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Teaching Philosophy

I remember watching my first print slip into the developer... the anticipation and then the seemingly magical appearance of tones and lines revealing an image of what had already become a mere memory... and then, just as mystically as it appeared, it darkened into a black cloud. Tragedy. A common occurrence as our small, teen-run darkroom lacked the most essential element, a teacher.

As a student, I learned from exceptional professors. They were not only supportive and dedicated, but also gave the right amount of guidance, while still allowing room for experimentation, freedom, and most of all, failure. Those teachers allowed me to operate outside of the current trends and given conventions; identified themes in my work which were not initially apparant to me; and always offered more questions than answers. My teaching philosophy has evolved from these interactions.

Now, as a teacher, I realize that I learned more from them than history, technique, and theory – I also learned the difference between presenting information and teaching. I believe that:
    one's own passion sparks enthusiasm in others,
    humor and fun can be two of the best catalysts for learning,
    patience is not only essential, but appreciated,
    there is a line between fairness and rigidness, between fear and respect,
    that an honest, constructive opinion will earn you years of trust,
    and most importantly, that the teacher should always inspire critical thought and never reinforce the limits of what is considered Art.

Within the classroom setting, I use a variety of teaching techniques for visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. I give verbal summaries before, during and after presentations. I require note-taking and use visuals constantly. I relate ideas to everyday experiences such as cooking and driving, especially for technical and mathematical concepts. I ask questions before giving facts. I have students teach each other whenever possible. Most importantly, I will explain a concept in as many different ways as possible, as many times as needed. As long as the student is trying to understand, I will try to make it understandable. I have a reflective approach to pedagogy that adjusts to student needs and unique situations; yet in every situation I encourage pluralism and challenge.

My goals for my students are:
    to have solid technical skills so that they may use them to bring their ideas into visual form,
    to conceptualize those ideas in a manner that pushes their boundaries and that of current conventions,
    to utilize whatever means and media is available to experiment and evolve their vision,
    and above all, to use all of these for intentional image-making that is true to their creative needs and desires.

"The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled."--Plutarch