



Nicole Wittenberg

Art education seems like something that needs a bit of shaking up. I went to an art school that had seen better days. There was one great drawing teacher and a bit of art history but as a prominent art dealer who also went to the same school said to me recently, it's not a place you go if you want a career. Very little was taught about how to look at pictures and how to form a feeling about what we see.

In that way, my own education started after art school ended. I moved to New York, where I was exposed to a group of really bright painters—I learned to talk about how paintings actually look without leaning on programmatic language. And when I started to teach at the Bruce High Quality Foundation University, my painting critique class, “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly,” was built on that. Each week students bring their paintings for a group critique with a guest artist; we do a brief interview and then discuss painting as an intellectual craft.

It goes a bit like this:

No more “idea art.” No more “identity art.” No more “political art.” No more noodling or tiptoeing around.

Instead, we consider the following: image vs. surface; atmospheric vs. graphic; direct and indirect painting; the role of drawing and composition; what the *new* looks like now; the overrated; the original; decorative manners; style and social engagement; what is first-class; what a painter might get away with; why getting it right might not be very good; and how to keep it interesting.

CONTRIBUTOR

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RECOMMENDED ARTICLES