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Participants:

ISAAC DUNCAN III

ARIEL PATTERSON

MICHAEL "ARCHE" TWITTY

JEQUISE BEVERLY

Length: 00:43:56

Preface

The following conversation was hosted at Stove Works, facilitated by Aja Scarlato and Eliza Myrie. Consent was given by the participants to have their conversation recorded and transcribed.

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START OF RECORDING

AJA SCARLATO: Alright, hit it.

ARIEL PATTERSON: Um, but, I'm working on a painting for a friend that's like, five by eight foot, so, yeah. So, I'm, I'm trying. I used to be really, um, I used to be shut in all the time and just draw and so that's where I started. Um, but you know, life, uh, experiences going off on your own and trying to get into the world so...I took a long break from art so I'm just now, last year, getting back into it, so--...

ISAAC DUNCAN: Oil or acrylics?

AP: Acrylic. I would love to do oil, but I don't have the space to do it yet [Laughs]
But I did try it out and I'm like in love the way it blends and everything so definitely,

eventually love to do oil. So [Inaudible 00:00:40]. Acrylics, they're cheaper and vibrant color and everything, so, I like them--...

ID: Don't have to worry about dry time too much.

AP: Exactly too, yes yes yes. I did so much research on oil, and I was like, wow this is, that's some dedication right there.

JEQUISE BEVERLY: How long does it take?

AP: It depends, like I was watching one painter and she was saying like how it took like a month or, 'cause that first layer has to dry, it never truly fully dries--.

JB: Oh.

AP: Like it's still wet underneath. That's why I like, if you want to paint and then come back to it the next day, it's still wet--.

JB: Hm, hm.

AP: So. But yeah, it takes a long time. Months, even, it'll just depend on the size, but. Do we just pull out the card?

JB: That's what I was gonna ask. I think so.

AP: Okay, I guess I'll start. So, the prompt is, *Could you do your work anywhere else in the world? What keeps you here?*

JB: It's a great question [Laughs].

AP: Fear [Laughs].

JB: No, but for real.

AP: If I'm being honest.

JB: Yeah.

AP: Like, just how we were just talking, like, I still work like an eight to five corporate job 'cause I have the fear of not being stable if I just let go and fu- uh, do art fully, is scary. So even in imagining like just packing up and traveling somewhere else is just like, it takes a lot of, lot of courage to do that and I feel like maybe if I go through a midlife-crisis one day, maybe I'll do that. [Laughs] But um, but if I'm being honest, fear. For me.

[AP intermittently agrees]

JB: A hundred percent. I don't fully trust myself yet. I don't trust myself to be able to sustain myself. Just from photography. But also I don't like that chase. I don't, it's something, there's something so secure about a check every two weeks, I ain't gonna hold you. It just, it just is [Laughs] I like being able to pay my bills on time, and then it's like, I fall in and out of love with photography so much. One year I'll like, really be in it. Like, deep in it. And then the next year I'm just like, not inspired. How do you create when you're not inspired? But I do think like moving away may bring inspiration, but since I've like, when I was in Nashville, a lot of my life in Nashville was about survival. So I didn't make time to create. It was like, completely like on the back burner. 'Cause I was like, I got these bills to pay, I got a dog, we both gotta eat. [Laughs] And I moved from here to Nashville not knowing the difference of like the rent increase and things like that. So it was really, like, grind, but I moved back here and things are slower. And it's like, that creative part of my brain is slowly, but surely, coming back but I'm also like inspired by community here. Because it's home. My family inspires me. When we have cookouts, I wanna take pictures and things like that. And see us as Black people happy or just like driving around the city even how it's changed, it's like, this stuff needs to be

documented. These areas that aren't gonna exist in five to ten years anymore. So, but a hundred perc- it's that trust. It's hard.

AP: Yes, it is hard.

JB: It's really hard.

MICHAEL TWITTY: Actually, we were kinda talking about that a little bit, like, just fear, not trusting my art. I'm, I'm a wordsmith you know, and I act, so it's just like, how to monetize that in a steady, consistent way that's, that's most of it. You know, I, I, I haven't traveled anywhere until this y- this year, really--...

AP: Mhmm.

MT: So it's like, alright I got to go to South Africa and that was--.

[Crosstalk]

JB: That's dope.

AP: That is super cool.

JB: Yeah.

[Crosstalk ends]

MT: It was dope, it was a whole cultural, you know, um...and I also got to see myself creating there. But at the same time, the income was steady, you know, 'cause it's a different priority over there.

AP: Right.

JB: Okay.

MT: I was like, alright, so this art is uh, more of a luxury than, you know. They'll go, oh, you can do poems, oh cool. Well, you know, we still gotta eat, bro. We not just gonna spend money to--,

AP: [Laughs]

MT: hear some people say some words.

ID: Um, I can do my art anywhere, um.

[Crosstalk]

AP: Yeah, I was like you you were just saying how you traveled.

JB: Yeah.

AP: You've traveled quite a bit.

ID: Yeah, yeah, I'm a sculptor. A metal sculptor.

AP: Which is super cool. I would love to do that one day, so I'd love to see some of your art.

MT: Cool, alright. Um, I have stuff around town. But uh, yeah, and, I- I been doing this for about thirty years.

JB: Wow.

AP: Mm.

MT: So, um, I'm--.

AP: Just sculpting?

