

# REALISTREVIVAL



THE EARLS COURT GALLERY

PRESENTS WORKS FROM THE  
ACADEMY OF REALIST ART

AUGUST 19 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2005

## REALIST REVIVAL — GALLERY NOTES

There was a time when ‘art was one thing and not another’<sup>(1)</sup>, an age when both technical proficiency and aesthetic principles, complimented each other. It was an epoch that espoused rational, deep rooted, artistic sensibilities over the superficial, transitory values of fashionable posturing, and the untutored pluralities of the amateur. It was a classical period in its truest sense, characterized by order, clarity, and universality. It began with the early Greeks, and lasted well into the 19th century, when it was shoved aside by a modernist revolution that prized primitivism, condoned lack of values, and appeared to champion individual artistic chaos.

A contemporary group of representational artists, who found the critical concepts of modernism convoluted, and the relentless demand for novelty unsatisfying, have begun to look to this cultivated period for guidance and inspiration. They are classical revivalists, who believe that ordered composition, correct proportions, and harmonious, beautiful forms can be used to express, truthfully and concisely, the fundamental concerns of 20th-century man.

These contemporary realists have initiated their historical dialogue, appropriately enough, with a disciplined study of the language of art, its manners, methods and ideals. The study of the language begins with indoctrination in the traditional methods of drawing practiced by 19th-century art academies. Once drawing has been mastered, the student proceeds to instruction in cast and still life painting, then painting from the live model. It is a progressively complex tutelage that results in works that are fundamentally solid, and well constructed.



The painting surfaces are elegant and beautifully finished. The images promote the refined sensibilities of the new ideal: order, beauty in context, and disciplined aesthetics.

The teaching method is explained in depth in an essay by Juan Martinez, which accompanies this exhibition. Juan is an instructor at the Academy of Realist Art in Toronto, Ontario. The essay has been published previously in *International Artist* magazine.

The accomplishments of the continuing dialogue, the subject of this exhibition, are almost self evident in the mature, confidently executed works of Juan Martinez, Fernando Freitas, and their students at the Academy of Realist Art.

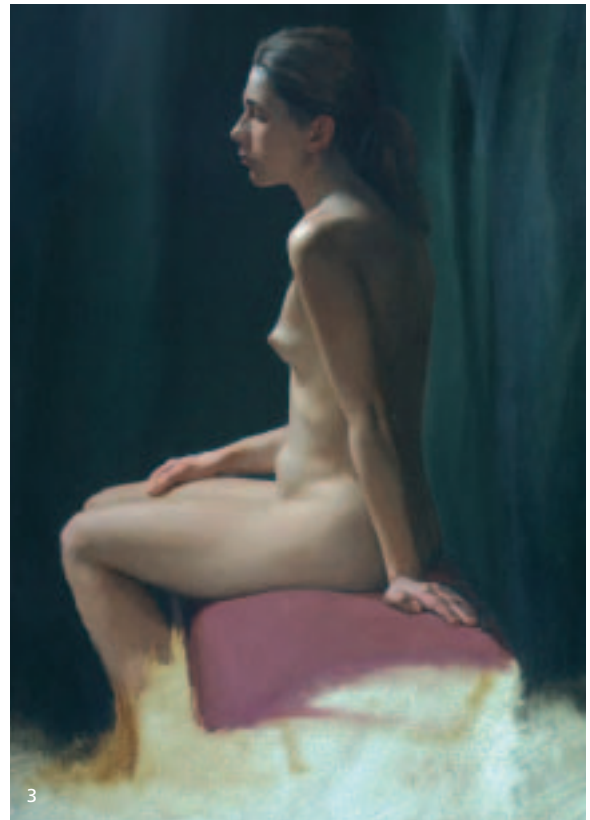
(1) MATHIS, Miles Williams; *The Art of the Last Man*

