

### **Learning to Look, Revelation in the Review of the Familiar.**

Learning takes place through a variety of different modes, but often we place the highest regard on information taken in through our visual sense, without question. Seeing comes naturally but looking critically is a skill that a student must develop.

Students need to see a lot of examples of work in their field as well as objects pulled from the everyday to strengthen their visual vocabulary through the analytical lens of graphic design. By bringing in magazines, posters, and books as daily artifacts, along with ones that are held as examples of good design within the field, there is an opportunity for students, in this comparison of forms, to relate the concepts of design to themselves.

My teaching style is assignment based and project driven, and I show the work of historical and contemporary designers, from Kasimir Malevitch to John Maeda, through slides and books, in order to help students visualize the possibilities of what they can produce in class. After all, the ability to see with an analytical eye is only one part of the process. The next step is to make work.

The assignments in the class are carefully structured to guide students through the design process. In-class projects are only turned-in on occasion, and they are exploratory in nature. This is to give the student space to understand the nature of their inquiry, to practice using design techniques, and to experiment with the rules of design without the pressures of due dates and judgement. One example of an short in-class assignment is a letter tracing exercise, where students copy and draw letterforms with their hands from a variety of type specimen posters I have created for them. Students are given time to study the typefaces, to look closely at the structures of a letter, and to be as creative with it as they want to. Here, students learn through their own process of experience and discovery.

Larger assignments like the book or poster project, are worked on over a period of weeks and self-initiated development of the project topics, themes and ideas are encouraged. Sketches are checked periodically, and help is given for technical computer questions. I see these larger projects as a synthesis of the techniques and concepts explored in the smaller class exercises. The final outcome of their long-term project is critiqued and assessed for quality in craft, and the student's ability to present their work and understand it in a written statement.

As a teacher I want to bring the experience of a practitioner of design to students. I want to help them visualize the possibilities for their own roles as future designers in society. It is important for students to actively participate in the classroom rather than be a passive listener to a lecture. Learning occurs as an accumulation of experiences in the classroom, as information is revisited and remembered.