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Embodying the Other: Pedagogic and Performative Strategies Used in 'The Art of the Life-Model Course', 2002-2007

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# Embodying the Other

Pedagogic and  
Performative Strategies  
used in The Art of the  
Life-Model 2002-2007

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## INTRODUCTION

The Art of the Life-Model was launched in October 2002 as part of Drawing Power: The National Campaign for Drawing. It was a community education 'drop-in' funded through the Leeds College of Art and Design and held at Leeds City Art Gallery on a Sunday afternoon. In the first academic year (2002 – 2003), it ran for 10 weeks; in its second academic year it ran for 20 weeks (2003-2004), finally becoming a full 30-week course in 2004 – 2005 in line with other community education classes; a level sustained at this current time. This research analyses its development in the context of pedagogic and performative strategies employed by myself, Nina Kane, as course lecturer in the 2002 – 2007 period.

### Research Focus:

The Art of the Life-Model is innovative on many levels. Ostensibly a community education course providing arts-making opportunities to the general public, it also operates as a gallery education workshop introducing the public to Leeds City Art Gallery's collection, and forms a research base for my lecturing practice as a theatre performer/director and life-modelling theatre pioneer. Whilst The Art of the Life-Model reflects aspects of educational policies and institutional developments at Leeds College of Art & Design and Leeds City Art Gallery, this report is confined to analysing my practice as lecturer / performer within the pedagogy of the sessions. It also analyses the development of life-modelling theory occurring in the sessions and my structuring of the course along community arts workshop lines as defined by Leeds City Council practices elsewhere.

I intend to give a brief overview of the influences on my pedagogic practice at the start of the course, examining the culture and conventions of life-drawing as part of this. I will then discuss critical and practical frameworks used in my teaching and in the development of the course, with photos from sessions. Finally, I will attach an appendix to include sample teaching resources used on The Art of the Life-Model.

## OVERVIEW

### **The Art of the Life-Model - public and community arts context:**

The course emerged at a time when there was a national campaign to encourage drawing within public institutions. The government had recently established free access to museums and galleries and there was a growing policy of encouraging artists, educators and the general public to utilise buildings and collections in innovative, accessible, ways. The Art of the Life-Model initially worked as a 'First-Step' course offering a mixed-arts 'drop-in' session free of charge to the public on a Sunday afternoon with an emphasis of new ways into drawing / mark-making through direct-working with the model. Each session involved drama, life-drawing and looking at works in the Gallery's collection. The Gallery's proviso emphasised usage of the collection as a central tenet, and the funding of the course through the Community Education department of the College ensured that established ideas around accessibility, inclusion and high-quality arts-making were to be observed in practice. The partnership of Leeds College of Art & Design and Leeds City Art Gallery backed by Leeds City Council effected a well-resourced course available to the public with drawing materials, books, access to a model and fine art collections provided. It also funded my employment as an Associate Lecturer to develop and deliver the structure

and content of the course alongside other developments in the area of life-modelling theory. This benefited research and professional performance practice in this field allowing links to be made between myself and other practitioners, educationalists, Gallery staff and the general public.

### **Community influences on my pedagogic practice:**

Like most part-time Community Education lecturers and arts workers, my pedagogic practice developed through a variety of training systems and professional experiences. As a community arts worker trained by Leeds City Council (West Yorkshire Youth Association Youth Arts Training, 1995 – 1997) I was familiar with developing/delivering community projects, with facilitating arts workshops and in working with people from a range of backgrounds. The ethos of my training centred on interventionist ideas, encouraging self-efficacy in the community, working at a grassroots level and understanding Equal Opportunities issues and barriers. This focused my teaching with adult learners. I believed in the principle of free arts-working within public spaces, in providing accessible educational opportunities to people and I understood the resources available within municipal collections and the importance of utilising them.

Work with women's groups had brought me an awareness of the great resources offered by students themselves through their own experiences, instincts, life-stories, opinions and the learning acquired through other courses. Sessions were therefore facilitated to enable students to voice their views on art, to work with 'gut instinct' and to share knowledge learnt in other pedagogic situations. Previous work with arts therapy and women's health forums, including employment with the HPA as a Women's Sexual Health worker, also

influenced my teaching of the sessions in the early days; particularly in negotiating issues around working with nudity, the body and in establishing boundaries. These ethics and frameworks have contributed to the accessibility and educational value of the course.

### **Academic and arts influences on my teaching:**

The themes of the course derived from my ongoing professional practice as a life-model and from experiments in the life-drawing space with WILMA – Women Into Life-Modelling Arts and Cast-Off Drama. From 2000 I worked at the Leeds College of Art & Design as a life-model – a role that continued until 2006. This placed me in a relatively anomalous position when appointed as a lecturer in 2002 as the professional roles were viewed as having different ‘statuses’ at the time. I continued to work as a professional life-model in schools, art colleges, community centres and private groups from 2002 – 2006. This assisted the marketing of the course in the early stages, and allowed for the spread of ideas.

The academic basis for the sessions derived from feminist politics and feminist art history work I’d done as part of my English degree at King’s College Cambridge (1991 – 1994). I studied life-drawing as a prelude to modelling whilst at Cambridge, but with a view to understanding the model rather than learning to draw – a suggestion made by the art teacher at King’s. This sparked my initial interest in the theatre of the life-drawing space, though I did not articulate anything on this until the work at Leeds later. The theatre basis for the work was influenced by Cathy Denford’s BA Certificate in Theatre Studies (School of Continuing Education, University of Leeds, studied 2001 - 2004) which focused on C20th experimental theatre practitioners. This gave me a useful forum for processing the

theatre aspects of my teaching and related life-modelling studies. Studies with the drama department at the University of Huddersfield (2006 – ongoing) enabled me to develop wider critical contexts on the performative nature of the course. This has assisted with the write-up.

### **The Art of the Life-Model in contemporary life-modelling practice:**

It is apposite at this stage to outline my involvement with developing life-modelling studies in the Leeds area prior to the course. In 2001, I self-funded and developed a project for female life-models called 'Will You, Won't You...?' This provided a forum for female life-models to meet each other and discuss the profession. It also provided workshop space for female life-models to explore their creativity through structured nude-working, drama, art history and movement practices. The workshop structure for 'Will You, Won't You...?' was the blueprint for The Art of the Life-Model sessions. In July 2002, I held the 'Will you, Won't You...?' pilot at Leeds City Art Gallery and the Swarthmore Education Centre. It was well-attended by female models aged 18 – 67 years, and involved female life-drawers in the sessions as 'artist -notators'. This led to the formation of WILMA – Women Into Life-Modelling Arts: a voluntary networking / advocacy service for female life-models offering model-led creative workshops. It also led to Cast-Off Drama: a company creating free-of-charge productions and workshops for public arts spaces using life-modelling as a performance form. The former comprised a voluntary group of female life-models working as an informal collective, and the latter was a project-by-project theatre company under my artistic direction.



'Will You, Won't You...?' asked detailed questions of life-models, initiating wide-ranging and passionate discussion about life-drawing and its functions. The development of the artist-notator role reversed the conventional paradigms of image-generation - the models took centre-stage in developing the images and the artists were expected to follow the models' lead in the creative direction of the life-drawing. The practical experiments of 'Will You, Won't You...?' revealed many misunderstandings and assumptions about the professional role of the model on the part of life-drawers. The programme of model-led workshops developed by its members revealed strong creativity and multiple interests. It highlighted the frustrated potential of models in the conventional life-drawing space. Centrally, however, the work revealed that despite their being no 'handbook of life-modelling', no written rules on how a life-model should act – the *unwritten* rules and conventions of life-drawing sessions are unilaterally applied, and are re-inscribed through practice and 'tradition' alone.

The conversations held with life-models through WILMA workshops, and the forum-based, performance practices of Cast-Off Drama formed the bedrock of ideas and workshop strategies for The Art of the Life-Model, contributing positively to my initial theories and practices as a teacher. In the early stages, my understanding benefitted from experimental drawing/modelling collaborations with secondary school art teachers at Castle Hall School, Mirfield established by Andrew Heath-Beesley, the then Head of Art. Also of note is the work done by Jeremy Holloway at Dartington College, Devon who used WILMA questionnaires with female models and found the same responses. In 2004, Jeremy and I participated in a clown-based life-modelling exchange in Leeds through WILMA and Art of the Life-Model, and in Devon as part of the Out of Context symposium. This was incredibly useful in processing understanding of life-modelling conventions.

## Life-Drawing culture and conventions:

My analysis of life-drawing culture largely focuses on the network of community classes, private groups and art college departments which provide the main bulk of model employment in the Yorkshire area. It is also the community at which *The Art of the Life-Model* was targeted, and from which it attracted students. I am less concerned with analysing the culture of life-modelling between individuals – such as models who work privately for friends, family members, partners, lovers – as it is a more complex area of investigation and has not been a focus of my work in this area, valuable as this would be as a field of study. The conventions of life-modelling and its perceived functions do, however, pertain to individual arrangements and it is important to recognise that oppressions identified in community life-drawing can often have their counterparts in domestic life-modelling arrangements – sometimes more so.

As a new life-model, I quickly became aware of accepted patterns, rules, rituals and modes of working within the life-drawing community. The rituals of life-drawing practice are rarely discussed, hence I will address them here in some detail. Conventions include: silence when working; stillness of the model / reduced or localised movement for the artist; nudity of the model; use of drapes / props and other staging equipment by model; fixed arrangement of space and materials; use of easels / donkeys by artist; use of robe by model; use of screen (British convention); heightened and objectifying terminology eg. ‘the nude’, ‘the robe/gown’, ‘the model’; use of practices to ‘fix’ the model eg. chalking round feet; use of platform or raised area for viewing the model; control of time and room by artist / tutor; and control of model (deemed lower status) by artists and tutor. (See appendix for spider graph of this).

