'll look at that. Seeing how it has worked for "them" in the past, brings out the nature of what works now, for us.

A life-size figure requires an armature. Armatures will be prepared beforehand and you'll start building over it the first morning. The armatures will be identical, made to the measure of our model. Male or female, I don't know yet. The "pose" (I hesitate to call it that) will *not* be academic.

A figure in ten days is real work. We'll take breaks, including breaks to review progress. I read aloud in class, usually while work is ongoing and we talk about the readings during work and on breaks. As to slides, for the sake of distance, bring your laptop. We can zoom together in the room, looking at the same thing at the same time, at social distance and near enough for easy hearing.

### **Learning Outcomes**

End of class, the figure in clay will be broken down, so the class outcomes are in effect all experiential. That is a good thing: one takes away fundamentals. In making a life-size figure, one acquires literal "muscle memory" of anatomy. And plenty of other intangibles: simply putting in the time, spending ten days at arms' reach from a life-size clay "person," one gathers a sense of what we are, in material terms, and how an image affects us by proximity, that no visitor to an exhibition can gather. A visitor doesn't typically "get" that, but it is essential to an artist.

Of course one will take away refreshed modelling skills, which are peculiarly different at life size vis a vis smaller. Not having done it before is no impediment: one learns everything by doing, and nothing standing still. Doing is everything. Just start.

I recommend shooting the work frequently. Your photographs will jog the experience to mind later. As will every other piece, at any scale, you attempt thereafter. This big thing will live on in your every other piece at any size, down the road.

### **Evaluation and Grading**

Grading is on a High Pass/Pass/Low Performance/Fail basis for NYSS MFA candidates.

### **Readings and Resources**

There is no set reading list. I will read things aloud day by day and provide either citations or photocopies or both. So a reading list does accumulate, and you walk away with it.

As a matter of risk avoidance, we may not gather as usual for slide lectures, but we can look at slides over zoom in the room, at a safe social distance, so please do bring your laptop. Our slide lectures are recorded and a link is distributed afterward.

I have a program of texts in mind, but my program is always modified by the conversation that develops at work in the room. Things come up and they are included in the slide talks and readings that follow.

### **Materials and supplies**

Clay will be supplied by the Studio School. As to tools, please bring what modelling tools you have. The larger tools needed for work at life-scale can be made in-house the first morning, and additions made at need thereafter. Toolmaking skills and the readiness to make whatever you need promptly is one of this course's essential "Learning Outcomes."

As to store-bought items, the largest elephant ear natural sponges are helpful (from ceramic supply houses or the Compleat Sculptor), as are synthetic sponges (a tile-setters sponge, available from a hardware store). Old towels are also useful, the coarser the nap the better. A few plastic tubs with lids are handy for keeping clay at various states of plasticity (more or less squishy).

An email will be sent to participants with any additional materials prior to the start of the Marathon.

### **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 and on the School's homepage [nyss.org](http://nyss.org) with regards to Covid protocols and entry procedures. Students are expected to be on time and to attend all classes. Classes missed due to Covid related precautions will be excused.