

DISCOVERING MANHATTAN: 2014 drawing and painting in the spirit of Modern Art pioneers. ARTS UG.1425 Gallatin arts workshop.

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class meets Thursdays 330-610    in room 432

Ruhe's office: Thursdays 1:00-3:00 in room 431Gallatin.

**Course objectives/Learning goals:** Discover Manhattan is an arts workshop but with an 'artist/scholar' bent. We read and reflect upon other artists as the 'lightning rod of culture' as well as upon ourselves as nascent artist creators. As a workshop, we practice how to draw a face, a figure, a building, we do that, while asking how the line itself is expressive, outside of considering form. You are going to journey to art making as a way of life, as a way of seeing, as a way of engaging your eye and your person, while your career considerations may intersect. We are approaching various skill levels- portraiture- life drawing- plastic composition- clarity vs. suggestibility- psychodynamics of art- while especially essaying triggering mechanisms and oblique strategies at the art making spirit. Many NY artists painted abstractions in the spirit of the city. The goal of the course is to produce artists, creators, edgewomen, lightning rods of culture, not student artists.

**Grading:** the final grade will take into account attendance (two absences creates a situation, three drops the grade, four is possibly an incomplete). Participation for Gallatin students is de rigeur, this is 20% of the grade, your voice in, sharing your art making moments and book reporting. Various papers are 40% of the grade, as we are Gallatin 'artist scholars', profusely quoting from texts to ground your personal art quest historically and from the professor's crits. Edit and re edit your papers, as Dr. Ruhe was Senior Editor for *Art/World* newspaper. Your art making in class

comprises 40% of the grade. Your art is not judged by quality nor by 'labor intensive' but rather by your bold engagement with the process as you evolve as an artist and creator.

**Academic Integrity:** As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, (as in Law School, collaborating on homework is understood and necessary, as in presenting our group book presentations, by committee. Working together at art is also great. Citing who you are working with is a courtesy but in this paragraph seems to be a legal necessity outside the professor's purview, please consult the Gallatin legal counsel for the precise protocol) doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (<http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html> )

Course Description : we will draw and watercolor at various locations in the city every other class. Then we will follow up with critiques and seminars and retouch the fieldwork artwork.

Our target: Manhattan. What levels of meaning can we address in art making? How have other artists angled their attack? What is E. B. White's approach in Here is New York. He discovered the holistic irony in spiritual, materialistic NYC. You may update his insights. Lorca mused at Columbia U on "Duende" and Ginsberg "Howl"ed his Whitmanesque dirge. How did they grasp the soul of our city.

We outline our target cameos of the city and our artistic attitude and goals in a charette. The duress of street painting in winter may not be pleasant for some of you!! You may bow out of this class gracefully now, as there is usually a long waiting list. We discover that the entire city is our vast painting studio. What luck. How did Abstract Expressionism come to define the New York artist? Were they painting the city, as they claimed? Could you commit an abstraction that you titled 'Empire'.

Read the entire syllabus now, And read it before each class, or you may be quite surprised to be in the classroom when everyone else is on the Brooklyn Bridge. Oops. We meet in the big city outdoors a lot.

You may want to pick theme(s) and art style(s) to concentrate on: Satire. Narrative. Find your Angle on the city. Apocalypse? Ads? Underground. Occupy. Fashionistas. The

professor is happy to have you bring your own art background into the course to share with the other students.

We split up the book reports for group analysis over the semester: our books are:

Here is New York by EBWhite (due Feb. 6)

HOWL by Allen Ginsberg (can youtube Allen reading!)

The Club, edited by Natalie Edgar. (Due March 6) (from the handout or buy a copy I have)

Art Spirit by Robert Henri (due April 3)

HANDOUTS: from MoMA “NY School” AbEx catalogue, from April Kingsley’s The Turning Point when NY upended the School of Paris. And on. Including our own Irving Sandler. The “DUENDE” essay by Garcia Lorca from his lecture at Columbia U, and featured in his ‘Poet in New York’ collection. What Painting Is, by James Elkins, excerpt. For book presentations: Get the gist, quote from, abstract, then spin off the book in an artistic extrapolation. The first group will present Here is NY next week.

