Working on skin

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Working on Skin

Phil Sawdon

An invitation to an embodied workshop by means of René Hector

*Found 2a: Gabriel Chêne, 2012*

Translucent skin with careless drawing (scribble)

The duration of the workshop is interminable (longer sessions will not allow a fuller schedule) and the level indeterminate for an absolute maximum of no one.

Arguably the premium material for inscription, skins nature is inherently different to that of other supports. It necessitates treatments in both preparation and presentation.
The workshop will comprise various methods of making ready including flattening and nap raising, occasioning corrections and erasures, stretching to remove cockling, and drumming over a prepared surface. Other techniques such as layering translucent and sometimes sallow skin over drawing will be encouraged, and René will begrudgingly demonstrate several unique and idiosyncratic approaches to working with [your] skin.

Please note that this workshop inevitably raises dust while sandpapering the membranes, and is therefore wholly suitable for those who are fatally sensitive to airborne dust.

Skin is a translucent material. When flayed and peeled from the body the bloodied rags can be washed with water and lime or honey, liver and almonds, but never together. It should be soaked in India ink to remove the hair. Once clear [of hair], the two sides are distinct. The hair follicles are usually visible on the outer surface alongside any scarring or other marks. The membrane can also display the lines of a vein network, the veined watermark of the sheet and the trace of the dandy roll. René in advance of the workshop has laboriously removed some of the remaining hair by careful scudding however you will still find various skins attached to herses on which to practice. You will be invited to add pippins and to take a lunellum to clean of any further hairs and to pounce in order to ensure that your mark making materials adhere to the skin’s surface.

Please note that all participants are required to bring a prepared drawing, size including margins; imprecisely incalculable, ready to be written onto their skin (ideally with bleeding hands) during the session and prepared at home in advance by every attendee. The drawing shall be dumb, and can be portrait or landscape and may include a few lines of text or short quotation. You should display little consideration of composition, colour or author accreditation in order to present the innumerable problems of the day.

In addition you will require:

- Dip-pens, the head of a small fish, impotent pencils, two small poems and the skeleton of a preserved monkey
- Medium and fine grades of sandpaper or ‘wet or dry’ abrasive papers
- Finely powdered pumice and marble dust
- A large urn of rare baked clay
- Handsome stiletto scalpel with a curved blade
- ‘Straight edge’ tattoo incorporating *The Day of Reckoning*
- Slippery paper and brown paper bags
- Two pressing boards, a piece of exterior grade plywood (for drumming) and a large root
- Bibulous paper, plastic sheeting, rabbit-skin glue and well-worn shoes
- An atomiser, ‘shewing’ a squinting eye
- A strange stick to whittle

*The instructor can provide some fine fresh skin if requested in advance. Each student will need at least half of their skin for a two day class or their full skin for a four day class. Any additional skin will need to be ordered and mailed in advance of the workshop.

**Other requirements to be provided by the organisers:

A large mortar & pestle to facilitate the grinding of various powders and a staple gun with an old wooden board …

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