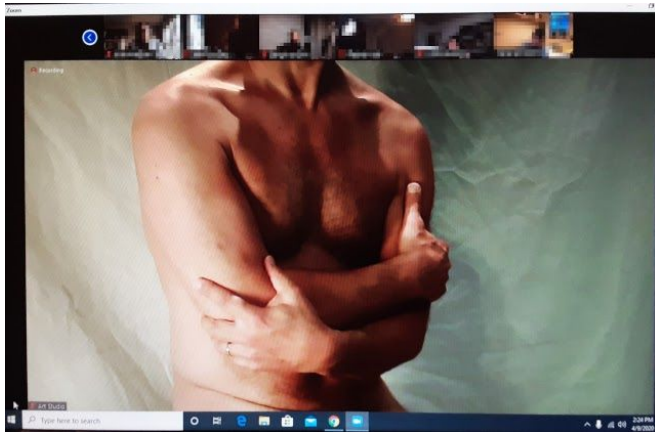# Teaching Figure Drawing via Zoom Meeting

This document illustrates methods for teaching online art classes that include figure drawing. It is the result of live collaboration with instructors working to adapt to a new medium. The model is in continuous communication with the instructor and students just as if you were in a drawing studio. Despite the challenges, the Zoom Meeting video format provides some advantages.

Basic Camera and Studio Techniques
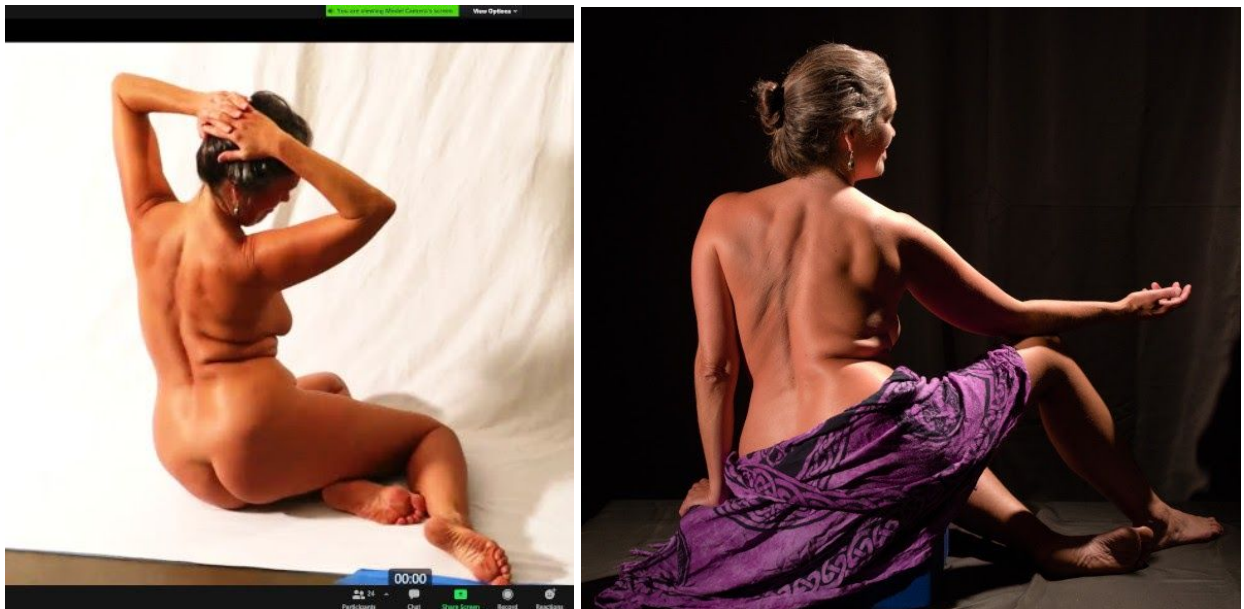
Framed close up study

The camera naturally provides a frame around a specific area of detailed study.

