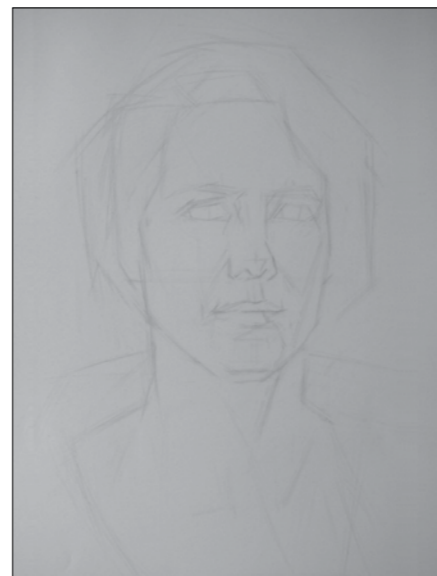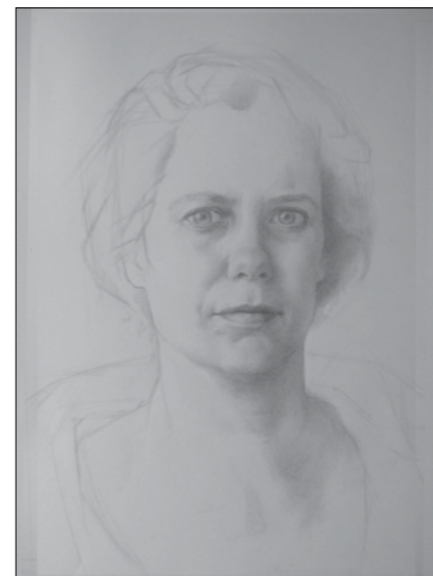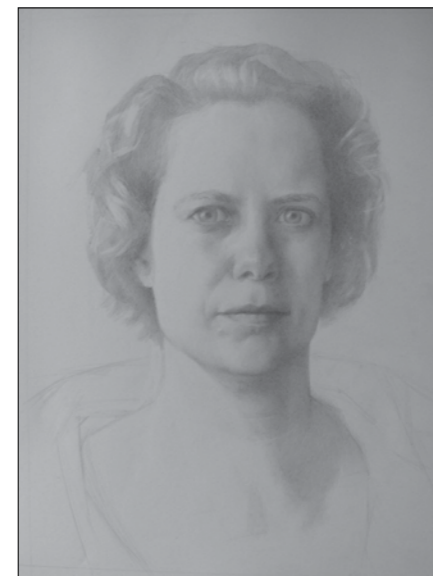**STAGE 1**
The drawing begins with a straight-line block-in using a hard (2H) graphite pencil.

STAGE 2
I refine the block-in by segmenting the lines until more and more detail is developed. I rely on very little measuring. With this method I can solve the proportions by adjusting the tilts of the lines, until the proportions begin to snap into place.

STAGE 5
Working piece by piece, I model each area of the face. I work only in continuous areas, without jumping around, so I can get a consistent value structure for the whole subject. The key to assessing accurate value is to judge a value by looking at the whole subject, not just compare two neighboring values.

STAGE 6
I developed the hair by using an eraser to sculpt out the light areas. The hair was the most complicated throughout the life of the painting and the drawing, because it changed so much session to session. I recorded the structure of the curls as much as possible in one day, and then tried to stick with the same pattern for the life of the project.

Part two
In the next issue, Sadie will show the self-portrait steps in oil with the graphite drawing as a reference

about the artist

Sadie J. Valeri is a Classical Realist oil painter currently creating a series of still lifes of transparent and reflective objects in her San Francisco, California studio. Raised in Salem, Massachusetts, Sadie graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design with a BFA in Illustration in 1993. She has since studied with some of the most important realist artists working today, including Juliette Aristides, Michael Grimaldi, and Ted Seth Jacobs at Bay Area Classical Artist Atelier; Jacob Collins at the Hudson River Fellowship; and Écorché/Anatomy with Andrew Ameral. Sadie has taught graduate students at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, and she now offers private workshops and classes at her San Francisco Mission District studio. To find out more visit: **www.sadievaleri.com**

