Fine Arts/Careers

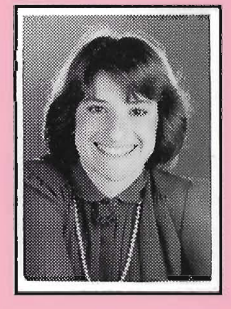
"As an art teacher I find *Rollover, Mona Lisa!* to be recommended reading for anyone interested in entering the world of artist modeling. I'm glad someone finally wrote it."

—Joe Severino
Mission: Renaissance Art Schools

If you've ever wondered what it would be like to model for artists—or if you're an artist who is intrigued by the relationship between artist and live model—*Rollover, Mona Lisa!* tells you everything you need and want to know. Even though models have been around for hundreds of years, little has been published on this unique profession. Now author Theresa Danna unravels the mystique, making modeling accessible for all men and women who appreciate fine arts.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Theresa Danna has been a professional artist model since 1987. Her image has been painted, sketched, and sculpted at art schools and private studios throughout the Los Angeles area. She is also a certified hypnotherapist and received a bachelor's degree in communications from Glassboro State College (1980) and master's degree in professional writing from University of Southern California (1993). *Rollover, Mona Lisa!* is her first book.



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Rollover, Mona Lisa!

THERESA M. DANNA

Rollover, Mona Lisa!

How Anyone Can Model for Artists

By Theresa M. Danna

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Chapter 1

A Step-by-Step Guide to Modeling for Artists

What You've Wanted to Know (But Didn't Know Whom to Ask)

When most people find out that I model for artists, they either squeal, "Oh, I've always wondered what that would be like!" or plunge right in and demand, "How did somebody like you ever get into that line of work?" This book is my heartfelt response.

When I was little, my older sister, Cathe, "the family artist," used to ask me to sit on the porch or in the backyard so she could sketch me with her pastels or watercolors. For awhile it was fun to see my freckled, toothless image on paper, but overall I preferred running and biking with friends to just *sitting* my summer vacation away. Cathe would beg me to stay a few minutes more, but my wiggling got the best of her.

Not much has changed. Artists are still looking for models who can sit still. However, I myself never gave it another try during the next 20 years, until one day in January, 1987, when I was lunching with a friend at the Fatburger on Sunset and Vine in "Tinsel City." I told him how badly in debt I had fallen since I had relocated from New Jersey to California. My cost of living had gone up, and my salary had gone down.

"I think I'm going to have to start selling my body," I joked.

He looked at me nonchalantly. "Well, when I needed extra money, I worked as a model for artists."

I wasn't surprised since he was a bodybuilder. What did surprise me, though, was his observation that most models he knew were not particularly muscular, especially the women.

Although the Catholic part of me was uncertain about posing nude, the single-woman-making-it-on-her-own-in-the-city part of me was desperate to catch up on my bills. I needed a second job that paid more than minimum wage, could be done at night between 6-10 p.m., and didn't require costly training. Modeling seemed to fit that description better than any job listed in the classifieds.

Gradually I climbed out of my financial pit, and continue to model now because it gives me personal satisfaction and creative pleasure (as well as some extra money for pampering). In this chapter I will help you get started, show you some good poses and offer you tips of the trade so you can enjoy yourself as you embark on this unique career.

Model: Theresa Danna
Artist: Brian Byrnes

How to Begin

My first step was combing the yellow pages under the section "Art Instruction and Schools." I called each school and asked if they used live models. If they did, I then asked what they looked for in a model and how to apply for work.

Basically all they required was that models: 1) Be on time and 2) Sit still. That's it! I thought, "Can it be this easy?" It didn't matter to them if I was thin or muscular, pretty or plain, young or old, novice or experienced. All I had to do was send them an index card listing my name, address, phone, social security number, age, body measurements and prior experience, if any. They also wanted a small photograph of me in the nude to keep on file so they'd know my body type.

The next step was finding a photographer. I happened to have a friend who was a professional photographer, but you can simply have a shutterbug friend or relative snap you if you don't want to pay for a session. You will probably feel most comfortable with an intimate friend who shares your interest in art. I paid $150 for 36 slides and my choice of six poses to be made into prints. Obviously, if there's only one art school in your town, one nice print will suffice.

For your photo session, drape a plain colored sheet or blanket on the wall behind you and have a bright light shining on at least one side of you. You will also need a stool and/or some pillows. Choose some poses of your own or turn to the section of this chapter on "Composition and Suggested Poses" for ideas. Ask the photographer to shoot full body angles. You might also want a few head and shoulder shots in costume, and "hands only" poses if you decide to apply for portrait and specialty modeling besides figure modeling.

When the pictures have been developed, you might be shocked seeing yourself nude, as I was, but don't let apprehension halt your plan of action. Exciting opportunities await you! Go ahead and send them along with your index card of information to the schools that use live models. Since they probably have a

regular rotation of models, you will have to be persistent in order to break into the circle. For example, my first assignment came as the result of a last minute cancellation.

Remember, just as the squeaky wheel gets the oil, the most enthusiastic model gets the job. Artists have always and will always, be on the lookout for good models. If you follow the guidelines in this book, you will be in demand for as long as you choose.

First Assignment: What to Expect (Along with the Unexpected)

Since my first assignment was a last minute replacement for a cancellation, I had no time to "practice" or even think about what I was doing.

I rolled up my bathrobe and scrunched it and a pair of socks into my tote bag, jumped in my car and began the 25-minute drive to Mission: Renaissance Art School in Glendale. When I arrived, I nervously opened the door and peered into the room. Four artists faced easels in the middle of the spacious room, and about six more students were scattered about the perimeter of the room, each studying still-life set-ups or pictures of classic paintings. Up against the cement wall on the left was a slightly raised platform, about six feet square. It was covered with a blanket and had several colorful pillows and a small stool on it. On the wall behind it hung a fabric backdrop. Two tall spotlights at the corners were waiting to be turned on and focused toward the object to be sketched by the artists: me.

The students were happy to see me, considering that they were paying to have a live model and none had shown up at the start of the class. The instructor greeted me and pointed out the bathroom where I was expected to change.

The bathroom was not heated on that chilly February night, so I quickly got into my robe, leaving only my socks on underneath, and approached the platform. The instructor said we would

"start with threes, then fives, tens and a long pose." Not understanding his lingo, I admitted that it was my first time. He was nice enough to take the time to explain that they worked in 20-minute intervals with five-minute breaks in-between, and a 15-minute break halfway through the evening.

"Threes" meant three-minute poses, "fives" were five minutes long, and so on. A "long pose" meant the same pose for one or more 20-minute sittings.

He showed me the timer (the same kind you use in the kitchen) and portable heater and then switched on the spotlights. It was time.

I removed my socks and robe and for a flash thought, "Oh, my god, what am I doing?" But it was too late to change my mind. I draped my robe over some vacant easels and stepped onto the platform. I waited for the instructor to tell me what pose to take. He just looked at me and said, "Okay, you can start now."

I realized it was up to me to create the poses! I was an actress without a director. I helplessly looked out at the waiting students and asked the friendliest face, "Can you tell me what poses the models usually do?" Her helpfulness put me at ease. "Oh sure," she said. "Just sit on the stool, kneel, stand, sit on the pillows, lie down, whatever."

I set the timer, quickly chose a position (sitting on the stool with my legs crossed naturally), and concentrated on staying still until the timer bell rang. I spent each three-minute sitting thinking about what pose to do next.

After about seven threes, we took a break. I put my robe on and walked around to see what the artists had drawn. What a revelation! There were several miniatures of me looking much more muscular than I thought my body was. Some were in perfect proportion, others distorted. Some students used dark bold strokes, others were timid with their pencils. No matter how each drawing appeared, I recognized it was a manifestation of a beautiful, creative process. The artists' eyes physically registered an image when they looked at me, which went back into their minds for interpretation, then came out of their hands onto the

paper.

And that's when I realized I was providing a valuable service to the creative community. I had no more qualms about being nude in front of artistic strangers. It was natural for there to be a live model in this room; the other students who were working on still-life settings didn't even notice me. Despite the media's depiction of modeling as a shady profession, I realized there was nothing indecent about my new job.

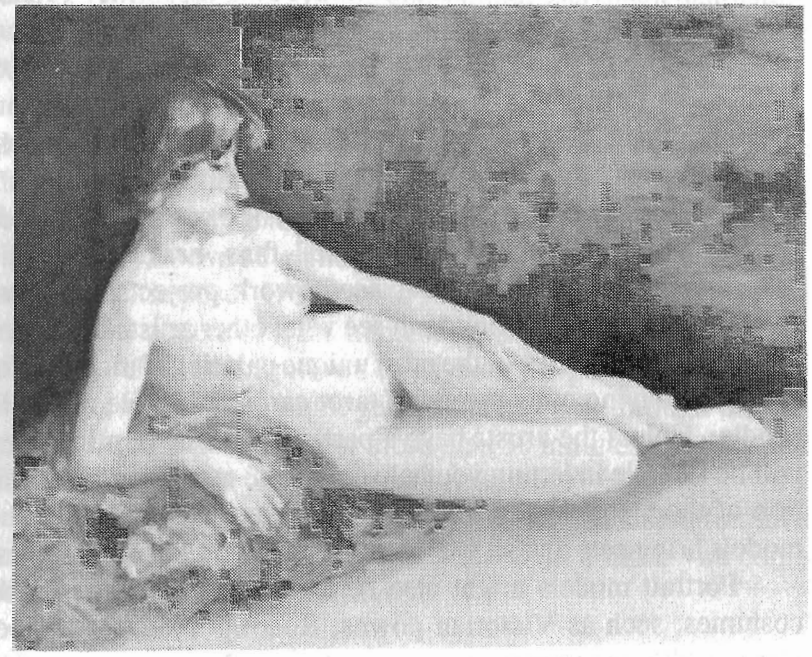
During the longer poses I focused my mind on the moment, staying aware of the creative process that was happening and what role I played in it. Before settling into each pose, I was careful to cross my legs loosely and to not lean too hard on an elbow or wrist, so that I could comfortably be still; the rise and fall of my chest and blinking of my eyes were the only outward proof that I was not a statue.

