Teaching With Technology - Reflective Portfolio by Philippa Lindenthal

In my teaching, I create an environment in which students can express themselves freely while learning to engage with designing in meaningful ways. I support critical thinking and emphasize the need to consider fashion within its larger social, historical and intellectual contexts.

Elsa Schiaparelli, *Vogue*, September 15, 1938
Photograph by Horst
Horst / *Vogue*; © Condé Nast

Miuccia Prada, spring/summer 1999
Photograph © Toby McFarlan Pond

My course work covers a wide range of topics in the various fashion fields. I draw connections between different design positions and I communicate complex concepts clearly to students of all levels. I am committed to an interdisciplinary approach to teaching, and my courses are structured with this in mind. It is important that students discover cultural diversity and different approaches and viewpoints, which can be a great source for creativity. Underlying my approach to teaching is a focus on teamwork and group projects in preparation for the job market. This is achieved through classroom projects, wherein students evaluate and present each other's work and comment on the qualities of each team-member. My role is to conduct the teams and I often point out aspects of innovation for successful results. In my classes on draping I promote hands-on active learning techniques like fabric manipulation and innovative finishing techniques, with attention to detail to underline the design statement of each student. I apply those to the environmentally, socially and budgetary responsible design process. I lead fashion classes through the entire design development processes.

I teach in the Fashion Design Department, Draping – the soft silhouettes class. One of the challenges of this class is the handling of soft, slippery materials, like chiffon, satin and crepe. These materials don't forgive mistakes and can't be controlled completely. The goal is to create fluid and organic garments that look effortlessly modern.

In this class I was introducing the basic cowl technique and set up three mannequins with variations of the technique. These were accompanied by illustrative materials of women in different decades, ages and cultures.

During the lecture a student was especially excited about a design by Emanuel Ungaro. She liked the look and application of the technique and was inspired to create a new interpretation. The class then asked me to show them how to achieve Ungaro's signature high collar cowl and was thrilled when I demonstrated how to creatively interpret the technique they learned and take it one step beyond.

Appreciating applied techniques in real life, in a context where they matter and have an impact on human beings, is something I strive for. I want to encourage new ways of thinking about and inventing traditional craft, such as how taking the same top and adapting it for an androgynous body can have a new statement and meaning. The silhouettes created in this class are extremely feminine and tie in with the radical cowl neck design applied in Rick Owens menswear collection.

I saw my teaching philosophy reflected in a lecture by Dr. Jacqueline Jones Royster at FIT on communication, language, diversity, and preparing students for life and work in the 21st century. As she was addressing various aspects of thought processes, I drew a connection to research and design development in Fashion Design. I especially liked when she spoke about the WOVEN curriculum (Written – Oral – Verbal – Electronic – Non-verbal) and the openness of this metaphor. As a Professor in Art and Design, I thought the V could also stand for Visual Communication. In my classes I encourage diversity. I introduce techniques and show variations to offer choices for all students and encourage creative thinking. In one class I was verbally giving a lot of options so the variety was for some students confusing and they were looking for more clarity. She demonstrated new ways of teaching by implementing an audio exam into her syllabus. She played excerpts of this playful approach during her lecture and I enjoyed the sensual variety.

At the heart of Fashion lies the desire for constant change and reinvention. The need for continuous innovation and staying ahead of the market is one main reason why I am expanding the use of technology in my teaching. I envision pioneering new educational approaches by digitalizing draped patterns with Programs used by other departments, such as Gerber 10, for an interdisciplinary approach. This offers new marketing and design advantages for the students. I also want to integrate video for classroom demonstrations, such as filming sewing machine techniques for instant projection and use outside of class. Voicethread can also be used for as an interactive fact gathering tool by the students, getting students involved, encouraging teamwork and research.

Since my first week at FIT I have used Blackboard for communicating with my students. This includes announcements for first day of class, briefings for research projects, links to the FIT library research guide and further links for research as well as grades. The communication is very transparent and my students do like it. For the student experience I like that a little bit more responsibility is on the side of the students as every information is accessible 24 hours. This technology supports the idea of the responsible design process and economical, environmental and social values. Implementing this technology in a thoughtful way allows for more visionary and immediate global communication with students, faculty and collaborative partners.

From my experience all different ways of creating – sketching, draping and computer aided technologies – have great value. Exposure for students to all those working methods support the goal of the best learning experiences. The brain integrates learning experiences and values created physically in a different way from learning on the computer. These skills cannot be replaced, but they can be interwoven. Smart usage of technology is key for improving highest quality standards.