DISCOVERING MANHATTAN: Spring 2016  
drawing and painting in the spirit of  
Modern Art pioneers.  
ARTS UG.1425 Gallatin arts workshop.

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class meets Thursdays 3:30-6:10 in room 432

Ruhe’s office: Thursdays 1:00-3:00 in room 431 Gallatin.

**Course objectives/Learning goals:** Discover Manhattan is an arts workshop but with an ‘artist/scholar’ bent. We read and reflect upon other artists as the ‘lightning rod of culture’ as well as upon ourselves as nascent artist creators. As a workshop, we practice how to draw a face, a figure, a building, we do that, while asking how the line itself is expressive, outside of considering form. You are going to journey to art making as a way of life, as a way of seeing, as a way of engaging your eye and your person, while your career considerations may intersect. We are approaching various skill levels- portraiture- life drawing- plastic composition- clarity vs. suggestibility- psychodynamics of art- while especially essaying triggering mechanisms and oblique strategies at the art making spirit. Many NY artists painted abstractions in the spirit of the city. The goal of the course is to produce artists, creators, edgewomen, lightning rods of culture, not student artists.

**Grading:** the final grade will take into account attendance (two absences creates a situation, three drops the grade, four is possibly an incomplete). Participation for Gallatin students is de rigeur, this is 20% of the grade, your voice in, sharing your art making moments and book reporting. Various papers are 40% of the grade, as we are Gallatin ‘artist scholars’, profusely quoting from texts to ground your personal art quest historically and from the professor’s crits. Edit and re edit your papers, as Dr. Ruhe was Senior Editor for *Art/World* newspaper. Your art making in class comprises 40% of the grade. Your art is not judged by quality nor
by ‘labor intensive’ but rather by your bold engagement with the process as you evolve as an artist and creator. Visiting the professor during office hours adds to the course value for you with your artwork getting personal feedback and the considerations you had during class getting a direct audience with the professor.

**Academic Integrity:** As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, (as in Law School, collaborating on homework is understood and necessary, as in presenting our group book presentations, by committee. Working together at art is also great. Citing who you are working with is a courtesy but in this paragraph seems to be a legal necessity outside the professor’s purview, please consult the Gallatin legal counsel for the precise protocol) doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website ([http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html](http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html)) Quotes are best footnoted and or addressed in the text with courteous accuracy. The professor and fellow students are always flattered by quoting them but consider taking notes at the instant of utterance to catch the exact wording which was the point.

Course Description: we will draw and watercolor at various locations in the city every other class. Then we will follow up with critiques and seminars and retouch the fieldwork artwork.

Our target: Manhattan. What levels of meaning can we address in art making? How have other artists angled their attack? What is E. B. White’s approach in *Here is New York.* He discovered the holistic irony in spiritual vs. materialistic NYC. You may update his insights.

We outline our target cameos of the city and our artistic attitude and goals in a charette. The duress of street painting in winter may not be pleasant for some of you!! You may bow out of this class gracefully now, as there is usually a long waiting list. We discover that the entire city is our vast painting studio. What luck. How did Abstract Expressionism come to define the New York artist? Were they painting the city, as they
We split up the book reports for group analysis over the semester: our books are:

1- Here is New York by EBWhite (due Feb. 5)
2- HOWL by Allen Ginsberg  (you can youtube Allen reading!)
3- The Club, edited by Natalie Edgar. (Due March 5) (from the handout)
4- Art Spirit by Robert Henri (due April 2)

HANDOUTS:  from MoMA “NY School” AbEx catalogue,  from April Kingsley’s The Turning Point when NY upended the School of Paris. And on. Including our own Irving Sandler. 5- The “DUENDE” essay by Garcia Lorca from his lecture at Columbia U, and featured in his ‘Poet in New York’ collection. 6- What Painting Is, by James Elkins, excerpt.

For book presentations: Get the gist, quote from, abstract, then spin off the book in an artistic extrapolation. The first group will present Here is NY next week.

Everyone is required to do all the readings and on time and your final grade will reflect that. Our book circle begins with the 3 person reading group’s presentation, then segues to seminar roundtable with ALL contributing.

