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STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY & RESEARCH INTERESTS

I am interested in questions of capitalist hegemony, postcoloniality, and hegemony within art. Through my artistic practice I wish to undermine the hegemonic conventions in artistic presentation that are taken for granted and ultimately exemplify problems in the relationship between “art” and the viewer. I wish to examine the ethics of the colonial impulse and fear of uncertainty within the history of western colonialism and art that produce or replicate an oppressive hierarchy and closes, rather than opens the space for criticality. In the spirit of undermining conventions of historic imaging and representation, the nature of my practice is interdisciplinary and research oriented. The work itself includes curation, and tends to take the form of interactive installation and architectural modification that incorporate and re-present traditional art objects (drawing, painting, photography, sculpture) as well as “new media” (video, sound, interactive media). The hope is that viewers become aware of themselves perceiving and consuming “art” and will reconsider the politics of representation as critical and active participants.

I believe the primary goal of teaching within the arts is to cultivate and support inquiry and criticality alongside creativity and experimentation. This can only be achieved in an inclusive environment or equity and respect. I am among those artists who feel art *should* affect and produce cultural change and criticality. I teach art as a field that relates and weaves into a holistic and interdisciplinary understanding of the world, from which we develop our worldviews and creative problem solving skills. My strength as an educator combines technical expertise in the traditional disciplines, a genuine passion for teaching and community building, and a solid background in critical theory, art history and curatorial practice. While technical skill training and mastery of craft may expedite the execution of a project, in many cases it is the means, and not an end, to creative productivity and intellectual growth. Mastering craft takes time and patience, however learning to engage in critical discourse and, more importantly, engaging in a process of fascination and inquiry is much more demanding and difficult to teach and develop. At the undergraduate level, this involves combining demonstrations and rigorous exercises designed to develop familiarity and mastery of tools and technique with reading assignments, critical discourse, and slide lectures on current topics in art and culture as well as relevant topics in art history. I often encourage students to propose topics and lead discussions and/or slide lectures to immerse and engage them in the learning process. Because graduate students often enter programs with pre-existing knowledge and direction, it is beneficial and productive for them to consider practices or approaches beyond that with which they are familiar and comfortable. This most often entails assigning and discussing text, along with looking at contemporary artists whose practices may be relevant or of interest to the students’ art practice and conceptual/critical sensibilities.

A student’s ability to push beyond convention requires a degree of confidence that can only be achieved through the risk failure. My work as an instructor is to foster learning by creating a respectful atmosphere where students are comfortable with making mistakes and learning from them. As a first generation Vietnamese immigrant raised in poverty and experienced in teaching and working with groups of diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, I am empathetic and heavily invested in the varying needs of a diverse student body. After nine years of teaching art and art history to non-art majors at a variety of colleges, I have experienced and successfully met the challenge of teaching a broad range of students who are not only ethnically and academically diverse, but who vary dramatically in age, culture, academic ability, politics and economic backgrounds. I find working with such disparate groups refreshing and rewarding, and it is something that invigorates both my personal life and my studio practice.

I am a firm believer in experimenting within my studio practice as well in teaching, and I believe that a successful teacher will learn as much from her students as they from her.