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The Impact of University and Atelier Instruction on Classical Realism Art in America

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Abstract

Students who aspire to become realism artists are faced with a difficult decision about where to learn classical drawing and painting skills. Where should they study and what type of education should they pursue? These students can attend a college or university and obtain a traditional contemporary art education. This choice will provide young artist with a basic education in painting and drawing. Students will also receive an education across different areas of art as well as a liberal arts education. However, students may select to attend an atelier, fashioned after the 19th century pattern for training classical artists. This decision will provide a highly focused classical drawing and painting educational path, but little else. This research will examine documents, articles, and professional journals related to art education. Additionally, interviews were conducted with instructors and administrators from 16 of the best college and universities in the United States that teach painting and drawing. Interviews were also conducted with instructors and administrators from 16 of the best ateliers across the United States. From the literature, personal interviews, and surveys the research has uncovered a series of pros and cons associated with each path. In evaluating the pros and cons the research finding is that for students who wish to pursue a classical realism art career it may not be the best decision to simply default to one option. Rather, the research points towards a conclusion that a prospective classical artist should pursue a carefully crafted individual academic roadmap. This roadmap may include a college and university degree program, however incorporating atelier training is equally important. Conversely, a student may choose a full-time atelier program and

augment their education with college and university studies. Each prospective artist must weigh the benefits and opposing factors of each educational option to decide for them self how best to balance the best of each in order to achieve their goal of becoming a classical realism artist.

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I Love you Mom and Dad ~ Becky

The Impact of University and Atelier Instruction on
Classical Realism Art in America

The history of educating young artists is a continuous process where one can see the continuance of certain traditions, the denial of others, and the invention of new techniques.¹ The world's best artists, historically, have profited by studying with eminent instructors who followed a rigid, well defined, and unvarying art educational process provided through ateliers. In America, during the twentieth century, a paradigm shift changed how artists were educated. The result was that ateliers and rigid specialization focused instruction was replaced with a more experimental, broad spectrum liberal arts, art education, offered through colleges and universities. Now, in twenty-first century America, the pendulum is beginning to shift again with a resurgence of ateliers across the United States and their more traditional apprenticing educational approach. This research paper will explore and determine whether the twentieth centuries popular university art education will continue to be the standard for educating artists seeking to pursue classical realism or whether the resurgence in atelier education will set the future direction for training these young artists in the twenty-first century. To fully understand the question requires an understanding of the history of ateliers and the modern university.

Many people today have never heard of or fully understand the atelier program. Ateliers traditionally served two purposes. They were the workshops where the artists worked while also being the school where master artists trained

their students.² Students were regarded as apprentices and their instruction was closely watched and guided by the master artist.

For centuries, the teaching of young artists was a small group, skill based, and a highly specialized endeavor. Training became a lifestyle, within the atelier, that took years in order for an individual to gain the requisite practice and skills to become a successful working artist. The single-minded focus to a specific artistic style taught by the master artist within the atelier became the sole purist and focus of the apprentices.

Atelier schools began in the middle ages. During the Renaissance, ateliers were very prominent in the education of artists. As the Renaissance art period ended and artistic styles evolved ateliers remained the center of art education. From Mannerism, to Baroque, to Rococo, to Neoclassicism, and to Realism artists all relied on atelier training.³ Over six hundred years of evolving artistic styles relied on the atelier.

Ateliers provided a lineage, like genealogical family trees, establishing the educational roots of artists. This lineage helped to explain the artist's unique art style because of the school he was trained in. Today there are artists who are classically trained through ateliers who can trace their educational origins. A modern example would be Paul Ingbretson, a well-known artist and teacher of the Boston Atelier. He was trained by R.H. Ives Gammell, who was trained by William McGregor Paxton, who was trained by Jean-Leon Gerome, who traces his atelier training back to Jacques-Louis David who was a famous neoclassical artist of the late eighteenth century in France.⁴

Exploring the realism movement of nineteenth century it is evident that the strong linkage to depicting everyday life required exacting precision in drawing and painting, which was the strength of atelier training. However, as the realism movement closed and the impressionistic and post-impressionism styles were born (1865 -1910) artistic interpretation became much more important. Artistic interpretation continued to grow in importance and precise lines and strict training becomes less important as artistic styles of the nineteenth century continued to evolve.⁵ The evolution of art in the twentieth century from Expressionism, to Cubism, to Surrealism, to Pop Art, to Conceptual Art, to Modern and Post-Modern Art was driven through expansion of the artist's interpretation as being the most valued aspect in the creation of art.

