

TEACHING PORTFOLIO

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CONTENTS

- 3 Teaching Philosophy
- 6 Inclusivity Statement
- 9 Course Proposals
- 13 Syllabus
- 19 Class Project
- 23 Critique Statement
- 26 Grading Rubric
- 28 Midterm Course Evaluation

Teaching Philosophy

Over the years, the best educators I had, were those who understands me, but were also able to enrich my perspectives. In other words, they help me dive deeper into an effective conversation with myself, but also help me understand the world in a different way. Coincidentally, the art of photography is also about that. As this fascinating art about facts, it motivates you to create new perspectives out of what you have already perceived – it is about understanding what you have, and transforms them.

I have always keep the two important concepts in mind: **understanding and inspiration**. With the help of these two ideas, my goal is to encourage students to pursue their directions with motivations.

As educator, we all know that understanding is very important. However, there are still often times in my learning experience that I feel I was not heard or understood by my professors. As an international students who does not take English as my first language, I had frustrating experience when a professor soon lose patience in listening to me and keeps imposing his own thoughts on me based on misunderstanding of my ideas. Therefore, I deeply felt how important it is to understand what it is that the students hope to learn, to express, and to achieve – in order to give better suggestions, and to help them understand themselves better as well. Students come to universities with openness, which an educator should respect. It is crucial that an educator is aware of the power dynamic within student-professor relation, and make sure to foster mutual understandings and dialogue on equal footing. Therefore, my goal is to make my students feel safe and comfortable in class and private conversations with me, and willing to participate in this way.

Besides understanding, a good educator enlightens the class. In a class, each students is different, on the basis of understanding their individualities, I try to emphasize those that are in common between

my field of knowledge with the students' interest. As a visual artist and an educator, I deeply understands that I should never stop studying, in order to obtain wealthy knowledge about my discipline. However, what is more important for achieving this goal is to better help student develop their interests in the subject. When I was an undergraduate student, I took Film as my major based on a feeling that it seemed interesting, but I had no idea where the charms lie. However, as I was introduced film philosophy via a film I love by one of my professors while she was teaching a screening class, I fell in love with Film in a brand new way. I was able to enter a new world where everything seems familiar but more exciting.

The purpose of education is to help students develop a deeper understanding and knowledge about their discipline, but it is also very important that the educator does that in an engaging and constructive way. My way of doing that is to combine the knowledge of visual culture and photography with everyday phenomenon. Visual culture and photography is everywhere in our contemporary life. My goal is to enlighten students with new perspectives on things that they are familiar with, which will foster them to think in a simple but effective way and to motivate their creativity.

Inclusivity Statement

Just like why I chose to study outside my home country, I think it is very important to be exposed to a diverse community. The diversity that students from all backgrounds, countries, races, genders and ages brings into a class is very precious, as they often brings new perspectives to the class. This excites a class and serves as a great resource for all of us to learn. Therefore, **it is very important to cherish and respect every student's differences.**

My personal experiences of studying in two western countries made me realize the fact that inclusivity is still often mis-carried out in institutions. In my experiences of studying-abroad, there are usually much more native students than international students. In some classes, I felt that no one cares about my idea when I uses examples from my own culture; in some other classes, my ideas are heard, but the professors and students can only talk about my culture from a western point of view, which sometimes generates orientalization. It is sometimes true that differences can create conflicts and misunderstandings in class, and it depends on how open an educator wants to be in order to solve these problems. With that in mind, I will try my best to understand my students and think from their perspectives. If there are things I don't really know, I will ask them and have conversations with them. Through those conversations, I will think about the way they think, and think in the way they think. When we know how other people think, it will help us understand their logic and world view better. This also helps an educator to step out of their own perspectives and respects others' view from a more fundamental way.

