



Students worked from casts during an afternoon session at the Bay Area Classical Artist Atelier.

BACAA: Classical Training

The Bay Area Classical Artist Atelier, just outside of San Francisco, began with one woman's dream to establish a school steeped in the traditions of the European ateliers of the past. Today the atelier is one of the most regarded classical contemporary schools in the country, offering students traditional figure-drawing training from today's top artist-instructors. | **by Allison Malafronte**

From Contemporary Masters

Walking into a class at the Bay Area Classical Artist Atelier (BACAA) feels a bit like stepping back in time to the European artist studios of the 19th century, when gifted apprentices gathered around professional masters to learn everything they could about the fundamentals of drawing and painting. Undoubtedly this modern-day atelier in San Francisco is a welcome sight for any artist seeking figure-drawing instruction in the classical-realist manner, with its 14- to 25-foot windows allowing constant, clear north light; students standing at easels or sitting in circles sketching from live models and plaster casts; and some of the greatest artist-instructors in the world stopping by to share their skills.

At the helm of this academic setting is the school's founder and director Linda Dulaney, who can be found piping Beethoven and Mozart over speakers while her students work, doing everything she can to foster the classical environment she envisioned for her school 13 years prior, when BACAA was just a dream. "I first had the idea to start a

school based on the ateliers of 19th-century Paris back in the 1990s," she remembers. "I had been an artist my whole life—always interested in the face and capturing a likeness—but had put my career on hold when I had a family. In 1994 I saw the movie *Immortal Beloved* about the life of Beethoven, and I was changed. Something about seeing the way this man struggled and persevered in pursuing his calling in life, and hearing the deeply moving music that resulted, inspired me to once again pursue my passion for portraiture.

"One day shortly after this epiphany I was looking through *American Artist* and noticed a breathtaking portrait drawing," Dulaney continues. "I was completely captivated by the level of skill achieved in this rendering, and I knew this was how I wanted to draw. I found out that the artist was Anthony Ryder, and from that point on I was determined to learn everything I could from him. In the months and years that followed, Anthony became a great mentor and inspiration, teaching me the fundamentals of figure drawing and portraiture while always speaking highly of his mentor, Ted Seth Jacobs."

