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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I am interested in the haptic learning process; how the way that we use our hands affects the way that we think. So, approaching the college as a laboratory for experimentation and a place for creative inquiry is my natural inclination. I feel that making mistakes and adapting ideas after a failure is a much more thorough learning process than strictly presented principles that must be adhered to. As an instructor I feel that my role is to provide a flexible support structure for the students to learn and explore the material and conceptual possibilities available to them when creating.

The future possibilities for students are various and there are so many challenges to maintaining an art practice after school, it feels like a heavy challenge to me as an instructor to help them prepare for that. I think some of the best ways I can do that is to be candid about my experience and to help them analyse the tools for success that artists they admire have utilised. In the beginning stages of an education in art I think that my job is to foster curiosity, expose the students to examples of the different possibilities; invite them to take part in the conversation and also to teach the core technical skills required in my studio area to provide freedom to explore their own ideas. It is a mix of technical skill building and negotiating ideas.

Almost every student in an introductory class has no previous experience working with glass as an art material. Because of this it is necessary to emphasize building and practicing technical skills right away. I have seen this emphasis successfully empower students to make interesting and expressive work but I have also seen it preclude the development of conceptual, contextual and aesthetic virtues of student work. So I must balance my approach to teaching skills and encouraging the students to find their voice within the material.

In my experience as a student it was the instructor who encouraged me who made the biggest impact and allowed me to make a breakthrough. Finding the way to make my critique of student work and skills encouraging is one of the most important tasks I have. It goes hand in hand with the idea of the studio as a laboratory for experimentation and discovery. In the critique setting or one on one with the students my role is to ask questions rather than to answer questions.