



LEGAL HIGHS

Emma Freud's legal highs: neon life drawing

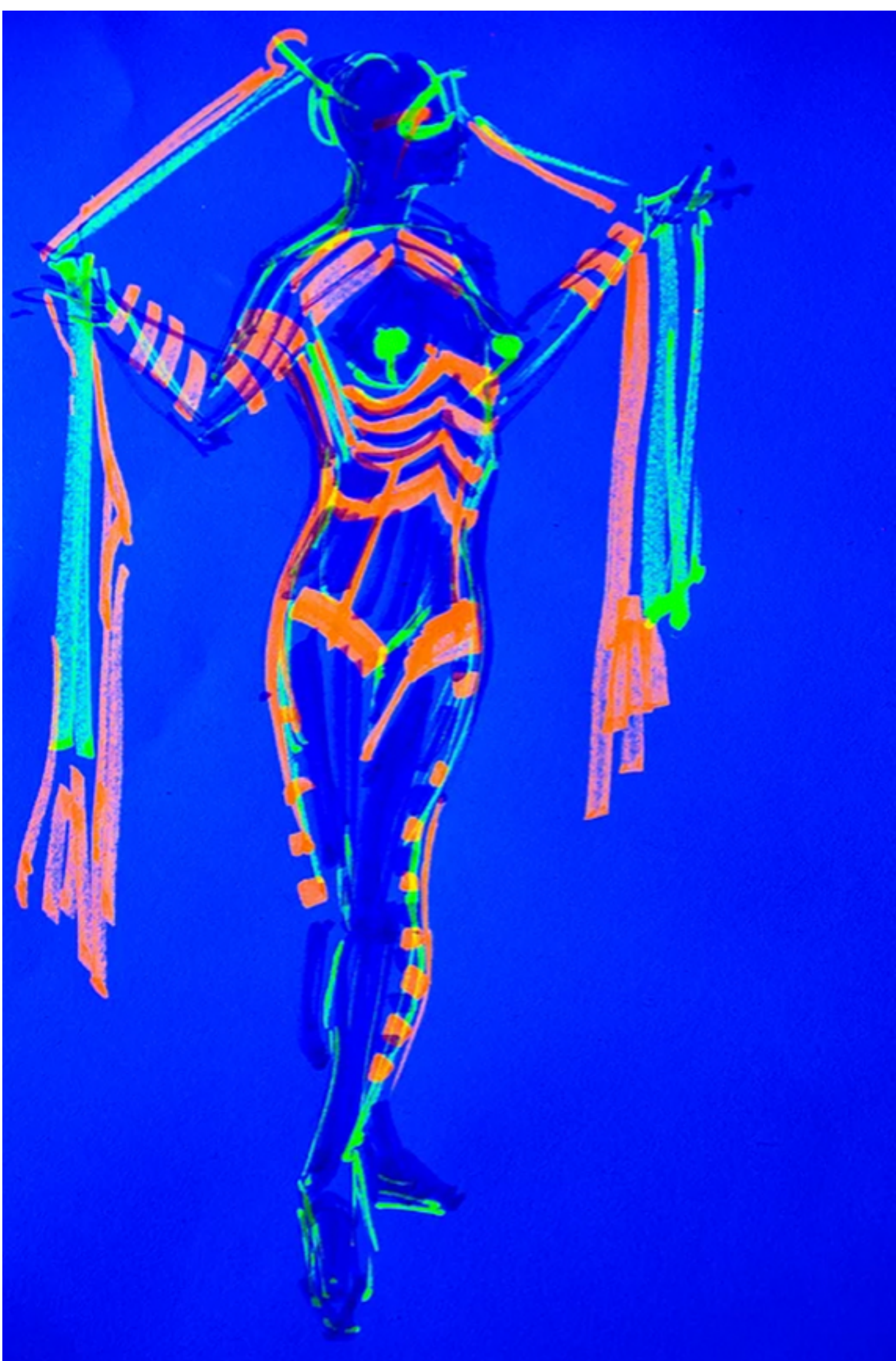
Emma Freud

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I am shooketh. Here's what happened . . . In search of yet another legal high, I book a Zoom lesson with an alternative artist called Jylle, who is to the world of neon life drawing what Hillary Clinton is to the world of pastel trouser suits: she is *it*.

I'm at home. There is no light in my room apart from the glow of the computer and on my lap are the props I was sent in advance: a pad of stiff black card, a full set of UV paints and a small UV torch to shine on my art as I draw.

Thrilled as I am by the new toys, my main excitement is about the nakedness I am to be sketching. As a life-drawing virgin - just as when I was a real-life virgin - I'm not sure what to do with my face when confronted by a nude body poised for activity. At that moment, Lilith appears on my dark screen, bathed in UV light.



Artist taking part in Neon Naked

Before the class started, Jylle had painted every inch of Lilith's naked body - even those inches - with bold blocks of UV paint in a style that looks half like an Andy Warhol and half like Mel Gibson in *Braveheart*. It's a stunning, albeit slightly frightening, sight.

As Lilith adopts her first pose, Jylle offers some instructions about form and composition, so before I put neon paint to black paper, I start to look: at the angles of Lilith's spine, the lengths of her limbs, the symmetry of her body, the curves of her calves.

Within moments, her nakedness has become entirely irrelevant and I am transfixed by the complex beauty of the human form. It's a stunning feat of engineering. Did you know? Am I the only person who hadn't fully taken in that the torso is an actual miracle of construction and poetry? Is it because I went to a convent school for eight years? Why are we not talking about this all the time? I illuminate my pad with the torch, and as Lilith moves through a series of exquisite positions, I draw, colour, stab and swirl. The natural beauty of her body lit only by the artificial glory of neon is an intoxicating mix. And, because of Zoom, I'm drawing like nobody's watching.

My paintings would be considered excellent for an average five-year-old with a surprisingly mature sense of subject matter. But I love them for the hour spent scrutinising nature's most miraculous canvas through the shroud of an ultraviolet Amazon delivery: an experience of humbling, unexpected bliss.

neonnaked.com