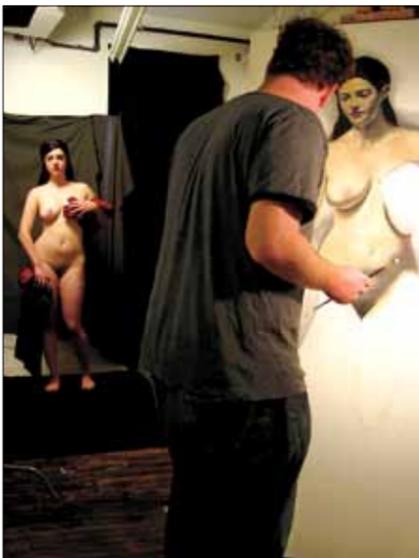




# The Artist's Model



## LEAH AND ME IN THE STUDIO

I'm working here with Leah on the painting *Leah 2*, featured in the first article. She modeled for the painting *Day*, also featured in the first article. The finished (and re-titled) *Leah 2* will be featured in a later article in this series.

Leah is a model and student I met at Spring Street Studios. She combines a professional and conscientious approach to modeling with real excitement about it; working with her makes my work better. That's the kind of model you want to find – somebody who inspires you and whom you inspire. She's also in the category of "macho" models mentioned in the article – I'm the one who has to call a break when we're working together.

IN PART TWO OF THIS SERIES **DANIEL MAIDMAN** TELLS US HOW TO PREPARE FOR AND RUN A SESSION WITH A HIRED MODEL

In the first article in this series, we discussed meeting, selecting, and hiring models for private art projects. In this article, we move to the studio as the project begins.

My studio is in a converted factory. The building's four maze-like floors include studios where dozens of artists paint, draw, and sculpt. Several times a year, the building owner throws an open house, where members of the public are welcome to tour the studios of participating artists. At one such open house, another painter gave me one of the nicest compliments on my working process I've ever received: "Most artists' studios are cold. Yours feels warm."

What this painter meant was that my studio felt like a welcoming and comfortable space. I put a lot of work into making my studio "warm." My space is small, but I want to enjoy working there, and I want models to enjoy working there.

In this article, we get into the practical details of making a studio "warm," and the process of working with models welcoming and comfortable.

There are only four really fundamental rules for working privately with models. If you ignore everything else, remember these:

- Don't leave sharp objects on the floor.
- Keep the studio warm enough.
- Don't sexually harass the model.
- Have money present to pay the model.

So why the lists that follow? A lot of the guidelines below might seem excessively generous. They're not about necessity. Rather, they involve the concrete means to produce a "warm" working experience for the model, and for you.

Lots of benefits result from a model liking to work with you: they will have higher energy and focus in their work with you, they will reveal unexpected depths about themselves which will feed the vitality of your work, and they will recommend you to other models if you need a recommendation.

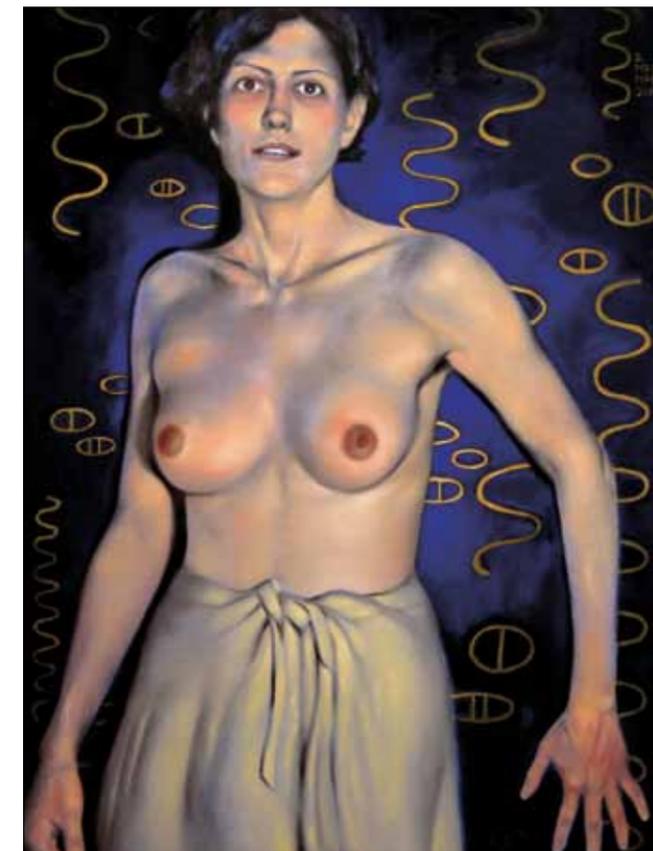
Moreover, taking care for the model's comfort is a form of the consideration that most of us would want to show to other human beings. Carrying out that consideration can be tricky in a complicated and unusual situation like a studio modeling