During the breaks I walked around to stretch my legs and explored the room. On the walls were many paintings, some in progress, others framed. There were a few children's works, too. Along one wall there were long shelves covered with uniquely shaped objects: vases, stuffed animals, plastic flowers, real fruit, baskets, bottles, dishes, cups, statuettes, seashells, bells, bowls, and books. All the "things" peddlers pushed at flea markets were resurrected to new life at this art studio. Whenever I posed with my head facing up, I focused my eyes on one of those *objects d'art* or landscape paintings. When I looked down, I focused on one of the paint splotches on the floor, which I found interesting to look at, too (for five minutes, anyway). Quiet music gracefully danced throughout the room while the instructor periodically helped the artists with their individual challenges. I listened intently to the teacher-student conversations as they searched my figure for shapes, shadows and planes. I was learning that they didn't see my stomach or thigh; they saw curves, tones and imaginary lines. They were applying the principles they'd learned in still-life lessons to real life. And I was feeling really alive!

At the end of the evening the students thanked me and gave me high marks as a model. That would have been a big enough

ego-booster in itself, but the instructor topped it off by asking me to model for an upcoming painting course. It would be six or seven Thursday nights in a row. Not only was I achieving my original goal of earning extra income, but I was also developing a new, unexpected perspective and appreciation of art.

That night in my journal I wrote: "Soft music playing. Paintings hanging everywhere. I've decided that if you model nude for *Playboy* you're a piece of meat. But if you model nude for an art class, you're a piece of fruit!"



Model: Theresa Danna
Artist: Helen Scott

Tools of the Trade

Whether you choose to be a figure model (nude) or a portrait model (with clothes on), you'll need some tools of the trade.

At the least, figure models need a bathrobe, socks or slippers that can get dirty or even paint-stained, and a tote bag to carry your gear. Check with the school beforehand to see if they provide pillows, a timer and portable heaters. If they don't (I've found a few that didn't), you can either buy your own or refuse the assignment. If you buy your own, save the receipts, as these will be tax-deductible. (We'll talk more about taxes in the "Money Mattters" section.)

If you model privately for individual artists in their homes or studios, they will probably provide pillows, blankets or sheets, but you might have to bring your own timer and heater. Settle these arrangements before accepting the assignment.

If you do portrait modeling, you will be expected to provide "props," such as hats, books, Oriental fans, baskets for fruit, canes, dolls, sports items, and needlework projects. Browse through art collection books and see what other artists have used in their paintings. One of the most unique paintings I modeled for shows me laying out a spread of tarot cards on a table near a lit candle. Unless the artists have a particular theme in mind, they will be flexible in letting you help create the mood and composition of the piece. According to model agent Bob Drake, some models bring pets that sit still better than the models themselves!

Portrait models might also be expected to wear "period" costumes, such as Victorian gowns, Roaring Twenties flapper skirts, 1940s gangster suits, sailor uniforms, Roman togas, gypsy gear, ballet tutus, and turn-of-the-century tennis outfits.

You probably won't have to look any further than your grandparents' attic or the corner thrift shop to build your "library" of clothes. And you thought you'd never wear your wedding gown or military uniform again . . .

Simple Rules for Easy Modeling

For your protection, there are some rules that all reputable schools follow.

First, the windows will either be covered or be made of opaque glass. No need to worry about peeping Toms.

Second, the schools will provide a private place for you to change into your robe, usually the bathroom or some type of closet space. I have never been expected to change in front of others, but I've met some models who don't mind doing it that way. It's up to you. However, keep in mind that some artists find it distracting when the model changes out in the open, so be considerate of others.

Third, no one can touch you without asking your permission. Occasionally the instructor or an artist will want to adjust your fingers or foot. In most cases they will simply ask you to move such and such a little to the left or right or up or down.

Finally, above all, remember that your comfort takes priority over an exotic pose. It's okay to slightly twist yourself to show muscles in action or cast interesting shadows, but don't kill yourself. Use lots of pillows to cushion the parts of your body where the circulation might get cut off halfway through the 20-minute sittings. Never sit for more than 30 minutes at a time and always take at least a five-minute break.

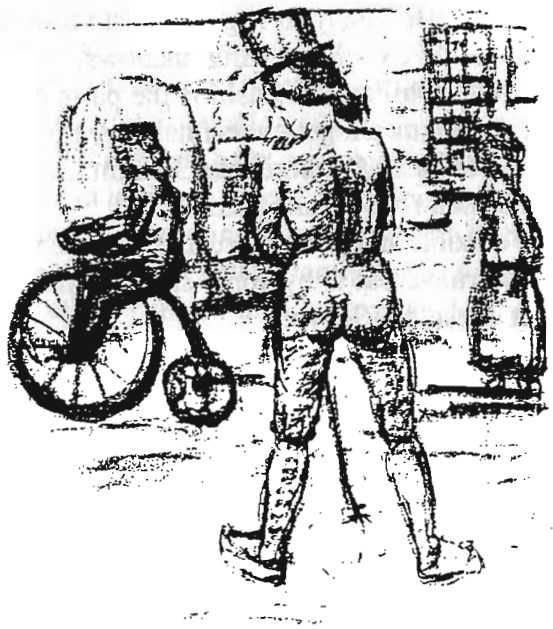
All of the schools and private artists I've modeled for have adhered to these rules, but if by some slight chance you come across one that doesn't — leave!

Your Role in the Creative Process

The creative process continues to awe me. Even if you say nothing to the artists the entire time you're modeling, you will still be interacting with them. If you calm your spirit as well as your body, you will feel the stream of creative energy flowing through the room. You can turn that time into a loving meditation, silently sending good wishes to the artists or by repeating positive affirmations to yourself. As model Cleo Dorman said in a 1988 interview with KCET's *Videolog*, "I send love to them and they give it back to me."

Larry Kronish, an energetic person, says that modeling taught him how to enjoy stillness. "In a sacred place, like a stage, you can be freer, more powerful. You leave baggage behind and you can gain a different sense of your body, yourself."

Some people label me an exhibitionist for doing this type of work. Yet I feel quite the opposite. Modeling has been humbling



for me because the artists draw, paint or sculpt exactly what they see. Looking at their work is not like looking in a mirror. You can't conveniently overlook the flaws! It's all right there for everyone to see. Exhibition or humility. You decide.

Once in a sculpture class, a female artist who was recovering from breast surgery asked if I would mind that she sculpt only one breast. Knowing that I was indirectly helping with her therapy left me with a warm feeling. How could anyone label that pornographic?

One of my male artist friends told me that one night the female artist working next to him was wearing a midriff top. Ironically, those few inches of her skin peeking through as she moved her arm was more distracting to him than the completely nude female model. Were either of those women exhibitionists?

If you are still concerned about being viewed as a sex object, consider what Dr. Spock observed as a result of his many years as a physician: Eighty percent of the population looks better with their clothes on.

So don't flatter yourself! Just concentrate on the miracle of human anatomy and physiology, and the spiritual beauty of self-expression through art. Trust me — that's what the artists are focusing on as well.

In his book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie emphasizes that "self expression is the dominant necessity of human nature." A good model arouses the artists' desire to create.

American painter Robert Henri (1865-1929) once told his students: "What you must express in your drawing is not 'what model you had,' but 'what were your sensations,' and you select from what is visual of the model the traits that best express you." (Henri, 80)

In another lecture he confirmed that the model, too, is an artist: "In this pose our model is as much an artist as any of you. He has a distinct idea of the action he wishes to express, and he keeps well to the idea. It is a piece of good acting. If you would but put as much mind, energy and imagination in your drawing as

he does in taking and holding to the spirit of his pose, good work would result." (Henri, 109)

Actor and teacher Ivan Crow also likened his modeling experiences to acting. While Ivan was posing, the art instructor pointed to a part of Ivan's body and asked the students, "Do you see what's happening here?" That's when Ivan realized that there existed life within himself, even when he was motionless. "Modeling is acting because you are communicating to the artists, and they interpret the message or emotion in their art," he said. "It was a marvelous experience!"

While acting out your role in the creative process, keep in mind that your mood affects the artists' work. Artists prefer models who feel good about themselves. "A model with a healthy ego is always much more fun to work with," said Gordon Cook. No matter how bad your day might have been before the class, when you walk into the art studio you must project cheerfulness and professionalism for those three hours. Save your complaints and tears for a more appropriate audience — such as the pet that loves you unconditionally!

Take some time now to examine your creative life and decide if your basic need to express yourself, your spirit self, is being satisfied. If it's not, then modeling might be a worthwhile outlet for you to explore. Your role in the creative process could turn out to be the most natural role you've ever played.

Composition and Suggested Poses

On his first assignment, my bodybuilder friend, David Smock, experienced "instant terror" when he discovered that he'd have to create his own poses. "Fortunately, I was able to imitate some standard bodybuilding poses." David situated himself so that he could scan the room with his eyes without moving any other part of his body. "Time went by faster when I made eye contact with the artists," he said. "Otherwise, it can get boring."

