

Sam Goodsell: Look, and Look Again

Materials

Pastels

Full assortment of Unison, Mount Vision, Nupastel and Rembrandt

Surface

Prepared Gatorbord with a homemade ground mixture of Utrecht professional acrylic gesso and pumicestone powder (type FF). For *Eric* (opposite), tinted the ground with a mixture of Venetian Red and Mars Black acrylic paint



Mercedes (40x32)

New York City artist Sam Goodsell describes the painting of *Eric* (opposite) as one of the best working experiences he's ever had. He characterizes the model as one of those people you quickly know is going to be a star someday. "You can just feel it," he says. So, the painting is special in part because the model and artist became friends, but also because, at 96x48

inches, it's the largest painting Goodsell has ever painted. "It's life-size," he says. "It had to be. His personality demanded it."

Because of the scale, Goodsell worked sight-size, placing his easel beside and a little ahead from the model. Throughout the process, he stepped back to view the model, stepped forward to the easel to draw, and then back again

to check for accuracy. "I could step back and make tick marks in charcoal for the top of his head, the hair, the top of the forehead, the bottom of the chin, where the shoulders are, the hips, his knees, his heels—still looking back and forth," Goodsell says. When the time came to focus on the head, he moved his easel closer to the model.

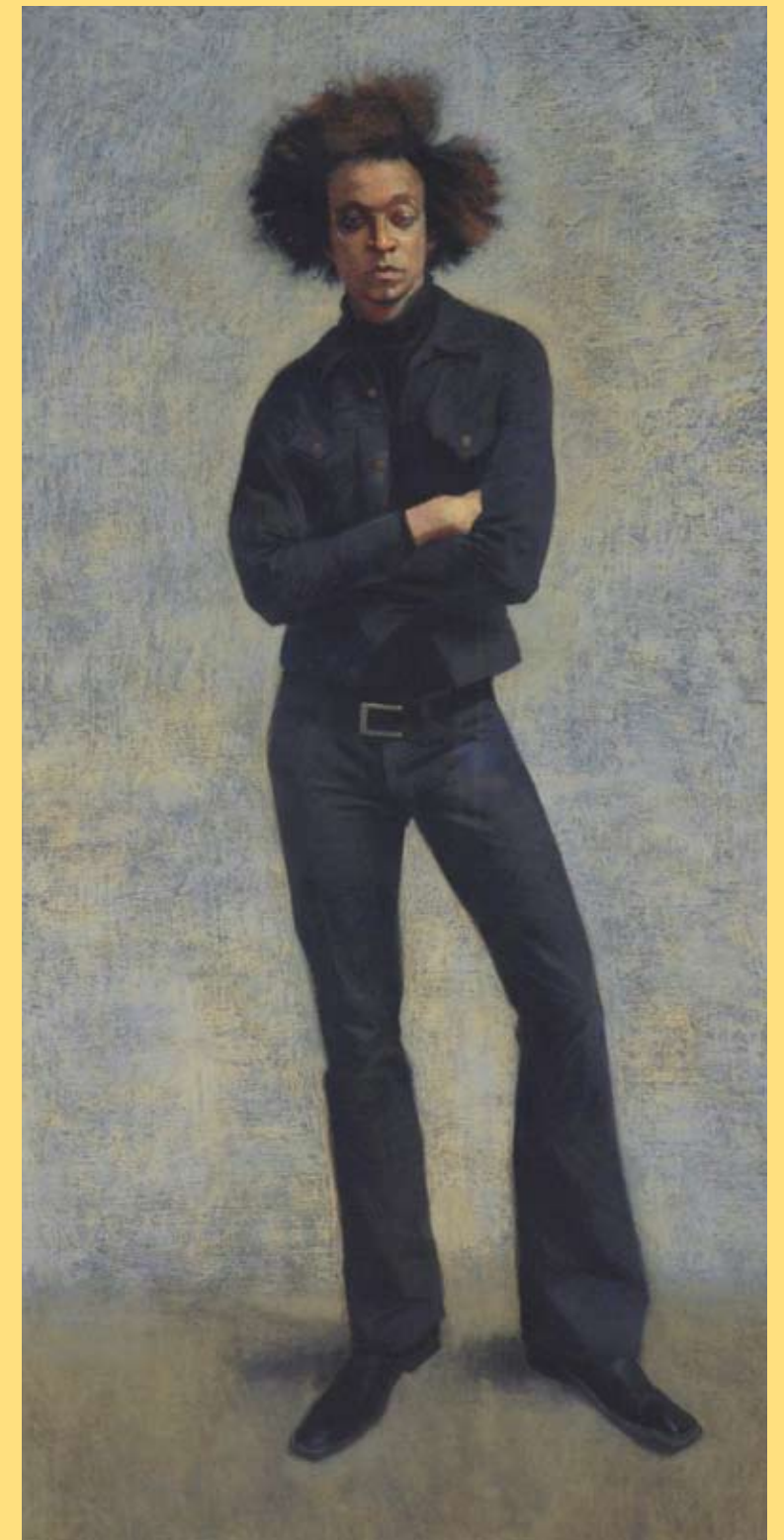
Goodsell's painting, *Mercedes*, at 32x40, is more typical of Goodsell's working size. "It has a totally different feeling compared to *Eric*," he says. "I've known Mercedes for a very long time. She's a woman who has seen a lot and I wanted to get that across."

Capturing the character of a sitter is the goal for Goodsell in every portrait. "Getting the drawing right is important," he says, "but what's most important to me is what it's saying." The answer, he points out, isn't taking a million hours of anatomy courses. It's not focusing on mechanics alone. "You just have to really look, and then look more," he says. "Keep looking and watching. That's what really

The Things I've Learned

- Embrace the challenge. Every person you paint will present different challenges—the complexion, the proportions, what the model is thinking. No one is the same.
- Read about the great masters. If you're stuck in a painting, figure out how another painter addressed a similar problem.
- Draw and paint every day. If you have no access to an art center, create a painting group and hire a model.
- Stay away from negative people. Being an artist is challenging enough; surround yourself with those who support your choice.

—Sam Goodsell



Eric (96x48)

makes *Mercedes* become Mercedes. If you really look at her, you're going to get her."

It's this quality that attracts Goodsell to one of his art heroes. "When you look at a Rembrandt," he says, "that's what it's about. The emotion is powerful. Even in a Rembrandt, some of the drawing may be off, but it doesn't matter, because of the humanity. That's what I want."