I remember once in one of my graduate classes, a professor talks about how a contemporary art exhibition happens in a small, undeveloped Africa country is like a miracle to that place. I was very uncomfortable about that, as I deeply know how easy it is for a privileged western person to treat something that has already been popular in

the west, and now happening in an eastern poor country, as a spectacle. Even though the professor herself probably think that this is a way to bring in inclusivity, I do not agree with this way at all. I don't think this is showing that a professor really understands a student, and think from their world view. If I were the professor, I would not chose to overstate the economy background of that country, and I'll focus on discussing just the art pieces themselves in a critical way as usual, just like how I comment on any other exhibitions. This is showing my students that all those different backgrounds are treated by me in an equal way. Similarly, I respect my students as individual humans, no matter what identity they are. What is more important for an inclusive class is how an educator can effectively help an individual -- to make each one of them feel they are valued -- while not understating or overstating what groups they come from will not help with that. As a professor, my goal is to ensure that the students feel safe, comfortable and positive about their learning environment, in order to be able to develop multicultural skills.

Course Proposals

Intro to darkroom

3 Elective Credits. (12 students max)

Instructor: L. Zhang (zzhang17@risd.edu)

In the digital age, where all the images are hyper-real, film practice keeps us in mind the ontology of photography. It keeps our eyes sensitive about image quality, and helps to strengthen our photographic practice. This class prepares students with the foundational techniques of black and white darkroom, black and white and color enlarging. With 35mm cameras as examples, students will learn technical knowledge of film camera exposure, developing and printing in the darkroom. They were then given assignments to develop their understanding of the visual qualities of film photography such as tonal range, color, texture, light. They are also welcomed to creatively experiment with media when they are learning the basics. The final project will provide them opportunities to express their own ideas and forms using 35mm film cameras.

Time-based Photography

3 Elective Credits. (12 students max)

Instructor: L. Zhang (zzhang17@risd.edu)

Thanking about how Instagram structures our photographs in a timeline sequence, we will find it is important for us to consider and reconsider the idea of time in today's age. Photography utilizes time in a variety ways: sequencing, long exposure, moving image and so on. Time-based Photography is a class that looks in particular at photographic artworks that are related to time. This class helps us to contemplate upon the idea of time – what it means to us in our everyday image encounters, what it means to us philosophically, and what

it means for both the history and contemporary of photographic art. The class takes cinema, film, experimental film, performance art as its fundamental object of study. Students will look at how the concept of time is recorded, played, or experimented, in order to better understand photography as a time-based art. They will explore theoretical foundations of time-based image making and try to make their way of visualizing their ideas.

Photography beyond reality

3 Elective Credits. (12 students max)

Instructor: L. Zhang (zzhang17@risd.edu)

How is reality understood, and transcended by photography? How can a photograph create what André Bazin called “an hallucination that is also a fact”? By understanding the ontology of Image, by carefully reflecting upon reality, and by examining the principles of perception, we will understand how photography, instead of documenting the real, mediates reality in different ways. The final goal for this class is to prepare students with methodologies for creating photographic images that go beyond reality. We will look at how the early surrealists, photographers and video artists make use of, ruin, and challenge reality. We will think about the changes happening in the analogue-to-digital transformation, new technologies such as Augmented Reality and the tradition of abstract photography that is entwined with this process. We will study how time and culture are distorted by the visual, and the meanings behind this. We will experiment on how to transform everyday scenes into spectacles. We will dream and imagine together with our cameras. Through studio research, workshops, seminars and critiques, students will be encouraged to creatively experiment with photographic visual devices and photographic process, in order to

strengthen their established practices and propositions. The instructor will work closely with students and help them construct arguments and methodologies to frame their work.

Syllabus

Course Title: Photography Beyond Reality

Term: Winter Semester 2021

Credits: 3

Time:

Location: Design Center

Office Hours:

Capacity: 12

Instructor: Zixuan (Leah) Zhang (Grad Photography)

Contact: zzhang17@risd.edu

Course Description:

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Through studio research, workshops, seminars and critiques, students will be encouraged to creatively experiment with photographic visual devices and photographic process, in order to strengthen their

established practices and propositions. The instructor will work closely with students and help them construct arguments and methodologies to frame their work.

Student Learning Objectives:

- Reflect upon the concept reality in photographic practice and the need/impact of going beyond it through readings and art references.
- Think about the alternative modes of documentation.
- Learn to creatively incorporate different techniques and concepts into photographic practice that surpasses reality.

Course Requirements:

- Show up and participate in all classes. Be attentive to the schedule and arrive on time for course activities, including the guest speaker lectures/field trips.
- Creatively explore your practice in relation to the content of the class.
- Readings or other materials will be assigned and posted on class google drive folder each week. Students are required to read/view/write and digest these materials, be prepared and be active for class discussions.
- Present previous, on-going and final work.