These changes in artistic style and the loss of realism in art coincided with an increasing desire for education. Ateliers were viewed as a thing of the past as the growth and accessibility to colleges and universities expanded. The increased popularity in the early years of the twentieth century culminated with the golden age of higher education, occurring between 1945 to the late 1970s.⁶ Tuition was affordable, and government programs, such as the G.I. Bill, assisted with affordability. Also, higher education was made more available to women and minorities. During this time the prominence and need for a college degree also gained popularity in the United States.

To meet the needs of artists' colleges expanded their liberal arts degrees to include degrees in art with an emphasis on drawing and painting. However, the liberal arts degree did not focus on a specific style of art, rather on teaching a broad

spectrum of art related courses across multiple artistic disciplines. As technical capabilities evolved the use of computers in art, especially in areas of commercialization, further eroded the classical realism art training opportunities within the college and university setting.

Over the past four decades the challenges facing aspiring classical realism artists within the college and university system are intensifying. The curriculum for art programs persists in being an immersion approach of different art areas and different art styles, rather than allowing student to narrow their focus to a specific genre of art.⁷ College tuition is increasing at an increasing rate. This has caused a decrease in the number of students willing to assume the debt load to acquire a fine art degree. Colleges and universities are responding to lower enrolment by shifting art programs to more technical commercialized specialties, such as graphic design. For some universities fine art program resources are shifted to other academic areas and in other cases programs in painting and drawing are outright discontinued. However, even with the changes and challenges there are young artists who wish to pursue a fine art education in painting and drawing and who aspire to paint like the masters of the eighteen and nineteenth century.

The aspiring classical realism artists of the twenty-first century face the realities of the big business “knowledge industry”. Universities and colleges represent roughly 3 percent of the gross national product and are critical to state and local economies. Tuition is forecasted to remain high, with an average university degree costing nearly \$150,000.⁸ The business of turning out science, technology, engineering, and math graduates continues to be the priority for

colleges and universities who wish to attract public and private funding assistance.⁹

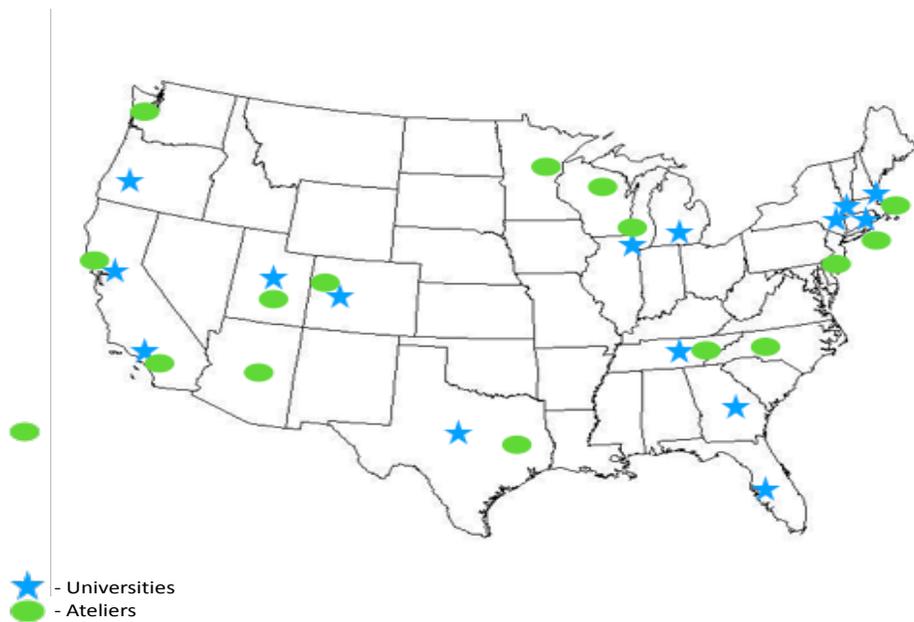
Where does this leave the student who wishes to pursue fine art education in painting classical realism?

