WELCOME BACK TO
Summer of Drawing

class no.12: SILVERPOINT II
Silverpoint

A silverpoint drawing is made by dragging a silver rod or wire across a surface, often prepared with gesso or primer.

Other types of metalpoint can be used, such as copper, nickel, bronze, gold, lead, etc., for different effects.

Some metals tarnish faster than others (gold does not tarnish at all) and in stylus form, some metals, such as lead, will dull more easily than silver.
Grounds

A traditional ground can be purchased in powder form.

Mix it with equal parts water

Let it stand for 2 hours or more, until it gels.

When you wish to brush it on your support, place the container in a bowl or pan of hot water, and it will liquify and become brushable.

Brush 2 or more coats of traditional ground on your support, allowing time to dry in between.
**Silverpoint Instructions**

1. In a container, mix equal parts of Silverpoint Ground with warm water.
2. Stir and allow to stand for at least two hours. It will set to a soft gel.
3. Place the container in a pot full of hot tap water. Silverpoint Ground will liquefy and can then be brushed on.
4. Apply a thin coat to the support while still warm. Allow each coat to dry.
5. Apply the next coat medistically after the previous one is touch dry.
6. At least four coats produce the best surface for painting. Sand the final coat with 360 or finer grit sandpaper, if desired.
The goldsmith's workshop

Alessandro Fei (1543–1592)

Exhibited at the Signoria Palace, Florence. (c. 1570)
Museum of Art and Popular Customs
Seville
Design for statuette

Hans Holbein the Elder (1460-1524)
Design for Anthony Denny's Clocksalt

Pen and black ink on paper with grey wash and red wash on the compass

Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8 – 1543)
Salt cellar design
black chalk

Michelangelo di Lodovico
Buonarroti Simoni (1475-1564)
Goldsmith’s Designs, including two ideas for a lamp, 1521

Black chalk on paper

Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (1475-1564)
Fire tools, 1500’s
Florence, Italy
Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571)
Perseus with head of Medusa
Bust of Cosimo I de’ Medici
Shield for Francesco I de' Medici
Saliera

Benvenuto Cellini

Kunsthistorisches Museum
Silverpoint: Learning an Old Masters Technique

• With modern materials, silverpoint is an easy medium to try.

• Keep expectations in check – the value range is small, and tarnish won’t necessarily improve the results!

• Light lines, cross hatching, following the curve of the form – these are all shading techniques well suited for silverpoint.

• Establish your darker areas first, but don’t try to emulate graphite or charcoal in intensity. Build up layers slowly with cross hatching.

• Plan your moves – it will be difficult but not impossible to erase. However, once the ground has worn off, the silver will not adhere to your support.

• It’s easy to prepare a number of surfaces quickly, so that you can use silverpoint outdoors and on the go. All you will need to take with you is a stylus and eraser.
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