Before the 2d class: go to, Blick Art Supply , or the NYU bookstore, and get a watercolor hard press sketchpad 9x12inches spiral- 50 sheets. And one tiny sketchpad to have with you at all times. One fat and one skinny watercolor brush. Watercolor pencils are great for the road -red, yellow, blue, chinese white, indigo, ocher, umber, green. 4b pencil. pastels or oil crayons called craypas, if you like. Hard and soft charcoal for sure. You can also get a Pot of india ink; or both: instead buy soft brush tipped pens that carry the ink inside them, this saves impending disasters and the museums don’t let you use a pot of ink for that reason. Watercolor pencils are great for drawing, then you later wash over them with a brush of water and they explode in color. These are your piano keys to make your visual music of the city. ((you may want to diverge from the above materials to play your strength or to try something new. oils are too difficult out on the run, unless they are oil sticks.))

FIRST CLASS , 28 January, introduction to the aims and spirit of the course, and getting a feel for the students’ abilities and needs. Pick the groups for book reports.

CLASS TWO:  Feb 4.  meet at the classroom
A GROUP’S PRESENTATION OF EBWHITE’S BOOK  HERE IS NEW YORK. With ensuing seminar format for everyone else to comment on the book and how they took it. ALSO DUE: This includes a 2 page poetical rant on some aspect of New York you are drawn to that makes your time in the city awful or awfully wonderful. This could be
something you can hardly share with the old crowd back home, they won’t get the joke, but we will. We are with you. Reading EBWhite will provoke your quick poetical essay immediately.

At 430 we all walk out together to our first art attack site at Cooper Square. We regroup at 530 at Starbucks West of the Square for our crit on art and street studio technique. It is urgent that you crit each other on the spot as you draw, share your ideas, find out what your scrawl means to someone else. They are impressed with your smears and jabs, even if you are dissing your efforts, we see what you do not, magic through your hands if not in your own conscious mind, pouring through, as Art. We learn to trust that our body-knowing may integrate on the picture plane with our averred intent. It is not all what you plan.

CLASS THREE: Feb. 11 at the MET 82nd and 5th ave
come an hour early if you can! At 3, even, start drawing the instant you get there. we meet on-site. They may not mention it, but you may pay what you will, one dollar. Rendezvous at the "Greeks". You turn left as you enter the entry hall to get there, and start drawing the statues until we are all assembled. Stay together. We will superimpose an African sculpture fetish image on our GrecoRoman sketch, to see how the Harlem Renaissance overlaid European sensibilities for the American Rhythm Mondrian attempted in his painting Broadway Boogie Woogie. We will proceed briskly to the Lehman Wing and the Ashcan School of New York Urban Art. And rush to the New York School of abstract expressionists upstairs, the Pollock Kline DeKooning Mitchell Rothko set. Then Crit when museum is closing.. follow the prof closely…in a group..to the education area basement southside of building, elevator by the Roman statues…we meet in a lobby area for the crit. <we may find a 79th street gallery art opening>

CLASS FOUR: February 18, meet back at classroom. Crit all drawings and retouch. Portrait lesson and what philosophy comprises a portrait. How does a building become a portrait. We critique your art for content, direction, dreaming, vision, grand design, hand, materials. Is it apocalypse or utopia or both. What edges are you on.

DUE. Group presentation of The Club. The presenters will moderate a Club/like PANEL with ALL students in on “painterly abstraction referencing NYC angst and Zeitgeist, how is this possible.” And everyone has read the book for today by the book’s editor and wife of Phil Pavia, Natalie Edgar. And we all seminar on The New York School of Abstract Expressionism. Dr Ruhe presents a brief history of the Pivot Point when this group of self named Irascibles took the lead away from the School of Paris, having bitterly targeted Matisse and Picasso, and watching the Uptown success of Surrealist war refugees. It was the War of the Roses AND THE INDIANS VS THE REDCOATS, as Club founder Philip Pavia termed the ambition of the new American Expressionists versus the chic uptown émigré Surrealist artists.

CLASS FIVE: feb. 25
meet on site at ACA Gallery, 529 W 20th St. By 4pm we are fully together and we then elevator to top floor to walk down through 20 galleries quickly but stopping in front of a work that resonates with you to capture that spirit in your sketch! we draw at galleries.
Is it redundant to make a drawing of art in a gallery? What happens? Can you segue the rendering into your OWN art? Theft? Interpretation? Appropriation? Even making a “bad” drawing shifts one’s intensity of gaze to enhance the experience of the art viewing. Are these installations about New York even tangentially? What global/local dance is the art world up to? Why are African artists showing on 20th Street? Interesting.

