

# NEW YORK STUDIO SCHOOL

## OF DRAWING, PAINTING & SCULPTURE

Fall 2022

Monday Evening Sculpture – IN-PERSON

**Instructor:** Brandt Junceau  
**Class Hours:** Mondays, 6:30pm - 9:30pm, ET  
**First Class:** September 19, 2022  
**Last Class:** December 5, 2022  
**No Class:** October 10, 2022  
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### Course Description

This Sculpture class is an on-again/off-again séance with Rodin. I was recently obliged to comb through jpgs of *all* the terra cottas at the Musée Rodin, Paris. A great many of them are small figures made at speed, toward his *Gates of Hell*, in a speculative, free-associative mode. They're fabulous. Highly, and unpredictably allusive. One by one, in the making, there was simply no telling how or why or what was coming out... until there it was. Who wouldn't want to try that? And what could be more *now*?

We'll have a model and extruded round "bars" of clay at the ready— one bar makes a limb, two make a torso. For Rodin, generating studies, that was routine practice. We'll make small figures, quickly, although when it gets interesting, we may come back to some, and their poses. Our attention will be on image, rather than anatomy. This about snatching a picture out of the air. It can happen very fast, or by degrees. Step by step joining the body to Meaning and Subject. Or they might catch up later (Rodin rarely titled his studies himself—others gave him titles, later). But we also reverse the order—*make a figure that expresses...hope? Thought? Thinker?*

Occasional slide talks and reading out loud, are routine. Good stuff gets fired. You keep it.

### Course Outline

This class meets eleven times, with a model; the same model each class. On the first meeting we'll have a brief slide talk, on sketch models—what they have been, what they can be. Michelangelo, Canova, Carpeaux, Rodin, Moore are high points. We'll start right away making smallish (12-18") figures, assembled from the clay round bars, on the clock, poses of a half hour, to start. Will start with poses engaged "on the ground" before making standing figures. No armatures. Bernini didn't use them, even for standing angels with wings. A pylon of clay, like a leaning post, and clay wire or dowels will stick the thing together. The pose time period expands or shortens depending on progress, and what we begin to turn up, in developing a family of poses that "speak." Every group has its own chemistry, pace, and conversation, depending on what people bring to (and want from) the room. If, for example, a reclining pose is making things happen, we would stick with that for some time, making variations, probing what essentially is the hook, and how to make the most of it. The next slides, either that same evening or next, would investigate that pose as available via art history— there are always precedents and premonitions. A conversation begins in the room at the first meeting and carries through to the last. The given subjects Sketch, Maquette, their employment by Inspiration, Theme and Variations, Rhetoric, Composition, and Invention itself are steppingstones, but the room writes the sequence and makes the story in its own words.

### Learning Outcomes

Funny thing is, your attention won't be on anatomy, but you'll acquire it, by use, as a way to make things happen. Likewise, composition, a word which seems terribly old-fashioned, isn't so much instructed, as exercised, again, *to make things happen*. Composition comes close to what was called Rhetoric— talk about a dubious term—which is simply examining a message for its inherent nature and making it plain. We look at what a pose "says," how it says it, what is

strictly necessary to it, and cut ruthlessly everything that isn't. A sketch model is idea and nothing but. For the Romantics, it was the soul of an artwork, all but superior to any enlarged development. That notion has largely stuck, though for much of non-figural sculpture, architecture and engineering today, "mockup" is the operative word. Could be useful, as a thought-experiment, to consider a clay sketch a "mockup." That acquires a life of its own.

Lastly, we will get the clay off the armature, and prep it for firing. The clay must be bone-dry before firing, so the last firing takes place after class. We will produce early enough to review terra cottas in class. Every change of state and perspective is a means to objectivity. Objectivity is the soul of ruthlessness, is the means of economy, is the necessary condition of poetry. Poetry, in the sense of highly condensed essential speech, carrying unforeseen and unpredictable messages, saying more than and other than intended, is ever the goal.

The freehand clay sketch is the first and necessary eruption of poetic speech. This class is about clearing its path, recognizing and protecting it at first sight, and learning how to *make it happen*.

### **Evaluation and Grading**

Grading is on a High Pass/Pass/Low Performance/Fail basis for NYSS MFA candidates. 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; however, diligence, understanding, and progress are in order to obtain a passing grade.

### **Readings and Resources**

I occasionally distribute photocopy images and text apropos the day's work or discussions during the previous class. I sometimes read aloud during periods of work from the model. If we meet via Zoom, we save the slides and the talk, for further reading. Students are encouraged to keep the distributed materials together, with their own notes, for future reference.

### **Materials and supplies**

Students should have basic wooden modelling tools; at least one "elephant ear" sponge, all of which can be had from Compleat Sculptor, and elsewhere online. NYSS supplies clay and firing options to keep your work in terra cotta.

### **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.