

## Jason E. Butler -Teaching Philosophy

I am an artist role model for my students. Everything I present to them about creativity, ambition, passion etc. is embodied in my art practice—they know I stay up till 2am working on a piece, they know how much the materials cost and what it is about. I regularly bring in parts/pieces of my own work to show for examples and demos. I tell them about grants, gallery shows or public art projects that I am applying to. I talk about shipping large works across the country and how to build a piece with that end in mind. As I describe the concepts of my work, students begin seeing what it takes to be a professional artist and to develop personal works of art.

I show them the exciting world of contemporary art. Each semester I reference articles I have read in popular art magazines, these become assigned for reading. A short essay assigned in connection gets them thinking critically and formulating responses. Debates and writing are also formed around art films I regularly show such as *Exit through the gift shop*. Every semester I take my students to the studios of producing artists. This becomes a glimpse and a chance to hear another artist describe his/her work. It is also a testimony to the importance of art networking. Other field trips include local gallery and museum shows.

I want my students to feel that I am genuinely interested in them and enthusiastic about working with them on their art. I want to be an art mentor for them and lead students along the art discovery journey. I know personally, how valuable this kind of mentor can be for a young artist.

I have seen, that with experience the concepts of a young students art will mature and develop naturally—these do not need to be extracted painfully. I work with these maturing artists to explore the conceptual side of their work blended evenly into the technical skills being practiced. I introduce my students early on to the artist statement and writing about their work.

I have extensive technical skill, which I enjoy sharing with my students. I am interested in exploring student art beyond the studio/gallery and into the community. This has taken shape in the painting of large murals (with donated materials) for an elementary school near our campus. In the future it will include the rotating placement of student sculpture in the community.

To open up an understanding of technology, self-promotion, self-image, networking and marketing I have my students create their own website through *otherpeoplespixels.com*. This becomes much more than a design/experience assignment: an eye opening, “I can do this” revelation.

In the spirit of Billy Collins’ *Poetry 180* I read a contemporary poem to my students at the start of every class.