

General thoughts on measurements by Alan Ball

I originally posted most of this on the old MedRom Forum, but thought that it might be worth re-posting here, as it falls under the general heading of this article.

Of course, this is only a personal viewpoint, and in some cases you have to use precise measurement (equipment, weapons, etc.), so here I am speaking in general terms.

I am actually personally not much in favour of using dividers to check the dimensions of a figure, they can give a false idea of how a finished figure should, or will, look ...unless you know exactly where and at which points you should measure from and to.

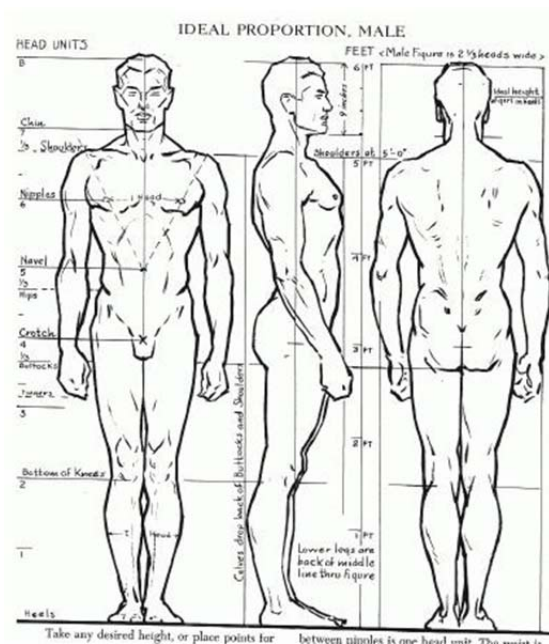
Measuring tools may be okay for scaling a mannequin, but once you get to figure, wearing clothes, it can get tricky.....where exactly is the point of the shoulder ...the point where the leg joins the Pelvis.....

What sort of clothing is the figure wearing, how does it drape, fold, and what effect is that having on disguising the important points etc. etc.

Besides, as has been said before, who in real life measures up to the anatomical Ideal?

There are very simple guides for measuring parts of the body against the others, and I prefer to go with them rather than using dividers or callipers.

Obvious rules like the one that says that when you bend your leg and squat down, your heels (Not your calves) will come up to your buttocks.



When bending your shoulder, the fingers of your hand will rest on your shoulder and your elbow will be between the bottom of your rib cage and the top of your pelvis.
Put the heel of your hand on your chin, and the fingertips will generally meet your hairline (unless you're going bald).

Proportional

The width of your hand is nearly exactly the same as the distance between the pupils of your eyes.
The Width of your hand is almost the same as the distance between the bottom of your nose and the tip of your chin.

Find the right Distance

The distance between the pupils of your eyes is the same as the width of your mouth
(So drawing a line straight down from the pupils of the eyes meets the corners of the mouth).
The distance from your knee to Ankle is about the same as the distance from your Elbow to fingertips.

The shoulders (or I should say the point above the Armpits) are normally pretty well in a straight line above the widest point of the hips. The arms themselves are wider than this point, and it is the muscles that attach the arms which gives the "Y" shape to the upper torso when seen from the back view depending on how much weight you are carrying around your waist, the point on the hips above that "widest" part can either go "in" or "Out". That sort of thing you can do without Dividers.....it's just realising and using what you already know.

Look at it this way, you have grown up since a baby, learning to know what a Human being looks like (otherwise life could get very embarrassing). You have also learnt to know, without being told, that someone has a problem with their Anatomy. That's what we are doing when we say „I don't like that figure; there is something not quite right about it "

What you need to do when Sculpting is to go with the natural instinct that tells you what's right or wrong...do not be persuaded to do something wrong based on what calliper's may be indicating, odds are you are using the calliper's wrongly..... use what you know naturally.

That's definitely far from being simplistic, you really have to understand the Human Skeleton, to realise why arms and legs move the way they do, that's what allows you to model the bodies bulk without actually starting with a skeleton (Basically that is what we do ...even when we use a mannequin, we are using that as a frame, not as a full skeleton).

Wrong Anatomy?

My last thought here is that if you buy a kit that you like, a lot of it is because it "looks Right"....it feels correct, that's something you do every time you buy a kit without conscious thought (not many buy kits that look wrong intentionally) given that, how many people do you think will check it's anatomy with Dividers? Not many I would betso how many times do you think that a figure that "looks right" is anatomically wrong to a great degree?

However, I am well aware that some people feel that they need to check and re-check dimensions using either rulers or callipers, but as the human body varies so much from person to person, I have the feeling that there is enough leeway to "go with the flow" somewhat.

As with everything though, it's what you feel comfortable with in your method of working.

This topic is something that is generally missed when people talk about the accuracy of figures, and shouldn't be...it should be a basic preparation, before you get to anything even remotely approaching detail work.

Realistically, most people are within the 6.5 to 7.5 heads range 8 heads isn't something that I would normally go to.

Of course, the state of the adult population in this regards, tends to reflect the dietary input, which in a long war declines quite a bit, so you can use this as an indicator to what stage of a war you are at if done well.

For example, some of the British battalions in the First World War were taken from heavy industrial areas, where the diet was pretty bad, and the average size of those guys was something like 5 ft. 6 ins or less (That's why they were called Bantam battalions, because of the small size of the recruitsI suppose that these guys would probably be only about 6 heads high)

The Body

Body build is very important, when thinking about a figure ... I know this is all a generalisation, though it's also generally pretty true as an average. Officers tended to have had a much better diet than the rank & file when growing up, so tended to be taller and fuller, this makes for some interesting possibilities.

The other thing that comes into play is the design and cut of the clothing, in some time periods the people just have an obvious and recognisable „look" about them, because they have been used to wearing a style of clothing, and that style of clothing is to an extent carried on into the "uniforms" of the period (Napoleonic is the obvious example).

Getting this right is as important ...if not more so than getting every single aspect of a uniform right (you can always fix a uniform, but it's a lot harder to fix the anatomy of a figure or the general look and feel for how the clothing interacts with the person wearing it).

The look should be pretty heroic

What we do see in this hobby is an expectation that figures will look pretty heroic on the whole, so we do get a much higher proportion of the "heroic" 8 head figures in our grey armies.....

Like the depiction of chain mail by little half-moon shapes, the expectation is to see this, so that's what's produced ...overall it's not really true to life that has to be realised, and as long as you know that a lot of what you are looking at is actually simply there to meet the expectations , or what's seen as the "normal „and not necessarily anything to do with fact or reality then you should be fine .

The individual sculptor

Each sculptor does have an inherent style, and there is not a lot he can do about it, as its part of how he is. It's something that you have to try and minimise to a certain extent, or at least keep under control. It can be very useful however, when sculpting a figure from a period that suits your style, and that's when you get to enjoy yourself

So, in my view, If you want a truly historically accurate figure (and not just one that looks good as a clothes horse) you have to bear all this in mind and spend a lot of time researching body shapes and builds from the period you are depicting.