# Introduction to Academic Art

by Juan Carlos Martinez

There currently seems to be a surge of interest in what is called academic art, both old and new. By “old” I mean from the 19th century, which is not all that old as far as art goes. The “new” is art coming out of an ever increasing list of private art schools — often named atelier, studio, or academy — which are preserving, and usually, augmenting many of 19th-century academic methods for the teaching of drawing and painting. It was in that century, and particularly in France, where what has come to be known as academic art, flourished and reached its apogee. The majority of today’s ateliers use a derivation of the practices most often associated with the Parisian 19th-century ateliers, or artist’s studios (hence, the current use of the French word, *atelier*). The term “academic” stems from the fact that in many countries, at that time, there was an administrative body to which the senior artists from the ateliers belonged. As this body was usually called an Academy, the art produced by its members is called “academic” today. The name has endured because of the continued existence of ateliers, rather than on account of the perseverance of the governing bodies, which have all but died away.

At the core of the atelier, no matter what it is called, is the training of an artist. Many and diverse painters in the 19th century were academically or “atelier-trained”. For instance, John Singer Sargent, Frederic, Lord Leighton, Rosa Bonheur, and Jean-Leon Gerôme were all atelier-trained, to one degree or another, yet their art is vastly different in style and in subject matter. But, they each shared a fundamental understanding of artistic principles, such as the importance of drawing and how to suggest spatial depth. They also shared an understanding of the true



appearance of visual phenomena. These are the kinds of things they learned during their training years.

In the past, academic art was more interested in painting of the “Grand Manner” and in so-called “history” painting than we are today. However, by the early 20th century, Realism had become more and more popular, and it is upon that path which most modern ateliers concentrate their training.

Academic art represents an approach rather than a particular style. In most ateliers today that approach consists, more or less, of the following elements: drawing from the “flat” (copy work); drawing from the “antique” (casts); drawing from the live model; painting casts and still lifes; and finally, painting from the model. This progression, moving from drawing to painting, is intended to allow



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lessons learned in the earlier stages, to be worked into subsequent steps “up” the ladder.

Back in the 18th and 19th centuries, drawing from the flat and from casts was taught to teenagers. By the time young people of, say, 18 to 20 years of age were entering an atelier they had already had years of solid practice and instruction. That is rarely the case today, so even adults who begin at an atelier must go through the same fundamental exercises as a relative novice would be required to do. Of course, the more accomplished the artist is, the quicker things will go. And, what’s more, the basic exercises are an excellent reinforcement of skills, as well as serving to ensure all the students at a particular atelier will understand the same principles, and can communicate effectively with their teachers and each other.

Perhaps the one overriding concern of the modern academic method is the desire to strengthen an artist’s ability to “see”. Without a well-trained eye, a lot of other things will be unattainable. By “seeing”

what I mean is what the apparent world looks like — the one we observe, not the one we know, or think we know. The countless hours of practice in front of master drawings, casts and models, is trying to inculcate this understanding in a student’s mind. Until we truly “see” the nature of visual phenomena, as they are actually before our eyes, we cannot draw or paint realistically to the best of our ability. Academy training is a constant visual study of Nature and its results cannot be easily achieved any other way.

To begin to understand ‘what things look like’ one must first be able to separate the light from the dark tones, or if you prefer, the light from the shadows. It is one of the first steps in training the eye which sounds simple and, theoretically, it is. But soon, it is taken further; anything we want to draw or paint realistically can be divided not only into light and dark, but also into tonal “families” and then each of those families can be further subdivided.



## Drawing from the flat

"Drawing from the flat" means working from a two-dimensional (thus, flat) model, such as from an instructional sample drawing made for the purpose, or from some other master's drawing, or even from a photo, rather than from three-dimensional reality. You can learn a lot by studying other's drawings and paintings, particularly from Old Masters' work. The practice of "copying", which in previous eras had no negative connotation, is still done at ateliers today, and I would highly recommend it. There are many ways of using two-dimensional image sources to help you in your training, and there is always something to learn from how others have done it before you.