When choosing poses you have to find a balance between

what is challenging for the artists and comfortable for you. Bend, stretch and twist a little, but don't strain. If you follow the adage that "it has to hurt to be a good pose," you will probably end up with a pained expression on your face, not to mention the possibility of falling off the platform!

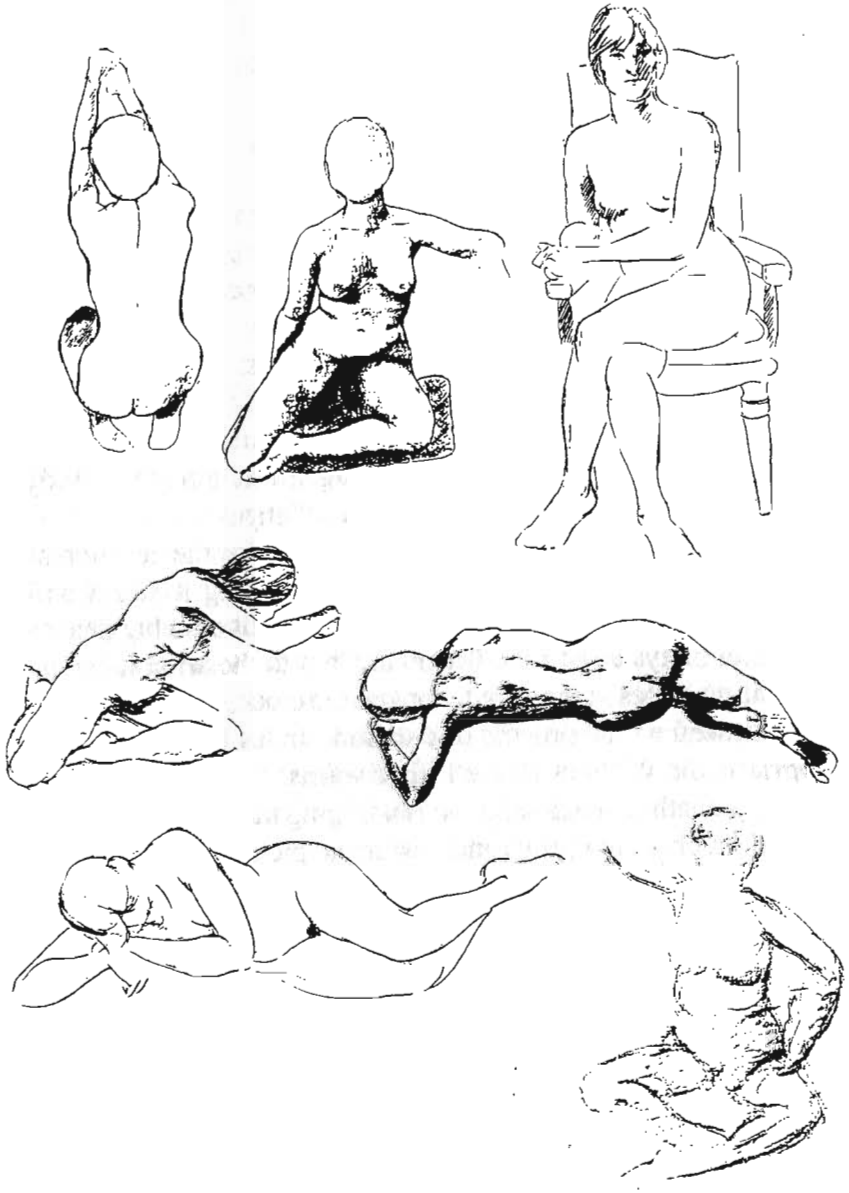
On the other hand don't just lie there. Have fun. If you are an athlete or dancer, or if you practice yoga or martial arts, select positions characteristic of those skills. Try to maintain a flow of lines and illusion of movement even though you are still. If you have long hair, pull it into a ponytail so the artists can see your neck and shoulders.

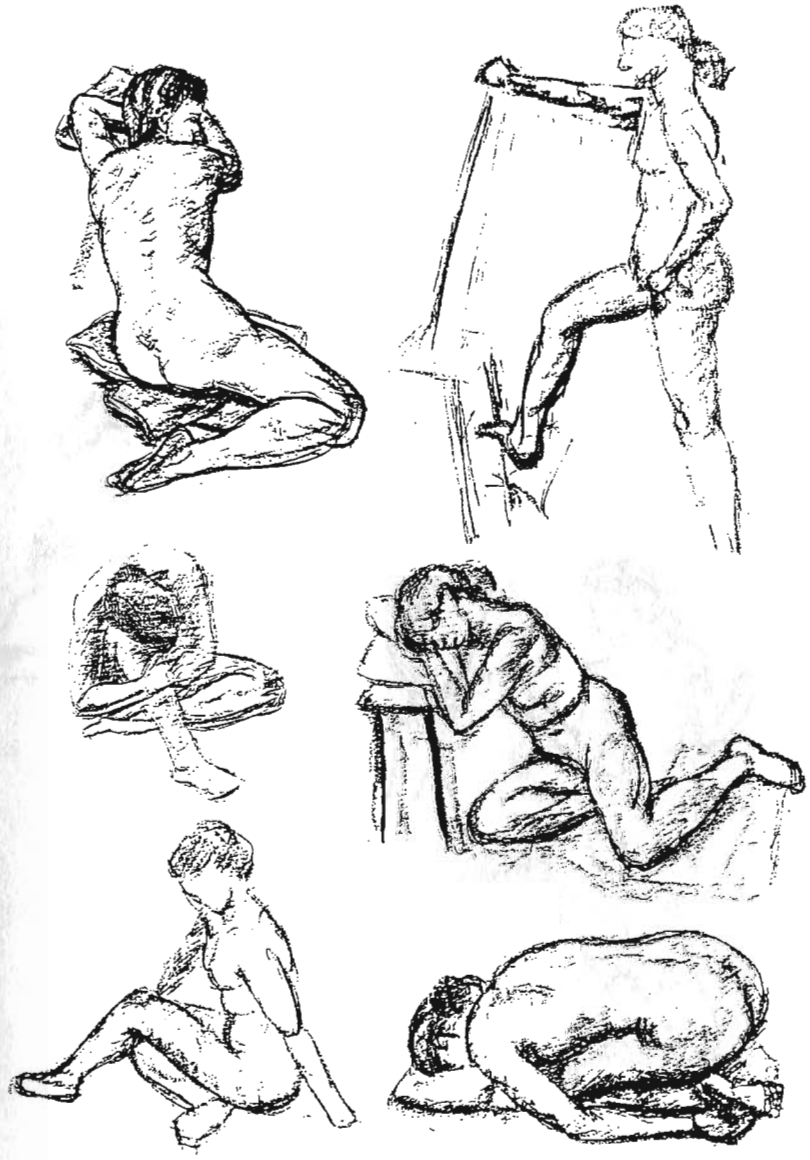
Also include some foreshortened positions. This is achieved by pointing a body part head-on at the artists. It is important for artists to study such positions in order to learn how to render proportion and dimension. In the drawing, the length of that body part will appear much shorter than its true length.

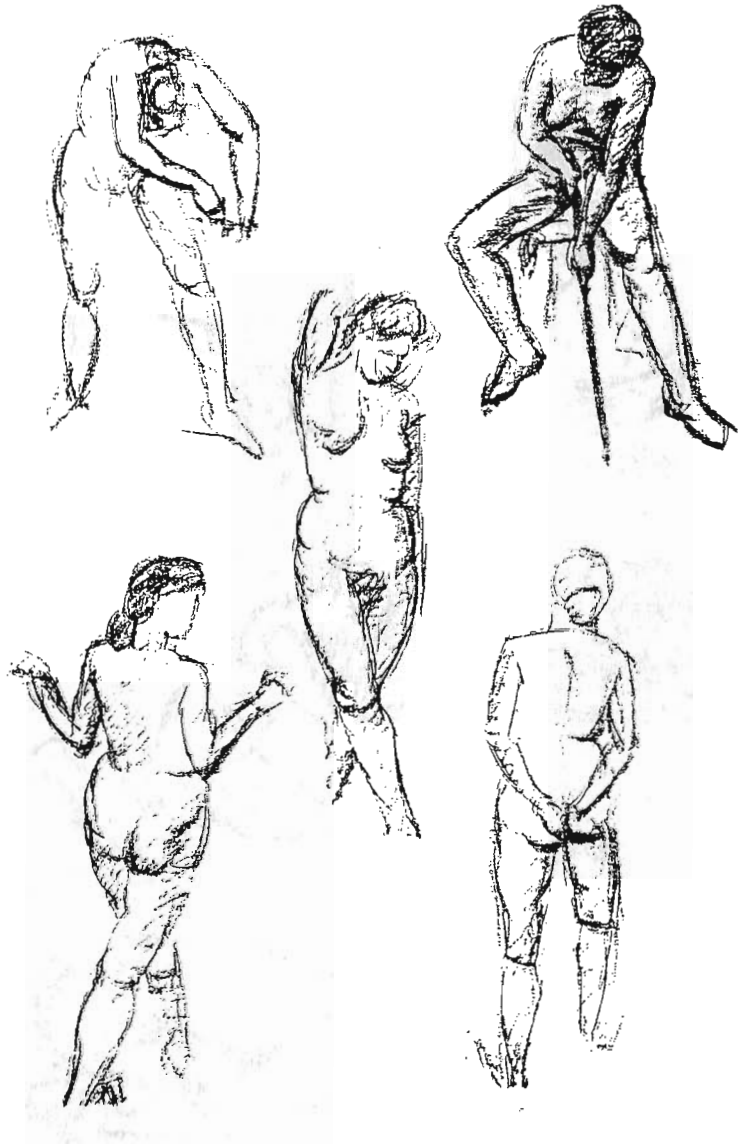
Once you have chosen a pose, stay with it for the duration of the sitting. If you have an itch, resist scratching it and it will probably go away. "That scratch might seem like no big deal to the model," says artist Lisa Bowman, "but to the artist it can be devastating." Resist the urge to look at the clock, too. Keep your mind focused on the process of creation. In his book *Models of Propriety*, Sir William Russell Flint warns: " . . . just as slack rigging is anathema to a sailor so is a jigging model to a painter."

