

## Art and Teaching with Scott Maier

Hello and welcome to Down To Art. I'm your host Kristy Gordon, and today I'm joined by Scott Maier, a professional artist, instructor, and video producer living in Northern Colorado. So welcome Scott. Welcome. Thank you for having me on. Thank you for being here. So Scott has a Bachelor of fine Art and painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art, and a Master of Fine Arts in painting from University of Alaska Fairbanks. He's been a teacher for more than 15 years and is video producer for the artist network.com. And I've worked with Scott doing online courses for the Artist Network and Peak Media. And what's always really struck me about you, Scott, is just how well you organize the content in a way that really works for the students,

for the people taking the classes. And lately I've been really encouraging my, you know, the artists I work with in my art mentoring program to dive into teaching. And I think right now it's such a great way, you know, to like dive into teaching on Zoom and online classes and just get your hands in their teaching and also supplementing our income as artists.

So I'm so excited to talk to you today about how to find our sort of voice and our identity as an art teacher and, and how to balance being a practicing artist with being an art teacher. So yeah, I was, I was thinking like you're, you're a full-time artist and, and you're also like a kind of a full-time teacher. And I wonder when did you start teaching?

Well, I started teaching in, in grad school as a, you know, teaching assistant. You know, they kind of threw us into the deep end and, you know, right away teaching, you know, teaching foundational drawing. Before that I, when I was at mica, I was enrolled in their m a T program. So, you know,

I had the vision of becoming a K through 12 teacher reached that point where I said, I, I love painting right now. There's so much more for me to explore that I'm, and I'm not ready at, you know, 21, 22 years old to, to start teaching full-time at the high school. I needed more time for myself. And that led to graduate school where I then was able to see the difference between teaching at a,

you know, higher grade level versus K-12 and just kind of went on from there. So it never went, never went back to public school teaching. Interesting. And, and when did you get involved with the Artist Network and Peak? So I've been with Artist Network for a little over six years now, you know, so in the interim, you know,

I had, I taught a bit at University of Alaska and Fairbanks started teaching online through the, the Art institute's chain of schools. It's had its ups and downs, it's no longer, no longer around as an online institution, but it, it kind of opened my eyes to the, the benefits and the drawbacks, the comparisons between teaching online versus on ground in a kind of a traditional setting artist network.

We're looking for instructional designers. And so with my background teaching for, you know, 11 or so years online, it helped me to kind of translate that into working with artists like you to create online courses for our audience. So Yeah, and I remember when we first filmed our first class together, I think in 2016, we had a slightly different format than what we've done more recently.

Like I really enjoyed the way we structured, I mean all of the classes, but the first one was structured really based on like every, you know, having an assignment all the way along at the end of each module, sort of as if the, the person watching the video was really taking a class.

And now we've sort of been doing more courses where I'm kind of painting and showing the process, but it isn't so like assignment based if, if you know what I mean? Like, do you wanna talk about those two kind of structures a little bit? You know, I think, yeah, no, that, that's a, I think a good observation and, and one that, you know, we've, we've been looking at, you know, there's two basic models. There's a kind of a curriculum-based model that's kind of more traditionally aligned with kind of traditional schools where you would have, you know, 12, 16 weeks or so of, of a class and you have specifically designed, designed assignments and you're learning and, and you're building your skills as you go. And that's kind of the approach that I, I brought to the company is building these, these larger kind of courses that lead you through a, a curriculum but another, you know, education model That's, you know, we see often that, you know, many artists have worked with is this kind of demo based kind of workshop based approach where it's, you're, you're learning as you're going, as you're seeing this artist work through the problems on their, their, their canvas. And, and it, it took me a little while to kind of transition into that, to really understand that project based kind of workshop based mentality and, and see how the two work together. How a traditional course might also then be supplemented or balanced with these, these more targeted workshops that we worked with you later on. So we have your foundation course, but now, you know, students can, can take that, they can learn the foundations, but now they can also take your class on painting like Sergeant or Rembrandt and it's, it's a, on a specific topic and you're working this, the, the issues out through a, you know, kind of targeted Yeah. Project or targeted painting. That's interesting. And I think the first one was like super long too, and I think, like I know people with all the social media and stuff maybe have like less and less attention span and I feel like that the more recent ones that we were doing that were more like work shoppy, they were like a little shorter too, maybe, maybe like edited a little bit. Like we don't have to show every single second. Do, do you find that, do you find that in some ways I think, I find that that in some ways people actually are happy to re like, to get something a little shorter. They don't actually want to commit like 10 hours, you know, to, to something something that's just like a little shorter but still shows you everything you need to know is, is Good. I mean, I mean, you think about our, the, the world that we're talking about right now and where I'm mostly immersed in is it's fundamentally different than that of say a traditional learning institution in that, you know, a a student going to a, a traditional learning institution, school, art school or whatever would, you're going to that school to say, tell me what I need to learn. And you earn their certificate, you know, you, you're getting proof that you've gone through this robust process to learn the, what the school has determined is, is valuable. And, and especially if it's an accredited school, it has to meet certain standards that are, that are determined by a whole committee of other people at school. So like there's a lot that goes into saying that a BFA or an MFA has met a certain standard in that. And so that's fundamentally different than what we're seeing through, you know, our audience here where it's much more self-directed. You know, people have a, a general interest in learning how to paint, you know, they're all at different kind of stages in their development and are looking for different things and it's generally self-directed. They have to kind of pick and choose and curate for yourself what, what your development is