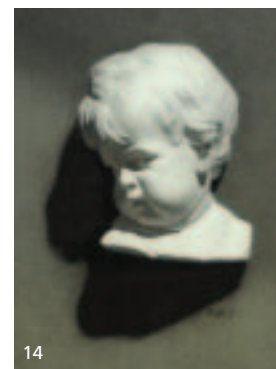
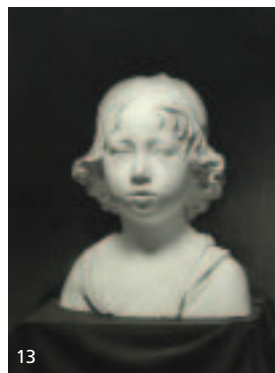
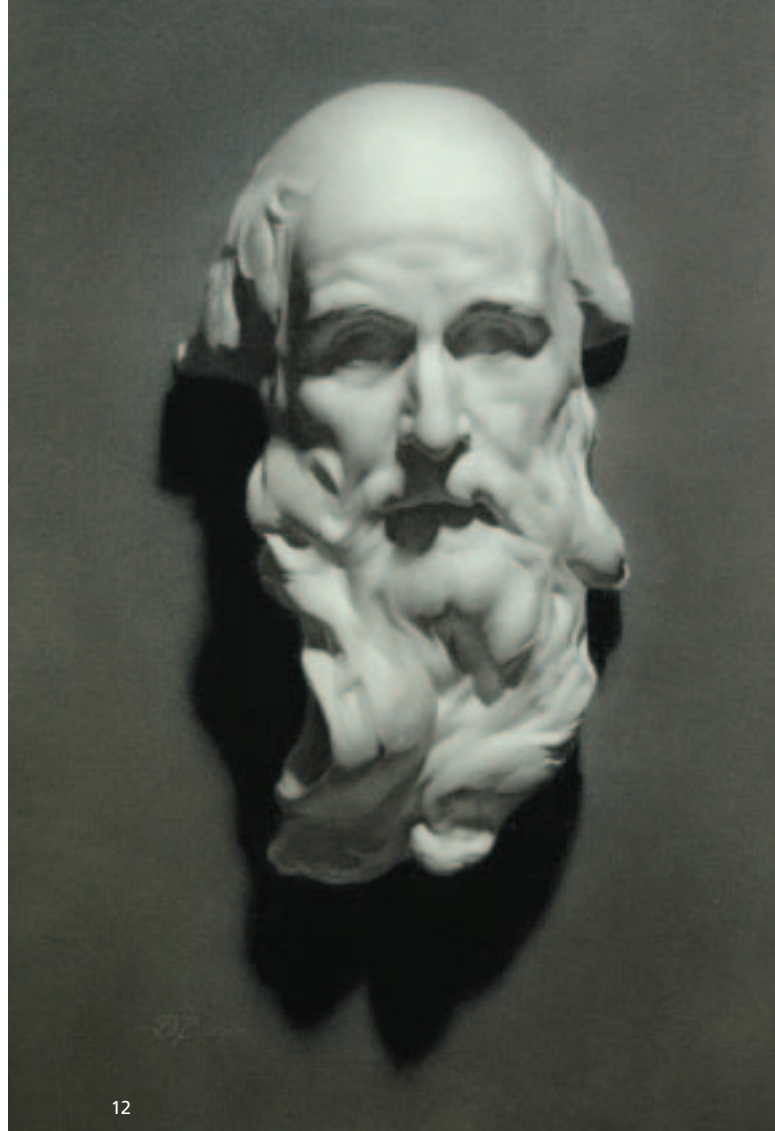
DRAWING FROM THE FLAT

## Drawing from the casts

The next step in academic training builds upon what one has already learned — separating light and dark, assessing tones, and “segmenting” curves — and applying these skills to drawing from the 3-dimensional world. In this case; from plaster casts, usually struck from antique sources, but not always. Such exercises can be done with any object, but casts offer the advantage of already being simplified and artistic forms. Plus, as they are monochrome (white) all we see in them are tones ranging from light to dark. This is the stage when one really starts learning about values (the relative level of lightness or darkness of a tone) and about rendering the effects of light-over-form.



