

# Andrew O'Brien

105 N. Berendo St. #4 | Los Angeles, California 90004 | 520.370.7907 | aophoto@gmail.com | www.andrewobrien.info

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## Teaching Philosophy

I believe that artistic process lies at the intersection of self-awareness and inspired conversation with the history, culture, and materials that surround us on a daily basis. Participatory dialogue amongst artists provides structure to the process of continual experimentation and discovery. My passion as an educator is to facilitate such dialogue so that students can organize and develop their personal insights through philosophically and conceptually engaged artwork.

The complexities of the increasingly diverse forms of image production and consumption reinforce the need to create linkages between image making and other forms of collecting, gathering and re-creating information. For students in an image-saturated world I encourage critical thinking and analysis through readings and presentations that touch on the basic vernacular of art as well as wider theoretical and social concerns. Challenging students' conventional understanding of the medium of photography and the practice of image making reveals a range of possibilities from which they can choose personally significant explorations. My own practice relies on a diverse set of personal, conceptual and material inputs. Therefore, I believe in giving students the opportunity to use a wide array of artistic methods while always considering the question, "what is photography?"

In order to enhance student commitment and the refinement of their ideas I incorporate strong critical dialogue in the classroom environment. This essential activity gives students the theoretical and philosophical tools to realize the benefits of new personal insights and experimental practices. Careful attention to the establishment of this critical laboratory provides students the freedom to explore new ideas and techniques without fear of failure. Alongside critical dialogue I believe that encouraging strong research practices gives students the essential opportunity to learn how to learn. As students become comfortable with an informed and nuanced artistic dialogue it is my hope that they are obliged to create their own responses in the form of innovative artwork.

I strive to develop and expand upon the interests and inspiration of my students. As a teacher I feel that I can develop their curiosity through focused conversation, research and historical awareness. I view their commitment to vigorous and professional artistic exchange as a measure of my success as a teacher.