going to be. And sometimes you, you kind of rely on teachers, like you have your mentorship program so you can work directly with somebody and you give your advice and they may go to, you know, somebody else and they might give some totally different advice, but there's no kind of standardization. And so I think that's a big difference in that, you know, if I'm, if I'm saying I need, I want to grow and learn and look, I'm I'll, am I going to YouTube? I might work, go to some of the artists that we're working with here at Artists Network and, and and watch for a little while and say like, what, what's that nugget of wisdom that's really going to help me in this? And, and I'm trying to plug that in around all the other things that are going on in life. And so for me, and I'm not sure as much of it, if it's as much of an issue of attention span versus just kind of that self-direction and you know, like most, I think most people don't really know what they, what they want. Like we know. But when you get down to it, when you're trying to make specific decisions for what to do next, it can be difficult to do that. And you say like, I know I need to get better at drawing or painting or, or something.

But generally you're following these, the, the inspirations and say, oh, that looks interesting, let me try that out. And so I think that's where I'm at right now. And then the letting the timeframe be dictated by the content, really like what, you know, there, there are some, sometimes you just need, if you just need to see a simple technique and that's going to lead to a breakthrough for somebody,

there's no need to to kinda labor on it and make it longer when it doesn't need to be. If there's, if there's a concept that is much, is much more involved then, then you, you kinda let that lead it and you, and rather than there be some sort of standard kind of kind of protocol that, you know, we hear,

you know, there was a time when you say like, no, no video's over five minutes. Nobody watches more than five minutes. But that's, that's been proven wrong in so many ways and you know, we we're all looking for that magical formula and I just feel like when we, when we do that, we end up just chasing, we just keep chasing these things that are always evolving and we end up not really identifying with what works for us.

So That, I think that's so true and I think it's actually so great that we're in this era of like, people can be kind of self-directed cuz there's so many different forms of art. I really love that in my art mentoring program that people can pick and choose what they wanna focus on. And I think like, yeah, the online classes opens up a whole new world of possibility from all around the whole world that people can like tap into whatever little pieces of knowledge that they, that they wanna get. And I just never even thought of that. I think that's like, you know, so true compared to the like, you know, college like sort of model that's more standardized and doesn't even always give you what you want actually in the end anyways. But it definitely beneficial. But you still might go to college and come out being like,

I actually don't know this thing that I, that I wanted to get out of it. Yeah. Yeah. No, that's interesting. A and do you, do you find like, I mean, what kind of tips do you have for anyone who wants to get started? Maybe they're like sort of a new, you know, they don't feel totally ready,

who feels totally ready to start teaching. Like, but we always have something to like offer. We normally, you know, even if we end up teaching say kids like initially or, or whatever to just like dive into it. But what, do you have any kind of tips for someone who might be wanting to get started with online teaching? Yeah.

Whether it's like recording, you know, videos or just doing like a live Zoom, you know, class and, and how yeah, just any tips that you might have. Yeah, I think recording yourself goes a long way. So much of, so much of the teaching process is actually performative, right? And that we're, and not, and not that we're,

we have to perform, we have to maintain a certain amount of energy to keep people engaged, but it's, it, it is like a performance in the way that they're like having a rehearsal go a long way. And, and I mean it's hard though cuz I, I never did that kind of consciously. It just kind of worked out for me.

So while I was teaching online, I was also teaching on ground and so I could kinda compare the language I was using online versus what I was doing on, on ground. And what I found is online it just, it helped me become much more efficient. It and, and it engages part of the brain that has to really visualize how somebody might interpret what you're saying because you're not getting that personal feedback when teaching on ground.

I can, there there's a certain amount of kind of forgiveness that you can have because you can kind of talk through some of your thoughts as you're trying to formulate what you're, what you're thinking about these topics or what might help the student really figure out how these things work, you know? So for example, with perspective, I would kind of go through my lecture, my spiel about how I'd think you kind of think about linear perspective, but then I, you know, you looking out at the students and then it is clear that it's not landing and then you're like, oh crap, ok, what did I miss here? Ok, lemme try it this way. Yeah. And let's try this exercise.

And you kind of start to form this custom thing then. But again, because I, you have that ability to kind of adjust as you go. I didn't real like over time I would slowly kind of refine my, my shtick. So we're, but I think on doing it online and kind of recording yourself and playing it back, recording it again and playing it back and say,

how can I, how can I be more precise with my language and how can I visualize how people are going to connect with it? I think it, it, it goes a long way with to really clarifying your thoughts and that there's a lot of value in that. And so, I mean, I think teaching is just a tremendous way to learn and it kind of,

it, I think it should be included, you know, for any kind of practicing artist in some way. Whether it's just an internal dialogue you're having with yourself, it can do kind of wonders to help you really clarify what's happening so that if you, you know, you can really kind of empower the, the intuitive aspect of your work with, you know,

with some kind of clarity. So let's see, I'm, I'm doing this and this, here's the results that I'm getting. Then I understand what's really happening. I'm not just responding in a kind of, in an emotional level that says I like it and you want to start with there. But I think being able to analyze it more deeply is helpful and doing that through the voice of a teacher can be really helpful in that,

if that makes sense. That, that actually totally makes sense. I think my work for sure improved when I had to like get clear about what I was doing. It's also when I came up with like the base shadow color mixture on my palette because all my students kept asking me like, how do you mix the shadow color? And I was like,

