

My teaching philosophy is intimately linked to my artistic practice. Both are interactive, exploratory processes that encourage intuitive thinking and formal investigation as well as relying on a healthy sense of humor. Working collaboratively with my students, my classroom - like my studio - functions as an experimental site for the successes and failures that inevitably accompany growth.

My experience has shown that technique, history and concept are all equally important components of a contemporary artist's education and practice, and I incorporate some aspect of each in every class I create. Assignments utilize multiple parameters - especially at the foundations level - yet typically evolve to be more open-ended. From concept to completion, I encourage my students to think critically and creatively to find their own direction and voice. This give-and-take approach allows students to explore their unique vision while allowing me to teach them ways to clarify their ideas and practice conceptual building skills.

This approach is unlike one I would take when teaching science or mathematics, in which everything has an expected answer. Artistic questions have no precise or correct answers - in reality, they may have no answer at all. Though many might find this daunting, I find it extremely exciting. It's consistently been my experience that students have access to worlds and ideas I may not even know exist. The fact that many students grew up with a mouse in their hand and the world at their fingertips has not only wiped away traditional artistic boundaries, it has provided an unprecedented opportunity for a mutually beneficial exchange within the contemporary classroom. This informs the way I teach and interact with my students on a daily basis.

In addition to traditional classroom tasks, I also work to inspire my students' participation in the world-at-large, both as artists and citizens. Acting as a role model and professional access point, I embrace a strong work ethic and foster the discipline required to participate in the lifelong challenge of making and thinking about art. At the same time, I try to be transparent about my limits. I give my students respect along with the benefit of the doubt, and I work hard to earn the same in return. I'm not afraid to be wrong, or to look ridiculous, or to mess up - in fact, I try to show by example that all of these things are integral to the artistic process.

Great teaching is much more than simply passing on information. It is active engagement. I love to see the spark when a new idea finally makes sense, or a task that once seemed impossible becomes possible. The implicit contract of the classroom is a commitment to persistently challenge, inspire, and activate the hearts and minds of my students. Both art-making and teaching are more effective when everyone - myself included - is comfortable experimenting with ideas, asking questions, expressing opinions, and speaking openly.

Art must provide an alternative way of finding one's way in the world. In teaching studio art, I am concerned not only with art-making, but also with helping students figure out how to look more discerningly at others and themselves. In the end, I want my students to leave my classroom with a better understanding of their own process and potential, encouraged to think of their art as a living, breathing entity - one that will continue to grow and ultimately surprise us all.