Life-models and life-drawers imbibe these conventions through practice in schools, colleges, community-run classes and private life-drawing groups set up in people's living rooms. In addition to the conventions, there are some generally-held attitudes and assumptions (see appendix) that models often encounter. Life-modelling is learnt 'on the job' and life-drawers are the keepers of the tradition. The status quo maintains that what the lead artist or tutor says in a session 'goes', and models are expected to comply. Models who dissent or question are generally regarded as awkward and don't tend to get much work, unless their 'rebellion' against the tradition is so flamboyant or interesting that it makes it exciting to draw! Where groups have no clear leader, the model has a more complex set of directions to accommodate. A classic scenario is the group-run life-drawing session where the model is told by the artists to take a pose – only to have the pose shaped again and again by various life-drawers in the room who negotiate and re-negotiate the position to their best individual advantage until a compromise can be agreed. By the time the pose has been set, the life-model is in knots – usually far away from their chosen position - and stuck in it with group pressure 'not to change it again'!

Life-modelling operates to a casualised employment pattern, and word-of-mouth contact is usually the way a life-model obtains work. Art colleges have moved to more formal processes which include an application form and interview. Whilst still booking to an informal pattern, they pay the model through PAYE and manage the bookings through HR. Informal community and private life-drawing groups remain casualised and are often willing to book someone who has never modelled before to 'give them a go'. While this has many positives and provides quick, informal, cash-in-hand employment, it can also create oppressive and exploitative working conditions. These impact negatively on the health of models and of the profession in the long-run. It is generally accepted within life-drawing groups that tutors, artists or session facilitators will pass the contact details of models onto

other artists with recommendations to work. It is not uncommon to receive an unsolicited phone call from an artist asking you to work at the drop of the hat, then be questioned about your size, shape and physical appearance while they decide whether or not to employ you. New models will benefit quickly from this if liked by an artist, as many life-drawers get bored with drawing the same person and the networks are sufficiently integrated and informal to pass news and phone number of 'a good model' on quickly. The speed with which new models are passed through the networks helps maintain the unwritten culture, rituals and conventions of the practice. It reinforces the status of life-drawers as teachers of the tradition and effectively works to 'train new models' in the behaviour expected of them. It provides a new model with work quickly and can make models feel welcome. This makes life-modelling a useful profession for people on a low-income and is the reason many women enter the profession.

However, the word-of-mouth pattern works the other way too. If a model has not met the desired – usually unstated – criteria of a particular artist or group, negative comments will be passed on. This practice keeps models at a lower status than life-drawing artists. The close-knit nature of the life-drawing community, and the trust that exists in the judgement of artists amongst themselves, means that a model labelled as 'bad' will quickly find themselves out of the employment network as fast as they were in it. A model labelled as 'not very good, maybe needs more practice' will find themselves subject to cautious scrutiny when modelling for no clear reason, making for an uncomfortable session. As models tend to work solo, there is often isolation and a lack of awareness of what their reputation is amongst potential employers. This can create unease when modelling for a group who will say they've 'heard all about you'. When a model performs to the liking of a life-drawing group it is not uncommon to receive praise hand-in-hand with criticism of the previous model. This 'divide and rule' mentality serves to keep models 'on their toes'

preventing us from trying new approaches, and frustrating innovation or self-development. It serves to isolate models from each other and stops them sharing information about their prospective employers. Uncertainty, and the praise / blame culture of many life-drawing groups can impair a model's judgement and is fundamentally disempowering. New and younger models rarely question the nature of the work they're being offered, making it hard to develop instincts about the risk-level of accepting a particular job. Too often models learn through bad experiences rather than good, but as risk is regarded as 'part of the job', they tend to accept worse treatment rather than demand better conditions on the idea that it's tough and they can hack it. Or they leave the profession and nobody asks why.

The structure and routines of conventional life-drawing sessions can compound the lack of autonomy available to the model. The space is usually organised prior to the model's arrival or while the model is changing, by a tutor or lead artist. The arrangement of furniture creates a defined posing space for the model – usually in the centre of the drawers or at the front of the group; sometimes raised either on a platform, chair or boxes and often attended by drapes and props. The areas of activity are clearly demarcated for the model and the artists.

There is a palpable tension as people arrive and choose where to sit. I refer to this process as 'the Goldrush phenomenon' as artists vie with each other for the best spot from which to view the model. Politely done, usually with some humour and apology, it is nevertheless a process of competition for space and creative positioning. Once the choice is made it is incredibly difficult to uproot and move somewhere else in the room. One reason for this is that the artists arrive at the space tired, encumbered with materials required for the session – bags of paints, brushes, assorted dry mark-makers, and often, easels. The first instinct is of course to drop them down, and yet placing the materials will suggest to other

artists that that is your spot so everyone stands, laden, whilst struggling to take in the space and make a decision that will impact on the creative direction of their work that day. This compounds the sense of there being 'fixed positions' and is ergonomically inflexible for artists and the model.

The tension of this is such that life-drawers at a regular class will usually define a spot for themselves and there is tacit agreement amongst the group that this is their spot and no-one takes it. This strengthens the sense of group identity and routine in community classes. At its best, this can lead to a warm, friendly, relaxed group of drawers, keen to meet a new model and welcome her/him to the fold. At its worst, it can present a model with a wall of dissatisfaction, censure, disapproval and a feeling of being an outsider who has to prove her/himself to a united front of critics.

The tensions felt by life-drawers at the start of the class was explained by one of the life-drawing artists on the WILMA pilot. She said that drawing is an inherently solitary process, and that the life-drawing group is usually the only time artists show their work to anyone else before it is finished. Artists who have been trained at art college – particularly older ones – often found life-drawing classes reminiscent of their student days and expected (or associated the sessions with) criticism of their work from a tutor. Hence the 'baggage' was not only literal, but emotional. Attending life-drawing can be an incredibly challenging process for artists by nature of its group structure. There was also the fact that preparation for any creative activity involves tension and a level of adrenaline. Having routines that everyone understands, and spending time defining space, arranging your own materials and making sure you have a view unimpeded by another body, can alleviate the tensions of this and prepare the artist for focus on the drawing.

I found her comments illuminating. The model's work, by contrast, is on a drama spectrum. It is inherently concerned with being amongst people, being willing to respond / engage with others and being spectated upon. Whilst the pre-drawing activity of artists may alleviate tension for the individuals, it effectively heightens feelings of tension and expectation in the room, and the model is the recipient of this energy. As the model's space in the room is already pre-determined, she / he is not party to the negotiations that attend the defining of self and space at the start of the life-drawing class. It is not possible to separate oneself from the dynamics, however, as the space that is the site of focus and anxiety is the very space that you will shortly be occupying for your work! The model's posing space becomes highly-charged, and it is not uncommon for a religious hush to descend on the room once the model appears! Stepping into the posing space has an operatic quality to it. If you are disrobing, or entering from a changing room, there can be an energy akin to the entrance of a boxer to the ring. This can be very appealing to models who work with theatre, or anyone who enjoys being the centre of other people's focus. It can feel empowering, but the potential for innovation is usually reigned in quickly by the tutor / lead artist who directs the model to the pre-determined requirements of the session, often in negotiation with the life-drawers. This negates the model's ownership of space, and fixes her/him to the desires of the group.

Once fixed into position, the model will be set to a time. Time-keeping was one of the main issues cited by WILMA models as representative of the disregard for the model's well-being within life-drawing sessions. Sometimes the time is set up to 15 minutes after the model has already started posing, and is rarely kept to. Tutors will often forget to keep an eye on the clock – particularly if they are absorbed in discussing a student's work. Lead artists will often put it to the group to decide if they want 'an extra 10 minutes' when the

time is up and extend the time anyway. There will usually be a cursory 'is that alright?', but only after the life-drawers have stated their desires, and models will usually acquiesce as it is hard to say no to a group consensus – especially when other conditions in the structuring of the class have conspired to reduce your autonomy and agency. Life-drawers rarely say no to more time! Life-drawing is a time-durational activity. The buzz of the contact time with the model and the group cannot be matched by solo working on the piece later and life-drawing pictures usually remain as 'works-in-progress' as a result.

The oppression of mismanaged and un-negotiated time for the model is compounded by the hierarchy of the working relationships. New models invariably wait for a tutor to tell them to move. More experienced models will ask passively if they can take a break rather than stating assertively that they need to take one. Models who have learnt the confidence to move an aching part of their body without 'permission' still have to negotiate the sighs and tuts of the drawers who are shocked into awareness of themselves and the room by the break in focus. The panic around the model moving is a symptom of the rigidity encoded into the space and structuring of the life-drawing session. The practice of the tutor chalking around the model's feet and body parts to ensure that the model can be fixed again is another aspect of this.

The fixing of the body in life-drawing is complex. It has its precedents in the cadaver history of the model – the anatomical practice of dissecting and viewing the body for accurate drawing which created mathematical rules for figurative work. It also relates to a practice common in European art colleges from the Renaissance onwards which required the artist to study body casts from the 'antique' before being allowed to draw from the model in the life-class. Bound up in this are Classical ideas of ideal proportions for the



human figure which the artist is taught to emulate. Though later histories have challenged these methods of figure-drawing, there remains a predisposition to view the body of the model as 'unreal', to objectify and detach oneself from the 'humaness' of the model and to view stillness / non-movement as a pre-requisite of posing. The idea that someone can be fixed exactly back into one spot denies the physical reality of the body – which expands, contracts and shifts itself imperceptibly through breathing and other internal processes. The fact that the artists do not require themselves to be fixed exactly back into the position that they were viewing from, makes a mockery of the process of chalking the model's body so precisely, and underlines the lesser status of the model within the class. When the model returns to pose within the marks, there is invariably a second process of asking the model to twist, turn and align him/herself again because 'it doesn't look quite right'. Whereas models develop internal systems of awareness that allow them to plot their body back into a position precisely- 'feeling a click' as I'd call it – it is impossible to align it so exactly that it will create the same view for every artist in the room. As such, there will always be someone grumbling about having to change their picture after a model has moved, reinforcing a general attitude that breaks are a problem for the life-drawing process.