Prospective artists have to decide what is the optimal roadmap to acquire the needed skills to be a studio artist. While also assuring they have the skills to be employable in the twenty-first century. In order to better understand the options available to artists in the twenty-first century landscape this research reviewed scholarly articles pertaining to art education. Additionally, qualitative research was conducted through contacting thirty-two art programs, sixteen universities, and sixteen ateliers.

To gain as much first hand knowledge as possible, a standard set of questions were posed to educators, art programs criteria reviewed, and information relative to art students collected and analyzed. The universities and ateliers were selected because of their preeminent art programs in painting and drawing. The programs chosen are in the charts below.

University		Atelier	
Yale University	Florida State Univ.	Academy of Classical Design	Los Angles Academy of Figurative Art
Rhode Island School of Design	Univ. of Denver	Old Hollows Atelier	The Ravenswood Atelier
School of the Art Institute of Chicago	Univ. of Texas	Academy of Realist Art Boston	The Great Lakes Academy of Fine Art
Columbia Univ.	Pacific Northwest College of Art	The Princeton Academy of Art	The Landscape Atelier
Bard College	Suffolk Univ. New England School of Art and Design	The Townsend Atelier	The Master Academy of Art
UCLA	Belmont University	Georgetown Atelier	The Academy of Fine Art
Cranbrook Academy of Art	Brigham Young University	Grand Central Academy of Art	Atelier Maui
San Francisco School of Art	Boston University	Golden Gate Atelier,	Rees Atelier

The interviews were conducted in a manner to eliminate research bias and maintain the integrity of the qualitative research. Questions were designed to help discover problems and opportunities from respondents by making them, open-ended in nature, easy to understand, and digest with no need for clarification. Additionally, the collected information comes from a geographical cross section of institutions across the United States. To avoid interviewer bias questions were asked in the same order and with the same general tone and inflection. Having the interviewer maintain a consistent demeanor assured no one was guided or answers influenced. Allowing the dialogue to evolve naturally captured the best-unprejudiced information possible. Below is a map, which indicates the locations of each institution.



Examining college and university programs provided a greater appreciation for the expansive and broad liberal arts education they provide while pursuing a degree in painting and drawing. University students attain an education in writing, science, economics, math, philosophy and a number of other disciplines in pursuit of a college degree. To successfully obtain a BA or BFA in painting and drawing requirements are very similar across college and university programs as illustrated in the chart below.

Graduation Required Course Work (Approximate)	Credits Required
University Graduation Requirements:	120
General Education	42
University Requirements	18
Major	60
Art Major Emphasis – Painting & Drawing (this includes core drawing and painting classes required during freshman and sophomore years)	33
Art Courses Required Outside Area of Emphasis (Photography, Sculpture, Ceramics, Printmaking, Art History, Graphic Design, etc...)	27

Note: approximation of graduation requirements, data obtained from 16 universities surveyed.

One fact that all interviewees mentioned was that colleges and universities, of whatever size, are a community of heterogeneous individuals with diverse thoughts, backgrounds and goals. The university goal, especially at the undergraduate level is provide a well-rounded education and broad set of experience to develop the minds, habits, and attitudes of the student. “The university campus is a microcosm of society and the experiences gained through living, learning, participating in clubs, debating ideas, resolving conflict, and learning to be accepting of people while respectfully disagreeing with conflicting view points are skills needed in communities. The college experience is designed to help develop well rounded members of society.”¹⁰

While the goals are laudable this leaves art students, especially those who are looking to learn a specific artistic style, such as realism, in a lurch. In examining the chart that define graduation requirements, it is easy to see that only twenty-five percent of a student’s time is spent in a painting studio. Is that sufficient?