I have to come up with an answer for this. So then I, you know, kind of developed the blue and orange mixture that I use and I, and it it's like a really good mixture that makes my work better. Cuz now I'm like crystal clear, this is how you mix. I mean obviously it's always tinted, you know, in different directions,

but that's like a good base to start. But, but I also really love what you said there about how it's almost like both have benefits actually, especially for the, the well for all of us as teachers, but also for the person starting out with teaching, like recording a class, it takes that pressure off where you're like freaking out. You have to paint in front of people.

You don't know if it's gonna be any good and you don't know if you can talk and paint at the same time. You can record it, you can do a voiceover, you can take some time editing it and make, you know, it takes that performative like pressure off. But also, I love what you said about how the, the in-person classes or even like in-person on Zoom,

even like when you've got your recorded sessions and now you're playing it to your students on Zoom, but then they ask questions and then you can like write down notes about all their questions cuz they're actually really brilliant and help you figure out better how to be, you know, be a better Teacher. Yeah, definitely. I mean it's that, you know,

I mean ultimately it's about the relationship between, you know, a teacher and student. I, I mean I personally, I have a hard time with that dynamic. Like I, you know, generally it's like I've, I've had simply just more time and experience with this stuff versus the people who are watching what I do. And so, but I,

I have, I have a hard time personally with that kind of hierarchical, hierarchical kind of tradition of kind of a teacher professor instructor being elevated over students. And I, for me, I I just embrace the model of it being a kind of a, you know, a more of a modeling, right? Like a guide more than in that. And that's just kind of where I'm,

I'm, I'm landing now, but that's evolved over 20 plus years of, of doing this and trying to just figure it out and observing other teachers, you know, observing the artists that I work with here to see, well what are they, how do they, how are they doing this? Like what is, what is something that, that, you know,

just like with art itself, you know, you can, you're gaining inspiration and knowledge by studying other artists how they work and what the, what the results are. It's the same with with teaching as well and just, just you could kind of picking up little nuggets here and there and like, I really like the way this person describe this thing. It's so much better.

You know, like, and sometimes you can take this massive concept and if you take the time to, to really think about it and, and try to articulate it as efficiently as possible, you can realize that, that this massive concept can actually be simplified. And I think that's, that's generally my process is to try to keep making things more simple.

So like for, for example, I, my i, my book out called See, think, draw. And it helped me really take my, my approach to drawing and simplify it either even further. It's all about this editorial process of saying, well what, what can I actually shed off that's not really necessary? Like, or like, how do I describe a fundamental concept that then,

then can be expanded upon by the student rather than give all of this information. It's about really what is essential and then allowing the, and and kind of encouraging people who are taking that information in to find their own connection with it and expand from it at the way that they want to so that it's not a matter of falling in line with the curriculum,

but being supported by it. If that makes sense. Yeah, no, I love that. When is you think draw coming out? I can't wait to read. Well, it's out for pre-order now on Amazon. Oh. So it'll be available in print in June, June 7th I think Is what it's Oh, I'm definitely gonna order a copy. Yeah.

Yeah. I think you're, you're right, like simplifying it. Like I, I've had some professors who seem really like scientific and verbose and I'm like, oh my God, how are you still talking? Like, you

could have just said this in like two sentences or something. And sometimes I've been like jealous that I can't be that kind of person.

I just like, well sometimes I probably talk too much. But yeah. But I think overall having the goal of like simplifying the material and just like making it clear so it's not bogged down by like excess details. Yeah. But I also really liked what you said about modeling and sort of being like, sort of like letting people, letting your students see that like you're an artist and you're still, you know, developing your techniques and we're, we're all doing that. We're always going to be, hopefully anyways. And so I know like with your, is it your YouTube? Which, which videos series is it that you have where you kind of, you know, have a different goal say each week to work on with, you know, whether it's texture or whether it's shady?

I, I'm not sure which. Yeah. Do you wanna talk a little bit about that idea? Yeah, it's called Drawing Together and it's on the Artist network YouTube channel. And it's, it's very much a project based thing. So the, it was all started, you know, when the, when pandemic first landed and we were all stuck at home and,

and I, I thought, well, how can I, you know, continue to kind of create videos and connect with an audience? And this came up, you know, I, it was me realizing that I needed to focus time. This is a good time for me to build my drawing skills. I have experienced teaching drawing, so why don't I put that out there.

