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Department of Art & Design
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I started teaching art when I was 6 years old!

Allow me to explain...

I grew up in Oneida, NY, an idyllic American, small city (population 13,000). Norman Rockwell could have lived there. I walked to school from kindergarten through high school, walked downtown and rode my bike everywhere. My father was a pediatrician and his office was in the house, my mother was an artist and her studio was just upstairs. My best friend was Alice Lee McKibben. We met when I was five and she was six. We could cut through the yards and be at each others houses in three minutes. My family's house was 150 years old and had an enormous attic. Upstate New York had brutal winters and the sun didn't shine often so we played in my attic after school practically every day.

We played school..... but this was no ordinary school. I was the art teacher and she taught music and that was all we taught! We had a *very* exclusive admissions policy; our students were stuffed animals. We played school in the attic until we were twelve.

When I think of it now, I see that we were ahead of our time. We had started one of the first School of the Arts!

The irony of this story is..... I *didn't* like school.

I would claim to be sick on Monday mornings. Of course, my father would check my throat and say, "**GO TO SCHOOL!**"

WELL, HERE I AM!

It is an honor to speak to all of you today. I want to thank the Distinguished Professor Committee and Debra Murphy, Chair of the Department of Art & Design. I also thank all of the UNF faculty who voted for me to receive this prestigious award. A special thanks goes out to Karen Carter, Assistant Professor of Art History, Elizabeth Head, Assoc. VP for Major Gifts, and artists Laurie Hitzig and Larry Wilson. Larry and Laurie, both former students have always been there to install, curate, critique and council. I'd also like to thank my children Fred and Elizabeth, who are my toughest critics and my most supportive and honest advocates. Finally, I have to thank my former students Alynne Sharp, Rita Kenyon, and Claudia Dresser for studying with me so long that they have become my best friends.

I didn't dislike school forever. In High School, I liked art classes, sports, cheerleading and being the art editor of the school newspaper where I could draw cartoons. I thought my future would be drawing cartoons for the New Yorker!

I did like college; in fact I loved being a painting major at Syracuse University. I am indebted to my teacher and mentor, Professor Robert Marx, who set standards for me as both an artist and an educator. My mother was my biggest influence and opened up the possibilities of being a painter early on, but Robert validated my potential as an artist with a voice. He instilled confidence that gave me a sense of self assurance and an ability to convey it to others. He visited me when I was teaching Lithography at Montgomery College. He asked me, "why teach Louise?" My response was, "because of your influence." I wanted, like him, to be a catalyst that fuels students' lives.

Well, I have been teaching a *long time*. This will be my 26th year at UNF, but before UNF I had a variety of teaching experiences.

When I was 24, I worked in the Occupational Therapy Department at the Bronx State Hospital. I taught psychotic adults, geriatric patients and severely mentally challenged children. Through this experience, I found ways of teaching that were enlightening. I discovered a mistakenly diagnosed autistic child, who was institutionalized for life, and through teaching visually with clay I taught her to say "baby" using a doll that I had made with her. She soon began to talk.

After the Bronx State Hospital, I worked at Mt. Sinai Hospital in NYC and taught art to mentally ill children in an experimental recreation program. I

had studio sessions for the children and there was also a traditional school in the hospital. Children were often sent from this school to their wards because of uncontrollable behavior. I took them into the art room and there they were able to concentrate, produce work, focus and relax. Obviously these are extreme cases, but many children and young adults are visual learners and are able to perform successfully in nontraditional school settings. The Psychiatrists' would consult with me to determine what was going on with their patients and came to the art room to review the children's work... and try to take it home when I wasn't looking!

I began college instruction at Syracuse University, where, I was in my element. The students' successes started when they began receiving awards in art competitions. After Syracuse, I taught Lithography at Montgomery College in Maryland and Etching at Jacksonville University. Again the student's excelled.