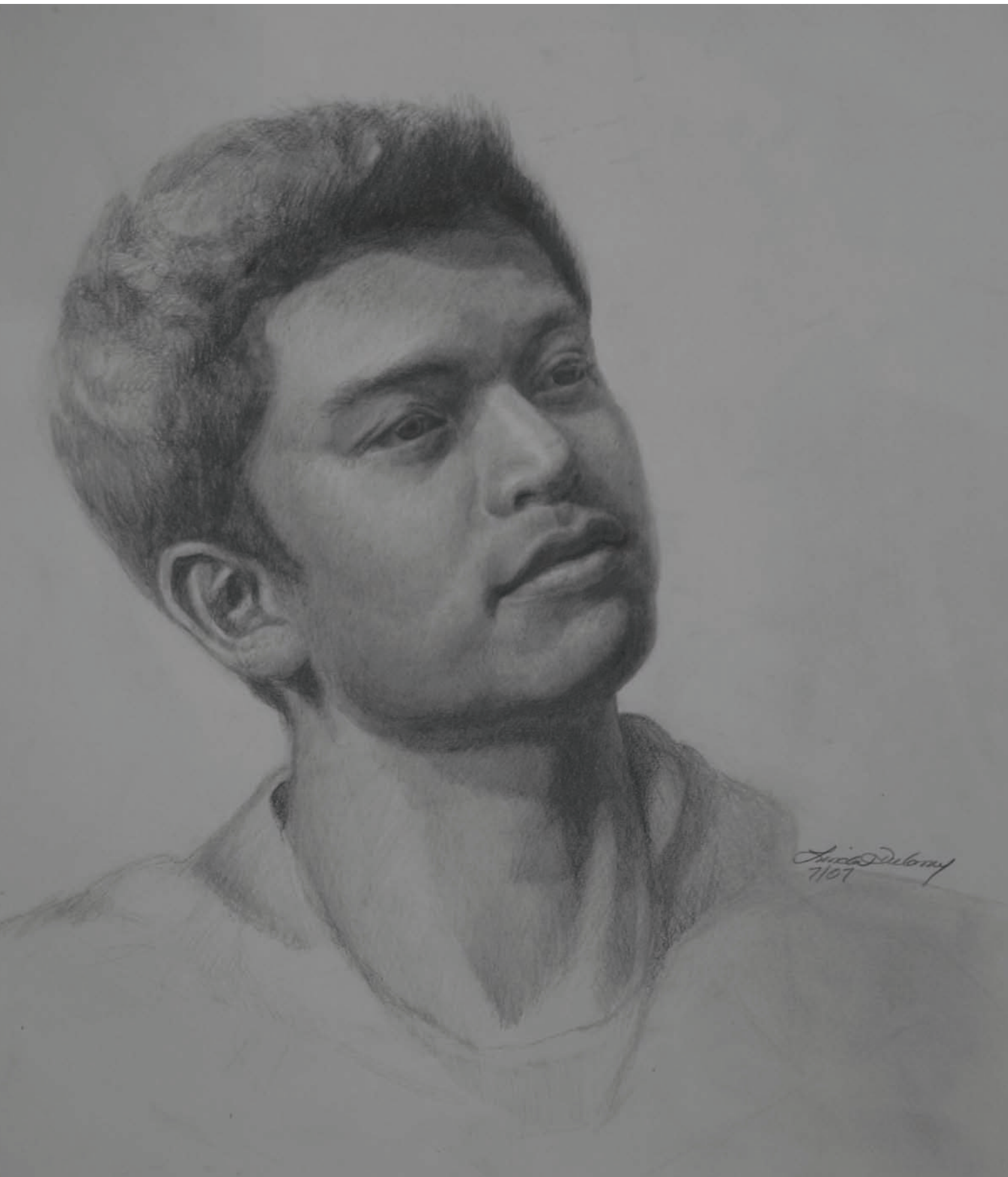
Inspired by what Ryder had said of Jacobs, Dulaney decided to travel to France in 1997 to meet the artist. "Being in France, meeting Ted, visiting the many museums, churches, and palaces, and making a trip to Beethoven's home in the Heiligenstadt of Vienna, all propelled into action my dream of being a portrait artist and starting my own school," she says. "After years of attending workshops with Anthony and consulting with Ted via e-mail and phone, I had a clear idea of the style and type of instruction I wanted in a school and, in 2001, I hosted my first workshop with Anthony in San Francisco. This was the beginning of the Bay Area Classical Artists Guild, which eventually became the Bay Area Classical Artist Atelier."



Linda Dulaney assisted a student who was drawing from the live model.

Anthony Ryder
worked on a sketch
of the model during a
workshop he taught
at BACAA.





BELOW

Bridgette

by Linda Dulaney, 2007,
graphite, 14 x 17.
Collection the artist.

RIGHT

Self-portrait

by Linda Dulaney, 2007,
graphite, 14 x 17.
Collection the artist.

OPPOSITE PAGE

JR

by Linda Dulaney, 2007,
graphite, 14 x 17.
Collection the artist.



INSTRUCTORS AND CURRICULUM AT BACAA

Both Ryder's and Jacobs' influence have been instrumental in the establishment and growth of BACAA, and both have been generous in sharing their time and knowledge with students. Since the school's inception, Dulaney has invited other artists to teach at BACAA as well, including Juliette Aristides, Michael Grimaldi, Juan Martinez, Dan Thompson, and Jon DeMartin, all of whom follow the contemporary classical approach to portrait and figure drawing but each of whom have developed his or her own way of conveying it. These master workshops are held during various months throughout the year, with Dulaney teaching classes in between the sessions to help students apply what they've learned.

The curriculum at BACAA is based on the European academic model of the 18th and 19th centuries, specifically that students make careful observations from life under natural light and learn how to transfer what they see to a two-dimensional surface in a slow, methodical manner. The premise for all instruction is taken primarily from the approach put forth by Anthony Ryder in his book *The Artist's Complete Guide to Figure Drawing* (Watson-Guption Publications, New York, New York), which Dulaney teaches

during the weekly long-pose, cast-drawing, and self-portrait classes at the atelier. "The method I learned and interpreted from Anthony is at the heart of everything we do here at BACAA," says Dulaney, "and the way he presents it is clear and concise, allowing artists of all levels to better grasp how to turn the form on paper and achieve a believable likeness."