MT: Sculpting.

AP: Wow.

MT: So, well, I'll say combination from, from schooling--,

JB: Mhmm.

MT: in sculpting, all the way to where I'm at now.

JB: Okay

MT: And so, I've other, I've done other things. Like, I've worked as, I taught elementary school for a little bit--,

JB: Mhmm.

MT: But even while I was doing that I was sculpting.

JB: Mhmm.

ID: You know. Um, worked for a, a non-profit, um, economic development agency, and even while I was doing that, I was sculpting. So I was always, you know, working on my craft.

JB: Ok. [Speaker intermittently agrees]

ID: Um, and, but, I'm, I'm at, I'm at a point where, yeah, I could do it anywhere I want. And to me, understanding fear, Um, and fear works two ways: it can either, um, hold you back. Or, it could be that fire. To continue, to continue on. And within the art world, in the art game, you know, that, that fear is what increases the hustle, alright? To make you get ahead and be on point, and do what you gotta do to get that next gig, or get that next commission, get that ne-next shot, you know? And put it out there. So, you know, I like to eat the fear up.

AP: Oh [Laughs]

ID: I have fear for breakfast.

AP: Hey, that could go on at T-shirt.

[Group members laugh]

AP: That's another T-shirt slogan right there.

JB: How did you constantly make time, or carve out time to sculpt.

AP: Oh, yes.

JB: Were you just like, dedicated, like this is, I know this is what I truly wanna do, so I'm gonna put my head down, and stick to this?

ID: I don't, I don't, I don't treat my calling as a job. I treat, I treat it as--,

JB: Oh my G- Okay.

ID: As a lifestyle--.

JB: That's it! [Laughs]

AP: I just took a bite of chicken at the wrong time.

ID: I breathe this, I eat this, I sleep this.

JB: Okay, yeah.

ID: This is who I am, right? So, um, once you treat it in that way, then things get a little bit clearer and there's options. I mean, you close all the doors, you know?

JB: Right.

ID: You might not party as much. You might not take--...

JB: Right.

ID: You know, the money and go to a bar, you know? And hang out. Because you're in the studio working--.

AP: Mhmm.

ID: You know, or taking that money for, you know, the five drinks that you're gonna have at the bar, and put it on a new tool--

JB: Mhmm

ID: Or new sets of paints. So, you just prioritize a little bit different.

AP: That's been what I'm saying, like, it's been feeling like a second job.

JB: Yeah.

AP: I can't look at it that way.

ID: Don't put that obstacle. And, and, you have to think, you have to remember that, what we do, and if you want to do it continuously, you gotta see it as a marathon, not a sprint--.

JB: Okay.

AP: Mhmm.

ID: Okay, so what you're doing now is not going to immediately pay off tomorrow--.

JB: Right.

ID: Right, you're building yourself to that next level--.

JB: Mhmm.

ID: You're building who you are, and what you're going to be. So, that doesn't come like this--.

JB: Right, at all.

ID: Right.

AP: What a luxury it would be if it did. But, [Laughs] it's not the case.

JB: At all.

AP: That's really awesome.

JB: Okay, I was like I'll pull one. Oh, we're just--...

AP: I don't know how we doing it.

JB: [Laughs]

AP: [Laughs]

[Crosstalk ends]

JB: Okay, so this one says, *How is cultural memory passed down through generations? Discuss legacy, intergenerational advocacy, and mentorship.*

[Crosstalk]

AP: Oh, that's very broad, well not broad, but--...

MT: I feel that's lacking a lot in a lot of culture right now. Not general culture--.

JB: Mm.

AP: Mhmm.

MT: It's, it's, it's, I feel like we're not as in control of our narrative as we used to be--.

AP: It's definitely, we're definitely getting away from, for sure.

MT: Yeah, like, we don't, we don't, like, our kids don't know much, because we don't tell them much about history. 'Cause we're kind of, here we're kind of forced into assimilation, right, assimilating, so it's just like, alright, don't worry about, yeah yeah yeah all that, that's old stuff, you know? Yeah, I know y'all were going through that back then, but it's different now. You know, so we don't pass those stories on, because we

want, you know, I have to speak from my own experience. You know, my parents were really, about me assimilating into the, you know what I'm saying? So it's just like, I didn't know a lot of stuff till I got older. Till I got to my thirties, forties, you know what I mean--?

AP: Same.

JB: Yeah.

[Crosstalk ends]

MT: It's just like, it's just like, oh, okay, oh, oh, oh, you did a lot. We didn't, that's us?

ID: [INAUDIBLE 0:09:29-0:09:30]

AP: That's such a hard question for me.

JB: It is! It's a very hard question, um, I don't know, a big one is definitely like to pass down that memory is photographs. And that can just be within family. Like going back through like scrap books, um, and I think that's why film is such like, it should be bigger. Like, digital kinda took that away. All your pictures are on your phone now. No one prints out pictures anymore. Um, so those memories do kinda get lost, or, they say like we losing recipes, and--,

ID: Right.

JB: I think we are, but, I don't know. I think we're creating, also, like new recipes but, I guess there needs to be more accountability of like talking to our elders, and getting those stories. And capturing them and, I don't know. Like--...

[Crosstalk]

AP: It's just so hard 'cause, like, especially the younger generation, they don't care about things like that. They don't understand the fruit that's in our past--.