Portraiture

Each student gets the same perspective on the model, with close-up detail. The video production studio provides the artist control over lighting and shadow angles.
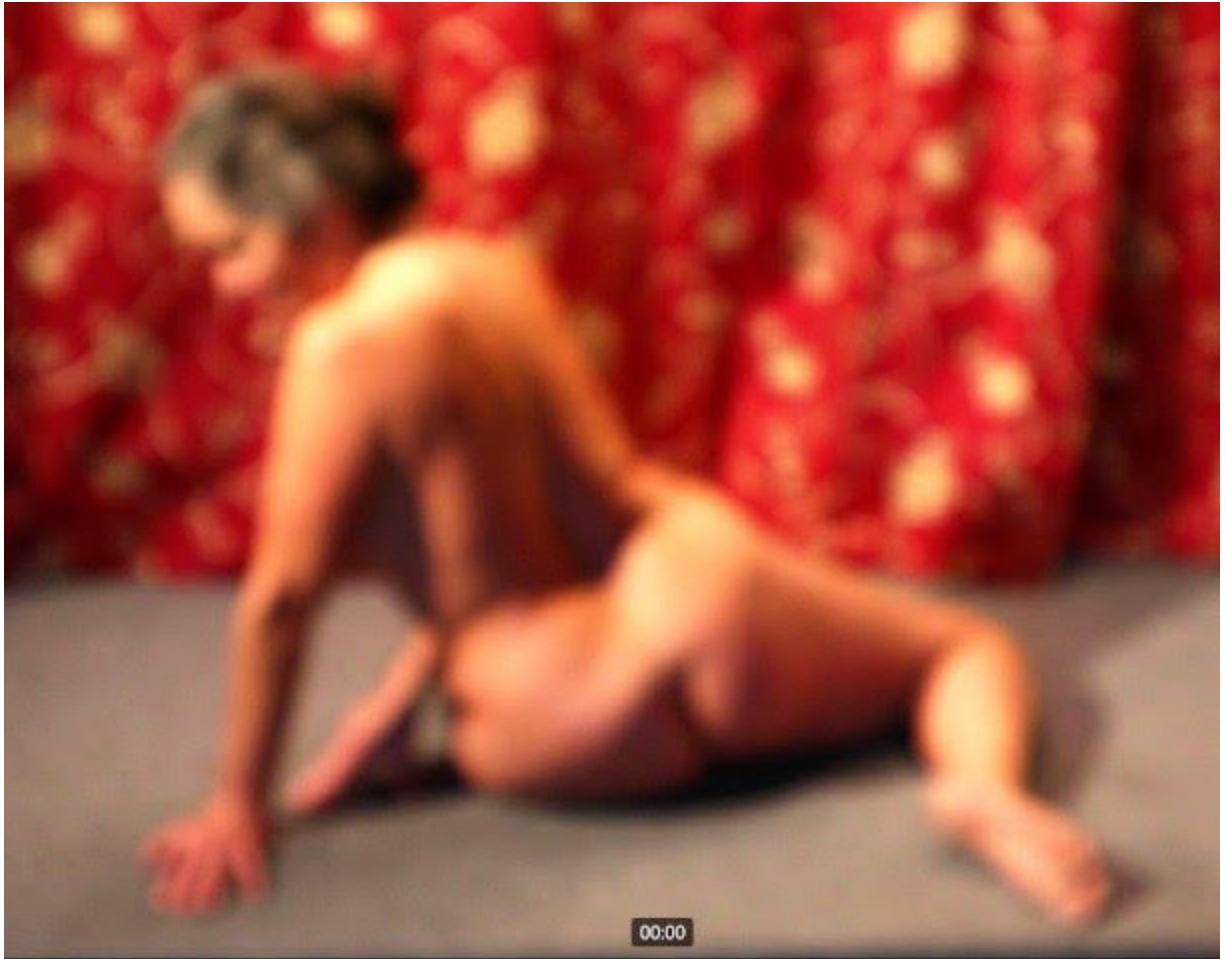
Background

The background is controlled through changing the lighting and curtains. This reduction in visual clutter, along with directional lighting, helps to offset the lack of a three-dimensional image.

Chiaroscuro in black-and-white

The camera can eliminate color from the image so only tonal values are presented. This can help students identify areas of highlight and shadow.

Defocused camera

A defocused view helps students quickly visualize large areas of light and dark tones. This is a camera's version of squinting your eyes. The camera is returned to sharp focus after the initial observations are complete.