DRAWING FROM THE CAST





### Drawing from the model

The fact that models are living, breathing, in full colour, and are supplied with a rather endless variation of forms and contours, makes them a most daunting task. This is where you really get down to studying the visible world — Nature. Also, I should make it clear here that in most modern-day ateliers, students start off right away working from live models. They don't wait for years as was the case in the 19th century. Starting early on working from the model allows us to, literally, see our progress "right before our eyes." We continuously apply the lessons we learn in the other exercises, to our work from the human figure.

### Cast painting and still life painting

Once students have been fully immersed in the language of drawing, of understanding visual phenomena, of light-over-form, of contour, of shape, they are ready to start translating that language into paint. Because oil paint is a new medium for some, most ateliers begin with monochrome cast painting before moving on to colour. Casts don't appear to have much colour because they are made of white plaster but, they can have a surprising amount of colour in the reflected lights in their shadow areas,



DRAWING FROM THE MODEL

STILL LIFE PAINTING



for example. However, to study the complexities of colour and of rendering texture, still life painting is ideally suited, and is introduced at this stage, as well.

### **Figure painting and advanced still life**

Finally, after the foregoing considerable practice, one begins painting from the nude model.

The wide variety of colour and shape found in any one figure, let alone amongst different individuals and races, makes for a subject that is at once profound, subtle, and endlessly interesting. At this more advanced level, still life painting continues, too, but it also is more advanced.

The various lessons learned through the academic process can be applied to nearly any subject matter, not just to depicting plaster casts, still lifes, and figures. In fact, since there is no limit to subject matter for an artist, the important things to take away from academic training are the major principles involved. It is they that prevail, not the minor details.







