

Life Drawing Recommendations for OMA

So, you are thinking of adding Life Drawing to OMA's benefits for the general community and regional artists?

Things to consider:

- **There is a need:** Currently, there are very few local resources available to graduated artists for life drawing practice. Few companies hire models for their artists, and only a handful of local art institutions sponsor life drawing sessions. Historically, colleges offered open studios so their students could get the much-needed extra drawing time, but due to pandemic and ever tightening standards for policy and procedure, these open studios have dwindled to only one college in San Diego County that offers this benefit to the community. There are nowhere near enough venues for the number of artists in this region. Pre-pandemic, ArtGymSD at SDAI in Balboa Park saw people coming up from Mexico and down from North County to participate. Especially now, high school and college students often need more sessions than they get at school to build their portfolios and skills for which OMA could become a valuable resource.

Number of San Diego County Life Drawing Open Studios:

SUMMARY: Currently, there is one-third of what there was pre-pandemic.

(information is limited to those locations known by art model coordinator Michelle Gregoire)

| | PRE-PANDEMIC QTY (total 28) | CURRENT QTY (total 10) | DIFFERENCE |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Independent Art Institutions | 5 | 1 | -4 |
| Public Drawing Groups (ran by volunteers) | 8 | 3 | -5 |
| Private Groups (individual artists pool together to hire a model) | 13 | 5 | -8 |
| Companies hiring models for their employees | 2 | 1 | -1 |

- **Stopping and restarting figurative art practice is not like riding a bike:** To maintain figurative art skills one must practice constantly. When Richard helped run a very robust life drawing program at SDAI, called ArtGymSD, artists were often coming three times a month, and even two times a week.

- **Money is tight:** Frequency is important in life-drawing practice, so each session needs to be inexpensive (scholarships should also be available). Current lowest price for open studio life drawing is \$10.00, above that artists start to drop off, with \$20 being prohibitive. There are ways to augment life drawing income:
 - Volunteers for set up and tear down
 - Sponsorships
 - Monthly passes
 - Life Drawing fundraisers (fun, inclusive event where people come chat, draw, and watch the magic of life drawing being done; model(s) can also be costumed for an all-ages event)
- **Figure Drawing** is a gateway through which people learn to appreciate visual art, become visual artists and/or patrons themselves. It would also be a tremendous benefit for member artists of OMA

Possible Features to consider:

- **2 model sessions:** Artists who do Life Drawing have different needs and there is only so much room around one model. A 4-hour session with staggered models (each 3-hours) meets both needs, with the first model arriving at the start for short poses (gestures), and the second coming after the first hour for one long pose. For adequate space for the artists, the models would have two separate stations. This makes room for a wide range of artists and creates comfortable space around the two models for up to 30 or more artists. This set-up maximizes the number of artists who may attend, increasing revenue due to the larger attendance. At ArtGymSD, two model sessions on Monday nights were always better attended and more profitable than the single model session on Wednesday night.
- **Different needs:** Animators are all about very short poses and, while most other artists need them to warm up, they almost always eventually want to move onto a longer pose to practice a more detailed rendering. Sculptors always prefer long poses. Most artists use both short and long poses to polish their skills, even if they are now abstract in their finished work. Richard has talked to a few of the local artists that are only interested in long poses. They intend to create a finished work they can sell out of each session. To do this some of them need a full 3-hour session with a one hour warm up before working on the long pose. Some long pose artists need more than three hours and even like the same pose over several sessions. There is a strong demand for both costumed and nude models, and variety (gender, race, age, body type) is important.
- **Flexibility and lack thereof:** Fortunately (and unfortunately), life drawing sessions only need a reliable and repeated fixed time and location. Fixed location just means an address, not a room. If other things are going on, a space can be created with floor space and strategically placed screens. Richard noticed at SDAI that life drawing was a good add-on to many other events (three ring circus marketing).

- **Schedule on different days than other local life drawing venues, for example:**
Palomar has a popular open drawing program 2 times a month. It would be useful for our members (and attendance) if we scheduled our sessions for other days.
- **It is best practice to use a model agent** to hire professional fine-art models, so that a lot of headaches are avoided. Most professional models take their job very seriously, study poses, understand artist requirements, and have a variety of costumes. Coordinator Michelle Gregoire regularly scouts for, trains, and auditions new models. She vets models to ensure **reliability, professionalism, and creativity**.
- **We are happy to help iron out details.** We are happy to volunteer in different capacities. Each of us has different experiences in life drawing and are willing to help build a life drawing benefit for OMA and the Artist Alliance.
- **Cost per session** per model is \$100. Michelle Gregoire (model agent) single event request is \$30 per model booking, but she discounts that rate for bulk bookings. Michelle also has contact with over 400 San Diego artists that are asking her where new venues are. Through her newsletter, the *Muse News*, her advertising OMA's open-studio would be an added value in her coordinator fee. This will help recruit new artists for the sessions and potentially memberships to both the Museum and Art Alliance. This worked when she did the same for the Athenaeum Music and Arts Library while facilitating their former Sunday open-studio sessions (pre-pandemic).
- **Life drawing sessions during the monthly artist alliance meeting** would be good and could be expanded to other Sundays in the month.
- **It would be useful** to have easels, tables, chairs, drop-cloths, ventilation, policy for brush cleaning and solvent disposal, lighting, and rolling privacy screens. Michelle Gregoire is also available for consulting to ensure that OMA is aware of everything needed to host live nude and costumed models.
- **Allow the program to grow, change or even shrink.** Review and alter once a quarter.
- **Daytime, Nighttime, and Weekend sessions each appeal to different artists.**

Attached is a pdf of Richard's Life Drawing Adventures at SDAI many years ago.

Please tell us what you need us to do to help take this to the next step for OMA.

Respectfully submitted,

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Addendum by Lori Escalera

Life Drawing classes at the OMA:

- Suggested to align before or after the Artists Conversation first Sunday and subsequent Sundays
either in the anteroom behind where the artists gather or downstairs.
- Goal is to reach 10 artists per session and build to a target of ? (to be determined by OMA staff)
- Cost: suggested fee would be to cover 2 x a month sessions with the idea of a monthly pass discount for 3, 4th free (i.e. \$10 drop in, \$30 for a monthly pass) OR a 6-month (or 3 month) trial is set up. You could issue a punch card for 7 punches for \$50

Organization of Classes:

Session 1 nude model 20-minute short, 40-minute 2 medium, 1-hour long pose
Session 2 drawing the attendees and details (hands, head, feet (one per 20 minutes, then change)
Session 3 nude model - 20-minute warm up, 2.6 long pose
Session 4 Costumed model set up (instructed session - instruction is provided for 15 minutes, midway 15 more, and running a crit at the end. Member artists could volunteer and not pay for the session + tip jar)
length: 3 hours

Provisions:

OMA provides: sawhorses, space, lighting, advertising, model stand
Artists provide: set up, tear down, supplies, materials, and snacks to share if they want

Marketing recommendation:

Establish a trial run, with good outreach and re-access mid-term.

It is suggested that the event be during daylight for various reasons, however, nighttime brings a different group of artists (those who work) but it could be broken up for trial run to 2 during the day and two during the evening to see where the attendance comes from.

LORI ESCALERA

(I'm always thinking of marketing!

If I had it my way it would be simple: long pose 3 hours 3 or 4 times a month. ;-)