**What do you teach?**

I am an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the Art Department. I teach a studio class in Intaglio, a class in Relief Printing, Photo Transfer and Print as Performance.

I have recently developed two additional classes taught in Art History, **Contemporary Arts Of The African Diaspora: Europe And Beyond**, a lecture class and **Museum Studies II**, which is about curating contemporary art. Students are given the task to create an exhibition from my current and past works. They have to write catalogue essays, exhibition captions and publicize the entire event, which will be shown at the Chazen Museum, Madison.

When I was teaching in London (where I am from), the structure was a studio based atelier system and you taught students in all areas of fine art discipline. I was joint head of the first year undergraduate program and led the weekly studio seminar and taught a specialist studio class in printmaking for the undergraduate, graduate and professional doctorate students.

No matter what I am teaching, my practice as an artist is the foundation, and I always remind students that '*success comes only through failure'*. Students must embrace this in their theoretical approach and in the studio so that they can work beyond their own expectations. Three principles that are emphasized in my seminar and studio classes are: Thinking, Making and Dissemination.

Thinking:
Students must think deeply about their practice, be able to express their vision in words effectively and understand the field of contemporary arts practice. They have to be able to develop a comprehensive, analytical and discerning eye.

Making:
Students must understand that process is not only a vehicle but also the vessel that contains thinking, and both are reliant on each other.

Dissemination:
The interpretation of the work can be affected by the method of delivery – framed, unframed, performance, spoken word, participatory, sculptural, photographic, etc. Students become aware of the power of these decisions as a part of their art making process.

By following these three simple principles, students will create works that are powerful, meaningful and evocative.

**How do you teach it?**

I tell students the studio is the space in which;

1. Problems are '*given form',*

2. Aspirations can be shared,

3. The infinite possibility to wonder can happen.

Students are given my manifesto: '*Artists have been and continue to be the shapers of social consciousness'*. Every thing that we see and hear that has not come from the soil or the celestial abodes has been created by us. I encourage the pursuit of 'clean eyes' that can be achieved by questioning the knowledge taught to them in their formative years. If they discover societal stereotypes that cloud their ability to be discerning, then they have to embark on the purging process. This helps them to commence the 'making of work' from a more honest and spiritually aligned perspective.

Some students come with a comprehensive visual understanding and others a curiosity. The latter tend to be more hesitant and reserved - so I devised a system to create an open environment to share oral histories and unpack early, mid and recent experiences in their lives. This process simply consists of ten questions that students have to answer and share with the group.

1.What is your favorite color?

2. What is your earliest childhood memory?

3. When was the last time you laughed uncontrollably?

4. Name a song that describes you?

5. If your house was on fire, what one object could I retrieve that is 'irreplaceable'?

6. If I can raise one person from the dead, for 24 hours - who would it be?

7. What was the last book you read?

8. What will be your occupation in ten years?

9. What is the most beautiful thing you have ever seen, image; moment; film etc.

10. What will they say about you in your eulogy?

The answers are occasionally met with curiosity, laughter and the comment *'I was going to write that!'* More profoundly intimate thoughts shared are met with an uncomfortable silence as they are privately acknowledged by most in the group. After the sharing process the students have now crossed a personal and social threshold and see the value in their thought process. I tell them their answers are the road map to building the content and context of their work and they are directed to create mind maps (spider grams) from their answers. Whilst in the midst of creating the drawings, the students engage intellectually and feel prepared to make the right of passage - to be the makers and shapers of their new reality.

Whilst they are working in the studio, I highlight that 'this place' that we know as the studio is not confined by a physical space. We inhabit a portable studio – our minds and our private thoughts that occur in transit and in those quiet moments of selfish contemplation are just as valuable and need to be recorded.

**How do you know if your teaching is working?**

For years I have wrestled with the question of '*how do you know when your teaching is effective?'* Developing trust and a healthy discourse in the learning environment is fundamental, but how can you quantify the effectiveness? Below is a medley of intuitive and formal observations that I have encountered over the years.

