

## **Elizabeth Camilletti**

*Elizabeth.Camilletti@gmail.com*

*540.525.9514*

*ElizabethCamillettiArt.com*

### **Artist Statement**

A viewer seeing a painting, book, television screen suspends disbelief in the events occurring in the image. The narrative is believed for as long as the book is open or the viewer is standing in front of the object, and that is magical. This bit of magic is what I want to create as I juxtapose ideas, materials, processes, and images. I think it is fascinating how ideas can be bridged (juxtaposed). For instance, in my own work the connection between child-like imagination and adult-like imagination is paralleled. We are all much more familiar with child-like imagination, yet I find that with the right nudge across some bridges a viewer may freely realize how much our own expectations for tomorrows are the same as a child's belief in fairies.

I try to prompt the audience to be inclusive through the themes of imagination, curiosity, and juxtaposition. In my process, I show how available "art" materials can be through the use of non-traditional, reused, and recycled materials. As an artist I feel a moral pull to create artwork that is accessible. There are many barriers that disconnect you, me, my neighbors, the sixth grade science teacher at Kealing Middle School from art, chief among them the exorbitant price tag that denies all but the 1% from owning artwork, but my fight is not with capitalism. I push against the mindset that equates money with success and "others" individuals who live within blocks of one another. With my art I want to work from the bottom to the top and enrich the community with healthy ideas of worth and a belief in a shared humanity.

### **Teaching Philosophy**

Inspiring nuance, openness, and honesty is the objective of my teaching. For me, it all begins with the fundamentals. I believe that broadening a students' understanding of the fundamentals of artmaking lays the groundwork for the thoughtful pursuit of ideas. I use the development of fundamental skills to fuel a student's confidence and establish the notion that within the security of the classroom, there are innovations not failures. I believe facilitating an open and inclusive environment with frequent dialogue between classmates, in groups, and with myself helps to develop self-awareness, critical thinking, and introspection. These traits are important for a healthy and sustainable work ethic within the classroom and out in the world.

In studio courses, I encourage and demonstrate enthusiasm for change and discovery. I design my class environment to integrate many types of student learners from experienced to novice, passionate to reserved. Some students may need the structure of a daily sketchbook assignment while others thrive off of the trial and error process of an individualized assignment. In this way, my studio courses are highly collaborative and adapted to the individual student. By approaching my courses this way, not only are students seeing, hearing, and learning from their peers but actively steering the direction the course will take. I want students to be free to be uninhibited inside of the learning environment because I believe this opportunity inspires openness to exploration and growth.

I design courses that build on qualities everyone possesses: curiosity, thoughtfulness and humor. I don't make attempts to ignore the individual circumstances and unique experiences each student brings to the class. Instead I cultivate an open and inclusive mindset by engaging with and acknowledging the diversity around us instead of using the same approach for everyone. The outcome is that students create

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visual evidence of their identity, expression, perspective, or ideas. The strength of the studio environment is that it is a safe space to share ideas, dreams, and opinions. I intentionally use the security of the studio to help students build confidence in themselves while being open to the differences that make us unique.

### **Equity Statement**

My experiences in art departments as an instructor have taught me about the power of collaboration to break down barriers to inclusion. A culture that values and respects diversity and a willingness to have honest and difficult conversations about equity among faculty carries over to conversations I have with students and how I adapt my courses to be more responsive and attuned to students' needs. My preconceptions of the classroom environment have been upended in my tenure as a professor. Not only is it now more clear to me that students learn in many different ways and an inclusive environment accommodates those differences, but the very idea of a "typical" learner has been proven a myth. I strive to ground the learning environment in a reality that acknowledges the harm created by inequality and seeks to disrupt systemic oppression. By building and sharing power among faculty members, between students and faculty, and among students, we can create an equitable and inclusive culture within the academic institution while beginning to dismantle the inequities that exist outside our halls.

Studio courses are excellent representations of an environment that is collaborative, dynamic, and diverse. Studio art breaks the mold of more traditional, one-way learning experiences. In a studio environment, I guide, empower, and encourage students to better understand and develop their own confidence, voice, and perspective. I will never be the expert of someone else's experience, but I can create a safe space for students to delve into themselves, open their hearts and minds to other perspectives, and foster the curiosity and courage to do so. I find that this can be achieved with ample time to focus, share, and experience. I use my technical expertise and experience to help students refine their work, not define it. This collaborative and inclusive design of the studio course empowers students to reach their own goals and aspirations, while examining external expectations and limitations with a critical lens. I believe this foundation can foster growth throughout their academic careers and beyond.

As an instructor, I make myself available to listen and communicate with students through all means possible. COVID-19 has revealed a reality and an imbalance in our society that I learn more about each passing week. I want to be accessible to the students so they feel safe to speak with me about how they learn or better understand what resources they need. Outside of the classroom I am engaging with new technology to better understand how to make it equitable. As my classrooms have become virtual, the learning curve is playing out right in front of me. I'm on my toes a lot, and that is a good place to be. I'm attentive and responsive to the current environment and the students' evolving needs. Though I certainly want things to settle down, I honestly hope they don't go back to normal. I feel that I am fortunate to be growing my experience as an instructor in a time of urgent and critical reflection on equity in educational outcomes. I have great hope that through this period of change, we can reshape our systems of learning to be more inclusive to our community and responsive to our ever-changing world. I endeavor to be part of that positive change as an instructor by continuing to grow and be open to growing, changing, reevaluating, listening, and challenging myself.