

## Summer Benton

Between my junior and senior years of college, I studied abroad in Florence. I took two classes; oil painting and drawing but it was the latter that affected me the most. I have drawn all my life but looking back I realize now that I barely understood what it meant to draw, especially observationally, before studying at SACI.

The classes were not the kind I was used to. We did not work comfortably in cool studios for a couple hours at a time. If we were in studios, they were sweltering and we were on our feet at an easel, laboring over timed figure drawings. If we were on field trips, it meant hiking uphill to churches and vistas, or visiting classical masterpieces in rowdy, packed museums. Every moment seemed frantic. Sometimes we would have ten seconds to capture a model's pose. Sometimes we would have precious minutes in front of a Botticelli to soak up all of the genius we could before being hurried along. When I got back to my apartment each long day I would collapse in my bed, physically and emotionally exhausted. At the end of my four weeks I was all sweat and charcoal and bread held together by espresso but with skills a million times sharper than those I had arrived with.

It would be an oversimplification to say that I learned to draw faster, although that is also true. A more accurate statement would be that I learned to recognize, in a subject, what is most important about it and how to pluck that thing out of time and imprison it in a drawing. Once I mastered this, I realized I could warp the image in any way, exaggerate proportions, or distort the body without the risk of losing its spirit.



























SUMMER BENTON