Silhouette

The model can be placed in full or partial silhouette with lighting.
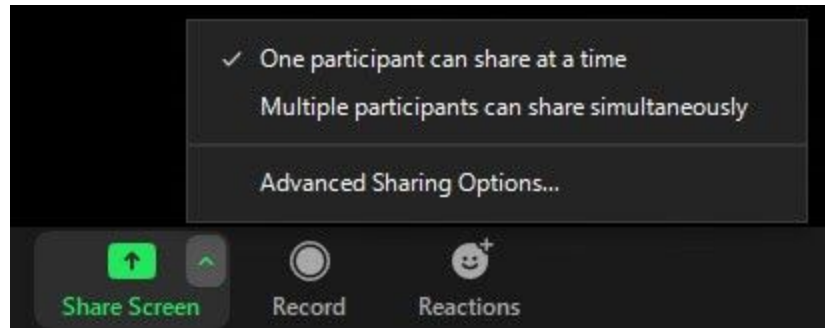
Color

Lighting can colorize the model working from a video studio, where the ambient illumination in a drawing studio would wash out color saturation. It is easy to create a warm and cool side for painting classes, or go to extremes of color mixing.

Advanced Zoom Meeting Features
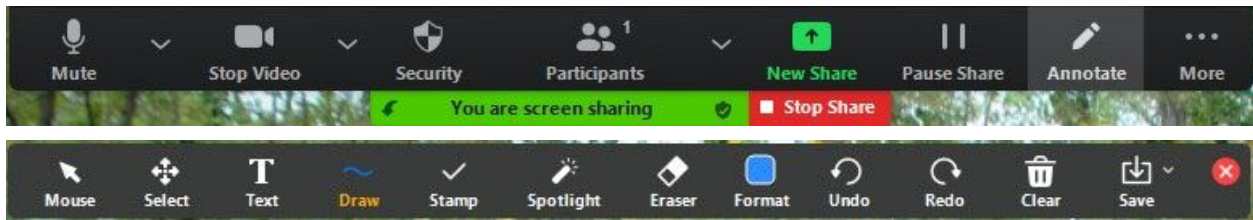
Share Screen mode

Advanced features are available if the video from the model is presented in <u>Share Screen</u> mode. The model camera routes through an external app that will display the live image full screen (e.g. CAMERA app on Windows10). This video is sent to the Zoom meeting via Share Screen. Share Screen provides a means of sending high-quality video even when an internet connection is slow or unreliable. Frame rate is reduced, but it's a good trade for improved image quality and extra teaching tools.
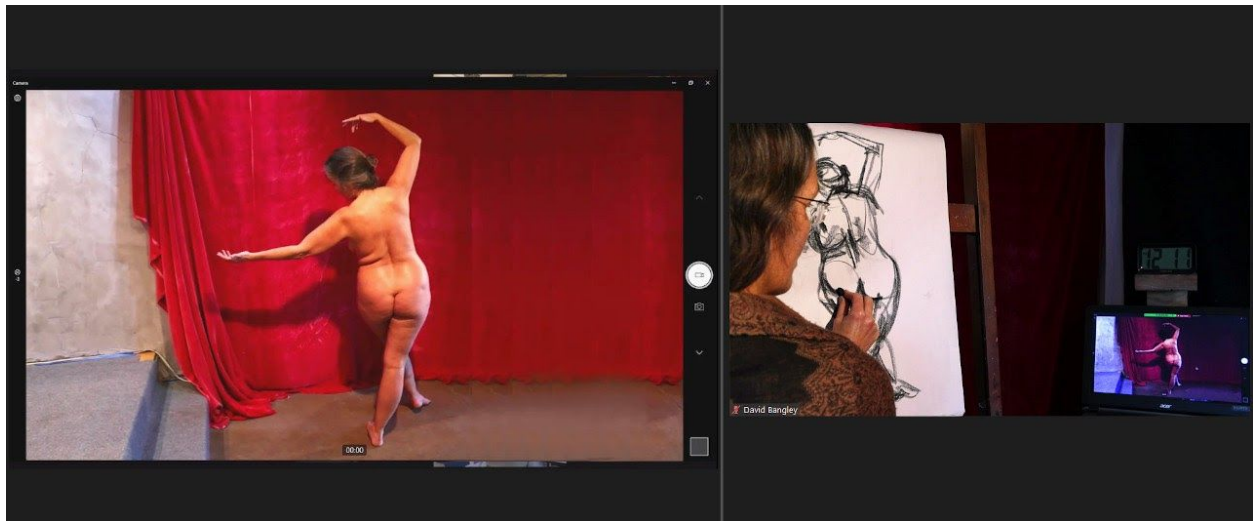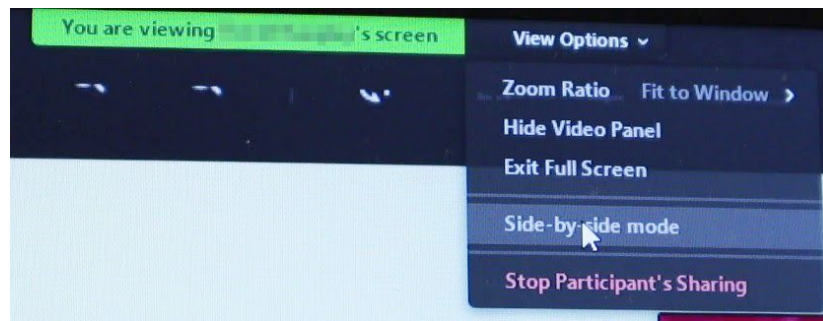

