Teaching Philosophy- Christine Dehne

To me, teaching is an integral part of being an artist. When preparing lectures, discussions and syllabi, I enjoy confronting broader swaths of contemporary art history and theory than I would ordinarily encounter in my research and creative processes. I have grown confident in my abilities as a teacher and my wide variety of experiences in the classroom have caused me to think about what I should accomplish when working with students.

I want my students to enjoy the study of art. I have found that the best way to do this is by engaging students in viewing and speaking about the work that other artists have made before them. Although it sometimes surprises them, most students are receptive to the idea that the study of art history and theory entails more than the realization that the work has been created, but also that it has been created within a particular historical context. I purposely leave my assignments broad, to encourage individual creativity and the development of a "body of work" by each student during the semester. Along with the creative, open-ended assignments, lectures and well-selected readings help students to become individually involved in the study of art. This allows them to engage in lively discussions with their classmates and myself both inside and outside of the classroom and to see where they and their creations fit under the broad term "art". Consequently, they have fun while being intellectually challenged, often leading them to enroll in further art courses.

My other primary goal as a teacher relates to the fact that I am a "New Genre" artist. I feel working in new and underrepresented media (in many academic settings) is often unfamiliar and intimidating to students, especially when they are faced with the pressure to learn a marketable skill. I attempt to teach my students to think for themselves and become creative problem solvers, the most marketable skills I can imagine. Once my students realize these challenges, they understand that they can learn to do anything that an employer may ask of them. This leads the students to release the question "why?" in order to embrace the question "why not?", a question which often generates more creative and impressive work.

I have found that staying alert to the reactions of my students continually stimulates me to tinker with the way I teach. I am always willing to explore the possible uses of different pedagogical methods and new tools. More than anything else, I believe that I must always strive to improve my teaching.