By 530 PM we regroup at ACA Gallery for group crits. Openings in Chelsea are 6-8pm. Join the prof in a hypercritical artropoliticking event where being seen is a career maker.

CLASS SIX: March 3 we meet at the Staten Island Ferry!! Dress very warmly- for sure buy thermal leggings for this class. A great hat. Ski overalls? It will be prohibitive weatherwise but the alternative going later in the Spring means battling touristas. Island Ferry: we take the 4pm ferry to be together, be on time!! We rendezvous in the mobbed main hall before entering AND LOITER IN THE BACK OF THE MOB SO WE CAN END UP AT THE VERY VERY REAR OF THE FERRY OUTSIDE LOWER DECKÔ.TO DRAW MANHATTAN AS SHE RECEDES QUICKLY. ALWAYS START DRAWING LIKE MAD WHEN YOU GET TO A LOCATION- AND BE THE LAST TO STOP DRAWING AND ENDURE THE WEATHER THE ENTIRE THREE HOURS. We remain at the BACK of the ferry to draw the receding Manhattan skyline. Then ten blitz drawings of the Statue of Liberty as she flies by (an exercise that is central to the theme of this course, as it frees your hand surprisingly, to shorthand notate the vision in an abstracting act of compression)

We debark the ferry ensemble, to crit in the lobby of the ferry terminal, and retouch drawings to meet your own poetic theme for where you want to psycho-situate yourself. Drawings are not merely renderings, but staging grounds for dreams, and interpretations of what you are doing in this city.

CLASS SEVEN: March 10 We meet at the Fountain at the Plaza Hotel at 59th and 5th Ave. If rain, we meet under the canopy at the entrance to the Plaza. We draw buildings AND the fruited statue- the essence of this locale is the Fountain statue au natur complementing the hard and soft architecture both Modern and Empire styles. See if you can play your drawing off of the conceptual contrasts happily warring.

-at 545pm we crit inside Plaza Hotel basement mall, stay tight. <And after class join Ruhe at art openings on 57th St.>

**Due:** "Here is New York" styled spinoff FORMAL 3 page essay. Read EBWhite again, then see where your theme wants to address a chapter of your own New York. Quote EBWhite first. Then reflect on the city in microcosm, illustrating macrocosm, a story you can tell that sets your stage. Do you have an artwork you already made by way of illustration for the essay? This is a tiny formal essay, so really polish it. **due: a short essay on your surrealistic Manhattan.** To remind us that art is philosophy made manifest. Scan again the entire Here is NY to get in the mood for your essay, an ode to one building or site or event in Manhattan, a nugget to mail back home to Dubuque? Musing over your face to face moment with something truly Nieuyorquaise.

SPRING BREAK IS WEEK OF March 17. NO CLASS. Read Art Spirit for next
week during Spring break, it is fun, don’t worry, great airplane read.

CLASS EIGHT: March 24: Classroom Figure and portrait lessons by the master. Ruhe’s specialty. Placing the figure into the city. Into context. Into narrative drama. **DUE:** GROUP PRESENTATION OF ART SPIRIT READING. YOU JOIN IN TOO.

TBD (Jazz Club nite may replace this class)

CLASS NINE: March 31; discussion in circle on your personal needs as an artist. What is fifty years making art going to look like for you. What would you want to put into it, what would you need to get out of making art.

CLASS 10: April 7, meet on site, in the center of the Brooklyn Bridge, under the first arch. If there is a hard bad rain, we meet in the classroom instead. If Dodging clouds or very light rain, then we still go to the Bridge. Be bold- but call my cell 917 721 2541 to be sure. And for such an exposed place, dress for the afternoon shadows, it will get brisk.

