

## Teaching Philosophy

I believe that the path to alternative ways of knowing is through a deep grounding in technique, in the discovery of a tactile relationship with materials and material problem solving. The tools of art offer a different way of thinking and being in the world. Intentional creative practices and spaces ask us to make connections, to consider and compose, an invitation to disrupt dominant thought patterns and narrative. My work as a teacher is to foster connection with that world, to create the structures for students to learn new techniques and find where their personal material world lives. I know the wordless knowing that comes from engagement with a material process that is right for me. I create curriculum that facilitate students' discovery of that embodied knowledge. There are many ways toward that place. Projects and exercises that provide structure through clear parameters and prompts, exposure to other people's work and the process of slow looking as well as willingness to engage with our body's relationship to material and practice, paying attention to what emerges.

If an art learning space is to be a space where normative and habitual thought patterns are disrupted, it is essential to consider the politics of representation. Most examples still used in classrooms are the European white male 'master artists'. While there will always be something to learn from these examples, it would be easy, based on what is typically shown, to believe that these are the only people who make art. It is imperative to disrupt this narrative if we are to create a classroom where diversity, representation, and inclusion are prioritized. One simple way I do this in my classroom is by showing contemporary work by people of color and a spectrum of gender representation, as well as work that is *about* identity and representation. As we look at the work, we talk about the history of art and the politics of representation. I also learn from the students, who their influences and inspirations are - these examples expand our classroom's visual culture. For the classroom to be a space in which the whole self is present, questions of cultural representation, diversity and equity have to be considered, both for the celebration of the multitude of experiences in the room and the continual questioning of the politics of representation and how we address these questions in our own making.

Beyond the teaching of art materials and techniques, teaching is about addressing the whole self. In the wonderful words of bell hooks, "our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students." I consider it my job as a teacher to create the circumstances for this kind of thinking, to guide students in the process of making their own connections that both specify and expand their sense of what it means to be an individual as *part of* our specific cultural context and moment in time.

A classroom is a space of learning, it is also a community. It is a place to build connection between learners as well as between disparate ideas, images and histories. I seek to foster an environment in which students are invited to experiment, to play, to fail and succeed, supported in their individual and collective paths. In an art context, I believe that it is through immersion in material and practice that the confidence to explore one's personal and political relationship to the world emerges. And it is from the grounded, embodied, tactile experience of making that these relationships unfold.