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An Investigation of the use of the Nude Model in Art Departments of State Colleges and Universities of Five Upper Midwest States

Merle Herman Sykora St. Cloud State University

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE USE OF THE NUDE MODEL IN ART DEPARTMENTS OF STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OF FIVE UPPER MIDWEST STATES

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
St. Cloud State College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by

Merle Herman Sykora
August 1965

M454)4

Accepted by Thesis Committee:

au Chairman

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND REASON FOR STUDY

The nude has been a subject for the artist for as long as visual art has been preserved. Some of the earliest nude sculptures have defied dating and come down to the present age as a clear indication that the unclothed figure had some religious or mythological significance. Carvings of the nude figure with enlarged sex organs, found in prehistoric caves, have led art historians to assume that they were used in some religious fertility rite. Investigation into the reason for the use of the nude as subject matter showed that the nude has been a means of portraying energy, pathos, ecstasy—the basic human emotions—as well as having been an end in itself for artistic statements.

It was assumed that art is a legitimate intellectual activity and deserves a place in the offerings of institutions of higher learning. As Kenneth Clark pointed out:

Art is justified, as man is justified, by the faculty of forming ideas; and the nude makes its first appearance in art theory at the very moment when painters begin to claim that their art is an intellectual, not a mechanical, activity.

The doctrines of this new academism are clearly stated in the first treatise on the art of painting ever written, Leon Battista Alberti's Della Pittura. It was completed in August 1435 . . . Alberti assumes that the basis of academic procedure is a study of the nude. . . .

In the second half of the fifteenth century we have plenty of evidence that drawing from the naked model was a regular part of training. . . .

With those statements to justify inclusion of courses using the nude model in art curricula, the researcher wanted to know if such institutions were making the nude model available to their students and for what classes.

During the winter of 1965 the researcher completed a project investigating the use of the nude model in art departments of four-year degree-granting institutions in the State of Minnesota. This investigation was made at the request of the administration of St. Cloud State College when the art department asked permission to use the nude model for a figure drawing course. At the conclusion of that study the researcher was curious about the use of the nude in state colleges and universities of surrounding states. Finding no information available to answer his questions, he expanded his investigation in the spring of 1965 to encompass the five adjoining states. He selected those states bordering upon Minnesota because they are frequently looked to for a precedent when higher education problems in Minnesota are discussed. He desired information concerning state college and university art department procedures and attitudes about the nude model.

¹Kenneth Clark, The Nude (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), pp. 450-452.

CHAPTER II

PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The Minnesota State Colleges have traditionally not used the nude model. The researcher became interested in what colleges and universities in adjoining states were doing. This led to a study encompassing the following problem and hypotheses.

I. PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to gather information relative to the use of the nude model in state colleges and universities of the upper midwest states of Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Additional information including the number of majors enrolled in the art department, the degrees offered, the presumed effectiveness of the nude model for teaching form, the type or level of classes in which the nude was used, and the scale of pay for the model was also desired.

Hypotheses.

- The majority of state colleges and universities investigated will not use the nude model.
 - 2. Those state institutions found using the nude

model will have encountered no community controversy.

- Those institutions using the nude model will do so in classes other than life drawing.
- 4. Those colleges and universities having more than sixty art majors will use the nude model.
- 5. Those colleges offering degrees beyond the bachelor's level will use the nude model.
- 6. Those institutions offering the degree Master of Arts or Master of Fine Arts will use the nude model.
- 7. Those colleges and universities not using the nude model will state "college policy" as the reason.
- 8. Those art departments not using the nude model would do so if conditions were such that they could.
- 9. Most state college and university art departments will presume the nude to be an extremely effective means of teaching form.
- 10. Those colleges using the nude model will pay in excess of two dollars per hour.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

College(s). All state colleges and universities which participated in this research.

Form. The three-dimensional quality of an object rendered in drawing.

<u>Institution</u>. Synonymous with college or state colleges and universities.

Life drawing. That drawing experience which uses the clothed or unclothed model.

Nude. The unclothed female form and/or the male form wearing a posing brief or athletic supporter.

State college. Those colleges which do not have university as part of their official title.

University. Those institutions which include university as part of their official title.

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CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since the nude figure has been a subject for the artist for centuries, the amount written about art works depicting the nude was considerable. Nearly every art history book made comments about specific paintings, sculptures or prints, while some made comments about the use of the nude model in academic situations. Other books made mention of specific artists and their use of the nude model. No literature could be found in the St. Cloud State College Kiehle Library about opposition to the use of the nude model.