The convention of stillness also relates to the precision with which artists have to look to manage the creative tensions involved in translating the three-dimensional model into a two-dimensional image. Artists are invariably bound up in their own internal processes – hand-eye co-ordination, perception of light and form, manipulation of materials and surface. If we factor in emotional response to the non-verbal communication between themselves and the model, and negotiation of the social relationships and energies existing in the life-drawing room, we can see that there is a lot going on. Denial / repression of the latter two factors make an artist's job a bit easier.

In addition to the 'fixing' strategies of life-drawing there are also codes of 'screening'. The easel is a clear example of this, and C19th academies actively stipulated the use of easel as a barrier to looking. Students were required to look at a model only long enough to get details of light and form – any extra looking was viewed as inappropriate and suggestive of sexual inclination. Likewise the model was ordered to fix their eyes to a single point of looking and not to make eye-contact with the artists. This extended to social contact, and within the British system we have the tradition of the screen or changing cubicle – a partitioned-off area behind which the model changed and resided during lunchtimes or breaks. This system objectified the model further, suggesting contamination / pollution of the artists from human contact, and also upholding ideals of 'the nude'. Use of a robe had a similar function. Absence of a screen or robe allowed the artists to view the model as a naked human being. I will not discuss the implications of the difference between naked and nude as this has been cited variously elsewhere, merely to note that the continued usage of the term 'nude' rather than 'naked' within life-drawing classes perpetuates this tradition of separation.

Elsewhere in Europe, different methods of screening were employed to objectify and create detachment from the model. Jacob Epstein once related the practice of choosing models in French ateliers of the 1920s. Every Monday morning, the life-room would be packed with life-drawers. Prospective models would enter a platform area one-by-one and take their clothes off. The assembled life-drawers would shout 'oui' or 'non' as loudly as they could, and the model who got the loudest 'oui's' would get the job for the week. The ones who didn't were sent home with no remuneration. The humiliation of this system can only be imagined. Elements of these attitudes can still be discerned however in the interview practices of some art colleges who ask a model to strip as part of an interview

process, and in the testimonies of models who have been subjected to negative comments about their bodies when being drawn. At the same time in America, model agencies existed which required the model to parade in costume up and down a platform for viewing by prospective life-drawers and in Ireland there were 'model schools' which existed for a similar purpose.

The fixing and screening processes in life-drawing history serve to underline an idea of the artist being in charge. The responsibility placed on the tutor or lead artist to regulate the model's behaviour in a session reinforces this paternalism. Some of this involves taking care of the model and is done with the best of intentions. Nevertheless it compounds the model's low-status. When I first worked for the College of Art as a model, I became aware that there were written guidelines / codes of behaviour for the tutor and students in working with the model, but none for the model themselves. This has thankfully changed and there are now guidelines issued to models as well.

### **Intervention:**

The establishing of a network of female models in WILMA aimed to intervene in life-drawing culture. Not only did WILMA talk about the profession and share experiences, but it established a practice of models sharing their phone numbers with each other, passing on work and details of how much they were being paid for sessions. WILMA members recommended or warned each other about life-drawing artists and groups for whom they'd worked, and discussion of their responses to the work allowed space for reflection and emotional processing. WILMA also intervened in the practice of life-drawing groups

'educating' the model by offering a practice-based forum to new models and women interested in trying modelling. This space gave new models a chance to talk about their expectations and try modelling with other female models and life-drawers as part of their introduction to the scene. The networking aspect of the practice meant that they were quickly passed into paid work within the life-drawing community, but had a supportive set of frameworks to fall back on. Fundamentally, WILMA encouraged shared agendas which nullified the competitiveness stoked up by the conventional employment patterns, whilst recognising that different models want different things and will have different emotional responses to life-drawing scenarios. WILMA is not an agency and does not require women to 'audition' or be selected for involvement in the activities. It is a free networking, advocacy and creative development service for life-models, and as such offers women a safe, relaxed, forum for experimentation and debate.

Interventions in life-drawing are not new and the work of WILMA formed part of a tradition of feminist critique of the profession which located oppressive practices in relation to humiliations, erasures and exploitation enacted on the female figure. My work in *The Art of the Life-Model* drew on feminist theories, yet recognised that new interventions needed to be made to develop theory in the field further. There was a dearth of life-drawing for a long time as a result of criticisms in the 1970s and 1980s. Much of the activity of image-making with the female body located to video, photographic and performative arts practices and when I came to modelling in the 1990s, there was a strong focus on issues of representation, symbolism and individual demonstrative acts in the fine art field. These developments were exciting, liberating and empowering. They have laid the foundations for my work in this area, and for the course.

By the mid-1990s, life-drawing was re-emerging from the shadows, but with no new theoretical frameworks specific to interrogating its particular practices. Its re-emergence is not surprising. There is something beautiful and essential in life-modelling and life-drawing. In an era of mass image-production and technological figuration of the body, the desire to make art with basic materials and view the live, naked, body as itself with others is very powerful. In the late 1990s, life-drawing tutors – particularly women – embraced holistic and therapeutic ideas to manage the treatment of models in classes, taking a softly-softly approach that confirmed a solidarity / empathy with the model. This was healing in many ways and encouraged a more reflective and positive approach to life-drawing. Despite this, many of the old conventions were still there, unchecked, and asserted themselves insidiously over time. It needed revisiting with a feminist agenda.

Much of feminist art theory at the time focused on discussing ‘the body’ as an abstract entity. I wanted practice-based readings to explore life-modelling. Whereas performance art offered useful parallels, I felt it tended to individualise women in their art practice, resulting in solo works. It also maintained a detached ‘one-to-one’ relationship with the spectator. As oppressions within life-modelling are played out through groups, I wanted an interventionist framework that addressed group relationships. Theatre practices – particularly those of Augusto Boal – proved useful in this way. I also noted that performance art frequently enacted desecrations of the body that hurt, scarred, humiliated, fragmented and invaded the artist – who was also the model – and felt this needed consideration. Whereas the theories supported more complex and useful readings, the performances progressed a tradition of rendering the ‘looked-upon’ body numb and even ‘dead’, mirroring conventional treatment of the body in life-drawing. I wanted to engage in art practice that articulated the ‘life’ of the model, allowing celebration and growth of the body into figurative drawing and performance processes. Banning life-drawing was not

enough of an intervention. New readings needed to be established that resonated practically as well as theoretically, and that redefined the culture of modelling with a clear investigation of life-drawing's history, functions and potential.

WILMA took a rigorous approach to this issue by bringing female life-models and drawers together to discuss imbalances of autonomy within the life-drawing space. The creative development programme offered by WILMA gave space for models to explore new practical ideas. Something I had formulated in my work with Cast-Off Drama was the idea of the life-drawing space as a space for theatre. The working relationship between model and artist is one of dynamic, creative, exchange. They are interdependent activities: you can't life-model without a life-drawer and you can't life-draw without a model. It's a creative partnership. The role of the model is inherently performative and is a psycho-physical system. Workshops led by WILMA models recognised the model's function in image-making and in being the 'outside eye' on life-drawers' work. It also recognised levels of instinctive and emotional engagement in the act of modelling. It indicated the empathetic and narrative functions of posing, the 'storytelling through the body' which impacted on an artists' work. Recognition that there is more to life-modelling than 'just sitting around naked' and that there was a need to raise the status of the model was an important part of WILMA's work. Recognition that there is a dialogue between artist and model in the act of life-drawing / modelling underlined the theme of 'creative exchange' at the heart of The Art of the Life-Model.

The dialogue with female life-drawers allowed for a sharing of views, expectations and attitudes. Inevitably there were women at these sessions who identified as both models and artists and this was important. It gave women a chance to articulate experiences / assumptions / practices from 'both sides of the easel' and to see the activities of

life-drawing and modelling as socially-constructed roles with pre-determined codes and agendas. However, principles agreed on in discursive analysis frequently fell apart when subjected to practice-based enquiry. It was noted that both life-models and life-drawers in the workshops would find themselves inadvertently repeating the patterns of behaviour previously critiqued by themselves – notably in passive-aggressive ways, with much apologising to each other! This led to a realisation that talking is good but not enough. Conventions can be stronger than the individual desires for change in life-drawing. Practice-based intervention and education were necessary to take things forward.

## **CRITICAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **Embodying the Other:**

Central to The Art of the Life-Model is the concept of ‘the other’ – an idea widely recognised in multi-disciplinary contexts to articulate the position of the outsider, the marginalised, the underdog, the exploited or absent figure. Recognising the life-model as ‘the other’ in the life-drawing space references a power imbalance between model and artist in practical working terms, and acknowledges a level of oppression in conventional treatment of the life-model. It recognises an erasure of the life-model’s contribution to figurative arts development in formal art history, and marks restrictions on the autonomy of the model to effect creative agency or claim ownership of work in conventional life-drawing situations.

A key component of my teaching strategy was to life-model as part of the sessions’ activity. In using my female body as a ‘laboratory’ for practical, performative, investigation

and by championing the role of the model as an active agent within the life-drawing arena, I was effectively 'embodying the other' and giving voice to it. In occupying simultaneously the conventionally high-status role of 'tutor' and the low-status role of 'model', I redefined the rules of engagement for the class, intervening actively in the dynamics occurring between myself and the life-drawing students, challenging, questioning and offering reflection and response. By 'embodying' the position of the model, I created a critical distance for myself negotiated by theatre. Using my body as a laboratory allowed me to register the immediate effects of the interventions through emotion, instinct and physical response, and articulate these through dialogue with the students. Naming the role of the model as a role and employing performative strategies to explore this protected me from individualising the effects of the exercises, enabling me to keep the wider perspective and further develop critical engagement with the themes.

