



Day, oil on canvas, 2009, 60x40" (152 x 102 cm)

STARTS THIS MONTH

IN PART ONE OF THIS NEW SERIES **DANIEL MAIDMAN** TELLS US HOW TO MEET, SELECT AND HIRE MODELS

The Artist's Model

Pliny the Elder claims that drawing originated in Greece. The lover of a young woman of Sicyon was about to depart. She saw that he was casting a shadow on the wall, and traced his shadow to remember him. In this story, the artist, the drawing and the model spring into being simultaneously. A motive links them: the model is precious to the artist, and must shortly disappear. The drawing is a means of rebellion – rebellion against disappearance, against loss, against time, which sweeps away every mortal thing.

From then until now, artist, art and model have remained deeply intertwined. Much has been written about artists and art. Very little has been written about models, in either philosophical or practical terms. In

this series of articles I will attempt to shed a little light on the practical side of working with models. This first article will cover how to meet, select, and hire models.

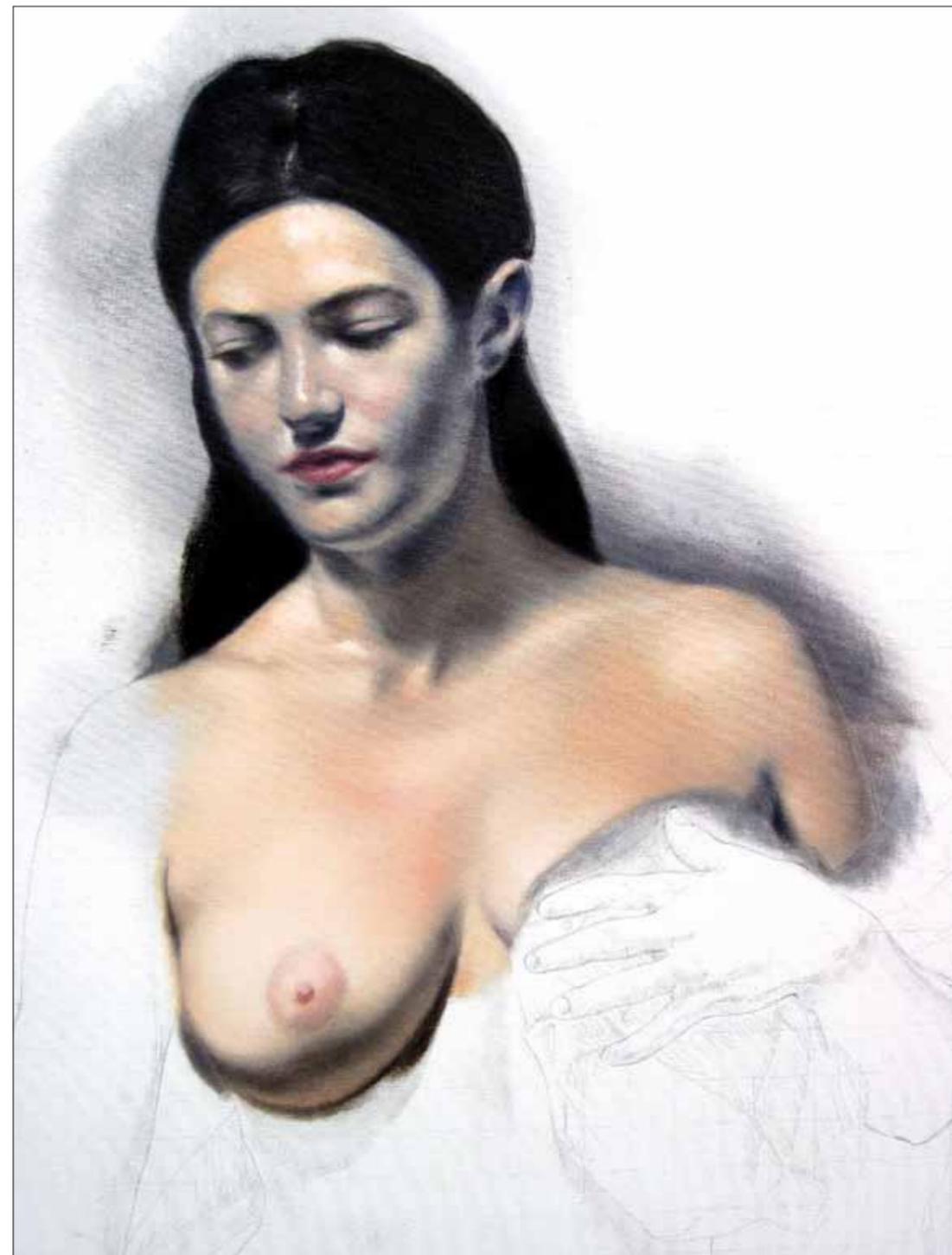
Much of the phrasing will be along the lines of “do this,” or “this works.” But you should remember – when I write “do this,” what I mean is “this is what I do.” When I write “this works,” what I’m saying is, “this works for me.” Who am I? I am a working painter who very much sympathizes with that young woman of Sicyon. I adore the models I work with, and I make artwork in rebellion against that merciless time which brings fleeting life before our eyes, and takes it away again. I hope my practical notes will be helpful for you in your own work.

