

jjhiggins.
teaching philosophy

I am an interventionist in the context of social space. I am a collaborator constructing examination spaces for participants who become my co-conspirators in a social discourse that addresses value and meaning. I observe the ways we select, create and use tools for survival and growth and how we comprehend time and space. I examine these compression and expansions through applied media and technology and maneuver spaces in both public and private forums.

My teaching cannot be separated from my artwork. I am the bridge between one space and another, working within the intermedia. My work and my teaching are about the constructs of community, communication and the architecture of an environment where language forms and ideas intersect. The Fluxus idea of concept art is my approach to the estate of the world, which provides a menu of choice, The experience of all artistic practice falls into the mixture, and the individual determines the success of the result.

As a teacher, I recognize my role as a learner and I strive to maintain the adaptability of a young mind. I engage in the discourse of new media with its interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary aspects that apply to spaces and ideas traditionally segregated [or divided] by discipline. With a content reflecting both image and culture, creativity, critical thinking and cross-disciplinary solutions should become exploratory, experimental, and effective. The tools and strategies selected to determine meaning should include comprehensive research, reading and discussion, skill building and application, technology, and time. The restructuring of ideas regarding image, text, communication, interactive spaces, and social/political contexts [among others] should be determined through consensus and fall within the framework of a social etiquette.

As an educator, my attention has been drawn to the development of students as individual thinkers and as contributing members to the community-at-large. My desire is that the community developing within the classroom exceeds the institution, both in architectural space and in time. That includes critical thinking, confidence, recognizing strengths and vulnerabilities, a desire to learn, respect for others, and becoming a contributing member of the community in which they engage. My role places me as their guide in this new landscape: initiating projects and discussions, modeling expectations and a strong work ethic, structuring time and space to engage with challenging ideas, listening, and yet maintaining a level of separation as the authority when making evaluations and establishing or enforcing policy.

My passion is for that engagement, the formation of ideas, and new ways of seeing and experiencing time and space. It is an integral part of my personal construct and my artistic practice. As an artist, a curator, and a teacher I am responsible for collecting objects and constructing spaces to engage my audience--my students, the public, anyone willing to become co-conspirators--in an interactive process. I provide the framework and the format--the field of play and the expectations. I establish the foundation, make room for experimentation, risk, failure. I observe, ask questions, seek out answers, demand excellence, recognize individual contributions, mentor, listen, and learn. I defend the atmosphere. I challenge empirical knowledge, but trust intuition. I admit to human frailties and to not having every answer. I apologize when I have exceeded boundaries, but challenge theory, knowledge, information, and cross-reference and apply any idea and media that can be gathered. I believe in absurdity and profundity, in terms of life and the serious issues that need to be addressed, humor, technology, poetry, and the willingness to learn from mistakes. Risk and reward, while producing intelligent work and thinkers comfortable in not falling into the mainstream. The key to finding the voice of their own language, a path to finding a way to implementing etiquette, constructing new forms of text and image, and a designating a forum in which to determine meaning, that is my hope, my gift, my art, my teaching practice, and my philosophy.

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