

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

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In both the liberal and the visual arts we encounter very little that is a solid yes or no, black or white, we inhabit a world of maybe and shades of gray where knowledge is a process and a negotiation as opposed to a final destination. As a teacher my role is one of facilitator, focusing on the comprehension of ideas and images from a multitude of perspectives and in varying contexts. While it is important to provide facts and allow students a way of creating meaning and content it is more important still that their conclusions be of their own making. This approach to teaching is dependent both on the environment and on the cultivation of a strong student/instructor relationship. While the student's job is to be actively engaged in their own education, the instructor's job is to provide an environment where each student can develop and voice their ideas.

Liberal arts and interdisciplinary study provides students with a broad base of knowledge and the ability to approach complex issues with the confidence needed to find solutions. In a world of hyper-specialization arts instructors are not just teaching students to become writers, sculptors, or photographers. We are teaching them to become makers, thinkers, and problem solvers, in short, to think outside the proverbial box.

In my teaching, I focus on three main aspects of any given subject: literacy, narrative, and rhetoric. Literacy, both visual and textual, teaches students to analyze, deconstruct, and comprehend ideas; Narrative (tied to memory) teaches students to construct concepts; and finally Rhetoric gives students the tools to communicate those narratives in a clear, and convincing manner. Ultimately, what we are teaching students is an understanding not only of their specific work but also of who they are. We do that by encouraging critical thinking and analysis and by giving students confidence in the value of their diverse ideas, opinions, and experiences.

As both an educator and an artist I am interested in images, communication, collaboration, and in being a part of a larger constructive community. I believe that a strong inter-disciplinary liberal arts education promotes deeper understanding and helps not only the students we teach but also the community at large. As an artist/educator, I am dedicated to the pursuit of what I believe is an invaluable contribution to the betterment of our society.