Bluestocking brings the books to the classroom, bring a credit card or check. Everyone is required to do all the readings and on time and your final grade will reflect that. Our book circle begins with the 3 person group’s intro, then segues to seminar roundtable with ALL contributing.

Before the 2d class: go to Pearl Paint on Canal, or NY Art , or the NYU bookstore, and get a watercolor hard press sketchpad 9x12inches spiral- 50 sheets. One tiny sketchpad to have with you at all times. One fat and one skinny watercolor brush. Watercolor pencils are great for the road -red, yellow, blue, chinese white, indigo, ocher, umber, green. 4b pencil. pastels or oil crayons called craypas, if you like. Hard and soft charcoal for sure. Do NOT get a Pot of india ink; instead buy soft brush tipped pens that carry the ink inside them, this saves impending disasters and the museums don’t let you use a pot of ink for that reason. Watercolor pencils are great for drawing, then you later wash over them with a brush of water and they explode in color. These are your piano keys to make your visual music of the city. ((you may want to diverge from above materials to play your strength or to try something new. Hint: oils won’t play out on the run))

FIRST CLASS , 30 January, introduction to the aims and spirit of the course and getting a feel for the students’ abilities and needs. Pick the groups for book reports.

CLASS TWO: Feb 6. meet at classroom

A GROUP’S PRESENTATION OF EBWHITE’S BOOK HERE IS NEW YORK. With ensuing seminar format for everyone else to comment on the book and how they took it. ALSO DUE: This includes a 2 page poetical rant on some aspect of New York you are drawn to that makes your time in the city awful or awfully wonderful, something back home you can hardly share with the old crowd they won’t get the joke but we will. We are with you. Reading EBWhite will provoke your quick poetical essay immediately.

At 430 we all walk out together to our first art attack site at Cooper Square.

We regroup at 530 at Starbucks West of the Square for our crit on art and street studio

technique. It is urgent that you crit each other on the spot as you draw, share your ideas, find out what your scrawl means to someone else. They are impressed with your smears and jabs, even if you are dissing your efforts, we see what you do not, magic through your hands if not in your own conscious mind, pouring through, as Art. We learn to trust that our body-knowing may integrate on the picture plane with our averred intent. It is not all what you plan.

CLASS THREE: Feb. 13 meet on site at Dorfman Gallery, 7<sup>th</sup> floor, 529 W 20th St. By 4pm we are fully together and we then elevator to top floor to walk down through 20 galleries quickly but stopping in front of a work that resonates with you to capture that spirit in your sketch! we draw at galleries. Is it redundant to make a drawing of art in a gallery? What happens? Can you segue the rendering into your OWN art? Theft? Interpretation? Appropriation? Even making a “bad” drawing shifts one’s intensity of gaze to enhance the experience of the art viewing. Are these installations about New York even tangentially? What global/local dance is the art world up to? Why are African artists showing on 20th Street? Interesting.  
By 530 PM we regroup at Dorfman Projects on 7th floor of the 529 West 20<sup>th</sup> St. building for group crits. Openings in Chelsea are 6-8pm do join the prof in a hypercritical press the flesh artpoliticking event where being seen is a career maker.

CLASS FOUR: February 20, come an hour early if you can! At 3, even, start drawing the instant you get there. we meet on-site, at the MET 82nd and 5th ave. They may not mention it, but you may pay what you will, one dollar. Rendezvous at the "Greeks" . You turn left as you enter the entry hall to get there, and start drawing the statues until we are all assembled. Stay together. We will superimpose an African sculpture fetish image on our GrecoRoman sketch, to see how the Harlem Renaissance overlaid European sensibilities for the American Rhythm Mondrian attempted in his painting Broadway Boogie Woogie. We will proceed briskly to the Lehman Wing and the Ashcan School of New York Urban Art. And rush to the New York School of abstract expressionists upstairs, the Pollock Kline DeKooning Mitchell Rothko set. Then Crit.

