

The Portrait Society of America hosts the 22nd annual conference in style.

By Laura Vailati, MiamiNiche.com

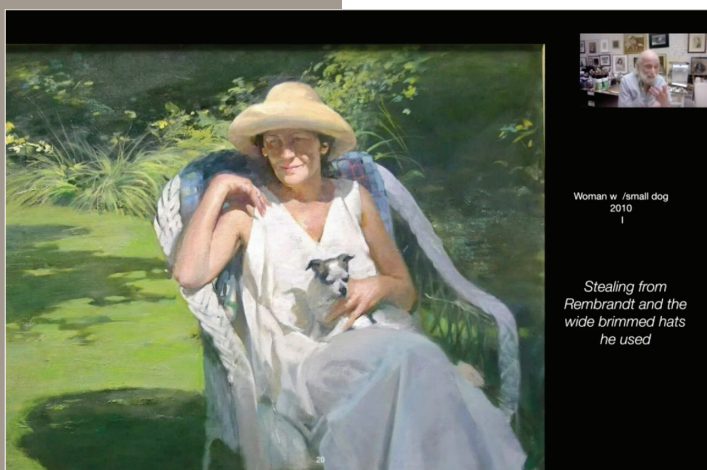
The Portrait Society of America's 22nd annual *The Art of the Portrait* conference ended brilliantly, especially considering the new methods of virtual participation, which leading up to the event had its skeptics but who are now believers.

During the two days of pre-conference activities, attendees had the honor and pleasure of visiting the home studios of Quang Ho, Adrienne Stein and the gentleman-artist Michael Shane Neal. These artists took us on tours of their studios and recounted anecdotes and the meaning behind some curious objects present in the rooms, which somehow represented the artist's singular personality.

There were many highlights of this year's conference, and among these was undoubtedly the three-hour workshop held by the great artist-poet Robert Liberace with whom the Portrait Society of America had set the goal of surpassing the Guinness World Record in terms of the number of people participating in a live online figure drawing lesson. Part of the proceeds from the event were donated to the Edward Jonas Memorial Fund and The Artists Fellowship. For the event, Liberace's daughter and artist, Celia, modeled, and the event recorded 3,197 participants. It is incredible to think of so many people watching in unison and united both by the desire to learn from such an admirable artist and the desire to do good for others. The day continued with Michelle Dunaway's interview with John Coleman, one of the most authoritative voices in contemporary western painting and sculpture, who manages to render the idea of movement even in the static nature of bronze.



Anna Rose Bain and Adrienne Stein created head studies while describing their individual approaches to painting



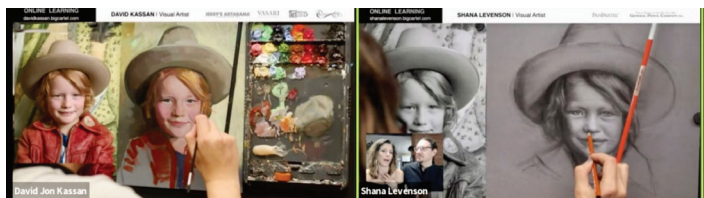
Burton Silverman, at 92 years old, shares a historical look back of the women he has painted throughout his career.



Rich Casali's evening class focused on the planes of the head, explained in clay.



Michelle Dunaway's conversation with Richard Schmid and Nancy Guzik provided viewers a unique opportunity to listen in on their personal and professional experiences.



David Kassan and Shana Levenson addresses the complexities and character traits specific to capturing a child's individuality and personality in paint and charcoal.



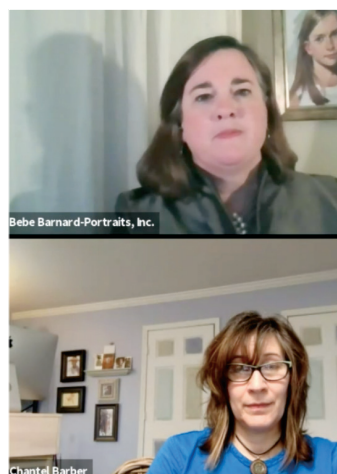
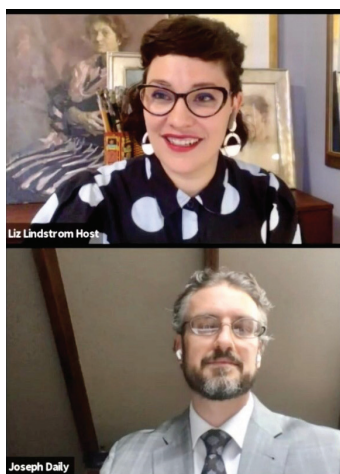
Cynthia Vowell led attendees through stretches and exercise focused on maximizing time at the easel

A fundamental component of the conference was all the great faculty artists who contributed on various themes, some which were of practical interest and what I called the “trptych of delights.” Each evening held three options from which an attendee could select. These events dealt with different themes: from how to draw the hand with Michael Shane Neal to the planes of the head using clay by Rick Casali; from the representation of the spirit of the person by Suchitra Bhosle, to the logical organization of materials with Casey Childs, Joseph Daily and Richard Christian Nelson; and then many other subjects that ranged from optimizing the use of social networks to advice on how to start a career as a portraitist. For those who had to choose between the different options and missed a section, the Portrait Society of America has decided to make available to the participants, for a period of one month, all the recorded sections to have a 360-view of the events.