The prevailing belief of college and university art educators that was gained through the interviews was that their role was to “inspire, stimulate, and motivate” students through a “journey of self-discovery.”¹¹ Yale University Professor Marta Kuzma wrote: the program’s focus is “to respond to the evolving interests of its students in areas and practices beyond those offered within the core curriculum. The School of Art recognizes that an individual student’s experience is not limited to an existence within an enclosed intellectual and artistic preserve, but is one that is inter-relational, transformative, and identify-forming.”¹² The commentary across the college and university spectrum follow a common philosophy, which is to create,

“institution(s) of higher learning to successfully integrate a studio-based education into such a broad pedagogical framework”¹³ and that the role of the university is to provide “intellectually informed, hands-on instruction in the practice of an array of visual arts.”¹⁴

What is consistent across colleges and universities is the idea that “even when the Core requirements aren’t a direct inspiration, it’s difficult to ignore the liberal arts experience ... the different people that you meet and the different texts that you read, you’re exposed to a lot of different ideas and peoples’ opinions does influence your work in some way.”¹⁵

The educational direction is to create something, using a combination of what is seen and what is imagined. The art instruction is directing students to hone skills in order to create something expressive that convey an important idea while also being accepted as beautiful, with the understanding that the beholder defines beauty.

Another consistent fact is the dedication and quality of the art program provided by colleges and universities to their art students. “Programs are academically rigorous and instructors and administrators are highly motivated to deliver quality painting and drawing instruction.”¹⁶ As part of the quality of program, within colleges and universities, the institutions incorporate a broad reach into a myriad of resources to benefit their students. Through both their alumni organizations as well as through professional associations and personal relationships, students have access to working artists, art critics, shows, galleries, and museums. “You have access to brilliant people to look at your work and speak to

you about your projects."¹⁷ "Famous artists in the outside world would love to have many of our faculty personally talk to them and view their art."¹⁸ While university and college programs are unique they have similar philosophical positions, which is made clear by statements about their respective programs.

Colleges / University	Art Program Philosophy
Belmont University	A foundation in the classic principles of art and design along with a commitment to teaching the most relevant advanced technologies
Rhode Island School of Design	We value collaborative interplay across design, fine arts and the liberal arts... We value experimental, contextual and culturally diverse methods of creative practice ...
School of the Art Institute of Chicago	Our commitment to an open structure is embodied in a curriculum of self-directed study within and across a multiplicity of disciplines and approaches that promote critical thinking, rigorous investigation, and playful creativity
Columbia Univ.	The Visual Arts Program is interdisciplinary and offers a BFA degree in Visual Arts rather than in one specific medium. The program, taught by internationally celebrated artists, allows students to pursue moving image, new genres, painting, photography, printmaking, and sculpture.
Bard College	Contemporary art cannot be contained within the traditional categories of painting, the Bard College art program continues to press forward in exploring art and expressiveness in an attempt to transform the production of visual arts.
UCLA	Provide students with a broad exposure to the arts and encourage new fields of investigation. Students working in more than one medium and explore mixed media possibilities. The programs intention is to provide a framework for creating art.
Cranbrook Academy of Art	The contemporary painter must engage in a quest to locate herself or himself in today's multi-faceted context. The focus is on self-exploration in creating art.
San Francisco School of Art	The school strives to be at the forefront of the art movements through instruction in a wide range of approaches to explore conceptual solutions to the creation of art.

Note: data sources were from discussion with the author from the respective Universities.

What is equally uniform across university and college programs is the philosophy that art is created with imagination and skill to express important ideas or feeling. The concept of teaching only a single style, such as classic realism is “not part of the university program.”¹⁹ The fine arts programs are designed to be

interdisciplinary rather than one specific medium. The programs are specifically designed for all students to “pursue moving image, new genres, painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture, and ceramics.”²⁰

Ateliers have a similar philosophy regarding the idea that art is created with imagination and skills to express important ideas or feelings, but that seems to be where their philosophy diverges from college and university art education. The atelier method is rooted in Renaissance tradition. The Renaissance tradition was a revival of classical Greek and Roman art, creating paintings with depth, linear perspective, and a focus on natural realism.²¹ Ateliers from that time have endeavored to maintain these conventions.