The depiction of the unclothed form has had many erotic, psychotic, social, moral or philosophical connotations. The researcher chose to leave the psychological, social and moral overtones out of the research as much as he possibly could. However, in his reading he found frequent reference to the difference between the naked and the nude figure. As Clark so advoitly stated:

To be naked is to be deprived of our clothes, and the word implies some of the embarrassment most of us feel in that condition. The word "nude," on the other hand, carries, in educated usage, no uncomfortable overtone. The vague image it projects into the mind is not of a huddled and defenseless body, but of a balanced, prosperous, and confident body: the body re-formed.²

²Ibid., p. 23.

Further he commented:

Plato, in his Symposium, makes one of the guests assert that there are two Aphrodites, whom he calls Celestial and Vulgar, . . . and because it symbolized a deep-seated human feeling, this passing allusion was never forgotten. It became an axiom of medieval and Renaissance philosophy. It is the justification of the female nude. Since the earliest times the obsessive, unreasonable nature of physical desire has sought relief in images, and to give these images a form by which Venus may cease to be vulgar and become celestial has been one of the recurring aims of European art. . . . These two basic conceptions never quite disappear, but since art involves the application of laws, the distinction between the two Aphrodites grows very slight; and even when most unlike one another they partake of each other's characters.

John I. Sewall made a pertinent statement about the nude in European art:

The nude may or may not be erotic. It is an untruth to say it never is, but it is a fair statement that such intention is absent in the overwhelming majority of the many thousand nudes in the history of European art. 4

Some of the earliest uses of the nude form were in Greece. The Olympic games were played in the nude which led naturally to the use of the male nude as artistic subject matter for that era. The use of the female, however, came much later, as Mr. Clark makes clear:

Since the seventeenth century we have come to think of the female nude as a more normal and appealing subject than the male. But this was not so originally. In Greece no sculpture of nude women dates from the

³Ibid., pp. 109-110.

⁴John I. Sewall, A History of Western Art (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), p. 49.

sixth century, and it is still extremely rare in the fifth.

These early portrayals of the nude form led to a philosophy which exists to the present time, according to Mr. Sewall:

. . . But however simple its beginnings, the introduction of the nude figure is one of the most important events in the history of art. The simple possibility of using the entire surface of the body opened up broader horizons almost beyond measure.

The artistic worth of the human nude derives from its superiority over the draped figure as a vehicle for communicating content. The state of the emotions and even the state of the soul makes itself manifest not in the face alone, but in every muscle. When the body is concealed by cloth, the artist simply has less area to work with and greater difficulty in making himself plain.

Although there was a marked decline in the portrayal of the nude figure during the medieval period because of the sinful connotation of the unclothed body, the Renaissance brought about a re-evaluation . . . with an emphasis on realism:

The artistic counterpart to the age of exploration and research was an increased realism. With respect to the human anatomy, the realists of the Renaissance cast off every vestige of medieval prejudice. Nudity lost its connotation of shame. Anatomical investigation of the entire body became a routine part of artistic training.

⁵Clark, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 112.

⁶Sewall, <u>loc. cit.</u>

⁷<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 605.

Virtually all of the famous artists, like da Vinci, Michaelangelo, and Titian, have at some time in their career used the nude as subject matter for painting. Thomas Craven has given interesting sidelights about these artists—artists of such great reputation that no one would dispute their significance. Of Leonardo da Vinci he stated, "Besides his studies of the nude, for which he utilized the corpses of the morgue and by solicitation, the nakedness of courtesans, . . ." he did many paintings of landscape and made many unique inventions. Michaelangelo, famous for his nudes in paint as well as sculpture, used various types for models:

His incomparable reclining figures in the Medici Sacristy at Florence were carved from large women who had labored under many pregnancies, . . . His Giant, or David, in Florence, was hewn from an adolescent model whose body was proportionately adapted to the requirements of a long, flat, slab, . . .

The figure of Adam, a reclining, dormant giant more than thirteen feet long, was painted in the three days! The model for this titan was an Italian athlete, . . . 9

Titian often remained within his own family when seeking nude models. His wife and daughter posed for some of his best known paintings. Rubens, so often painting the nude, was above reproach in his relations with his models:

⁸Thomas Craven, Famous Artists and Their Models (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1962), p. 8.

