

My goal as an educator is to be a guide through the academic cauldron of intellectual and emotional stimuli, allowing my students to realize their artistic goals. Quite simply, by the end of their education, I want them to surpass what I can teach them. I yearn to be surprised, amazed and awed by the creative minds of my students.

The very reason I'm drawn to teaching is the same reason I'm drawn to making artwork. Creating art is simultaneously an explosive, meditative, vibrant, and serene activity. For both teacher and student, navigating this complex experience is exciting and challenging. Teaching and making art require a delicate balance between encouragement and critical analysis, as well as technical skill and creative investigation. As an Art Educator, my role is to guide students through the development of their artistic vision, the understanding of how their artwork relates to a larger world, and how creative problem-solving translates to a profession. To achieve these goals, I work with students in individual and group discussions, focusing on the growth of these skills through different projects.

### **Purpose of Art Education**

#### *Guide Future Artists*

Education in the Arts provides an important step in guiding future artists into the profession. Through experiential learning, analytical critique, and practical application of technical and conceptual skills, students improve artistically and increasingly understand how their art can function outside of academia.

#### *Influence Appreciation of the Arts*

Understanding how visual art functions in society is essential to becoming an aware and informed citizen. For example, the ability to break down an image and understand potential interpretations, helps art students effectively decipher the true message of advertisements and its influence on culture.

#### *Build Transferable Skills for Other Professions*

For students that won't be professional artists after graduation, they can undoubtedly use these skills for other professions. Making artwork facilitates growth of creativity and problem-solving. These skills could help students work as a museum curator, engineer, marketer, counselor, and recreation therapist to name just a few.

### **Professor & Student Interaction**

The core of any curriculum revolves around a professor's interaction with students: how they challenge, support, advocate, and encourage. Combining individual and group discussions enhances a student's artistic education.

#### *Individual Discussion*

Every human brain differs in how it processes the world, resulting in a highly individual understanding of art. Each student has a very unique physical, intellectual, and emotional relationship with their work. Therefore, my role is to respond intuitively to their artistic tendencies and assist in finding a personalized trajectory through individualized conversation. Though students may work on a project with specified guidelines, I expect them to approach the problem differently. Everyone's voice, and use of visual language, is different. From poetic ambiguity to political commentary, each deserves to be fostered and respected.

#### *Group Discussion*

Just as the individual conversation is crucial to an artist's development, so is the group discussion. This interaction manifests through discussions of local gallery shows, visiting artist talks, and classroom critiques. Hearing diverse opinions helps students process what art is, and how it relates to them. Visual Art is a language, complete with its own rules of grammar and infinite dialects. Students need to understand how other people interpret work in order to learn how this language can be interpreted.

## **Curriculum (introductory level to advanced)**

Similar to creating a balanced classroom environment, I strive to build a curriculum that oscillates between strong foundational knowledge in the principles/elements of design, creative freedom/investigation, and contextual understanding.

### *Foundational Knowledge (design principles & technical skills)*

To make effective work, it is essential to possess a strong background in basic design principles. Similar to young children, students must first learn individual words and basic grammar before tackling complex ideas in this visual language. For example, a drawing's line weight informs how we interpret the piece. The atmospheric, measured drawings of DaVinci elicits a completely different response than the moody approximations of Giacometti's drawings. It is also important for them to understand how these skills transverse mediums; from an aged metal sculpture to a glossy photograph, they all are born from the same principles.

Introductory sculpture classes utilize multiple materials and techniques including: metalwork, cold-casting, wood, plaster, paper, and everyday items. Though students learn complicated techniques such as metal fabrication, they also work with simple materials like paper or everyday objects. I firmly believe that a student doesn't need to make work only in a traditional sculptural material, but prefer they eventually uncover ones that resonate with their sensibilities. Learning how to manipulate material is essential in advanced courses. As a student understands how to expertly move material under their fingertips, they start to make more thoughtful choices and generate the ability to work with complex ideas.

### *Creative Investigation*

The core of creativity lies in the ability to tie unrelated thoughts together effectively, in essence creating a unique idea. This can only occur when we meld ideas, images, forms, and mediums together in such a way that doesn't fit into what society deems as logical. So we explore creativity as a matter of perspective, rather than a skill. I constantly drive them individually to explore multiple solutions beyond their initial ideas; how deep can they go, and what connections can be made. Within the curriculum, I also require students to combine forms and images in unexpected ways; allowing them to practice working with the unforeseen.

### *Contextual Understanding*

During discussions, we also focus on how their work relates to their peers and the world outside of their mind. We discuss how other disciplines can motivate their work, such as sociological connections, economic, political, psychological, etc. In the development of ideas, we emphasize the importance of looking beyond our initial sphere to find solutions, by experimenting with conceptual influences or different media.

## **Progression of Curriculum**

In every course level from entry to advanced, students are constantly working with all three components. But, the proportion will differ at every level. Beginning classes start with larger doses of foundational knowledge and grow incrementally to include more creative investigation and contextual understanding. As their skills and creative minds develop, so does their ability to create engaging and complex work.