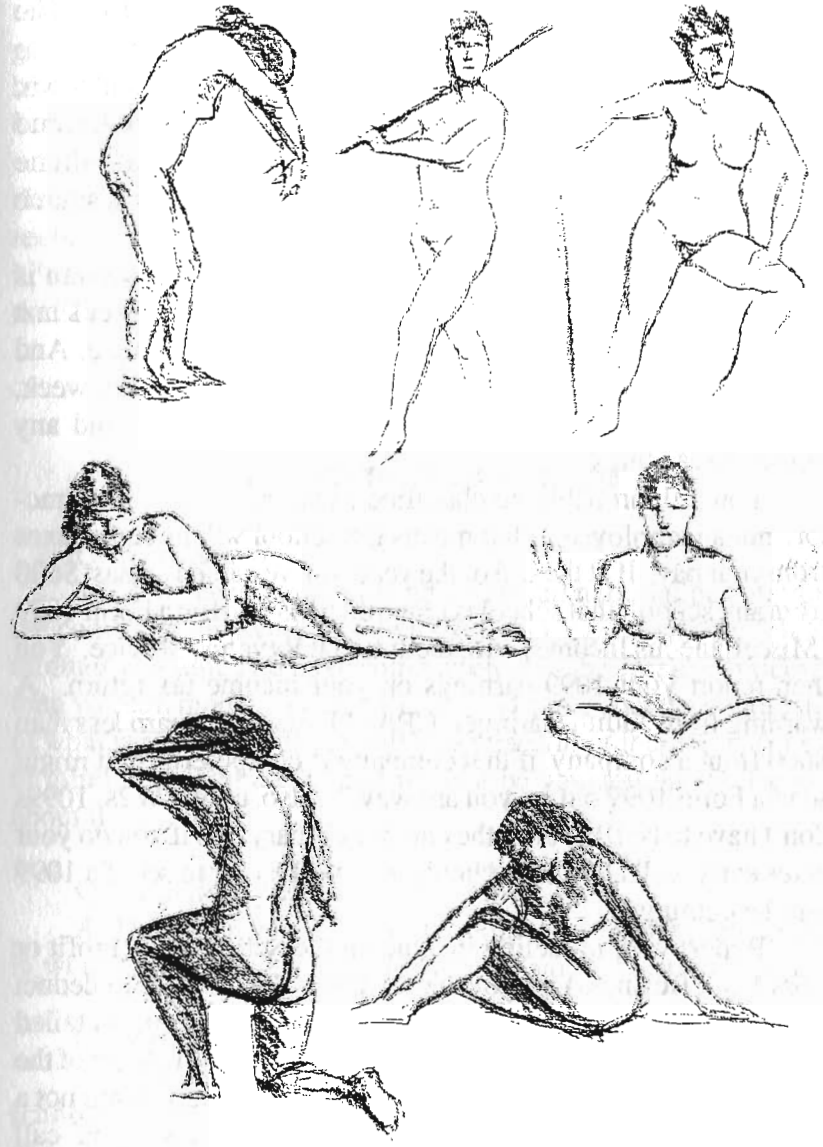
When choosing props and costumes, pick items that reflect your mood and are artistically pleasing because of their color, texture or shape. By using your imagination you will stimulate the artists' imagination, as well as the viewers' imagination when the piece is finished. Figure out what elements cause you to look at a painting over and over again, and then strive to put those elements into your own modeling.

Always remember that you are an important part of the picture. Henri remarked to his students: "This model is wonderful in as many ways as there are pairs of eyes to see her. Each view of her is an original view and there is a response in her awaiting each view." (Henri, 87)









Money Matters

If you expect to make as much money at art modeling as fashion models do at their craft, you will be disappointed. The schools in Los Angeles currently pay $10-$12 per hour. Private artists usually pay $15-$20 per hour. If you live in a small town, you might find the pay scale even lower. None of the figure and portrait models I've met are able to do this work as a fulltime career. However, as I mentioned earlier, it's an excellent source of extra income.

Some schools pay you as soon as the three-hour session is complete. If you're posing for the same class several weeks in a row, you might not get paid until the assignment is complete. And one school I worked for simply paid everyone every other week. Be sure to discuss the pay schedule beforehand to avoid any misunderstandings.

You will probably be classified as an independent contractor, not an employee. That means the school will not take taxes from your pay. If at the end of the year you've earned at least $600 from any school, that school is required by law to file a Form 1099 (Miscellaneous Income) with the Internal Revenue Service. You then report your 1099 earnings on your income tax return. A warning from Judith Garinger, CPA: "Even if you earn less than $600 from a company, if that company is computerized, it might send a Form 1099 out on you anyway." Also, unlike W2s, 1099s don't have to be filed until the end of February. So if you do your taxes early, call all of the schools you worked for to see if a 1099 will be coming.

Report your modeling income on the Schedule C (Profit or Loss from Business) on your Form 1040. Remember to deduct expenses such as props, timer and photos. Also, keep a detailed log of your mileage to deduct travel expenses as well. Most of the lines on the Schedule C will not apply to you since you are not a full-scale business. Nonetheless, if the form confuses you, call your local IRS office for free help.

Finally, don't forget to complete the Schedule SE (Social

Security Self-Employment Tax). This assures your contribution to your Social Security account. If you earned more than $400, about 15 percent of your modeling income will have to be paid into Social Security by way of this form. The good news, however, is that you can deduct half of your Social Security tax from your gross income on page one of the Form 1040. If you don't want to be shocked on April 15, put some money aside during the year earmarked for paying taxes later.

This bookkeeping is not as difficult as it sounds, so don't get discouraged. The knowledge you've gained from reading this section has already put you far ahead of models who have to "wing it," as I did. Continue to approach your new career conscientiously, and you will be pleased with the outcome.

Answers to Common Uncommon Questions

Q. *Who models?*

A. Men and women, old and young, all nationalities. If you are comfortable having people look at you, can sit still for 20-30 minutes at a time and have some interest in the creative process, then you can model. You don't have to fit into society's standard of what is attractive. If you reflect a peaceful or integrated frame of mind, then you are beautiful. Just be yourself and feel good about it.

Q. *What do artists look for in a model?*

A. They want you to show up on time, stay still, be interested in what you're doing, and be versatile in your choice of poses.

Q. *Where do you find modeling jobs?*

A. Scan the yellow pages of your phone directory for art schools and art leagues. Call the art department at local colleges and adult continuing education schools. Go to art exhibits where the artists are present and introduce yourself. If you are tall,

contact your local department stores to find out who sculpts their fashion mannequins.

Artist model agents are rare, but if you are in the Los Angeles area you can contact one named Bob Drake. The advantage to using agents is that they are connected to the art community. The disadvantage is that they'll charge you about 10 percent of your wages for their service. You can try a local fashion modeling agency, but chances are that type of agency will be of no help to you as an artist model.

Once you have connected with a few artists, the rest is usually word-of-mouth referrals. Be careful of classified ads seeking models, unless the ad is running in a serious art periodical. Even then, when you go on your first session for a private artist who you don't know, tell a friend the address and phone number of where you'll be, the name of the artist, and what time you expect to return. Or bring a friend with you. Use common sense and always act professionally.

Q. *What's the difference between modeling for sketches, paintings and sculpture?*

A. Figure drawing classes, also known as life drawing, require you to do lots of short poses (gesture poses) before settling into a longer pose towards the end of the session. So you have to think and move quickly. Painting classes require you to hold the same pose several weeks in a row. Your mind tends to wander when you don't have to think about what pose to do next. So you have to keep your mind occupied with other creative or beautiful thoughts. If possible, make eye contact with the artists.

Sculpting also requires you to keep the same pose for about six or seven weeks in a row. Unlike painters, sculptors have to come up close to your body to examine the muscles. So if you think you might feel uncomfortable with people looking at you from just a few inches away, bypass sculpting work. In no circumstance whatsoever does an artist have to physically feel the model! Artists claiming they have to become one with their subject are just looking for cheap thrills.

Also before accepting an assignment, find out if the artists will be painting abstract style. Posing for an abstract art class can be more difficult than others because you'll be expected to distort or overextend your body. To compensate, however, the teacher will probably allow you to take longer breaks in-between sittings to help your body relax.

Q. *What is the difference between fashion modeling and art modeling?*

A. According to Bonnie Weinberg, who has done both types of modeling, the focus is different. With fashion modeling, the emphasis is on the clothes and how the fabric drapes. Also, when she was a fashion model, they made her wear lots of makeup, so much that she almost felt like she was "in drag." Fashion modeling is based on movement. And except for one photographer that she knew well, Bonnie didn't have a feeling of working together with the photographer.