While atelier training ranges in time from two to six years, the majority of ateliers have a four-year full-time program. For ateliers full-time is generally year-round, five days a week. The result is that the time spent by students is significantly more than at colleges and universities two-semester approach. The program is self-paced but curriculum is highly regimented. The first year student, studies the Bague drawing methodology. Charles Bague, an artist known as a portrait painter who executed paintings with meticulous detail, created a drawing course. The Bague drawing course is an essential and foundational component of ateliers since the mid-nineteenth century. Each of the ateliers surveyed use the Bague drawing method to teach “the same Classical techniques and methods of drawing and painting taught in the schools of the nineteenth century.”²² Bague created this program for students interested in classical realism. The program trains student in “how to draw academically correctly, learn the characteristics of shape, and how to

play with light and shadow.”²³ Bague’s methodology also teaches students how to recreate what a student is seeing in exacting detail using a method that breaks down what is seen into basic geometric shapes that are easily understood. From these shapes the student recreates the image. The reason mastering drawing, and especially Bague drawings, are so critical early in the atelier education, is it provides the foundation for later drawing and painting three-dimensional shapes. This method allows artists to be able to have exact proportional representation in their painting as is seen by the artist when viewing a model, landscape, or scene. This is vastly different from university drawing curriculum where very basic mechanics are taught but the majority of the direction is to “draw based on how you feel the image should be interpreted and attempt to capture essence and projected movement of the model”²⁴

Student’s progress, in subsequent years onto cast drawing projects, copying masterpieces, and finally students move onto painting still life, models, and en plein air scenes. Ateliers allow students to progress at their own pace. The steps defined in the curriculum are consistent from atelier to atelier, which was confirmed through the interviews. Ateliers do not provide grades, confer degrees, or have exams. The learning process is to observe, work on a project, receive critique, and repeat. The atelier education focuses on teaching students to observe what is being drawn, be it cast, model, or nature, with a high degree of accuracy. Essentially, this is the process artist’s use in creating classical realism art.

An additional significant aspect within an atelier is the extremely small learning group. In the college setting a small class may be fifteen to twenty-five

students. Teachers and students have multiple classes and may only spend six to nine hours per week in a each class with a professor. In comparison, students in ateliers spend twenty-five to thirty hours a week with the instructor and have many one-on-one sessions with the teacher. Also worth noting is the atelier artist is with the student for their duration at the atelier, making the training very consistent, cohesive, and personal. Atelier work at such a smaller scale that universities cannot realistically match that level of personalization.

The sixteen ateliers studied were remarkably similar in teaching method, size, focus of study, and their attitude toward teaching students. Each of the ateliers exhibited a deep-rooted determination to maintain a tradition of art that they perceive was on the verge of vanishing. Also, there was a very personal and endearing sense of resolve to instructing the students. The ateliers, collectively conveyed, that their duty was not solely developing artists, but to also expand the base of working artists who are classically trained, realism artists.

Characteristics Shared by Ateliers	
Modeled after 19 th century French Academies	Small studio schools with an averaging 25 students
Established and run by an artist considered a living master	Ateliers teachers are working artist and the schools are apprenticeship-style programs
Study is focused on traditional drawing and painting techniques –	Follow the “time tested” method of: Copy, Casts, and Figure Drawing. Using Bargue drawings, Casts, and Models.
Costs are relatively low compared to University Tuitions – Avg. \$10,000 per year.	Focus is on the natural environment focusing on: Still Lives, Portraiture, Landscapes

Note: data obtained from discussion with the 16 ateliers surveyed.

A cursory review of the research would indicate that if an artist wanted to pursue a career as a classical realism artist the only solution would be attend an atelier. What is obvious is ateliers teach the very basics of drawing and painting utilizing a hyper-focused approach to teach the ability to reproduce human forms or landscapes, as they actually exist. Students work with living masters and get very practical advice and guidance with hours and hours of practice daily. Finally, the tuition is much more cost effective and training is very focused on attaining the goal of becoming a classical realism artist.

