Atelier Hawai‘i
At
Windward Community College
Summer 2016

Taught by William Zwick

William Zwick received his BFA from Laguna College of Art and Design in California. He then traveled abroad and studied three years at one of the most prestigious atelier programs in the world—the Florence Academy of Art in Florence, Italy—where he was awarded several teaching scholarships and best painting of the year in 2012. William brings the knowledge, craftsmanship, and classical realism techniques learned in Europe to Hawai‘i at Windward Community College.
Pedagogy of the classical atelier

When this summer atelier program was first created, it was based on the traditional teaching practices developed in the 19th century and carried on in present day ateliers around the world. These techniques would include Bargue master copy drawings, cast drawings, and the optical measuring technique of sight size. This system of teaching is based on a student’s slow progression through a series of studio projects, each project more challenging than the last. Students begin with master copy drawings in graphite and slowly move to charcoal drawing and later to painting. One of the strengths of a system like this is that students build up a strong drawing foundation before they are introduced to the added challenges that painting presents. The summer course that I have planned for this year is designed to continue that philosophy of teaching.

Rather than focusing on portrait painting, figure painting, figure drawing, cast painting and cast drawing as separate concepts, the focus will be on the underlying principals of drawing and painting that apply to all those categories, and really all of classical realism.

One of the things that students have responded to the most during the courses I have run in the past has been the cumulative nature of the structure of the course. Students are introduced to new principals of drawing and painting as they come to the stage of their projects where those principals are needed. Teaching to the problem rather than to the tools. I feel that this ultimately gives students a much firmer grasp on the principals of drawing and painting because it is very clear how the new tool or concept fits what they are working on at that moment. This method of teaching requires a very systematic approach to the projects they do throughout the course. This means that we do not want to jump students straight into portrait painting before they understand how to organize values and create proportionally accurate drawings.

The course is split into two sections, studio projects and figure projects. The goal of the course structure is to keep the studio projects one step ahead of the figurative work. This allows students to be introduced to concepts in charcoal in a very controlled environment before they have to deal with the same concepts in oil paint with the added challenges working from a live model presents.
Course Outline

Each day is split into two sections: half of the day is devoted to cast drawing while the other half is devoted to drawing and painting from live figure models. Students who have taken the summer program in previous years will have the option to do a limited pallet cast painting or simple still life painting instead of a cast drawing for their studio project.

On three of the Friday morning sessions guest lecturers may give presentations on drawing, painting, materials and techniques as well as other topics.

Each Wednesday during the model session, we will do a figure pencil drawing from live models to give students a break from their longer projects. It is often in these weekly sketches that students notice how much they have improved over the length of the course.

May 23—first day of workshop
Introduction to the course and an overview of materials and the concept of sight size, assigning casts to students and setting up workshop stations. During the model session students will sketch from a live model.

Week 1—
Begin sight-size construction of casts in charcoal, finding large shapes and focusing on proportions and gesture. Toward the end of the week, when the large shape and proportions are completed, students will begin to separate light from shadow with the introduction of a varied shadow line.

In the model section of each day, students will be doing one-day pencil drawings of models in different poses using sight size. This is to familiarize them with using sight size to map out a figure and find accurate gesture, proportions, and body type. There will be an emphasis on anatomical landmarks and ascertaining the gesture and weight distribution of the model.

Week 2—
Students continue to develop their cast drawings, breaking their large block-in shapes into more refined structures.

In the model section of the day, students will begin their transfer drawings of the extended model pose which will last for the remaining five weeks of the course. Transfer drawings are done in charcoal and are a natural progression from the pencil drawings that were done the previous week.

Week 3—
Students continue to refine their cast drawings, smaller structures of the cast contour and shadow line. Toward the end of the week students will start to KEY their drawings (begin to organize their values in a block in manner, large shapes of value).

For their model sessions, students will finish their transfer drawings, transfer them onto stretched and prepared canvas and refining their drawings on the canvas with raw umber. Toward the end of the week
students start to block in and key their paintings.

**Week 4**
Students have keyed their cast drawings and begin to work on breaking down the blocked in values into smaller forms and begin to add more variety to the transitions between the different planes of the cast.

In the long pose, students finish keying their figure paintings with generalized color values (this ties into what they have already been learning while working on their charcoal drawings). We will go over how to organize warms and cools within a model's flesh tones and the different local colors of the model as well as how to mix flesh tones and organize one's pallette. Throughout the week students work on blocking in their paintings with accurate color values.