In art modeling, however, she felt like she was a participant, which was satisfying. "In art modeling, you're stripped to your essence," she commented. "The focus, of course, is on your body." With art modeling, except for the quick gesture poses at the beginning of the sessions, it felt like she had to be still "forever." Overall, though, she enjoyed the art modeling more than fashion modeling. "Too bad it doesn't pay as much as fashion modeling."

Q. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of art modeling?*

A. The advantages are that you enjoy the beauty of being a part of the creative process; you meet intelligent, sensitive people, and you earn extra income. In time, you can also amass a unique collection of art for which you posed. The disadvantage for some people is that it can become physically gruelling if you're not used to making a living with your body. Also, ifyou model for a group of artists gathered together without an instructor present (sometimes referred to as "workshops"), you might find it frustrating

that everyone wants you to do something different and you simply can't please everyone all the time. That is why I now only model at schools where there is a teacher presiding and all of the students appreciate my efforts.

Q. *What's the funniest thing that happened during your modeling experiences?*

A. I've had ants crawl up my legs and a gnat fly up my nose, but the funniest thing was when I was walking through the studio lounge on a Saturday afternoon, wearing my robe and slipper socks, and a little boy who was taking a break from his class in the children's section looked at me with a shocked expression asking, "Is it nighttime already?"

Chapter 2

From Parisian Model Markets to Your Local Community: A History of the Art Modeling Profession

Historically, modeling for artists has been considered by those outside the art community to be a lowly profession—even lower than prostitution. It has been reported that a young girl in a French cafe who agreed to pose for a painter insisted, "Don't tell my mother, she thinks I walk the streets." (Kluver & Martin, "Short History," 161)

However, among the 19th century Italians there was no such false modesty. For them, to be a model was a serious trade that brought in good money if you had a taste for the work, and that was passed on from one generation to the next.

Attitudes varied then and continue to vary today. To deny that some irresponsible sexual activity doesn't happen now between a few artists and models would be naive. But in all the time I have been modeling at schools and for private artists in their homes, I have never encountered a sexual advance. It is no longer expected by reputable artists for models to "give up the goods" at the end of the session—or instead of the session.

17th Century France

In 1655 a law was enacted which gave the French Royal Academy of Art a virtual monopoly on life drawing in all of France. It decreed that nowhere outside the Academy schools was any public life drawing to be allowed, and even private life drawing circles in artists' own studios were illegal. Posing in the nude was illegal and punishable by imprisonment. (Segal)

Some people feel that the motives behind the laws were less anti-vice than a move to protect the monopoly of the nude for artists recognized by the French Royal Establishment. The result was overcrowded classes at the Academy, which only offered one two-hour life drawing session a day.

As was to be expected, illegal life classes began being held in the more disreputable quarters of the city. Academy students were warned that if they were caught drawing from the nude out of school hours, severe disciplinary action would be taken against them. The students, however, were lighthearted about this, maintaining that they wouldn't *dare* enforce the law.

It is fun to note that back then the Academy allocated models' salaries in the same category with the items such as oils and chalk, to the tune of 1,000 francs a year.

During the long reign of state-supported academic painting, the model most sought after was likely to be male: "His great stature and the elegance of his proportions, which were needed to wear the costumes which the genre of historical motifs require . . ., his intelligence, his long experience, his stamina while posing were precious to the artists." (Kluver & Martin, "Short History," 157)

Paris From the Mid-1800s to Early 1900s

Despite the Academy's efforts to monopolize the industry, modeling blossomed as a profession (albeit a lowly one) in Paris during the 1800s. Most of the models were Italian and gathered

at a "Model Market" every Monday morning hoping to become Madonnas, cherubs, mythical heroes or classical warriors for the week. (Kluver & Martin, *Kiki's*, 18)

Whole families of Italians from rural mountain areas devastated by poverty, wars of foreign invasion and the turmoil of the struggle for Italian unification gladly left, hoping to make enough money in Paris to return to Italy and buy their own plot of land. They discovered that one or two members working as models could support the whole family.

The first art school in Paris to use live models was the Academie Suisse, started in 1815. In 1870 it was renamed Academie Colarossi, after the model who took it over. For lower-class women who wanted to "stay honest," modeling paid better than did work as a seamstress or domestic servant. The young women usually had a limited time to model, 10 years for most of them, though they could play character parts as they grew older. Women received four to five francs for each four-hour session—usually from 8 a.m. to noon and then from 1 p.m. to 5—and a man was paid only three to four francs.

The work was hard, with the model generally allowed only 10 minutes' rest every hour. But the models were proud of their collaboration and bragged about the works they appeared in; instead of saying, "So-and-so did that after me," a model would say, "I made that together with So-and-so." (Kluver & Martin, "Short History," 157)

When the artist couldn't find the perfect model for the subject he wanted to represent, he would use different models for different parts of the body. In some cases this was necessary because there were female models who would only pose for head and shoulder; others became known for the beauty of their hands or feet.

However, with the outbreak of war in 1914, the French government declared that Italian models were "aliens without profession" and thus deported them. After that, many young women anxious to escape the restriction of bourgeois family life went to Paris, particularly the district of Montparnasse, to become

models.

One such woman, Sophie Braguinski (better known as Zinah Pichard), expressed her opinion of modeling:

"Being a model was not a profession, but there was nothing degrading about modeling; it permitted you to be around painters and interesting people." (Kluver & Martin, *Kiki's*, 239)

Despite the sexual freedom caused by a surge of women's liberation in Paris after the war, some artists from that era maintain that "the relationship between artists and models in the studio, the academy and the cafe was for the most part 'strictly business.'" (Kluver & Martin, *Kiki's* 216) In their book *Kiki's Paris*, Billy Kluver and Julie Martin relate that, "Many painters denied having slept with their models, others boasted of it." Artist Picabia once told a favored model at the time that, "The reason I don't paint models is that then I have to sleep with them and that tires me out and I have to go to sleep."

One person of that era who actually encouraged modeling as a profession was Victor Libion, owner of the Rotonde cafe, a popular meeting place for artists. As recorded in *Kiki's Paris*, he didn't allow prostitutes on the premises, but did welcome artists' models. When they complained about their hard life, he said: "Be a good model. It's a profession; and the police like women who have a profession."

In the early 20th century, male models were less and less in demand outside of the life classes in academies. Except in portrait painting, the female nude model became virtually synonymous with modeling.

19th Century America

According to Garnett McCoy, Archivist for the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution, the availability, even the existence, of models was a late development in American art. Until well into the 19th century, every aspiring American artist who could afford the price of a passage studied in the life schools

and museums of Europe. At home, painters depended on such engravings and Old Master copies as were at hand.

Makeshift models were probably not uncommon. In 1793, when Charles Willson Peale and other Philadelphia artists organized a short-lived academy with facilities for drawing from life, the model engaged was a local baker. Overcome with embarrassment or stage fright, he decamped and Peale himself stood in his place.

With the 19th century came the prosperity and urbanization necessary for a thriving art community. Unfortunately, a new and fervent religious consciousness came too. Morality advanced at the expense of art. The study of the human figure, which required life classes and observation of the nude model, was widely regarded as licentious and a throwback to Greek and Roman paganism. The result was a neglect of the principles of anatomy.

In 1837 the National Academy of Design opened New York's first life school, but found it necessary to advertise in the newspapers for "well formed men" to serve as models. Procuring female models was more difficult. No virtuous woman would disrobe before a group of men, however aesthetic their purpose.

The heyday of professional modeling in America began in the 1870s and continued through the first half of the 20th century. Interest in portrait and landscape painting declined, art schools proliferated, and a new concern for realism stimulated the demand for trained models. The establishment of the Art Students League in New York in 1875 and the influence of Thomas Eakins, "a realist of realists" as one of his models states, at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts were critical factors in this development. (Smithsonian Institution)

In 1879 Eakins ruthlessly revamped the curriculum at the Pennsylvania Academy, completely eliminating classes on illustration, art history and composition, and concentrating exclusively on anatomical dissection and the study of the nude. This teaching career, however, was rudely cut short in 1886, when Eakins was fired from the Academy after removing the loincloth from a male model in front of a class of female students. Unpre-

pared for the public outcry and the hostility of people whom he had regarded as friends, Eakins seemed to have undergone a nervous breakdown, to have consulted an expert in mental exhaustion, Dr. Horatio Wood, and to have gradually recuperated after a trip to a ranch in the Dakota Territory. For the next few years, he continued to teach a band of loyal students, but this group dissolved after six years, and he slipped into increasing social ostracism. (Adams)

In a 1923 newspaper article, artist Frederic S. Church reminisced about the attitudes towards modeling at the turn of the century: "Models were scarce in those days, as that profession was looked upon as questionable even for the draped figure. There was a certain etiquette among the artists, particularly the older ones, for their protection, and in the schools at that time the female figure models were allowed to wear masks and their coming and going to and from their work was conducted with a certain secrecy."

20th Century America

In 1907, former model Charlotte Eaton, widow of artist Wyatt Eaton, attempted to allay the public's prejudices about modeling by writing an editorial in the *New York Herald*. She first explained how she, a recent orphan at age 16, got involved with modeling:

"I was hopelessly lonely and forlorn—yea, worse. I was hungry, unable to get anything to do because of inexperience, and at the end of my tether.

So one day—it came to me like a flash! An artists' model! Why not? I knew myself in possession of a strong and shapely physique, and that gave me the courage." (Smithsonian Institution)

Of course, like most models, she was nervous when she applied for her first job. The artist asked her to disrobe and pose as he studied her physique. Pleased with her audition, he hired her.