Self-Portrait in Progress
## part one / Drawing by Sadie J. Valeri

I have been working on this self portrait for the last couple of months. It was an interesting challenge to take the same process I use for still-life and apply it to a self portrait. The painting is an homage to an 18th century German-born painter I recently discovered named Christian Seybold (1697-1768). I find his painting of a woman in a green veil particularly stunning. I was thrilled to see how he created extremely fine realist surface detail, supported by a structural understanding of the underlying form, and I tried to emulate this. I also took inspiration from the scale and cropping of the portrait, the fur collar, and the paintbrush tucked behind one ear.
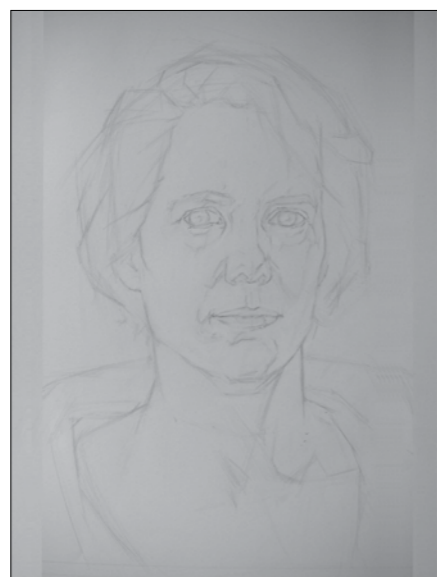
STAGE 3
When the major elements are in place and the proportions seem to be working, I begin to block in the shadow shapes. This is when the planes of the structure begin to take shape, and a likeness begins to emerge. Sometimes my students ask me at what point I begin to "round off" my straight lines. The answer is I never "round off," I just keep segmenting the lines until they begin to emulate curves. This method helps me identify accurate high points to make very precise contours.
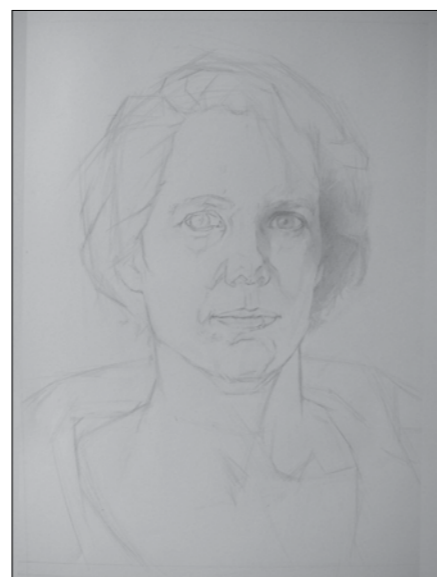
STAGE 4
When I have gone as far as I can with the contour drawing, I begin shading to model the forms. I start in the shadows and work up to the lights. When I do a preparatory drawing for a still life I only draw a contour, I usually don't do any modeling. But for this self portrait, I knew I would only be able to tell if I'd captured an accurate likeness if I developed a full-value drawing.
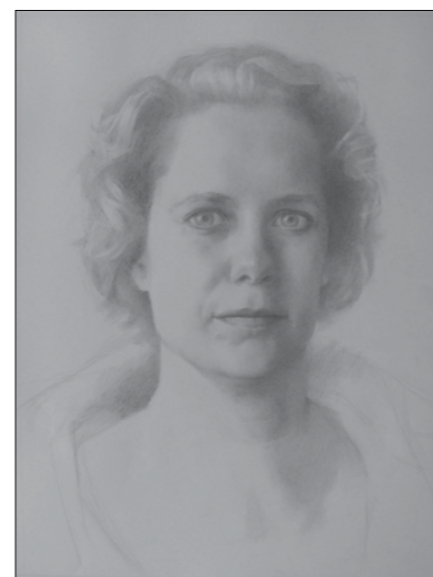
STAGE 7
At the previous stage I showed the drawing to several friends and to my husband, and asked for feedback as to likeness. Everyone told me I looked too "serious" and "mean." Apparently the expression I hold when I paint looks severe. So I made small changes to the mouth and eyebrows to relax the expression. As with all my paintings and drawings, I am working from life for every stage of the process, I never use photos.

STAGE 8
I had been apprehensive about rendering the fur, because I had never before tried to paint or draw such a complicated texture. It turned out to be very fun and easier than I'd expected, both in graphite and in paint. The hair was much, much more difficult.