

## Drawing Essentials, Part 2

- Intermediate Bague Drawing

- **Notes about reality vs. Bague plates.**

- It is useful to first understand that in the practice of copying Bague plates we will take two steps back from reality. Once through Bague himself, and then from his lithograph onto our paper the second step. In short, the artistic decisions have already been made. This, of course, is the actual value of the endeavour- learning from his decisions. With this in mind I want to recall those two steps and look to one of the casts that he drew.
- The Girl of the Seine is a popular cast in use today in many ateliers and it was popular in 19th century France as well. For this reason it is a good example.

- **What separates beginning from intermediate?**

- The first Bagues are about establishing the language. The intermediate and advanced Bagues are about variations within that language. (prepare slides that will compare beg. and int./adv. slides).
  - Shadow shapes go from being mostly unified to being, in places, full of variety. Half tones go from near non-existence to richly populating the light shape. One thing that stays almost the same is line quality. The value and weight of the contour lines in Bague's examples, both figure drawings and sculpture studies is almost totally uniform. This consistency is something I have observed to be at odds with beginning student's impulses. Their drawings are often full of accents, both dark and light, throughout the contour line of their chosen subject. What this represents to me is the difference between focusing on the whole vs. the parts. Student's interest will have the tendency to gravitate smaller details while a master like Bague will see better the harmony of the big impression.

- Another way to observe the difference between beginning and intermediate Bargues, albeit a very subtle way, is the complexity of the shapes.
  - Shape design consists of a few factors. Each one of these metrics can be observed in shapes that go from simple to complex:
    - complexity/quantity of angles along the contour. This progression follows the "broad to the specific," concept I use to judge when to add new information.
    - Edge quality. The character of the edges of a shape are fundamental to the design of a shape. Soft vs. hard.
    - Value variation. The values inside a shape, whether many or few, is an information factor that must be included in the design.
    - Organic vs. geometric qualities. Are the angles of the shape straight and simplified or complex and organic? Or, even better, a combination of the two...

- **Advanced Bargue Drawing**

- What separates intermediate from advanced?
  - There are only a few observable factors in the difference between these levels. It could almost be reduced to the physical scale of the lithographic reproduction to be copied. When I was a student, and later a teacher, beginning and intermediate Bargues were done in graphite on a smaller scale and the later advanced Bargues were made significantly larger (think A4 vs. A2) and in charcoal. This last difference in practice, using charcoal, is something that I have since done away with recommending to my students. I am mostly interested that students will learn the design concepts present in these lithographs to which the drawing medium they are copied with is immaterial. Graphite being easier to control, in general, I prefer it for these studies.
- The Belvedere Torso
  - The torso distinguishes itself through the sheer complexity of the language it uses. Shadows are both unified and full to the brim with variety. Some shadows have very definite edges while others are completely nebulous clouds of value. Half tones have also reached a maximum level of diversity. From the lightest to the darkest they span the value scale completely, creating a sense of form that is quite full.

- What do we find in the Belvedere Torso?
  - Each of the formal properties of a drawing can be located and practiced through this Bargue plate.
    - Overlaps: a basic technique to show/imply depth. They can be employed without adding value to the drawing making them very valuable in the early stages of the drawing.
    - Transitions/gradients: we are referring here to a transition between values. Some transitions are faster and others slower depending on the character of the form they are describing and the proportion of the light source.
    - Value (hierarchy): Appropriate value expression in a drawing requires an organisation of values to show the proximity and orientation of each plane to the light source, and also depth and perspective. We call this organisation a hierarchy.
    - Line quality: The line quality here is not so diverse. Of course it is adequate diversity but as it is with many drawings that have a diverse value set, the diversity of the line quality is not necessary.
    - Edge quality: As with a values, a diverse set of edge types must be used to illustrate the various types of forms in a subject. Soft rolling forms, tight crisp turning forms, and all of those in between. Not to mention the way that different lighting situations describe form- direct vs. ambient, for instance.
    - Form: Values, edges, and transitions are used in conjunction to create the illusion of form.

- **Loomis Head Structure (+other head structure models).**

- What can we learn from Loomis? In short, a lot! Below are some bullet points that he makes throughout the first section of his book on portraiture:
  - From the skull we get the spacing of the features, which is more important to the artist than the features themselves.
  - The features must take their proper places in our construction. If they do we have little trouble in drawing them.
  - In trying to correct a face that appears to be out of drawing the chances are that we will do just the wrong thing.
  - the beginner starts by setting eyes, ears, noses, and mouths into blank white space, surrounded by some sort of an outline for the face. This is drawing in the two dimensions of height and width only.
  - It seems more logical to start with a shape is basically like the skull, one that is simple draw and is accurate for purposes of construction. This can be done by drawing a ball resembling the cranium, which is round but flattened somewhat at the sides, and attaching the jawbone and features to it.
- **Loomis quotes-**
  - **On construction & structure:** If you have worked out the ball and plane and its divisions you will not have too much trouble in placing the features. However, you should realise that a feature will never fit on a head until it is placed correctly and in line with the construction lines of the whole head, Every artist must be prepared for a certain amount of struggle with construction, so do not allow yourself to get discouraged. Every head anyone draws depends on construction, just as much as every building... does. That is what the artist's job really is in learning how to construct things in three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface. We have to think of each thing we draw in its entirety and see how its dimensions appear to us from our particular viewpoint. Representation in three dimensions calls for knowledge and study. But such knowledge is no more difficult than that required for any other field. No matter how great your talent, talent has to work with knowledge to do anything well. When the search for particular knowledge becomes pleasant as well, half the battle is won. Construction need not worry you; it comes with practice.

- **On the planes of the head:** The planes of the head should be memorised, for through them we have a foundation for rendering the head in light and shadow. Begin with the basic planes, and study them until they are fixed in your mind. Then take up the secondary planes. From these sets of planes almost any head can be built. The surface varies with the individual character, but with the planes... you can produce a well-proportioned head.
- In regards to the Reilly head:
  - After the conversations I have had about the Reilly head and the Reilly rhythms I feel that I have come to a better understanding of their utility. That utility, however, I think is very limited in that other artists, such as Bridgeman and Loomis made more simple and versatile templates. Reilly's method deals with intuitive rhythms (hand/arm movements) that will correspond with the bone structure and musculature of the face/head. These rhythms are, to my eye, idiosyncratic and complex. I consider that they could be useful as a kind of illustration of an idea.
- After showing examples of various head plane simplifications James Gurney had this to say about the variety of expressions of these head concepts: "People will debate the merits of these commercially available heads, but I've never been completely satisfied with any of them. I think it's a great exercise for any student to come up with their own analysis, and that's what I did when I was in art school... Mine was inspired mainly by Loomis and George Bridgman."
  - I found this quote deeply significant for students in that it outlines something that I have come to understand after my years of study and practice. It is most important that you engage with and study structure in your drawing. It is slightly less important which head template you study. Some are better and some are worse, but each one will contain some kernel of truth that is worth your consideration.