



PEDAGOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

An important step towards fostering innovative and critical thinkers is to change the way art education is approached. As artist educators, we should not shy away from issues related to social inequality and subjugation. My didactic approach is not just focused on and rewarding technical application, but also the student's ability to ideate and consider materiality. Restricting what students learn to just technique hinders their growth as individuals and prevents them from discovering new revelations about their artistic practice.

It is my professional responsibility to use art to promote democracy, inclusiveness, and recovery. One of my didactic objectives is to ensure my students feel represented and acknowledged through what they learn and experience in my class. During the fall of 2020, my students facilitated a virtual exhibition, Art for Armenia, focused on selling student art and donating half of the proceeds to Armenian families who were displaced during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War. The majority of my students are of Armenian descent and have a strong sense of agency when wanting to aid those within their community.

To continue combating institutionalized racism, I have participated in workshops focusing on restorative justice and anti-racism. My pedagogy is geared towards integrating anti-bias and culturally relevant lessons into my curricula. With recent efforts to lambaste the racial and gender disparities within the art world, I find myself inspired by artists such as Titus Kaphar, Kara Walker, Patrick Martinez, and Narsiso Martinez. One of my favorite units is dedicated to intersectionality and Njideka Akunyili Crosby, a Nigerian-American painter who is based out of Los Angeles, CA. Students are provided creative liberty with how they wish to identify themselves. Some students dedicate their social identities to their culture, religion, disabilities, and/or gender identity. The main objective of this project is to encourage students to think deeply about all parts of their lives that make up who they are. They consider the good, and the bad, and how the culmination of all their identities forms their unique life.

Giving complete autonomy provides students the agency they crave and the opportunity to address and reflect on the problems they face. For example, my advanced students are asked to pick an inquiry that interests them for a portfolio series. They research their topic, pull from personal experiences, and emote through painting. It is not uncommon for many of my students to choose beauty standards as a topic to explore. Many of my students express discomfort in their own bodies because of the influencers they witness on social media or the discipline needed to stay extremely thin. Through discussion, we are able to naturally address oppressive aesthetics in our personal lives and ensure we do not perpetuate linear or limiting ideas. Paulo Freire believed appropriate dialogue between the instructor and students is crucial in any learning environment. It's important to me to foster an artistic community in my classes through art production, critique, and discussion. Creating beauty through art, listening with an open mind, imagining a better world, and practicing empathy for others are some of the things I enjoy most about teaching.