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STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I recall one of my first drawing courses in college, in which I realized I wanted to be an artist. Despite an ambition to learn how to draw, I found myself paralyzed by the perfectionism which seems to plague many beginning art students, preventing them from truly “seeing” the world, and inhibiting a curiosity-driven, thoughtful art practice. My instructor, however, designed a class environment which dismantled my previous expectations about good art, reducing my perfectionism and freeing my mind to work intuitively and expressively. This class set me on the path towards becoming an artist, but more importantly, activated a more acute lens of curiosity through which to experience the world. I have striven to cultivate a similar classroom climate in my own teaching. My primary goals in a studio course are to teach technical making skills, to grow in problem-solving and divergent thinking, to challenge and inspire my students to create things that exceed their expectations, and to facilitate the discovery of their individual creative vision. I want my teaching methods to equip all of my students, i.e., those who pursue art careers as well as those who do not, to look at the world through a lens of critical curiosity and understanding.

My assignments not only reinforce new artistic techniques and vocabulary, but also prompt students to transform one material into something else, to synthesize divergent ideas and forms into something new, or to take a broad concept and make it personal. For example, the assignments seen in my student portfolio, *Cardboard Synthesis* and *Armatures & Skins*, both require a shift of this sort. Each project is accompanied by technical demos, lectures, readings, discussions, open studio hours, and a variety of critiques and peer reviews. Readings and lectures are meant to inspire dialogue and activate another facet of learning; topics often relate directly to a project or critique methodology, and sometimes wander into divergent subjects from science to psychology to fiction. Consistent examples include John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing*, or Charles Ray’s *Thoughts on Sculpture*. An ongoing sketchbook is also required throughout the term in which students document their process, generate ideas efficiently, and reflect on their work. In foundations courses, we consider material as a language, discuss color as both a scientific and phenomenological element, explore gestalt theory and design principles, and consider the impact of transitioning between 2D, 3D, and 4D.

Students receive consistent feedback on their work through formal critiques as well as frequent in-progress peer reviews. As a class, we discuss the benefits and limitations of critique sessions, and ever aim to improve our methods and create a classroom community of shared knowledge and support. Students spend time writing about their own work as well as offering written feedback for classmates. I consistently consider new critique strategies, looking for ways to increase meaningful and productive dialogue. During lectures, I provide examples of historic and contemporary sculptors from diverse backgrounds, to provide inspiration and context for each project. These examples also provide an opportunity to critique more mature artwork as a class, and offer inspiration for students as they begin to develop their own creative voice. Observing that students rarely take advantage of office hours and often lack the incentive to communicate specific needs, I have begun to implement one-on-one mid-term meetings, giving students the opportunity to check in with me about their projects as well as their experience in the class. This builds a better connection with my students, opens more two-way communication, and gives me valuable feedback early enough to adjust the course before the end of the term if necessary.

In every studio course, I encourage students to become immersed in the technical process of making, to follow the material towards unexpected results, and to make intuitive decisions. To facilitate this mindset, I assign readings and discussions about the creative process itself; we talk extensively about the value of experimentation, innovation, and

risk-taking in any creative research field, from the arts to the sciences. Without minimizing the importance of well-crafted objects and an ambitious work ethic, we talk about what it means to embrace success and failure as similar entities and discuss how unexpected knowledge and meaning can arise from alleged mistakes. To use failure in such a way requires an open mind, problem-solving skills, an ability to challenge one's preconceived ideas, and a habit of self-reflection. Finally, we discuss how innovation results when an artist returns repeatedly to an idea with new strategies, rather than accepting the first outcome. Students understand that their evaluation is based not only on the quality of their work, but also on these risk-taking endeavors. I often assign at least one project with strategically vague guidelines, requiring students to dive in head first into a project when they don't yet feel like "experts." While this situation is initially met with some pushback, I frequently have students approach me towards the end of a term, thanking me for the chance to get outside of their comfort zone and do something they did not expect of themselves.