Ryder has taught this approach to figure drawing through workshops he has offered at BACAA as well as during classes he currently teaches at his new school in Santa Fe called The Ryder Studio. "In my figure-drawing classes, students are introduced to a drawing style in which the subject is built up through a succession of linear and tonal stages," Ryder explains. "The first stage is the 'The Envelope,' which is a simple, foundational shape of the figure; the second stage is 'The Block-In,' the complex/abstract shape of the form; the third stage is 'The Contour,' a specific, linear description of the silhouette of the subject; and the fourth stage is 'Drawing on the Inside,' which involves shading the tonal description of the form within the confines of contour."

Ryder stresses that the key to being able to convey what you're observing is to understand the phenomenon of vision as an effect of the interaction of light and form, a concept taught to him by Jacobs. "In Ted's classes, we learned about



LEFT

Bridgette

by Linda Dulaney, 2007,
graphite, 17 x 14.
Collection the artist.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP LEFT

Cast Study

by Sadie Jernigan
Valeri, 2007, vine
charcoal, 24 x 18.
Collection the artist.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP RIGHT

Potential

by Anthony Ryder, 1996,
graphite, 18 x 24.
Private collection.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM

Sadie Jernigan Valeri
worked on her *Cast
Study* drawing.

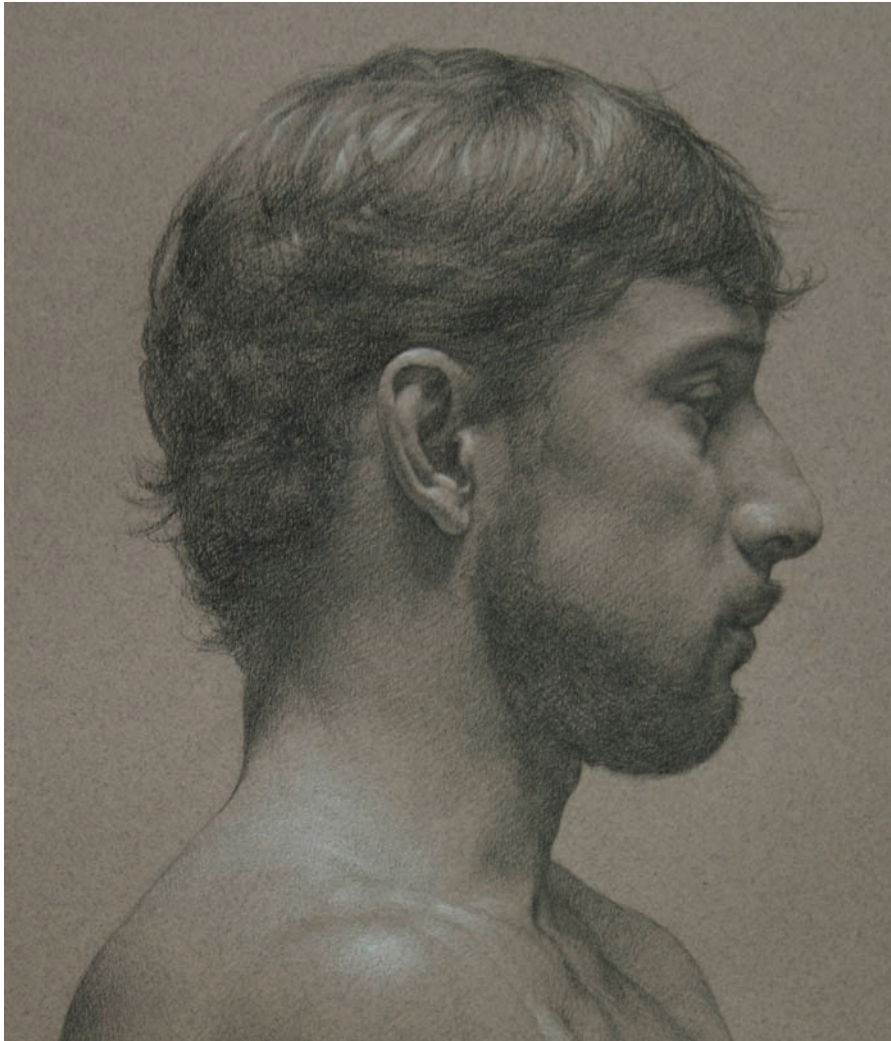
light in relation to the structure of the human body,” says Ryder. “He teaches a very cognitive approach to drawing, to understanding the perceptual process. Light is the substance of visual experience, it’s something we need to interpret with not only our eyes but also our minds.” Ryder applies this concept to painting as well in what is called “form painting,” a process also taught to him by Jacobs and one that stresses continuous, changing tonal progressions that mimic the changes of light and shadow seen on the model.