Model-led activity was a key facilitative method of both WILMA and Cast-Off Drama, and I was confident of working with nudity in workshop situations. There was also a precedent to a model leading a life-drawing class within Gallery Education from a workshop on 'the grotesque' where the model 'spoke back' ('A Model Speaks' 1996). This further validated my use of this method within the public arts context of the gallery. Nevertheless, as a pedagogic strategy, this involved a level of risk. Nude-working challenged conventional community education tutor practice, hence necessitated nuanced and negotiated boundaries with the students at each 'drop-in' session.

I worked to particular codes of robe use and was careful to structure nudity in the sessions in context, communicating the purposes of this to the students. However, the experimental nature of the course meant that this did not always follow the parameters of nude-working as defined by conventional life-classes and this provoked a range of responses. An added



risk factor was the fact that the course was a drop-in so I did not know until the start of the class who would be turning up, what their expectations / boundaries would be and what group dynamic would emerge that day. The course also challenged conventional pedagogy by the fact that I was not a life-drawing teacher and was working from theatre / performance practices in the sessions.

### **Use of Space:**

The structure of the workshop space was important in the risk-management of the sessions, but was also something I employed as a pedagogic tool. I treated the workshop primarily as a theatre space, moving tables and chairs to the side of the room to use the floor and arranging materials ergonomically. In line with my directing practice, I brought the room to neutral then arranged it differently each week to effect certain responses from the exercises and to provoke the students' kinaesthetic, visual or aural encountering of the space. I effectively 'heightened' the room, whilst also leaving free space for playing. Challenging the students' expectations of space for drawing was an important part of the pedagogy. The Gallery Education room was ideal for this purpose – particularly in its enlightened decision not to stock easels, and in the provision of specially-designed floor mats and cushions. I arranged materials and furniture differently each week according to the activity of the workshop and stocked the room with a good range of books, art images, a kettle, cups and a range of teas, coffees and biscuits in addition to the more standard drawing materials.

Controlled structuring of space had a number of functions. One, it put me, as the model, very clearly in charge of what would happen in the room. This reinforced my status as a

tutor, and was important given that I would usually be working nude at some point during the class. Secondly it set the room up safely to accommodate fluctuating numbers of 'drop-in' participants, enabling me to direct them efficiently on entry to the space. Thirdly, it reinforced the idea that this was not a conventional life-drawing class, whilst reassuring students that there were familiar 'things' to escape to within the room – whether that be an art book, a cup of tea or something to draw with. This third factor underlines the ethos of the class – challenging, disruptive, yet also comfortable to make choices within and ultimately – I hoped – transformative. By claiming creative 'ownership' of the room for the session, I was able to pass that ownership safely on to the students whilst maintaining clear boundaries and safe, negotiated, practices.

### **Uses of drama and life-modelling performance:**

Use of drama was also paramount in negotiating the risk elements of the drop-in and also in delivering some of the key themes of the session. It placed students in the realm of the model, underlining the physical, emotional, performative nature of the activity, and laying emphasis to theatrical resonances occurring within the conventional life-drawing space: narrative, role-play, costume, staging, spectating, and social exchange.

The drama worked in two ways. The most common form I employed was interventionist, community theatre exercises. These were designed to bond the students as a group, facilitate communication between people and encourage choice-making and instinctive-working. Students were invited – usually at the start of the workshop – to participate in group, paired or individual exercises with the proviso that they could step out and back in at any time, and to take responsibility for their own feelings / responses. This was an

essential component of the risk management – reminding students that they had a choice about what to participate in. It also worked to get students moving through the space and being aware of the environment they were in.

The second use of drama in the sessions derived largely from the life-modelling theatre developments I had explored through Cast-Off Drama. This involved spectacle-based performances with life-modelling which the students were invited to draw as ‘documents of time-durational activity’. This is at once reassuring and challenging. It enables students to occupy familiar positions as drawers, but reverses the balance of the activity to prioritise shared image-making, kinaesthetic and emotional response. In these performances I heightened conventional features – such as props and drapes – making careful choices beforehand to bring items that had emotional resonance to me as a performer as much as visual impact for the drawers. Re-construction of tableau images for sustained poses was a feature, but usually accompanied by some sort of intervention relevant to the themes of the session eg. singing or eating. Improvisation and working from source stimuli became central features of the life-modelling and movement / shifting were central performative challenges offered. In performance, I would challenge the students’ viewing of my body by shifting between nudity, drapes, costume accessories and everyday clothes, emphasising role-play and eschewing fixed readings.

I would often use life-modelling performance to challenge the students’ adherence to fixed positions and routine. It was not uncommon for me to relocate the performance space whilst improvising to encourage them to shift their viewing positions. I also challenged the rituals of time, putting the activity to ‘model-time’, varying the pace of the performance – sometimes moving indefinitely, then holding a pose for a fixed time, before moving again to another progression. I would also use this method to challenge the arrival rituals of life-

drawers, setting up a different sort of 'goldrush'! I would set myself an hour's improvised performance to commence at 1pm and start on the dot – even if the room was empty. I would leave a note on the door telling the drawers that the modelling activity was already underway, and they should come in quickly and settle to drawing as soon as possible. Uses of drama in this way provoked strong reaction with startling aesthetic results, which we discussed as a group after. Though disconcerted, many students testified to their drawings being better when challenged in this way, and liked the shift to model-space and time.

### **Drama-into-drawing: creative exchange - drawing as physical, life-drawing as social:**

The course offered students an opportunity to explore life-drawing as a physical and social activity and I began to describe the exercises undertaken as 'drama-into-drawing'. It was largely recognised by students that the conventions of the life-drawing space can be as oppressive to the artist as to the model. Many students testified to having witnessed situations which were exploitative, oppressive or disregarding of the model's well-being, yet found themselves unable to speak up and comment on it for fear of disrupting the session or incurring the wrath / censure of the tutor or fellow life-drawers. Many found the fixed patterns of arranging rooms, and the stillness and silence inhibiting but accepted it as par for the course. All students were willing to discuss the negative aspects of life-drawing culture and welcomed the course as an opportunity to talk to other life-drawers and hear from the model also. Many life-drawers also recognised how the rigidity of the space can inhibit drawing. Early on in *The Art of the Life-Model*, Garry Barker – the then Community Education manager who was instrumental in establishing the course – gave a talk on the

relationship between physical uses of the hand and arm and its effect on mark-making. Challenging the inflexibility of the space and conventions was also a feature of the work done in the teachers' life-drawing group at Castle Hall.

As such I frequently devised exercises to encourage empathy with the model whilst developing the physical and kinaesthetic awareness of students. I relied heavily on Augusto Boal's Image Theatre practices to enable students to physically occupy the model's position, and clowning practices by Sue Morrison and Jacques Lecoq to extend the students' playing with space. The construction of space to theatre workshop ergonomics assisted this, also the use of props. I regularly brought percussive instruments, masks, bamboo canes, drapes, hats, costumes – even red clown noses to sessions for the artists to play with. This not only extended the physical, imaginative and improvisatory capacities of the artist – placing them in the conventional realm of the model – but it created associative emotion to the objects which helped them to connect / empathise with me as a model when I later used the objects during their life-drawing time. All drama exercises worked directly into drawing, encouraging artists to reflect on the different effects of physical ways into practice. It also challenged the students to take ownership of the space.

The course also worked with this through provision of materials and books. Enrolment at 'drop-in' enabled participants to hold a Leeds College of Art student card, borrowing up to two books at a time. I also brought a wide range of books on related themes for students to peruse. The materials by and large remained consistent, and included a large range of charcoals, pencils, graphite, pastels, inks, acrylics, oils, watercolours, crayons, paper, brushes and other mark-making implements. As the course progressed I extended the range to include fabrics, feathers, shells, beads, modelling clay, textile accessories,

sewing equipment, cloth flowers, miscellaneous objects, plasticine, wood and a wider range of papers, cards and plastic to work on. I felt it was important for students to have a wide range of materials to work with – partly to extend resources to students on low incomes, partly to encourage students to experiment with materials that they might not normally use, but lastly to free students up to ‘travel light’ to the sessions. This last point played an important part in encouraging students into the drama-working of the course – unencumbered by easels and bags of paint, they arrived with a more flexible energy without the tensions of having to fix their spot on entry to the room. I, by contrast, arrived equipped with large suitcases reversing the conventional associations!

Experimentation with materials formed an ongoing part of each session, enabling the students to broaden their understanding of mark-making. From the second year of the course I explored collective drawing along principals of creative exchange. This led to the ‘inheritance’ project (see appendix) and provoked exciting questions in thinking about the studio practices of artists historically.

It must also be said that the conventions in themselves can often be incredibly positive, both in developing drawing and for the working experiences of life-models and artists. Sessions explored multiple sides of silence, stillness, nudity, etc. debating their positive and negative aspects. A central theme of the course was – how can we best progress these conventions into C21st practice? How can groups operate in ways that encourage dynamic, inspired, creative exchange? These questions remain at the forefront of life-modelling / life-drawing investigation.

## **Stepping into the picture: physical / instinctive readings of art in the gallery space:**

A huge resource for the course was the fine art collections and exhibitions of Leeds City Art Gallery. I planned sessions week-by-week, from a point of contemplation in the gallery space. My method was to identify a figurative work and explore it in the space through pose-reconstruction, narrative–theatrical investigation and through a questioning of the conditions under which I intuited it had been produced. After engaging with this process, I would research the art-historical background and revisit the picture / sculpture to re-read it from this perspective with a more conventional focus on form, composition, use of materials and symbolism. I would then develop a range of drama, life-drawing and research materials for that week's session from the process.