Class Schedule

Class 1

Lecture: Syllabus overview and introduction to photography beyond reality

Student discussion

Assignment #1 prepare presentation of your work

Class 2

Student work presentation – 20min each

Lecture: Look at a variety of artists from the list, followed by a class conversation

Assignment #2 Read and prepare for class discussion

Class 3

Reading discussion

Workshop: introduction to creative usage of lighting kit and perceptual devices (filter, glass), performance and rearrangement of space

Assignment #3 Read and prepare for class discussion

Class 4

Reading discussion

Workshop: introduction to creative usage of lighting kit and perceptual devices (filter, glass), performance and rearrangement of space

Assignment #4 Setting up the vision: creative application of the tools for altering space and visual; Draw ideas for semester project

Class 5

Class critique: Assignment #4

Student present their draft/ideas for semester project

Class idea/work discussion

Assignment #5 Watch class materials and prepare for class discussion; research into guest lecturer

Class 6

Readings/Materials discussion

Guest Lecturer speech

Class 7

Field trip to ICA Boston

Discussion during trip

Assignment #6 write response for field trip

Class 8

Class discussion about field trip and writing

Work in progress critique group 1

Class 9

Lecture: Look at a variety of artists from the list

Work in progress critique group 2

Class 10

Readings/Materials discussion

1:1 Studio Visits

Class 11

Final critique group 1

Class 12

Final critique group 2

Submit work statement by the end of the day

Reading Material & Resources

André Bazin - The Ontology of the Photographic Image

Walter Benjamin - On Some Motifs in Baudelaire

Vilém Flusser - Into the Universe of Technical Images

Christopher Williams - Linhof Technika V fabricated in Munich, Germany. Salon Studio Stand fabricated in Florence, Italy. Dual cable

release. Prontor shutter. Symar-s lens 150mmm/f 5.6 Schneider
kreuznach. Sinar fresnel lens ' with black tape on the ground glass.

Dirk Scha 2008 / and other work

Luis Buñuel - Le fantôme de la liberté

Jean Cocteau - Le Sang d'un Poète / Orphée

Alain Resnais - L'année dernière à Marienbad / La vie est un roman

Jan Svankmajer - Neco z Alenky

Tarsem Singh - The Fall

Alec Soth – Song Book; Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel – Evidence

Ahndraya Parlato – A Spectacle and Nothing Strange

Trevor paglen

Evan Roth – Landscape (Series)

James Bridle

Lucas Blalock

Grading

40% Attendance, punctuality, class participation

30% Assignment completion, rigorous experimentation, active re-
search, fulfilment of syllabus requirement

30% Final project and work documentation

Class Project

Setting up the vision: creative application of the tools for altering space and visual

Week 3 Class 4

Now that we are in the first week of introducing various kits, devices and methods for making photographs that transcends the reality. Note that some techniques work on rearrangement of the space, such as setting up the various objects in the space; some techniques work on the rearrangement of the perception in our camera viewfinder, such as the usage of lens filters. But most often, all of these methods work on both the two aspects mentioned above, and as photographers we should pay attention to both aspects while photographing.

In this class assignment, students are encouraged to creatively apply at least 3 techniques introduced in class into their photographic practice to produce 2 groups of pictures (each groups can contain any numbers of pictures) that surpasses documentation. The first group is made inside studio/indoor, the second group is made outside studio/outdoor. You are welcomed to use any cameras/exposure process and any post-production means (e.g., photoshop, cropping the image). Besides the techniques we have learnt in class, you are also welcomed to experiment on other techniques on your own, and incorporate them into your practice. During working on the assignment, consider the following questions: What is the most effective technique for you to achieve your ideal aesthetics? What is the difference between working inside/outside studio? This assignment can also serve as an initial development to your semester final project.