⁹Ibid., pp. 18-20.

Contrary to the impression created by the prevalence of nude women in his pictures, he was strictly monogamous and there is no compromising gallantry against his name. . . .

Rubens loved the nude as an organic fact and accepted its challenge without trepidation, undue excitement or any thoughts of exhibitionism. His undraped women are as healthy and chaste as his wives were; in truth, most of them were modeled, as I have said, from his wives; and his sexual appetites being amply satisfied in real life, he had no occasion to resort to the imaginary compensations of art. All his nudity is clean and pure and undisguised. 10

Most often Turner was a painter of landscape and the sea but, "At the Royal Academy, he drew from the nude, and drew very well, . . . "11 The portrayal of the nude by such Parisian painters as Monet, Toulous-Lautrec and Modigliani came as the result of first-hand study in schools as well as natural settings.

The literature clearly indicated that the nude has been a respected subject for so long that in most circles its use was a foregone conclusion.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 39-42.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 75.

CHAPTER IV

COLLECTION OF DATA

To gain the information desired it was necessary to question the state colleges and universities and then tabulate the replies to those questions.

I. INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

It was necessary to compile a list of the state colleges and universities of Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. This list was available from a master list of colleges in the Registrar's Office at St. Cloud State College, with no consideration of whether or not the college had an art department. A letter of introduction 12 stating the sponsorship of this study by the St. Cloud State College Art Department was sent to the art department chairmen of all thirty-four state colleges and universities of the five states. A questionnaire 13 with a stamped, self-addressed envelope accompanied the letter. The questionnaire, the same as that used for the earlier study, was of the check-list type to simplify answering and

¹²See Appendix A.

¹³See Appendix B.

assure a favorable percentage of returns. Earlier a compendium of desired information was made by the researcher with all members of the St. Cloud State College Art Department faculty submitting questions to which they desired answers. A questionnaire was formulated by the researcher and submitted to the art department faculty for their approval. The questionnaire was then used to gather information from the four-year degree-granting institutions in the State of Minnesota for the study previously mentioned. When the results of that study were tabulated and the desired information received, it was decided to use the same vehicle for the study involving the five state area. As the replies arrived they were tabulated on a blank questionnaire form, 14 simple percentage correlations made, and the results compared with the hypotheses. Because the percentage of returns was greater than anticipated, and considered more than adequate, no follow-up was made of the five non-responding colleges. One was in North Dakota, two were in South Dakota, and two were in Wisconsin.

II. DATA

Of the thirty-four questionnaires sent, twenty-nine

¹⁴See Appendix C.

were returned, making an 85 per cent response. Because of the multiplicity of degrees offered by some colleges, there were a greater number of degrees offered than the number of respondents: twenty-one offered the B.A., twenty-two the B.S., two the B.F.A., one the B.Ed., six the M.A., nine the M.S., three the M.F.A., five the Ph.D., while one offered the D.Ed.

There was a wide range in numbers of art majors:
two colleges had no majors, but some minors, four had eleven
to twenty majors, five had twenty-one to thirty, one had
forty-one to fifty, one had fifty-one to sixty, three had
sixty-one to seventy, three had seventy-one to eighty,
three had eighty-one to ninety, while seven had over one
hundred.

The number of drawing courses varied from one to eight, with thirteen colleges having three or four.

Twenty-one colleges (72 per cent) did not use the nude model, while eight colleges (28 per cent) did. Of those reasons given for not using the nude model, 44 per cent gave "lack of models," while 30 per cent gave "college policy," and 19 per cent listed "cost of models." Of those colleges not using the nude, 95 per cent stated that they would if conditions were such that they could.

The nude model as an aid for teaching form was felt

to be extremely effective by twenty-two (76 per cent) of the respondents, but moderately effective by six (21 per cent).

Those colleges using the nude did so in drawing, painting, sculpture, and printmaking. The nude was used in both beginning and advanced classes and in from one to sixteen different classes. None of the eight colleges using the nude had encountered any community (academic or other) controversy over the use of the nude model.

The models were paid from \$2.25 to \$4.00 per hour for their services.

The following table relating selected questionnaire responses to the state and institution has been provided for the convenience of the reader.