This process was useful on many levels. Firstly, it asserted a life-modelling / theatre-based reading of the figure that involved suspension of disbelief (a willingness to believe in the narrative of the picture at face value), empathy with the human figure depicted, involvement / projection of imagination into 'the scene' and a willingness to deconstruct the image to intuit the conditions within which it was produced. I called this process 'stepping into the picture'. The art-history research was a parallel process of investigation which gave substance to some of my instincts and involved close looking at the work. It worked to educate me as a tutor about the artist and work, and helped me understand its curatorial positioning in the wider space of the gallery. I encouraged the students to follow similar processes of investigation. Handouts and exercises on the works involved physical/theatrical engagement with works in the gallery space provoking lively discussion as to what the figure was doing and what the experience of the model must have been.

As the course progressed, I situated whole sessions in the gallery spaces encouraging the students to be bold in their engagement with the space and its collections, and drawing the general public in. This further developed the physical spontaneity of students and engaged with the public space of the gallery on multiple levels. It also encouraged performative acts.

Drawing 'from the antique' formed part of the engagement with the works and involved the life-drawers in thinking more about the history of the conventions. Despite the strong attachment to 'tradition' there is often little awareness of art history and developments of figurative-working within community life-drawing groups. There is a strong focus on practical drawing, and theory is often regarded as irrelevant. Using the gallery collections necessitated an awareness of history and theory, important for broadening the debates away from the immediate questions of life-drawing and life-modelling conventions. Amanda Phillips from Gallery Education – also instrumental in bringing the course into being - gave a couple of useful talks which assisted in this. I made active use of the gallery archives to support the discussions on the collection and as a tutor found access to the college library of immense use for these purposes. Planning sessions week-by-week kept a spontaneity of enquiry, as I rarely repeated sessions, which assisted in the performative pedagogy of the sessions. It also meant I engaged actively with exhibitions as they came in, and was in tune with the gallery as a whole. This strategy was time-consuming and all-engaging and went beyond the usual practice – and paid hours – of a community education tutor. Given that I was developing life-modelling theatre practice external to the course, this did not particularly worry me, but it did require a strong change of strategy when I decided to 'retire' from modelling in 2006 and needed to focus my energies and working time elsewhere. Fortunately this co-incided with the closure of the gallery for renovation. This allowed the course a year of shifting between locations (Space 2 at



Bracken Edge and Leeds College of Art) and a change of management in Community Education which brought new structures into place anyway allowing me to re-orientate my practice.

### **Model collaborators:**

Performance and collaboration remained key themes of the course. In addition to me being a model-tutor, students often had visiting models and performance artists to work with. In addition to Jeremy Holloway discussed earlier, I also collaborated with Raphaele de Groot (see photo gallery). There were also many models from the college with whom I explored practical ideas. I treated visiting models as collaborators and spent time negotiating the activity of the session beforehand along the lines of model-working in WILMA and Cast-Off Drama. This presented students with two empowered and engaged models, offering different views and experiences on the session's themes. It also ensured that I didn't get pigeonholed as a 'token' model-tutor. From 2004, the Personnel department began to send new models to the sessions just to observe, and I became an informal contact for them. When models attended the sessions I gave them a copy of the WILMA questions (see appendix) and this led to more discussion on the themes. I continue this practice now, especially with new models.

When I stopped modelling in 2006, I found myself in the position of tutor alone! This took some getting used to as I suddenly had time to contemplate during the sessions and observe from the outside. I took it as an opportunity to create a platform for the model to try things out as a facilitator. I now give part of the session over completely to the model to try something new in relation to the themes. I play a supportive role in keeping time and

reflecting back the effects of it afterwards. This has proved very successful and hopefully means that in future years there will be more than one model running a course for life-drawers at the college!

### **Developments and moving on:**

There is little written on the history of life-drawing generally, and research on the model involves shifting processes of enquiry, reading between the lines of artist-biographies and gleaning information about studio practices. Fictional accounts of modelling – eg. Anais Nin – can provide some clues, but are often bound up in fantasy and stereotype so need careful reading. The activities of the course have allowed for focus on a variety of Histories of the Model (see appendix) and this, together with a handout on Conventions of the Life-Drawing Space forms a starting point for all new students to the course.

In April 2007, the course changed to a modular system of 10-weeks' duration. This meant that students progressed from week-to-week building ideas and debates. Crucially, it meant that students could take on a solo or collaborative research project investigating an aspect of modelling. This can be researched and presented to the class in a variety of forms – though visual arts, academic presentation or performance. This proved highly successful on pilot. The return to the newly-refurbished City Art Gallery this term will offer further stimuli and research opportunities to students in this field.

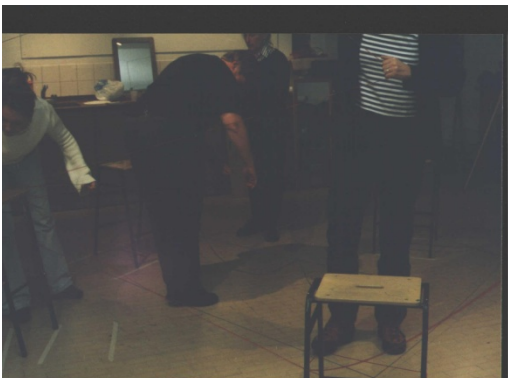
Nina Kane, October 2007.

## APPENDIX - A

# The Art of the Life-Model Gallery



Images from a session on *The Lady of Shallott* by John William Waterhouse (1896). Students did drama exercises with mirrors before building a web between them for the model-tutor to pose within. The class experimented with drawing reflections in a mirror having read Tennyson's poem and looked at the work in the gallery collection. 2002





Images from student sketch pads from sessions on *The Mystery Man* by Jack B Yeats, *Lottie of Paradise Walk* by William Orpen and *Monument* by Susan Hiller.

The model-tutor improvised with masks and props as a way of physicalising character. The students had explored mask and drape work to build tableaux images themselves in these sessions. 2003-4



Images from a session on 'life-drawing spaces' with two models.

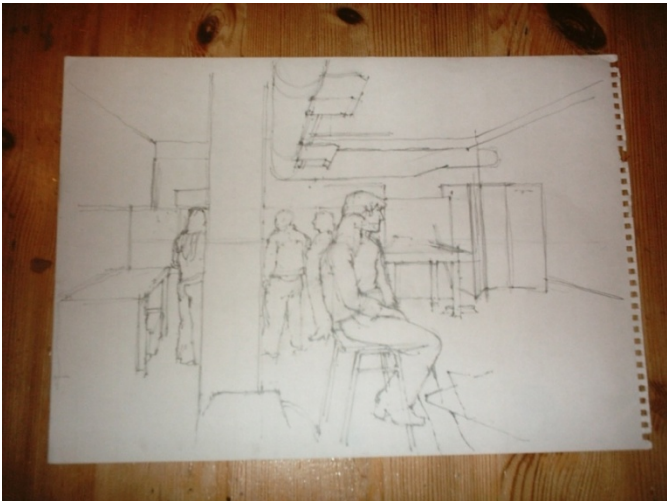
The models explored image-theatre techniques and led discussions with the students before modelling as a pair and discussing their reading. 2003



**Image of Luke Powell (skateboarder / artist) with model-tutor.**  
Luke skateboarded within the education workshop for students to draw and discussed the crossovers between mark-making on paper and marking the spaces of the city with his skate-boarding. The session was on R. Tait Mackenzie's Four Masks of Facial Expression and explored physicality in the life-drawing space.  
2003

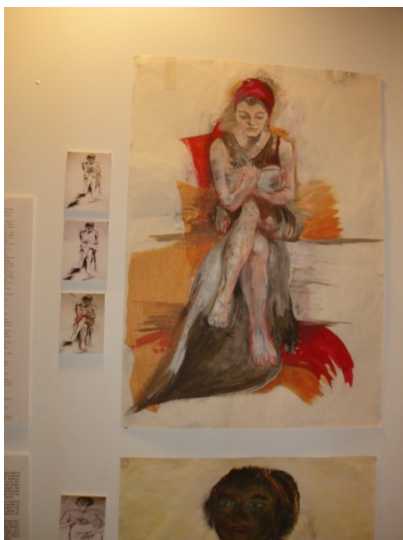


**Copy of Walter Sickert's Portrait of Ellen Heaton by Les Child.**  
'Drawing from the antique' was a regular feature of work in the gallery. The image was made from a session where students viewed Sickert's work in a mirror and drew the reflected images.  
2004



**Image of volunteer student-model.**  
In a session on Terry Atkinson's exhibition of war images the class explored Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre exercises on oppressions of the body. In relating life-drawing experiences a student volunteered a story about how she used to model but stopped because male life-drawers drew her breasts bigger than they were and regularly insulted her. She hadn't life-modelled for 25 years but requested to try as part of the session as she felt the group of students were supportive.  
2004





Collectively-produced images from 'The Inheritance Project' based on Ivan Mestrovic's sculpture of The Reader (Dorothy Una Ratcliffe) as exhibited in the International Women's Day Exhibition at Leeds College of Art and Design, March 2007. 2004 See appendix for details.



Image by John Willcocks of the model-tutor with Jeremy Holloway as part of the Leeds-Devon Art of the Life-Model exchange. Image taken from clowning exercise exploring movement and stillness with gendered positions. These exercises were repeated and developed at Dartington College, Devon in May 2004 as part of the 'Out of Context' symposium.

March 2004



Members of the public viewing The Art of the Life-Model community education exhibits as part of International Women's Day, March 2007.

