

## **HERB VINCENT PETERSON**

Philosophy of teaching (In progress and non-ending and chock-full of writing errors)

A while ago I came to the conclusion that as an active educator and studio artist/designer, I see no difference between one practice to another. Since my start of teaching I have intently set ways to cultivate this merging of both worlds. While simultaneously I have acted to foster new ways of teaching, making, doing, and participating in the larger understanding of higher Ed. By sharing the secrets of this blurred way of being, my continual aim is to articulate my perspective of teaching and my role as a colleague and practitioner of both art and design to our community, academically and locally.

As my studio practice informs my teaching, through the past few years I have begun a list of ideas that help direct my teaching efforts. I find that rules and or manifestos create an energy that is attractive while enticing the ability in keeping focused on the larger question of what we are doing. For the time being, I have chosen only a handful to include due to the lengthy size this could create. Below is my philosophy of teaching, a set of ideas that are in constant progress and never ending and on a good day contradict each other with ease.

### *TEACHING IS MORE THAN TEACHING*

Teaching is not easy. It is constant, vast and continuously differs each time it happens. Teaching cannot be turned off and there are no time clocks. Teaching is a way of being, a practice that takes time like becoming a devout believer. To teach is to give up and surrender all preconceived notions about life and the human mind. We teach because we see the importance of knowledge and this happens not always in the place we think of as teaching. As an educator life is teaching us and in return, we are teaching life. We see opportunity, discrepancies, potential, ideas, and abilities. We see what is to come in the world at the moment and for the future.

### *LISTEN WELL AND ASK GOOD QUESTIONS*

Listening is a practice of strength and wisdom. In all forms, it takes time and patience. As we listen, we make connections, hear the problems and issues that rise in the moment of learning. As we listen and pay attention, we gather data, references, and context that informs the questions we ask. It is my desire to make way for new depths in the students leaning, to not be pretentious enough in thinking I am the only one that knows. Listening activates the good question in hopes of never giving an answer; the good question brings on new questions and leads to knowledge.

### *MAKE THE BIG PICTURE HAPPEN*

Whenever you can manage it, allow for the real to take place in the studio, classroom or learning moment. Always give students the opportunity to find the applicable possibility in the problem being asked the question being given or the assignment being assigned. Make it real, make it do something, make it more than one more art board in a portfolio that will take up room and never be used. Talk about the problems, how the world is and show this through real engagement. Understanding the big picture will make the blow of the real world less of an issue. Bring in professionals, take them to professionals, give them the real experience and always be honest in the picture you paint.

### *BRING CULTURE HERE, BRING THEM TO CULTURE THERE*

Always look for the chance and opportunity to allow culture to be involved in the learning. Culture in the studio gives a larger understanding, perspective and overall makes the learning real. Take your students places, visit museums, studios, artists, and designers, bring designers, artists, makers, studios, to you. Show that there is a dynamic that we all understand; we all are going in the same direction. Some do it one-way where as others do it another, regardless, we all started somewhere. If you don't have it with you, go find it and share the experience with your students.

### *PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF THE TYPICAL*

After hearing a student once explain the making of her photographs in an introductory photo critique, I asked the question, "Do we even need these photos?" As the class stood amazed by my odd question, I again asked, "What was more important in the making?" As the student stood there expressing a wonderful moment between her grandmother and herself, I felt that the photographs lacked the effect that we all felt after hearing her heartfelt story. My point, don't always allow the typical to inform the way teaching happens. Especially in art and design, as its constant, we need to focus enough to break the rules in good places and where learning can take place. Change things up; don't always think that a photograph has to look like a photograph. This student, eventually started performing after taking a performance based course and graduated with a portfolio of spoken and performed pieces.

### *MAKE FRIENDS AND COLLABORATE, SHARE EXPERIENCES, SHARE THE SECRETS*

Collaboration is one of the best ways to learn who you are and how you work as an artist. Teaching this is just as important. In the studio give your students the opportunity to work with one another. Make them work through problems and make them do the impossible. As they learn that they can work with the most difficult person in the room, a newfound power and ability will be established and what can come of this is great risk taking. Teach them that in most cases the studio practice is a non-solo way of working, we all rely on others to help make the magic. Through the working with others, we share our ideas and learn from one another by sharing the many artistic secrets we utilize in our practice.

### *EAT, BREATHE, AND LIVE THE DISCIPLINE*

Always teach that the best way to learn and understand is to dive deep. I tell my students that they need to know everything about what it is they are interested in, as if they were in a love affair. Tell them to look at magazines, tell them to get lost in the library, tell them to be involved in the community. Everything they do should be in reflection of their practice. Diving deep is living in the studio, taking baths once a week, drinking coffee to keep the energy going and working day in and day out. This way of learning is all encompassing and happens at different stages within a student's career.

As this list tends to be ongoing, I will share a few other important factors. More than anything, I continually strive to promote critical thought in my students. I want them to have the ability to critically think of issues, ideas, and create articulated responses. I want to see them have an appreciation for life; to understand that life is our canvas, what we live is what we create. I hope to activate an understanding of desires; to me, there is an ache to have a voice and to present it to the world. They should acknowledge the processes, our ever-changing tools that we desire, dictated by conceptually driven principals. I want them to obtain a critical eye so they can view life, to respond to initial responses and act on impulse. In addition, I teach community and share that we act as a whole and create what we critically judge. Within community, they learn taking risks, an ability to pull past the normalcy of the mediocre and successfully learn. They as well embrace the equality amongst their peers. This is the subjectivity of individualism and how we can add to one another's process. I continually provoke change with the desire to pose new thought and question what we haven't questioned and to see a new outcome. Lastly, I demand understanding proper exploitation that results in the using of resources that are always amongst us, especially in academia. All of this I believe, equals a readied student that is aware of what is next and how to articulately respond in a visual way.