

ON ASSESSMENT

We didn't come to an adequate conclusion to the discussion we began during printmaking class yesterday on grading. The consensus in class seemed to be that grading is subjective, there are no right/wrong answers in making an artwork, and therefore artwork grading isn't really either possible or relevant. I commented that while there are no right or wrong answers/solutions in/as an artwork, there are better-than-not-solutions. This seemed not to gain any traction in the discussion, so I am writing to provide a clearer answer in monologue form before we talk again in person.

I am very much an oral teacher, that is, I explain what and why I think what I think as we go along during the project. At this point I will have commented about each of your pieces on an individual basis and in doing so my thoughts on what (cutting, inking, design, etc.) moves "tend" to result in better-than-not viewer experiences were revealed.

Very Simply:

What artwork is not – making visual artwork, and learning to do so in my estimation, is not about making decorative objects or being entertained.

What artwork and learning to make art is – making artwork is about exploring the world, seeking to learn something (about yourself or the world) and communicating any insight to an audience (which of course includes yourself). This is why I have a focal question at the beginning of each of the 4 assignments going forward.

A **better-than-not-solution** is a solution seen relative to other possibilities; it's an answer to what, why or how to go about making something as small as your next cut all the way up to and including the entire work. Often you will go about this internally, naturally, as you design and progress in the making, but it is also seen holistically relative to the evaluation of the piece. There exists a continuum of quality, from very low to very high, and all objects of any kind fall on (are placed on) a continuum relative to human-designed categories of value and the relationship seen in contrast between objects being evaluated as such. In normal life this is an intuitive observation that you make almost constantly in contemporary culture as you are bombarded with "bigger-better-faster-newer" products, music, and other media. Consider how you choose what it is you choose to "like" in an emotional respect and maybe even with respect to social media. We see things in relation to other things and that is how they are evaluated...regardless of the necessity of a right or wrong answer. This does not mean evaluation isn't possible or instructive. Neither does this mean that your work is evaluated based on a comparison to others in the class as if a hierarchy was being created. This is not the case, but there is a judgment I make based on my experience (as an instructor/evaluator of artwork from students ranging from middle school to college) that relates your work both to what level of achievement I believe is possible for someone in a particular class and to what I experience as your individual performance on the project (which is based on three general categories: conceptual development, design development, and craftsmanship). All of these categories are considered on each project and in each case students fall on a continuum: not meeting

expectations, meeting expectations, or exceeding expectations. Generally speaking, if you want to translate these into letter grades, I consider meeting expectations to be doing what is asked of you, you employed the techniques, you followed the project parameters...that's doing "good" and seems like a "B" range grade to me. Exceeding expectations is where I think the "A" range grades will fall. There is a rubric posted on Schoology and everyone is capable of exceeding expectations.