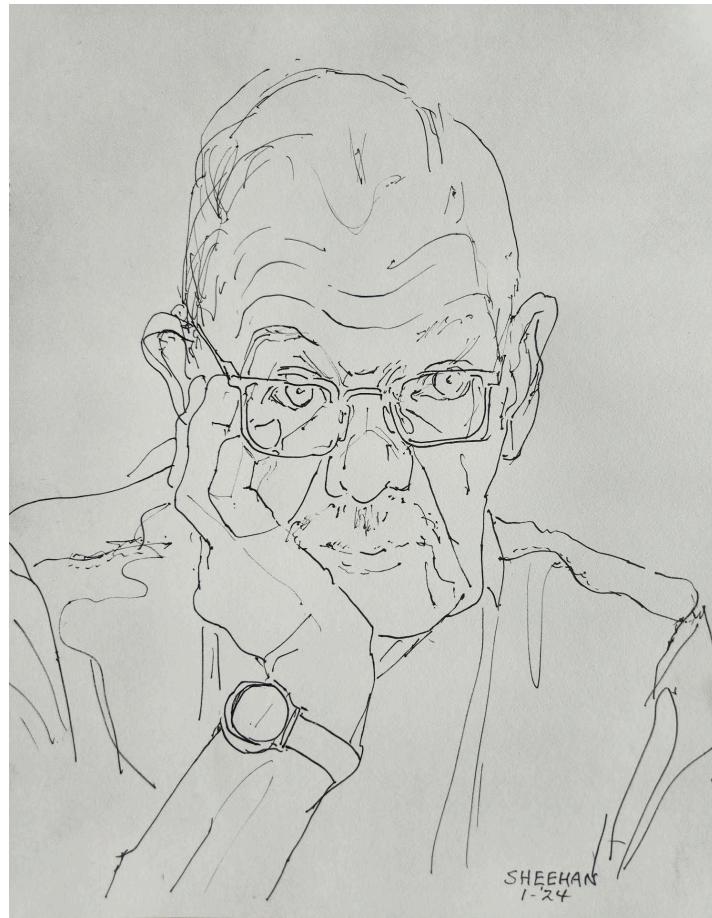




FRIENDS OF Sharon Art Studio

Student Spotlight: Dan Sheehan



Self Portrait by Dan Sheehan

Dan Sheehan discusses with our Program Manager, Cassandra Sechler, his creative process, artist background, passion for drawing, and his relationship to Sharon Art Studio.

Dan has known about the Sharon Building since it was still known as the Mother's Building and remembers the time when you had to stand in a line that curved ALL the way around the building to register for a class. It's a mystery how Dan discovered it, but we are so glad he is part of our community.

How long have you been coming to the studio and taking classes? Please tell us any special memories you have of the drawing group at Sharon Arts in the 90's?!

"I attended a Life Drawing group led by Virginia Banta in the mid 1990's for five or six years. It was an evening session and the Ceramics group downstairs was quite active. One ceramics student was a chef and he would occasionally make pastries in the kitchen to share. Barbara Tooma was a regular much loved model as was Gyoko, a Serbian young man."



When/How did you discover your passion for drawing?

"When I was in High School. I was encouraged by a teacher and I illustrated the cover of the school literary magazine and on weekends did the watercolor landscapes around the city and started painting during the summers on a Mendocino county farm."

What are your go-to drawing materials and what makes them so special to you?

"Nib pen and India ink with ink wash, #6 charcoal pencil, occasional watercolor, and 100 pound paper. I prefer black and white drawings and the directness of the material."



What concepts or themes do you like to explore in your art? Are there any particular emotions or feelings you hope your pieces evoke?

"I hope that my drawings are a response to what is in front of me emotionally. The drawings are not pre-planned. They evolve as they are put on paper. An instructor encouraged me to 'create a world' in drawing and not leave a figure floating in a white space. I think of the background of the drawing as a stage set or as a part of a dream and try to integrate dream and reality in the work."

One thing we (the FOSAS Office Team) love about Dan's work is that often there's imagery in the background behind the model. I complimented Dan on one of my favorite pieces he has posted after a Life Drawing class: a figure drawing with flying witches around the person.



What's the most difficult thing about figure drawing (or drawing in general)? What's the most rewarding?

"Avoiding a sense of pointlessness, knowing that no one is particularly interested in your work yet continuing to draw or paint. Acknowledging that there are dead ends of explorations and finding new ones. Keep working your whole life. Once in a while you can surprise yourself. Continuing to draw and paint allows us to find our own voice and not aspire to be some other artist."

Any words of wisdom to aspiring artists who want to pursue drawing, specifically figure drawing who are afraid they "can't draw?"

I expressed to Dan that one of the biggest things I hear people say when they're curious about taking an art class is "But I can't draw." Dan and I discussed how common this is and different ways to approach encouraging someone new to drawing. Perfectionism can be dangerous, those new to drawing shouldn't try to be a perfectionist and expect completion. Dan spoke eloquently about how "everything you need to know is within you" and artists respond to their own visions and find their own voice in their art. It takes time to find that voice and acceptance

in your developed style. Dan (and I second this) encourage people to get involved in the process of drawing!

Dan highly recommends two important books:

- 1) [Art and Fear by David Bayles & Ted Orland](#), 1993 McNaughton and Gunn Inc.
- 2) [The Undressed Art by Peter Steinhart](#), 2004 Vintage Books



What inspires you most with your art-making/What sparks your creativity?

Figure drawing classes are definitely popular for a reason—people love working with live models! There is a big difference between working from an image and working from real life three dimensional forms. We have a wonderful group of models here at the studio who are all so talented with their range of poses and accessories. Dan spoke of his enjoyment of the activity itself of figure drawing as well as the learning and exploring process of figure drawing, and his appreciation for the live response one has with the model/subject in a figure drawing class.

What do you love most about Sharon Art Studio?

“It feels like home. It is a nurturing, accepting, encouraging place to continue our explorations along with other artists.”