

B. Blanchette

Bruce's Studio News

Process • Concept • Evolution • Solution

Vol. IV No. 6 June, 2014

Spring and Summer Life Drawing at STUDIO 8



In the informative, personal, and historical book "The Undressed Art"¹ author Peter Steinhart discusses not only why artists draw, but also why the nude has been such an important subject for artists throughout the centuries. He also explains to the non-artist the reasons for drawing the nude figure and what actually goes on behind closed studio doors...

"We are taught most of our lives that naked bodies symbolize either desire or shame. The two are tangled together, shade into each other, in most of our minds. Adam and Eve are usually represented as idealized bodies and simultaneously as embodiments of shame. It's one of the great stumblings of our culture, one of the great conflicts in all of our lives. We love and hate our bodies. But here, in the studio, looking upon the warm immediacy of the frankest human form, we realize that there is much more to it than desire or shame. What seemed prosaic or ordinary under clothing can become beautiful and powerful and full of meaning. There is dignity here. There is intelligence. There are modesty and compassion, pride and humility. The body projects character, not just mere form, but in the way the model carries and displays it."

Steinhart later goes on to say: *"Modern art is held up to us as a way to express our feelings. But our feelings are often blurred or murky. We have different abilities to recognize and name them. The lionizing of Jackson Pollock and other "action painters" endorses creation as an act of frenzy, and many are perhaps drawn to art not because it seems to be a way to see, but because it seems to be a way to act, a way of being spontaneous, alive and full of authentic feeling. The more practiced artists, whether drawing abstractly or realistically, take time. They are absorbed by the subject but never overwhelmed by it. They know that it requires an enormous amount of conscious attention to draw well."*

For forty or more years I have attended life drawing sessions at the local college, in galleries, and other artist's studios. All of them have a familiar look, much like you see above. Interesting people drawn together to experience a challenging, difficult, yet rewarding artistic task. For the last few years, my studio has been the gathering place for sporadic and regular appearances by some 59 artist friends of mine. Meeting once a week, I secure either male or female models for 3 hour life drawing sessions. (Unfortunately, my studio's size limits the number of artists to a dozen at a time.) A typical session incorporates one hour of short (warmup) drawings from 1 minute to 5 or 10 minutes each, a second hour of longer poses of 15 to 20 minutes each and a third hour of long poses of 25 to 50 minutes. The model takes a 10 minute break each hour at which time the group socializes with a cup of coffee, tea and /or snacks. We play a variety of music as we draw... it's a very enjoyable and regular gathering of friends!

¹ Peter Steinhart, THE UNDRESSED ART/why we draw (Alfred A.Knopf, 2004) p. 32-33, 188-189.