

Art Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is infused with a desire to integrate mastery and respect for the material, with an epistemology of unknowing. As mentor, facilitator and guide I enter the unknown to enable co-emergent knowledge, I complement this with being a transmitter of historical knowledge. My relational pedagogy, grounded in the practice of deep listening, directs a listening as much for what is said as what is left unsaid. I believe we are not by necessity isolated as learners and that the collective dynamic of a group can and does shape the direction of a learning environment as much as an instructor does. To assist a dynamic social learning environment, I encourage the inclusion of all aspects of the person: the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual.

My practice as an artist and educator works towards an expansive framing for contemporary art practices, similar to the philosophy of artist educator Carol Becker (2002), where educating artists for the role of “organic intellectual” (Gramsci, cited in Becker) or “public intellectual” is primary. As public intellectuals, artists do the work of critical educators, “cultural workers” (Henry Giroux, 1997) and researchers within society, bringing what is hidden or repressed forward through exhibiting art publicly within local and international communities.

Engaging art-making practices reflects well our human desire to fully engage tactile, messy, bodily processes. We are embodied, breathing, physical human beings, who require touch and kinesthetic knowing as an essential component of our lives. The body and its expression is very much part of my pedagogy--bringing the non-verbal (arational) components of art together with the conceptual (rational) elements of art.

I have found that practicing and teaching arts-based research and in particular *artography* (the form of arts-based research I have found most integrative for the artist as researcher and educator), can expand one’s art and teaching practice. This leads to new levels of understanding and criticality, regarding what art and the artist is and what art is for. I do believe that art (complicated to define as it is) assists in the advancement of our society through its ability to disrupt, risk creatively and mobilize for positive change. I also believe that artist educators need support and guidance to fulfill this role and to sustain their lives in healthy and creative ways.

I believe the artist educator, whose art and teaching practice incorporates multiple worldviews, has an opportunity to fully reflect the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual elements through the political, historical, personal and sacred faces of an individual and society (Abalos, 1998). From this integrated location an artist educator can assist those studying art and those aspiring to become artists and arts educators, so they can speak easily across paradigms and worldviews, from the local to the global; and to present art as public art, be engaged as organic intellectuals, act as cultural catalysts, and actively assist the advancement and transformation of society.

References

- Abalos, David. (1998). *La comunidad in the United States*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Becker, Carol (2002). *Surpassing the spectacle: Global transformations and the changing politics of art*. Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Giroux, Henry A. & Shannon, Patrick (Eds.) (1997). *Education and cultural studies: Toward a performative practice*. London, UK: Routledge.