JB: Yeah.

[Crosstalk ends]

AP: And they only see what's now, they only see what's trending, they only see what's trending, they only see what, you know, other people are doing. And it's like...I feel like they lose sight of themselves, sight of where they came from. And, which, granted, I mean I can only speak for myself. Um, like I didn't have a, a great child- I had a rough childhood. And, you know, being biracial, like I...culturally, very two different sides of the story. Um, but, you know, I was raised primarily by, you know, the Black side of my family, and that's what I grew up in. So, for me it's very important for my, me, my siblings, and other people to see...that kind of history, I guess. Um, like I, so I paint I- the main thing I paint is Black women. That's my...I think Black women have su- the culture, like we are the originators, you know? Everything that's now, everything that's happening is like from Black women and I want Black women to be celebrated--.

JB: Mhmm.

AP: And I feel like we're at a age where it's like, a, a time and that it's not happening. Like, it's getting lost in them trying to look like what they see, instead of just sticking to their roots and being proud of the skin that they're in. The color of their skin, the the the aura that they just emit naturally from birth. So, that's my goal, to capture that. And, um, I don't know where I'm going. I think I'm just going rambling [Laughs].

JB: It's fine.

AP: I'm just rambling at this point.

JB: You're doing it.

AP: But yeah, um, so I, as far as legacy, my siblings, like, two of them are artistic as well. Um, and I hope that I don't know if that's what they wanna do. But I do hope they find some kind of purpose in that, to help touch the world in a way that I'm trying to, so--...

JB: Yeah. That's dope.

AP: I just started sweating. I don't know why. It's 'cause I was talking [Laughs].

JB: [Laughs]

AP: And we know we're being recorded.

JB: It's such a hard question, y'all.

MT: Right, it is a hard question.

JB: It is, it's super hard.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ID: And a lot of it depends on, like the first part really depends on family. Wherever that structure is. And what they've gone through, on trying to survive within their area, you know, during that time. So, unfortunately, some of our families had to put the idea of looking forward to a legacy, planting for a legacy, because to create legacy, you have to have some type of foundation—And a lot of our families come from, or have participated in a way where they're just trying to stay afloat--.

JB: Yes.

ID: They don't really, can't really set that foundation. So it's, they're preoccupied of making sure that the family is staying alive. Not everything else that goes with

creating [INAUDIBLE 0:13:33-0:13:34] --. And, um, then you get to a point where you know, the kids have to get, to, either they understand it or they don't--. And, sometimes they understand it when they're young, sometimes they understand it when they're older, you know. Um, I've always had, kind of like, had to figure out some of those questions about legacy and family. So, my parents, they both, are refugees to this country in sixty-nine. From the island of Cuba--. And, um, with that, they were put into the hustle game, where they had to survive to provide food for myself and my two other sisters, and me going to school, you know doing what they had to do to put me into school and everything, there was always that question. You know, [INAUDIBLE 0:14:26] biracial, bicultural, you know, being white and Black. Um, there's always that question that's like, "what are you, who are you" --. You know, where to fit in? So, at a young age I had to ask that question. It was like, you know, hey, you know, pops, why is our last name Duncan, right, but we're we're supposed to be, you know, Latino? Right? And where did that come from? He was like, oh well, my father was from Jamaica. You know, he went to Cuba, and there he met your grandmother--. So it's just like, understanding that, and then, [Inaudible 0:14:57-0:14:57] so I was like, okay. And then asking those questions. Growing up in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, you know, which is predominantly African American, it's like, where do I fit in? Right? And then, understanding that I was like, oh yeah. My father, my grandfather is Jamaican, you know, so I'm Black, too. So, there is, so, oh. What's this thing called--?

[Laughter]

ID: Black Latino? You know? It's like, oh, and then you start thinking 'cause like, oh, he got kinky hair, he got kinky hair. Oh, oh you got some Black in you, don't you--?

JB: [Laughs]

ID: [Inaudible 0:15:32] Your name might not be Hernandez, but yeah, you got some Brother in there somewhere, right--?

JB: Yeah.

ID: So, it's, so, understanding that, um, but it's, it's like...this thing that, it comes down to us or the person to decide, you know, where they want to take that--, How they want it to be--. But we can't really fault our, you know, our ancestors, because, you know, the struggle is real--.

JB: Yes.

AP: Awesome.

ID: To put that food in the mouth.

JB: Yeah.

AP: Very much so. Very much so.

JB: I think one of the biggest things I've learned, like, especially in my thirties, is that my parents did the best they could do with what they had--.

[Crosstalk]

ID: Right.

JB: If my momma--,

AP: [INAUDIBLE 0:16:10] that they had...

JB: Yeah! My momma came from the projects. She ain't have the tools, her momma definitely didn't have the tools, so as I've gotten older, and especially since I've come back home, and I see them more, I help more. And you, I didn't realize I was

steppin' into this role of like, being one of the like, lead women of the family, which I'm kinda iffy about. I'm like--...

AP: That's hard.

JB: 'Cause I'm the oldest [Laughs] --.

AP: Same, same.

[AP and JB crosstalk: 0:16:32-0:16:34]

AP: The relationship with the mom, well, like, you have a relatio—I don't have a relationship with my mom, so it's like, I've always had to take care of me and my five siblings--.

JB: Yeah, yeah.

