

**Walter Santucci**  
**818.419.0640 • walter@evilcatland.com**

## **Statement of Teaching Philosophy**

### **TEACHING WITHOUT INTERFERING**

When I attended film school, I always appreciated the instructors who guided me but did not dictate. While some teachers wanted to impose their style and ideas onto my work, others let me pursue my vision, offering practical advice when appropriate.

As an educator, I have tried to be like the latter. Many times, after giving a student feedback on a project, I add, "But that's only how I would do it. If you are really feeling something else, go with your vision. But do it with QUALITY."

### **TEACHING BELIEF IN ONESELF**

It is important that when students complete a course of study that they not only have education and training but a sense of confidence as well. Success depends on believing you will be successful. So, in both direct and subtle ways, I communicate to students that it is crucial for them to trust their beliefs and themselves. And if they don't succeed immediately, they need to believe that they have what it takes to try it again. This last bit is especially pertinent to animation where it is quite common to revise and re-time work many times.

### **PLAYING WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE RULES**

While I have worked at established mainstream animation studios since 1998, I still consider myself to be an outsider and a rule breaker. I can and do teach traditional

principles, but I am always excited by those students who come along who want to shake things up.

If I were teaching mathematics, perhaps I'd be more rigid. But I feel an animation teacher's role is to guide students towards learning how to "get out" what's inside themselves. My job is to equip students to express themselves as masterfully as possible. I use my experiences and my mistakes to help light whichever road they decide to take.

However, since I have worked in Hollywood for over fifteen years, I also have much practical advice to give. I can explain the realities of what "sells" and what doesn't. I can explain how very often powerful yet mediocre producers insinuate themselves into a project and take all the fun out of it. And I can explain that despite these realities, it is still possible for an animator to make something original and intriguing; it may be difficult, but there's nothing wrong with adversity.

## **THE WORLD IS A CLASSROOM**

Students of animation should be aware that there are lessons to be learned everywhere. The world provides lessons in character, movement and timing: a person with a unique limp, a bird trying to eat in the middle of the road while dodging traffic, a newspaper blowing in the breeze, all can inspire an observant animator. The first animated film I made in college was inspired by a unique cat owned by a friend; a cat that was at once sweet and vicious, extremely unpredictable and the cause of unbelievable amounts of chaos. The fact that such a creature could find a place in this world still inspires me today.

## **NEVER GIVING UP**

Finally, I believe that students must learn that when they fall short of their goals, that it doesn't mean they have failed. It means they must get up and try again. I have many examples from my own career where I was rejected repeatedly, but rather than give up, I persisted until successful.

It is an educator's job to show that redoing work need not be painful-- it can be joyful and rewarding. Once one sees that the process is as important as the result, work is no longer something to be feared or avoided.