

Lauren Jacobs' Teaching Philosophy

I help my students to use more dynamic communication methods when interacting with the viewer through their art. I set a framework of questioning context and point of entry into each studio art course that I teach. Every person has a different set of visual metaphors based on their own experiences and social contexts. Figuring out how to construct a language that incorporates these metaphors but is legible to the viewer is an important goal for every artist. My students do not limit themselves by defaulting to creating "objects"; they also create spaces, body extensions, and experiences. In my classes we discuss incorporating other senses, not just vision, to create a more immersive art experiences. I want my students to relate to the viewer spatially, contextually, functionally, and experientially. It is important that they consider all of the elements and principles of art not just for the sake of aesthetics, but also making sure that their use of each ultimately helps to communicate the concept behind the work.

Artists need to find a balance in their body of work between complete experimentation and refining a personal visual language. The goal is that an artist's technique should live up to their vision, so they should have as many techniques in their toolbox as possible. The technical foundations of my classes are about developing muscle memory, an understanding of principles, an understanding of medias and substrates, and the ability to separate assumptions from authentic observations. The bulk of in-class time in my foundation courses is spent on exercises to help sharpen these abilities.

I stress methods of structuring studio time: students prepare with research, plans, sketches, and samples, and do not consider the work done until they've written about it, had it critiqued by peers and mentors, and documented it. All of my students turn in a piece statement for every work of art they show me. Additionally they prepare a digital portfolio and artist's statement as part of their final project.

Some of my students have been taking art classes their whole life, some have been making art with no formal training, and some have never thought about creating a work of art before. Especially in a class without a prerequisite, I don't want my inexperienced students to feel discouraged or penalized. I am also invested in transparency in my

grading system. For these reasons, I grade every project on five equally weighted criteria: 1) Presentation (Is it presented cleanly and professionally?) 2) Concept (Is it thoughtful?) 3) Craftsmanship (Does it demonstrate a good use of media and technique?) 4) Demonstration of topics covered in class (Does it demonstrate an understanding of what we've learned in class, such as perspective and proportion?) 5) Progress (is the student advancing the overall quality of their work?) I supply the students with a grading rubric so that they know what is expected in order to earn a given grade.

Outdated teaching methods have done our students the disservice of teaching them that art and academics are measurable and commodifiable. As a result they are ill-equipped to think critically about subjective topics, not only art, but also politics, ethics, and any other subject that requires judgment that cannot be reduced to strictly objective measurements. Art is about asking questions and initializing a dialogue both with yourself during the making and your viewers during the showing. Because of this, I believe art has the ability to bridge the gap between what students have categorized as "school learning" and "life learning".