
Teaching Philosophy of Erin Carignan

As an instructor my goal is to cultivate innovative designers and artisans. My goals also include content mastery, experiential learning and problem solving. I also however strongly believe individuals must bring personal discovery, risk taking and experimentation with a strong understanding of historical and cultural context to achieve skill mastery and creative discipline.

My teaching philosophy integrates practical, technical and theory-based knowledge. I push students to make connections and understand underlying principles whether working in more traditional or what may be considered by some as "cutting-edge" technologies. Students in my classes will not only become well versed in the classic techniques of watercolor rendering and equally accomplished in digital rendering but they also come to understand how light, shadow, form and color can be applied across these mediums to see broader concepts in play.

Students engaged in the arts must take on substantial responsibility in the learning process. This discipline requires a partnership between student and instructor with an engaged, active approach to learning. I like to get my students excited about a subject with interesting historical perspectives or facts, anecdotes, and/or cultural relativity. I use lecture to clarify overarching concepts and readings coupled with hands-on practice: whether it be physical creation of an object with mentorship, or the student starting their own costume plot or rendering, the student is actively engaged in the learning process.

I have a strong foundation academically, professionally and personally in costume and fashion history, costume technology, and painting & dying. More than just exploring these topics from a technical or scientific perspective, I enjoy the process of exploration. I hope this excitement and enjoyment is evident in my lessons and that I prepare my students to process this information with organizational and creative tools such as an in-depth character analysis chart, costume plot, or schematic renderings. In her book *The Creative Habit*, Twyla Tharp notes "Everything is raw material. Everything is relevant. Everything is usable."

Everything feeds into my creativity. But without proper preparation, I cannot see it, retain it, and use it.¹

In summary I believe that teaching is a process in which instructor and student share responsibility of learning. My responsibility is to provide every tool I can to prepare students to engage in projects with a critical mind and a firm direction. My student's job is to master the coursework and make each project their own as they create their path to journey from a theatre student to become a theatre professional.

¹ Twyla Tharp, *The Creative Habit* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2003), 75.