

No one can teach anyone else how to make art. As someone who has taught art for almost two decades, this is an important truth for me to remember, as well as an important truth for me to impart to those artists I work with. Art can be learned, but it is an independent process that is developed within each practitioner. This learning looks like working on authentic process, development of technique and experimentation with materials.

An authentic process is one that is defined by its universality within the work of the practitioner—it is not bound by any one medium and can be just as effective with traditional materials as contemporary. It is a process of investigation and engagement. Working on technique and material experimentation are more dependent on the physical reality of the “stuff” of art. This is what most studio time is spent on; learning best practices in the painting studio, safe use of printmaking equipment and appropriate ways to sharpen a pencil. Once these two things—authentic process and confidence in and knowledge of techniques and materials are combined—then a student can begin working towards discovering what their art looks like.

One of my most important roles as an art teacher and facilitator is to create an atmosphere where serious and inquisitive making can occur. This has to include accountability which is a balance of both encouragement and criticism where disciplined struggles and joyful creations coexist. The goal of my teaching and facilitating is to come alongside students and other artists to help lead them down a path where authentic and profound realizations can be made in not only their artistic process but also in their life.

The *work* of art is a challenging business. Many of the processes and discoveries artists try seem fruitless and frustrating, if not discouraging. As maturing makers struggle to grow beyond their perceived abilities, they need to be able to take satisfaction in their work and remember what it is that drew them in the first place to create. My goal in my own work and in my teaching is not to have the art take center stage, but to allow the result of the art, the change that looking and doing creates in me, be the most beneficial end result. Art is ultimately about life—a fuller engagement with the world around us as artists but also communicating that to our audience through the works we make.