

Teaching Philosophy

As an art educator it is my responsibility to create an environment for students to discover their personal voice, taste, identity, and how they relate to their history/the history of art. The ability of the fine arts to elevate the under-represented as well as give space to allow artists to tell their unique stories has become centered in contemporary art. As a teacher, I work with students who are in the prime of their journey of self discovery. Essentially, my goal for students is to answer the question “who am I?”. My priority as a teacher is to encourage students to find their personal voice through making art.

The students' expectation is to embark on their quest toward understanding themselves using art as a vessel in that journey. On this path students will refine and develop a concept for their art and see the work to fruition.

Students are encouraged to use art as a tool to answer the question “who am I?”. I work with the student to ignite passion, but ultimately it is up to them. By learning about themselves, artists gain confidence in their identity. By creating work they see as beautiful, and learning where they fall in the context of art history I hope for students to feel validated. I also create space for self reflection and self actualization through a journaling and/or meditation practice in the beginning of each class. As students gain confidence through validation of what they generate and where they fall in the context of art history, they will learn how to externalize their personality. This is encouraged through group critiques, collaboration, and writing.

The teacher's expectation is to help students along their journey for self discovery. This self discovery can potentially look like what other educators refer to as “concept”. The most important thing is that a teacher creates a space that encourages discovery, while maintaining comfort, courage, and safety. This space can be created by treatment of physical space. Allowing students to listen to music, socialize when appropriate, or even just adjusting the lighting to be a more comforting space. Even the cleanliness of an art room, or the way furniture is laid out is essential. This is coupled with my ability to foster a communal environment free from judgement and discrimination by the encouragement of discussion of tough issues.

In the quest to remove judgment it is essential to avoid unnecessary hierarchies, and remove any instantiations that might produce biases towards students. To accomplish this, the teacher must give each student their attention in an equitable way. That time in the “spotlight” helps build student confidence and a more confident approach towards an assignment. It is essential that I as a teacher do not monopolize the time of the students by working through lectures and demonstrations the entire class.

When considering assessment and accountability, I am a strong believer in dialogic formative assessment. My approach is to set a time limit allotted to each student so that an even amount of attention is given as a way of avoiding hierarchies between and or among the students. This practice discourages comparison by teacher bias that can potentially negatively affect a student. By dividing student-teacher attention evenly, I avoid the segregation or distinction between students who compare themselves to other artists in the class.

To avoid bias in the classroom it is essential for the teacher to have an empathetic attitude towards all students and what they are working through. I like to think that it is important to be “near” the students in technique and concept but not “with” the students in the social realm. There is a fragile line to navigate between teacher and student, where the teacher is

approachable yet respected. That line is malleable, and looks different with each student. This involves sharing experiences between myself and students, without getting too personal. That line fluctuates between different students and classes. Art is different from most curriculars. It is inherently expressive. Personal conversations will be had, and they need to be approached with openness, and without fear, and yet within professional, productive boundaries.