The Atelier Tier

Project 4

Project title: Advanced Cast Drawing, White Chalk and Graphite on Toned Paper.

Expected hour to complete: 24-35

Materials:
• Graphite pencils (2H-2B)
• Stonehenge paper (white/cream)
• Kneaded eraser, mono-zero eraser
• Paper stumps
• .3mm-.5mm mechanical pencils
• White chalk pencils (Faber-Castell Pitt Pastel)
• Indian ink (almost any permanent ink will do)
• Wide brush for ink wash application
• 16x20 cradled panel for stretching paper
• Light duty staple gun + staples.

Recommended scale of project: 12 inches (30cm) from top to bottom of the drawing. Edges of the paper should be at least 2 inches (5cm) above and below that.

Feedback submission deadline, block in: Oct. 20th
Feedback submission deadline, final drawing: Nov. 20th

Lesson notes

Background and technical highlights:

This mask is from the full figure of St. Andrew created by Flemish-Italian sculptor
François Duquesnoy (c. 1597-1643). The original St. Andrew is in marble and stands over 14 feet high (about 177 inches) in the Basilica di San Pietro in the Vatican. It is accompanied by three figures all sculpted by Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

Drawing on toned paper with white chalk represents the bridge between drawing and painting. Up to this point we have been working in only one direction with our value application (darker). Starting on a toned ground will allow you to work outward from your middle tones in a new way.

Graphite and white chalk, though comparable up to a point, are not meant to be mixed. The result of blending them together is a cooler grey value than either of the mediums alone.

The value of the paper, optimally around a 2.5 on the value scale, will act as your mid-tone. By this I mean that in a transition from light to dark/shadow there will be a space where neither white chalk or graphite will be applied. The value of the ink wash will determine where this space exists along the transition.

Toning a paper too dark will make it quite difficult to see your block in. It will also result in the necessity of applying a lot of white chalk to get the correct values in the light. While not catastrophic, in my experience white chalk is a little bit more difficult to control than graphite and so this situation leads to a bit more work than is necessary.

Not all white chalks are created equal. They vary in consistency, performance, and even value. There are 2 that I tend to rely upon. The medium Pitt pastel from Faber-Castell and the .9mm ceramic chalk from Sewline. The second is somewhat an unconventional material in the it was a chalk developed for tailors. In my experience it performs very well when drawing but also with respect to accepting fixative.

Concepts:

Envelope shape: A simplification of the silhouette of the subject comprised of straight lines and angle breaks.

Shadow shape: The area of the form of a subject not contacted by light from the primary light source. At different stages this will be illustrated in different ways. At first it will be a linear boundary showing a simplification of the shadow shape (this is similar to the way the envelope shape is a simplification of the silhouette of the subject). As the drawing progresses the shadow shape will be filled with value and the shape of the edges will increase in complexity.

Character of light & shadow: It is one thing to make dark and light values on the paper and another to show the character of shadow and light. Shadow shapes will tend to have continuous edges with a slightly darker concentration of value at the edges. Lights shapes will contain half tone values that do not have concentrated edges and so appear very different from shadow shapes. Their edges are softer and flow into one another. The boundary between the two is of central importance and leads us to the next concept…

Core shadows: the core shadow in a plane on the form which is not influenced by either the primary light source or the secondary light source. This makes it the darkest section of the form in a transition from shadow to light.

Light shape: Light (shape): any area on the form that directly receives light from the light source. You can contrast this with reflected light to better understand the nature of the shadow shape.

Half tone: An intermediate value between light and dark (most commonly used to describe gradations within the light shape).

Dark half tone: Due to the way that light behaves on form we can understand another half-tone concept via the Lambert Scale. A Lambert value scale shows the acceleration of the darkening of value as planes get closer to the definitive shadow edge. This is caused by the form of an object eclipsing different parts of the light source at different points along the form. Once the majority of the light source is eclipsed by the light source this causes an acceleration in the darkening value gradation. (Note: while this phenomenon is better observed when working from a 3D subject it is worth mentioning here just so that we understand it's role.)

Unity: Unity generally refers on the sameness of value. In reference to form it is generally used to indicate the orientation of a plane to the light source. In shadow shape/light shape organisation it generally refers to the grouping, and thus separation, of these two value groups. In this particular Bargue plate the simplifications haven't been made as easy to spot. In this way it is much like working from life or from a photo of life. You will have to learn to see PAST the detail and available information and into the organisation underneath the superficial appearance. In this way you will become a better designer of value shapes.

