

The Art of the Critique



Gary Hovland

they sought out that amazement."

It is those attributes — drive and amazement — that excite her about a student, Ms. Evans said. Many people can understand the basics of composition and shape and positive and negative space, but becoming an artist demands ideas. By constantly questioning a student, the teacher can help clarify those ideas.

"It's important to get them to say what they want to do," she said. "Then the important thing is not to tell them this isn't drawn well but to say maybe the idea is a little too sentimental or obvious or whatever."

While she would never tell a student what

she thought of his potential, Ms. Evans said, she does try to inject a dose of reality into the mind of the student who dreams of living the glamorous life of an artist.

"I don't think you're doing anyone a favor by encouraging them to be an artist," she said, laughing. "I tell people, 'Only be an artist if you have to. You're not going to make a living at it. You're going to have two or three jobs. But if you have to, then we can get to work.'"

George Loros, an acting teacher at the Lee Strasberg Institute, is known for his toughness. Being straightforward, he says, is the best approach.

"I'm an honest critic — harsh may not be the word," he says. "When you're dealing with actors you have to be very sensitive, but you have to be very honest. The honesty might seem harsh, but it's a velvet hammer."

"I think my students would call me severe but very fair. It's not the performances: people do terrible performances all the time. My severity is with people who are late, people who miss class, who aren't prepared to do the work. I feel that is a manifestation of a lack of will."

"The only way that the teacher-student relationship works in its maximum is if the will of the student to learn equals the will of the teacher to teach. And I have a very strong will to teach."