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Statement of Teaching Philosophy:

Art education plays a powerful role in forming and mapping of a cultural landscape that has never been in greater need of maps. The art world is segmented into a panoply of sectors, styles and practices where anything-goes. In education, this overriding pluralism prompts corresponding needs to work, think and teach in the plural. My awareness of pluralism and contingency in our world shapes my ideas and practices of teaching.

Cultural pluralism means removing oneself from grand motifs of the past and moving toward more context-sensitive positions. Clearly, a positions-sensitive teacher cannot ground art education wholly in an authoritative style, medium or discipline, since no single style, approach or 'ism' predominates and likely will not in the foreseeable future. Absence of grand narratives of art or a dominant, structuring pedagogy, however, does not mean that "anything goes" in the sense of surrender to confusion, renouncing responsibility, belief or commitment. It means rather that teachers and students are constantly involved in a dynamic negotiation about the quickly changing nature of art, its public meanings, community ties, and life options for artists. Since art can be anything, there is all the more reason to focus our teaching on fundamental questions about what it is to be an artist in our time; to see through ephemeral objects to subjects. In brief, I believe that art education negotiates and generates the ambitions of artists.

Seeing education in terms of plural ambitions and identity has a range of consequences for how I teach and view the potential of the art school, especially when questions of reform arise. The art school best fulfills its mission when offering a context of development for artists: a microcosm that both reproduces and contributes to the art world-at-large including studio production, exhibition, history, criticism, and publication. Accordingly, I try to involve and coordinate as many of these elements as possible. Because artists exist in a pluralistic situation, past stable distinctions between historians, critics and artists are breaking down. It is frequently the case, sometimes demanded, that young artists define their positions using their own critical voices and historical perspectives. I celebrate this more active, knowing role of artists and aim to extend it as other divisions and myths of artists and art schools dissolve. Art schools can assimilate other models of education besides the ivory-tower 'academy' or nuts-and-bolt vocational institute. Similarly, the artist, finds far richer opportunities in looking beyond behavioral stereotypes such as the dandy aesthete or gruff bohemian. The situation really demands nimble-minded individuals who can balance multiple stances and issues and apply them imaginatively to specific needs. I encourage seeing the art school, without bounds, as a working part of the world and artists as symbolic entrepreneurs and rigorous thinkers within it.

Any profession or discipline benefits from rigorous thought of course, so I should tie this potential more explicitly to what visual artists actually do, especially to *visual studies*. The concept of visual studies in education has an interesting history that illuminates where art education stands today and where it should be tomorrow. Though it might suggest the exclusion of other senses and specialization, it was initially put forward as a way to reform modern art education through relieving the time-worn divisions between established departments and the fragmented treatment of art within them. Visual studies demonstrated the ability to close much of the functional gap between art history and studio practise. Pioneering programs adopted the word "visual" to remove the "fine" from fine art and in doing so placed art in a more inclusive field

with sociology, psychology, and scientific investigation. They also leveled the cultural distinctions between high and low as specious. I believe strongly in these inclusive motivations of visual studies and often define what I mean by a rigorous thinker in the arts as someone who comprehends visual culture in the broad-based language of vision itself.

But what is it to be involved in visual studies in a time of the denigration of vision? With good reason, post-structuralist critics and philosophers have analyzed the so-called primacy of vision as an operation of ideology and social apparatus that pins subjects down within a regime of sight. In view of this underlying critical theory, I believe that visual studies has to continue to adapt more reflective strategies, perhaps even take on an antagonism to its own visuality. For myself, I have come to think of the visual as a trope for a host of communicative practices involving language, sound, and performance. Understanding vision as incorporating language reforms a romantic notion of sight as a pure, immediate form of apprehension. In a more self-critical and mixed fashion, I continue to see visual studies as the most contentious, exciting, and relevant area of discourse for an artist to be involved in.

In addition to the incursions of critical theory, the explosive growth of information technology (IT) is radically altering visual studies and art education. The explosion is of particular interest to me considering my extensive work with new media and digital arts including the courses I teach in these areas. IT has fantastically extended sight and prismatically split representation into diverse formations of substance and abstraction. IT proliferates imagery, yet divides their distinctiveness as a sign system through a compounded overlay of alternative codes. The consequences for visual studies are clear: to specialize in vision in its purity is to specialize in nothing at all.

As dramatic as the consequences are for visual studies, I don't place too much stock in revolutionary rhetoric for IT and new media. The concepts of media ecology and "remediation" make better sense as a way of understanding the impact of new technologies as the reforming, revising and resituating of media practices; a process of transformation that rarely completely overturns them or extinguishes them. For education, remediation only extends the plural nature of the scene. Now, not only do new systems compete with each other for dominance, they also coexist with older forms and press their claims for additional skills. The pluralism of new media lies not only horizontally as numbers of available options but also vertically: systems overlay systems sometimes literally taking the form of older media as content for the new.

With the proliferations of new media in mind, I want to sum up these thoughts on pluralism with a sampling of ideas and comments for shaping a strong, contemporary program of photography, digital arts, and visual studies.

- Make information technology exist at a number of levels within the program: as means of production; as resource and database; as conduit for communication and presentation; as critical topic of media literacy and process of social transformation (remediation).
- Encourage and support effective presentation environments for the display of work, whether print- or screen-based. In new media, emphasize the importance of effective demonstrations of prototypes in this "demo or die" environment.
- Explore new initiatives in expanding visual studies programs to include, for example, sound work, software development and computer visualization.
- Make place matter. Design spaces sensitively to encourage "hanging out," social interaction as well as efficiency.
- Explore possibilities of the web for distance education as a supplement to place.
- Stress the importance of core courses in design and visual literacy. Fundamental abilities are even more crucial in face of new media.

- Dynamically relate the study of art history and criticism to studio work: encourage wide independent reading and viewing of diverse artwork.
- Integrate professional practices and internship opportunities into the curriculum while exploring emerging niches in communications and markets.
- Maintain a diverse community as a living cross-section of society and foster different social perspectives on media. For example, support women's interests in technology. Diversity of media interests and media ecology is likewise important.

These values inform my methods of teaching and play a vital role in my daily work with students. Practically speaking, I place the highest value on helping students define their positions as artists. This means working with individuals closely in forming collaborative relationships around work-in-progress. In informal settings or in class critiques, I give feedback to students by reading their works. I integrate theory into discussions by understanding the work, not as illustrating precepts but as the direct expression of theory. "Reading" also involves drawing out subtexts, pointing out linkages to other works and suggesting extensions to projects. I guide by pointing out and sharing resources. Especially in a situation of fast-changing technology, where no one can absolutely keep up, it's important to refer students to self-learning guides and to advise students generally in learning-how-to-learn rather than embroiling them (or the class) in the detailed mastery of a specific system. Given the complexity of new technologies coupled with the demands of overburdened work schedules, I encourage self-discipline and the efficient use of time, e.g., committing enough time to proven areas while holding onto a margin for experiment and speculation. Broadening my role as advisor, I try to help students form a "cognitive map" of the program as a whole. As with the urban landscape, this means forming an image according to the program's "markers" and significant features. A curriculum should be more than a set of courses to "get through" but instead offer a city-like place to draw on and dwell in.

All of the above methods converge in the purpose of education that artists form a full sense of the plural present and act on it.

Please note: my recent course syllabi are online at :

<http://vsw.org/courses/histphoto/>

<http://vsw.org/courses/MediaCulture05/>

<http://vsw.org/courses/VisualInfo06/>

Student work samples are online at:

<http://vsw.org/cb/studentwork>