2007



Students discussing handout material in the gallery space. From a session on the Adam and Eve myth, held as part of Art of the Life-Model weekend put on for Adult Learners' Week. 2005



Model-tutor recreating pose of The Artist in her Studio (Paula Rego) for students to draw. 2005



Students posing as Adam and Eve for their fellow students to draw as part of Adult Learners' Week. 2005

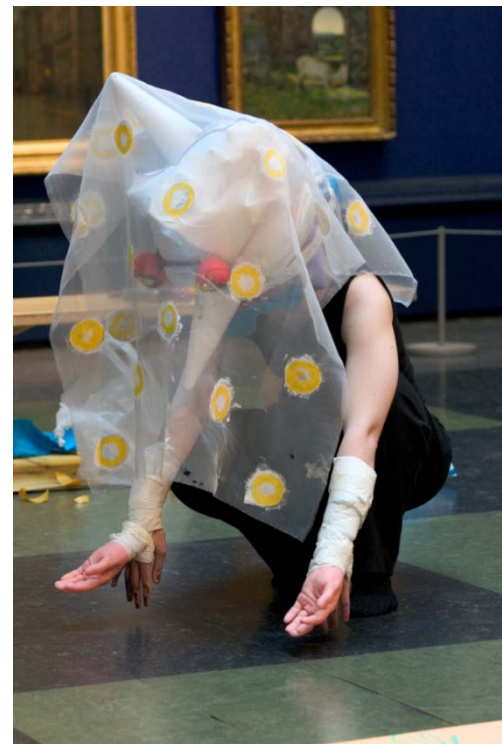




Raphaëlle de Groot is a performance artist from Canada. In her work for Situation Leeds she performed the role of the life-model and combined it with the activity of the artist, presenting a subject matter that continuously transformed itself to become pure process – a process that faced those drawing her with the unknown. Through this she probed the act of seeing - witnessing, revealing, interpreting, inventing the other through the creative response of participants. Prior to her performance for the course we collaborated in the public spaces of the Gallery, negotiating seeing and non-seeing, movement, mask, guiding and risk. I offered a physical theatre, mask work and life-modelling perspective to the process, allowing Raphael to deepen her inner engagement with the performance's negotiation of the model's body as both 'spectated object' and 'performative subject'. We developed translation exercises between us which we subsequently explored with students on the course.

**Above:** Raphaëlle de Groot and Nina Kane collaborate in the gallery space as part of the Situation Leeds festival. Cast-Off Drama 2005

**Below:** Raphaëlle de Groot performs to Art of the Life-Model students whilst they draw her.





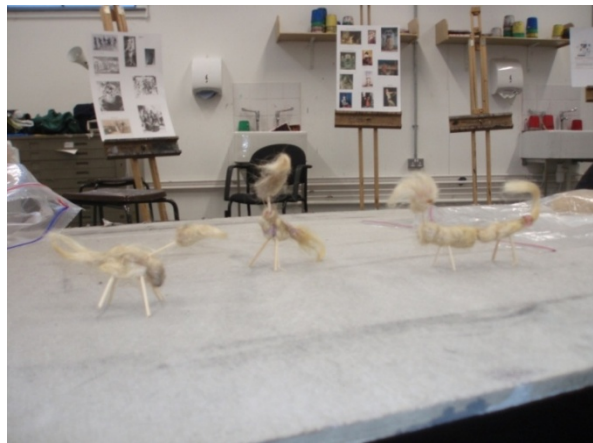
Students on the 10-week pilot project present their individual and joint research portfolios to the class.  
Summer 2007







Students on the 10-week pilot project present their individual and joint research portfolios to the class.  
Summer 2007.



## **APPENDIX - B**

### **Developed prior to The Art of the Life-Model course – its aims and objectives**

#### **Educational Agenda:**

To posit an understanding of the female Life-Model as a central and essential component in the processes of Western art production. To recognise that life-models are frequently disregarded, even now, as contributing to the development of artwork, and to challenge this through a variety of methods.

To redress an imbalance in the education of life-drawers which ignores the contribution of the life-model within the life-drawing space. To recognise life-modelling as a professional and artistic activity that has an impact and influence on artist's work – to posit an understanding of the life-modelling and life drawing activity as one of creative exchange.

To set the premise that the Life-Model is a largely neglected field of study within academic art theory, and one that merits further investigation. To acquaint students with developing theories on the issue, and provide a research base of knowledge on sources which work with this.

To introduce Feminist readings of art history, and related discourses on women artists and the body as an appropriate theoretical base from which to explore the issue of the Life-Model further.

To recognise that engagement with images of women through art theory, though offering powerful readings, can only offer so much information on the work and practice of the Life-Model. To suggest alternative approaches to investigating the role of the Life-Model through physical and dramatic engagement with figurative art – to encourage students to 'step into the picture' as a way of reading art. To value uses of instinct, empathy, imaginative speculation and emotional response as valid tools to accompany such investigation.

To recognise life-drawing and life-modelling as physical activities. To encourage participants to use their bodies and expand their awareness of physical connections to their drawing and reading of figurative art.

To use works from the Gallery's collection as a springboard for investigation of the female Life-model and related areas of interest. To understand the context of the works selected. To value and promote art-historical research of artists, cultural movements and relevant theories as supporting tools for investigation of individual artwork and Life-Modelling theory.

To recognise and explore the potential of the Gallery and its collection as an Educator, an arts provider, a working space and a space for new ideas and practices. To familiarise students with the Gallery's collection and layout. To offer opportunity to reflect on its curatorial development and choices, its history and its current interests – to explore the position of works in the collection within this context.

To recognise group life-drawing activity as a social activity as well as a forum for individual development.

To reflect on the practice and conventions of the Life-Drawing space. To understand the interaction of artists and model as operating within historically-defined conventions, with attendant rules, rituals, patterns of language and working practices. To offer an opportunity for students to reflect on these conventions in the context of their own experience and working practice; to suggest alternative methods of negotiation between artists and models with the emphasis on creative exchange.

To explore through practical methods conventions such as silence, stillness, nudity, narrative play, pose/set construction and props in the processes of production within the life-drawing space; to create 'spectrums' of engagement offering artists the opportunity to reflect on the usefulness of particular conventions to their own work

To create and question patterns of ritual occurring in the Life-Drawing space, to abstract and utilise certain structural features of the Life-Drawing session as a means to understanding the impact of these on the Life-Model and to offer choice.

To encourage an understanding of the issues that affect Life-Models, to encourage empathy and co-operation on the part of artists in relation to the model; to encourage communication between artists and models; to create a culture within which students can identify themselves as sharing common interests, concerns and ideas as part of a Life-Drawing/Modelling community.

To offer the opportunity for students to explore themes through a variety of activities: drama, discussion, looking at artwork, art research, life-modelling and life-drawing.

To offer an opportunity for drawing from a Life-Model; to explore the benefits of reconstructing a 'pose' (as opposed to reconstructing a 'picture') for drawing; to encourage imaginative and selective engagement with themes, images, energies and figurative representation occurring in works of art; to offer stimuli for the creation of new work

To encourage access to the Gallery and educational resources for a range of adult students. To facilitate their learning through flexible course structure, well-researched resources and access to libraries and information on other courses. To encourage students to pursue their own learning interests and research ideas beyond the course.

To facilitate involvement and inclusion through focused pairs and group-working, and directed learning. To create a culture of openness, sharing, co-operation and mutual respect.

## **APPENDIX - C**

**Some Women Models, Artists, Performance Artists, Photographers, Writers and Sculptors studied on The Art of the Life-Model course in recent years.**

Marina Abramovich...Eileen Agar...Elizabeth Siddal... Dolores...Tracey Emin...Lottie Stafford...Anais Nin...Betty Rea... Isabel...Fanny Cornforth...Betty May...Lucy Boyce...bell hooks...Meum...Lucia Noguiera...Jananne Al-Ali...Elizabeth Butler...Vita...Christine Borland...Lila Nunes...Dora Maar...Elizabeth I...Amy...Alison Saar...Amrit KD Kaur Singh...Rabindra KD Kaur Singh...Susan Hiller...Frida Kahlo...Suzanne Lacey...Maria Izquierdo... Amina Peerbhoy / Sunita...Mary Keene...Lubaina Himid...Beryl Cook... Zineb Sedira...Delaine Le Bas... Tacita Dean... Yoko Ono...Raphaëlle de Groot...Tamara de Lempicka...Lee Miller...Lucy Madox Brown...Mary D Webb-Robinson...Helen Chadwick...Anya Gallaccio...Frances MacDonald...Ana Maria Paechecho...Margaret Mackintosh MacDonald...Alison Lapper...Gillian Wearing...Elizabeth Murray...Mary Jones ... Kuhne Beveridge...Ella Von Werde...Rosa Bonheur...Orlan...Barbara Comyns...Tilda Swinton...Shirin Neshat...Sutapa Biswas ... Anne Brigman...Dorothy Una Ratcliffe...Mona Lisa...Gwen John ... Paula Rego...Estelle Brown...Mary Cassatt...Matilda Shields...Julia Margaret Cameron...Anne Ryan...Ellen Frazer ... Alice Gray... Annie Miller...(Louisa) Ruth Herbert...Clara Stephens...Keomi... Jane Burden / Morris... Julia Jackson...Madelaine Smith / Wardle ...Edith Waugh...Ellen Smith...Maria Zambaco...Mrs Egley ... Alexa / Alice Wilding ... Georgiana MacDonald...Aglaia Coronio...Marie Spartali Stillman...Anna Mary Howitt...Alice Keene... Emily Hunt...Rebecca Solomon...Emma Sandys...Sophie Gray... Catherine Madox Brown...Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale... Evelyn de Morgan...Kate Bunce ... Christina Rossetti ... May Morris ... Frances Ludlow ... Effie Gray/Millais...Mary Hodgkinson... Margaret Burne-Jones...Emily Andrews... Emma Hill/Ford... Eustatia Davy...Tryphena Foord...Joanna Mary Wells... Emma Watkins...Cecilia Kramer...Sarah Kramer / Roberts... Antonia Caiva...Joanna Mary Boyce...Georgia O'Keefe... Fanny Waugh / Holman Hunt...Gwen Salmond/Smith...Marthe Bonnard...Sonia Boyce...Faith Ringgold...Henrietta... Berthe Morisot...Artemisia Gentileschi...Queen Nefertiti... Nan Goldin...Angelica Kauffmann...Guerilla Girls...Jemma... Paula Modersohn-Becker...Mary Kelly...Tina Modottii ... Saskia ... Kathe Kollwitz ... Cindy Sherman ... Nicoletta

