F.A.Q.

Frequently Asked Questions for our Online Stereotomy Courses

OK, I've finished my drawings and/or models. What now?

- Once you've finished your drawings and/or models, you'll need to email high resolution photos of the model and drawing. Within each individual task project, there are "answer" folders, where you can see and review what the finished project should look like. You will need to email photos just like what you see in the "answer" folder. So that means having photos from multiple angles while it sits exactly on the plan view of the drawing. The photos must be high quality being at least one megabyte (1mb) in size. This will give a high enough resolution to really zoom in in order to review the work properly. Most students use WeTransfer, a free service, to email up to 2gigs worth of photos. You can find their website here →WeTransfer

- Before emailing or sending your completed project, ask yourself "Is my project exactly the same, or very similar, in every small detail to the one provided in the Answer folder?" If you answer yes to this question, then you're ready to email your work. If you answer no to this question, then please review in detail what is missing or what makes your work different and make any and all changes.

How we should use the "Answer" documents? Should we send off to you our drawings for grading by you and then look at the answer? Or do we check the answer first before finalizing our work?

- The "Answer" folder has been provided to you for two reasons; first, to help as a guide in what the finished project should look like. Secondly; are to give an example of the course expectations. Ideally, they are there for you to examine AFTER you've completed the drawing and model to make sure you're on par with the project expectations.

I can't find the specified paper size that's suggested on the task sheet? What can I do? Also, is there a specific type of paper I need to use when sending you work to correct?

- The best approach I found is to purchase a large roll of white paper and cut it to the recommended size using a straight edge and sharp knife. You can find the recommend roll by clicking HERE. In terms of paper type; generally speaking, no I don't have a specific type of paper one should use. The basic, maybe obvious, is that the paper should be white and thick enough to handle some minor wear.

The use of color in identifying different views and procedures:

- In terms of coloring the drawing. It's nice to include color to distinguish different pieces or views. Because there is no one specific way or order to do it, here are two examples; First, coloring the end view procedure, all the lines associated with that view and maneuver, which means the lines found

on the hip elevation view and on plan view, would be all the same color. Second example; for the Raccord projects one can make the entire plan view one color, all the rafter elevation views another, all the hip elevations another, and the net view another. Coloring, like the symbols, are easy visual indicators to orientate oneself on the drawing. It keeps the drawing clear and easy to navigate. In the end, coloring helps to easily identify specific views and/or operations.

My drawing and project are complete. I'm ready to mail the drawing. What is the general protocol?

- There's no need to send the drawings individually, as long as you email high-resolution photos or a scanned copy of the drawing. It'll give me the ability to really zoom in on the drawing so I can make any recommendations using Paint and email them back for you to make the recommended corrections.

Should I wait for corrections to start the next step or can I press on?

- You can certainly take a look at and start thinking about the next step. But before you start making any permanent lines on the drawing, it would be a good idea to get feedback from the previous project first.

Will we be covering some aspects pertaining to masonry construction?

- The short answer, yes. What you are learning is directly transferable to masonry construction. The vaulting and curved construction, which can be found in Stage 5 of the online courses, is where we create three dimensionally curved surfaces. Stage 5 contains just paper Net projects. It's the beginning in understanding curved surfaces and how they interact with one another.

Is there any difference between stereotomy for carpentry and masonry are they interchangeable?

- There is no difference in carpentry or masonry stereotomy. They are all the same. However, masons tend to use different methods and procedures because they use a different way to lay out stone as we do for wood and timber. I'm not a mason, nor have I been trained in laying out stone using stereotomy, but my guess is that they use a method similar to that of the Net Method we use, essentially laying out flat the three-dimensional objects. This is what we do in the Raccord Net projects.

In real life do carpenters really move the elevation views so far away from the plan view when scribing on the floor? In stereotomical drawings the elevation view and side views seem to be layered one upon the other like a palimpsest, isn't it so?

- The short answer is no. carpenters do not chase away any of the views. In fact, by chasing them away, like we currently do in the courses, we increase the chance of imprecision. So why do we currently chase the views away? So, students can have a clearer picture of all the views and how to move information from one to another. It keeps the drawing clear and concise. It's the best way to start understanding how we lay out all the pieces without having too many lines one on top of the other. But as the course progresses and models become more complex, you won't always want to chase away the views. In Stage 2 and beyond, It'll be up to your discretion.

I am about to embark on my first online stereotomy course and gathering the necessary tools. I am a bit at a loss regarding Japanese saws that you recommend. It's truly a jungle to navigate in and choose the right blade, for there seem to be different TPI for rip cut and crosscut saws.

- Yes, indeed searching for the right saw can be a jungle to navigate through. I've used all these saws with very good results. In fact, I made two master pieces with them. But they can break easily if used incorrectly, however they will last a lifetime if taken care of. I once broke the rip saw from forcing too much because I was cutting a little off from my line and tried correcting it. As with anything it seems, you can spend thousands of dollars on saws and chisels. So it all depends on you as the individual, if you want to make a living doing this or is it a hobby.

I would like to be able to develop the confidence to design a piece of work through an understanding of L'art du trait. I would like to be able to understand why each part of the drawing process is carried out. For example, from my reading of "Practical, Plane and Solid geometry" by Joseph Harrison, I can understand how planes and lines are folded down on to a plane of projection ("Rabattement"). Also, I am beginning to gain a very brief understanding of using the horizontal and vertical traces of planes and lines to ascertain angles that planes make with a plane of projection. This may, I hope help me to understand the processes involved in your courses on Stereotomy. It is one thing to be able to follow or copy a drawing, it is another to start with a design on a blank sheet and know what to do. At the moment, the only way I can even begin to visualise it is to think in terms of folding down vertical planes and points onto the horizontal plane and then projecting onto the plan of another member in order to begin to obtain a cutting angle. By folding down and then looking at it "orthographically" true lengths and angles become apparent. I am trying to think in terms of the "x-y line as the folding line of the horizontal and vertical plane of projection. I am at such an elementary level however ..... I think stereotomy has a lot to do with projecting the traces of planes onto the ground plain and joining intersecting points ....

- This view is correct, stereotomical drawings are produced by folding down specific vertical planes (elevations views) onto the horizontal plane (plan view). By doing so, one can discover all that is needed (angles, true lengths, curves) to transcribe onto a solid piece (wood, stone, metal, etc...). During the course, there are task models that require a certain amount of "copying" to understand the basics of all the maneuvers. Then there are exam models where the student will repeat those same procedures and maneuvers to make sure that it has been registered.

Do you also incorporate joints such as, for example, a mortise and tenon to connect members in a trestle within your training? A tenon, I suppose, would be a parallel line extension of the edge line of the member and a mortise would require a template block made to guide the chisel. I am interested to know how the member are connected.

- Joinery is not an essential part of the online stereotomy courses. However, many of our students go above and beyond by incorporating joinery into the models. But it is not a requirement.

I work predominantly with hand tools and often cleave wood, which as you know has great strength in the uncut fibres. I wonder if stereotomy can be applied to members which are not completely straight? I doubt that this is possible without scribing each piece which is a very lengthy process, but I wondered if, before sawing was used to prepare stock, whether craftsmen used such methods to make pieces or trestles even from cleaved wood.

- Stereotomy can be applied to members that are not completely straight. To do so, one would need to establish a reference plane on the piece of wood. (a center line for example)