

Bethany Rusen

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Teaching Philosophy

I believe in being fully present in the creative lives of my students. In my experience, this kind of commitment does not diminish my own creative pursuits, but serves only to enrich my own practices. My students give me as much as I give them, and I believe my own commitment as an artist serves as the best example for my students. As a student, I remember carefully looking to my professors for clues on how to be an artist. Their example lit what otherwise would have been a dark and lonely path for me. Being the guiding force of a creative community gives me energy and inspiration that I would not get from any other source.

In teaching studio classes, I approach the curriculum in a holistic way. I believe that a large part of making involves the physical, the nuts and bolts, where you get dirty and really understand your materials inside and out. Nothing can substitute for this. But I also believe that conceptual concerns should develop in concert with the physicality of making, and that the two should reinforce and illuminate one another. A broad-based understanding of art history and theory is necessary, as it provides analytical tools to locate oneself as a maker. It is essential that young artists have an understanding of what has come before, how to understand art and its history critically, and how their work can fit within the panorama of contemporary art and the issues it addresses.

I believe in cultivating an insatiable curiosity. I want this curiosity to extend far beyond art and into the worlds of writing, literature, physics, math, pop culture – anything that will help feed the creative lives of students. Artists of any age or persuasion are best served by being interested in anything and everything.

My philosophy of teaching encompasses my own history and experiences as a maker, as well as my experiences in education - both as a student and a teacher. I understand the challenges of existing in the contemporary art world and my teaching is based on how to best equip students so that they can thrive in that environment and understand themselves as makers.