Comand...Madonna... Winifred Roberts / Nicholson...Nathalie Gontcharova... Vanessa Bell...Virginia Woolf...Nina Hamnett...Amanda Barrie... Marilyn Monroe...Maggi Hambling...Christina Smith...Nellie... Dorothy Hodgkin...Karen Ingham...Henrickje...Millie Kramer... Nellie Pickering...Mrs Epstein...Nellie Smiles...Peggy... Dorothy Parker...Ruhula...Carol Ann Duffy...Vera Cunningham..Anita Peerbhoy...Christiane de Mauberge...Marion Monay... Elisabeth White...Diana Spencer...Lauretta Hope-Nicholson... Valerie Hobson...Katherine Anne West...Kitty Garman... Alexandra Williams-Wynn...Anne Dunn...Celia Paul...Rose Boyt ... Esther Freud...Sue Tilley...Leigh Bowery...Jenny Saville... Isabel Lilian Gloag...Ethel Walker...Dora Carrington... Mrs Siddons...Emma Hamilton...Nell Gwynn...Rose Pettigrew... Connie Gilchrist...Emily Scobel...Laura Knight...Ella Naper... Mary Alford...Paulina Bonaparte...Euphemia Lamb... Marguerite Kelsey...Dod Proctor / Doris Shaw... Dorothy Dene...Lizzie Willis...Nan Condron...Betty (Esther)... May Spencer...Jane XXX (Lilian Ryan)...Patricia Preece... Sylvia Gosse...Petra Gill...Barbara Hepworth...Alice Edwards... Kathleen Woodward... and the many other nameless, transient, forgotten, collaborative female artists throughout the centuries who have created figurative art.

How many of the above names do you recognise?

What can you find out about the lives of the above and the contribution each has made to art history?



## **APPENDIX - D**

### **Discussion points for Life-Models on “Will You, Won’t You?” Project**

1. How and when did you first become interested in life-modelling?
2. How frequently do you model? Do you regard it as a profession? What's the highest and lowest wage you've ever received for life-modelling to a round figure?
3. How do you negotiate poses? Do you tend to form your own or have them set for you by the tutor or the class? Which do you prefer? When choosing a pose what do you take into consideration?
4. Do you ever recreate poses from pictures, photographs, sculptures or adverts? Are you aware of 'playing a role' or taking on a 'character' when creating a pose? Are you aware of artists or tutors recreating poses from other sources when positioning you? Is there such a thing as a 'feminine' or a 'masculine' pose? If so, do you ever consciously adopt one or another?
5. Describe the physical sensations you encounter when maintaining a pose? Is there a pattern to these? How do you manage to keep still? What do you concentrate on?
6. What emotional states do you experience when life-modelling?
7. To what extent are you aware of using your senses when life-modelling? What do you see / choose to look at? What can you hear? If your body is in contact with a surface of any kind, how aware are you of this? Are you aware of smells or tastes?
8. How important is room temperature? Who is in control of the temperature in the room? How do you negotiate changes in temperature?
9. How do you mark time? When do you 'break'? Who is in control of the time in the life-drawing session?
10. How do you remember and recreate a pose after a break? Who is in control of the time in the life-modelling session?
11. How do you prepare physically and mentally for a life-modelling session? Do you have a 'ritual' or 'routine' to your preparation? What sort of things do you have to take into account?
12. Describe different dressing room spaces you have encountered. How important is the dressing space? Do you find mirrors useful? What else do you like to have in your dressing area? Do you have any 'rules' with regard to this?

13. Describe different life-drawing spaces you have encountered? How is the space where the model stands constructed? Where are the artists placed in relation to the model(s)? Who 'sets the scene' and directs what happens within this space? At what point do you leave and enter it?
14. What do you wear in a life-drawing space? How important is 'the Robe'? What do you think of the term "robe" as opposed to dressing gown or cardigan? What does it signify? Do you have any personal rules in relation to your nakedness? Are there unwritten rules within classroom situations with regard to being dressed and undressed?
15. How important is it to you to see the drawings made of you? Do you like looking at the pictures? Do you look to find anything in them? What perspective does it give you on your body? Do you recognise yourself in them? Do you discuss the work with the artists? Have you ever had a noticeable change of shape? How has this influenced your experience of your body when modelling?
16. If you draw as well as model, how does your experience of 'one side of the easel' inform your practice on the 'other'? Likewise if you are a tutor, how does your experience of one activity translate to the other?
17. What is your experience of tutors and artists? Are you aware of unwritten 'rules' or 'power-balances' in the life-drawing class? To what extent is there communication both verbal and non-verbal between artists, models and tutors? What 'histories' of life-modelling are there?
18. If you practice any other art form, do you see a cross-over with life-modelling and the practice or processes of that art form?
19. Have you ever done or considered doing any other kind of modelling or related activity catwalk, glamour, catalogue, Life-Sculpture? Is there a difference between modelling for drawing/painting and modelling for photography or film?
20. Do you do anything to maintain physical, spiritual or mental fitness such as Yoga, aerobics, Keep Fit, Alexander Technique, Pilates, etc.?
21. How much do you use your imagination while modelling? Are you aware of your thoughts?
22. What do you choose to concentrate your thoughts on? What comes into your mind? Do you set 'rules', 'exercises' or 'challenges' for yourself?
23. Do you feel that life-modelling is any of the following: erotic, detached, functional, strenuous, communicative, creative, boring, exploitative, exciting, relaxing, meditative?

24. Have you ever had any embarrassing moments when life-modelling? How did you deal with it?
  25. How do you deal with biological functions such as sweating, coughing, sneezing, hiccuping, breaking wind, periods, breasts lactating, suddenly needing the loo? Do you talk, hum, sing, whistle or laugh when modelling?
  26. Have you ever done any 'doubles' or group modelling? If so, how did you find the experience of it? If not, how do you expect it to differ from solo modelling?
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1. How would you explain life-modelling to somebody who had never heard of it before? What does a life-model do?
  2. Describe the average life-drawing class?
  3. What do you consider to be the 'rules' of life-modelling?
  4. What do you consider to be good working conditions for life-models?
  5. What do you expect from tutors and artists
  6. What's the difference between life-modelling and other sorts of modelling?

## **APPENDIX - E**

### **Attitudes of the life-drawing group ... ? DISCUSS . . .**

- The life-model should be seen and not heard
- The life-model can teach us nothing about art.
- The life-model should nurture the artist.
- A muse should be amusing.
- A muse should be a-musing.
- The life-model is the property of the artist.
- Clothed life-models are a disappointment. Nude life-models are up for anything.
- Good life-models can do any position. Bad life-models break without permission.
- There is no real difference between a life-model and a bowl of fruit.
- Time is immaterial. Good life-models do not count the time.
- Life-models should never claim the artists' work as their own.

#### **Exhibition questions:**

- Do you agree or disagree with the statements made above? What aspects, conventions or expectations of models are referenced in these statements?
- What attitudes to / perceptions of the life-model occur in life-drawing circles?
- What is the role of the model in your opinion?
- What value judgements are made about life-models in your experience?
- What is the function of 'unwritten rules' in relation to the model within life-drawing practice? How do 'unwritten rules' assist the making of figurative art?

## **APPENDIX - F**

### **'Inheritance': Collective Works by Student Members**

The Art of the Life-Model is a weekly drop-in course at Leeds City Art Gallery. The course is model-led and combines drama, life-drawing and looking at works in the Gallery's collection. The sessions explore the diverse roles of the life-model in the making of figurative art, investigating the hidden history of the life-model through practical experiments into arts-making processes. Centrally we recognise the life-model as an active creative agent in the making of fine art, and see life-drawing and life-modelling as interdependent art forms.

The works exhibited represent an experiment into collective arts-making. Each picture has been worked on by a number of artists over a series of weeks. As the course is a 'drop-in', the pictures created a continuity from one week's group of students to the next, with the process being directed by the tutor who is also the model.

On the first week of each project, the model-tutor reconstructed a pose - the former being Antonio Canova's 'Venus' (1822), the latter being Ivan Mestrovic's 'The Reader (Dorothy Una Ratcliffe)'. Students made drawings and paintings from the model for twenty minutes. They attached a piece of paper to it recording their hopes for the future direction of the picture and returned the work to the tutor.

In subsequent weeks, the model-tutor reconstructed the pose for twenty minutes at each session. Students chose a pre-worked picture at random, located their position in relation to the model's pose and continued the work of the image. They were invited to make strong choices for the progression of their 'inherited' work and think about what the picture needed. At the end of the twenty minutes, they added their comments to the sheet. A photo was taken at each stage of the picture's development - some of the photos are displayed here for viewers to track the 'journey of the image'. All students were encouraged to work with the picture as their skills allowed and in ways they thought best, however, in the second project the model-tutor gave suggestions on what parts of the picture the artist should progress that week. As with the notes left by the previous week's artist, it was left to the students' judgement whether they followed the directions or not.

The second project's works developed more 'stylistic cohesion' than those produced on the first – this could be in part due to a growing confidence with the technique amongst 'regulars' and more time spent on the works (11 sessions as opposed to 8). Students present at the end-of year 'drop-in' were given the task of 'curating' the works for exhibition, adding 'finishing touches' as they thought necessary.