**Week 5**
Students continue to refine their cast drawings, now focusing on edge quality, line quality, and atmosphere to begin to define a focal point.

In the long pose students are now breaking down the larger planes of the model into more specific, smaller plains as they are introduced to the concept of painting passages.

**Week 6**
Students focus on finishing details and refinements to the focal area of their cast drawing and work on any areas they are having trouble with.

In the long pose students refine their color values, edge quality, atmosphere. Through the use of edges and value organization, students define a focal point in their paintings.
Project Examples

**Cast Drawing**

**Figure Drawing**

**Figure Painting**
An Overview of Sight-Size

Sight-size is an optical measuring technique that allows an artist to make one-to-one measurements and comparisons between the artists work and nature. It is a powerful tool for creating realistic artwork and improving the accuracy of your artistic eye.

A brief history:
Descriptions of similar drawing and painting techniques have been linked to artists as far back in history as Leonardo Da Vinci (1452 -1519) and Diego Vilazquez (1599 – 1660). The more developed technique that we still use today however, was popularized in the 19th century. This is due, in part, to the Courso de Dessin (a sight size drawing course created by Charles Bargue and Jean-Leon Gerome published in 1866) and the rise of high quality art academies like the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where many of the period’s most prestigious artists were also teachers. Sight size reached its panicle in the late 19th and early 20th century with the popularity and success of artist like Johan Singer Sargent.

Although this handout uses charcoal cast drawing as the example, the same techniques can be applied to drawing with other mediums as well as painting.

Materials

Tools used for sight-size charcoal drawing:
- Sand paper for sharpening drawing materials
- H, HB, and B charcoal
- Kneaded eraser
- White chalk or conte crayon
- Toned paper
- Plumb line

A mirror can also be used to give the artist a fresh view of his work.
Step 1

From a fixed distance and position, hold the plumb line horizontally to take height measurements of the cast. Hold the string horizontally and slowly bring the string down from above until, from your vantage point, it appears to touch the top of the cast. Run your eye along the string to see where the string overlaps your paper at the same time that it appears to rest on top of the cast. Make a mark indicating where that point on the page is. Repeat this step to find the bottom of the cast, this time bringing the string up from below. Indicate that measurement of the bottom of the cast on your page as well. You can also find the midway point of your drawing using the same process.

Step 2
We now have the height of our drawing mapped out on the page. We still need to decide where our drawing will be placed left to right. One way to place our drawing on the page is to use a plumb line to draw a vertical line on the page and then hang a corresponding string in front of the cast. The string should now be considered equivalent to the vertical line on your page. The points the string passes through when viewing the cast will match where the line on our paper passes though our cast drawing.

**Step 3**

With a string dropped in front of the cast and the top, bottom, and middle indicated, we can now map out the simplified shape of the cast. We can use the plumb line to measure the height, with, vertical and horizontal alignment of each of the angle-breaks and points of your simplified shape. Widths are measured by holding the plumb line horizontally and using your fingers a calipers. Vertical heights can be measured using the same method we used to find the top and bottom of the cast. Let the plumb line hang freely in order to observe vertical alignments and hold the plumb line horizontally in order to observe horizontal alignments.
Continuing to make all measurements from a distance, we can use the plumb line to check the alignment of the drawing and the plaster cast. Though this process it is possible to map out the contour of the cast in great detail. The next step is to break the drawing into light shapes and shadow shapes using the same measuring techniques.

**Step 5**

Once we have carried the line drawing as far as we can, shad the shadow shapes a flat value so we can better see how the light shapes and shadow shapes fit together. Use this step to continue to improve the shape of each while beginning to identify cast shadow vs form shadow edges.
Step 6

Isolating the light shape serves the same purpose as the previous step. Once you have improved the drawing as much as possible it is time to begin Keying our drawing (establishing the value range of the drawing). One of the steps in the process is to establish an accurate value relationship between the background and shadow shape of your cast.

Step 7

Indicate the darkest dark in the drawing as well as the lightest light. This represents the full value range we will be working with for this drawing. We can use these marks to map out and
organize all of the other values found in our drawing.

Step 8

Once we have found the relationship between the background and the shadows in the cast, we can start breaking down and organizing the planes visible in the light shape and continue refining the drawing until it is finished.

Finished Cast Drawing
Photo source: