

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY Karen Gergely

My teaching philosophy is grounded in fostering a dynamic, inclusive, and student-centered learning environment. I believe learning happens best when it occurs in a supportive community. Creating a safe and bold space is of the utmost importance to me. Establishing a true culture of trust in the studio gives students openness to ask tough questions, the freedom to struggle with concepts without fear of condemnation, and the autonomy to create very personal work. In the studio classroom, we build the rules together, helping establish boundaries. When we create these guidelines together, we abide by them, and we trust each other.

I encourage students to see themselves as agents of positive change and to recognize the transformative potential of their creative endeavors. Students who can synthesize and process information are stronger critical thinkers. I facilitate open discussions, question assumptions, and have students reflect on their own artistic practice and societal impact. I utilize a flipped classroom model where our time together is one of reciprocal learning.

I intentionally seek out and included diverse, contemporary voices, experiences, and artists in my curriculum. When students investigate artists who look like them creating and succeeding in the art world, they can see themselves succeeding. They can see a future in the arts.

I continuously assess and adjust my teaching methods to meet the evolving needs of the students and the community, ensuring that the learning experience remains relevant and meaningful. I integrate socially engaged art practices into my classroom experiences to empower students to explore the intersection of art and society. Through collaborative projects, community partnerships, and real-world applications, students learn to use their artistic skills as tools to change the world. I ask my students to critically examine their own art, artistic choices, and the societal implications of their work. I stress process and risk-taking over final product. Through guided reflection, students develop a vocabulary to talk about their work, and the work of their peers. We ask specific questions: "What does the work remind you of?" and "What does the work make you feel." These questions lead to deep, slow looking and understanding rather than passive judgement and allow the artist to gain the guidance they need to make adjustments, if needed, and continue forward.