A turning point in my teaching career occurred in 1977 when I donated a drawing to the Channel 7 Art Auction and Bill Dodd, the Art Supervisor of Duval County Schools saw the drawing on TV and asked me to be the second Artist in Residence for Duval County. He said, "Anyone who draws like this needs to be affecting the teachers and students of Jacksonville".

So, I was Artist in Residence for four years and it was a "transformational learning opportunity" that changed the way I teach today at the university. Bill Dodd was a true visionary regarding art education specifically the importance of interaction between art teachers and working, professional artists. When I accepted the position, I told Bill I didn't want to teach workshops, I just wanted to work in the schools. But within the first few weeks, there I was, teaching workshops. I realized the teachers needed feedback in order to teach the students my processes. The workshops instilled in the teachers a renewed sense of value in the classroom. Art teachers are still taking my workshops in St. Augustine and Italy.

I met my colleague Nofa Dixon in the Artist in Residence program and started conducting workshops for her when she became Director of Education at the Jacksonville Museum of Art. I primarily taught drawing workshops for the museum and the participants were professional artists and art students. Artists from St. Augustine came to my workshops and subsequently asked me to teach in their community.

This September I will celebrate the 11th year of workshops with the St. Augustine Art Association and the 10th year with Il Chioistro Workshops in Italy. I return each year with students because it gives them the ability to submerge themselves completely in the art and culture of Italy while producing paintings and drawings on the same soil that artists have worked on for centuries.

I am grateful to Jacksonville native, Helen Lane and to an anonymous family foundation who together generously fund 6 UNF students each year to study with me in Italy.

Workshops in general have served to enhance my teaching style and suggest new techniques and methods for instruction. The environment gives me the extended time to examine studio processes that encourage experimentation, collaboration and in depth exploration. Another discovery was how much productivity was possible in a short period of time, which changed my studio teaching methods.

I am a conductor in the classroom, I challenge students preconceived concepts of art by encouraging them to explore new pathways of critical thought. I guide them by setting boundaries along with teaching processes that enable them to tap resources they were not even aware of.

I have always incorporated *Directed Independent Studies* for my students because they open doors and give them experiences that often change their lives. In the past Heather Blume and David Mitchell assisted artist Barry Wilson in printing his first major oversize woodblock print *The Alligator*. This led to Barry getting a state grant and the three of us all got original alligator prints!

One of the most rewarding *Directed Independent Studies* that I have established is with Art With a Heart, a program at Wolfson's Children's Hospital. Because of my two hospital experiences, I did not hesitate. What my students have gained by teaching seriously ill children is beyond the ordinary learning experience but what they do for the children and their parents is immeasurable.

The efforts of my teaching are reflected by my student successes in acceptance in graduate programs from the New York Academy of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, Rochester Institute of Technology, New York

University, FSU and UF to name a few. They have won numerous awards, been acquired by permanent collections, accepted in professional juried exhibitions, and received numerous grants and fellowships. Catherine Bauer was the winner and only painter selected this year in the statewide Select Student Competition and her painting series exhibited was based on her Art with a Heart experience.

I teach a class entitled Fine Art Portfolio. It is an exit class and probably the most important class students will take. I tell them that is the last class of college but it is the beginning of their life as professionals and they will be dealing with it forever. It is the resume, the biography, the artist statement, the letter of intent, a press release, a verbal presentation and most importantly at least 20 digital or slide images of their best work produced during college.

Teaching is most rewarding because of the tangible feedback I receive from students and former students practically everyday. George Pitlak, a former student had his first solo exhibition September 4th at FCCJ Kent Campus Gallery. Right after the show was installed I spoke with him. He was overwhelmed at seeing his body of work on the walls of the gallery. I guess, summing it all up, that is what teaching is all about.

In closing, please know that I am honored to serve as the first member of the Department of Art and Design to receive the Distinguished Professor Award.

Tonight, I hope that you will join me in the University Gallery at 6 o' clock for a reception and exhibition of my work entitled, "Those Things Similar." The University Gallery will be open today at 12:00 for those of you who can't make it later. The exhibition continues through October 18.

THANK YOU.