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Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Building Community and Fostering Critical Dialogue

One of my favorite parts of being an artist, particularly an artist in Chicago, is the frequency with which I hear the question, "What can we build together?" Community is a necessity for artists and shaping that community is both an opportunity and a responsibility. I believe the most important traits that I can instill in my students are willingness to contribute and openness to cooperation. I make it a point to connect students with others who share their interests or point of view and I encourage collaboration whenever appropriate. I push my students to use school as an opportunity to find their peers and to begin setting up the network that will support them after graduation.

After effort, my chief requirement of my students is generosity. This generosity is most vital in critiques and class discussions where the value of that time depends on the potency of individual contributions. In order to build an intimate and supportive community, I require all students to find a way to participate in discussions. I make a special effort to include the students who struggle with the discussion format by offering them alternate opportunities for contribution such as writing assignments and smaller group conversations.

Strengthening Individual Practices

Though the structure of a student's individual art practice cannot be prescribed, I believe that an instructor can help each student accelerate his or her search for a productive and sustainable mode of working. I feel that my primary task as an instructor is to help students define their own criteria for success and to help them to find a routine or a way of thinking that allows them to satisfy these criteria with regularity. I ask my students to reflect on the activities that inspire their most successful work. Does inspiration come from research? From process? From play?

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I encourage my students to find their voices by rooting their practices in art history and engaging with contemporary discourse. I require my students to speak and write often about their work. I encourage them to make connections between themselves and other artists and to hone in on the issues that are important to them.

A Note on Printmaking

I feel a special affection for printmaking because it is the medium that first lured me into a serious relationship with visual art. Though print now drifts in and out of my studio practice, I think I will always harbor an infatuation with the process of mediating an image through a complex system and waiting expectantly for the result. I love the rhythms of printing and the occasional infiltration of the unexpected.

For me, effective instruction in printmaking balances an emphasis on technical mastery with an encouragement of experimentation and innovation. My recent work in the field of sustainable printmaking has shown me that, though there is great value in tradition, continual re-examination of conventions is always appropriate. I encourage my students to develop an in-depth understanding of the technical aspects of printmaking so that they have the power to safely manipulate these processes in inventive and productive ways.

Beyond inky material exploration, I stress the importance of engaging with the conceptual discourse that surrounds contemporary printmaking. Issues of authorship, authenticity, and social formation are intrinsic to the medium, and I encourage my students to consider the ways in which these ideas influence the reception and interpretation of their work. I remind my students that, in choosing to make prints, they have entered into a larger conversation and I encourage them to contribute to that conversation in a meaningful way.