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Teaching Philosophy

In my class, each student is engaged from their own personal knowledge base. I assist them in conveying their message in the best possible way given their material and means of expression. Historical relevance is emphasized, and the student is encouraged to understand the art making that informs his or her given practice.

Too often students artificially separate their understanding of art history from their studio practice. The result is that they create work that they cannot place within a history of culture. My studio classes become a setting within which they can assign themselves their own historical interests and make informed art from it. In this way they can use established techniques, ideas, and mediums as a springboard to find their own individual voices and means of expression.

In a more general sense within this framework for informed learning, the teacher must always keep in mind the power that they wield. Students invest their time into this process to improve themselves and to achieve a desired set of goals. One should always be mindful to foster a sense of care and respect that encompasses all levels of interaction within the classroom setting. This is not to say that a good teacher is never critical, but this criticism should be tempered with suggestions for alternative avenues, or moderated with encouragement. This is especially true in a fine arts setting, where the conclusions that have been drawn historically are not incontrovertible facts but are assumed and adopted norms. In a very real sense, a studio class is always up in the air, and my job becomes keeping the ground within sight.

When a student is asked to find their own historical inspirations, and the instructor does not forcefully impose ideas upon them, they create more interesting and original artwork. This does not mean that I will not suggest alternate routes to the student, but I will start from where the student is, instead of expecting an adoption of my views and beliefs.

A fine arts course should, in the end, be a self-actuated process of informed discovery. To foster creativity and inspiration, the student must retain a feeling of control over their process. As the professor, I am there to point out dangers, illuminate unforeseen avenues, and to assist each student in critical thinking and creation.