"Gradually it dawned on me that I felt singularly happy and safe in the presence of that man. My trepidation had been only nervousness from the unusualness of the surroundings, not from fear of the sculptor."

Her article further claimed: "There is in the temperment of every good and earnest artist a quality that protects the model against her own danger, and if the model on her part be of sound moral fibre she is as safe in his studio as she would be in her own home. But these facts are too subtle for the ordinary lay mind to grasp, hence the misunderstanding that has always surrounded this profession, and I confess that I suffered a martyrdom because of the work I had chosen. I did not dare to make known my employment to my landlady lest I be turned out, and even after I became the wife of an artist, the artists' wives, with one or two exceptions, still held to the prevailing prejudice and did not call upon me.

"Although much has been done in late years through the Art Workers' Club (Miss Sargent president) to bring about a better understanding of the life of the model, there are yet many doubts in the lay mind connected with the work. This is, perhaps, somewhat explained by the fact that abroad models generally belong to a class out of which they cannot rise. But in this country conditions are different, and we have here a class of self-respecting, capable young women of undoubted moral character who earn their living as artists' models." (Smithsonian Institution)

Despite her well-put thoughts on this subject, misunderstanding of the life of the model did remain in the minds of Americans, as demonstrated by this anonymous 1928 letter to Everett Shinn's model, Virginia Mortimer:

"If you were a *real decent* woman," the letter reads, "you would be ashamed to parade your nakedness before any man, although you pretend he was impersonal when he painted you. Would your mother, father, sisters and brothers approve of your naked posing? They ought to disown you, for you are no better than a woman of the streets, in fact not as good, because they openly flaunt their shame and are paid accordingly, but you

haven't got their courage, you tried to hide your shame and rotteness under the guise of art. I suppose you are intimate and have sexual intercourse with every artist you pose for, if you don't you ought to, because you can earn more money that way. As long as you're going to strip for the boys you might just as well *screw* them." ("Model Behavior," 20)

Outrage over a Clothed Model

Outrage towards models was not always sexually oriented. An Irish woman who posed in native American clothing caused an even louder uproar.

Mary Cunningham's portrait appeared on 14,869,355 American coins. She was shown in full profile wearing an Indian headdress, posing as Miss Liberty. Hers was the face that appeared on the Indian-head $10 gold piece, designed by the famed sculptor Augustus Saint Gaudens and issued between 1907 and 1933. (Rochette)

There were vehement protests when it was announced in early September 1907 that her visage would appear on a coin of the United States. No one argued about Mary's beauty; no native American objected to her putting on a feathered headdress and posing as an Indian. And though she was neither named nor identified, an outcry was voiced on Mary Cunningham being Irish born and of Catholic faith!

The *New York Times* reported: "Mary Cunningham, whose face is to appear on the coins designed by Saint Gaudens, is a waitress in the little town of Cornish, near Windsor, Vermont. She was born in Ireland about twenty-six years ago, and she has not been very long in this country. Before going to Vermont, she served as a waitress in Boston."

Antiques & Collecting magazine reports that Saint Gaudens' $10 Indian is ranked among the country's most beautiful coins.

Present Day China

A 1989 exhibit of 120 works on nude art at the Beijing Art Gallery was another source of public and even model uproar. The nude figure, always rare in Chinese art, disappeared entirely during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976. Only recently has it begun to appear as an acceptable subject for artistic expression. Still, it is a rarity.

The women who posed for the artists had reason to feel uneasy when the paintings went on display. Many in China consider it scandalous to pose in the nude. One of the models, a 19-year-old woman, reportedly went insane after neighbors accused her of being a prostitute. Two models sued the Beijing Art Gallery and succeeded in having their pictures removed from the show, protesting that the artists should have made their faces unrecognizable to spare them inevitable embarrassment and ostracism.

It was just too much for a couple of marriages when the husbands learned their wives had been posing nude; one husband is now seeking a divorce.

Writer Sam Staggs in the April 1989 *ARTnews* suggested: "While the Chinese are still a considerable distance from the West in their attitude toward nudity as well as litigation, they appear to be making dents in the barriers that have long divided them. Chinese artists today would be well-advised to have their models sign release forms—before they disrobe."

How Artists and Models Have Found Each Other Through the Ages

Often, models have been referred from one artist to another, or models knocked on doors of studios and art schools soliciting work. Occasionally throughout history, entreprenurial models and others have developed systematic methods to match artists with models, but often the procedure is casual and even coincidental.

Rebel painters Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec rejected the falsity of the French Salon (gallery) paintings and of the professional models that were needed for them. These artists chose to go into environments outside the studio for their models: the first to the racetrack and ballet classes at the Opera, the other to the brothels, dance halls and cafe-concerts of Montmartre. (Kluver & Martin, "Short History")

Another artist who found his models either on stage or backstage was Amercan painter Walt Kuhn. At the old Madison Square Garden, the Barnum & Bailey press agents used to give him backstage passes. Other times he'd stand on the corner of University Place and Union Square wearing a black fedora. He'd dump it over his nose and just stand there looking for models.

When he was looking for a particular kind of model he'd ask his friends to scour the neighborhood. They'd send candidates to the studio for a cattle call. "Okay, girls, let's have an audition," he'd say. And he'd have them parade back and forth and turn and pose until he'd chosen the one he wanted to paint. (Perlman, 69)

Renoir used to ask young women whom he saw on the streets of Montmartre, Paris, to come pose for him. In one case, when the girl refused, he asked if he could meet her mother. The mother was impressed with Renoir, and even more so with the money he paid. After that, mothers came to him in droves, boasting of their daughters' qualifications. (Kluver & Martin, "Short History")

One of the first artist model agencies was founded in 1885 or '86 in Paris by an Italian former model, Socci. At the Agence des Modeles Vivants, Socci kept albums of photographs as well as plaster casts by which the artists could preview the models. Within a few years, he had more than 200 models enrolled.

In the late 1880s, almost 500 Italians made a living in Paris by modeling. But more models were needed, since there were at least 6,000 artists working in Paris at that time. Each year more than 4,000 painings were shown at the annual Salon, most of them with historical and literary subject matter that most benefitted from the use of models. To cash in on this opportunity, each year *rameneurs* went to Rome and Naples, where they chose women

"more often for their type than for their beauty" and signed them to three-year contracts. (Kluver & Martin, "Short History")

Back in Paris, the *rameneur* first went alone to the studios to find out what the artists needed. Then he took five or six models for the painter to choose from; the price was fixed and the hours set. Each morning the *rameneur* dropped the models off at the painters' studios, and after the posing session, he picked them up and returned them all to their homes.

Some artists who couldn't afford live models or hadn't the time to search for one, worked from photographs collected in little booklets.

One time-honored method of model searching that still exists today is that of convincing members of the household—wives, children, servants—to serve as models.

Some models became quite professional in their approach to finding artists. In a 1925 exhibition catalog of the Society of Independent Artists, a male model placed an advertisment stating: "Professional Model (Young American Man Type) Available for all varieties of illustrative, commercial, sculptural and photographic art. Regular rates. Hobbies: Maintaining difficult action poses and holding various facial expressions." His ad was accompanied by a studio photo of himself wearing only a G-string. (Smithsonian Institution)

Nancy Lilly, the current model coordinator at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena said of the 200 models on file at the school, "We don't find them—they find us." (Keller, B7)

But is Modeling a "Profession?"

We know that the Italian immigrant models were expelled from Paris during the war because they lacked working papers. And in the 1920s, foreign women in particular were drawn to Montparnasse to model because of the fact that they didn't need a work permit and therefore could make money right away. But surely modeling is an accepted profession today, isn't it?

Well, believe it or not, even to this day, modeling has never been recognized as a profession in France. (Kluver & Martin, "Short History") That fact remains despite models' efforts to elevate the standards of their industry. In 1946, announcements appeared in the Paris press headed "Gooseflesh Bonus." The reports claimed that "Models for the figure demand gooseflesh bonus of thirty-six francs an hour. As soon as a model shows goose pimples as proof of suffering from cold, owing to the strict fuel rationing in the studios, she is entitled to extra pay." (Segal, 182)

But the United States is a different story. As early as 1945, the tax man was after artists to keep income records of their models. Observe this excerpt from *Art Digest*:

"A debate wages as to whether a model is a professional person and therefore is not an employee, or whether, if the model is not one who follows that career but poses for some artists, she shall be classed in the employee category. This is where the taxing agencies split hairs.

"If this latter case holds, then Mrs. Whosit may likely be called to account if she fails to render an accounting for her cleaning lady who comes in every week to tidy up the apartment. And she, like the casual model, may not have any such a thing as a social security number. We are trying to figure out the difference if a person sells a bit of time for house work or an hour or so posing for an artist. The difference as we see it is that one is a little easier work." ("Model's Records," 32)

As you read in the first chapter, your modeling income indeed is accountable, usually on the Form 1099, and that it can turn out to be the most interesting job you'll ever work. And despite the profession's checkered past, it's unlikely that the vice squad will be on your tail these days. But beware that some members of the general public still believe that modeling is a disgraceful job. Your services will be most understood and appreciated within the creative community only.

Model: Mona Lisa
Artist: Leonardo da Vinci
"Mona Lisa" photo courtesy Art Resource, New York

Chapter 3

Painted Ladies: Profiles of Famous and Infamous Models Through History

Mona Lisa

She's probably the most recognized model in the world, but who actually was Mona Lisa? Her full name was Madonna Lisa and she was the third wife of a Florentine merchant named Francesco di Bartolommeo del Giocondo.