TABLE I

SELECTED QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES BY STATE AND INSTITUTION

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*Indicated information in a letter, but did not complete questionnaire.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF DATA

It was necessary to make several correlations essential in substantiating or refuting the researcher's hypotheses which were not mentioned in the previous chapter. These will be mentioned as they relate to the specific hypothesis.

I. RELATION TO HYPOTHESES

- 1. The majority of state colleges and universities investigated will not use the nude model. With only eight (28 per cent) colleges and universities having used the nude model, it was discovered that this hypothesis was true.
- Those state institutions found using the nude model will have encountered no community controversy. All colleges using the nude had encountered no community controversy.
- 3. Those institutions using the nude model will do so in classes other than life drawing. With five colleges using the nude model for painting and sculpture, two for printmaking and one for any class above the freshman level, this statement was substantiated.
- 4. Those colleges and universities having more than sixty art majors will use the nude model. This hypothesis was disproven with only six colleges having over sixty art majors using the nude while ten did not.

- 5. Those colleges offering degrees beyond the bachelor's level will use the nude model. Fifteen of the responding colleges offered degrees beyond the bachelor's level. Of these, six used the nude model while nine did not, thus invalidating hypothesis five.
- 6. Those institutions offering the degree Master of Arts or Master of Fine Arts will use the nude model. This was proven with five of the six colleges which offered the M.A. and all three colleges which offered the M.F.A. having used the nude. The one institution which did not use the nude offered an M.A. in Education only.
- 7. Those colleges and universities not using the nude model will state "college policy" as the reason. Since 44 per cent gave "lack of models" and only 30 per cent "college policy" as reasons for not using the nude model, hypothesis seven was disproven.
- 8. Those art departments not using the nude model would do so if conditions were such that they could. The proof for this was adequate with 95 per cent of the non-using colleges stating that they would if conditions were such that they could.
- 9. Most state college and university art departments will presume the nude to be an extremely effective means of teaching form. Twenty-two (76 per cent) of the respondents

felt that the nude model was an extremely effective aid for teaching form. The effectiveness was felt to be moderate by six (21 per cent) which validated this hypothesis.

10. Those colleges using the nude model will pay in excess of two dollars per hour. One institution paid the model \$2.25, three paid \$2.50, two paid \$3.00, and one paid \$4.00 per hour. This substantiated hypothesis ten.

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CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was the purpose of this study to determine in how many state college and university art departments of Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin the nude model is used, the presumed effectiveness for teaching form, the community reaction, the extent which the nude is used, the expense involved, and if the nude is not used, for what reason(s). Such information as what degrees were offered, how many majors in the department, and how many drawing courses in the curriculum was also desired.

The information was gathered by using a questionnaire which was sent to the art department chairmen of the thirty-four institutions in the five upper midwest states. The questionnaire was formulated by the researcher using ideas and suggestions of the St. Cloud State College Art Department faculty, subject to their approval. The questioning vehicle was used to poll the four-year degree-granting institutions of Minnesota before being sent to the five-state area. As the questionnaires were returned they were tabulated, the numbers of responses subjected to simple percentage computation, and the results compared with the hypotheses.

There was an 85 per cent return of the questionnaires.

All participating colleges offered a bachelor's degree while fifteen offered degrees beyond the bachelor's level. The number of majors varied from none (but some minors) to over one hundred. The number of drawing courses varied from one to eight, with many colleges having three or four. It was discovered that while few colleges (eight) were using the nude. many (twenty) would if conditions were such that they could. No community controversy had developed where the nude was The nude was used for painting, drawing, sculpture, and printmaking classes on both the introductory and advanced levels. There was no correlation between size of department (number of majors) and the use of the nude model, but those colleges which offered advanced degrees strictly in art studio work did use the nude. Of the reasons given for not using the nude model, 44 per cent gave "lack of models" while 30 per cent listed "college policy." The nude model was felt to be an extremely effective aid for teaching form by twentytwo (76 per cent) of the respondents, but moderate by six (21 per cent). The model was paid between \$2.25 and \$4.00 per hour.

From the readings and the findings of this study, it may be concluded that the nude model was considered an effective teaching aid and would be utilized more widely if professional models were available and administrative policy

altered. Some respondents seemed surprised that the use of the nude model should even be questioned—the effectiveness assumed and use so long accepted at their institution. It might also be concluded that if an institution presumes to offer an advanced degree in studio art work it must make the nude model available to its students.

