

Creating an Advanced Technology Classroom

I taught a class in Denver to a group organized by an excellent teacher and painter. The students were not watching the demonstration. They were worried about “getting behind” or not wanting to stop what they were doing. This wise teacher stood up and told the group this: “Why am I a good painter? Do I have special talent? No! I watch, listen, absorb and then apply.” I wanted to kiss this teacher! After that, all students put the brush down and watched and applied what I was trying to share with them. The unfortunate thing was that they had to gather around my easel sheet or come up for small group demonstrations. I wished that they could have viewed from the comfort of their seat but the room was not set up for this option.

Fast forward a couple of years. In our studio in Omaha, we have an overhead camera and two 27” TVs hanging from the ceiling. When teaching, I can zoom in so that a water drop fills the screen. There is not a bad seat in the house. Students can watch and paint along from their seat. I can paint my demonstration actual size and perfect it so that the student will know what is expected of them at each step. The commotion in the class has disappeared because students are not running up to see the easel sheet. Students no longer go back to their seat and forget what they are supposed to do. Classes go so much faster.



What to do when teaching “on the road” for a convention, a shop or a chapter? I offer two choices: please provide two TVs or a projector screen. If the TVs are provided, I bring a tabletop tripod, camera, splitter, and cables. (More about the equipment later). If TVs are not possible, I bring a digital projector and the camera and tripod. For conventions, I bring my own portable projection screen. I have also talked a few of the places I teach often to add their own system. The students and the resident teachers are thrilled! The on the road students now are able to see and receive the same benefit as the Omaha studio students. If you are thinking that this is a lot of equipment to tote

around, I brought my camera, digital projector and portable tripod to Japan. I went to four different cities – three by way of plane and one by bullet train. Of course each day I took the system in and out of classrooms by way of train, taxi and just plain walking.

What equipment is necessary? The camera we use is the one my husband and I bought when our 20-year-old Christopher was a toddler. Therefore, obviously nothing fancy! Just a low-end video camera will work. The cables are cables that can be purchased at any computer or video store like Radio Shack. The splitter is a device that takes the signal and just as the name implies, splits the signal to the different TVs. In the Omaha studio we have a little TV on the teacher’s table so that the teacher can see

what is on the screen. We keep the camera remote handy for zooming in and out. My suggestion is to ask a professional in your area what would work best for your camera and your TVs.

The digital projector is a wonderful invention. It takes the image from your camera and projects it onto the screen (or blank wall). You can also use it to give Power Point presentations.

Projectors range from \$800 and up. Look for the highest lumen projection that your budget will allow. A lumen is a unit of measurement of the amount of brightness that comes from a light source. The standard lumen rating of a data projector is the average of photometer readings at several points on a full white image on the screen.

Technically, lumens measure “luminous flux.” A wax candle generates 13 lumens; a 100 watt bulb

generates 1,200. The lumen rating is a critical specification when choosing a data projector. In a darkened room, 500 lumens may be ample; however, in a conference room with normal lighting, 1,000 lumens would be better. In a room with bright daylight, 2,000 lumens is preferred.

A full size tripod that sits on the floor is an option.

I just discovered a table top tripod. It sits next to me on the table. I like this option better because it is closer to the image and I don’t trip over it. I can angle the camera almost straight down or at just at a slight angle. I like to paint at a small tabletop easel as this reduces glare and puts the piece at the right angle for the camera.



Mary teaching in Osaka using the video system

That is all there is to it! Think about automating your classroom – your students will thank you and frankly so will your feet! Any questions about automating your classroom contact Mary Gibilisco at painting@kingslan.com