

## Teaching Philosophy

Self Discovery  
Collaboration  
Exploration  
Research  
Integrity  
Work

### Why do I teach?

I teach because I had great teachers, passionate, curious, inspiring individuals who instilled in me a life long love of learning. In the classroom we were transformed into explorers, poets, architects and artists. We were challenged with self discovery, expanding our ways of thinking about the world, and our place in it. Doors appeared where there had previously been walls, and as we crossed the threshold, new worlds emerged at our feet. I've never been here before! What do I need to do to stay? I will teach.

I have had my fair share of doubts. An academic life is not only about classrooms and studio visits, collaboration, exploration, first days of school and graduation. The by-laws, deadlines, and the ever-changing needs of my students can have their way with my plans and personal life. Still, I feel deeply satisfied with the decision I made all those years ago because I know teaching is part of a purposeful life.

Sculpture is an ever expanding discipline that can include formal and figurative work, abstract and conceptual installations, sound, light, street theater, and dance. Teaching this subject demands constant re-evaluation and continuous study. The evolution of sculpture, the material, means, and shifting conceptual concerns presents a rich platform for discussing historic, social-political and environmental issues. The assignments and projects that make up my curriculum come from a core belief that as artists, as educators, we are culture makers, and we have a responsibility to provide our students, our audience with challenges and opportunities that encourage critical thinking and relevant, informed discourse.

In the classroom, I try to make my students understand that we contain concepts like rhythm and balance inside our bodies. What we do in foundational courses is to put into words these ideas so we can communicate with one another, identify the elements and

principles of art and design, experiment and ultimately act with integrity and deliberation.

Through discipline and practice, a level of technical proficiency can be learned, but understanding the value of craftsmanship or the principle of unity might lead to failed attempts at trying to explain what is 'good' or 'bad'. Striving to avoid absolutes, without seeming lenient, I use analogies so my students might better understand.

"Good craftsmanship doesn't get in the way!" I tell my students and then explain:

"Imagine you are watching a B movie, maybe a bad horror film, and suddenly the actress's hair is totally different, or the color of the light changes, the sound is out of synch... the story stops. Or maybe your friends are in a band, playing a song you know, then someone plays a bad note, suddenly the story stops. Good craftsmanship doesn't get in the way. When you look at a lump or a mark you've made, ask yourself, does it enhance the story, reveal a few more details, or distract from it".

At more advanced levels, when students are working independently or with more complex techniques and concepts, I am careful not to impose my ideas, but create an environment where they are challenged to sharpen their skills, recognize and present their intentions while putting their practice in a contemporary context. I provide them with all I can in terms of professional development and opportunities, as an artist, as a mentor.

My curriculum is continually evolving to meet the needs of my students, the course of study and ongoing research, however objectively I divide my lesson plans into 4 areas of conceptual and technical development, that are presented concurrently over the course of the class. These areas include:

1. Skill building (technique)
2. Material investigation (exploration)
3. Conceptual development (investigating and establishing meaning)
4. Critical response (works of art and readings on art and life)

Artists are natural educators. We research and synthesize information, sharing our ideas, asking questions, testing hypothesis and revealing connections between seemingly disparate realms. I hope my work inspires my students and my audience to think differently, think for themselves. I want to encourage curiosity and a passion for knowledge, to assist in the formation of informed citizens.