My first episode I, I've really kind of approached it with a, with the mindset of it being like kind of a limited series of, of drawing exercise. Let's start with kind of just working with line and see how that works, for example, or, I can't remember which one we started with, but I very quickly realized, I think by the end of that first episode,

I'm like, that's, this isn't, this isn't really it, you know, this is not really working. And with the, the support of other people here at the company we're like, you, let's just, let's just do a project. Let's just do a fun drawing, right? Yeah. And thickness, thickness drawing. And, and I realized, you know what that is, I think if, if anything, the thing that I can think it'd be most valuable to teach anybody is how to develop a healthy habit. So that's really the, the foundation for it. Cuz as artists we all kind of learn basic fundamentals. You know, I can, you can pick up books and watch videos on,

on the learn on how to learn the, you know, the basics of drawing anywhere, but your growth really comes, it, it, you know, throughout the rest of your life you'll be doing this forever and you're gonna just, you're continually understanding them more deeply and more expansively. So it's not a, it's not a linear process where you start in one spot and you move to mastery.

It's an expansion where you start with a core group and from there you just keep building. And sometimes you challenge yourself by doing things a completely kind of wrong way, right? And, and so each week I select a new topic, you know, a new reference photo, and I do the drawing. Let's see, let's see what we can learn from this today.

You know, and, and it's just about continually moving forward with that. And then throughout the process I'll be describing what I do and my thought process for, you know, kind of resolving some of the, the issues of observational drawing. But it's the mindset is that like, this is, this is the work, it's the exercise that all artists go through that we very rarely see when we see these finished paintings on Instagram or galleries or places like that,

we don't see the practice that goes into it outside of art school once. It's like, once you've, once you're out of that space and you're on your own as an artist, you gotta do that yourself. And there's so many people that haven't had that experience that this gets to be kind of a little taste of that, where you're just like, you know,

I, as an artist, you paint every day, you draw every day you do something and it moves you forward. And the, and it's not just about kind of executing and, and you know, all the time. Sometimes you just, you just do stuff. You just keep making. And then out of that something will, something will emerge.

You'll find your, your way and, and the next step that you need to pursue. So that's kind of, again, the heart of it. It's just like, let's just take time out of our, our busy lives to just draw. That's it. Like we don't have to think any bigger about it. Any, all it's just like, we're just gonna draw cuz it feels good and it's gonna help us.

So. Yep. Yeah. Totally. And I think you're right, it does move you, you towards whether it's like a little technical goal or even just like the seed of an idea starts to develop for a whole body of work, or who knows, just as long as we're doing like, you know, some work consistently. And I, I love that it's like we both have a similar approach to just like being transparent I about how we're still working.

Like it takes work and we have to focus and we sort of have to keep pushing forward. And like sometimes I think maybe, especially when I was starting out teaching, I probably felt like maybe there was a bit of pressure to like pretend to be like the hierarchical like teacher, you know?

Yeah. And I think as I get more confident about myself as an artist, even though of course I'm on, you know, we're, there's only a certain level of confidence anyways, but I just don't have to pretend anymore. Like, so I'm, you know, I share my like process with my, the artists I work with in my art mentoring program, you know, that I apply to things and don't get in. And then it's disappointing like we all do.

And you know, and just like, it's so normal and it's good to like remove that facade from the whole thing that like then you're an artist and then everything is good and you never have to work at it ever again. Yeah. Yeah. Like, I don't know. And it just seems, that just seems boring to me. Like the idea of mastery,

that seems really boring. That's True. Yeah. And that's, yeah, I mean I, I I think that the thing is, is like, you know, I think a lot of, for me what I realized and I kind of took for granted for a long time as a teacher is that, you know, I, I feel really lucky that I have the impulse to paint or draw and in for mo and most of the time I know what to do.

I'm like, I need to go out here and paint, or I'm gonna do this today. Sometimes I don't. I just kind of go out and, but I kind of, I have some sort of clarity in the, the next steps that I need to take. And what I realized that there's just a lot of people out there that don't, they have the desire to create,

they have the desire to go, but they don't really know, well what does that mean? What do I want to do? I, I don't know, it was like trying to decide what's for dinner can be hard to, to to sometimes, right. You know, and, but we kind of know the experience that we want to have. And so by,

by having somebody just say like, let's just do this this week, then it keeps you moving. Like it just like, and get you comfortable. Like don't overthink what you're doing if you don't, if you don't really know, just do something and then out of that then you'll gain clarity. And that's the kind of counterintuitive thing for a lot of people is that you feel like they're, they feel like they have to sit back and wait for that spark of inspiration. That this is my who, this is who I am as an artist. I'm like, that only comes out through being exposed to things like we're, creativity is only a reaction to the things in your environment. So you have to feed the, you have to feed your environment for creativity to happen.

And that's the hardest part that, you know, I think, like I said, I feel really lucky that I naturally have that. But I took that for granted for a long time and I realized that there's a lot of people who don't. So that's the, the goal is, is I'm like, sure I can teach the fundamentals of, you know, line shape, value, form, texture, all of those things. And that's it. Like, but it's just like, how do you, how do you keep moving forward? You just keep making so that you're constantly exposing yourself to the things that are gonna lead to a creative breakthrough That's like so valuable. Cuz that's like what you offer in your YouTube videos.

So people can kind of hop on board and start to get into this practice of just like choosing something and doing it, working, you know, working on texture or whatever, you know, you can toss like you say the the principles of drawing into it, but sort of having this bigger picture about just like steady progress and yeah. Thinking less for a while there I was waking up in the morning and making a list of like 20 ways I could improve what I do.