session. But if you're interested enough in other people to want to make images of them, isn't taking care for their comfort a natural part of your outlook?

We begin with making a studio suitable for a modeling session.

## STUDIO SET-UP

- If there are ugly walls, try hanging art or large pieces of cloth. Unless it conflicts with your work, make the space visually dense and interesting.
- **FUNDAMENTAL RULE #1**  
Nobody expects an artist's studio to be surgery-clean. But make sure you don't leave sharp objects on the floor (broken glass, old blades, bits of conté, etc.). Your model might be barefoot: they understand that dirty feet are part of the job, but wounds are not.
- If you use materials containing volatile toxins (e.g. turpentine), ensure that there is enough circulation for safety.
- Dispose of any food trash at the end of every studio visit. Food waste, particularly vegetable matter, tends to give rise to flies. There are few better ways to ruin a sitting than to have a fly buzzing around the model and landing on them (and they will). It is almost impossible to remain still and focused under these circumstances. Models find it incredibly irritating.
- What's true for flies is true for larger animals. Avoid having dogs or cats present while working with models.
- Acquire stable supports for complex or raised poses. I use up to 11 milk crates and 2 Century Stands to support arms and legs. These items can be rearranged in a wide variety of ways to accommodate different poses.
- Get a yoga mat for standing poses. The padding reduces model pain during the session by quite a bit.
- Keep some magazines and books in the studio. You might work with a model who needs non-verbal down time on breaks, and there's a good chance they'll appreciate the reading material.



***The Shock*, oil on canvas, 2008, 40x30" (102 x 76 cm)**

Theresa, who modeled for this painting, is a student of butoh performance and has a natural flare for the stylized and dramatic. I took advantage of these qualities in the design of this painting.

***Tree of Knowledge*, oil on canvas, 2009, 48x24" (122 x 61 cm)**

This is my ninth painting of Piera, who was featured in the first article in this series. Working with her so extensively has given me a chance to explore many sides of her personality.

- Stock your studio with a few bottles of water. Most models bring water with them, but if they haven't, they'll appreciate the concern for the thirst they work up while posing. You might want to keep non-perishable sealed snacks around as well, but models don't particularly expect it.
- Have a working timer handy, in case the model has not brought theirs.
- Put in a free-standing folding screen for the model to change behind. If you don't have room for a screen, make sure a bathroom or separate room is available for changing if the model prefers it.

- **FUNDAMENTAL RULE #2**  
Make sure you can control the studio temperature, especially during cold winters. Cold ranks above flies among things that can make a model hate working in a particular space. If you don't have central heating, buy enough space heaters to keep the model warm. Likewise, air conditioning or fans in the summer are important; but not quite as important as heaters in the winter.

## BEFORE THE MODEL ARRIVES

- Get to the studio in plenty of time to turn on your heaters or air conditioner/fan and get the space to about the right temperature.
- Leave enough lead time to set up whatever you will need for the session. If your model is scheduled from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., you're paying them for that time. If you're setting up until 1:20, that's not their problem – they're still leaving at 4. Be professional and respectful – be ready to work when they arrive to work. →



## → THE MODEL ARRIVES

- If you are a male artist, the first time you work with a female model she may well bring a boyfriend or husband with her. He's there to make sure his partner is safe with you. This is a gentlemanly thing for him to do; you be a gentleman as well. Give him a chance to size you up and see your studio. However, he cannot expect to stay during the session.
- Unless your model is a friend whom you know and understand, don't offer a beer, a glass of wine, or any other type of alcohol before getting started. It interferes with the work, and it's liable to be misunderstood.
- Both of these rules are specific aspects of **FUNDAMENTAL RULE #3** Don't sexually harass models. This is a matter of simple good sense: don't make lewd comments, don't touch



