

Kathleen Caprario, Café' 541 Column #13:

Those Who Do...

I grew up hearing the old chestnut, “Those who can, do and those who can't, teach.” The belief was that *real* artists with *real* talent, dare I say—*genius*—will most certainly be recognized, celebrated and financially successful. Or not. And, if not, the *true* artist would choose to sacrifice all for their art and be satisfied living the bohemian lifestyle of poverty and obscurity in their own personal garret.

Cautionary in tone with the underlying message being “stop daydreaming and get a real job, already” it was shared in order to direct one toward more reliable and guaranteed professions. Left over from last century, this dated line of thinking continues to permeate our cultural expectations of who is an artist and how both the artwork, and the maker is assessed and valued based on their work week and how they manage to pay their rent.

If a creative person has a day job, and they actually find meaning and satisfaction in that wage earning activity—well, how is that reconciled with or reflected in and through their creative practice?

Hmm...How about that teaching option?

I'm referencing myself here and the many artists I know who *choose* to teach as a creative and connected part of their life. Teaching is not “second place” or something that's done because one can't make a living selling their handiwork. These artists welcome the opportunity to share their knowledge, experience and passion for creativity with others as an extension of their own creative work and in addition to the paycheck.

Personally, my teaching practice has kept me honest as a studio artist and my ideas fresh and authentic. I imagine this is similar for many of my colleagues. Our involvement with the arts is not isolated but encompasses creativity and creative thought through making, teaching, exploration and, for some, activism and community building.

There's a generational shift happening with more young creatives regarding teaching as an integral part of their creative practice. I recently viewed a talk by designer, artist and educator, Chris Do. Do stressed the dimensionality, both conceptually and financially, that offering educational experiences creates for him and his design studio, thefutur.com, as they teach creatives how to translate their art and educational practices online.

If art involves relationship—that of viewer to artwork, of one's self to an idea or subject, individual and cultural associations—what more important relationship could a creative person have but to engage with others in a positive, mentoring way about that which is most important to them? In other words, art.

A career in education can be a calling and, much like a career in the creative arts, you'll probably never get rich doing it but you will live a life filled with satisfaction, curiosity and generosity.

For me art is a whole-life experience and a lifelong process rather than an isolated activity that focuses on a predetermined end result or product. It's time to de-mystify, de-romanticize and reassess the creative life and value the whole of one's life. Day job included.

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