She was about 24 years old, approaching middle age in Renaissance terms, when she first sat for Leonardo da Vinci in 1503. He was so impressed with her that he reportedly rejected other valuable commissions in order to work for approximately four years on her portrait.

Giorgio Vasari, an artist who was also the first modern historian of art, said that the portrait was "an exact copy of nature." (Wallace, 127) Author Robert Wallace in *The World of Leonardo 1452-1519* claims that "Leonardo far transcended portraiture to make his subject not only a woman, but Woman; in his hands the individual and symbolic became one."

According to da Vinci's notes, his models spent tedious hours waiting around while he stopped his painting in order to do a bit of research. If he had trouble finding the exact turn of the wrist, for example, he would call to his young male students to bring him an arm from the cupboard where they stored the odd

limbs of his research corpses. Mona Lisa then watched as they cut through the flesh to show just how the tendons pulled the muscles.

Likewise, to create that haunting glance that seems to follow you from wherever you look at the picture, da Vinci and his boys yanked the eyeballs out of the corpses' sockets, turning them this way and that to catch the reflection of light that gave the illusion of shifting focus.

Vasari said the artist employed singers, musicians and mimes to entertain Madonna Lisa at other times. The artist supposedly told his financier: "We shall want a dozen violin players to keep the sitter in a bright humor. If you like, we will add some singers and few buffoons, so as to vary the monotony of the instruments." (Segal, 50) Are they to account for that unforgettably coy smile?

No, claimed two French doctors in 1991. Jean-Jacques Comtet, a hand surgeon, and Henri Greppo, a joint specialist were convinced that she suffered muscular atrophy on the right side of her body. They believe that her swollen right hand is another indication of such a physical condition. ("New Wrinkle")

In 1507, after Mona Lisa had several of her teeth pulled, thus changing the shape of her face, da Vinci finally sold the painting—but not to the woman's husband! When Giocondo refused to pay for the masterpiece, the artist peddled it in France, eventually selling it to the king. Today it hangs majestically in the Louvre.

Regardless of why she looked the way she did, and no matter how often she is copied and caricatured, Mona Lisa's smile and eyes, her very spirit, reminds us that a painting based on a good model can live forever.

Victorine Meurend (also spelled Meurent)

Edouard Manet's "Olympia" is considered one of the most sensuous paintings in history and, like the "Mona Lisa," has been copied often. The model was Victorine Meurend, "a young girl

whom Manet had met by chance in the midst of the crowd in a room at the Palais de Justice." (Bulliet) Another version of their meeting goes like this: One rainy afternoon in 1860, Victorine stopped in the Louvre to dry off. When she left an hour later, skipping down the steps, she bumped into a grumpy-looking young man who nearly knocked her over. From then on, she was his "comrade" and model. (Segal) Little did she know then that she would earn the dubious distinction of being the most insulted model in modern art.

In *The Courtezan Olympia*, author Clarence J. Bulliet said that Manet had been struck by Victorine's original appearance and her decided ways. She had reddish-blonde hair, a very white skin, and a "very peculiar expression." To his wife, a piano teacher from Holland, Manet described Victorine as "not strictly beautiful but she is like one of those macabre dwarfish demi-virgins in a Baudelaire poem." (Segal, 118)

When Manet first invited her to his studio, he painted just her face. She became his favorite model between 1862-1875. He used her for two draped figures, "The Street Singer" and *"Mlle. Victorine en Costume d'Espada."* Victorine obediently stood in for whatever character Manet wanted to paint, whether it be a matador, schoolboy, brothel-keeper, sailor, gypsy dancer, Christ, an angel, three beggars or a bugler boy. Muriel Segal related in her book *Painted Ladies* that "it is always Victorine, with Victorine's face, Victorine's big bust crammed into a small fifer-boy's uniform, or Victorine's fat thighs bulgling out of the Spanish matador's pants."

One painting in which the model was allowed to pose as herself was Manet's 19th-century version of Georgione's *"Dejeuner sur l'Herbe"* ("Lunch on the Grass"). The scene places a completely nude Victorine in the foreground looking at the viewer, as two fully-clothed men sit at a picnic blanket. In the far background another nude female is dressing. Most critics shredded the work of art as well as Victorine herself. One of the kinder critics remarked: "She might have got away with it if she was looking like she was getting into a Roman bath and wearing the

accepted blank expression which marks the whole difference between 'Nudes in Art' and the woman next door without her clothes on." (Segal, 120)

But it was "Olympia" that offended people the most. Again, Victorine is looking directly at the viewer, blatantly posing as a pampered prostitute. However, records Segal, it wasn't Victorine's sensuous skin or the blatancy of the pose that outraged the public. Rather, it was her shape that ruffled their feathers, "with none of the curves and roundness that were the accepted form of a nude, one that could be excused as a 'study.'" Though Victorine's breasts and hips were too feminine for the military uniform of a fifer boy, they were not the fulsome feminine beauty that people preferred to see in a nude painting.

"What is this yellow-bellied odalisque, this wretched model picked up from heaven knows where, a sort of female gorilla?" wrote the press.

Victorine had taken as much abuse as she could and vowed to never pose nude again. She later became a painter herself, successful enough to exhibit a self-portrait at the Salon.

Gabrielle

Renoir's favorite models were the nursemaids of his children. One of the requirements when applying for the nanny job was that "these girls must have velvety bodies." (Bulliet, 189) Gabrielle was one of those young women, appearing in many paintings, including the "Bather" and also the "Venus" sculpture.

The Courtezan Olympia describes her as "that curiously ugly-beautiful human animal, with a low forehead, large eyes, short turned-up nose, her lips half open like blossoming flowers." Francois Fosca remarked " . . . how well her creator knows how to set forth her compelling charm." Garbrielle was from a common social class, the favorite type for Renoir. He once exclaimed: "I don't know how artists can paint those over-bred females they call society women! Some of our servants have had

Model: Victorine Meurend
Artist: Edouard Manet
"Olympia" photo courtesy Art Resource, New York

admirable figures, and have posed like angels." For Renoir, the most important quality of a model is that "she has skin that takes the light."

But Renoir's wife reportedly objected when her husband made Gabrielle stand for hours over the basin in her camisole washing her hair instead of washing the dishes. Deciding it more provident to keep the business in the family, Mrs. Renoir had a poor relative come and live in the house as a nursemaid. They called her Gabrielle, too, as that was an accepted name for a maid-servant. (Segal)

Thus ended her modeling career, but Garbrielle is nonetheless immortal, her inspirational essence wonderfully captured in an endless bath.

Kiki

Montparnasse, the Parisian district which derives its name from Mount Parnassus, the refuge of the Muses of ancient Greece, was the first international colony of artists. Model Alice Ernestine Prin—Kiki—was crowned "Queen of Montparnasse" in 1929.

When she was 12, Kiki was sent to Paris to learn how to read. But the next year, she was pulled out of school to work in a factory and then a bakery. When she was barely 16, she rebelled against the harsh treatment at work and modeled for a sculptor instead. When her mother found out, she disowned Kiki. In her memoirs, Kiki wrote, "That was something new for me, to strip like that, but what else was there to do?" (Kluver & Marin, *Kiki's*, 223)

Kiki refused to become a prostitute, but didn't hesitate to use her sexuality to help friends in need. In *Kiki's Paris*, we're told that she would collect money on the spur of the moment by showing her breasts or lifting her skirts in a bar or restaurant, telling the delighted patrons, "That will cost you a franc or two."

Because Kiki was "always the center of a group of laughing people" artists clamored to have the opportunity to capture her free spirit, versatile face and distinctive profile in their work. Kiki

Model: Gabrielle
Artist: Pierre Auguste Renoir
"Grande Nudo Seduto" (The Bather) photo courtesy Art Resource, New York

modeled for hundreds of sketches, paintings and sculptures by artists including Pablo Gargallo, Irene Zurkinden, Moise Kisling, Per Krohg, Foujita, Sandy Calder, Man Ray and Maurice Mendjizky. A visual and performing artist herself, she later earned a living singing, acting and managing her own cabaret.

Unfortunately, Kiki's fun-filled life ended tragically in 1953 when she was 51 years old. Her final years, marked by poverty and alcoholism, culminated in an icy attic. She died with an alleged bottle at one side of her and cocaine on the other. Beneath her bug-infested mattress were 28 charcoal drawings and 20 paintings dated between 1925-1927 and 1929. They were all of Kiki and bore signatures worth a fortune in any language. (Segal)