A follow-up study of these colleges in five years would be interesting. The researcher would like to know if more colleges would be using the nude and if university status for the Wisconsin State Colleges would make any difference in their responses. To determine whether the lack of use of the nude model is restricted only to the five upper midwest states included in this research, a study could be made of a similar group of institutions either to the east or west of the area used in this study.

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Obsirmon, Art Department.

DESTRUCTION OF THE REAL

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

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February 16, 1965

Chairman, Art Department

Dear Sir:

An investigation of the use of the nude model in art departments of state institutions of higher learning in the states of Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin is being sponsored by the Art Department at St. Cloud State College, St. Cloud, Minnesota. A questionnaire has been drawn up and is enclosed with this letter, which we would like to have you complete and return in the stamped, self-addressed envelope.

If you would like a copy of the results of this survey, we would be happy to provide you with one. If you could take time from what we know is your busy schedule to check the questionnaire, we would appreciate it greatly.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Merle H. Sykora Art Department

Enc.: 2

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNA IRE

Name of .	Tuetitation -			
Position	of responder	nt		
Degree o	r degrees of	ered by insti	tution (check	those applicable)
B.A	_ B.S	B.F.A.	M.A	M.S
M.F.A	Ph.D.	D.Ed		
Number o	f art majors			
1-10	11-20 _	21-30	31-40	41-50
51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-100
Over 100				
Number o	f drawing co	urses offered:		
1	2 3.	4	56	Over 6
How many	?	-		
Do you u	se the nude i	model? Yes		
If you d	o not use the	e nude model,	why?	
No	t needed	Lack of	models	Other (What)
Co	llege policy	Cost of	models	- 1
that you	could? Yes	e nude, would		ions were such
	you feel to			nude model for
In	effective		_ Moderately	Effective
Ex	tremely Effe	ctive		

***** Institution	ns not using the	nude need	not ans	wer below ****
In what classes of	lo you use the n	ude model?		
Drawing	Scul	pture		Other (What)
Painting	Prin	tmaking		
Number of courses	in which the n	ude model i	is utili:	zed:
1 2	3 4	5	6	Over 6
How many?				
Is the nude model	L used only in a	dvanced cou	rses?	Yes No
What community (a tered using the n	nude?			e you encoun-
Little		Extreme	e	
Amount nude mode	l is paid per ho	ur:		
Less than \$2.00	\$2.25	\$2.50	\$:	2.75
\$3.00 Over	r \$3.00			
If less than \$2.0	00 or more than	\$3.00, what	t amount	?
Do you desire the	e findings of th	is question	nnaire?	Yes No
ADD TOTAL COMME	armo .			

APPENDIX C

TABULATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNA IRE

Name or institution
Position of respondent
Degree or degrees offered by institution (check those applicable)
B.A. 21 B.S. 22 B.F.A. 2 M.A. 6 M.S. 9
M.F.A. 3 Ph.D. 5 D.Ed. 1 B.Ed. 1
Number of art majors:
None 2 1-10 11-20 4 21-30 5 31-40
41-50 1 51-60 1 61-70 3 71-80 3 81-90 3
91-100 Over 1007
Number of drawing courses offered:
1 1 2 5 3 7 4 6 5 4 6 1 Over 6
How many? 1, 8
Do you use the nude model? Yes 8 No 21
If you do not use the nude model, why?
1 Not needed 12 Lack of models Other (What)
8 College policy 5 Cost of models not accepted
If you do not use the nude, would you if conditions were such that you could? Yes 20 No 1
What do you feel to be the effectiveness of the nude model for teaching form?
Ineffective6 Moderately Effective
Extremely Effective

***** Institutions not usi	ng the nude need	not answer below *****
In what classes do you use	the nude model?	
8 Drawing 5	Sculpture	Other (What)
5 Painting 2	Printmaking	any class above freshmen
Number of courses in which	the nude model	is utilized:
1 _ 2 _ 2 3	4 5	6 2 Over 6
How many? 9,8,16		
Is the nude model used onl	y in advanced co	ourses? Yes 3 No 4
What community (academic of tered using the nude? 8 None		
	Modera	
Little	Extre	ne
Amount nude model is paid	per hour:	
Less than \$2.00 \$2.	25 1 \$2.50	3 \$2.75
\$3.00 <u>2</u> Over \$3.00 _		
If less than \$2.00 or more	than \$3.00, wha	at amount? _\$4_
Do you desire the findings	of this question	onnaire? Yes No
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:		