2005

Balancing Skills and Creativity

Mardi Mileham
Linfield College

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol2/iss2/9

This article is brought to you for free via open access, courtesy of DigitalCommons@Linfield. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@linfield.edu.
Balancing skills and creativity

Nils Lou may be an art professor, but he claims he doesn’t teach art. He says he is more of a gardener in his Linfield College studio classroom. He does some weeding, adds a little fertilizer and then watches with amazement at what his students grow.

“Being creative is about surprising yourself,” Lou said. “It’s about being playful, and taking internal risk. Teaching is about creating a space for the students where they basically learn by themselves. I tell my students two things: ‘This is a studio potter full-time, first in Minnesota and later in rural Willamette. When a full-time teaching position opened at Linfield in 1987, he was eager to get back into the classroom. “I always liked connecting with the students,” Lou said. “When you are a studio potter, it really limits your creativity because you start thinking about product instead of process.”

Lou firmly believes that art cannot be taught. “We certainly have composition rules and processes we discuss with students. We can talk about balance, we can talk about light, dark, texture and all kinds of things. But they are only useful when they are handled in some unique way.”

Teaching art is a balance between building foundation- al skills and pushing students to create authentic art vs. ordinary art. “Ordinary art is the art of imitation, with a product in mind,” Lou said. “The authentic is something that comes from inside and it develops because there is attention to communication arts minor, provided leadership in the department in various activities because I’m genuinely interested in them.”

The secret to Marshall’s accomplishment? Long days, usually 12 to 18 hours, and an intense work ethic instilled by her parents. But curiosity may be her driving force. “I have very eclectic interests,” said Marshall, who plays bassoon and enjoys exploring ideas in the sciences and social sciences in addition to the arts. “My involvement in various activities occurs because I’m genuinely interested in them.”