

There are two simultaneous streams in my teaching. One involves helping students to clarify their vision. The other centers on giving them the tools to express that vision.

## Vision

I believe that every artist has a cosmology behind their ideas, which is built up over time in almost geological layers in response to the world they inhabit. The more aware an artist becomes of this cosmology within them, the more they can clarify<sup>1</sup> their actions as an artist.

I work best when I can listen and respond; My role as a teacher is to do everything I can to understand the vision of an individual student; To try to enter in to and comprehend the structures and ideas from which their work comes, and to help them to clarify and understand their vision more fully. My aim is to give a student the tools that they need to embody and express their vision.

I resonate deeply with Joseph Albers' goal of using artistic practice to open student's eyes to the world around them. The core of my work as a teacher deals with a student's ability to perceive and imagine. If this skill is clarified, then technique, craft, and the rest of artistic practice have a pocket to be stored inside of.

## Technique: The Power of Limits

Learning traditional technique is invaluable in helping a student of art to develop the persistence, patience, and perseverance necessary to make any kind of work in a contemporary context. It allows an opportunity to transform challenges and even frustrations in to potential.

Artistic Vision can be clarified through the limitations of learning technique. Like weights in a gym or rules in a game, materials provide resistance to imagination, and can play an active role in helping an artist to realize which forms express an idea and which do not. Pressing an idea through the resistance of materials and technique can

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<sup>1</sup> I believe that, as we live in such a visually active world, there is a constantly deepening layer of sediment on the artistic vision of any growing artist (of any level). Some of this sediment sticks, while some merely collects on the surface. "Clarifying vision" for me means clearing off the sediment on the surface to allow the form of an artist's vision to be comprehended.

be a playful and generative process. Responding to the character of a material and being sensitive to its attributes are also skills that I aim to foster through my teaching.

Learning technique and pushing against the resistance of material can also help a student to learn discipline and patience, which are invaluable skills for an artist to have in following an idea through to its fullest potential. While an engineer might search for the simplest material to use in his or her work, it is often helpful for artists of all levels to push against difficult materials to an extent in creating their work.

## Playfulness & Excellence

It is crucial for a student of art to open their eyes to the world around them. One incredibly important goal in my teaching is to encourage work that is playful (while still pursuing excellence). Playfulness allows for a greater breadth of experimentation, which fosters the growth of a more multi-faceted view of the world. It allows students to approach an exploratory sense of abandon in their work, which is crucial in fostering growth that can sustain its own momentum and evolve.

## For Example

I was able to work with a painting student recently who had a fantastic virtuosity with texture and a very good eye for seeing planes of flat color in relationship, but whose work was falling victim to a conflict between color and texture in which neither was given room to breathe. I asked her to quickly translate her composition in to a relief (like a topographical map) using torn up cardboard boxes that were in the studio, and then to use a spotlight to cast planes of flat shadow across the relief. This helped her to perceive the interaction of texture and flat planes as she returned to her painting that afternoon.

My aim in teaching is to foster playful approaches to creating which can reflect a variety of perspectives (and eventually virtuosity) back on to the pursuit of excellence in creative practice. Pulled through the resistance of materials (from cardboard to charcoal) this approach can expand vision.