AP: Always.

JB: Yeah, that's...

AP: And, it's just like...I, oh, dang, I feel like we're getting personal, 'cause now we're talking about legacy, 'cause like, how you were saying, like it's our job now to, to decide that. But it's like, I always thought like, I don't know if I want children--.

JB: No, one hundred percent! [Laughs].

AP: Just, because, just because of the struggle I saw my mom go through, and just the, the, how ruthless this world is--.

JB: Yeah.

AP: And I'm like, if, if I think that way, is my legacy going to be inspiring others, to walk in their purpose, is that gonna be my legacy? If I don't decide to pass it on, you know, generationally or whatever, so...

[Crosstalk ends]

JB: A hundred percent, I get, I think being raised by like a single mom, you see how hard they work. My mom always worked two jobs, until she met my step dad and didn't have to anymore. But me, and I tell people, me and my sister are thirteen years apart, but we were raised completely different. Where I was like, always at home alone, 'cause my momma was at work, and she was a stay at home mom with my sister. And so, it's like, my sister got this nurturing that I just didn't receive. I'm so much more, like, self-sufficient because I had to be, and it's like, I've had to work through that. Um, and sometimes it brings up these feelings of like, jealousy. I love my little sister down, but I be like, my mom cares so much more about your emotions than she did with me. Um, but I think those are things that we can catch and also pass down of like, how do we take care of ourselves emotionally? How do we preserve that emotional legacy of being kind and caring for one another? Even those that didn't get it 'cause my emotions ain't a thing in my family--.

ID: Right.

JB: We pick it up and we go, and so I think that's work we can do to also preserve or create those types of legacies, where it's like, we provide that emotional care that maybe we've never, like, had before, or that our parents were never shown, or anything. Just that grace. Black people aren't given grace. Like, Latino people aren't given grace. We gotta get it out the mud, and it's like--,

[Crosstalk]

AP: Sometimes I just wanna a little bit of ease [Laughs].

JB: [Laughs] Can that be our legacy--?

MT: Exactly.

[Group laughs]

JB: Some ease--.

[Group laughs]

MT: Can ya please [Inaudible 0:18:46].

[Group laughs]

AP: Yay! [Laughs] Alright, I'm just gonna leaving it in the middle for you to grab--.

[Crosstalk ends]

ID: *Discuss support systems for your art practice.* Mm...my support system, when I started, um...I'm gonna, I'm gonna say, my s-, my first support system were my parents because they didn't get in my way. They, they--...

JB: That's beautiful.

ID: They, they let me go ahead and do it. And they told me, [Laughs], make sure you're able to eat [Laughs]. So they put it in kind of a, a, uh, a way where, um, just don't forget, you know, you need, you need to survive. And, you know when I went to school, even when like I started out deciding to getting into the arts, it was also paired with, you know, another type of job, so like I had, I was studying art and sculpture but at the same time I was also studying to be a uh high school teacher. So, I was like, okay. If I'm gonna do this, then, I'ma do what I love, but also have another card in my pocket where if I need to go here or there, and the same thing with, when I got into sculpting, um, it was, okay. I would go to, uh, I'd take classes at, you know, at night, um, for welding. At welding school. And I was like, if this doesn't work out, I can always go on the factory

line. You know? Just to have that... So, um, so I would say, just like the words of, get up and do it but make sure you're gonna eat. And that was good enough for me, that was just my motivation. Keep that in the back of my mind.

JB: I love that, um, my parents have really struggled. Like, when I was really into photography, they were like, this ain't gonna make you no money, girl, whatchu doing? [Laughs] Like, a hundred percent. They was like, but then, as like, blogging and things start, they started to bring it up again. I was like, but where did these?

ID: Right

JB: What's, what's going on? So we [Inaudible 0:21:10], okay. Um, that's beautiful that you've had that type of support. What was the ques- um

ID: And part of it has to do with, because my father had a, a, a side job on the weekends. He was a photographer--.

JB: Oh that's lovely, yes!

ID: So he had, a [Inaudible 0:21:23] format--.

JB: So he understood that understanding.

ID: But it was funny because he, to him, it was an art form, but it wasn't an art form, it was a commercial form--.

JB: Okay.

ID: Because he was doing, you know, portraits and weddings and stuff--,

JB: Yeah.

ID: So it was along the commercialization--,

JB: Mhmm.

ID: Of that. So he s- he, he, understood--.

JB: Yeah.

ID: Kinda--?

JB: Yeah.

ID: But, you know, his, his, I-lead to a, a check, definitely.

JB: No, a hundred percent.

ID: Right?

JB: Yeah.

ID: Where mines was kind of like, if you sell

[Group laughs]

JB: Please buy my art piece.

ID: Here's my assignment, I'm gonna take the shots, here, get paid.

JB: Yes. And that's where I struggle, it's the commercialization of it because I'm like, I just want to walk around and take pictures. I didn't even think about being paid for photography for the longest. It was just like, I like to do this. I started doing this in high school, taking year book pictures for people. And then people are like, you can monetize it, and I was like, but how? And I tried, and I'm not good at the business side. I just wanna take the pictures and leave. Um, and I think I'm still building that support system. Like, getting back into art and creating, um. Josiah has been super helpful, he's always super encouraging. Meeting you and knowing that you do art, I was like, it's encouraging. [Laughs]

AP: I know, you're like, when you're, like portrait, I was like, wait, what?