CLASS 11: April 14. back in classroom: first we critique of your favorite artwork you made as homework (and on site) these past months. Reflect on and insert your personal theme. Flesh it out, Collaging past sketches into your ‘signature piece’. This is a culminating piece of art that draws on the class experiences but adds your own private trajectory into the city ten years from now. You can rework in the classroom sketches made hastily on the run across manhattan. Bring all you previous art in today. Later we run out to sketch Picasso’s vast statue **Sylvette in situ.**

CLASS 12: April 21 at the classroom: Classroom **book reading due:** HOwl; then write your own 7 page version of Howl in your own dark voice with allegory and referencing associations off the top of your head, the kitchen sink of our time in this new age in your next avatar. This could be a long long poem with little editing. Give us your epic reconstruction of all of what you know and have experienced in a rhythmic cadence. (editing is mostly to spare the reader what when you read it out loud falls flat, cut that) Later, Washington Square sketching for the mural.

**NightTime:** obligatory class trip! + JAZZ CLUB “Smalls” just two doors off 7 avenue at 183 West 10th street. 730 pm to 9pm. The purpose of the trip is student covalence and a chance to draw in a ‘cave’ in the rhythm of the music, jazz is NY, jazz is Bach made now. We could go to Harlem instead but it would approximate Smalls anyway.

Class 13, APRIL28! Classroom. Collect collages materials from the street, for constructing “maps” reflecting NYC detritus as a mirror. Also bring a large panel board, two foot square, to collage onto. And scissors or xacto and glue. Can your collages go into a ritual spiritual journey through the city towards an epiphany. During visiting artist Jon Singer’s crit of your collage, see what New York story might be embedded in the debris.
CLASS 14: May 5: last class: in classroom.

**FINAL PAPER DUE:** 5 pages reflecting on art and your Manhattan Project, historical and personal, your trajectory in this class eking out art, matching raw pigment to steel and glass and flesh and making your own sense of it, finding a glimpse, a DERSHAN, of the gods of the city. Add *quotes from ALL readings* and handouts to bolster your vision.

The psyche flowing to the jazz beat of the bass fiddle at a jazz club. How does your art making forge a path into an experience of your city. Fleshing out this paper inside a small group. Where does the hand of the artist speak, when is reason bypassed or defeated. What artwork was done and what did it reveal about you and about the city. How can you revisit your old sketches to revise and reclaim them based on your needs. No work is for ‘study’ merely, but exists as a journal and journey, as steps along the way. How is abstract art work ALSO catching the energy and the zeitgeist of the city. How is your work so NOT Peoria, Illinois, and not Hoboken. Contemplate your own and others artworks to find an existential crisis expressed. So your art workshop wasn’t just to learn to render, but was also a personal JOURNEY into Manhattan. Navigation. Mapping at each moment. This happens when the paint material and the hand are together. As in Jazz, a lot happens in the performing you didn’t plan on, in the zone.

A circle review of the class journey through all the art work made this semester. Then we **Regroup in Washington Square Park** to ensemble collaborate to ink out a large mural of New York in a dream sequence.

**overview:**
Fourteen classes, seven on location drawing and painting live, buildings and scenes, going for expression through experimentation with your materials and gestures and narratives. Paying attention to art historic NY styles like Ashcan and School of Paris and contemporary art interpretations. Back at the classroom we group crit, analyze, historicize, retouch surrealistically and ironically, at art. Warning: it will often be brusque out there, we will duck into coffee shops, but expect to work hard under duress for hours! This harsh experience, more than talent, will serve you well in the course and in your artistic careers.

This workshop is user friendly. What would you like to discover in Manhattan? You can break off from the pack on your detour to fashion culture, jazz dives like Phoebe Legere at Joe’s Pub, NY Art Fair, The New York School (of Abstract Expressionism) at MOMA. One piece, a masterpiece, a labor intensive large artwork, should be approached on your own as a bonus homework assignment, go where you will on this stylistically, while stretching yourself creatively.

Theme: you in the thick of what Manhattan means to you. What art skills to pick up? Watercolor, drawing, acrylics, tight graphics or loose Expressionistic Romanticist touch, breathing your soul into the city and catching the town journalistically. You may come into this class with some or no skills, you may be thinking graphics or cartoons exclusively, and I am asking you to use those skills but also to develop your own voice in the process, find your own smell on the paper, AND **EXPLORE ART MATERIALS** within the mindset of REALISM AND SURREALISM.
AND EXPRESSIONISM.