However, at closer examination and review of the data, paying special attention to the surveys and interviews, a different conclusion is realized. The atelier environment is a bubble and classical art is not the end-all be-all of art making. The teaching process is highly regimented, student run the risk of becoming great at copying, or students become fixated on a historical methods. For example using photos as reference would not be considered as proper material from which to create art.²⁵ Finally, ateliers focus heavily on recycling. For example, composition of old masters is taught as the basis for new works. Similarly, color, layering techniques, and subject matter is taught as what students should mimic. Teaching students to create new compositions or leveraging any new technique to enhance classical realism art is not encouraged. The skills of imaginative drawing or visioning the composition of multiple subjects within the painting are almost nonexistent in atelier training.

Looking forward into the twentieth century it appears that classical realism art will be impacted positively by both university studies and by atelier education.

Ateliers appear to be the leaders in educating artist in classical drawing and painting techniques. Their dedication to teaching and delivering their programs based on traditional Renaissance atelier traditions is non-existent at colleges and universities. The vast majority of universities made conscious decisions to eliminate Bague and cast drawing instruction in favor of more modern approaches.

However, while ateliers in the United States today share common practices taken from the nineteenth century Paris ateliers there are no standard academic governance overseeing the atelier's education. Consequently, atelier education is highly dependent on the personal philosophy of the artist/owner. Students need to select wisely when choosing an atelier and the credibility of their education is based on the quality of the work and reputation of the artist/owner. While university students need to also select a university carefully, a university degree connotes a level of achievement and proficiency that is widely recognized in all parts of society.

Young artists, who aspire to become classical realism artists, should leverage both the university education opportunities while also looking for full-time support or post-graduate opportunities to study at an atelier. Universities broaden the minds of their students and train students to think critically.²⁶ Great art is a visual representation of subject matter that engages the mind and emotion of the viewer. Being taught to think critically and being exposed to many points of view and non-like-minded individuals will only make art stronger. Also, learning to engage the mind and develop compositional skills is critical. Integrating these, and other university benefits, with the atelier classical instruction, dedicate hours or practice,

and personal mentorship with a living master classical realism artist is the best long-term formula.

The short answer for young aspiring classical realism artists is to look for universities to help open their minds and teach them modern approaches to art. Aspiring artists should look to ateliers to learn the foundational rules, concepts, theories, and techniques that universities no longer teach. What is required of the aspiring artist? Aspiring artists need to build a personal education roadmap that includes a university education but also includes atelier instruction.

Compellation of Facts Obtained Through Interviews

Subject Area	University	Atelier
Average number of painting & drawing instructors	8 to 20	1-5
Instructors who are working artists	100 % (Approx. 50% active)	100%
Percentage of time spent on painting and drawing across 4-years	30%	100%
Avg. Painting & drawing class instruction hours:		
- per week	Avg. 12	Avg. 40
- per semester	Avg. 125	Avg. 480
- per year	Avg. 250	Avg. 1,200
- over four years	Avg. 1080	Avg. 4,800
Dedicated Classical Realism curriculum	No	100%
Composition & imaginative drawing	Yes	No
Curriculum includes Art History	Yes - Broadly	Yes - Realism only
Varying painting & drawing instruction	Yes	No
Additional art courses required (Print Making, Sculptor, Ceramics, Photography)	Yes	No
Liberal Art Classes	24	No
Business Classes as part of program	Yes	No
# of Years to Complete Program	4	3 to 6
Total Tuition Costs	Avg. - \$151,000	Avg. - \$53,000
Access to equipment	Superior	Adequate
Studio space	Superior	Adequate
Community	Peers have varying interests	Peers have common interest
Exposure to Artists	Broad Exposure to artists of various genres	Broad Exposure to Classical Realism artists
Networking opportunities	Yes - Broad Exposure	Limited - Narrow Exposure
Internship & Job opportunities post graduation	Yes & lackluster	No & Focus is to becoming a working artist
Learn skills beyond art	Yes	No
Type of educational experience	Broad Liberal Arts	Singular - Classical drawing & painting
Graduates have the artistic training to become working artists at graduation	Limited	Well on their way

Note: data obtained from discussion with the 32 institutions studied.