It's some kind of self-improvement thing that I was, you know, doing and I kept writing down like think less and paint more. Yeah. Just like, do the paintings and like, think less about it. And I, I just feel like that's kind of like similar to what you're saying. Yeah, Yeah. Yeah. And I, I feel like too,

I mean one of the things that's also been on my mind a lot lately is really questioning our individual motives for painting or drawing or creating art, you know, in any way. You know, like there's, there's that the, for me, I value that it's the personal experience is the thing. I've never thought about art for being for an audience.

And I think that's held me back a lot in terms of showing, and I've had some shows here or there, but I, it's just, it's hard for me to put myself in that space of saying, I'm making this painting. So for someone else, because it's such a personal experience. And so, but my model for what a successful artist was,

was the showing, you know, gallery artists or eventually a museum, right? And, and I would just beat myself up for that over and over again because I'm like, I just don't have that. And, and then, you know, there, there are certainly people out there that, that's the primary goal is to say, I'm doing this.

It's, it's me, but it's for you. There's that relationship or there's, there's some sort of transformation that's going to happen, you know, with within the viewer, within the audience, be as a result of this, this work. And, but I think the, because I don't think we have a, you know, there, there is no kind of standardized ver version of what an artist is like at the foundation.

Like what, what the role of an artist is. It just at least all of this bickering back and forth, like, this is art, that's not art or things like that. And my biggest fear is that there are people out there that have the desire to create maybe that it's not about creativity, right? It's not about doing something unique that nobody has ever seen the value in is just simply having that experience. We don't do that with other, like, we don't, you know, people go out to the club to go dancing because it feels good to dance and be around other people, not because they're communicating something more deeply like, you know, a ballet or, you know, modern dance performance. Like it's, it, you just, you go out and do it and,

or you go to karaoke and sing because it just feels good to sing. You do it in your car and maybe you have visions of one day becoming a performer, but you, you never stop doing that. Right? And, but for some reason, I, I feel like there are people who, with art, it's something different. Like you feel like as soon as I decide to make work,

I'm, I'm labeling myself as quote unquote an artist. And then it comes on with, with whatever preconceived notions you have about what an artist is, you think of Van Gogh or whatever and

you're like, well, it's not really me. I'm sure I would love to be that right? But if in the end I'm like, I, I, it just isn't,

that's not who I am. Like, and so, and so the, that's where I, what I try to convey to the students that, you know, not students, but the viewers of my, my classes or people who might read the book is just like, this is all about you just deepening your connection with, with the process and, and going from there.

Don't think about calling yourself an artist and just, just do stuff and see, feel what your connection is. If it is all about telling stories and or connect, you know, like really it requires a viewer, then go for it. If it's not for me, I do a painting, I might post it to Instagram, but it goes in a box somewhere and now I just have boxes full of paintings.

Right. That's just what I do. And so Paintings and I, yeah. And I don't really care about showing at this point. Like, it, it, it's just not where my head's at because I find so much joy in teaching. And so, yeah. And then it, it frees me up to just when I paint is just for myself and I recognize there's part of that,

there's a certain amount of fear because it's challenging to try to put my work out there and I have to continue to confront that. But just trying to own the fact that how much I love to teach and do I need to make painting my career focus or not, or do I want it to be just for myself? Do I kind of like that as more private for me?

You know? But yeah, I, I like, I totally agree with you. I like, I like to do whatever it takes to keep it. So my work is like, when I'm making it, it's just about me. And then, you know, if I put it into shows or whatever later, it's like, it's really separate for me.

Like, I try to never think about I'm painting this for a show or, or whatever. Yes. I just like paint it as, you know, my work's very weird. Yeah. And then, you know, whatever happened, it's two separate things or whatever. But also the, the thing about like, like being an artist is so interesting.

I have like so many artists that I work with in my art mentoring program, but they actually, a lot of them may not even call themselves artists. I think that like, like they want to be, but they're like, when do I know if I'm an artist and stuff? And it's like, well, you're already an artist. Like as of like the moment you started making art.

Like I think that that's the other thing with the label is that they, some people I think think it needs to be a career to be an artist or it needs to be really serious to be an artist. But I'm really like generous with when I would give the term art. I think like practically everyone's an artist, but if you have any creative,

I don't know if you've ever made anything, you could be an artist. I don't know. Yeah. I just think it's, it's, it's really interesting to me how many people though it's like they want to be an artist and they almost look to me like, am I an artist yet? You know? And it, it's, it's just really interesting and a little bit,

maybe a little bit Mm, a little bit sad, but like that like the artist, the word artist is so he hyped or something. Yeah. Yeah. That even when we are artists, we think, we're not artists. When do I become an artist? How do I know if I'm an artist? Yeah, yeah, Yeah. And then I think there's, you know, there's, there's so many factors in that, that stereotype, right? You know, so depending on the family you're in the community you grow up in the culture that you're raised in, there's different associations with artists and the role that the artists play within the larger community.