Alert: This is an arts workshop where I welcome your experimentation but also your own previous style strengths; while hoping we explore alternatives as well. So much of your grade ALSO depends on ATTENDENCE and PARTICIPATION and BEING UP ON ALL THE READINGS AND ON TIME WHEN DUE. Missing 3 classes will see a drop in grade. I am checking off whether you participated in the seminar on each reading, understanding that we want a brisk and lively exchange that flows, so shyness or hesitation will be of no benefit to any of us. Questions, even doubts, and even criticisms, are most welcome and help everyone gain traction in the course. Moving into artistic consciousness is not as obvious as we would hope. The great artists truly paved the way with remarkable shifts of understandings. For instance, how is the “New York School” of Abstract Expressionists about the city, since the art is completely abstract (?!). (Plagiarism, it goes without saying, is intolerable. It consists of borrowing others writings and sometimes even their ideas, without quoting them. Refer to those you honor in quoting or paraphrasing, this is elemental scholarship.) (Within consideration, papers are due on time, and readings must be kept up because our discussion is timely while we are in the classroom, as we won’t be able to talk round robin while sketching at Times Square! Again, the grade will start to suffer from lapses.) Curiously, your first virtue in art making is doggedness. Keep at it. That is where your evolution lies both in skill and concept. Exploring materials and styles robustly is much the purpose of this kind of workshop, so I expect your results to be … clumsy and offhanded in the best of situations. We have to stretch ourselves, and test the materials. You may comment on that ‘stab’ at your artmaking, during your crit. It is not an apology, it is a declaration that you were challenging yourself. We are not in High School, so the terms of engagement have changed. Mark this.

The Artist/Scholar paradigm special to Gallatin School requires your engagement intellectually even as we are principally an arts workshop. Artist Robert Motherwell wrote books and co-founded the Paris Review. And Willem de Kooning could talk art history endlessly at the Ufizzi Museum in Florence. Even the Abstractionists haunted the MET. You’ll see photos of all those painters in coat, tie, evening gowns at their Club on 11th and University talking ART three nights a week.

I want to introduce you to other ways of looking at a skyscraper: It is a design problem. How to squeeze 300 feet into twelve inches and make it as exciting as when you confront Empire head on, live, from a few blocks away. Not from a photo. No. Maybe at dusk, or rush hour, in the fog, while it is biting cold. And the building seems positively hostile. The building has a personality. It makes you feel like something. And this is part of your drawing. How you feel must come through your hand in the marking and in the “Arbitrary Color” that van Gogh proposed.

EMPIRE: A skyscraper is the sum of abstract thinking: when you draw it abstractly it reflects the attitude of the creator, the architect, the visionary. With the spirit of an idealistic punch in the sky. A tower of Babel, hubris, daring, big bucks. It can be its own dream or just yours, or both. A skyscraper scrapes the sky. It is poetry from the word go. It is concrete and quartz and glass and lots of wires and oil and steam and electricity and
people. 30,000 people in the Empire State Building alone. It is history. Twenty people jumped to their deaths from the lookout platform of Sleepless in Seattle. A chill in the air. And there is the red lining and the silver lining on all the windows reflecting sky and cloud and sun and cityscape. And the stone is brown and/or blue and/or yellow and/or gray and all of the above it depends on the day. Empire is a rattlesnake, rough skin, coiled, shining with bright menace. Moving clouds make the building seem to tango like a Disney cartoon. You’re hungry, so the building seems colder. Nebraska is different than this. The elevator man is part of the story, as are the clerks and execs and security and sanitation engineers and ghosts and tourists and techie. Each with a story and what a story- go up and interview one person and be shocked that they are that interesting. There are micro and macrocosms to consider. The street vendor in front of Empire is a bad joke on evolution. He has an engineering degree, speaks five languages, most you’ve never heard of like Gujarati and Sindhi, he is more poetic, has more sense, deserves better breaks than the CEO indoors. The vendor’s son may become the next CEO, and he knows it, that’s why he slipped in from Mehmedebad.

(WTC is Hamlet’s Ghost: "remember me")


To research demographically cosmic Manhattan high and low, break up into your own group, sketch as you go as a way of Counting Coup and as a form of contemplation of the question, and as a way of seeing. We justify our venture into the bowels of our city through sober reflection, diligent recording, clever analysis, thorough research, endless discussion, the hard rock pile of poetry, frank critiques, more discussion, curious comparisons, raw philosophy. That is Gallatin.