CLASS FIVE: feb. 27 meet back at classroom. Crit all drawings and retouch. Portrait lesson and what philosophy comprises a portrait. How does a building become a portrait. We critique your art for content, direction, dreaming, vision, grand design, hand, materials. Is it apocalypse or utopia or both. What edges are you on.

**DUE.** Group presentation of The Club. The presenters will moderate a Club/like PANEL with ALL students in on “painterly abstraction referencing NYC angst and Zeitgeist, how is this possible.” And everyone has read the book for today because the book’s editor and wife of Phil Pavia, *Natalie Edgar, is our visiting scholar artist*. We wouldn’t want to disappoint her after all her efforts to compress and illuminate 20 years of art panels into one volume.

And we all seminar on The New York School of Abstract Expressionism. Dr Ruhe presents a brief history of the Pivot Point when this group of self named Irascibles took the lead away from the School of Paris, having bitterly targeted Matisse and Picasso, and watching the Uptown success of Surrealist war refugees. It was the War of the Roses AND THE INDIANS VS THE REDCOATS, as Club founder Philip Pavia termed the

ambition of the new American Expressionists versus the chic uptown émigré artists..

CLASS SIX: March 6 we meet at the Staten Island Ferry!! Dress very warmly- for sure buy thermal leggings for this class. A great hat. Ski overalls?

**due:** a short poetical essay on your surrealistic Manhattan. To remind us that art is philosophy made manifest. Scan again the entire Here is NY to get in the mood for your poem, an ode to one building or site or event in Manhattan, a nugget to mail back home to Dubuque? Musing over your face to face moment with something truly Nieuyorquaise.

on site at the Staten Island Ferry: we take the 4pm ferry to be together, be on time!! We rendezvous in the mobbed main hall before entering AND LOITER IN THE BACK OF THE MOB SO WE CAN END UP AT THE VERY VERY REAR OF THE FERRY OUTSIDE LOWER DECKÖ.TO DRAW MANHATTAN AS SHE RECEDES QUICKLY. ALWAYS START DRAWING LIKE MAD WHEN YOU GET TO A LOCATION- AND BE THE LAST TO STOP DRAWING AND ENDURE THE WEATHER THE ENTIRE THREE HOURS. We remain at the BACK of the ferry to draw the receding Manhattan skyline. Then ten blitz drawings of the Statue of Liberty as she flies by (an exercise that is central to the theme of this course, as it frees your hand surprisingly, to shorthand notate the vision in an abstracting act of compression) We debark the ferry ensemble, and I guide you to a local coffee shop to crit, and retouch drawings to meet your own poetic theme for where you want to psycho-situate yourself. Drawings are not merely renderings, but staging grounds for dreams, and interpretations of what you are doing in this city.

CLASS SEVEN: March 13 We meet at the Fountain at the Plaza Hotel at 59th and 5th Ave. If rain, we meet under the canopy at the entrance to the Plaza. We draw buildings AND the fruited statue- the essence of this locale is the Fountain statue au natur complementing the hard and soft architecture both Modern and Empire styles. See if you can play your drawing off of the conceptual contrasts happily warring. -and later we crit inside the park. And after class join Ruhe at art openings on 57<sup>th</sup> St.

**Due:** "Here is New York" styled spinoff FORMAL 3 page essay . Read EBWhite again, then see where your theme wants to address a chapter of your own New York. Quote EBWhite first. Then reflect on the city in microcosm, illustrating macrocosm, a story you can tell that sets your stage. Do you have an artwork you already made by way of illustration for the essay? This is a tiny paper, so really polish it.

