



Dorian Beaulieu

*Instructor of Art
Lake Superior College*

Dorian Beaulieu believes that art has the power to transform lives and that is what motivates him to guide his students on a journey of self-discovery and transformation. He discovered, first as a student—he created his own studio at 16—and later as a teacher at the federal prison in Duluth, where he taught for 11 years, that “human beings have a capacity to be creative and passionate learners regardless of their social status; grand things can happen when people are given respect and the opportunity to discover the excitement of self-guided learning.”

Beaulieu is an innovator. When given the opportunity to teach a ceramics class at the newly merged Lake Superior College, he found the classroom equipped with a single 220V outlet. So he improvised to do things without a lab full of power equipment. He brought in his own kilns and wheels, had students purchase clay, and foraged in the college’s storage shed to look for discarded “stuff”: an old printing press as a clay slab roller, for instance. And the students benefited from such tactics. They learned that “you don’t need state-of-the-art equipment to make art; making art is innovative and so the equipment can be also.” Since those beginnings, Beaulieu has taught 12 different classes at Lake Superior College, developed a cooperative studies program between Lake Superior College and Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, and organized the 2007 International Wood Firing Workshop with fellow artists from China.

Beaulieu holds two master’s degrees: one in art history, the other in studio curriculum. He is the recipient of several art awards and the 1997-98 Student Support Services Instructor of the Year Award. He has held numerous ceramic exhibitions throughout Minnesota and China, served on the Duluth Public Arts Commission, collaborated with neighboring four-year institutions on art exhibitions, demonstrations and public lectures, and has been instrumental in bringing Chinese artists to teach at Lake Superior College.

Beaulieu believes the purpose of his teaching is to develop a student’s creative self-confidence as much as skill; he also strives to teach his students to trust their own perception and problem-solving abilities, and not to be inhibited by the perceived aesthetic standard implied by the teacher. Assessment of students’ learning begins on the first day of class and permeates the course, with the purpose of gauging progress and providing feedback that will motivate students to perform even better. Wherever possible, even while “packing as much into the course syllabus as I can,” he said he

works to eliminate the attitude of competition and redirect it to a spirit of cooperation and team building. Beaulieu is a teacher-participant in his classes: leading, nurturing, and inspiring others to learn about and be active creators in the domain of art he loves so deeply.

REVIEWER COMMENTS

Beaulieu demonstrates an emphasis on developing and helping students re-discover their creative talents and self-confidence. His use of problem-solving approaches and small-group work informs his approach to artistic creativity. His respect for individual perception and fostering the value of a creative attitude is integral to his classes, and student art exhibits are a key component of his teaching methodology.

Beaulieu's content expertise and ongoing professional development is illustrated by the degrees he holds, emphasizing both art and education. The cooperative studies program that he developed and fosters between Lake Superior College and Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in China reflects a global perspective that benefits his students and his own professional growth. We can see an active artist, teacher and scholar in his work coordinating and organizing the 2007 Wood Firing Workshop with a fellow Chinese artist, and through his collaborations with northern Minnesota universities on art presentations and demonstrations. He brings to his teaching experience gained at prison facilities, an art institute, a university, and a fine arts academy in china.

We observe his commitment to service through his participation with students at the Minnesota Community College Fine Arts Festival. He has conducted workshops and talks for the college community about his experiences teaching in China and helped bring Chinese artists to teach at Lake Superior College. He has fostered and developed a relationship between art and industry while working with the Duluth public arts commission and is heavily invested in developing and sustaining international connections.

Finally, Beaulieu's use of assessment strategies are predicated on students finding their own creative voice. He employs a pre-post survey test that tells him, and his students, how much they've learned over a semester. He also works to ensure assessment methods that reduce subjective bias, a common problem in creative courses. He has developed a grading rubric that assesses students' work in four principal areas and fosters group work to establish a collaborative and not a competitive environment. His students' work becomes part of an art exhibit subject to public viewing and valuation, thereby further fostering exhibit display skills in the creative process. His primary focus is on process and on positive reinforcement as the core to all evaluation techniques.