éric marty

Teaching Philosophy

As an educator, I foster a culture of intellectual curiosity and active investigation. I endeavor to help my students to develop critical and design thinking, technical fluency and a strong personal artistic voice.

Learning & Creativity

Learning and creativity are strongly linked with perceptual and associative abilities. My pedagogical methods focus on the development of observational skills and the capacity to discover and internalize governing principles. This provides a firm foundation for the intuition and leaps of insight that are the mark of exceptional scholarship and creativity.

My role in teaching art practice is to enter into the perspective of the student and to help them understand their own creative process. Beginning students typically use what may be termed a naïve intuitive approach to creating art. By learning to observe, analyze and internalize their own work, they acquire a firm footing for the exploration of new ideas, and in the end master the informed intuitive approach essential for the emergence of their artistic voice.

To help students develop basic observational skills, I use tools aimed at improving perceptual sensitivity. These include studies of visual (and auditory) perception and illusion, Cagean attention-directing exercises, and meta-cognitive exercises designed to focus the student on the workings of their own cognition. Training in fundamentals and design principles can then proceed on a firm observational foundation.

I also focus on building descriptive grammars of style which can help students gain insights into an artist's style, or their own styles. A student who can analyze and internalize the grammar of a style is now in a position to invent in an intuitive, holistic way within that style. I believe this is important, since novelty and creativity tend to emerge from holistic, intuitive mechanisms.

Collaborative & Interdisciplinary Investigation

I believe that successful creative investigation acknowledges the continuity between the work and its context, and between particular fields of inquiry and the broader world. I encourage collaborative and interdisciplinary practice to provide a greater scope for inquiry. I use group discussion, brainstorming, and group critique as a way to multiply individual students' creative efforts.

Combined with a robust collaborative research structure, cross-disciplinary inquiry is a powerful tool for learning and creativity. It helps students learn to solve problems from multiple perspectives, and place their work within a broader cultural context. I actively encourage students from a wide range of fields to participate in my classes, and encourage them to bridge disciplinary boundaries. I am myself an interdisciplinary artist: trained in composition and computer music, I moved into sound art, installation, and design. I integrate students from diverse backgrounds and disciplines by maintaining a dynamic, flexible, participatory teaching style.

Teaching Technology: Art + Technique

In all my courses, I balance technical training with grounding in aesthetics, theory and historical context. Even courses that are technology driven are organized around conceptual investigations. I believe that technique should be used in the service of artistic expression. I encourage my students to question the purpose of their materials and techniques, so that their choice of media and use of technology are a means to an end.

My undergraduate projects are designed to develop a wide variety of technical skills while exploring personal expression within contemporary discourse, with a view to developing a strong artistic voice. Graduate students are expected to contribute significantly to contemporary discourse, while developing their personal practice. The success of a project is judged mostly by its depth of meaning, awareness of context and communicative power. Technical competence—craft—is judged separately from the art itself.

Professional Practice

Finally, I believe the study of art and other creative fields in university should be supported by a strong culture of public exhibition and discourse to prepare students for professional careers. In a creative endeavor, the final product is a public one; therefore, it must be put before the public even in an educational setting. Public presentation is the only true test of design, revealing how well a message communicates to an audience that is not aware of it a priori. Public presentation also allows the student to solve problems that are unknowable until the work is situated in the real world.

I expect and encourage my students to present their work in a variety of public fora, and I facilitate and direct their efforts while leaving creative control in their hands. I encourage my students to curate and produce their own events, submit work for consideration in professional venues, and participate in competitions, workshops and residencies. This final stage in the development of the work is the bridge to the profession of art.