Cleo Dorman

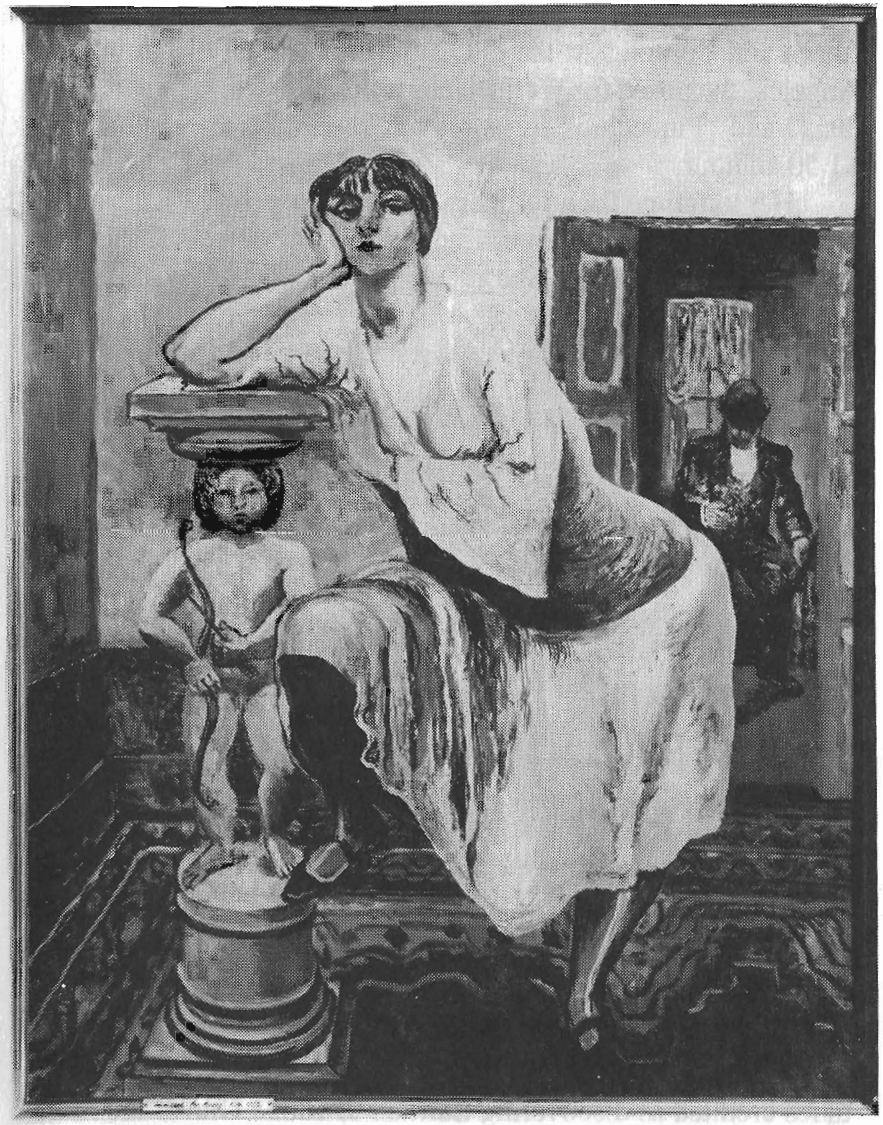
Modeling was Cleo Dorman's life and the painings, she said, "are like my children." (Folkart, A30) She once told an interviewer, "The reason I'm so healthy is that I've been naked all my life."

She was forced to leave school when she was 16 by her family's economic straits in the early 1930s. Before trying modeling, she worked as a salesgirl in a department store, an elevator operator and a taxi dancer. From the first time she modeled she sensed a "calling" and continued modeling until her death in 1990. Her first assignment was at a Chicago art school, where she at first refused to disrobe, but, needing the 50 cents an hour, finally agreed.

"I thought the next 25 minutes would never end," she recalled. But after seeing how her image was being interpreted by the students, she relaxed.

Cleo began visiting museums to study poses and even took art courses. She became widely sought-after not just for her shape but for her collaborative interest in the work of her portrayers.

She became a favorite model at the Art Students League in New York, the Pennsylvania Academy of Art in Philadelphia, and



Model: Kiki
Artist: Per Krohg
"Kiki 1928" photo courtesy Fotograf O.Vaering, Oslo

art departments at colleges such as Syracus, Rochester, Buffalo, Ithaca and Cornell. At the old Chouinard School of Art in Los Angeles, she posed for Walt Disney animators working on "Fantasia" and "Pinocchio" for what was then the princely sum of $1.50 an hour.

Her longtime friend Robert Service explained: "The magic of Cleo was that she had prepared herself to understand what the artists were trying to do. She knew what the search was all about. Instead of just being a passive lump of nude flesh up there, she was trying to project herself. She was a soloist, and her body was the instrument."

Of her near lifetime career, Cleo said, "When I am on the model's stand, there is a spirit that comes over me . . . to be needed after all these years. I cannot think of anything more wonderful." (Folkart, A30)

Several months before her death, Cleo sold her collection of works for which she had posed. The $10,000 raised established a scholarship fund for minority students at Otis-Parsons art school in Los Angeles.

"I just really wanted to be of some help," she said. "The creative art world has been a part of me, and consequently my life has been greatly enriched." (Nilson, 32)

Carmen Gaudin

Though considered ugly with "slightly brutal facial features" (Stuckey & Scott, 184) Carmen Gaudin was much in demand during the 1880s. Painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec is sometimes credited as discovering Carmen in 1885. One of the most famous of his paintings for which she modeled is "Woman with Red Hair Seated in the Garden of M. Forest."

Carmen also modeled for two famous female artists, Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt. As a matter of fact, Cassatt chose Carmen to model for "Girl Arranging Her Hair" as the result of a challenge from her mentor Edgar Degas. Like many committed

Cleo Dorman
Los Angeles Times photo

bachelors, Degas could be plainly stuffy about women at times, and it took Cassatt to put him in his place. When Degas remarked that women were incapable of passing an educated opinion on art, Cassatt devised a plan which would teach Degas not to underestimate the opposite sex. In *Mary Cassatt* by Jay Roudebush, we are told that "she found a very ugly model . . . a sort of vulgar looking servant. She had her pose in a shift next to her dressing table, in the act of a woman preparing to retire . . . the expression is stupid . . . " (Roudebush, 22)

When Degas saw the result, he quickly forgot his misgivings about women: "What drawing! What style!" he wrote to Cassatt and promptly acquired the painting for himself.

Again, we see that in art, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and that the conventionally less attractive models seem to be the busiest ones.

Helga

Andrew Wyeth's collection of "Helga" paintings was possibly the most hyped exhibit of the 20th century. Sensational articles in major magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* convinced us that we couldn't miss this body of work, a self-proclaimed "national treasure." It is interesting to note, however, that none of the national publications that ran with the story used its staff art critic for the job. (Schjeldahl)

The collection consisted of more than 100 sketches, watercolors and tempera paintings of Helga Testorf executed between 1971-1985. The publicity more than hinted that Wyeth and Helga were secret lovers, despite the fact that Wyeth's wife Betsy owned several of the paintings and was instrumental in launching the exhibit.

Even though the media had a field day in all of 1986, little was disclosed about the model herself. The exhibit's catalog states: "Helga is a German woman with a proud and close family who worked on the nearby farm of Karl Kuerner, himself one of

Model: Carmen Gaudin
Artist: Mary Cassatt
"Girl Arranging Her Hair" photo courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (Chester Dale Collection)

Wyeth's most famous subjects." Another source describes her as the housekeeper for Wyeth's sister Carolyn, who called the Helga-Wyeth romance rumors "a bunch of crap." (Schjeldahl, 12)

Art critics generally agreed that from an artistic point of view, the exhibit would not stand the test of time.

As a model, I view Helga as lifeless, compared to the others mentioned in this chapter. As John Updike commented: "The mood of the portraits is elusive. Often deadpan Helga is not so much there as her hair is there, braided or free-flowing or cut in a pageboy, each glowing filament laid on . . . in painstaking tempera or dry brush."

"All the nudes taken together haven't the sensuality to ignite a firefly," wrote art critic Peter Schjeldahl in *Art in America*. "The lack of psychological tension extends to Helga's face, typically stolid and tired (when not sleeping). In general, these pictures appear minor even for Wyeth, being essentially story-less studies."

As you embark on your own modeling career, I encourage you to take a look at the Helga collection and compare it to classic collections by the masters. Decide for yourself the significance of the model's contribution to art.

Epilogue

What Artists Want Models to Know

"You are important. It's not an empty, passive occupation. You can make it something to be proud of. The great models are immortal because they brought something to the painting—their personalities. You don't necessarily have to have proper bone structure. For those considering figure modeling, worry more about being bored than being embarrassed. The embarrassment wears off quickly, but the boredom is always a possibility. If more people knew that the embarrassment is fleeting, artists would have no trouble getting models."

—Brian Byrnes

"Be free and easy. Also, be willing to do what makes a good pose for the artists, not what makes *you* look good. Don't fall into the trap of being stuck on yourself. Learn to please your audience. Your purpose is to help the students fill their portfolios with good work. It's not a beauty contest."

—Jennifer Oliver

"It's not easy work. You shouldn't do it just for the money, otherwise you might become embarrassed. Be professional, respectful of the artists. And most of all, have respect for yourself. We do need you!"

—Stephan Klima

"A good model gives to the class, and that interaction creates artistic energy. Models who do it for some quick cash usually lie around like sacks of potatoes, and that shows in the artwork. A model should bring both physical and mental aesthetics. Most importantly, be professional."

—Joe Severino

"You are an integral part of the process. Recognize the importance and significance of what you're doing for the artists, the effect you can have. You must consider yourself an artform and carry yourself that way. Don't complain about what happened to you that day, otherwise you'll ruin our ideal image of you. Modeling is truly an acting job."

—Lisa Bowman

"Just put your heart and soul into it. Do it for fun, and let the money happen. Don't think with your wallet. Think with your mind and spirit. Anytime you think with your heart and soul, it turns out to be a miracle in life. Anytime you think with your wallet, it comes out to be calculus. Also, keep in mind that some of the poses should be meant for the artists to learn about anatomy, and other poses meant to inspire. If the class is advanced, use lots of action and foreshortening. There's a time to be technical, and a time to be creative."

—Wes Connelly

Model: Theresa Danna
Artist: Brian Byrnes

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Page 15-16: Wes Connelly and Brian Byrnes

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Page 35: Wes Connelly

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