

ERIN NEVE

Teaching Philosophy

My goal as an art educator is to ignite and awaken my students' curiosity through the process of making. I guide students in observation and play. I teach them visual literacy and critical thinking, self-reflection, and focus. I help them find connections to their work, and I root them on as they nurture those connections. I emphasize a rigorous technical understanding of photographic processes with a critical and thoughtful eye in order to best prepare them with the tools to express their visions and ideas. And, I model for my students a passion and love for what I make and a contagious enthusiasm for the photographic medium.

Because of my background in philosophy and photographic theory, I am uniquely situated to provide my students with an interdisciplinary and contextualized approach to their work. In my classes, students participate in active discussions on the nature of photography, ethical problems they will encounter, and concepts such as identity, reality, and time as seen through photographic language. I urge them to find their visual voice. I introduce writings by photo theorists and artists, and students are given a solid grounding and understanding of the history of photography and their own role within this history. By giving students a conceptual photographic foundation alongside a rigorous and thorough technical foundation, I aim to provide students with a core understanding of photography with which they can then build their own creative practice.

Craftsmanship and attention to detail are vital components in my classes. Students learn color theory, color balance, solutions to lighting problems, composition, and advanced digital and analog post-production processes. Students articulate their creative process by writing formal analyses and through individual and group critiques. I emphasize fine-tuned and large-format printing as their final stage of production, and I find opportunities for my students to present their work through exhibitions and public presentations. I require intermediate and advanced students to keep a digital portfolio and an artist website; by clarifying what they do through their web presence, they are then further able to clarify their own vision and direction of their work. I invite working local artists to speak with students about their work and about the students' work, providing additional artist eyes and thoughts about their photographs, and showing them real-life examples of artists working in their community.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, I emphasize personal connection. Students learn *how* to make photographs; but unless they discover *why* – why to work hard, why to push through challenges, why to take risks, why to value what they make – they will never fully embrace it as a means of discovery in their world and in their lives. By empathizing with and understanding their subjects, and through honest exploration of themselves, students learn to connect with what they make, and by extension, to connect with their creative selves.

Photography is a rich arena for teaching intellectual inquiry and for teaching personal and meaningful connections through creating. Education is powerful; teaching, even more so. As a profession and as a calling, teaching photography provides me the opportunity to support, push, inspire, and guide my young artists. While I certainly cannot provide all the answers, I encourage them to search for and examine their own questions.