JB: Yeah.

AP: And you're like, photography? I was like, I had no idea. [Laughs]

JB: Yeah! And so we found that out. I was like, okay! Like, this, and then, you like to paint Black women, I like to photograph Black women.

AP: Yes.

JB: Um, and I think I'm still, like, building those spaces and I've realized that community does like, it helps a lot too.

AP: It does, especially when people understand and they want

JB: Yeah!

AP: They want, they want your voice to be heard, and they, they, you know? They can help amplify your voice as well. So it's just like, the more people that come together, the more inspired you are, the more motivated you are, and it's

JB: Yeah

AP: definitely helped a lot. Like, I'm an introvert, so, I'm a, I stay in the house all day. If I, like, you know, but I'm trying to do something different. And I wanna get out there in the world, so like. Knowing that you do art, meeting Josiah, and just putting myself in like, even like spaces like this. Like, it inspires me. And, um, I just, for my support sys- like it's just been me, because my parents, or, my mom didn't care. Like, she was worried just about the kids at one point until life hit and everything. So, but now as I'm doing this as an adult, um, my friends are very supportive of pushing me to do this, because they know that this is what I love to do. And they think it's my purpose. So, that's the goal. Um, as far as money and everything, that eight-to-five computer science job, is what's paying for all these canvases. [Inaudible 0:24:07] and Michael's got a little

seventy-five percent off sale, you know. Um, but yeah, I think right now my art, my support system has been more so, like, the energy, the motivation and everything, as far as [Inaudible 0:24:21], so--...

MT: The community that you find is like, I know for me that's been, that's been my support system. My parents, my family, they don't care.

[AP, JB laugh]

AP: Same, that's like--,

MT: Right? I'll be like I got an event coming up, okay, well, cool, don't quit your day job--.

AP: [Laughs]

MT: But, like, people that you find in the community that get it? Like, that's people that's like, people that'll encourage you and tell you, it's dope, or here's what I think--.

AP: You feel seen.

MT: Exactly, exactly. 'Cause they feel that struggle--.

JB: Yes.

MT: And it's just like, okay, like, I didn't think, it's like you said, I didn't think about getting paid for poetry ever. I was in Genesis' workshop, you know, for a while. He offered to pay me for something, and I was just like--,

AP: It's weird, isn't it?

MT: It's weird as hell! [Laughs]

AP: It's so weird, I was like, wait a minute. My first gig, I was like, uhhhhh, I don't know--.

JB: Right, like, whatchu mean?

AP: Right.

[AP, JB laugh]

AP: You wanna [Inaudible 0:25:15], what?

JB: Right.

AP: Are you sure you wanna buy my piece? Like, you know?

MT: Yeah, and it's just like, oh, and then like, I feel like it's really kinda confirmation. Like valida- not validation, but that, too, of your voice. Like, especially, kinda come from a place, like, I was always told, sit down and shut up. You know--?

JB: Same, yes.

MT: [Inaudible 0:25:35-0:25:36] Man, look. Everybody got an opinion, don't nobody care [Laughs]--.

AP: Right.

MT: You know what I'm saying? You not special. But then you get out there and you start speaking, and people do care what you say. It's just like, oh. You know? Okay, and then it kinda turn towards, ok, well now what can I use that for. Then I know there's some empowerment in this. You know what I use it for. So that kind of, you know--.

AP: That's good you didn't let, like, what your father said, um, keep you from what you felt so passionate about.

MT: Oh, I did for, like, ever. Man, I'm forty-three and like I just got into this, like six years ago. You know, and it's just like, you get to this place where, I need, you need your voice. You know, everybody needs a voice. Um, you know, then it's just like, alright,

I wanna be able to pass down my legacy. I wanna be able to tell my grandkids
[Inaudible 0:26:26]. We lived in a predominantly, like, white area, so like. So, like,
usually, it was just, just me--.

AP: Okay.

MT: [Inaudible 0:26:34] like a little chocolate chip dropped in a bowl of milk --.

[Group laughs]

MT: But, so, it's like, to them, like, pursuing art, is crazy--.

JB: Yeah.

MT: You know what I'm saying? They're like, ah, you shoulda got a job with TVA.
I told you. You know, so it's just like, alright, when you find that network of people, it's
like, [Inaudible 0:26:55-0:26:59]. Oh, you know, so that's--...

AP: That's good. That community building.

MT: Oh, loo--...

AP: No, you're good.

MT: *Is it possible to make artwork that's not tied to notions of identity or legacy?*

AP: That's, uh, [thinking about question 0:27:21-0:27:22] 'Cause I feel like, you're
inspired by, you know, these things. That's like, what are you paint- like, well, for, like,
I'm painting or sculpting. What are you sculpting, then. What are you, what's the
purpose behind it, or are you just doing it just to do it? And like, you know? Like me
painting, like. I'm just g--,

AP: Sorry.

ID: No no no no, and the thing is, that even if you just doing it just to do it. It's a reason that's still a reflection of you. What you're going through, what you're thinking--.

