
Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy and research statement share the same basic premise: the importance of approaching our knowledge of and place in the world from a position of critical reflexivity. Recognizing the reciprocal relationship between action and reflection. In other words, "inquiry" and "practice," "research" and "teaching," "thinking" and "doing" are viewed to be integrated concepts and activities, rather than oppositional ones. It is for this reason that I pursue teaching. The reciprocal nature inherent in teaching, the relationship between student and instructor, is essential for the evolution of culture and creativity. It has been seen throughout history, the master artist is constantly in a dialogue with those that seek tutelage, those that become influenced from afar, or those in direct contact with the activities of the artist. Without the learner there is no learned. The passage of knowledge is fundamental to creative growth. Within the exchange between the teaching artist and the pupil there is a mutual transference of ideas and considerations that bloom within them both. I uphold the philosophies of artists like Joseph Beuys; that everyone is an artist and that art is an act of social sculpture.

My central aim in teaching is to guide students in their natural inquisitiveness and exploration of interests and provide them the tools to reflect critically on their roles and places in the world. I incorporate this emphasis into my teaching by creating an open and inclusive environment for students to ask questions of the world and of themselves. By offering a range of diverse perspectives and disciplines, I hope to give students the means and cause to reflect on their own experiences and ways of thinking and acting. I encourage the students to introduce and adapt to the unfamiliar and difficult. I have had the opportunity to develop and apply my teaching philosophy in a number of contexts — as production coordinator, teaching assistant, visual arts instructor, and through guest lectures and workshops — in which I developed strategies and approaches that put this teaching philosophy into practice.

A typical day in my classroom begins with an open discussion of relevant issues and interests of the students, a means of initiating participation and inclusion. Followed by individual updates on projects or goals that the student is undertaking. With these responses in mind, I direct a classroom exercise or workshop including drawing skills, painting techniques, sculptural applications, and/or other practices of visual arts in various disciplines. Students are expected to conduct independent work in these areas and conclude that day's technical lesson as is appropriate. Some students may wish to continue their work from that day's lesson, or they may wish to clean up and finish their work as is. The remainder of the class time is dedicated to critical reflection. This is either in the form of a short lecture on art history, theory, or practice. It will also, when applicable, be in the form of a group critique. Classroom critiques are especially important in my program. It allows students to receive praise and constructive suggestions, relate to their peers, express personal positions, and explore their understanding and empathy of others, as well as the world as a whole. This activity also improves understanding of technique through the learning of others. Listening to the methods of their peers students learn the experimental and personal nature that is creative activity.