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Teaching Philosophy

Creativity and critical thinking are core values that shape my teaching practice. Because of the perpetual evolution of technology, students need to continuously adapt to current trends within the changing artistic, cultural, and social climate. Teaching basic skills and techniques, while drawing upon historical and theoretical examples, provides students with a strong foundation for developing their own ideas. As an educator, my main challenge is to instill technical mastery in my students while nurturing creative and critical minds.

My sensibility in the fine arts informs my work in new media and design, and one of my primary interests as both an artist and educator is the hybridization of these two areas. Working with technology requires a combination of investigative skills and expertise, including interactive design, video, sound, photography, typography, 3D animation, and illustration, to name a few. When teaching courses in design and new media, it is essential to address this interdisciplinary quality and to always remain prepared for changes within the context of the discipline. I view the computer as a tool with vast creative potential. However, I also advise students not to become seduced by the spectacle of technology, encouraging them to rely primarily on concept and design principles. Work that communicates a compelling message while upholding strong aesthetic qualities will maintain its relevance beyond the present, regardless of the process or medium used to create it.

Another of my many roles as a teacher involves breaking down any preconceived notions that might hinder a beginning artist's creativity and encouraging students to discover exactly what drives their creative life. I therefore require students to question all stages of the art-making process. I believe that art begins with the cultivation of an idea, encompassing both process and presentation. Thus, I emphasize that the process is a journey and all of the challenges it brings are just as valuable as the resolution.

Within each student is a new method of creating and self-discovery. In the classroom, I often address the class as a whole, but in a studio setting, I find it equally important—if not more so—to work with each student individually. A good teacher knows how to listen, keep an open mind, be flexible and spontaneous, respond intuitively, interject, gain control, and then let go and allow students to come to their own conclusions. Hearing critiques provides students with the opportunity to reflect on and discuss their work while engaging in constructive dialogue about various issues explored in the course. Students benefit just as much from listening to what their peers have to say as from expressing their own opinions, and listening to the professor.

I believe that a student's potential for learning and excelling in any given field emerges from certain key attributes: openness to a subject, past experiences, and an individual desire to be creative. With an open mind, a student is more willing to experiment, ask questions, and investigate a topic. Past experiences can influence their personal direction. The passion for expressing oneself creatively provides the drive to follow through and even transcend expectations. These characteristics, which can shape a student's way of thinking and looking at the world, can be further developed through effective teaching.

Finally, in my role as artist, designer, and educator, I have had the good fortune to work with students, colleagues, and professionals from a variety of cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds. I enthusiastically welcome, support, and encourage diversity in all its forms, both inside and outside of the classroom community. This commitment to diversity is reflected in my course examples, group discussions, and class projects, wherein I often ask students to address social issues or topics of cultural importance.

As a professional artist and designer, I am personally invested in the mediums that I teach in, which gives me a deep respect and appreciation for both the design and artistic disciplines. My past experiences grant me insight about what students might go through in their creative endeavors. In turn, my teaching experiences give me the inspiration to continue learning and growing in my own artistic endeavors.