+ Friday March 15!! Panel discussion on the historic Armory Show where Duchamps' Urinal was famously rejected. 630 pm at ATOA: take notes! Voluntary but exigent.

SPRING BREAK . NO CLASS.

March 21: no class that day, we meet in April at a jazz club!! For sketching, see below:

CLASS EIGHT. March 27. TBD (Jazz Club nite may replace this class)

CLASS NINE: April 3; meet at Times Square: dress very warmly.

Class rendezvous at grandstand at center of Ticketron Island at Broadway and 45th St.

How to encapsulate that much confused materialism, an island in a sea of concrete and glass blitzed by billboard scapes and neon. What meaning. Where are you in all this, a reporter? A sadhu? CAPTURE TIMES SQUARE EXCESS, SOMEHOW. HINT, BE EXCESSIVE WITH THE PAINT. DO A COUPLE DRAWINGS HIT IT HARD WITH BIG INK BRUSH, FOR 15 MINUTES. THEN DO A TWO HOUR TOUR DE FORCE single drawing... FULL OF VERTIGO. The class regroups at 5pm in HOJO coffeeshop for crits and rave.

CLASS 10: April 10, meet on site, in the center of the Brooklyn Bridge, under the first arch. If there is a hard bad rain, we meet in the classroom instead. If Dodging clouds or very light rain, then we still go to the Bridge. Be bold- but call my cell 917 721 2541 to be sure. And for such an exposed place, dress for the afternoon shadows, it will get brisk.

CLASS 11: April 17. Classroom, with Jon Singer visiting artist. Collect collages materials from the street, for constructing "maps" reflecting NYC detritus as a mirror. Also bring a large panel board, two foot square, to collage onto. And scissors or xacto and glue. Can your collages go into a ritual spiritual journey through the city towards an epiphany. During Jon's crit of your collages, see what New York story might be embedded in the debris. This is a vision quest into the city by way of free associations.

CLASS 12: April 24 at the classroom: Classroom 1. book reading due: HOWL;;;;;;  
..2. then write your own version of Howl in your own dark voice with allegory and referencing associations off the top of your head, the kitchen sink of our time in this new age in your next avatar. This could be a long long poem with little editing. Give us your epic reconstruction of all of what you know and have experienced in a rhythmic cadence. Later, Washington Square sketching for the mural.

NightTime: obligatory class trip!

+ JAZZ CLUB "Smalls" just two doors off 7 avenue at 183 West 10<sup>th</sup> street.

730 pm to 9pm. The purpose of the trip is student bonding and a chance to draw a 'cave' in the rhythm of the music, jazz is NY, jazz is America, jazz is Bach made now. We could go to Harlem instead but it would approximate Smalls anyway.

Class 13: May 1! back in classroom: a critique of your roving masterpiece prototype that you worked on as homework and on site. Our groups of four break up to recompose their collective and separate masterpiece. Reflect on and insert theme. Flesh it out. (Your collage might be useful in fleshing out the masterpiece. Recut and add from it.

**DUE:** GROUP PRESENTATION OF ART SPIRIT READING. YOU JOIN IN TOO.

Collaging past work into your masterpiece is legal. This is a culminating piece of art that draws on the class experiences but adds your own private trajectory into the city ten years from now.

Later we run out to sketch Picasso's vast statue *Sylvette*.

CLASS 14 : May 8: last class: in classroom.

**FINAL PAPER DUE:** 4 pages reflecting on art and your Manhattan Project, historical and personal, your trajectory in this class eking out art, matching raw pigment to steel and glass and flesh and making your own sense of it, finding a glimpse, a DERSHAN, of the gods of the city. The psyche flowing to the jazz beat of the bass fiddle at a jazz club. How does your art making forge a path into an experience of your city. Fleshing out this paper inside a small group. Where does the hand of the artist speak, when is reason bypassed or defeated. What artwork was done and what did it reveal about you and about the city. How can you revisit your old sketches to revise and reclaim them based on the needs of each present day. No work is for 'study' merely, but exists as a journal or your journey, as steps along the way. How is abstract art work ALSO catching the energy the zeitgeist of the city. How is your work so NOT Peoria, Illinois or even not Hoboken.