Notes

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⁸ Ryan Brown (The Master Academy of Art) in a discussion with the author, October 2019.

⁹ Kristie Buscaglio (Belmont University) in a discussion with the author, May 2019.

¹⁰ Michael Cohen (Boston University) in a discussion with the author, July 2019.

¹¹ Jose Lerma (School of the Art Institute of Chicago) in a discussion with the author, April 2019.

¹² "Yale School of Art", September 2019. <https://www.art.yale.edu>

¹³ "Yale School of Art", September 2019. <https://www.art.yale.edu>

¹⁴ "Yale School of Art", September 2019. <https://www.art.yale.edu>

¹⁵ Myers, Suze, "The Art of the Matter". New York: Columbia University Press. April 2014. <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/eye/2014/04/17/art-matter/>.

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¹⁸ Danielle Gutierrez (Columbia University) in a discussion with the author, March 2019.

¹⁹ Jeffrey Mims (Academy of Classical Design Atelier Owner) in discussion with the author, July 2019.

²⁰ Danielle Gutierrez (Columbia University) in a discussion with the author, March 2019.

²¹ Ryan Brown (The Master Academy of Art) in a discussion with the author, October 2019.

²² Hall, Ashley and Barker, T. "Design Collectives in Education: Evaluating the Atelier Format and The Use of Teaching Narratives for Collective Cultural and Creative Learning, the Subsequent Impact on Professional Practice." *Royal College of Art Alternative Practices in Design*, 1 (1), (2010): 5.

²³ Academy of Fine Art Germany, December 2019. <https://academy-of-fine-art.com>.

²⁴ Jose Lerma (School of the Art Institute of Chicago) in a discussion with the author, April 2019.

²⁵ Jeffrey T. Larson (The Great Lakes Academy of Fine Art) in a discussion with the author, May 2019.

²⁶ Peter Abrami (University of Texas) in a discussion with the author, November 2019.

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Reflection

I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to be part of the USU Honors Program and for the experiences this opportunity has afforded me. As an Honors student I had the good fortune to work with exceptional teachers. I have also had the opportunity to engage in various organizations across campus, and participate in the different activities that were required by Honors. The program forced me to move outside of my comfort zone and expand myself in ways I would not have normally participated. Even though some of these activities were stressful I persisted. For example I was pretty nervous presenting research at a campus symposium. I was equally apprehensive conducting interviews with educators from colleges and universities across the United States to collect needed data for my Honors capstone project. However, looking in the rearview mirror at these experiences, I do so with positive, fond memories. The capstone research project was the most challenging aspect of the Honors Program. However, I found that the experience of doing this level of in-depth research has proven to be beneficial in how I personally think about my future.

I chose a research topic that was personal and meaningful to my future. The research question is something I have struggled to answer for myself, and to answer for others who have asked me about educational options for realism artists. While I found the review of academic journals, books, Internet articles, and other scholarly materials pertaining to the subject helpful what I found most meaningful, were the interviews I conducted with the different ateliers, universities and art colleges.

When I first decided to do the interviews I was very nervous. I was concerned that I would not come across as professional or that I would come across as naive and unformed. However, for the most part, everyone I spoke with was very gracious with their time and open with the thoughts and opinions. During this process I learned to be more confident in my abilities.

I have worked on this project for almost 18-months. During that time I have had several obstacles to overcome. As a student who struggles with dyslexia the research takes me longer than the average student. Reading in general is challenging and the more there is to read the more difficult the task as the words seem bounce around the page as I read. For those who do not understand, I would invite you to read while a friend drives you thorough an off-road excursion through the mountains. That's my experience when reading.

Incorporating interviews into my research was a great way for me to offset the reading aspect of the research process. Through speaking with educators I was able to focus on the content without the struggle of reading. I felt that I gained much deeper knowledge on the topic through one-on-one discussions, which in the final analysis helped me create a richer end product. Equally challenging, was the backend of the project. Writing the research results was an exercise in trial and error as I worked to maintain focus on the topic while answering the thesis concisely. I was very appreciative for the long lead-time to complete the work.