MEETING MODELS

If you are a figurative painter starting out, it is tempting to work with friends who are available, or attractive or interesting strangers you have met and approached. I strongly recommend avoiding this path, and to instead work with professional models if you can at all afford them. Modeling is difficult work, both physically and psychologically. It is unnatural to remain still for an extended length of time. It is uncomfortable to most people to reveal too much of themselves, especially if they are amateurs or friends. On the other hand, the professional model has experience in the physical demands of posing, in the artistic demands of finding the interest in a pose, and in the psychological demands of self-revelation.

Therefore, the painter should seek to meet models where models are already working – open life-drawing workshops, figurative art school classes, other artists’ studios, and the larger multi-model marathon drawing sessions that run in major cities. I myself have found models in New York through Spring St. Studios (an open life-drawing workshop), the Art Students’ League (an art school with open life-drawing workshops), and Michael Alan’s Draw-a-Thon (a multi-model marathon drawing session).

Let’s say you are a figurative painter who is looking for inspiration from the models you are meeting and drawing. You’ve attended some workshops, and you’re wondering which model to select to hire for private work at your studio. How do you choose?



Leah 2

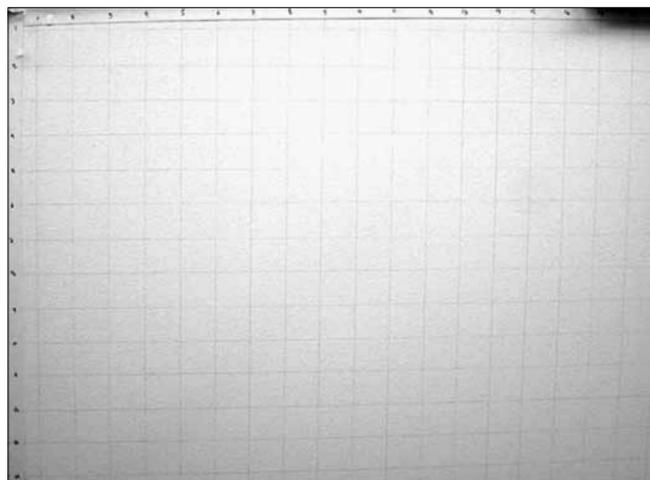
Ask yourself these questions

- Which models remain in your mind?
- Which models trigger ideas for paintings when you draw them?
- Which models seem particularly fascinating to you?

When you’ve got a list, narrow it down with another set of questions

- Which of these models seem particularly adept?
- Which seem interested in their modeling, and glad to be modeling?
- Which ones seem to have their life and schedule under enough control to be reliable?

Art in the making



STAGE 1

I have drawn a grid onto the blank canvas, so that I can accurately scale up the much smaller preparatory image for the painting. I have written inch numbers on pH-balanced artists' tape on each edge, so that I don't lose my spot while drawing.



STAGE 2

I have drawn the preparatory image onto the canvas. The preparatory image itself might be a sketch, or a photograph, or some fusion of the two that I've played with in Photoshop.