[JB agrees intermittently]

ID: So, I, I think, uh, to answer that question, everything's about personal identity, everything's about, you know, legacy. 'Cause you're, if, you putting it out there, you share, you having a conversation, you know, and that's one personal thing, to the next personal thing, you know. And, eventually, some type of legacy can happen from the rewards or consequences. So--,

AP: I feel like people are gonna identify, everybody sees art differently, but someone's gonna identify with what you put out there. And it might speak to their identity or their legacy. So, in a way it's like it's all tied together.

JB: No, I was like, it a hundred percent does, but I'm thinking, like can that sometimes be like, detrimental, like, maybe to ego, because it's like sometimes we create art, are we seeking like validation or does our art by creating and producing this art, is that the validation that we need to just like, get it done. I know I struggle with that, because you're like, I want people to like my photos. I don't post on instagram or like, I'm not gonna do this show because I don't think it's ready. Um, and I think I'm going on this journey of like, you wanna create, just create. For you.

AP: Exactly.

JB: And if people like it, they like it. And if not, it's all good [Laughs].

AP: Me and my therapist were just having this conversation. 'Cause I was telling her about the first gig. I was like, I'm afraid of people not resonating with my painting.

JB: Oh, but they did!

AP: 'Cause I had to do a live painting. Like a live, and I was like, dang. And um, which, I did bring some artworks to sell. But that was, and I was telling her that was the fear I had. And she was like, it's not up to you to decide what they think.

JB: It's true.

AP: You could only, you can only put out there what you want.

JB: Yeah.

AP: And just let the eyes decide for themselves. But that's not up to you. She was like, don't be discouraged. Just do what you love.

JB: And my good sis sold, three paintings? Like you, you, you pulled through, you know? We was, yeah [Laughs] I was like, your artwork is beautiful [Laughs] I was like, your art is beautiful.

AP: I was, I know, it made me really happy. The first like, I wasn't even five minutes. She was like, you brought that? I wanna buy it.

JB: Yeah.

AP: I was like, okay.

[AP AND JB LAUGH]

AP: And, and I was worried about that, I was just like, 'cause it was so simple. Like, I was just like, it is. But, what is more of a statement than a nice, bamboo earring? [Laughs]

JB: Yes. I was, it just, it resonated. It was like, Black Girl. I want this in my living room.

[JB AP crosstalk]

JB: Um, we've all know the history of bamboo, yeah, that's what your paintings make me feel--,

AP: That's where I want. I want, yes, that's what I want. Yeah.

[CROSSTALK ENDS]

JB: Jay bought the one that I wanted. And I was like, not him beating me to it! But I was [Laughs] --...

JB: No, it is.

AP: I still don't know how I feel about that, to be honest. 'Cause it, I, I appreciate his purchase but I was like, it wasn't meant for you, but thank you.

JB: Because that painting, like, the orange, and then the face being, it was the colors, 'cause there was this one with the orange, but the blue really resonated of like, the emotions that we go through, how we can feel sadness, but that orange is like, I know there is brightness coming, even though I may be blue right now.

AP: Yes.

JB: But there is brightness. It, that painting resonated with me so much, I was like.

AP: Oh, that makes me happy [Inaudible 0:31:01-0:31:03] .

[JB, AP laugh]

JB: So beautiful! [Laughs] So, for context [Laughs]...

AP: I painted this, this Black woman, but I painted her blue. Different shades of blue--.

ID: Uh huh

AP: Um, she had these beautiful jumbo passion twists in her hair and everything. And I, I painted the background completely orange. And, um, 'cause it was just to represent, like me, going through my healing, me going through emotions, accepting them, um, and understanding that I feel sad, but I still have this love around me that's gonna warm me. Um, but my best friend's husband bought it. And, um, he is white [Laughs] And, I appreciate it but I was hoping it would go, like, I can't, I feel like I can't say like I was hoping, like, you bought my art. I appreciate it. But, I wanted it to be for a Black woman that felt I was ready to. But he was like, he said to me, he was like, there's the money, it's mine. I was like, okay.

JB: He was just like, I can't say no. He was like, I just bought that. I was like, whatchu mean? [Laughs] 'Cause I was, I was like, I'm finna pull the trigger [Laughs]. I was like, once this is open, I'ma pick it up and be like, Ariel, just-

AP: [Laughs]

JB: Beat me to it.

AP: Yeah, there'll be more, but yeah, sorry [Laughs].

ID: But, that, that, that was, that was a really good, uh, learning experience, right?

JB: [Laughs]

ID: [Inaudible 0:32:10-0:32:11]

AP: You gotta be quick.

JB: You do! You gotta be quick.

AP: It was a great learning experience because I was like, But, I wanted it.

[JB, AP laugh]

ID: But you know the funny thing that, you know, think you'd be, you'd put the question of, um, see, how did you put it? In a sense of...uh...you said something I wanna speak on. Or, or, investigate some more. About feelings, and then, if it's about, are you making work for affirmation--.

JB: Oh, yeah, yourself.

ID: Or, or is it about this- and, and, thing, I've got, I've gotten to the point where it's like, if you make your pieces to feel affirmed.

JB: Mhmm.

ID: Why not?

JB: That's true! Hundred percent.

ID: You know? Again, you know.

JB: Mhmm.

ID: We, as colored people are always taught that we need to hold things back. While everyone else can do whatever they want, however they want.

JB: Ooooooh, yes, yes.

ID: So, you know, we can't be privileged because we are the underprivileged.

JB: Mhmm.

AP: It's like it's so-, that thought is so consistent it like a stereotype in itself--...