Goals:

- To practice the photographic techniques introduced in class
- To discover ways to transcend our photographs beyond mere documentation
- To experiment ways that work more effectively for building their own aesthetics
- To reflect upon the difference between working inside and outside studio

Outcomes:

- 2 groups of pictures (any numbers of pictures in each group) (50%)
- A grasp of the techniques learnt in class (30%)
- An understanding of the quality and different aesthetics they can produce (20%)
- An opportunity to form questions and ask after their making process
- An opportunity to develop their semester project (not required but welcomed)

Basic Competency Qualities:

- Complete assignment with 3 techniques used in the process
- Show understanding of the techniques and its usage
- Participate occasionally in class discussion

Advanced Competency Qualities:

- Complete assignment with 3 techniques used in the process
- Show understandings and reflection upon the technique/aesthetics through work or description
- Show conceptual reflection upon the idea of reality in their work

- Participate actively in class discussion

Critique Statement

Constructive, respectful, and inquisitive group critiques are at the center of this class. The primary foundation for the critique format is to let student find this class a comfortable and helpful environment for them to share their work.

Constructive

The purpose of critique is to help student develop their ideas and works in a solid way. Even though your work may be an unfinished draft or an initial thoughts, you are still welcomed to share what you have in class. Instead of rigorously criticizing each other's work or saying things like "this does not work for me, it just doesn't", students are suggested to show enough empathy to the work and try to understand both the work and the artist's choice first, and then give constructive suggestions in order to help the work grow.

Respectful

Respect the artist and the given work. As you are sharing your knowledge, information, reflection and educational experience with your peers, at first respectfully listening to others' comments is mandatory, in spite of the fact that a comment may not be personally agreed upon.

Inquisitive

Think deeply in yourself before you share the ideas. Critique your work with yourself first before presenting them in class. In class, students are suggested to pull a number of references and suggestions to the work. We will also share what techniques/knowledge each students have in their own work in order to mutually help each other.

*Recommended procedure of critique

Students are encouraged to actively participate and critique the work through two process. The first is a general description about the work. Look closely and in detailed, describe the work and consider how it make you feel. This is an important part to help us respect and understand the other's work instead of refusing to enter it (15min). The second is a deeper analysis, suggestions and feedbacks of the work and how you foresee it to proceed. In this process, if there are any specific topic that is related to the work, students are welcomed to have a less than 10min discussion on that. The second process helps us to give constructive feedbacks, share our own thoughts and better help others from our own standpoints/discipline backgrounds (30min).

Grading Rubric

Photography Beyond Reality

All grades are subject to change. If you receive a grade you feel is in anyway unfairly given, please speak to me.

Criteria	A +/-	B +/-	C +/-	D +/-
Attendance	You attend all classes and arrive on time.	You attend most classes and arrive on time.	You attend most classes but arrive late.	You seldom attend class and arrive late.
Participation	You are sharing with others and helping them to improve themselves.	You are sharing with others most of the time and you are willing to help others grow.	You are not actively participating with group discussions and subsequently helping your peer group.	You are not participating with group discussions and not helping your peer group.
complete-ness	Your work is always complete and finished on-time.	Your work is usually complete and finished on-time.	Your work is usually complete but not finished on-time.	Your work is rarely finished on-time, but is completed by agreed upon extensions.
Techniques and Innovation	Your own work is improving, you are gaining new skills for your craft.	Your own work is improving, you are experimenting with the skills you already known.	You are not showing growth in your work.	You are showing little effort in your work.

Course Evaluation

Course Goals:

- To reflect upon the concept reality in photographic practice and the need/impact of going beyond it through readings and art references.
- To learn to creatively incorporate different techniques and concepts into photographic practice that surpasses reality.
- To develop a cohesive project
- To build skills in critical discussion and analysis

Please respond to these statements by selecting 1-5, with 1 for if you strongly disagree and 5 for if you strongly agree.

The teacher communicates class expectations, technique and concepts clearly.

(strongly disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)

Class time is divided evenly amongst students and is well organized.

(strongly disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)

I feel encouraged to participate in the classroom critique discussion. I feel my opinions are valued and important to the instructor.

(strongly disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)

I feel my passion for this subject has grown since the beginning of this course.

(strongly disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)

Please feel free to answer the next 5 questions below.

1. What do you find effective in the instructor's teaching?

2. What do you think about the critique format of the class and whether you find it effective for yourself?

Your time devoted to the class?

3. Which assignment has been your favorite/dislike so far and why?

4. How do you understand the topic of the class now?

5. Please write any other suggestions or concerns about the course: