



# The Florence Academy of Art

## Urban Plein Air: Drawing the Figure and Architecture in Renaissance Florence

*Drawing and Art History for Students and Architects*

*Beginning - Intermediate – Advanced Levels Welcome*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the Florence Academy of Art's *Urban Plein Air: Drawing the Figure and Architecture in Renaissance Florence*, course students and architects will immerse themselves in the study and practice of drawing in The Florence Academy of Art studios and in-field at select locations in the historic urban centre. They will practice and refine drawing methods and techniques of realistic representation of the figure, architecture and perspective in the urban context of the city.

Understanding the classic proportions of the human figure is central to drawing Renaissance architecture. Humanistic Greek philosophy influenced the Renaissance revival of classical architecture and how we perceive and create proportions to the human scale. Renaissance architects and artists were inspired by and celebrated the human figure. They studied, translated and represented the depth and pathos of humankind through the figure in many forms and materials, from early static to later *contrapposto* two and three-dimensional poses, to spiralling forms in architecture.

Students will immerse themselves equally in the study and practice of drawing the figure in the Florence Academy of Art studios and drawing Renaissance architecture in-field at select locations in the historic urban centre. The practice of drawing the figure helped great artists and architects of the past learn their craft. Students develop acute observation and drawing skills while learning to work from nature. Strong emphasis is placed on design, composition, linear perspective and context. These skills directly translate to the understanding and drawing of the classical proportions of Renaissance architecture in Florence.

The course is suited for all students of any skill level, including architects and design professionals, interested in both the cultural contexts of the figure and architecture in Renaissance Florence and how each shaped the other 500 years ago. No experience is necessary drawing the figure, perspective or urban settings.

Study and practice will be enhanced with guided tours in Florence of the architecture and museum paintings of the figure and perspective in art relevant to the course.

### **STUDIO DRAWING**

A short distance from the historic city centre at the main campus, Florence Academy faculty will guide students through the methods and techniques to translate three-dimensional forms into two dimensions. Progressive, individually tailored instruction is designed to take students of all levels through a series of exercises aimed to develop their individual observational skills and accuracy to translate and spatially represent the figure in form and perspective, both single and multi-point. Emphasis is placed on describing the form of the figure through the relationship of light and shadow, controlling values, rendering edges and background.

Drawing a human figure from life is a unique and fulfilling experience, one that is fundamental to the training at the Florence Academy of Art and central to a long-standing tradition. Working from live models students learn how to approach the human figure through observing and representing proportion, body type, gesture and important anatomical points. Utilizing pencil, the focus will be a linear approach on outline and shadow line to explain form. Further study will include the understanding of mass and overall sense of light and atmosphere through comparison of light and shadow shapes. Models will pose for three hours per session, for



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multiple sessions, allowing time for students to make careful observations and produce an accurate drawing. Concurrent with these exercises the student will place the figure in a setting; the room and backdrop placed around the figure to fully explain both the figure and the contextual linear perspective, much like urban architecture.

## **URBAN PLEIN AIR: IN-FIELD DRAWING**

Most days students will meet at select locations in the historic centre of Florence to draw selected Renaissance architecture in the urban context. Paintings by Canaletto and Guardi, among others, will be considered as precedents in the course of study. Exercises will focus on how to accurately and expressively represent what is spatially seen in nature; foreground and background, linear perspective (single, two-point and multi-point), line, form, shape, shade and shadow. Locations will include exterior, capturing the architecture and art of buildings and piazzas, and interior in historic building courtyards and palazzos representing the rich, complex forms and light of Renaissance Florence. In some locations, models may provide human scale and proportion in the urban setting for students; directly linking the studio drawing experience to the urban setting.

Drawing the first week will be at locations where form, light and perspective can be represented with basic application of skill sets. As the course progresses into the second week students will have the opportunity for a multi-day focus on a specific location applying a deeper understanding of learned perspective and rendering skills and the aesthetic of spatial representation. Students' progress from basic to refined drawings of urban perspectives of locations and buildings using pencil, ink and ink wash.

Parts of the program are very similar to what is offered to full time students and allows students to experience parts of its regular curriculum at The Florence Academy of Art.

During their free time, students will be encouraged to sketch additional main monuments, palazzos and piazzas, or continue their studio projects.

## **ART SUPPLIES**

Students will receive a list of materials to purchase. On the first day of class, they will receive additional equipment and supplies provided by the school.

## **ARCHITECTURE AND ART HISTORY INSTRUCTION**

The master works of Renaissance architects and artists can inspire contemporary architects and artists for their ability to transcend time and enter the realm of our experience. Through guided architecture and art history tours students will observe and understand how architects, artists and sculptors used form, expression and perspective to create their lasting works of beauty and a timeless aesthetic of the figure and in paintings of spatial representation.

Florence's principal monuments, museums and churches and art will tell the story of powerful families like the Medici, religious orders like the Franciscans, and the merchant guilds. Among many destinations and museums, guided visits would likely include the architecture and art of Michelangelo, Brunelleschi, Alberti, Giotto, Masaccio, da Vinci, Ghiberti, Donatello, Canaletto, Guardi, Fattori among others. Museum tours may include *Uffizi Gallery*, the *Accademia Gallery* and Michelangelo's unfinished, *Slaves*, and *David*, the *Museo Nazionale del Bargello*, *Museo dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore* and the *Modern Art Gallery* (19<sup>th</sup> century painting) at the *Pitti Palazzo*. Final itinerary will be decided at the time of the course.



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## Two--week Course Daily Schedule

### Urban Plein Air: Drawing the Figure and Architecture in Renaissance Florence

WEEK 1	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
AM 9:00 - noon	Drawing studio - introductions, syllabus of the course, logistics and destinations. Presentations and exercises. In-field drawing kits and materials provided.	Drawing studio lecture - and in-field demonstrations and exercises.	Museum / Architectural destination guided tour and in-field sketching.	Drawing studio – drawing studio exercises.	Museum / Architectural destination guided tour and in-field sketching.	In-field day trip to a historic village near Florence. To include sketching, drawing. (Lunch on your own near our drawing destination)	Day off
	Pencil, ink and wash	Pencil, ink and wash	Pencil, ink and wash	Pencil, ink and wash	Pencil, ink and wash	Pencil, ink and wash	
PM 2:00 - 5:00	Drawing studio - demonstrations and exercises.	Drawing studio - presentation and demonstration of drawing techniques and methods including sight-sizing. Drawing exercises.	Drawing studio - presentation and demonstration of perspective techniques and methods. Drawing exercises.	In-field drawing at an urban location in Florence.	Afternoon off	Afternoon off	
	Pencil	Pencil	Pencil	Pencil			



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WEEK 2	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
AM 9:00 - noon	In-field - drawing at a urban location in Firenze.	Museum / Architectural destination guided tour and in-field sketching.	In-field / Drawing studio - presentation and discussion of applied projects in Firenze. Drawing and sketching.	In-field / Drawing studio - drawing and development of applied projects.	In-field / Drawing studio - drawing, development and completion of applied projects.		
	Pencil, ink and wash	Pencil, ink and wash	Pencil, ink and wash	Pencil, ink and wash	Pencil, ink and wash		
PM 2:00 - 5:00	Drawing studio - figure drawing. Presentation and demonstration about drawing of human anatomy, proportion and form.	Drawing studio - figure drawing, presentations and demonstrations.	Drawing studio - figure drawing.	Drawing studio - completion of figure drawing.	Drawing studio - wrap up and final group critique. End of course.		
	Pencil, ink and wash	Pencil, ink and wash	Pencil, ink and wash	Pencil, ink and wash			