

OPEN FIGURE DRAWING INC.



WE DRAW PEOPLE

Corner of Westcott and Euclid  
Syracuse NY  
[www.openfiguredrawing.com](http://www.openfiguredrawing.com)  
Facebook Open Figure Drawing Inc.  
315-453-5565

# Studio 2018 How We're Unique

## A tiny history...

Perhaps 25,000 years ago our descendants started representational arts. The Greeks about 1,500 years ago developed hyper-realism which was an ideal figure composed from multiple models. Four hundred years ago the Renaissance ushered in anatomical study. The educational system of master and apprentice gave way to the Atelier. By the 1950's abstract expressionism turned interest from the figure to surface and color. Community drawing groups began to spring up and in 1989 OFD was born, a grassroots response to the loss of the figure. Contemporary figure work today is based on dynamics, distortion, and speed rather than Beauty and the meticulous proportion, tonality, and fidelity of classical figures.

Everyone who can write their name can draw. Studio sessions are based on no barriers, low cost, and unchanging calendar of sessions. There are many things to be observed in the studio; some go unnoticed such as Contributions of the Model, Peer Mentoring, Importance of play and practice, Pre-artists and more benefits of a Community Drawing Group.



## Models contributions

Most of our models come with countless hours of experience (some with decades of experience). They are self-organizing, choosing their own poses. Our schedule of poses remains constant: 5- two minute, 5 one minute, five 30 second gestures. A 10 minute, a 20 minute, break time with snacks, a ½ hour, and a final one hour pose). Some take their profession to the level of performance artists, bringing narrative, props, or costume. Even the novices can be enticing with their unorthodox view of posing. We consider our model pool as our most valuable resource and protect their confidentiality. Due to issues of nudity we don't allow photography or phone use within the studio.

## Peer Mentoring

Our setting for multi-age and abilities offers some special learning opportunities. Participants work at their own pace and may be at various stages of learning in different specialties. Working side-by-side in a collaborative and nurturing atmosphere creates opportunities for observing inadvertent demonstrations. Multi-age mentoring stimulates rich interaction and inventive problem solving as participants consciously or subconsciously 'borrow' techniques, styles and materials. Our environment gives participants the opportunity to take on roles as teacher or student. This allows for reinforcement of skills in many settings. It also engenders a familial



atmosphere where people are able to find true peers regardless of age/abilities. We'll have a match for you!

## Importance of Practice and Play

With interaction with live models, participants learn to organize their time and manage their work. This is an ongoing process throughout the artist's experience. With hands-on, small-group activity (averaging 18 participants), people find real world problem solving skills by making artwork. The studio is a laboratory for anyone to work on developing skills. Highlights are the conversations that occur during breaks, or a review of our library. Students guide and mentor one another, seeking input through participation. The studio allows the physical creation of art which may help them focus on academic challenges without formal instruction. Peter Grey writes about the shrinking opportunities for play. The trends have been for over structured, overseen, and overbooked activities. The studio allows complete personal choice and FUN.



## Individualized Education

All styles and abilities are accepted in the studio. Learning is engaging as the students participate in drawing, interactive discussions, and hands-on exploration. As they become more sophisticated in handling this non-formal information, errors are viewed as natural opportunities for learning. People develop on-going goals. Problem solving becomes a personalized assessment. We ...

## Individualized Education

(continued)

offer a non-juried, uncensored group show to help usher participants into more professional habits. Portfolios are assessed not by outsiders, but by the individual within our community. We enable participants to experience competency in skills of expression and internalize the processes for their best communication and problem solving. Problem solving in Art is a complex set of skills — learning to identify problems, articulate the problem, break it into solvable parts, imagine multiple solutions, and evaluate risk, can take a lifetime to master. Lev Vitzgotski makes the case for social learning. We observe, listen and copy. We learn to talk and walk in this manner. The studio operates in the same fashion, by immersion.



## Pre-Artist?

Many of the participants don't consider themselves as artists. There are many words to describe them; novice, dabbler, hobbyist, weekend warrior, learner, amateur, beginner or even pre-artist. We also attract full time professional artists and educators seeking to keep their edge. No matter what one thinks about their artistic ability the studio can help with a realistic self-image. I acknowledge shared characteristics with the New School in Syracuse. Immersion in the studio helps with decision making and abilities to evaluate alternatives. The studio presents ways to cope with failure and utilize mistakes. Participants view problem solving and alternative solutions in real time. The studio is full of curiosity, an eagerness to explore and understand. The room is heavily laden with imagination as images are created. It is easy to observe risk taking and participants dealing with uncertain outcomes. Here is the work of artists.



## Respect and Collaboration

The studio's ground rules: respect the models, and respect fellow participants, under the guidance of hosts. Issues emerging in the studio are discussed and solutions brainstormed by our Board. A byproduct of our session has been the forming of a community of likeminded people, based on the arts. We not only meets Wednesday (7-10pm nude sessions) and Sundays (1-3pm family friendly costumes and street clothes), but hold travels sessions (such as Drawing In Nature, at the Everson, or Westcott Street Cultural Festival), and offer special celebrations (like Mardi Gras, Spooktacular and Holiday-tacular). Find our updated calendar on our website [www.openfiguredrawing.com](http://www.openfiguredrawing.com) and sign up for email reminders and discounts. We invite everyone to join our group show.