The entire list of faculty artists this year were: Anna Rose Bain, Chantel Barber, BeBe Barnard, Suchitra Bhosle, Scott Burdick, Rick Casali, Casey Childs, John Coleman, Joseph Daily, Michelle Dunaway, Tina Garrett, Thomas Caleb Goggans, Nancy Guzik, Quang Ho, David Kassan, Shana Levenson, Robert Liberace, Liz Lindstrom, Susan Lyon, Michael Shane Neal, Richard Christian Nelson, Mardie Rees, Anthony Ryder, Richard Schmid, Burton Silverman, Daniel Sprick, Sharon Sprung, Adrienne Stein, Cynthia Vowell, Dawn Whitelaw, Mary Whyte, and Elizabeth Zanzinger.



Faculty artists Anna Rose Bain, Tina Garrett and Mardie Rees shared tips for handling social media in today's climate.



Casey Childs, Joseph Daily and Richard Christian Nelson discussed their favorite materials and tools to create powerful works of art.

This networking panel featured Chantel Barber, Bebe Barnard, Thomas Caleb Goggans and Liz Lindstrom presenting essential steps to a career in portraiture.

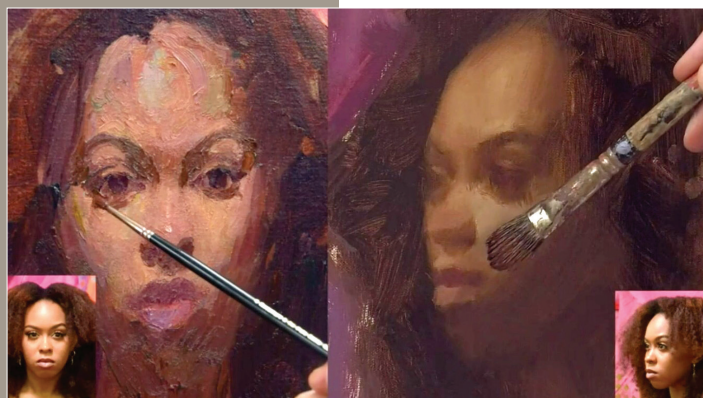


Robert Liberace conducted a Worldwide Drawing class with 3,197 artists online learning together.

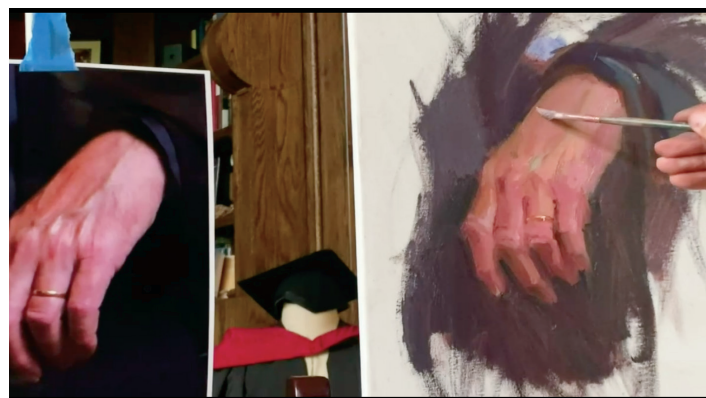


Quang Ho and Daniel Sprick invited the attendees into their Denver studios to observe their distinctive approaches to painting the head.

All artists were of immense value, but the honors went to three artists in particular: Richard Schmid, artist, teacher and writer, best known for his book on *alla prima* painting, who was interviewed by the brilliant and talented Michelle Dunaway, his pupil; Burton Silverman, an artist over 90 years old, who summed up the years of his painting activity by focusing on the importance that women have had in his life and in his way of creating art; and finally, the quiet artist, Daniel Sprick, an exceptional talent who we had the honor to see both in a three-hour demo with Quang Ho, and in a whole two-hour section on the last day of the convention, in which,



Susan Lyon and Scott Burdick demonstrated from the same model on Saturday and then on Sunday conducted individual critiques.



Michael Shane Neal demonstrated the anatomy and form of hands and how to overcome the challenges of depicting one of the most expressive parts of the human figure.

through his works, Sprick revealed concepts, visions, emotions and thoughts that he masterfully impressed on canvas without leaving anything to chance: a “Sprickian summa” in which all the magic of his art appears as well as his mind. In addition to the myriad of programs, it was very intriguing to see the Face-Off Demonstration on Thursday, during which four artists interpreted the subject using their individual techniques. It was so interesting to see the different techniques being used, all equally fascinating and accurate because there is no right or wrong way in one’s approach. What counts is the knowledge of artistic anatomy and the importance of value over color. Paired together for the Face-Off were Quang Ho and Daniel Sprick, and Anne Rose Bain and Adrienne Stein. Other artists that presented together were Susan Lyon and Scott Burdick, who are a couple in life as well as art, as are David Kassan and Shana Levenson who, instead of depicting an adult, ventured into the representation of a child. During the conference, the three winners of the “International Self Portrait Project” were announced by board member Mary Whyte, who are, in order: Coulter Prehm from New Mexico, Ronilo Abayan from the Philippines, and Sharif Sadiq from New York.

The 22nd annual conference was certainly an event to remember because despite the hardships of COVID-19, the potential of the human spirit and the ability to be connected together, regardless of where one lives, were highlighted, and this proved to be an immense accomplishment. Obviously with the lack of physical interaction, the warmth of direct human relationship can never be replaced, but it will return stronger and more intense than before at the 23rd annual conference, already scheduled in Washington, D.C. from May 6-9, 2021. To close in beauty, I would like to quote the sentence with which the master Richard Schmid closed his interview: “One day all this marasmus that afflicts the world will end, but the art will remain and the artist’s task is to create the world he wants.” Could one hope for anything better? 🌀



Sharon Sprung outlined approach that simplifies the complexity of understanding color, value and chroma in skin tones.



Suchitra Bhosle focused on the components that breathes life into portraits.



Attendees could watch and work alongside Elizabeth Zanzinger as she demonstrated her alla-prima approach.



Anthony Ryder demonstrated with precision and artistry.