

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Educating and inspiring young artists is possible if one assumes a charismatic and multi-tiered approach. Each semester my students gain a sense of creative efficacy, learn to articulate their ideas visually, build a strong technical foundation and immerse themselves in contemporary art. Throughout the duration of the course, I maintain a dynamic classroom that is informative, open-minded and fun.

From day one, I treat my students as if they are already artists. This affirming attitude encourages them to take their projects and studies seriously as artists, not dabblers. It is important that they know that art-making is a gratifying life pursuit. It also makes them feel as if they are an important part of the art world with a unique perspective to contribute. It is my job as an artist/educator to engender in the students a sense of why his or her particular life experience is important. Realistically, I know that not every one of my students will pursue a life in art. But the skills learned and used in making art (problem solving, visual and verbal communication skills and cultural history, for example) are exceptionally practical and universal.

Young artists need to know how their intentions are being interpreted. In this way, they learn to develop and use their own visual language. During critique, I step back and facilitate discussion from the sidelines. When I see a trend or tendency in a student's work, I take that opportunity to bring it to the attention of the class and offer it as a topic of discussion. The student then begins a process of analysis that produces new understandings of how their thoughts are manifesting visually. I encourage them to use and flex this new muscle, capitalizing on their self-awareness.

Technical proficiency is a necessary step in making ideas legible. Students who are technically adept are better able to express themselves visually in a way that fortifies the content of their work. Therefore, during introductory classes, I spend a substantial part of the semester giving demonstrations and feedback. Once the basic tools are understood, a student can employ them to think beyond the mechanics of the medium.

Most college-aged students are extremely well versed in time-based media. They grew up surrounded by the ubiquity of video, film and photographs but they aren't used to intellectualizing these forms. To initiate a deeper examination, we look critically at both the canon of contemporary media art, and sources of mainstream media. We look with our own eyes, and try to imagine the opinions and perceptions of others who may not be versed in media critique. We discuss how artists have employed visual strategies in the past, and the many ways those strategies can be interpreted. Beyond these clinical ways of looking, we talk about how images make us feel. It is important to acknowledge the difficulty in turning off our initial visceral reactions. This culminates in the students' understanding of how visual strategies have been used in the past, and how they can develop and employ their own.

In art school, it is easy to fall into the trap of making work with only your colleagues and professors in mind as an audience. It is important that students know there is a creative landscape beyond their immediate surroundings. On a weekly basis, I bring relevant pieces of media to class to discuss ideas that exist both in and outside of art academia. Exposing students to key modern and post-modern artists, critics, and theorists in a relevant, and accessible fashion, is another means of making young artists feel immersed in the vanguard of today's art making.

Finally, it should be noted that two of my most important teaching virtues are to maintain high energy and a sense of humor. I try to emulate my most memorable teachers who kept my attention with equal parts charisma, generosity, knowledge and skill.