Ted Seth Jacobs, who in 1943 studied with Frank Vincent Dumond—an artist who at the end of the 19th century trained at the Académie Julian, in Paris, with Jules-Joseph Lefebvre and Gustave Boulanger—provides almost a direct link back to the 19th-century European atelier school upon which BACAA is based, although the artist says he rejected almost all of what he was taught. “I was originally taught a technique called ‘The Effect,’ which I didn’t agree with because it did not match what I was observing in nature,” says Jacobs. “The concept was based on the idea that in every painting there should be one lightest point, one highest value. This was to be what first captured the viewer’s attention, and everything in the picture was graded down from this.

“Similarly, on the head or whole figure, there was a lightest point, from which everything would be graded down, darker and darker,” the artist continues. “In a portrait, for example, if the light was coming from above left, the highest value would be found on the forehead. Dumond would critique twice a week, and in each session he would select a student’s painting and work over it, reorganizing the light distribution according to ‘The Effect.’ This did not accurately replicate what was happening on the model, however, and many times Effect painters greatly exaggerated the rate of value change.”

Eventually, Jacobs taught himself how to draw and paint in a more naturalistic way, focusing on the concepts of light and shadow through direct observation. “I was essentially always saying, ‘I was taught it looks like this, but that doesn’t look like what I see. What, then, does the model look like?’ This led me to a process of very careful analysis and observation. Now my approach is largely the opposite of what I was taught. From carefully looking at what I see and constantly comparing, I discover what nature really looks like. I observe on the premise that at every moment, I am seeing nature for the first time.”





LEFT

Oscar II

by Anthony Ryder, 2005,
graphite and white pastel
on tinted paper, 18 x 14.
Collection the artist.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Oscar I

by Anthony Ryder, 2005,
graphite, 20 x 14.
Collection David Dwyer.

STUDIO SPACE AT BACAA

The belief that Ryder and Jacobs share in direct observation, specifically as it is guided by strong natural light, is one of the strongest tenets of BACAA's philosophy—so much so, in fact, that when Dulaney envisioned what the studio space for her school would look like back in the 1990s, the quality of light was the most decisive factor. “Shortly after visiting Ted in France in 1997, I became very interested in learning more about the master/student tradition of Europe,” she explains. “I read a book called *In the Studios of Paris* (Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma), which talked about the ateliers of Bouguereau and other 19th-century artists. What impressed me most was that the core inspiration at these masters’ homes and studios in Paris was the quality of light.

“I then visited the homes of artists Jean-Jacques Henner and Pierre-Eugène-Emile Hébert in Paris, as well as that of Lord Frederic Leighton in London,” Dulaney continues. “When I went upstairs to Leighton’s studio and saw the magnificent way the light was coming in through his window, I was absolutely blown away. It was a defining moment to see how having natural north light could so strongly affect the objects in the room. When I was choos-

ing the studio space for BACAA, this vision was always in my mind. During one of our workshops in early 2004, I walked out of our studio in the Belmont Parks and Recreation Center and happened upon another studio called Barrett Hall. I gazed in and was literally stopped in my tracks by the dramatic way the north light was coming in through these enormous windows—it was exactly the impression I got in the old European studios. I was determined to get that room as the main studio for BACAA classes, and today that is where all our workshops are held.”