There's, there's just, and there's so many ways forward career-wise. And it's,

I don't have the, I don't have the mental capacity to be able to figure it all out. And I found that it wasn't leading me anywhere healthy when I was trying to, and I'm like, there are already people,

we already have critics, we have people in cultural institutions and we have critics and we have, they can, they can philosophers that can figure that all out and let that battle out.

And I just, I feel like I was least the times when I was least happy with my work and my painting when I was, when I was comparing myself to that traditional vision of somebody who's showing and like a feeling like I'm more capable in my work than I actually was. And why isn't it being recognized? What's wrong with this? And I wasn't being very objective.

I can look back at it now and I'm like, oh, now of course that's just why it didn't get accepted into this show. It's not good painting. Right? But, but when I reflected on it and like that's, I didn't paint it to demonstrate how good of a painting was. I just needed to paint. Like, I don't know, I can't help it. And I love the challenge of trying to improve and trying to, I come constantly changing up my palette or, you know, changing a surface here. Then I just, I love that, that experience of figuring something out and it's not leading to mastery. So, so I'm like, I think It might be for you, but I Dunno,

like it's, it's not, but it's, that's not the goal is to kind of of reach the status system. Like I just, I don't know, I, I'm just so much happier now that I, I have that off my, my plate and I've gone through phases of that, but totally. I feel like it's been more consistent. But to get back to the original topic,

like I, it was, it was parallel to my really owning the fact that, you know what, the thing that I, that I really love is teaching. Like yeah. And, and in the end, if I, if I think out of existentially about the end of my career, I would rather know that I've impacted people and measured the, my kind of value against how many people have made things because I've, I've influenced in this. Like I would rather have that than say I sold X number of paintings, like, or I was in a, and like, and enough, I don't want to imply kind of any sort of value there. Cuz I think, you know, paintings have changed a lot of people's life.

I just know it's not for me. Right? Yeah. And maybe at some point I'll sell my work and, and I'll, and it'll be okay. But I'm like, I, the thing that brings me kind of personal esteem is hearing the comments from students that say, oh my gosh, this has been so helpful. I haven't drawn in 30 years and this has gotten me out of that.

And the idea of somebody staying stuck like that is like, is heartbreaking. I know. Yeah. So Actually the other heartbreaking thing that, you probably hear this a lot, I know I have heard this a lot, is the whole like, like high school art teacher tells student they have no art ability whatsoever. And then the student never ever paints or draws ever again.

Yeah. What kind of horrible teacher, like you and I are both teachers. Is there any circumstance where you would ever say anything like that to any of your students? Like, that's a terrible teacher. It's not the truth, but the, the student thinks it's the truth. They think it's an objective reality. They have no skill And it's, it's at a particularly vulnerable time for humans.

Like we, I feel really lucky that, you know, at Micah I was able to attend the m a t program and we would take courses on the arts and human development. Like how do we as humans evolve as artists? Like what are these standard stages? And you learn that when you're, you know, you're pre-teen, teen years, something shifts and it becomes really important that the marks you're making match what you're trying to copy.

Right? It's like that's when all of a sudden we care about things being either realistic or matching the sort. Like, you, you get you, like you, it's gotta look. Right. Right. And for some people it comes naturally and they, those those people can say, all right, I'm an artist. I can, I can do this. And for others it's a more of a struggle. And as like as you articulated, it's all a skill that we learn how to do. And for some people it just comes more out naturally than others. But you know, it's,

everything can be learned to some degree and a hundred percent. But we, it's that stage where we say we either can't or we can't.

And the, and the people who say they can't, they don't do it. Like I remember I had this one student who was really profound when I first started teaching. She was in the seventies or so. She had spent her whole life working in this organization. When she retired, they, they rewarded her with basically just take whatever classes you want to take, you've dedicated your life to us take classes. So she's taking art classes because she had hadn't done it since she was a teenager and her drawings look like a 14 year old. Right. And, and like, yeah and here's this person who's 80 years old and I'm like, yes. She, that part of her brain had just been frozen in time.

And it was so cool to see that now like a time capsule come back And I just think of how many people are, are like that that could have like found joy in, you know, throughout their lives in drawing this used it to bring greater focus and clarity or just to, you know, process and information and connect with your body, do all of those things.

And just to feel good Totally. That they didn't because they had decided at age 14 that they're not an artist and Oh, I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna pick up the a number two yellow pencil and just start making marks. Yeah, totally. Yeah. It's a pretty common story too. I know someone who like became a photographer cuz they're like,

you know, they had a high school art teacher who said they had no talent and they believed them and so they never would draw ever again. But they became a photographer cuz they are like into art and that's cool. I love photography, but it just seems like criminal. Yeah. There's like a lot of like art school teachers probably with very low self-esteem themselves that would tell like, you know, I just think if anyone's like listening to this and they had an art teacher tell them that they have no talent, go ahead and sign up for an art class. Like really, it just like does not, it doesn't even matter who cares. Like just take, just draw. Like Yeah. And I mean I I, I jokingly tell people all the time I made the,

you know, I didn't make the wisest financial decision going to art school and getting an Mfa. Yeah. We're Right at MFA when a time when everybody and their brother got a, an mfa. But like, I, at the same time I'm like, I've been able to do it right. And, and, and it, again, I've been stressing out and I've been down on myself for years and years cuz I'm like,

