

## **RJ Sturgess**

### **Teaching Philosophy**

My teaching is built on four essential pillars: communication, variation, failure, and community. These principles guide my approach, helping students develop both technical skills and creative confidence. I set high expectations, challenging students to think critically, engage deeply with their work, and push beyond their perceived limitations.

Communication is the foundation of learning. Clear, open dialogue between instructor and students fosters critical thinking and meaningful reflection. I encourage students to articulate their ideas, ask questions, and engage in discussions that challenge their perspectives. Through assignments, demonstrations, videos, and readings, I expose students to a wide range of artistic concepts, techniques, and historical and contemporary contexts, broadening their understanding of the creative field.

Art is a language learned through making, and failure is an essential part of that process. The studio classroom teaches students to view failure not as an endpoint but as a critical stage of discovery. By experimenting, problem-solving, and revising their work, students develop resilience, adaptability, and a deeper understanding of both materials and concepts.

A strong sense of community is vital to artistic and personal growth. While creating can be an individual act, meaningful progress happens in a collaborative environment where students support, challenge, and inspire one another. I cultivate a classroom culture that values dialogue, critique, and shared learning. When students face creative roadblocks, engagement with their peers can spark new ideas and solutions. Group discussions, peer reviews, and collaborative projects help students build confidence, take risks, and develop the ability to both give and receive constructive feedback. Beyond technical skills, this sense of community fosters empathy, accountability, and a deeper connection to the broader creative landscape.

As an instructor, I find joy in pushing students to realize their ideas and watching concepts evolve into tangible works. My goal is not only to teach technical skills but to cultivate independent, innovative thinkers who approach the world with curiosity and confidence. Through my teaching, I strive to mentor artists who are not only skilled makers but also engaged, thoughtful contributors to their communities.