

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

I actively work to celebrate diversity and elevate what makes a student who they are. I do this by encouraging an active open dialogue. In my classroom I work to push students to address their individuality. I make it clear with students that inevitably there will be slip ups, as none of us have the same understanding of identity as someone living it. However, my classroom will handle conversations with respect when people speak their truth with the intent of empathy. This will be achieved through active conversations and through asking genuine questions. In art, an understanding of “concept”, or personal voice, is essential. This is what self-expression really means.

I think about what it means to discriminate, or to “other” someone. This clearly can be seen as a dismissal of conversations around one's identity. This includes ideologies such as “I don't see color”. These are more of “Macroaggressions”. But discrimination can also be a build up of microaggressions. In art classrooms there is a plague of silence during conversation relating to concepts such as race, sexuality, gender, political beliefs, physical and mental health, trauma, ect. This silence can be othering, and a buildup of these microaggressions can be just as harmful as macroaggressions. With an active willingness facilitated by the teacher to ask questions and a genuine desire to learn, this room of silence is avoided.

It is essential to acknowledge and elevate authority others have over their own identity. As an art educator I believe I have a lot of the answers, but just as other students I have a lot of questions. This transfer of power to students is a tricky line to walk. I walk this line by taking authority of the formal techniques behind a student's art. I take authority in asking hard hitting questions. In this I maintain respect. However, I do not take authority over why a student wants to explore what they want to explore. I do not take authority over a student's personal experiences, as this is invalidating.

I do however have boundaries I enforce in a class as a way of creating a safe space. Students will always have the right to leave conversations that are triggering or harmful. Students must use language that is respectful. Derogatory language and slurs are strictly prohibited. Students will not be allowed to make work that is an act of self harm (physical or mental). Students are not allowed to make malicious work towards others. When a work is censored there will be active conversations around why the work is harmful.

As an avid art historian, there needs to be an acknowledgement of the problematic roots of the foundations in western art. I think about the distinction between “perversion” and “subversion”. To pervert is to corrupt, while to subvert is to undermine corrupted foundations. I discourage perversion, and instead advocate for subversion. Subversion in the corrupted foundations of art looks like elevating voices of artists and identities that have been silenced or dismissed. This looks like teaching and exposing students to the work of black artists such as Jennifer Packer and Kerri James Marshall, or queer artists such as Paul Cadmus and Peter Hujar, as well as exposing students to other silenced voices. This is essential, as it allows students to see themselves within the lineage of successful artists.

By elevating voices of those silenced, creating healthy boundaries in a classroom, and encouraging conversations behind important identity conversations, I hope to create a classroom that is inclusive, empowering, and most importantly safe.