

## DENISE (DEDE) HARTER

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### Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is centered upon the belief that everyone is an individual. Students walk through the classroom door with diverse personal histories and abilities; therefore, a variety of teaching methods and assessments must be applied to accommodate these differences. On an individual student basis, my methodology is to seek out something a student already knows and build upon that base with new concepts. In my lessons, I discuss connections between ideas that link the familiar with the unfamiliar.

The social environment of the classroom is of primary concern for me as a teacher. Much of the learning that takes place in a studio class is accomplished through interaction, student-on-student encounters. Reflection and peer review are both essential in making dynamic art. I seek to shape the atmosphere of the classroom into a nurturing and memorable experience, ripe for challenge, experimenting, and risk-taking. This can only happen in a positive working environment where camaraderie is encouraged among the students.

Art classes are best taught with a dual approach that emphasizes both technique and conceptual thinking. Technique alone will foster an artisan, not an artist. Teaching technique first and concept later will likely beget the same result. Both technique and concept should be explored at the same time.

My instruction is also devoted to discussing past and present visual culture. Ideas must be contextualized if one is to connect with the conversation at large among society. Students need encouragement to research a bit and develop their expression of ideas within a context. There's nothing more disabling than making art that you thought was innovative and real, only later to find there is an identical twin out there.

Teaching art is like getting paid to eat chocolate brownies. I am a studio artist and a teacher, and I feel lucky to say that both of these endeavors serve to inform each other. The classroom affords me the opportunity to reach out beyond my solitary studio life and share what I do... and completing the circle, the student work/dialogue informs my artistic practice and motivates me to focus my voice. The classroom allows everyone involved to learn from one other. The processes of teaching and of art-making are intertwined.