

## ***Statement of Workshop Teaching Philosophy***

Vince Pitelka, 2021

Workshops have always been my favorite teaching venue. Amazing things can happen over one to five days of intense studio immersion. I approach every workshop as an opportunity to help each participant build confidence, technical capability, and self-expression. I reject the traditional academic model of the teacher as font of knowledge and the student as sponge. Teaching studio arts works best as a highly interactive exchange of idea and information between teacher and student, and among fellow students. My goal in every workshop is to facilitate a fun and interesting experience that enables and empowers the participants with knowledge and skill.

In a university studio art class, you'll find variety and diversity among the students, but they generally start out relatively equal in terms of knowledge and skill in the particular subject. For example, all the students in an intermediate class will start at the intermediate skill level. Under the guidance of a good teacher, they move ahead in a single wave as they tackle the sequence of projects. That's far less true among workshop participants, where we usually encounter far more variety in background and in skill level in the medium. It makes workshops more interesting, but also introduces special challenges. In a university class, the course requirements and expectations specified by the teacher apply equally to all students, who are expected to adapt to the teacher's ways of doing things. In a workshop, the opposite is true. It is up to the teacher to adapt the teaching style and content to fit the participants, allowing each of them to advance from whatever level of skill and knowledge they displayed at the start of the class.

Well-designed, well-run workshops go a long ways towards making up for the primary shortcoming in university-level studio art programs, where a declining focus on materials, technique, and craftsmanship seems the norm. Most short-term studio art workshops are specifically focused on skills, craftsmanship, and knowledge of materials, and the amount learned in just a few days can have a big impact on the participants' self-confidence in the medium. Becoming a highly skilled potter or ceramic sculptor requires familiarity with a vast range of materials and technique. In my workshops, I introduce practical and useful studio skills and information in a way that is fun and entertaining. Participants have a good time, and comment on how much they learned.

I support the relaxation of formal and aesthetic distinctions between art and craft media. My teaching incorporates the history of art and craft, with frequent focus on ancient and tribal art. This provides an expanded context for self-awareness, and further empowers each workshop participant in the development of original style and direction.