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## /// ON TEACHING //

In the classroom, I foster a balance between skill building, conceptual development, and openness to the unfamiliar. Students learn techniques and un-learn preconceptions, and they are challenged to articulate and live into their roles as artists in the 21st century.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

On the second day of a studio class, I ask the students to share an image that recently intrigued them in some way; maybe they broke out into laughter seeing it, or were deeply touched, pleased, perplexed, etc. An image that “sticks.” After each student shares her/his image, they are all projected in a loop, and we discuss the effect of viewing them together: a process that echoes scrolling through a Facebook newsfeed. I urge students to discover relationships between these images and wonder aloud about contemporary phenomena like image-overload, selfies, police body cameras, circulation of memes, etc.

There are two major goals of this collaborative activity. One, to get students to articulate their curiosity for images at the onset of the semester, establishing a personal stake in visual culture. Two, to meet one another through the material and make connections between what's shared, highlighting critical issues related to representation and image production that will resonate throughout the class.

## SOMETHING YOU KNOW / SOMETHING YOU HAVE NEVER DONE

Technical demos are often opportunities to create collaborative works of art in the classroom. For example, to show students how to make a stop-motion animation in Time-Based Art, we brainstormed an idea: a seemingly dormant volcano erupting with rainbow colors, then sucking them back in. Students brought the necessary materials on the demo day, and I showed them how to set up the lighting studio and move things incrementally to create the illusion of moment. They took turns being the photographer, lava-mover, and director, making many coordinated and semi-coordinated efforts to throw fabric at just the right time the shutter opened so as to make it appear that chunks of lava were flying out into the sky. “So, should there be hot pink fluffy smoke coming out at the end?” “Yes, there should.” Spontaneous ideas were embraced and worked into the animation. After shooting, students figured out amongst themselves what frames worked and what didn't as they learned to edit the animation in Final Cut X. I provide pragmatic, detailed handouts for every step of a demo. My guided yet hands-off approach to teaching technique empowers students to trust their instincts, to embrace unexpected forces of gravity and bad timing, and to become technically proficient through rigorous yet playful engagement.

Assignments encourage a similar openness and receptivity. A recent prompt for my Foundations class Making Art is as follows: “Create a performance where you do something you know, then do something you have never done before. Create a lasting document of this process.” Projects ranged from a public a cappella mashup of Cher and Natalie Imbruglia in the atrium of the art building to a student athlete running the class through warmup drills on bubble wrap. This

assignment asks participants to work from an authentic, trusted center—their lived experience, and/or with a particular skill—and extend that out by doing something they'd never done before, an expanded extra step. Students also decided how to negotiate the documentation of their performances, some choosing to use video or photos, others tweeting or drawing it.

## OUT OF AND INTO THE WORLD

I also guide my students in becoming advocates of their own work, because once they leave college they will need to establish the conditions for a sustainable practice. Creation happens in the studio, but artists also must identify specific channels that facilitate its communication or exchange with the world. A current student in my Making Art class has reached out to the city of Richmond in planning to do a large-scale, permanent public mural. Students in Time Arts planned and created a sound art exhibition on Earlham's local radio station, WECL. At UF my Image/Order/Idea class published a collaborative photo book called *Speech Acts* for the UF Art + Architecture library's permanent collection and put on an exhibition at a local gallery that extended out of the gallery space, activating its outside walls with video and sound work to draw a range of visitors during Gainesville's monthly Art Walk. Working in teams on the logistics for such events fosters trust and lasting alliances between classmates, and it also prepares students to establish the conditions for a sustainable practice.