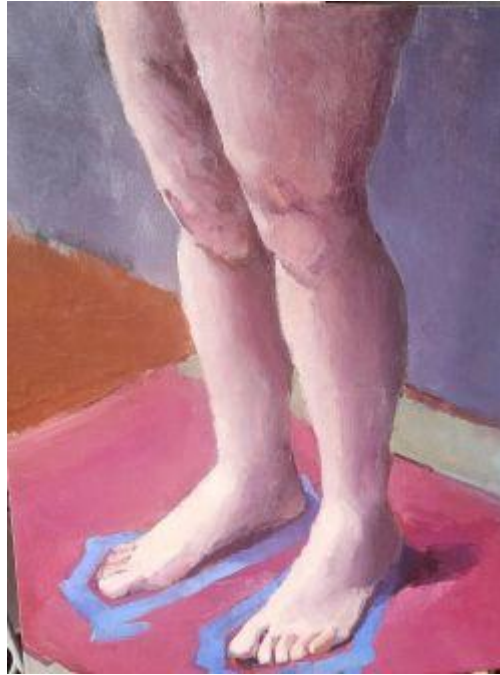


TAME:THE ART MODELS EXPERIENCE



By Robin Hoskins

As I typed the title of this piece, I noticed the first letter of each word spelled out the acronym TAME. That's what is expected of us - to be tame, compliant and accepting of injustices as they occur in our field. To be tame when we encounter low pay, inconsistent pay with no acknowledgment that we have bills with due dates just like everyone else, no advocacy when bullied, being discriminated against or even sexually harassed, dressing rooms being used for storage, no light in the dressing room, no step stools to safely get on and off of the model stands, no mats, no heaters, and worst of all no say. If we say something, there is usually a good chance we will not be booked in the future.

We've been resilient for so long taking these injustices in stride as we've created and maintained inspiring poses long and short for artists of all mediums. And, all the while, being told by those who are unfamiliar with our profession that we're lucky because when we're at work we "just sit there" or "just stand there" or "just lay there". These are the same people who most likely are unable to tolerate a lengthy airplane, train or bus ride. The level of discipline and patience required to hold any pose from one minute to twenty minutes at a time adding up to several hours per day is comparable to sainthood.

In our experience, we gracefully absorb these misconceptions as we carry out our daily routines with the physical stamina and work ethic of a devoted athlete or professional dancer. We also embody the mental stamina and work ethic of a top notch secretary, advocate or accountant. And, I express this tenderly, we embody from our hearts the passion and creativity of a muse. We are providing a service from our bodies, our minds and our hearts.

We use our business communication skills as we take direction from and collaborate with artists from our side of the easel to construct poses. We hold and maintain the integrity of those poses. We organize our schedules. We map out each of our commutes while carrying loads of work material. We carry protective mats and padding along with enough props, costumes and garments to fill an entire backstage department of a theatre on our backs through the subways sometimes being searched by the NYPD. As we show the artists all of these garment, costume, prop and accessory options in the studios, they still ask if we have more. It's never enough.

In our downtime, we keep up with the regimens necessary to recover and reset, so we can segway into our next sessions. It's essential to be refreshed and manage soreness. The clientele we're posing for are unaware and generally uninterested in the bodily wear-and-tear from previous sessions. We have our daily stretches to realign our bodies from poses demanding twist and weight bearing limbs. We rest with elevated feet to treat swelling. We ice our feet from standing poses and take epsom salt baths. We burn our skin by repeatedly applying tiger balm. We rarely socialize because most of our free time is spent in recovery. Our dedication is 24/7.

My objective for writing this piece is to bring awareness to our clientele and the rest of the world what our profession entails. And, Yes...Art Modeling is a Profession. I consider every art model near or far, alive or dead, as my family. I see you. I bring your everyday struggles to light, and I embrace you all.

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