STAGE 3

I often paint wet-into-wet using a thin undercoat of a single color. In this case, I chose black. Here I begin to apply black paint to the area I expect to paint in a single 3-hour sitting.



STAGE 4

The finished black undercoat, before painting from the model has begun. The black paint was spread using a cloth dipped in Turpenoid.

Here I am working in the studio with Piera. I've been painting her since February 2008, and this is the beginning of my eleventh collaboration with her. We work together every week, and have become good friends – but I met her and hired her in exactly the same way I recommend in this article. She was working at Spring Street Studios, a life-drawing workshop in Soho, New York. After I had drawn her several times, I concluded that my first impression was correct: she really was fascinating, professional, talented, beautiful, and generous. I approached her to hire her for a painting just as I have described here, and we have been working happily together ever since.

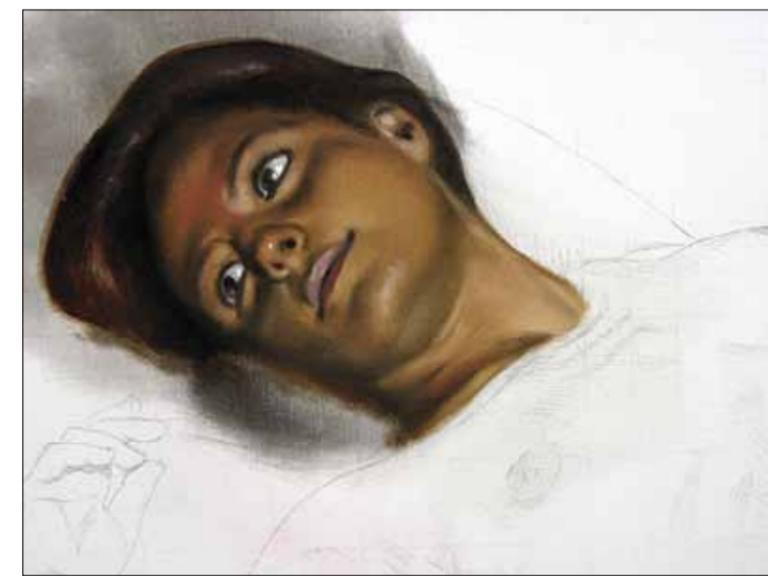


PHOTOGRAPHY CHARLOTTE SEARS



STAGE 5

Partway through the sitting, the face begins to emerge.



STAGE 6

As you can see, the draughtsmanship evolves over the course of the painting, eventually ending up fairly different in appearance and mood from the now-hidden underdrawing. The changes result from my mood, and the mood of the model. This is the end of the 3-hour sitting.

This second set of practical questions is not as important as the first, more artistic, set of questions – but it is important, and your private working process with the model you choose will flow more smoothly if you choose a model who is talented, enthusiastic, and organized.

You may be wondering how you're supposed to answer these questions about a person you don't really know. This is a good place to start training yourself to see the model not as an object, or even as a set of anatomical principles in dynamic equilibrium, but rather as a person.

- Read body language. Does the model move with confidence and make clear decisions about poses? Do they understand what's interesting about their body, taking poses that are rewarding to the artists? Do they know their physical limits, taking poses they can hold for the length of the pose? Are they generous with their engaged presence, or do they seem closed off? Does the model understand and command the audience – is the energy level of the workshop high, does it match your own preferred type of energy?
- Watch the model's interaction with the workshop instructor or coordinator. Are

they on good terms? Do they chat easily?

- Observe the model's personal conduct. Do they arrive on time? Is their bag of supplies organized and does it meet their needs? Most models carry around cloth samples, a robe, a timer, a calendar, and a snack, but not all models carry these things in such a way that they are easy for the model to access. By watching a model carefully as a person, you can deduce a lot of things about them that will impact your decision to work with them.

