

2007/08 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships Kraus Family Foundation Award



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As a child of migrant laborers, we moved with the seasons. We followed the work, but we stayed within the Eastern Washington region and this became my home. I discovered this when I finally settled down for more than four years to attend college in Ellensburg, Washington. It was here that I studied painting, drawing, and sculpture. My work reflected a longing and awe for nature. I painted the sky and fields and began making sculpture in the natural world.



I began making artworks that people in public settings could encounter. I was trying to create and evoke potent images that would convey the complex relationships that I perceived in nature. I explored video, film, Internet works and performance.



My first large experiment was the Ellensburg Cloud Event in which I facilitated the sending of 150 clouds in white boxes around the country and around the world. Best of all, a variety of people from the town attended the event, many of whom were not artists. This project created a sense of pride among the residents of Ellensburg.



In many of my works, I am responding to my location, trying to deepen people's appreciation for the natural world. While I do not make overtly environmental or political art, I am interested in effecting change on a more intimate and personal level. This kind of change takes time. I create artworks that not only raise awareness about the natural world but also evoke awe, wonder, and hope.

It is here that my role as artist and educator intersect. I want to inspire people to really observe their surroundings. I believe that the skills and perspectives that art unlocks are powerful tools in transformation on the personal, social, and political scale.



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Through art, I can teach students to observe their world with focus, awareness, sensitivity, and criticality. Students can learn the value of play through risk-taking and through controlled experimentation and failure. Through art history and criticism, students learn cultural relativism and how various societies have defined and practiced art making.

In 2004, I became certified in the State of Washington to teach K-12 Art Education. The demographics of the classrooms where I was teaching in Yakima, Washington were 70% Hispanic. The Yakima region is fraught with a serious economic disparity and latent race related issues that are still unaddressed. It is for this reason that I want to return here as an educator. I want to bring back what I have had the privilege to learn and experience in higher education.

While my immediate career goals involve teaching Visual Art at the collegiate level, my long-term career plan involves creating a bridge between higher education and the public school system in Central Washington. I plan to return to this area to teach and make visible the role of art in the public schools and in the community. Making Art, like planting sequoias, has the power to transform the future by giving tools and knowledge to the voices of students.