why am I not succeeding? And then I realized that, I'm like, well the metric was never am I selling paint to sell paintings. My metric was just, how do I do this another day? And I'm like, wow, I've been able to continually paint. That feels really lucky. And, and then ev and every other artist like you and that I've,

that I've worked with here at Artist Network, it's the same thing. It's just like how do I, how do I just make sure I can do this one more, one more day and the next day after that. And, and then when I look at that metric, I'm like, wow, I I've been far more successful than I was giving myself credit for,

but I just, I'm not, yeah. I don't have a museum show. Sure. But I, I'm like the, the truth is it's like I just, my work's not there. Right. And if I'm gonna be, you know, really honest about it, that's the truth. What's that? Well, it's, it's, It's not, that's not the truth.

It's not because the No, the, you know, when you like quality is one thing, but then, you know, what museums and galleries are tasked with is creating an exchange with the community. And because my work isn't about that exchange, it shows in the work. Right. You know, and it might, I might, I I, you know,

some people will look at it and say, well I really like this painting. Sure. That's awesome. And, and there might be kind of a kind of a personal connection or something there, but it's the, the foundation of my work isn't kind of built on on that dynamic I think is what it, what it is. And so it would be,

Yeah, I know what you mean for some museums, but I still think that some actually it would be like the right fit for, but it doesn't. Yeah. I, I totally know what you're saying, but also I like this whole idea of the metric. Like, and that's part of where like just making it just surviving as an artist, just doing,

it's like that shows our drive. We just for whatever reason really wanna be an artist and we do whatever it takes to like make it happen. And a lot of that, like for a lot of us, that means like doing online classes and sort of being creative about how to make a sustainable income Yeah. So that we can just like keep drawing and sort of share it with like others and help them like Yeah. I, I think I remember when I was like, maybe I had been a full-time artist for like a year or something and I was like laying around probably feeling kind of bad about myself as an artist, but then I was like, wait a minute, have I made a living off my art for the entire year with no other income from anything else?

That's amazing. Like, I can't believe it. Yeah. And now, I don't know, it's been like 20 years or something like that. Or maybe a little on your 20. But yeah, I mean that's like, that's, I mean we're just creative as artists, we can figure out how how to make it happen. Yeah. But, but I do think that,

yeah, go on. Oh no, I mean, but that's kind of the, the fuel right is comparison. Right. We, we, that's how we move forward. But it's, it can be dangerous too. And so it yeah, we, yeah, I don't really know the way forward with that. And we all have our ups and downs, but it's that tension that that between where we want to be and where we are that keeps us moving and advancing. Right. And you know, I think we're never gonna be diss never gonna be really be fully satisfied. And I don't, and I think there was a point in my life where I realized actually, you know, the last thing I want is satisfaction because it's that dissatisfaction that moves me forward.

I mean, but I just, what I want is that dissatisfaction to be in control and not leading me to this this, you know, this existential crisis that I'm experiencing right now. Like Oh, for sure. Are you Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. I, I like definitely I know what you mean. Like sometimes I have have all these goals and I move forward on them.

But I remember there was, I think this is around when I met you, there was like a year or two where I just stopped actually showing my personal work to like anyone in the world cuz I just needed to like work on it in secret for a while. And I was like sick of feeling all of the like, worry about what someone else would think.

It was just at a sensitive time. And I had been like so goal oriented for so long that it actually was beneficial for a couple years, at least a year I think maybe a couple years to just be like, you know, I'm just gonna put that one down entirely and just keep making the art. Like Yeah. And then sometimes it is like useful to feel all these goals and work towards them or whatever, but there's totally times for both like Yeah. And we can feel that when it's that. Yeah. Well and it, and it kind of to kind of bring it back around to teaching it, you know, one of the stories that I tell a lot in the show is, is that I, I, in my, I think it was my junior year at Micah,

I, I wasn't managing the stress, the pressure of, of that, you know, it's just, you know, when you're surrounded by so many good artists, there's that natural kind of competitive nature of I

really want mine to look good. I don't wanna look like a fool today. And, and I just, I got to this point where I just wasn't managing it well.

So I, I just approached my professor, I said, you know, like, is it okay if I just make some bad paintings for a while or bad drawings? And he's like, sure. You know, like it wasn't like, you know, it, it was totally an internal pressure that I was putting on myself and like, and you know, the, all my classmates, they were really cool and supportive. I felt like a great environment. I was, but I was not doing managing it myself. And so I took the rest of the semester to do quote unquote bad drawings. You know, I just changed up the materials and I'm like, rather than trying for control, I'm going to,

you know, just be more expressive and do more mark making. I learned so much more that that semester. And it felt so good to have that from an authority figure saying yeah, yes. Just chill out and just experiment. Like I, yeah, I am like, that's, that's it. That, that felt so good. And sometimes we need to hear that from people.

We just need to hear it's okay. And because we don't really know, we make so many assumptions based on what we're seeing and what we think other artists are doing and how they're thinking. You know, when to hear somebody who you really respect and as an authority to say it's okay. Yeah, you can like it, it was so good. And so I,

I tell my, my, my viewers in the show, it's like that's every drawing I try to approach. I want to have at least a part of that feel like I've never drawn before. Like yeah. Because that was the part that was so exciting and I'm like, this is not gonna be a fun experience for me if I don't have a sense of discovery.