As a security precaution, Share Screen by participants requires permission from the school's Zoom account, and the host of the meeting. Generally, the instructor is designated as the host. The model is a participant. Your menu may not match these examples - features vary by subscription level and authorizations.

Annotation tool bar

While in Share Screen, tools are available under the <u>Annotate</u> button to allow lines and curves to be drawn on a live image of the model to illustrate lecture points. This feature must be enabled on the Zoom account you are using. Annotation is only available when using Share Screen.
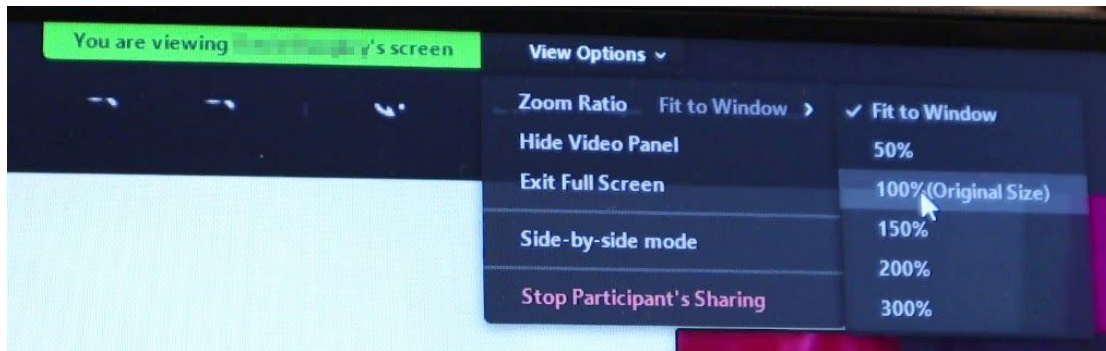
Side-by-side mode

When using Share Screen, most computers can display the model and instructor simultaneously in a split-screen view called <u>side-by-side mode</u>. Students activate this with the <u>View Options</u> menu (not available on some mobile devices). The center bar is adjustable to size the left- and right-hand images as desired. This is useful for drawing demonstrations.

If side-by-side mode is not available to a student, Zoom can display the speaker over a Share Screen image. The inset box can be repositioned and resized by dragging the corners.

Image scaling

Share Screen video can be scaled or "zoomed in" to study details using the <u>Zoom Ratio</u> control menu.

Long poses

It is difficult for a model working alone to tape and mark a long pose. If the camera position remains fixed, the instructor can tape vellum or tracing paper over the screen, outlining the pose with a soft pencil. When the model resumes after a stretch break, the pose can be adjusted by talking the model in to match the outline on paper.

