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Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is simple. To INSPIRE, inspire about CERAMICS and LIFE. The best way to inspire, is to live by example. I love ceramics and life. Without them I am incomplete…yes, I know how crazy that sounds, but it's true.

The most important part of all my classes is when I as the teacher, get the opportunity to interact with a student. This interaction is exciting to me, because the possibilities where things go are endless. We can approach the art work from various angles and just talk about "art" or; our discussion can lean toward talking about life and many other things. Once communication is open and the student is willing to tackle the creative challenge, that is where the magic begins. I make it perfectly clear to all my students that it is important that they present a personal response to each assignment, that is, "that they must be in the work." It brings so much joy to my heart, when I see a student tackle a problem or an assignment through experimentation...what a learning opportunity!

In addition, to individual work all of my classes include the use of technology as an additive tool to lecturing or demonstrating. I also include group work that emphasizes the importance of socialization and discourse. It is essential that the students who work together, compromise about their choices for a specific group project. In this respect, class critiques and discussions are important, because it gives the student(s) the ability to talk about the work. I ask hard questions that need to be answered in a thoughtful manner. The idea here is to have the student think about the work from all angles.This might include such questions like, "What determines the value of a work of art?" "Are social issues raised by work made in class?" "What are the responsibilities of the artist in society?" And in some instances the critique may not even discuss the work…it dwells on life and its complexities thereof.

Other ways in which I try to engage the student is with class activities, for instance: slide presentations, field trips; assigned reading, visiting artists and research projects.

As a teacher of art more specifically ceramics I have set goals. The first is to provide my students with the necessary technical skills and knowledge of materials. Students should gain an understanding of the full range of possibilities offered by the media covered by the class, together with a skill set of techniques for achieving their aesthetic goals. Mastering the process is key. Knowing how to dry their projects, how to decorate them and finally, what kind of firing is best for their work. It can be about craftsmanship. From my experience in teaching ceramics classes, I feel that the issue of craftsmanship is still relevant today. Of, course the idea or concept is just as important as refinement and technical skill.

The final element that I try to infect students with, is the idea or concept of "Fun." If the student is not having fun while working on the project, then there is no point to creating. While having fun students learn to think carefully about all decisions they make with regard to materials and technique and to relate these decisions to a historical and theoretical context. Most importantly they learn to formulate conceptual objectives for their artwork. While the class assignments provide a general starting point, I emphasize that their work should above all else be personal, and that the process of actually creating the work can teach them something that they didn't know when they started. The piece that they planned to make will inevitably have been changed by events during the course of its physical realization or their moods...just as in life.

My goal here is to have the student initiate an ongoing body of work through various projects that is both an expression and a means for development of their own ideas and interests. This is how art can become a part of their lives, and this is the first step towards becoming an artist, teacher or just to keep their lives centered.