1. Students cannot answer questions from the previous session - *woeful*

2. Student asks a question that I have not considered – *excellent*

3. Student playing on their hand held device instead of doing their task – *woeful*

4. Student is working in the class before you arrive – *excellent*

5. Student sleeping in class – *woeful*

6. Student persevering despite many failures in a particular process – *excellent*

7. Student asks for extra reading material – *excellent*

8. Students do not remember health and safety rules and protocol of the studio – *woeful and dangerous*

9. Student can pass on key processes to another student – *excellent*

10. Student asks a question that I cannot answer – *excellent and woeful!*

11. Student takes other classes with you – *excellent*

12. Students attend your lectures and exhibitions outside the class – *excellent*

13. Student still working in the class, when you are finished – *excellent*

14. Students do not attend any of your lectures or exhibitions – *woeful*

15. Students get over 90% in their examination – *excellent*

**Why do you teach?**

I have never regarded myself as a teacher, and chose to describe the act of teaching as '*a conversation with an audience'*.

This *conversation* is the product of what Dr. Wayne Dyer defines as **a Quantum Moment** – for me this took place about 35 years ago… in two places.

Back in the 1970's the UK was dealing with racism in the education system, public life and the financial industry. The Banks in particular were being less forthcoming in lending money to anyone from the Caribbean community. As a consequence, my father's generation started up small businesses in their homes, one in particular was a local barbershop owned by Mr. Wright, the architect of my first Quantum Moment.

The barber was situated at the back of his house and was meticulously arranged. Mr. Wright a petit man with coco brown skin, sold beers, playing cards, dominoes and cigarettes, it was rumored his house was almost paid for - due to his adroit business acumen.

Sitting in the barbershop was always an arduous wait for a nine year old, Mr. Wright was the only barber and he was popular. I would always see the same faces, but one thing I loved, was being around the 'elders'. After they had purchased a few beers they would open up and switch to story telling mode. These were men from my father's generation and they generally were from the same town/district in Jamaica and quickly resumed their friendship when they migrated to the UK. I had heard hundreds of stories as I sat and listened (children were seen and not heard) but I came to the conclusion that Mr. Wright was a teacher and oracle of our community. Stories about his romantic liaisons 'only' when his wife was not present in the room, would be met with roars of laughter. At the tender age of nine, I was a student at the first university of life,

learning how to observe and listen, organize the research material and apply in my daily life coherently and objectively.

Mr. Wright would oversee the conversation in the barbershop and insure that all the facts were correct. He was a well-read man and would only refrain from using profanity in the presence of young children, but none of them were more intelligent than the quietest man in the room – my father.

My father would occasionally correct Mr. Wright when he said something that was misleading or deemed hearsay. Mr. Wright new my father from Jamaica and would never attempt to counteract him. He knew my father was discerning and graduated at the top of his class in his formative years, and now as a respected church minister – did not want to stir the wrath of Gods messenger.

The second Quantum Moment was in my father's church.

My brother and I would sit in the front row and watch in wonder, as our reticent father became a teacher and preacher to his congregation. His one-hour sermon would be spoken from memory and depending on the intensity of light coming through the stained glassed window he would be likened to a prophet enunciating the Lord's wisdom.

This early exposure to these informal methods of teaching encouraged me to be curious about the how the past, present and future shaped social conscious and our understanding of others. Mr. Wright initiated the importance of knowing thyself to construct a path of purpose, generosity and benevolence. My father set the scene to be valiant, ardent and conscious of the celestial world.

My practice and '*the conversation with an audience'* is something that I do to re-invent myself daily; it is a fundamental process that helps to purge my body of the toxic ills of society and keep me whole. In life you attract what you are and not what you want.

So through '*the conversation with an audience'* I hope to encourage students to be diligent in their thinking, conscientious as they are making and profoundly adept when they are ready to disseminate their work – then at this juncture I can truly say my existence has been meaningful.