

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

Karen Gergely

My art practice is rooted in the very nature of celebrating the every-day person. It cultivates social interaction, experience, story collecting, listening, and social change. My work parallels my reason for being, the way I try to live my life, and the way I want to treat others. I make this work as an extension of who I am and how I truly believe we should treat others and ourselves.

Although this mantra has been a constant for me throughout life, the ideas of social practice and socially engaged work came later. As soon as I entered graduate school, I had a very public breakup with object and art making (perhaps the worst time to have this crisis). I had just finished two long distance multi-month outdoor adventures where I felt so deeply connected to who I was as a human, a woman, a friend and a collaborator. Both of these journeys were experiences I shared with total strangers who instantly became deep lifelong friends. I believe in the power of shared experiences bringing like-minded people together to talk about our differences: politics, ethics, climate change etc. These shared experiences are what I wanted my art and life to be about, and have fought hard to ask myself and others the necessary questions to prepare myself for the risk to unite these visions.

As I have moved in and out of different communities, I hold tightly to the friendships cultivated in each. I believe I am authentic and genuine in my interactions with close friends, colleagues, acquaintances, and strangers. Cultivating positivity and joy seemingly come naturally to me and are things that I hope to spread with abandon. I show up. I show up to listen, to support, to high-five, to celebrate, to mourn, to help, to be a hero, and to celebrate other heroes. I show up to help write hard emails, to sponsor students for scholarly works, to athletic events, to celebrate wins and losses, to make homemade popcorn for students, and to give out birthday stickers and temporary tattoos. I show up to hold the devastated and allow them to hold me back. I show up to seminars, classes, and colloquiums in effort to help my coworkers and instill a sense of investment and collaboration to our students. I show up to meetings to sit alongside my colleagues for support. I show up to long bike rides on gravel roads to breathe alongside friends, to listen. I show up.

I value laughter and humor in situations that call for it, and extend strong listening efforts for stories that need to be heard. I am a nurturing and supportive force for my students, colleagues and friends. I am a provider, an encourager, and a realist. I help students whittle their ideas down to their most essential essence and ask them questions until they find the answers themselves. Likewise, I ask my coworkers and friends what they need and how I can be there for them as they pursue their visions.

I build sincere relationships by visiting face to face. I cook for others as a sign of affection and I host dreamy outdoor projection nights, make brownies, and invite everyone I know to embrace the simple magic of a shared experience. I am a quick thinker and a calculated, well-planned problem-solver. I am goal oriented and deadline driven. I am willing to take the lead and just as happy to follow. I am a student, an educator, an activist, and force for positive change.