Besides the exquisite lighting, Barrett Hall has many features that make it an inspirational environment for classical figure study. The large auditorium studio space can accommodate multiple model stands, easels, and plaster-cast setups, allowing students, instructors, and models to move easily among one another. A full stage surrounded by black curtains allows models to position themselves comfortably for long-pose sessions while permitting students to work from a setup with minimal glare. Plaster-cast replicas of Greek and Roman sculpture, from which artists do detailed charcoal studies, line shelves while large mirrors are available for those students who participate in the self-portrait classes.

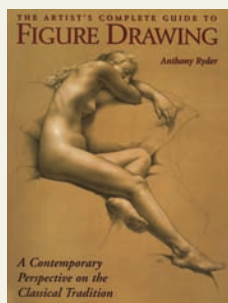


Recommended Books From BACAA



In the Studios of Paris: William Bouguereau and His American Students, by James F. Peck (Philbrook Museum of Art Publications, Tulsa, Oklahoma)

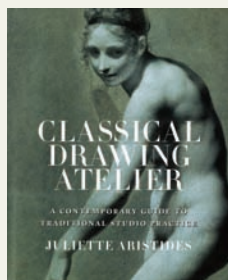
The light, the master, and the student were the principal elements of artist studios in 19th-century Paris, and it was this book's description of that setting that inspired Linda Dulaney in choosing BACAA's studio space. Discussing the relationship between master artist Bouguereau and his American students, this book shows how the Parisian ateliers of the late 19th century influenced American art.



The Artist's Complete Guide to Figure Drawing: A Contemporary Perspective on the Classical Tradition, by Anthony Ryder (Watson-Guptill Publications, New York, New York)

This book, the foundation of BACAA's curriculum, provides explicit descriptions and accompanying renderings of how to draw the human figure in a classical contemporary fashion. The book is intended to be an in-depth guide for both draftsmen and painters who desire to accurately draw the figure while gaining a better understanding of the human form.

For more information, visit Ryder's website at www.tonyryder.com.



Classical Drawing Atelier: A Contemporary Guide to Traditional Studio Practice, by Juliette Aristides (Watson-Guptill Publications, New York, New York)

The historical practices of classical ateliers are the focus of this book, as is how this tradition is being incorporated into contemporary drawing practices. The book features work from Old Masters to today's finest artists, including that of Michelangelo, Rubens, Prud'hon, Jacob Collins, Graydon Parrish, and Anthony Ryder.

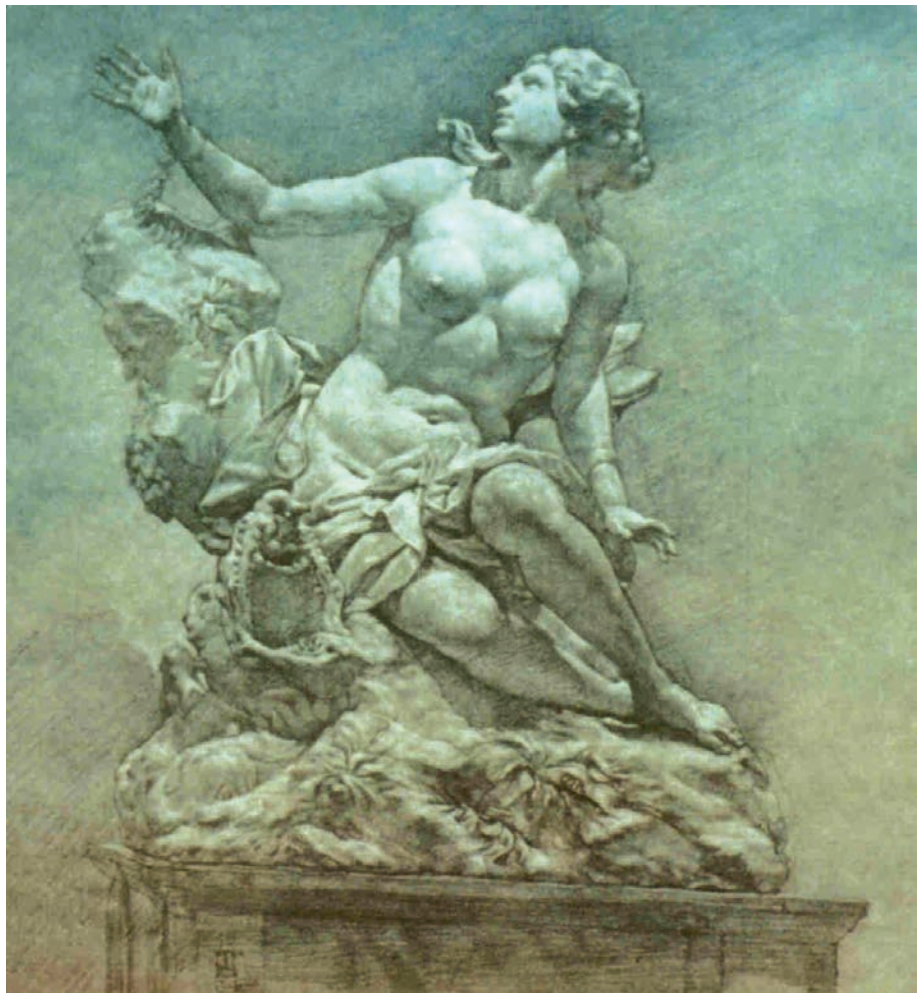
Aristides' new book, *Classical Painting Atelier*, will be published in 2008. For more information, visit her website at www.aristidesarts.com.

