

## ***Teaching Statement***

### ***Methodology***

*I come to teaching with my own personal joy in learning. Each day of teaching in the classroom has allowed me to communicate my happiness in new knowledge and experience. One of my former students told me that she had learned many things in my class. But, what I am most proud to relate to you is that what she remembers most is my passion.*

Empowering others is a vital component of my teaching method. My primary goal is that students will discover and develop their own aesthetic values, which will serve them for a lifetime. I have always learned best when my whole person is acknowledged by my teachers. I am genuinely interested in my students and I have found that they enthusiastically respond to this affirmation. I see the act of teaching as a conversation that awakens action and then continues as an echo in the mind that will be recalled at later, if often unexpected, moments.

### ***Coming to America***

*I have come up from very humble origins always trying to be open to widening horizons.*

In the 1970s, my family emigrated from a village in rural Italy to a vibrant coastal town in Rhode Island. In moving from a traditional peasant society to classic small-town America, I was immersed in a shockingly unfamiliar landscape and culture!

In the first years of living in this country, I believed I was unfortunate because I did not know the language. My desire to learn about my new surroundings gave me the motivation to do well in school. Schoolwork was my way of coping with the inevitable misunderstandings. My curiosity about the world around me has made all the difference in my life. In the face of much indifference in my family circle, I have worked hard to pursue my education and work in the Arts. Back home in Italy, this probably would have been almost impossible to achieve. I like to think that the classroom was where I became an American. The opportunities and challenges of America have inspired me to become the person and artist that I am.

### ***Becoming an Artist***

*I have traveled from a hardscrabble existence in Italy through an immigrant's childhood in small-town America to graduate school in New York City and beyond that, to a life immersed in art.*

Individualized attention is a cornerstone of my pedagogical approach. My skill in teaching lies in my sensitivity to the personal history and desires of my students. I want to help them develop a discerning eye. I emphasize learning the visual language of sculpture and painting and the modern media of photography and filmmaking. Students should be able to think about and speak eloquently of their own and other people's work. My assignments for studio work are often based on situations that a

photographer would face in the real world. Ultimately, I hope that students will grow to appreciate that the creative process can be as gratifying as the end product.

### **Art 101**

*I am as committed to teaching as I am to my own artistic and professional work.*

I see class projects as guideposts to help students travel in their own personal directions. Learning from other artists is a crucial part of being an artist. When I go to a museum or contemporary gallery, I feel that I am in the company of friends and colleagues. I emphasize visiting these places in person or on-line as an important adjunct to classwork. My students are encouraged to visit these places with an open, enthusiastic attitude. I see the role of a teacher as being a trusted guide who reveals alternate paths and places, provides a supportive environment (allowing focus and experimentation) or simply witnesses (or shares) the artistic experience.

### **Skills for the Real World**

Assignments in my classroom address the realities of the workaday world for a photographer. For the past twelve years, I have owned and operated my own photography and video production studio, shooting mostly weddings and portraits. I conduct a seasonal schedule of photography workshops, covering camera work, digital issues and darkroom techniques. In the wedding business, I have learned to work at a daunting pace to catch those “important moments” without hesitation. I tell the story of an event without rehearsal or second chances.

I often hire second shooters for many of my commissions. Time after time, they need more practical ability with equipment, lighting and framing. Our students are only a moment away from the “real world”! It is absolutely imperative to give them the skills they need to have. With a teacher’s help, they can confidently enter into and work in the field they love.

### **Praxis**

In my workshops, I often set up a group project to explore a single concept, such as “What is shutter speed?” The challenge is to shoot a portrait against the backdrop of a train station. We wait for the train, with the model in the foreground. What happens as the model moves? As the train arrives and leaves? How does all this movement affect the shutter? What directions do you give the model? When does the movement in the picture get interesting? It is satisfying to see how quickly students learn if they are enthusiastic. It is one thing to demonstrate something in a classroom; it is more productive to shoot an actual assignment.

### **For the Future**

I think artists are lucky individuals. They are able to express themselves and embody their feelings about the world. To be truly creative, ideas and methods need to stay fresh. As a teacher, I want to communicate my excitement about my creative life. Students will be able to live well with the values they can learn in

the Arts. Content comes from the process of making the work by experiment and allowing the student to make mistakes. Playing and working come together to put content into the work.

-Maria Scaglione, B.F.A., M.F.A.