Setting up a Teaching Studio

A minimum setup is a single computer on a table. One computer can support multiple cameras. A second camera for drawing demonstrations is useful. Zoom software allows the instructor to select which camera to show.

Zoom audio quality is improved when the instructor wears a microphone. This can be a headset, earbuds with a built-in microphone, or a clip-on microphone.

When two computers are available, such as a laptop and a PC, the teaching studio experience can be closely simulated. Both computers join the Zoom meeting and handle separate tasks as illustrated below.

Primary Zoom connection:
>   Instructor Microphone
>   Class discussion audio
>   Instructor discussion camera
>   Screen displays students for instructor interaction

Secondary Zoom connection:
>   Microphone muted
>   Speaker muted
>   Instructor demo camera
>   Screen displays model for instructor reference

Failure to mute the audio on the second computer results in time-delayed echo feedback.

Cameras for the Model Studio

The following features are helpful:
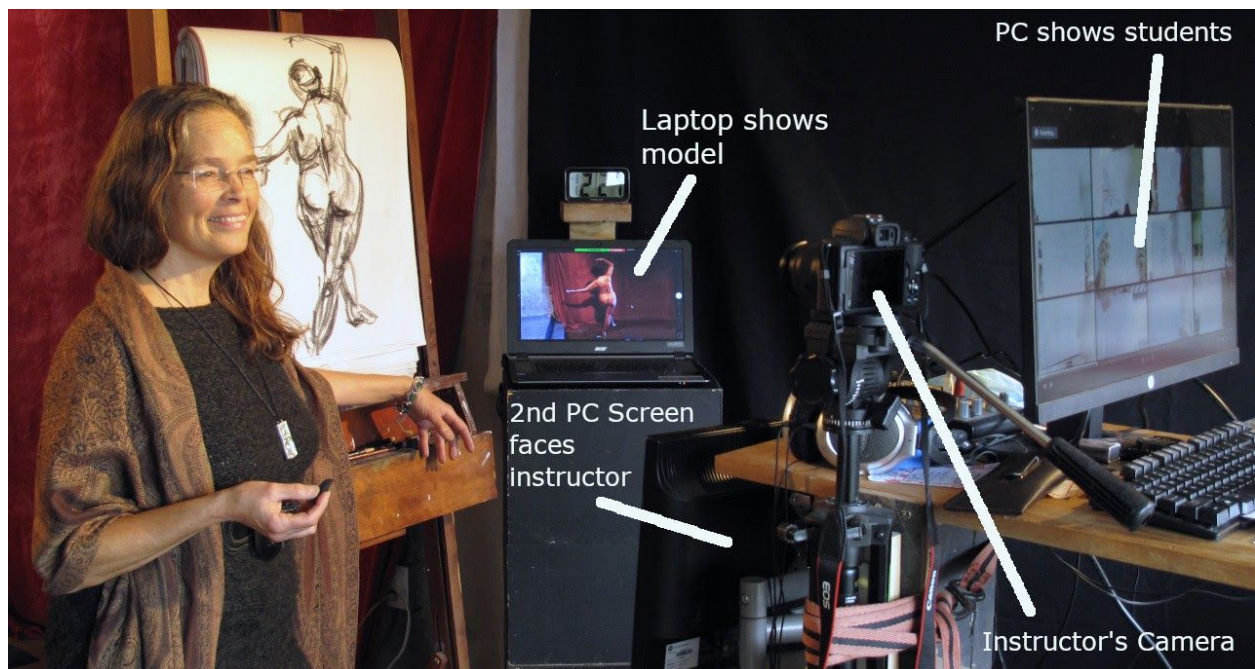
      HD video output - provides detailed images
      Zoom Lens - quick framing of gesture poses
      Manual Exposure - avoids overexposure of highlight areas
      Manual Focus - avoids autofocus "hunting" on a stationary subject
      Preset White Balance - preserves color saturation

Experimentation is vital in providing a useful life drawing experience for online art classes. Until live holographic imaging is realized, interactive high-definition video will remain the best substitute for life model sessions.

The Pittsburgh Figure Drawing Meetup provides scheduled Zoom meetings where you can see these techniques at work:

https://www.meetup.com/Pittsburgh-Figure-Drawing/

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