STUDENTS AT BACAA

Students of all levels are accepted for the weekly figure-drawing, cast-drawing, and self-portrait classes at BACAA, while the master workshops are better suited for the intermediate to advanced artist. Although the training in all classes is serious and academic, Dulaney strives to cultivate an encouraging, non-intimidating atmosphere. "I want BACAA to be available to students of all levels, from all different backgrounds," she says. "We don't require portfolios or an application—we want it to be a welcoming environment where artists can grow in their artistic development. For the longest time this kind of classical-realist education was unavailable to art students, so we want to make it as accessible as possible and continue passing on the tradition."

Several students found the Bay Area atelier while searching for exactly the kind of traditional approach to drawing and painting to which Dulaney refers. "I enjoyed attending art school and pursuing my degree in illustration, but I always wondered when we were going to learn to draw like Michelangelo and paint like Ingres," says Sadie Jernigan Valeri, who began taking regular weekly classes at BACAA after attending the Juliette Aristides master workshop in March. "But lessons in those traditions never came—my art training was not the disciplined study of color and form that I had imagined it would be."

After spending a decade in a successful career as an illustrator and web designer and becoming increasingly dissatisfied artistically, Valeri finally decided to devote herself to the study of representational art. "I found out about Juliette's workshop at BACAA through the Art Renewal Center website, and when I entered the class, it was an absolute turning point for me," the artist says. "Juliette's approach to drawing in the classical method, and her eloquent description of the atelier tradition, made me feel as if I had finally found a manner of drawing with which I could identify. I have studied drawing since I was a teenager but never found an approach that taught me to capture gesture, form,



TOP LEFT

Jeffrey Fahey

by Ted Seth Jacobs,
1982, sepia Conté on
prepared paper,
14 x 10. Collection
the artist.

TOP RIGHT

Michelle Tully

by Ted Seth Jacobs,
1996, sanguine lead
on buff paper, 9 x 7.
Collection the artist.