Really contemplate your own and others artworks to find the existential crisis expressed. The clues are in the artwork. So your art workshop wasn't just to learn to render, but was also a personal JOURNEY into Manhattan. Navigation. Mapping. The moment. This happens when the paint material and the hand are together. As in Jazz, a lot happens in the performing you didn't plan on, in the zone.

Review the journey of the class and all the work. We read aloud bits of your "Here Is New York" styled essays.

Then we **Regroup in Washington Square Park** to ensemble collaboration paint a large mural of New York in a dream sequence.

overview:

Fourteen classes, seven on location drawing and painting live, buildings and scenes, going for expression through experimentation with your materials and gestures and narratives. Paying attention to art historic NY styles like Ashcan and School of Paris and contemporary art interpretations. Back at the classroom we group crit, analyze, historicize, retouch surrealistically and ironically, at art. Warning, it will often be brusque out there, we will duck into coffee shops, but expect to work hard under duress for hours! This experience, more than talent, will serve you well in the course and in your artistic careers.

This workshop is user friendly. What would you like to discover in Manhattan? You can break off from the pack on your detour to fashion culture, jazz dives like Legere at Iridium, Art Shows, The New York School (of Abstract Expressionism) at MOMA.

One piece, a masterpiece, a labor intensive large artwork, should be approached on your own as a bonus homework assignment, go where you will on this stylistically, while stretching yourself creatively.

Theme: you in the thick of what Manhattan means to you.

What art skills to pick up? Watercolor, drawing, acrylics, tight graphics or loose Expressionistic Romanticist touch, breathing your soul into the city and catching the town journalistically. You may come into this class with some or no skills, you may be thinking graphics or cartoons exclusively, and I am asking you to use those skills but also to develop your own voice in the process, find your own smell on the paper, AND EXPLORE ART MATERIALS LIKE THEY ARE REALISM AND SURREALISM AND EXPRESSIONISM.

Alert: This is an arts workshop where I welcome your experimentation and your own previous style strengths; while hoping to explore alternatives as well. So much of your grade ALSO depends on ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION and BEING UP ON ALL THE READINGS AND ON TIME WHEN DUE. Missing 3 classes begins to see a drop in grade. I am checking off whether you participated in the seminar on each reading, understanding that we want a brisk and lively exchange that flows, so shyness or hesitation will be of no benefit to any of us. Questions, even doubts, and even criticisms, are most welcome and help everyone gain traction in the course. Moving into artistic consciousness is not as obvious as we might presume! The great artists truly paved the way with remarkable shifts of understandings. For instance, how is the “New York School” (of Abstract Expressionists) about NYC since the art is completely abstract (?!). (Plagiarism, it goes without saying, is intolerable. It consists of borrowing others writings and sometimes even their ideas, without quoting them. Refer to those you honor in quoting or paraphrasing, this is elemental scholarship.) (Within consideration, papers are due on time, and readings must be kept up because our discussion is timely while we are in the classroom, as we won’t be able to talk round robin while sketching at Times Square! Again, the grade will start to suffer from lapses.)

Curiously, your virtue in artmaking is mostly dogged. Keep at it. That is where your evolution lies both in skill and concept. Exploring materials and styles robustly is much the purpose of this kind of workshop, so I expect your results to be ... clumsy and offhanded in the best of situations. We have to test ourselves, and test the materials. To Stretch. You may comment on that ‘stab’ at your art, during your crit, this will become you. It is not an apology, it is a declaration that you were challenging yourself. We are not in High School, so the terms of engagement have changed, mark this.

