

COPYING AT THE ART INSTITUTE

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1. Choose a painting in the museum, and two alternate choices, with the accession numbers, which are located on the didactic by the painting. The number begins with the year of acquisition, example: 1962.41. You must have the title, artist, accession number, and gallery room number for all copy choices. Give this information to your instructor.

Museum guidelines for copyists:

To avoid traffic problems, the painting to be copied must NOT be in a corridor, near a fire exit, door, or elevator.

Only one copyist is permitted per painting or in a gallery at a time.

Your canvas must be 10% larger or smaller than the original and must not be larger than 30" x 30" overall. Sketchbooks must not be larger than 16" x 20".

You may want to do a section of a larger work or crop and reformat it in an innovative way. Also, a smaller work done on a larger canvas can be left with extra space.

Reducing the image is an alternative strategy but it is not recommended for some works because of the loss of manual scale in the work.

2. After choosing the work to be copied and receiving approval from the instructor, fill out an application for a permit to copy and give it to the instructor who will sign and turn it in to the respective museum department for approval and signature by the curator. The curatorial department will forward the application to Museum Protection Services where they'll hold it on file for you.

3. At Museum Protection Services:

Call 312-443-3564 ahead to verify that Benjamin Capps, Office Coordinator, Department of Protection Services, has your Request to Copy and it's been approved.

You must have your SAIC ID.

Bring canvas to be stamped on the back. Before your canvas is stamped you must enter at the Monroe Dock entrance and receive a Property Pass to enter the museum with your canvas or panel. Proceed to the Protection Services Office in the basement of the Art Institute.

Get your yellow Permit to Copy and approval stamp with signature on the back of the canvas after filling out the yellow Permit to Copy forms.

4. Entering and Exiting the Museum.

The Permit To Copy is for the official class period, Wednesday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. However, if you like, you can go into the museum to set up around 11:00 a.m., but you still must be leaving by 4:00 p.m.

Enter and exit at the Columbus Drive entrance from/to the School or through the museum's front entrance.

Always have your Permit to Copy with the stamped canvas when entering and exiting the museum. Show them to the guard and all your materials. Supplies must be easily transportable through the museum. Backpacks are not permitted. Use a canvas bag or other easily checked bag or painting box. The entrance guard will issue you a Daily Property Pass that you must sign and show and return when exiting the museum.

You must be prepared to leave the museum by 4:00 p.m. No exceptions. Optional painting days are subject to other class schedules and curatorial and instructor permission. This varies in each department. Consult your instructor. Painting is never permitted on weekends, holidays or after 4:00 p.m.

5. Copying in the museum

Everything must be placed on a plastic coated tarp that covers an area no larger than 4' x 4'. No canvas, cloth drop cloth, brown or white kraft paper is permitted.

Keep all supplies in a neat confined area under your easel. Do not touch ropes or go over them with your easel. Do not lean things against the walls. Keep supplies off benches.

Appropriate easels must be used in the galleries. Easels must be of the collapsible type and cannot be carried through the museum in their extended form.

Odorless turpenoid must be used and carried in a squeeze bottle.

Never point at the paintings with your paintbrush or pencil.
Use of cell phones is restricted in the museum.

Anyone wishing to leave their work area temporarily is required to take all materials and equipment with them. You may not leave your equipment to go to the restroom or ask anyone else, including the guard, to watch your materials.

All materials must be removed from the museum at the end of the session.

You will exercise extreme caution while working in the galleries to ensure the safety of the collection. Tell the guard immediately if a visitor is endangering a work of art or causing a problem.

Copyists may be asked to stop working by the security personnel due to crowd conditions in the galleries.

Your copy is for educational purposes only.

6. Supplies

portable easel, French style or aluminum collapsible
cotton or linen canvas, smooth or rough depending on the work to be copied
brushes and palette knives
plastic tarp, not larger than 4'x 4', 3'x 3' recommended
oil paints and palette, disposable recommended
turpenoid in squeeze bottle
mediums, linseed and/or stand oil. No Liquin or mediums with strong odor.
Caution with damar varnish, and varnishes in general,
because they are made with turpentine, which is not permitted
in the museum galleries. Consult your instructor.
cold wax or gel mediums if needed
roll of paper towels or small rags, handy wipes recommended
small plastic garbage bags
small pocket size mirror
small sketchbook for process notes
wheel cart or canvas bag for carrying supplies, no backpacks
headphones help if you want to limit the interaction with the public but be polite

7. Conceptual Preparation

After choosing a painting try to read about the artist, the painting, and the cultural environment in which the artist worked. Look at other works by the artist and his or her contemporaries. The Ryerson and Flaxman libraries are good resources as is the slide library. The Media Center has videos that may be helpful.

8. Optional Slide Resource

Some slides are available at the Museum Shop or can be checked out from the slide library once appropriate library forms are filled. Upon request, the instructor can send you an image of the work to be copied through e-mail for printing. The Museum has many images of its collection available on its website.

9. Canvas Preparation

The kind of canvas you use is dependent on the kind of work you intend to copy. Look carefully at the original. Is it cotton or linen, smooth or rough? If ground preparation is required don't do this in the museum, do it in an empty classroom or at home before going into the museum. Discuss this with your instructor beforehand. Buying a pre-stretched canvas can be very convenient. If you're stretching your own canvas, consider and discuss the type of ground preparation needed, medium tone ground or light tone ground? Venetian, Academic or Impressionistic? A slide is an efficient manner of transferring an image to a prepared canvas. Slide projectors can be checked out with your ID from the Media Center on the 2nd. floor of the Columbus Drive building. Rooms for projection are on the third and first floor and must be reserved on the door sign up. Make sure your projection is perpendicular to the wall to avoid distortions. Trace with paint or soft charcoal. Take care of the large shapes that define the composition and avoid details. You will get those later during the painting process in the museum.

10. Credit Students at The School of the Art Institute.

Students taking the class for 1.5 credit hours must do two copies of the work being investigated. One copy should be a straight copy with as an authentic verisimilitude as possible. Working within the restrictions of the museum, the class, and modern painting practices, the straight copy should be in the manner of the original.

The second copy is an interpretive copy and is to be done outside of class. It should be similar in scale as the straight copy but either;

A. The same technique as the original but recontextualize the subject,
i.e. change the view, figure, or objects.

Or

B. Keep the same subject as the original but change the color harmony or
technique.

In addition you must complete a short research paper on the artist and work copied with an analysis of the cultural context of the artist's individual technique. The paper should be around two to three pages, 800 to 1000 words, and is due on the 13th week. It must be submitted to the instructor digitally in an email as a pdf attachment.

Above all, if you have any doubts or questions, ask your instructor. He's here to help you.