BOTTOM LEFT

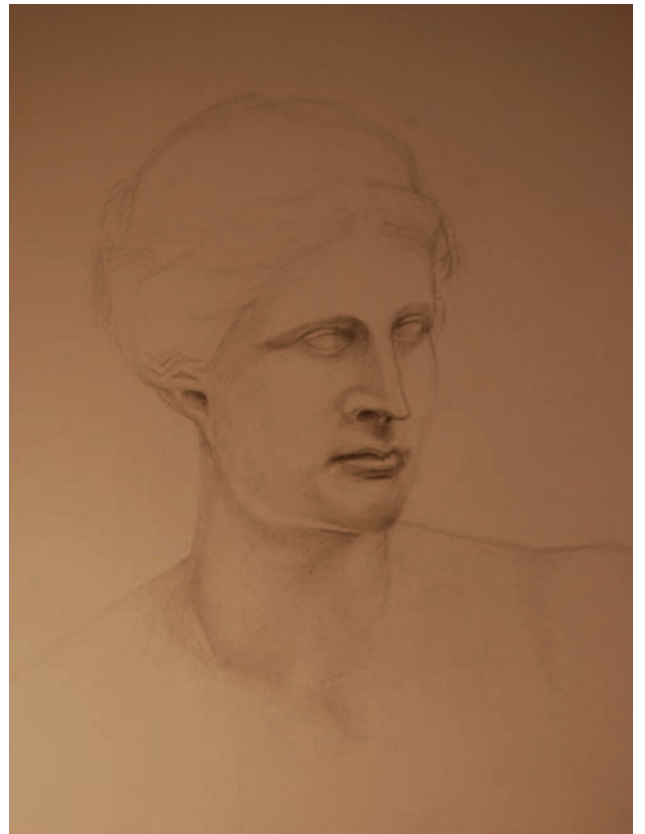
Camille Izard

by Ted Seth Jacobs,
1982, sepia-colored
Conté on prepared paper
with pastel, 12 x 10.
Collection the artist.

BOTTOM RIGHT

Monnot

by Ted Seth Jacobs,
1982, sepia and black
and white Conté on
prepared paper,
15 x 18. Collection
the artist.



OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP

A student used a thin wooden stick as a plumb line as he worked on his cast drawing.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM LEFT

Bridgette

by Lori Kitamura-Tintor, 2007, graphite, 11 x 14. Collection the artist.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT

Cast Drawing (in progress)

by Charles Hinckley, 1997, graphite, 17 x 14. Collection the artist.

RIGHT

Caroline

by Sadie Jernigan Valeri, 2007, graphite, 11 x 14. Collection the artist.

proportion, and value like the classical block-in method. I am amazed every time at how straight, angled lines can magically transform into an elegant, emotive depiction of the human body.”

This appreciation for the realist method that BACAA instills in its students gives them not only a firm foundation in tradition but also a deeper understanding of how important it is to master the fundamentals before developing an individual style. “Being able to draw well is vital to understanding how to paint and how to see the human form, and to understanding what you’re rendering,” says Charles Hinckley, who regularly participates in the weekly portrait- and cast-drawing sessions at the atelier. “Through the instruction I’m receiving at BACAA, I’m learning that in order to develop as an artist, you have to examine the fundamentals and expand from there.”

“It was very inspiring to watch Dan Thompson in the workshop he conducted here this past August and see how his years of accumulated knowledge inform every brush stroke he makes,” says Valeri. “His understanding of constructive anatomy seemed to affect every decision he made, no matter how loose or painterly the final effect. I was amazed to see how, with two small twists of his brush, he was able to give a complete anatomical description of a knee half-hidden in darkness. Watching him draw and paint has just reinforced the belief that I have always held: we must learn to draw well if we are to attempt to paint.”

It seems all BACAA students appreciate the level of high-caliber instruction that is available to them, and each is grateful to receive this training in a setting reminiscent of the ateliers of 19th-century Europe. “BACAA draws a level of artist-instructors whose credentials, body of work, and ability to guide students are unmatched,” says Lory Kitamura-Tintor, who has been taking classes at the atelier since 2005. “The studio space is fabulous, and Linda does everything possible to ensure a stimulating and supportive working environment for her students.” Says Valeri, “Between the beautiful north-light-filled studio, Beethoven playing in the background, and the chance to work alongside people who are equally dedicated and disciplined, the Bay Area Classical Artist Atelier is exactly what I always dreamed studying art would be.” ❖



Upcoming Master Workshops at BACAA

- **Ted Seth Jacobs Master Residency Program**, November 5 through December 14, 2007; January 14 through February 22, 2008
- **Michael Grimaldi**, March 31 through April 11, 2008
- **Michael Grimaldi**, October 6 through 17, 2008
- **Dan Thompson**, June 9 through 20, 2008
- **Juliette Aristides**, July 7 through 15, 2008
- **Jane Paul Angelhart**, August 25 through 29, 2008

For more information, visit BACAA's website at www.bacaa.org.