A Powered-Up Teacher

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A powered-up teacher

Winkenweder keeps his classes flexible. He doesn’t lecture in a style where “you turn the professor on for 30 minutes and then turn him off, just like a fountain of knowledge.”

Students are free to ask questions and often seek him out outside the classroom for advice or input. One of the best parts of teaching is working directly with art majors in their studios. Because Winkenweder’s expertise is postmodern art, he has a clear understanding of what has occurred in the last 60 years.

“Part of my job here is to be someone who wants to talk about art and who is informed about art, so students routinely invite me into their studios for critiques,” he said. “It is the single most enjoyable part of my job, and I remain flattered that they want to hear what I have to say.”

Zach Mitlas ’09 calls Winkenweder a mentor and the most dedicated professor he has ever met.

“Brian encourages me regularly as a painter to fully develop my ideas and skills,” he said. “He works to give students the necessary resources and more in order to help them succeed. During critique, Brian approaches students in a professional fashion, treating each scholar as an equal. He is a highly developed intellectual always trying to energize students to learn and thrive at Linfield and beyond.”

Winkenweder’s specialized research synthesizes art theory and its underlying philosophies with aspects of the social sciences and communication. He focuses on the influence of two internationally known academics, Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of the 20th century’s most important philosophers, and artist Robert Morris, who responded to Wittgenstein’s philosophy and incorporated it into his work by re-interpreting the rules of modern art.

Winkenweder views his academic writing, what he calls theoretically informed art criticism or philosophical poetics, as a kind of stylized art, because he exercises a great degree of creativity. “I find that it stimulates the same part of my mind that is stimulated when I am making art.”

“It is this tremendously energetic moment of discovery and I use that moment with words,” he added. “I really think of how I write as a kind of poetics. I am very sensitive to word choice and also to structure: There’s a real craft in how I put my work together.”

Teaching allows him to share with students not just his research, but more importantly, how to gather that kind of knowledge.

“It’s about helping students learn how to think for themselves,” he said. “It’s about helping students learn how to think for themselves.”

“Teaching is also intellectually stimulating. It’s not only the values of the institution, but also the size, the intimacy, and the sense of community that exists among faculty, staff, administration and students. I believe I am lucky to be where I am.”

By providing for some release time from teaching, the Kelley Award will give Winkenweder the time to start a new research agenda during the academic year, which will include writing a visual culture textbook designed to introduce college students to this burgeoning and exciting new interdisciplinary field of study. — Mandi Mihlan

Brian Winkenweder critiques the most current work of Zach Mitla ’09. One of Winkenweder’s favorite parts of teaching is working directly with students in their studios. He offers advice, positive feedback and constructive criticism, prompting several students to call him a mentor and source of inspiration.
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Teaching allows him to share with students not just his research, but more importantly, how to gather that kind of knowledge. “It’s about helping students learn how to think for themselves,” he said. “I am helping them figure out what they are passionate about by sharing my own experiences, my own interests and how I learn more about those topics. When I see the concepts that we have articulated in class informing students’ art and showing up in their conversations, that is tremendously gratifying.”

Ron Mills, department chair, said Winkenweder is a marvelous addition to Linfield’s liberal arts environment in which thoughtful intellectual integration is critical. “He is a devoted humanist and writer and a compassionate and articulate colleague who offers a thoughtful voice to all faculty discussions and freely gives his expertise to students,” he said. “As an accomplished performance artist, his capacity to mentor young artists represents a boon for all of us in the artistic and academic community.”

Winkenweder believes he has found the perfect fit at Linfield. “It is not only the values of the institution, but also the size, the intimacy, and the sense of community that exists among faculty, staff, administration and students. I believe I am lucky to be where I am.”

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Allen and Pat Kelley Faculty Scholar Award
Brian Winkenweder is the recipient of the first Allen and Pat Kelley Faculty Scholar Award, an endowment established by Allen Kelley ’59, the James B. Duke Professor of Economics at Duke University, and his wife, Pat ’59. While serving as a Linfield trustee, Kelley wanted to create a formal means to recognize outstanding scholarship and research by Linfield professors. The cash award is presented to a faculty member whose work is likely to lead to a publication with an academic press or journal. The faculty member will also receive a reduction in teaching load to focus on preparing the research for publication. Winkenweder is preparing material for an introduction to visual culture textbook, tentatively titled Critical Spectacles: Exploring the Motive of Visual Expression.

Brian Winkenweder file
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\[\text{Mandi Milham}\]