JB: Yeah, yeah.

AP: And I'm just like, we gotta break through that. So, I'm not gonna say the quote, exactly, but I don't know if anybody watched Coach Carter before--?

JB: Yes, a long time ago. That's a yes [Laughs].

AP: But there is that, like, there is that poem at the end, where it's like, who am I to dim my light, to make others feel secure around me--.

JB: Yes.

AP: Like, we are all meant to shine as children do. Like, that that poem like always like really resonates and almost brings me to tears every time. Because I always read it when I need it most--.

JB: Yeah.

AP: 'Cause I have this fear of, trying to do too, like, am I grasping for too much? Am I trying to, to, to, you know what I'm saying--?

JB: I, no, I, I get that. And that goes back-

ELIZA MYRIE: Five minutes remaining, we're gonna start wrapping up, okay? So, finish your thoughts.

JB: Okay. I was like, that goes back to the point you made of being taught to be seen and not heard as a child. Like, I tend to sometimes shrink myself--,

AP: Right.

JB: In cert- in every space [Laughs] I'm gonna just be honest. I tend to shrink myself. Especially, and I've, that's something I've had to work through, especially in relationships. Romantic ones as well. Of like, you don't have to dim yourself for anyone and if anyone makes you feel that way, if a space is making you feel that way--,

AP: Mhmm.

JB: It's not for you.

UNKNOWN: [Inaudible 0:34:24]

JB: It is time to move on. So that is a beautiful point. Yeah.

MT: I was talking it was arrogance [Inaudible 0:34:33-0:34:34].

AP: Right.

JB: Yes.

MT: That's what it's called.

JB: Yeah, arrogance.

ID?: But, but if somebody else did it--...

MT: Yeah.

ID: Oh, he, they, they're confident [Inaudible 0:34:42-0:34:43].

JB: Yeah! No, a hundred percent.

MT: It's like, okay, I just did this thing it's dope. You know, you finish a piece, it's like, oh this is--,

JB: Mhmm.

MT: This is crazy! I felt chills when I wrote this!

JB: Yeah.

MT: It's like, hey, calm down.

JB: Right, that--...

AP: Be humble.

JB: It's like, and it's like, I should be able to celebrate me. A hundred percent, of like, I accomplished this, I got it done. 'Cause sometimes, like, starting is hard. To get to the point to start, but to finish, you're like. Did that shit, like [Laughs]--...

AP: Man.

MT: [Inaudible 0:35:14-0:35:17] 'cause it's just like that's, we're taught not to empower ourselves--.

JB: A hundred percent.

MT: We're told not to speak, you know what I'm saying?

JB: Yeah.

MT: Like, well, I can't possibly do anything that powerful. I, you know, no it was alright, you know?

JB: That's me [Laughs] I'm like, it's, it's cool [Laughs] Yeah, that's a big lesson a big lesson. Popular shit [Laughs] Can we cuss?

[Group laughs]

AP: 'Cause it's like, if we don't do it for ourselves, I mean, who else will? I mean, I'm sure, as long as you're in the right community of people they'll support, but you gotta do it for yourself first. Believe in yourself.

MT: That, that, that, that's true, 'cause you won't believe it. Like if you don't get past that.

JB: Yeah.

MT: Somebody else could tell you your stuff is dope that's the craziest, amazing painting I've ever seen, but if you don't believe it, it's just like, oh, they just gassing me.

AP: Right.

JB: Yeah.

AP: Very true.

ID: One, one of the things one of my mentors told me, uh, it hit me hard. Yeah, he told me once, when he was talking about me getting into art and stuff. He said, remember, nobody asked you to be an artist--.

JB: Hmm.

ID: So, don't think that somebody's gonna come give you stuff. You know, it's on you. And when he kinda put that in those words, it just, brought it back, I just flipped my mentality that it's my responsibility.

JB: Mhmm.

ID: Right, and, I gotta hustle and do what I gotta do to get where I want because nobody's gonna get it for me. Alright, and then, one of the things I usually say, um, and believe in is that you have to invest in yourself first--.

JB: Yeah.

ID: If you're not invested in yourself, and you're just waiting for somebody else to come, you know, then, it's not gonna happen. Because people like to see invested- things that are already invest- have investments--.

JB: Mhmm.

ID: So you take, you know, the extra money that you have and you buy that extra piece of equipment which takes you to the next step, or the extra piece of whatever, you know, to make yourself better. You know, take a workshop, go on a residency, you know, do whatever you need to do--.

JB: Yeah.

ID: But that's that self-investment, which then has this trail which people can see--.

JB: Mhmm.

ID: And they're like, oh, okay. We see you--.

JB: Mhmm.

ID: 'Cause they see the, it's like a comet, alright--.

JB: Yeah.

ID: See the trail of the comet, right--?

JB: The story, yeah.

ID: Might not see it, alright, the comet's probably over there 'cause you can see that trail. And it's like, okay I can follow that--.

JB: Yeah.

ID: That's something tangible that people can see them get into it--.

JB: I was like, you been dropping gems, right?

[Group laughs]

AP: You really have.

ID: Thank you, thank you.

JB: Like, just--...

[Crosstalk]

AP: Like, real food for thought.

JB: Yes, right, a hundred, like, beautiful to meet you [Laughs].

MT: Yeah, same here.