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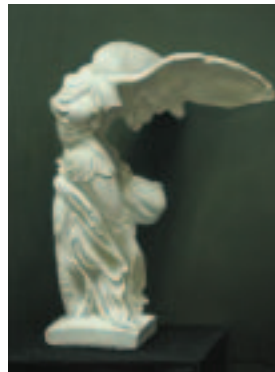
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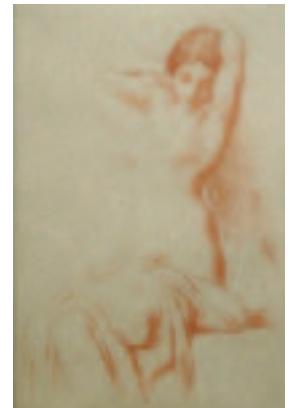
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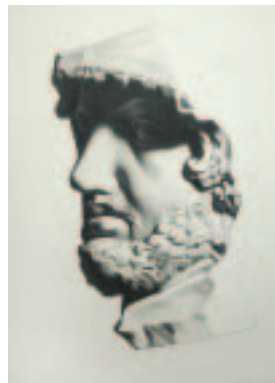
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1. **Linda Crawley**  
Phaenopsis  
36" x 18"; oil on canvas
2. **Kingsley Owen**  
Child at Bath  
(after Wm. Bouguereau)  
18" x 14"; oil on canvas
3. **Juan Martínez**  
Russian Model  
24" x 18"; oil on canvas
4. **Kingsley Owen**  
Red, White & Green  
24" x 12"; oil on canvas
5. **Leslie Morgan**  
Cameron (from the model)  
9" x 12"; oil on canvas
6. **Evelyn Choi**  
Tête de cheval  
(after Charles Bargue)  
15" x 11"; graphite on paper
7. **Gary Richardson**  
Torse d'homme, vu de dos  
(after Charles Bargue)  
15" x 11"; graphite on paper
8. **Kalene Dunsmoor**  
Main de femme  
(after Charles Bargue)  
15" x 11"; graphite on paper
9. **Debby Repka**  
Ariadne du Capitole  
(after Charles Bargue)  
15" x 11"; graphite on paper
10. **Marie-Eve**  
Copie d'une eture pour la  
Sixtine de Michael-Angelo  
25" x 23"; sanguine on paper
11. **Yee Kang Ngeow**  
(Drawing from the cast)  
Finalist in Drawing Category  
2005 ARC Salon™  
24" x 18"; charcoal on paper
12. **Diliana Popova**  
St. Jerome (drawing from the cast)  
32" x 24"; charcoal on pape
13. **Evelyn Choi**  
Drawing from the cast  
24" x 18"; charcoal on paper
14. **Teresa Nice**  
Cherub (drawing from the cast)  
24" x 18"; charcoal on paper
15. **Fernando Freitas**  
The Swordsman (from the model)  
20" x 14"; carbon pencil on paper
16. **William Nathans**  
Female Nude (from the model)  
18" x 24"; carbon pencil on paper
17. **John Lynch**  
Tea Time  
16" x 20"; oil on canvas
18. **Leslie Morgan**  
Copper and Brass  
21" x 40"; oil on canvas
19. **Elise Hunter**  
The Ink Well  
24" x 18"; oil on canvas
20. **Deborah Brent**  
Male Torso (from the model)  
7.5" x 6.5";  
carbon pencil on paper
21. **Garrett Vitanza**  
Female Nude (from the model)  
13" x 11"; graphite on paper
22. **Ellen Erenberg**  
Jeune fille enfant  
(after Charles Bargue)  
15" x 11"; graphite on paper
23. **Yee Kang Ngeow**  
Sweet and Sour  
11" x 7"; oil on canvas on board
24. **Kingsley Owen**  
Towel, Talc and Tie Tacks  
13" x 18"; oil on canvas
25. **Kingsley Owen**  
Tea  
12" x 16"; oil on canvas
26. **Kingsley Owen**  
Potatoes and Ricer  
Finalist in Still Life Category  
2005 ARC Salon™  
22" x 20"; oil on canvas
27. **Marie-Eve**  
Bras d'homme ploye, exterieur  
(after Charles Bargue)  
15" x 11"; graphite on paper
28. **Evelyn Choi**  
Belvedere Torso  
(after Charles Bargue)  
15" x 11"; graphite on paper
29. **Marco Colangelo**  
Andrea (from the model)  
19.5" x 13.5";  
carbon pencil and white chalk  
on coloured paper
30. **Ileen Kohn**  
Victory of Samothrace  
28" x 20"; oil on canvas
31. **Bill Benson**  
Phocion (after Charles Bargue)  
15" x 11"; graphite on paper
32. **Yevgeniya Sovosta**  
Etude de femme  
(after Charles Bargue)  
16" x 10";  
sanguine on coloured paper
33. **Linda Crawley**  
Heavenly Brushwriting  
16" x 14"; oil on canvas
33. **John Lynch**  
King's Ransom  
20" x 24"; oil on canvas

Prices available on request

## ACADEMY OF REALIST ART



The success of our academic curriculum, so beautifully demonstrated in the artwork here, attracts students from all over the world to study at Academy of Realist Art. Students, graduates and instructors regularly win prestigious awards, including high placements in the annual Salon™ of the Art Renewal Center (ARC), the accrediting body for classical fine-art instruction. Artworks by students and faculty now hang in private collections internationally, created on commission or sold through Studio shows and gallery exhibitions like this one. Our newsletter, accessible from our website, will keep you informed about upcoming shows and events.

THE ART RENEWAL CENTER (ARC) is a registered not-for-profit educational foundation, which champions a return to representational fine art, and maintains the most popular art museum on the Internet, with a growing database of 30,000 images and more than five million annual visitors. ARC promotes a return to high standards of training and discipline in the fine arts of painting and sculpture, and supports qualified fine-art schools and yearly scholarship competitions, as well as juried art contests such as the International ARC Salon™

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Tuesday to Friday: 10 am – 5 pm

Saturday: 10 am – 4 pm