Gradation: this refers to a progression of value from light to dark or from dark to light. When drawing form a gradation Weill be the way that we communicate the "turning" of a form, meaning that the form is turning towards or away from the light source.

Line quality: There is a variety of lightness and darkness in the counter lines used here. Also, though to a lesser extent, the breadth of the line changes. This can also be referred to as the "weight" of the line. Accomplishing the control of this variety of such a subtle thing as a line will be very valuable to you as an artist.

Fall of light: this is most easily described as the relative darkening of value as planes increase in their distance from the light. Let us say that we have two planes, both inclined towards the light

source to the same degree. One plane is quite close to the light source and the other is quite distant from the light source. The one closer to the light source, unsurprisingly, will be lighter and the further plane will be darker. A great lighting situation to observe this would be a standing nude model lit from above. In this case the tops of the model's feet will be facing upwards toward the light source but will be darker than the tops of the model's shoulders which also face the same upwards direction.

Flow of light: this could alternatively be called the continuity of the light shape. What we are referring to is the continuous and gradient nature of value shifts within the light shape. It is best understood in contrast to the transition between shadow and light which is characterised by a concentrated value edge. Implementing this concept is one way in which we keep the light shape feeling like a light shape thus increasing the natural impression of the subject.

Editing: this is a kind of extension of simplification. It starts with the question o what is necessary to make this drawing look like the subject. Is it the surface texture of the plaster? The shapes of light and shadow? The curvatures of the contour? In each case you can answer yes or no depending on the situation your subject finds itself in. By including the information we deem important or necessary and leaving out what is superfluous we will have edited with the aim of showing what is most useful and important about the subject. The aim with which you are editing will determine what is included and left out.

(NEW) Working Middle Out: This refers to a method of value application that starts on a surface with an intermediate value. This allow you to interpret the tone of the paper as a halftone and proceed to simultaneously add lighter values with chalk and darker values with graphite. In this way the tone of the paper becomes a part of the transition/gradation.

(NEW) Center Light: The plane or planes that are facing most the light source and therefor appearing to be the brightest. It is also very important to differentiate them from…

(NEW) Specular Highlights: A specular highlight is the bright spot of light that appears on shiny objects when illuminated. In a 3/4 light situation this highlight will appear usually at the edge of the center light plane between the viewer and the light source. Specular highlights are important as they provide a strong visual cue for the shape of an object and its location with respect to light sources in the scene.

Process/stages:

Preliminary Studies:

1. Making a small thumbnail drawing of your prospective cast composition is a great way to clarify your composition. I can almost hear you saying in response "its only a cast drawing why would I need to study the composition?" The answer is super simple. If its on a paper or a canvas then it is needs a composition to be pleasing. The earlier you start this practice of conception the better you will be at it when the more complex subjects come along.

Block-in:

1. In this advanced cast drawing project the block in will have an outsized importance. This is why we are going to develop the drawing assignment as 2 consecutive projects. As with most portraits, the St. Andrew cast is largely defined by the features inside of the contour. Because of this we will proceed for quite a while with what is essentially a line drawing.

2. This stage should be defined by what you will leave out of the drawing. You can think of it as an overexposed photo wherein all of the light values are washed out and even the shadows are not so dark.

3. Your handling of edges should also have a hardness limit. The target that we are aiming for here is a clear drawing with well defined parameters but without a graphic hardness to the marks you are making on the paper.

4. Finally, this is the moment where we make sure that the plan is holistic. There should not be sections of the subject that we are intent upon drawing that are not included in the drawing at this point. Details can be excluded, but the picture must be complete.

Value & structure, phase 1

1. This stage will be split into two parts- The 1st will be the expression of the values that will be represented by graphite and the second will incorporate the whole value scale via the integration of white chalk.

2. To help us understand the planes which will be defined by graphite vs. white chalk we are going to place the highlights. These notations don't have to be rendered very well, just enough so that they are not distractingly flat.

3. It's important to understand that even though the form of the cast will begin to appear that this is not a rendering stage. Rendering a cast of this scale and complexity will require many passes of value and manipulation in order to reach the final expression. Think of this moment as the "underpainting." We are here to clarify the bones of the drawing and to create a surface that will accept the white chalk gracefully.