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Teaching Philosophy

We are living in a “mash up” era, where the integrity of individual images is collapsing in favor of the multiplicity of montage – in our music, our images, our cell phones. New York Times writer Kevin Kelly proclaims, “We are headed toward screen ubiquity,”* where verbal language takes a back seat to screen language. Our students are already at this place. They are accustomed to multi-tasking and instant gratification. “Slow” is not an option. “Now” is yesterday. Everything can be experienced at once.

In order to teach context in the 21st century, we must mash up historical with contemporary approaches; proper technique with new technology. We must ask students to add sophistication and complexity to their ability to process imagery through understanding the evolution and historical context of contemporary images. We must ask them to take an active role in the classroom experience, transforming the lecture to a participatory call and response. Students learn most effectively through doing – supporting the dissemination of information with in-class projects creates an active learning environment.

I approach the classroom from a position of mentorship. In today’s media saturated world, I can no longer claim expertise – I learn from my student’s constant browsing of cultural phenomena just as they do from my guidance and depth of experience. Allowing them to be teachers is important to the contemporary classroom. I encourage a collaborative experience by asking them to take an active role in classroom discussions, presentations and demos, and by asking them to work together in groups to fulfill assignments. As students come more prepared to absorb and more competent with technology, the classroom is freed up to become a place where ideas are explored and concept is prioritized.

From digital imaging to the blogosphere to Twitter, individuals experience the world virtually. Artists and designers define the way that we interact with this technological world; new media evolves from the foundations of traditional image making, yet shifts our ideas of tangible space, narrative and authenticity. Like the new media world, the classroom learning experience is malleable and intuitive; contemporary students respond to and expect that their educators bring new technologies into the classroom, however we also need to stress the importance of interacting with the physical world. As educators, it is our responsibility to offer them not only the skills to create within the digital world, but more importantly, the understanding of how all kinds of technology (ancient to potential) can support their ideas and concepts. Within the professional world, their ability to express their ideas effectively and individually, will determine their success.

*NYTimes Magazine, November 23, 2008