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INTRODUCTION TO COPY/SYNTH/MORPH

The master copy has been an integral part of drawing education for centuries. Additionally, drawing students are often endlessly consumed with their 'style'. To address this issue, I have developed a Drawing II course that plays with the "Master Copy" and exposes students to an avalanche of contemporary and classical drawing artists.

The central assignment, which is repeated several times, is entitled, "Copy, Synth, Morph," and results in four distinct drawings: two copied drawings, a synthesis of those two drawings, and a morphing of the drawing where students make the work their own by incorporating their own sources and influences.

The project forces students to articulate, both visually and verbally, what their own drawing interests are, while also practicing the art of careful observation and replication. Via this exercise, students observe a multitude of approaches to mark-making executed through a wide range of media and technology. Additionally, they grow to realize personal style grows from an amalgamation of practiced skills and collected experiences, rather than relying on inherent talent. The entire process allows students to undertake specific drawing challenges from a beginner's point of view, and releases them from the weight of their own expectations.

PROCESS:

STEP 1: Select two artists to master copy from those presented in class.

When selecting two drawings to copy and eventually synthesize, it can be helpful to select two distinctly different styles. Look for striking differences in the use of line, value, form, space, color, and so on. It can also be helpful to seek out two different types of drawing to ensure there is adequate contrast between the two master copies. Some types of drawing include landscape, still life, portraiture, figurative art, architectural, botanicals, cartoons/comics/graphic novels, caricature, silhouettes, architectural/technical/engineering, travel illustrations, cartography (signage, maps, charts, infographics), food/product illustration, animals/minerals illustration,

medical/anatomical illustration, fiction/horror/fantasy, or collage. It can also be helpful to seek out drawings that are executed in distinctly different media, such as graphite, pen and ink, marker, charcoal, colored pencil, pastel, oil pastel, scratchboard, computer illustrated, sidewalk chalk, spray paint, and so on. Finding as much difference as possible between the two master copies will provide opportunities for interesting combinations during the third drawing, or synthesis.

STEP 2: Execute the two master copies. Work from a very high-resolution image of the original. Print the original and bring it to class with the master copy so we can critique the success of your copy. Pay special attention to replicating, as close as possible, the distinct and unique aspects of this artist's style.

STEP 3: Execute a synthesis drawing (combination of the two master copies). Your goal is to intertwine these two specific styles without adding new or unrelated items (or adding as little as possible). Ask yourself how you can break up the composition. What are the key components of each master copy's style? Use your analysis skills to identify the subject, form, content, and context of each style. How can the two subjects interact or fuse? What are the formal elements of each work and how can they coexist? Can you simultaneously represent the content of the two works? Are there relationships between the contexts of the works? You will want to execute several sketches to test various combination options before launching into your synthesis drawing. You will display this drawing next to your master copies and print-outs of the originals.

STEP 4: Execute a fourth drawing that morphs the third drawing into something beyond the original two by incorporating one of your influences or sources into the composition. How does the synthesis drawing make you feel? Is there anything from your sources or influences that inspires a similar emotion? Be ready to share how you have morphed the styles and integrated your own ideas, subject, elements of style, etc. Again, you will want to execute a number of sketches testing various approaches before you begin your fourth drawing. This drawing will be displayed next to your other drawings and print-outs.

TIPS:

- Encourage students to work in materials/media as close to the original as possible.
- For critique, encourage students to work in pairs, collecting feedback on works that are

not their own, and then have all pair report back to the larger group.

- For the time table, I give students a week to complete each of the four drawings.