

## Marina Falco's speech

Good-morning, good evening to everyone. My name is Marina Falco I'm coming from Brera Academy of Fine Arts where I've been teaching Artistic Anatomy for twenty years, but before I had taught Figure Drawing in a high school in Como. This was my first didactic experience and it was really very important for me. It has completely changed my way of thinking about drawing.

Until then I'd only known to draw as my personal language, a language to improve my subjective, artistic skills. When I started teaching I immediately understood that in order to obtain a good didactic result, the most important aim to achieve was to lead my students in a different comprehension and translation of the human body shapes. In a couple of weeks it was really apparent that if I wanted to get a good didactic result, shared by the majority of my students, I had to change my personal idea and knowledge of the drawing as a language.

What I mean is that when we approach for the first time figure drawing we always have two problems: the proportions and then the third dimension, the volume of human body.

It was in this period that I started looking for new books about Drawing and its different languages. This research took a lot of time in specialized libraries. One day I found out by chance a wonderful little book by an English author Richard G. Hatton. *Figure drawing* meant a discovery of a new drawing dimension where the language of Geometry was the key for sorting out the two most important problems in the comprehension of the human body shapes: proportions and volumes. The second important discovery was Burne Hogarth's books and his incredible method to draw human body. Certainly Hogarth used to draw exaggerated body anatomies, in a way that suited the superheroes. Geometry was at the base of his body interpretation, so his method was really useful for my students.

But at the beginning of my didactic career the most important discovery was Dürer's artistic conception. It was based on the idea that Geometry and Mathematics, as sciences, are able to provide, to Art in general and to Painting in particular, the elements to establish common rules of representation of the body and space. These disciplines would have allowed us to eliminate from the works of art those falsehoods and errors that were often seen in the works of artists, who did not have adequate theoretical training. Dürer's thought of human body proportions can be traced back to a geometrical-mathematical conception that he meditated and developed through the drawing as a tool for cognitive investigation. Then Figure drawing and the first book of Burne Hogarth, the third book I bought, was the new edition of Dürer's human body proportions by Dover Editions (the same editor of *Figure drawing*). From this moment I always refer myself to Dürer's method in my didactic activity.

**Geometry could really be a common language, a scaffold to structure the human body shapes, in order to understand its volumes.**

To define human body proportions the use of a geometric structure is well known. Looking the ancient rules to describe, to depict or to sculpt the human body we can observe two different ways, two different ideas or concepts to conceive its shape through the language of geometry.

The first consists on inserting the body into a whole geometric shape. We can refer to the famous studies by Leroy Gourhan on the Neolithic female sculptures, or to the Egyptian Canon, based on a drawn grid by 18 or 22 lines. This canon can be interpreted in both ways: either through the general structure of the grid that inscribes the whole figure, which through the multiplication of a module,

or we could remember the famous sketches by the French architect Villard de Honnencourt. In this case he used the pentagon to elaborate the human body studies. Leonardo had a different approach coming from the symbolic ancient concept to reflect macro and microcosm in the study of the figure. His famous drawing is something that we can't forget to mention, from his studies all the following artistic theories were inspired.

Connecting the language of Geometry to human body, the Greek canon is surely one of the most interesting examples. The Vitruvian rule of eight heads to build human ideal height, which came from the transcription of Greek canons by the roman famous architect, is already at the base of some contemporary proportional structures. So we have a different concept: a repeating form which builds the whole structure of human body height. And this is exactly the main rule I've been following in my 25 years of didactic experience.

You can see in this picture one of my drawings. I usually sketch this kind of scheme to the blackboard. They're a synthesis of the proportional structure based on the eight heads. I'm used to tracing lines and split points like Dürer did, because it is easier to calculate the distances between the main body diameters. Furthermore in the last years I'm getting used to drawing all the view of Human body at the same time. In my opinion it was one of the most interesting insights by the German Painter. The front, the lateral and the back views represent the way to analyze human body as in an orthogonal proportions, and this method gives immediately the comprehension of the whole figure shape. You can see in the following pictures how some of the most important contemporary authors (all Artistic Anatomy teachers) are used to trace this proportional schemes, illustrated in their books.

In the next images I'm going to show you what are the first steps I always follow at the beginning of my course. I always introduce students to this new method of comprehension by gradual and successive schemes. The first step is to analyze the proportions. Then I start the description of the main sections of the body, according to an anatomic point of view. This is the decisive phase of my initial description. Human body volumes are traced through the inner sections. If the students visualized these shapes inside the body they're going to improve their knowledge in a significant way. In the following images we can see some of these schemes combined with those performed by first year students. I took these pictures last month, so we are looking at student's exercises during the first period of lesson. My sketches on the blackboards are a demonstration and in the meantime a work in progress study of the model's postures. So students can develop their skills understanding male and female structures and the typological differences between human beings.

According to Dürer's thought the beauty of the human body was not based on abstract concepts, but it was something to be sought through an empirical calculation. In fact I think that the most important exercise for the students is to analyze the model in different positions. So we could have a constant relation with the reality. The ideal proportions I use to explain are useful and help to support the understanding of the structural differences between sexes and prototypes.

We can consider that the modern idea of proportional canons is based on the actual valuation of differences between human beings. If we think of Fritsch canon or we reckon in Paul Richer's researches, we see this actual difference with the ideal body conception.

The last canon that is always mentioned, Le modulator by Le Corbusier reflects the idea of proportionality based on the design of grandiose building complexes and, at the same time, objects of domestic use.

Starting from these reflections, in this time what could be the real purpose of studying a nude with a proportional scheme? At the end what could be the actual reason of this experience?

It was the question I asked myself when I started teaching Artistic Anatomy. The answer is in the current need for a body design that can interpret all the requirements of a Fine Art student. It's important to understand, to analyze the human body with a structure which could help students in their multiple, interpretative needs.

In the following pictures you can see studies from different positions by male and female models. The new frontiers of digital design and animation fix a new dimension of work. Today digital modeling becomes a new training requirement. Therefore we must also consider the different potentialities suggested of digital modeling.

New tools are needed and among them this text by different authors is surely very useful.

We have different solutions and applications and they depend from the activities and skills of our students.

In the following pictures we have examples of these different elaborations and at the end one of the drawing I've presented in our exhibition. Finally the student has declined the general information in a personal design language.

Dear colleagues, let me thank the organization of this meeting, especially Vasco Cardoso, who has so extraordinarily engaged in this wonderful initiative.

Now I speak on behalf of my colleagues in Brera who have not been able to take part at this meeting. They were very interested in the study of the topic and to give their personal contribution, but the heavy didactic commitments did not allow their presence. So what I'm going to ask is whether it will be possible in the near future to organize a web space, a forum, where all those interested people can publish their interventions and share didactic experiences and knowledge. It would be an extraordinary experience for the entire community of Fine Arts teachers.

Thank you so much for your contribution.