

Alexa Wheeler
Teaching Philosophy

As artists, we walk through each day with tremendous power: the power to express, the power to nurture, the power to self-explore and rehabilitate, the power to facilitate change, and the power to educate. I have extraordinary opportunity to create, but must be conscious all the while of myself as not just someone who builds, constructs, and produces art, but one who appreciates, evaluates, and educates within the arts.

I am committed to an art education with a seminar style, interdisciplinary approach that provides students with the flexibility, adaptability, empathy and the experience of the arts, both traditional and new media, as a very wide-ranging endeavor within multiple paths of interest. As an educator, it is my philosophy to constantly question history, historians, values, practicing artists, and the growth of technology. It is my fundamental objective to assist students in using art and technology to communicate, discuss, question, and enlighten. My students are exposed to intellectual and historical models to build their understanding and analysis of the past as they establish direction in their work and foresee the future of new media and electronic communications while still cultivating the timeless traditions and techniques of the arts. I promote an environment in which students must think critically not only about art and the art-world, but also about the world at large and it's inherent connection, in all aspects of living, with art, design, technology, and interactivity in general. A collaborative teaching philosophy within programs, divisions, and departments in any college or university must be key to the success of a new media arts education, and I am passionate about creating bridges in curricula with colleagues within a multitude of specific interests and research that can benefit from, work in conjunction with, and support a well-rounded new media arts education today.

A primary objective of my pedagogy is to expand the creative, conceptual, and technical aspects of a student's visual thinking through multiple processes of creativity and investigation. Refining a student's ability to observe, create, and analyze through studio practice and problem solving allows for this. As artists, we can move consciously and fluidly between creating art that expresses our individual viewpoints and those that express societal perspectives. My goal is to support the self-realization of each student and to develop individuals who can grasp this physical and virtual world around them in a comprehensive and critical manner.

When working with a diverse population of students, it is imperative to encourage and enhance both technical and creative skills, especially within the media arts. Some students require more instruction on a technical level, and others need to let loose and (un)focus on creativity. It is of utmost importance to encourage intuitiveness in the process of creation, but also introduce the ideas of self-editing and critique. It is imperative for students to acquire the ability to discuss and defend their work cohesively and intelligently, as well as to analyze the work of others. Continued exposure to historical and contemporary models develops a student's visual vocabulary and offers an opportunity to aid in the successful communication of their ideas. My students must be both proficient and comfortable being both the critiqued artist and the critic.

My overall philosophy regarding an education in new and digital media arts and visual thinking lies in the allowance of individual imagination, skill, ambition, and preferences while emphasizing the importance of successful team and group project work mimicking any career path in the "real" world. I believe that process is as essential to a work as the final product, yet these processes must be executed with a developed technical skill fundamental in the education of visual, performative, and interactive arts. True refining of technique and exposure and mastery of various technologies is integral to a lucrative arts education and to the success of intuitive image making and project readiness. Exploring many concepts and principles two, three, and especially four-dimensionally is critical in this time of history, and art history, as clear genres in the world of art, media, and technology are steadily becoming indistinguishable and interdisciplinary. The constant analysis of the present is crucial in determining those trends that are to follow and those trends that once led revolutions and movements in times past.