

'You haven't taught until you see the light bulb in their eyes light up...' That's how education was defined for conceptual pioneer John Baldessari when he began a parallel career as an art-school teacher. But how do artists teach art? And what does their specialised experience bring to it? Emma Gray and Pablo Lafuente talked to some of the most important artist-teachers from Los Angeles, New York, London and Frankfurt. *Photography by Derrick Santini*



This page, from left to right: John Baldessari, Shirley Tse, Barbara Kruger, Sam Durant.
Opposite: Michael Craig-Martin, Fiona Banner, Adam Chodzko, Jemima Stehle



Shirley Tse

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The courses I offer are mainly seminar-style, combined with students' presentations of their work or research.

I am less interested in offering my opinions than examining the conditions that make possible such opinions. In other words, I think it is not so

important for students to know if I like their work or not, it is more important for me to give them the tools of self-evaluation; to [help them] question assumptions and build their own criteria.

I think it is also very important to teach by example, because the process of critical thinking can be taught, but the commitment to be an artist and the desire to realise their ideas can only be inspired. I am an artist first before I am an educator. What do I look for in a student? Hard to say, I like to be surprised. In the CalArts student body there is no lack of independent thinkers and risk-takers. There is also a high degree of autonomy and freedom in teaching.

I like how the classroom becomes a platform for open debates and generating discourses. I feel very privileged to be the custodian of those critical periods when young people are going through choices and finding their paths.

Sometimes I say to myself, "I almost went that route too!" People say we learn from history. I think I learn so much from those unfolding experiences before they become histories. They help to reaffirm my belief in my own practice. For me teaching is also a form of articulation: an articulation of the artistic process and its context, historical or otherwise. This is not to fix art in ready-made concepts or categories but to cultivate the ability to form complex connections and to generate multiple modes of seeing.