

For the CSUDH Studio Art Class of 2011, Exhibition Opening

May 9, 2011

This is the moment in which we recognize you as the creative artists you have become through years of perseverance, and a good deal of hard work – in the tripartite arena of art making: visualization, conceptualization, and execution.

At times you may have experienced doubt about dedicating so much of your energy, time and resources to your art. Yet, it is important to understand that the creativity that you stimulated, trained and honed in your art is just as important in all aspects of your life.

As artists you have learned to trust your intuition, rely on your judgment, and welcome change, to insure originality in your work. You have grown to appreciate the unexpected, embrace accidents, cherish surprises, applaud innovation, look for many points of view, take risks but are not reckless, as these are all part of a good artist's quiver and will further you along to the next step.

You have learned to understand the unique properties of each medium; and the unusual qualities of the *word* "medium," being both the vehicle with which you bring your image into reality, and the transpersonal medium between your ephemeral thought and spirit, and the resulting image.

You have learned to do magic - produce illusions of reality on a two-dimensional surface, and have deconstructed three-dimensional elements into two-dimensional illusions. You have come to understand that there is no light without shadow.

You have grown to appreciate structure and process; and have learned to respect the natural percolation of ideas, layers and incremental transition, all steps in the creation of unique works of art.

You have grown confident in your opinions about the work of other artists, historical or contemporary, not always going along with prevailing sentiment, but allowing your deepening knowledge and experience to back up your arguments. You have discovered that once you have learned to see, you will continue to widen your vision until you close your eyes for the last time – and I am not sure about that...

You have also realized that you never finish being an artist. Once that channel has been primed, it is forever active and requires attention – or you suffer from what I call psychic constipation. You cannot memorize, test and forget the artistic process. It is inevitable, indomitable, indefatigable and never ending.

These wider views and behaviors also help inform personal growth and facilitate a rich and varied path in life, as one is always seeking to enhance the known by probing the unknown, discerning what works - and what works better. While everyday life can carry separation and loss, art is about integration, connection and growth.

Art making is analogous to life-making...It is said that artists are neotamous, always being reborn, because they reinvent themselves with each new image. Those of us who have been artists for a long time look back with amazement to see the many incarnations of ourselves reflected in our past series of works. From the outside they may appear to have been made by different artists, yet the core message of every true artist is always evident even though the metaphor and style may change.

The creative journey of every one of *you* is also a unique journey for those of us who have the privilege of guiding you through. No two individuals are alike. After teaching for 41 years I have never seen the same image twice. I may not remember everyone's names but I never forget the images.

We know when we are successful as teachers when each person's work is unique and does not in any way resemble the work of the instructor. Our job is to permit and encourage the flowering of every psyche in the direction that it needs to go. It is a privilege to watch, in a sense being midwives/midhusbands in the birthing process of each student artist. This precious incubation takes place over much time, is prodded by many assignments, critiques, papers, from the very earliest classes to the senior exhibition, and beyond through the rest of your lives. And in the meantime, we learn so much from each of you, an entirely new sensibility, history, culture, thought process, and view of life. Effective teaching/learning is reciprocal.

You have been told that artists are required to do what they really want to do. It is the only place in one's life where one is granted so much freedom. Paradoxically, along with this artistic license comes responsibility. Artists must not only express themselves, but also consider what the effect of that expression may have on the viewer. There is a great difference between free flowing, random "self-expression", and honing, tweaking, streamlining, refining a work, towards a work of art.

Form is universally consistent in its emotional evocation.

Form evokes feeling

Feeling conjures metaphor,

Metaphor spawns idea.

Idea demands expression.

We have responsibility for the forms that we, as artists create and allow to live in the world, as each elicits reactions from the viewer.

I have kept the "I" word to the last: IMAGINATION. Everyone is born with one, and everyone should be given the opportunity to explore his or her innate artistic core. The creative life is most difficult and least supported or remunerated, yet civilizations are valued by their art and ideas, not their weaponry. We must focus on enhancing the facilitation of imagination, enlivening the aesthetics of our environment, finding a new view of the world, and prioritizing the

value we place on the arts in our lives. By strengthening this vision, we will be much healthier in body, mind and soul, from individuals to nations to a planetary community

As graduate artists you have a double responsibility: one is to continue your creative work in the world - whether it is manifest as an artist, politician, museum director, designer, educator, community member parent, art collector, or any other vocation that you will follow.

And at a time when the arts and art education are systematically reduced, your second responsibility is to support those who are practicing artists and preserve the institutions where art is taught and treasured, preserved and conserved, where you have had the opportunity to learn and understand the value of creativity as it is the energetic foundation of all aspects of life.

As individuals with limitless potential - once you recognize that you have the right to be a unique expression of divinity in humanity; that the idiosyncrasy of your work and life has reason in its wake; that, what might have been attributed to intuition is consistently underscored by an original logic; and that the repercussions of that activity have been generally positive; you can relax into that vein and know that there is an innate quality of beauty shining through.

On behalf of all of us, I wish the Class of 2011 every success in the world, with great beauty shining through. We are very proud of you.

Congratulations!