

# ANDY SHAW

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I credit my liberal arts background at Kenyon College for setting value in multi-perspective analysis and for developing an ability to synthesize distinct ideas into single, working directions. In my classes, all ideas are up for evaluation, especially my own. I have taught seminars that conclude with a discussion that aims to dismantle the premise that had guided our study. In critiques, I commonly step beyond the conversation to focus attention on our process. My strength is in the development of effective methodologies through malleable thought.

I value these skill sets for art students: Improvisation, Community, Iterative Generation, Active Learning, Craftsmanship, Off-campus Practicum, and Connections to Historical and Contemporary Practice.

A fundamental tenet of my teaching asserts that attitude produces work. Frequently I see the mistake of criticism, that it primarily addresses what is wrong. Students learning in this environment look at their art to identify its shortcomings. Alone, this sets a dangerous precedent. I prefer to guide students using opportunity-based viewing, from which the artist learns to look for latent areas of potential, for moments where something honest and real sneaks in, and for ways to further what is compelling. Being vulnerable to learning rather than to being right or wrong requires a great deal of trust. Within closely advised relationships, I require students to adopt self-reliance and personal accountability. I don't hesitate to point out faults in the work, but more often than not, I concentrate the conversation on what one student called "Phase 10," a term to describe my seeing of their next possible 10 steps.

In developing coursework, I use my reflections on the field to identify opportunities. Knowing that Ceramic art most often produces ceramic objects, I wanted to throw a curve to students. In response I designed *Clay as Intermediary Material*, a course that requires students to use clay only as an intermediary stage towards another artistic outcome. Our results included live performance, video and claymation, sound recordings, paintings, prints, photographs, knitted rugs, and one baked cake. For another course, *Rethinking Material and Practice*, I asked students to work in the glaze lab to develop ceramic composites, neither clay nor glaze, and then to invent fabrication methods and artwork using these materials. The course emphasized the dependency of 3 parts: raw material, construction, and application. Any change in one requires adjustments in all. In these classes, our imaginations for the Ceramics field expanded.

Ceramics is fraught with binaries: Wheel or Handbuilding, Function or Sculpture. A further complication is that the binaries collude so that Wheel suggests function, Handbuilding suggests sculpture. I would like to write an introductory ceramics curriculum that presents multiple starting points for generating form. The series of courses called *Forming* would group methods into new frames. For instance, *Rotation* would cover methods relating to circular shaping: wheel, coil building on both moving and stationary platforms, plaster lathing, and radial sledging. The intention of *Forming* is to teach integration and connections among methods while ending the binary, either/or structure that is so troublesome. The binary is not a problem due to the methods. The binary becomes a problem when it is understood as the default starting point for everything. Students struggle against the binary and at best, they find a "grey area" which actually reinforces the binary and its inherent structure of opposition. Another course called, *Not Function, Not Sculpture*, was an effort to reclaim creative autonomy outside the binary and its grey areas.

When writing artist statements, I encourage students to write a 2-person dialogue. Where prose sentence structure can sound too definitive for students unsure of their guiding principles, the dialogue validates both the awkwardness of an idea and its reflection. Another method refers to Anglo-Saxon kennings, poetic compound words, as a means of reaching content hard to grasp through a single term. Out of these exercises, students more readily acknowledge their creative purposes in sentence-based statements. Another in-class exercise focusses on choice and the difficulty in defining the criteria for selection. In PowerPoint lectures and technical demonstrations, I present a range of possibilities, often to overwhelm students so they feel the need to assert themselves through artist's choice. In the smallest of details, the students reveal viewpoint. I frequently ask students what their choices indicate about their priorities.

As a teacher, I help students achieve self-realization through their art. I do my job well when our classroom holds energy, builds momentum, and invents within a collaborative, open-spirited effort.