The Artist/Scholar paradigm special to Gallatin School requires your engagement intellectually even as we are principally an arts workshop. Artist Robert Motherwell wrote books and co-founded the Paris Review. And Willem de Kooning could talk art history endlessly at the Uffizzi in Florence. Even the Abstractionists haunted the MET. You’ll see all those painters in coat, tie, evening gowns at their Club talking ART three nights a week. Wow.

I want to introduce you to other ways of looking at a skyscraper: It is a design problem. How to squeeze 300 feet into twelve inches and make it as exciting as when you confront Empire head on, live, from a few blocks away. Not from a photo. No. Maybe at dusk, or rush hour, in the fog, while it is biting cold. And the building seems positively hostile. This is a good thing. The building has a personality. It makes you feel like something. And this is part of your drawing. How you feel must come through your hand in the marking and in the Arbitrary Color (van Gogh’s idea) .

A skyscraper is the sum of abstract thinking: when you draw it abstractly it reflects the attitude of the creator, the architect, the visionary. With the spirit of an idealistic punch in the sky. A tower of Babel, hubris, daring, big bucks. It can be its own dream or just yours, or both. A skyscraper scrapes the sky. It is poetry from the word go. It is concrete and quartz and glass and lots of wires and oil and steam and electricity and people. 30,000 people in the Empire State Building alone. It is history. Twenty people jumped to



their deaths from the lookout platform of Sleepless in Seattle. A chill in the air. And there is the red lining and the silver lining on all the windows reflecting sky and cloud and sun and cityscape. And the stone is brown and/or blue and/or yellow and/or gray and all of the above it depends on the day. Empire is a rattlesnake, rough skin, coiled, shining with bright menace. Moving clouds and you see the building tango like a Disney cartoon.

You're hungry so the building seems colder. Nebraska is different. The elevator man? He is part of the story, as are the clerks and execs and security and sanitation engineers and ghosts and tourists and techies. Each with a story and what a story- go up and interview one person and be shocked that they are that interesting.

There are micro and macrocosms to consider. The street vendor in front of Empire is a bad joke on evolution. He has an engineering degree, speaks five languages most you've never heard of like Gujarati and Sindhi,

He is more poetic, has more sense, deserves better breaks than the CEO

indoors. The vendor's son may well become the next CEO, and he knows it, that's why he slipped in from Mehmedabad.

(WTC is Hamlet's Ghost: "remember me".)

Our small research team may trek out to an undiscovered corner of Manhattan: Cloisters. Asia House. Carl Jung research center. Zendo. Zabars. Bronx Zoo. (how is a zoo a distinctly urban experience? Aha) Queens Ashram. Mosh Pit at Mansion. Blues in Harlem. Folk Music at Village Vanguard. Off off off Broadway. A struggling new dance company. Frick Museum inner courtyard. Phoebe Legere at Jazz Club, Woody Allen jazz pickup band, Madonna at Odeon sketched like a paparazzi on the prowl, Free concerts around town. Free Fridays at the MoMA.

To research demographically on the fly cosmic Manhattan hi and lo, break up into your own group, sketch as you go as a way of Counting Coup and as a form of contemplation of the question, and as a way of seeing.

Must we justify our venture into the bowels of our city through sober reflection, diligent recording, clever analysis, thorough research, endless discussion, the hard rock pile of poetry, frank critiques, more discussion, curious comparisons, raw philosophy?

The latest Tweets from barnaby ruhe (@barnabyruhe): "Just posted a photo <https://t.co/M7ncpFngKv>". Meet the most die-hard Village Halloween Parade marchers | <https://www.timeout.com/newyork/things-to-do/meet-the-most-die-hard-village-halloween-parade-marchers> 0 replies 0 retweets 0 likes. Reply. The Ruhe Foundation presents ShamanCycle Victory Party - Portrait Painting!!! <https://www.facebook.com/events/164142050427424/> 0 replies 2 retweets 0 likes. Reply.