

# **Relief Sculpture Workshop with Jim Franklin**

Loveland, Colorado

Jim Franklin Sculpture Studio, 602 Cedar, Perry, OK 73077

**Preface:** The process of relief sculpture is difficult. Many of the world's most renowned sculptors have found relief sculpture to be frustrating. I have been sculpting portraits of human subjects in relief for over 20 years. Every relief sculpture I attempt, I say to myself; "Now I understand"; in reality, my understanding remains incomplete.

## **Day 1**

### **1. Introduction of the workshop participants**

- a. Background of the Instructor
- b. Participant introductions

### **2. Housekeeping**

- a. Final registration and payment of fees
  - i. Name and email address
  - ii. Fees are to be paid prior to start of class
- b. Class Starting times
  - i. Start on time 9:00 AM
- c. Facilities: restroom, coffee,
- d. Classroom set up. The classroom will be arranged.
- e. Each Day, please straighten up your area before you leave.
  - i. Pick up all tools and equipment and return them to the designated area.
  - ii. Do not allow the oil base clay to be pressed into the table's work surface.
  - iii. You are responsible for keeping tools and equipment clean.
  - iv. Sweep the floor in the classroom at the end of the day.

### **3. Shellac the boards**

- a. Reason to shellac the boards:
  - i. Retards water absorption of the board from water base clay and oil absorption in the case of oil based clay.
  - ii. Also reduces water absorption of the board when using plaster when producing a mother mold of the piece.

## **b. Materials needed**

- i. **Board:** Interior or exterior plywood, 3/8" CD. This is good on one side. The less grain the better. Or 1/4" thick Medium Density foam (MDF) board is a preferred and cheaper alternative. Particleboard does not work.
  - ii. **Shellac:** Preferred is Bulls Eye (trade name) Amber Shellac. It is more expensive but worth the price. The shellac will dry in less than 30 minutes (another plus).
  - iii. **Paint brush:** 2" or 2 1/2" Inexpensive natural bristle brush. You may throw away or clean with a paper towel.
  - iv. **Sandpaper:** Open weave 120 grit wallboard screen works very well. NOTE: If using MDF, sanding is not needed.
- c. **Board Size:** Any size that fits the project you are working on. If you are going to make a mold, remember to allow sufficient room. If the project is large, 1/2 or 3/4" thick plywood may be needed.

## **4. Introduction to Relief Sculpture**

### **a. What is a Relief Sculpture?**

- i. **Definition:** the projection of figures and forms from a flat surface.
- ii. "There is no absolute law for relief, it may be more or less projecting and the sculptor must choose the degree of projection. For decorative purposes, the amount of projection depends on the place the work is intended to occupy."  
*(Paraphrased from Edouard Lanteri, "Modeling and Sculpting the Human Figure" ... Published 1904)*
- iii. **Sculptors identify four types of relief.**
  1. **High Relief** is a fully or almost fully round figure backed up by a wall.
  2. **Medium Relief (mezzo rilievo)** is a figure about half buried in a wall.
  3. **Low Relief (bas relief, French for low and pronounced "bah" not "bass")** is like the head on a coin.
  4. **Relievo Secco** is Italian for "dry relief". This is little more than drawing on the clay surface with the very thinnest buildup of form.
  5. There is one referred to as "incised relief": This is where forms are carved or modeled on a flat surface so they are recessed below the flat planer surface.

### **b. An important point to Bas Relief Sculpture:**

- i. Think of bas relief as a topographical map showing lines of elevation. Each line describes a level of elevation ... say 2000 feet. The line next to it may be 2010 feet. The gap between the two lines relate to angle of fall from 2000' to 2010'. The closer together the greater the angle, the farther apart the angle is less.
- ii. Another way of describing relief work is a two dimensional drawing in three dimensions. X and Y represent height and width in full scale. Z is a foreshortened projection from the board (wall). The modeling is achieved by using light as you would shading with a pencil.

5. Types of tools and their purpose

6. Examples of Relief Sculpture

7. Demonstration of Bas Relief Sculpture by the instructor

8. Each participant attaches a photo of the subject and loads the clay on the board

9. Begin to sculpt the relief

10. Completing the Session

- a. Discuss methods of completing the work and processes to produce a more durable piece using a variety of medium.
- b. Review workshop activities, critique and answer final questions.

Day 2 & 3: Continue working on the pieces.

End @ 4:30 P.M.