I recommend waiting until you've had a chance to draw a model you're interested in two or three times before making a decision about working with them. You'll be able to form a more complete idea of what they're like by seeing them on several different days. You'll be able to evaluate how inspiring you find them by studying the progress of your own work in drawing them. And because it will likely take a while for the model to cycle back through your workshop's schedule, you'll find out whether they stick in your mind over time, which is perhaps the most important quality to seek.

Let's say you've now selected a model you'd like to work with privately. How do you hire them?

First of all, don't be shy. There's nothing embarrassing about your request. The model is a professional. Most models like to work privately – it's work, it's often fun, and generally it pays better than schools and workshops. So have confidence when you approach a model that they have as much to gain as you from working together.

Ask the model if they work privately. If they do, explain that you would like to hire them for a painting (or a sculpture, or whatever your project is) and ask for their contact information, and offer yours. There is a lot of information you need to provide before work begins, and you will have to decide how much of it to offer in person or later, by email.

Apart from the practical logistics, you should remember that the model you are hiring is walking into a situation in which they are more vulnerable than you are. They will be in a strange space – your space. They may be nude, depending on your work. And there are a lot of jerks out there. So the information you give them should help to set them at ease about what kind of a person you are. Offer them character references from art instructors or other models you have worked with. Give them the URL of your website, if you have one, or email them some of your work. Let them know that you've been drawing them at your workshop (or whatever venue) for a while now, and you admire their work. Demonstrate in your personal conduct and the information you offer that you're a serious artist, and not just another creep.

With regard to practical considerations: Most models need to work for at least three hours to make it worthwhile to travel to a private booking, so plan on bookings of a minimum of three hours. Agree on a pay rate before you begin work. What hourly rate are you offering? This varies from city to city, but models will make time for bookings with you, show up promptly ready to work, and throw themselves more enthusiastically into their work, if you can offer a rate at the upper end of the ordinary range for your location. In my experience, it is absolutely worth it. Remember – for you, this is inspiration. It is for the model too, but the model is making a living doing it. Respect that. If you commit to working privately with a model, you're committing to the fact that models need to get paid.

Do you shoot reference photographs? If



Gemini, oil on canvas, 2008, 48x48" (122 x 122 cm)

This is my fifth painting of Piera. It took forever to paint, but the process was a great deal of fun.

you do, make that absolutely clear in advance. Also make it clear whether or not the photographs themselves will ever be seen by others. Many models who do not pose for art photography will allow you to take reference photographs if they trust you to keep them private.

Always offer to pay for reference photographs. If you're using the photographs to prepare your painting, but will be hiring the model to sit for most or all of the actual painting process, it is

reasonable to offer the equivalent of 3-5 hours of modeling fees for the photography session, even if it only lasts 15 minutes at the end of an ordinary modeling session. If you're planning to hire the model for a single photo shoot, and then to paint from the photographs, plan on paying at a much higher rate. If you paint from a photograph, you're not painting the model. That costs the model paying time, and it is fair for them to charge you commensurately with a large proportion of the lost time (anywhere

from 40-80%).

If you have an idea or sketch for the pose for your painting, email that to the model before work begins as well. This allows the model to raise any objections and resolve them with you before work begins.

Finally, coordinate a first session with your model and make sure you mark it in your calendar.

In Part 2 we will discuss how to set up your studio before your work begins, and how to behave once the model arrives. □

About the Artist

Daniel Maidman was born in 1975 in Toronto, Canada. He was raised in Toronto, Jerusalem, Washington, and Chicago.

Since attending college in North Carolina and Texas, Daniel Maidman has lived in Los Angeles and New York City. In Los Angeles, he set himself on a program to learn how to draw and paint the human figure. He attended life drawing workshops 2-3 times a week for eight years. As well, he spent two years working on an anatomical atlas based on human cadaver dissections in which he participated at Santa Monica College, under the guidance of Dr. Margarita Dell. Illustrations from his atlas are currently in use in the United States Army's forensic field manual.

Since moving to New York, Daniel Maidman has sped up his painting schedule, while continuing to maintain his drawing skills through life drawing workshops at Spring Street Studio. Although he remains primarily self-taught, he has learned a good deal about color from conversations with Stephen Wright and Adam Miller.

Daniel Maidman's other interests include filmmaking and writing.

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