## What is a Community Drawing Group?

I found an eloquent description of a drum circle from Arthur Hull . I coopted his piece because it was also relevant to our figure drawing group. All the rewriting would have involved was a few substitutions and a few modifications but I took the basic concepts a bit further. The two art forms share such fundamental benefits that I was amazed by similarities. © by Arthur Hull's website <http://www.drumcircle.com/>

Within our non-professional representational drawing culture there are community drawing sessions. In the context of how we are using it, they are the basic and simple use of drawing. We use drawing events as a *tool for unity*. Unity is participation based on inclusion. The community drawing groups across the United States are fun and although not necessarily considered a family friendly event (but they can be), where people come together in order *share their spirit* by joining into an ensemble of individual works. This spirit is the joy of making imagery.

We empower each other in the act of celebrating community and life through drawing. People of all levels of drawing expertise come together and share their artistic spirit with whatever skills and materials they bring to the event. Any one is welcome and everyone who comes and participates has something to offer the group. These offerings are simple, foremost is observing how many people tackle the same drawing task. The results are secondary to celebrating drawing together. For the core members, drawing is a way of life. The newcomers can absorb this attitude as well as discovering new ways to create.

Celebrating is multifold. There is the excitement of seeing imagery develop before their eyes. It is empathizing with the making, framing, and exhibiting of images. There is a community formed by creative people that enjoy being the presences of one another. We share music, food, and the library of books and images. The ticket is not just the viewing of the model, but seeing the other participants, their work, and associating with them. Some novices are starting their artistic journey and benefit from proximity of other like spirits. We share insights into creativity. We explore the countless avenues of style.

The spirit and magic of drawing covers all ages, genders, religions, races and cultures. It says drawing is a universal language "*known to everyone, even the youngest child, if we can just remember*" to quote Hull. Drawing is within our nature, practice is needed to develop and our sessions provide not only opportunity but the perseverance to grow. "*So in a very objective, yet beautiful way, a session puts us all on an equal footing with each other and brings us closer together*". To promote drawing we suspend judgment on the work, this acceptance is part of the magic. In the studio we find rookies can hit a home run, and the best may foul. Anticipating how the creative process develops is difficult at best. While attempting to maximize their skill, participants may be willing to settle for less than perfect outcomes. There is an acceptable tradeoff for learning rather than successful imagery. Process trumps product when there is believe the next image will be better.

The secret of the art studio is that autonomous artists may actually develop more skills in creativity in group situations rather than solo acts. This unconventional learning is an off shoot of the ancient apprentice / master but peers serve as role models and participants are free to generate their own work. The open studio invites all people in; the only prerequisite is interest rather than skill. Within the studio autonomous artists borrow bits and pieces and assemble the information into their approach. Few people have complete information out art, only limited personal information about their own approach. The studio has collective wisdom for many different aspects that can be shared. The studio's open policies allow for freedom of personal choice without interference.

Strategies for creating images are usually developed by individuals and reinforced over long periods of alone time. The studio allows people to rewrite strategies that might not be easily abandoned otherwise. Our group wisdom shares the culture of successful drawing. Long standing approaches can be altered when new problem solving approaches are observed or overheard. External influences are internalized with repeated visits. Respect or admiration for other successful outcomes, help mitigate resistance to change. There are personal payoffs from adapting the work of other artists. Studying the master is a time honored learning method, updated in the studio to live, in the moment of creation. Our group is [basically] self-organized without complex rules.

*“Co-operation and collaboration is the basic glue to a community.”* A community session is a collaboratively self-organized event created, "in the moment," by a model and all the people who participate. Our sessions forms circles around the model, not only give a view of the model but views of the work in progress. A models experience provides another layer of opportunities. When we, as a community, draw together, sharing our spirit in the form of images, it can change our relationships for the positive. As we draw together, we give ourselves views of images under construction, and messages about art. This can be an emotional release as well as potential learning. The release from judgment and healing from these creative experiences is different for every person that is in the drawing group. It happens whether we are entering into the circle by drawing, or standing by the circle and observing and listening. All we have to do is bring to the group whatever drawing expertise we have to offer, to make artwork together, beautiful or not so.

People of all levels of drawing expertise come together in a community drawing group and share their spirit with whatever they bring to the event. They don't have to be an artist to participate. They don't even have to exhibit. Participants can play with representation or abstraction. They can draw stick figures, they can represent or inspire. It is enough that they are in the session and participating. Over time change happens.

Unconventional learning was an accidental byproduct of banning together to draw. The value of the images produced in an event like this is not based on the expertise of the participants, but on the relationship with their art. Participants are exploring their potentials. With many developmental levels, people can instruct each other without formal lessons. The quality of work in the session is immaterial. The result is those magical moments where inspiration runs rampant. In those moments, the participants stop worrying about keeping up with standards or styles. Competition, as they know it, has stopped. In its place is a living breathing entity, expressing timeless joy, passion and release through the power of drawing.

That is the beauty of a community drawing session.