AP: Man

ID: I've been fortunate to have people that have hit me up with gems like crazy. And it's, I, I just find it's my responsibility, you know, to make sure that those gems are spread. You know, 'cause again--,

JB: They are.

ID: We, we, we were all there at one time. You know. And, um, and anybody's fate can change at any moment. You know? So, it's like you gotta build that community--.

JB: Mhmm.

AP: [Inaudible 0:38:30-0:38:36].

ID: That's right. Right. 'Cause communities protect each other. Alright, so--,

AP: I was really nervous for this.

JB: I was too!

AP: But I like the small tables. What I had pictured was that we were all just gonna sit at one big table, and everybody just take turns, I'm like [Inaudible 0:38:50]--...

JB: Same.

AP: But this makes it more intimate and personal and I like that.

JB: Which I liked, so it was nice.

AP: [Laughs] 'Cause I just thought I was gonna be quiet, but I was like, oh I can do this.

JB: It was like, and the conversation flowed, I like that they had the prompts.

ID: Yeah.

AP: That helped a lot.

JB: Yeah, cause I was like...

[Crosstalk ends]

AP: I am curious, like what other. Oh, oh, there's only two left, so one was, *Does a sense of civic responsibility affect formal decisions made in your studio* and the other was, *How do you*, oh this one's good, *How do you maintain spiritual, physical, and mental wellbeing as an artist or art administrator?*

AP: That's a good one.

UNKNOWN: [Inaudible 0:39:28].

MT: On go- that's ongoing. Like, that's that's a ongoing search for balance. You know. As a artist, like, you feel more, you know, so [Inaudible 0:39:38] way up here, you know the inspiration that you might get way down, you know, it'--...

AP: Yeah.

MT: Next, next.

AP: Oh, for me, I've noticed that, so I feel like art is my purpose. Um, 'cause I feel like I can, you know, speak to people through art. Um, and, since I started walking in my purpose, I feel like mentally, I've been happier. Um, I feel like it's helped ground me and affects other parts of my life, of making me want to do more, for myself, and think more of myself, so. Um, I think it's really been propelling me in a good way.

JB: I be goin on walks, like [Laughs] that is, that is how I ground myself. Whether it be creatively, or just everyday. I go on walks, I get in nature, and I just give myself that

space to really feel. Because there's no one outside but me, or like if I'm plugging in headphones, it's like, it's just quiet. So, yeah.[Laughs]

ID: I, I feel that I'm, I'm just, I'm a conduit. So, I'm a conduit, my work's a conduit, for, for whatever's out there, for what I have derived--.

JB: Mhmm

ID: Whatever I am, and uh, just that energy that we all share. So, yeah.

AP: Yeah I don't know how to answer that one either, ya'll didn't- my studio's my house, so I'm just like [Laughs]...

JB: I was like I--...

[Crosstalk]

ID: My, my think on the sense of civic responsibility is, since I'm, I feel that I'm at a stage--.

[Crosstalk ends]

EM: Thank you so much everyone, we are wrapping this session up. I know I'm cutting you off, but the morning session, we'd love to have a kind of closing of this session. Give yourselves a little round of applause, good job--.

[applause]

EM: If you are staying...

AP: You're moving quick ain't you?

JB: Hmm?

AP: I said you're moving quick, ain't you?

JB: [Laughs] I'm like, I don't wanna stay [Laughs] I changed my mind.

ID: You on Facebook?

AP: Yes! On Facebook and Instagram.

ID: [Inaudible 0:41:50-0:41:52] .

JB: Yes.

ID: What I was gonna say about civic responsibility, I find that I'm at a point, um, in my life that, when there's opportunity to be at a table, to get to take that seat, and make sure that I'm there representing, and making sure that people understand that there are people like us out there--.

JB: Yeah.

ID: Willing to do, and, you know when they come out with these crazy ideas, they're like, well, you need to rethink that. You know. Put it in even more perspective because, it's a lot of people got a good heart, good intentions, but sometimes they don't understand some of the consequences of some of the decisions that, no matter how good as it might be.

MT: [Inaudible 0:42:47.7-0:42:50.6].

UNKNOWN: Do you have kids?

ID: Yep, one. Just graduated, uh, Thursday.

JB: That's sweet.

AP: Oh great, congrats!

JB: Yes.

ID: Thank, yep.

MT: You got that like, fatherly wisdom.

UNKNOWN: Hello, hello, how's it going?

UNKNOWN: Good, good.

AP: I got a message back.

JB: Huh?

AP: I said I got a message back on instagram.

JB: Girl [Laughs].

AP: You got a message too?

JB: Only that one time. But, I, I was like I'm not in the space to, but I was like, I'll support [Laughs] 'Cause I don't know what I would do, like—

AP: Yeah.

JB: Yeah I honestly don't [Inaudible 0:43:30-0:43:32].

AP: Unless [Inaudible 0:43:32].

JB: [Laughs].

AP: Well he asked me, he asked me if I had any works coming up and he asked if I wanna- he, he said he wants to paint with me.

JB: Oh! Okay.

ID: [Inaudible 0:43:48].

AP: And I'm just...introvert.

ID: Is this you?

AP: Yes, that's me.

AS: Hey everybody, all done talking?

AP: Hello.

CHA_052023_ART1

JB: Yes, thank you.

END OF RECORDING

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