

BARD HIGH SCHOOL EARLY COLLEGE

Syllabus for Studio Art

2005-6

Studio Art classes are made up of lessons drawn from a "core curriculum" which lays out fundamental skills and concepts having broad application in the visual arts. The curriculum is a modified version of what might be presented in a Foundation Program at an art school such as Pratt or The R.I.School of Design. The Foundation approach is tailored to fit students of Early College age, experience, and interest, and to fit a schedule of twice-weekly 55-minute class periods. These classes occur over a 18-week semester, resulting in approximately 36 contact hours per one-credit Studio Art course.

In addition to gaining specific skills and experience in visual art, students are encouraged to become aware of how Studio Art ideas and practices can have general relevance. We are exploring ways of seeing and thinking that can sharpen students' capacity to engage with and make coherent statements about the world.

Media

Drawing - pencil, graphite sticks, ink (brush and pen), marker, charcoal, pastel
Painting - tempera, acrylic, watercolor
2-Design - ink, marker, collage

Concepts

Observation informs imagination; the ability to represent the visible world establishes artistic authority. What are subject matter, form, and content?

Some of the terms and phrases often heard in the Studio are:
Structure, Form, Proportion, Scale, Process, Sequence, Simplification, Emphasis, Transformation, Imitation, Likeness, Authenticity, Influence, Analysis, Logic, Intuition, Expression, Mood, Ambiguity, Fact, Symbol, Metaphor, Representation, Abstraction, What is Seen, What is Known.

Constant emphasis is placed on the idea that the art-making process is always one of trial and error, and that therefore it must remain open to change throughout. The importance of limitations, even rules, is equally emphasized, along with the creative possibilities of bending those rules. Finished works are rigorously evaluated in terms of their formal and expressive strength, and their power to engage the viewer in a fruitful and sustained way.

Each project is approached as a conversation between what we see, what we think, and what we feel. Free-writes are regularly used to focus and record this conversation.

Elements

Line, Tone, Texture, Shape, Mass, Volume, Edge, Contour, Color, Light.

Principles

Proportion, Balance, Symmetry, Rhythm, Gesture, Movement, Unity, Stability, Harmony, Contrast, Expression, Mood.

Resources

The library is utilized frequently to provide examples of ideas and methods presented in class. Students are also assigned research on their own, in the school library or elsewhere. They are encouraged to view relevant local exhibits, and field trips are occasionally taken to see works of particular interest.

Classes

Each semester is unique. Lessons are ordered and altered according to which activities trigger the most productive responses, and which sequences seem most appropriate. A typical semester will include a selection from the following lessons:

2 or more classes of Gesture Drawing. Quick (30 seconds to two minutes) drawings to capture the overall "gesture" of a short pose. Strengthens ability to see "whole" figure, confidence in eye-hand coordination, use of intuitive skills. Establishes value of looking at an entire structure quickly, and engages the kinesthetic sense. A "big shapes first" process.

1 or more classes of "Blind" Contour Drawing. Slow, deliberate study of objects, drawn in detail *without looking at the drawing* while making it. Builds concentration, patience, and confidence in eye-hand link. Establishes use of slow, detailed analysis as another approach to understanding structures. A "small parts first" process.

3 or more classes of Drawing the Posed Figure. The goal is to fit the figure to the page in good proportion. A basic standard of drawing competence. Requires synthesis of skills gained in gesture and contour drawing. Additional time might be spent focusing on drawing drapery, drawing "inside" the outline to create form, mass, and volume, doing detailed studies of facial features, hands, etc.

4 Classes in Color Theory, Mixing, and Application. Construction and analysis of the Color Wheel. Primaries, Secondaries, Complementaries. Hue, Value, Chroma. Complementary Pairs, Simultaneous Contrast. Mixing Equal-

Step scales to Neutral Gray. Establishes basic skills needed to use paint to create light and represent volume and space.

2 or more classes in Self Portraiture. Invites application of whatever drawing, painting, or collage skills have been acquired to a psychologically rich and challenging subject.

2 or more classes in Still Life. Provides an equally rich but less intimidating opportunity to apply representational skills. The challenges and limits of the quotidian.

2 or more classes with Interior Space as subject. Increases the scale and vocabulary of representation. Interiors blend the expansive with the intimate. Issues of perspective and foreshortening arise.

2 or more classes with Landscape as subject. Introduces issues of greater spatial expanse and instability (the light is always changing) to the representational context. A chance to deal with "the world out there". Involves scale, perspective, light, and atmosphere.

2 or more classes of Abstract Painting. Using color, shape, space, atmosphere with a different agenda - to represent "abstract" feelings and ideas. Introduces intuition rather than observation as the directing force in the deployment of material elements and formal principles.

2 or more classes in Pointillist painting. A particular way of using tiny spots of color in various groupings to create a unique atmosphere through the phenomenon of "optical mixing". Allows for advanced use of color mixing knowledge. A broad spectrum of students can create very satisfying results.

2 or more classes in Collage. Gluing cutout paper shapes to paper. Collage is a good way to introduce 2-D design principles as well as hone observational skills. Abstract collages with a goal of creating a sense of movement or deep space are basic 2-D exercises. Collage images of observed objects are often more successful than attempts to draw the same subject.

2 or more classes in using Existing Art Images as source material. This might involve a charcoal-drawn montage of images from several reproductions, or a painted copy of a Monet. Allows an opportunity to examine the issue of Influence in art, as well as gain specific skills through direct imitation. A demonstration of "master/student" learning.

2 or more classes in Cartoon Drawing. Allows students of any skill level to create effective and engaging statements reflecting their attitudes about life.

Increases attention to detail and neatness, as well as the ability to create coherent narrative. Simplification and emphasis for the sake of characterization come to the fore. Discussions of what makes something funny are a way into a serious examination of individual attitudes and societal mores.

2 or more classes of a Special Project. There are often special circumstances which invite a particular activity - the mural panels near the cafeteria need a new look, or the current theater production needs a backdrop. We do these when time allows and they support the Studio Art pedagogical agenda. Projects which involve collaboration with other teachers and classes are welcomed as chances to point out how concepts (rhythm, ambiguity) can apply across subject areas.

1 or more classes of Individualized exploration. Students with particular interest and aptitude might spend extra time working on an assignment when the class goes on to something else, or might pursue an altogether unique interest if their skills and ambition so warrant. One student with outstanding drawing skills spent several classes completing a life-sized drawing of a human skeleton.

1 or more classes of collaborative work. Students are often invited to work in pairs or larger groups, to complete works of extraordinary size or complexity. Such an approach might be used to construct mural-sized collages of human facial features, or super detailed drawings of entire ecosystems. This reinforces confidence in collaboration, and provides experience in the sharing and elaboration of ideas.