**Red, oil on canvas, 2009, 60 x 36" (152 x 91 cm)**

Lillian, the model for this painting, is sometimes gentle and shy, and other times brassy and bold. I tried to reflect this in the contrast between figure and background.

models inappropriately, etc. These universal rules are especially important when working privately with a model. The model is in your space, not theirs. The model may be nude, while you are clothed. The artist-model relationship is poorly defined by ordinary social conventions. So take an extra measure of sensitivity to earn the model's trust and avoid anything that could be construed as harassment.

- A modeling session is broken up into a series of sittings. Even if it's a single pose you're working on, the model needs to break at regular intervals. Sort out at the beginning how long each sitting will be. Typically, models prefer 20-25 minutes. Try not to let the macho ones go over 45.

## WORK BEGINS

Finally, you are about to make some art. The last two articles in this series will treat the artistic side of this process. For now, a little more nitty-gritty:

- If the pose is nude, and the model changes in the studio, don't stare.
- Don't allow random people into your studio while you are working with a model, particularly if the pose is nude. If you share a studio, make it clear in advance whether other artists might be entering and exiting during a session.
- The model gets to decide on the temperature. Their degree of exertion and dress may make their perception of a comfortable temperature different from yours.
- A 5-minute break between sittings is appropriate; offer to take a longer break (10-15 minutes) at the midpoint of the session.
- If you have one comfortable chair in the studio, offer it to your model during the break.
- It is entirely reasonable not to show your work-in-progress to the model. Keep in mind, though, that experienced models are very familiar with how they look and typical drafting errors they inspire. Some of the best technical critique you can get for your work will often come from your model.

## THE END OF THE SESSION

When the session is finished:

- **FUNDAMENTAL RULE #4** Whatever you do, don't forget to bring money to pay the model, especially if you haven't worked with them long.
- Pay the model at the end of the session. If the pose was nude, pay them after they get dressed. This subtlety is meaningless to most models, but it is important to the ones who care. Why? Because their nudity is professional. It lasts for the duration of their work. When they stop working, their nudity becomes personal again – now they are naked. Paying them while they are naked crosses the professional/personal line.
- If you've just completed your first sitting, and you have a sense of how many more sessions you're going to need for the project you're working on, schedule as many of them as you can with the model now. Good models have busy schedules. Don't get left out.
- Thank your model for their work. Never forget that what they're doing is work, and it takes talent and skill.



## IMPROVISE INTELLIGENTLY...

Well, that was a lot of detail about things that aren't absolute necessities! But remember – our goal here is to create a “warm” work experience. And remember some of the good reasons to do it: model energy and focus – model revelation of the self – model recommendation to other models – basic human consideration.

No list of ways to make the studio “warm” can be complete. While the points here are a good start, a lot of variation will result from the particulars of your situation. So once you've made sure you're following the four fundamental rules, you might as well add



**Emma Twice, oil on canvas, 2009, 48x48" (122 x 122 cm)**

This is my second painting of Emma, a dancer and model. Naturally high energy, she helped me discover her contemplative side here.

**Untitled, oil on canvas, 2009, 30 x 24" (76 x 61 cm)**

I had the idea for this painting within several minutes of first meeting Natalya. Her forthright quality was the element around which everything in the painting was organized.

another: improvise intelligently.

The demands of your art, comments from models, and your own observations will guide you. Remain receptive to your experiences, and you will be able to expand your skills over time. Your working relationships with models will improve as a result.

In the next article, we'll take a look at choosing and refining a pose for an artwork, and the difference between figurative painting and still life. □

## 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.

After moving to New York in 2006, 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 the theory and practice of art from conversations with Stephen Wright and Adam Miller.

Daniel Maidman's other interests include filmmaking and writing.

[www.danielmaidman.com](http://www.danielmaidman.com)

[danielmaidman.blogspot.com](http://danielmaidman.blogspot.com)

His work will be shown at *The Great Nude Invitational Figurative Arts Fair* in New York City, May 13-16, 2010.

[www.thegreatnude.tv/invitational](http://www.thegreatnude.tv/invitational)

