



Frederick, October 22, 2021

Dear Dr. Morris, Members of the Faculty Personnel Committee,

Gary Cuddington has asked me to visit his classes on two occasions and give a fair evaluation of his teaching methodology and general approach to teaching.

On Monday the 13th of September 2017, I went to one of his classes (Business of Art) on "how to write a good artist statement". I have to say I was very impressed by the class. Indeed, Gary handled very difficult concepts with ease and intelligence. The course began with the distribution of a review sheet and an article the students had read at home in preparation for the class. It was a very clear and organized summary of what students were expected to know and how they should understand the main points of a complex article *Don't Quote Deleuze*. Gary summarized the previous class and asked questions in order to make sure the students understood and were able to explore in depth the elements discussed that day.

The main aspect of this class was to define the right way to write a good artist statement as well as an artist biography. I was very impressed with the way Gary was able to handle and explain highly theoretical aspects such as the use of critical angles while defining one's own art and, at the same time, the more concrete aspects of a statement (avoid clichés and expected statements: "Oh, you loved art as a child? Well, join the club", avoid some specific words such as "piece" or "juxtapose", "human condition", "liminal", "rupture", etc....).

The reading of the article and the discussion of the key elements in it were followed by a series of quick exercises. At the end of the previous class students were asked to write their own bio for homework. Following the new reading, they were able to criticize their own statement and work on the strengths and the weaknesses of it. Indeed it was a very productive exercise; again, the students were very active and passionate. They worked in pairs in order to get feedback from their peers. While deconstructing these bios (their own and the one of the other student in the pair), they questioned themselves in the process. They realized that their bios and artist statements are a profound reflection of their work.

Gary mastered superbly a difficult task: to be highly critical and abstract in the philosophical construction of the class while at the same time working on very pragmatic aspects and challenges of the art world today. Indeed he was able to work with his students on Deleuze and deconstructionism while being able to answer specific questions related to the demands of an art gallery. I was very impressed with his command of the material studied in class as well as his handling of the students' questions.

The second class was a few days ago (Wednesday October 20, 2021) in a very different context. This time the class was *Drawing III, IV*. The students were asked to show their two latest assignments

and to explain to the class several aspects of their creative process. The class was extremely well organized with a brief and complete introduction from Gary, recalling the main critical aspects of the exercise and then an open discussion, subtly directed by the professor while letting the student express their theories. The two drawings were different, both in their scope and uses of various media while both of them were aiming at exploring personal emotions and encouraging experimental techniques. I found this approach especially interesting after Gary's very practical explanation: the need to work on two projects at the same time in order to improve the judgement and to avoid to be "lost" in the creation of one work. While the first project was aimed at the concept of distortion, the second was concentrating on the use and saturation of colors through the process of collage.

In this class, like in my first experience with Gary's teaching, I have been very impressed with the mixed of theory (and indeed, while also practical, the class was highly theorized and intelligent) while organized around the students' work and creative process. As for my first experience with his teaching methodology, I am amazed on how the students found very deep answers to very difficult questions within an hour of working with Gary. He has an amazing way to push his students to discover their own truth in the process of making mistakes and self-realization. While the student can appear a little confused at the beginning of the experience, they are in control of their interpretation by the end of their exercise. All this because of Gary's masterful pedagogical talents.

As a follow-up from the class experience, Gary sent the students and myself a link for the OneDrive folder with images of the critique and demo images. I was able to appreciate how Gary, in this time of uncertain classroom teaching, is able to incorporate digital and technology classroom innovation.

My conclusion about Gary Cuddington's qualification as a teacher is an obvious one: his classes were exceedingly well done, with ample and well-chosen examples, intelligent group exercises and exchanges. His organization of the class was superb: review of discussed material, introduction of new ideas, free time for students to ask questions and give their reactions, etc. As a conclusion to my letter, I would also like to emphasize the quality of Gary's work as an artist. We had several conversations about the meaning of his artistic production. I had the opportunity to experience his work both in our gallery and in his office and was deeply impressed by the technique, the depth and the scope of his work. He is an impressive artist whose vision of the world enhances our community with a much needed sense of interpretation and artistic meaningfulness.

In sum, Gary possesses a large range of qualities both as a professor and as an artist; I highly recommend him for a future at Hood College. We are very lucky indeed to have such a gifted teacher and painter as a colleague. He deserves to be granted his tenure in our institution.

Sincerely,

Didier Course - Professor of French

Department of Global Languages and Cultures