The experiment focused on the nature of 'inheritance' in figurative image-making, underlining the reality that the works we see in a gallery space are rarely the product of a solo artist's creative output or vision. The project sought to prompt awareness of the model's role in shaping arts work, the collective nature of guild traditions, of Renaissance studios/schools, and the input of restorers and curators in 'maintaining' a work of art. Citing mural-painting, cathedral-building and stain-glass window-making as immediate examples, the project prompted life-drawing artists to engage with a figurative history that reaches beyond the C19th paradigm of '1 artist + 1 model = 1 finished canvas', and to recognise the diversity of life-drawers' working traditions. 'Inheritance' aimed to explore the fragmentary, time-durational and process-focused nature of life-drawing - 'There is never enough time' is a common refrain! It sought to explore the tradition of the 'antique', the model's 'inheritance' of traditional poses, and the historical nature of repetition in the shaping of the body. The challenge for both artist and model was to not to start each session with a blank sheet, but to be open to 'inheriting' another's 'marks' and to commit our skills to furthering a work of indeterminate and multiple creative ownership. Centrally, it emphasised the life-drawing space as a site of negotiation, conflict and empathy.

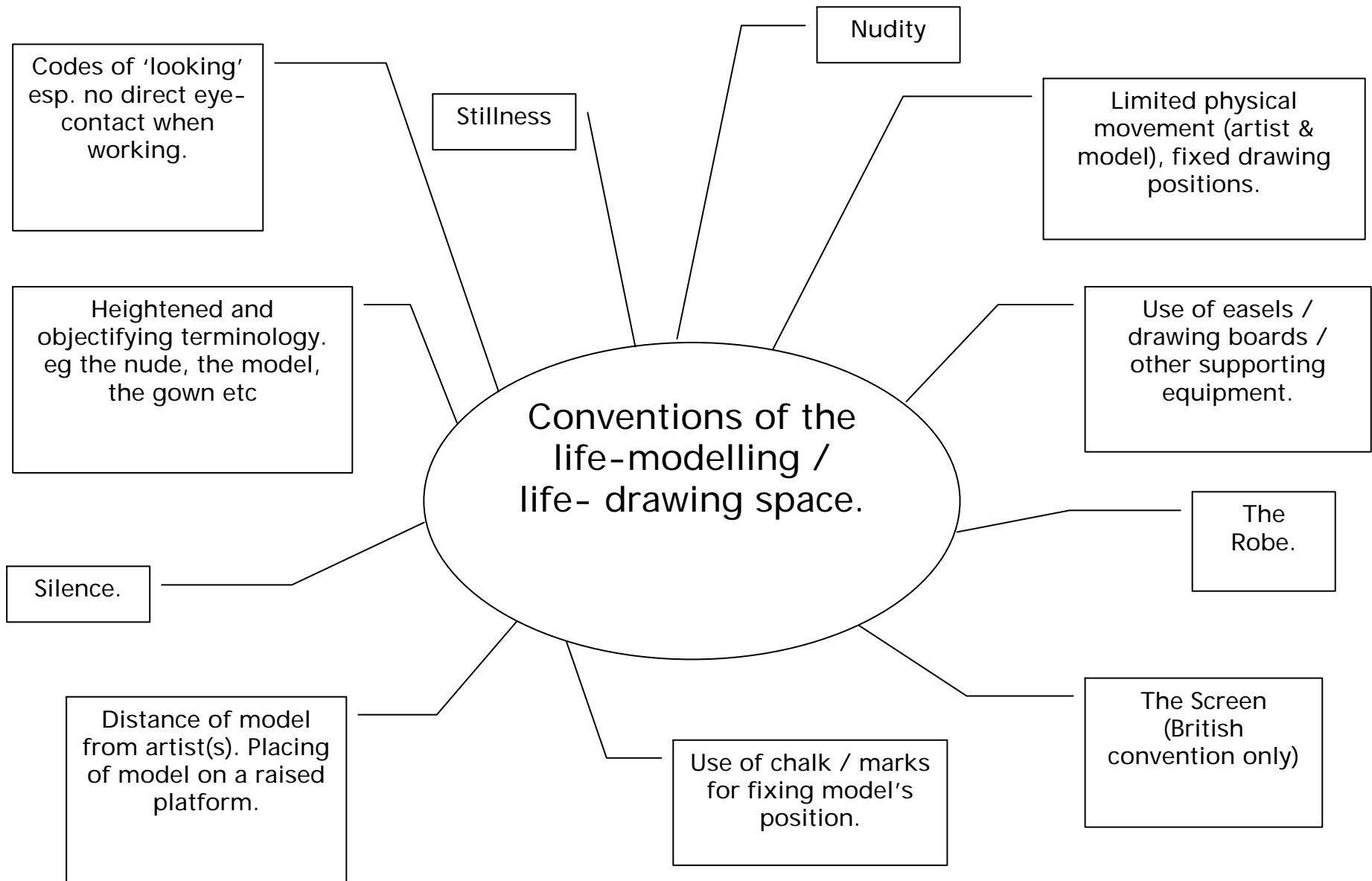
The first project lasted for 8 sessions and was based on a reconstruction of Antonio Canova's 'Venus' (1822). 8 images were produced in total. The second project lasted for 11 sessions and was based on a reconstruction of Ivan Mestrovic's 'The Reader (Dorothy Una Ratcliffe)'. 18 images were produced in total. Both works are in the permanent collection at Leeds City Art Gallery.

The following artists were involved in these projects:

John Adamson	Paul Laass-Pheonix	Kimberley Tilger-Holt
Paul Armitage	Maria Lage	Adrian Todd
Jane Austwick	Patricha Leggett	Julian Waite
Jenefer Baker	Hamish Lloyd-Platt	Jane Westwood
Colin Buckle	Alexandra Long	
Mark Chamberlain	Karen Long	Curators
Ann Y Chu	Deanne Lord	Pete Akroyde
James Clarke	Alan Lowe	Renee Giblin
Robert Clarke	Nina Kane	Helen Greatrex
Andrew Copley	David Maddox	Karmen Heidens
Laura Cramp	Sheila Maddrell	Nina Kane
Ruth Cross	Lynette Margerison	David Nunney
Jobert Cuevas	John Marlow	Louise Richerby
Anna Currie	Sandra McGarr	
Kelly Dean	Ryan McGee	
Virginia Delgado	Albert Mitchell	
Alison Dibbs	Ingrid Moss	
Jennifer Draxlbauer	Phil Norton	
Chris Eastman	David Nunney	
Lis Evans	Freya Paget	
Jessica Fenwell	Cordelia Reynolds	
Georgina	Louise Richerby	
Joy Gilmour	Emma Robertson	
Joyce Harrington	Alison Smith	
Louise Hawker	Christine Smith	
Katie Hill	Tracey Stanley	
Hannah Horsman	Sigrun Stanton	
Hugh St. Aubyn Hubbard	Donald Stephenson	
Mohammad Hussain	David Stogdon	
Robert Isle	Margaret Taylor	
Ben Johnson	Holly Thompson	
Martha Jurksaitis	Daisy Thurkettle	

**Questions:**

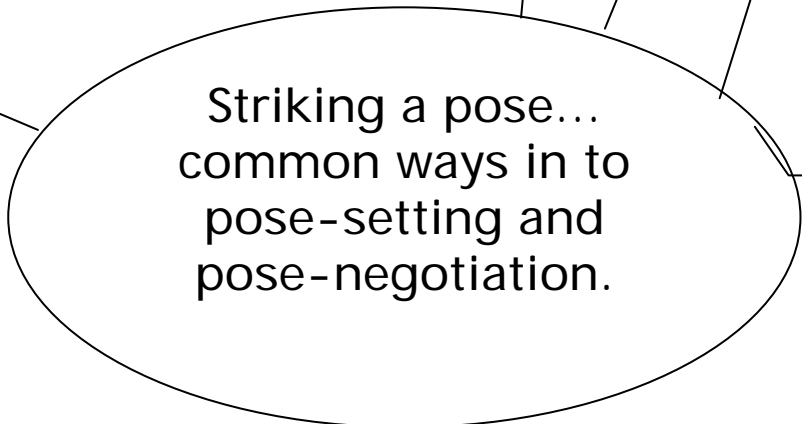
How familiar are these conventions? Do they operate in all life-drawing situations? Where do they originate? What is their function? How useful are these for figurative arts-making?





**Questions:**

In your experience, how is a model posed and to what effect? Are these systems used exclusively or in combination? What do we look for initially in a pose? If you are a model, how do you develop your 'pose-repertoire'? How best can you negotiate a pose? Is it useful to think of poses as narrative (ie. telling a story), abstract (arrangements of light, shade, tone, form), emotive..? What is the history of the poses we see repeated in figurative arts history? How are poses passed on culturally and for what reasons?



Physical contact. Lead artist/ tutor physically 'sculpts' the model into desired position.

Verbal direction. Tutor / lead artist tells the model how to place their body.

Model-initiated posing. Model draws on own 'pose-repertoire' or own body habits to set pose.

Group - negotiated pose. Having fixed their own positions artists in a group negotiate a pose that suits all angles.

Art-historical specific. Pose is directly copied from a work of art - eg. the model sits in the pose of the Mona Lisa, or of Manet's Olympia using an image of the original as a guide.

Use of other physical systems as a way in to creating pose eg. Yoga, T'ai C'hi, sign language, ballet positions, circus.  
NB. Usually defined by model's expertise /training in a given system.

Art-historicalesque / 'Cipher' posing: Model takes a pose that is suggestive / resonant of an art-historical type. Eg pseudo ballet pose that is called 'Degas-like'.

When we engage in life-modelling / life-drawing we encounter, often intuitively, aspects of different traditions. The emotional 'tenor' / dynamic of a life-drawing session can be informed by the model and artist's instinctive engagement with the different histories of the profession.

**Activity:** Which 'tradition' of modelling are you most familiar with? Can you think of any other histories of the model? Next time you look at a work of art think about where you would find information on the body / bodies behind the image.

**Question:** Why are there so few accounts of the working practice of life-models and their contribution to art history? What do people most commonly associate life-modelling with? What is the difference between a 'model', a 'study' and a 'sitter'? What sort of profession is life-modelling?