An area where I grew as a result of working on this project was learning to adapt to change. I also learned to accept the unexpected, not panic, and solution for issues, which are out of my control. Along with the everyday issues of being a

college student, I was faced with a few other challenges. My initial advisor needed to bow out of that roll for personal reasons. My second advisor had an unexpected opportunity arise to work at the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, in New York, and left Utah State University to live in New York City for a year. I feel very fortunate that Dr. Raymond Veon agreed to be my primary advisor. Although changing advisors was difficult each time, I feel Dr. Veon, in the end, was a perfect fit for me and for the research topic. He has been very supportive and generous in his assistance as I pursue my education in realism art.

In addition to changing advisors, I broke my arm, in two places, in November 2019, which sidelined me for several months. Finally, the complete upheaval of everyone's spring 2020 semester of college, caused by the Covid-19 virus, has created a new normal for everyone. Living in quarantine, which has turned my closet sized studio apartment into my painting studio, my printmaking lab, the library, essentially my entire world, has been a very interesting turn of events. The Covid-19 also provided me with my one true regret, which was not being able to present this material at the spring 2020 symposium. Overall, this experience has given me greater appreciation for personal connections and face-time with my professors and friends. I can honestly say I have a new appreciation for the monks and artists of the Renaissance who lived in monastery cells.

Someday I hope to be a working studio artist. I hope to be a realism artist, following the masters of old who painted in the Realism and Neoclassical style, while also intertwining modern art techniques into my paintings. This research has helped me gain invaluable insight into how to go about achieving that goal.

I have felt that my BFA degree has not fully prepared me for to obtain my career goals and I have pondered if I might have been better of going to an atelier. However, this project has also confirmed, to me, the benefits of my Utah State University degree. I have a better appreciation for the liberal arts curriculum. I value the life experiences I have gained while attending Utah State University. I feel my art will be stronger by being a more informed, accepting, and mature individual.

This project has also helped me also realize value and benefit of the atelier without idealizing the atelier training as the end-all be-all for classical realism artists. I feel I have a better grasp for the need for balance in art education. My university education has better prepared me to make balanced decision through thoughtfully investigating options and looking at choices from many different perspectives. Something I do not believe I would have done without my university education and further confirmed through completing this research project.

If no one else finds value from this capstone project, this work will still be extremely valuable for me. I can honestly say that this work has helped set my future direction. I truly appreciated the opportunity I had to work with such a remarkable, generous, and caring group of people who I have come to know and respect at Utah State University.

Personal Biography

Rebecca C. Brock is an aspiring American painter in the neoclassical realism tradition. She graduates from Utah State University, April 2020, magna cum laude, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting and drawing. She will also receive a minor in art history, recipient of a graduate certificate in museum studies, and is also a graduate of the Utah State University Honors Program. Rebecca studied as a full-time summer student at the Academy of Classical Design, under D Jeffrey Mims, in Southern Pines, North Carolina, during the summers of 2015 through 2019. Rebecca's work has been displayed at Utah State University *Student Showcase* in 2017, *Research in the Arts Day* in 2018, and the Caine College BFA Senior Exhibition, *Threshold* in 2020. Rebecca served as a curator at the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, on the Utah State University main campus in Logan, Utah, January through April 2020. Additionally, the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art is considering Rebecca's Belvedere Statue cast drawing for the cover of their publication, *The Classicist*. At USU Rebecca has held numerous leadership positions in student organizations, her sorority, and served for 3-years on the USU Art's Council, holding many roles including Vice-President of Operations. Rebecca was a Caine College Ambassador for 2-years. Upon graduation Rebecca will attend the Master Academy of Art, an atelier in Springville, Utah to study under Ryan S. Brown, an American painter in the naturalist tradition. Rebecca is on a journey of discovery as she continues to study the time-honored classical traditions of craftsmanship, composition, color, space, and symbolism in her paintings. Rebecca aspires to produce artwork that connects with her viewers on a human level.