

Taylor Benoit // Teaching Philosophy

All educators were students first. Exceptional educators are students still. Therefore, It is important that my career as an educator hinge on the ideals of what it means to be a student. It is my belief that the most effective forms of education establish a premium on perennial inquiry, and strive to find a healthy balance between engaging in active listening and perceptive mentorship. My goal as an educator is to arrive at all semesters, every class, and in front of each student with not only what skills and knowledge I have to offer, but also with an expectation that I myself will need to assume a beginners mind, defined by an openness, eagerness, and lack of preconceptions, to better learn and understand the goals of my students. Embodying both these roles, in turn, establishes an environment in which students can freely test their *own* ideas, experiencing first hand what holds water and what doesn't in regards to their developing system of internal standards. I believe critical thinking is the most transferable and therefore most valuable of skills, and great consideration should be given to the design of a curriculum that prioritizes an emphasis on learning how to learn, or in the words of Paulo Freire, establishing consciousness as a “consciousness *of* consciousness”.

A life of art has led me towards the desire to be an educator. The study and practice of visual art and it's far reaching ability to critique and question established social percepts engenders an invaluable sense of potential. This potential fuels the pursuit of, if at the very least, the understanding of *how* the world could be a better place. Through the unification of formal and conceptual contemplations, existing realities can be critiqued, and new realities imagined. Elucidating the powers of critical thinking for developing minds is essential and art is exceptionally good at this. I believe in all forms of art, but perhaps better said I believe in discourse. Ultimately, I see the role of art education in the academic sphere as the attempt to offer students the necessary tools to be adequately permeable, yet critical in regards to how knowledge and information is presented, accessed, absorbed, and retained as they move through the worlds social and cultural institutions.