Cuz that's the exciting part. Like, otherwise I'm just rude. I know I can make the pencil do what I want it to do for whatever reason. Like, I want to figure out like, well what, what happens if I do something different? You know, like, like yeah. You know, what is the experience? What's the motion?

What's the, you know, the, the whole process look like and how do I wanna feel after this? And then the drawing simply becomes a record of that and, and it, and I make it a distinction between drawing and the drawing and trying to get viewers to connect with what, where do you weight that we have, we each have our own kind of hierarchy.

It's either about the drawing or it's about drawing the process. And for me it's so much more on the process side, you know, but I do, there is part of it, I'm like, I do want it to look good cuz that feels good. That's part of the experience. That's that end. You're like, ah, yes, it feels good.

But there's also like, I I, you know, was looking for those kind of happy accidents or things like that that also feel very good. That's gotta be part of it. And for some people it's all about execution. There're like, no, this has gotta be like, like a commercial art piece or something. This is, there's no wiggle room and it's gotta be,

you know, perfectly created and it might make lead to an unpleasant experience or what I would think of as unpleasant, but this person might love it. Right. They love that, like that, that confinement of that. And so, yeah. And I think, and the same with painting and painting and the painting. And like for me, like I just,

my latest painting ended up just being wiped down entirely because it's like, you know, I, when I was, I was getting through there, I'm like, you know what, actually I didn't, I didn't care where I was. I went out, found a spot and set up. I said, I just wanted to paint for a couple hours, so I'm just gonna wipe this down. I got out of it what I wanted. Yeah. I didn't need another painting. I just needed to paint. Yeah. And that's the kind of the stage I'm at right now is just

doing that and intentionally wiping things down because then it relieves any sort of pressure that voice inside of me that, you know,

I don't know, what's somebody gonna think about this? You know? And so, oh, That's so good about the piece, like about the art professor who was like, you know, freeing you up being, giving you permission to just do like bad paintings. Like I have also had moments where I'm like, you know, maybe I'll just give up and I'll just do bad paintings.

And it's like, normally I actually do something kind of good at that point when I'm, you know, but I'm not trying to, and it's hard to talk myself into like really believing it. So I think that is like the power we can use as teachers is to be like, you know, it's totally okay to do something that's like a bad painting.

And the other thing that's okay is if we're really tired, it's okay to not do any work and not feel guilty about it for a day or two. Like yeah. That's another thing that we can give people permission about, you know? Yeah. Managing and energy. Yeah. No, and I, I, I think there's it, what's hard,

there's kind of a catch 22 to like an art school in that like we, that is, that's the the time to experiment and grow, right? Yeah. But there's also the kind of the, the, the peak kind of point of comparison when you've got 20 other people Also Good, you're like, and you're seeing like your work right next to somebody else.

And that's the one of the benefits to drawing together is that, and I tell, I say this quite a bit, I'm like, look, you don't have to show this to anybody. Like, just, just do this. Like, and so don't worry about that. That's true. Now at the same time, the, the, the, the other, the other issue with, with coursework is the feedback cycle, right? So the, what I, what I say is like when you can find somebody and you find the right person who can give you the feedback that you need in the way that you can really respond to, that's gold. Because we, we have a responsibility to, to the people that we're asking for feedback.

And to some degree, like, and I know a lot of people that they'll just say, they'll, they'll show their work to somebody and say like, well, what do you think of this? And they're like, whoa, I love it. Or I hate it. Like, that person may never have spent more than a second until this moment ever even thinking about art.

So now we're putting this person onto a spot to give an opinion over something they know nothing about. They don't wanna look like a fool. So they're gonna say something and, and, and then you're gonna give feedback that's not valuable at all. And, but if you can find somebody who, who can analyze the work and really understand what you're going for, what, and what would be helpful. Well, and then you can articulate what are you looking for? And they can do it in a kind way, then that's really valuable. Because then there's some people who have from really good feedback, but they're just jerks. You know, they, they feel like there's A lot of that why. Yeah. And yeah.

And it, and it's not just about protecting feelings, but it's about, it's about being responsible in that position to Yeah. You know, the impact your, your words are having on somebody. If you know somebody needs harshness and you can deliver that and it works for them, go for it. If you know that this is gonna break somebody Yeah.

And you're, you're doing it anyways because you feel like they need to get a tougher skin, to me, that's not the sign of a, a good teacher. You Yeah. I mean, granted that person, it would, could benefit. I could definitely use a, a tougher skin sometimes. Could You? I, I don't, it's, I don't have one and I probably won't ever have one.

Yeah. You, you know, what makes me think? Cause I think what you're saying is something that I really believe in too, that like, basically there's like a little bit of a format to critiques and I just don't think it's a good critique unless you follow this in what I developed. I think it's like a little bit of a format. Start by analyzing it and finding something that they're doing right.

There must be something, you know. Yeah. Tell them the things that they're doing right, that's gonna like, reinforce that and help them build on those things, and then find specifically things that they're doing that they could improve on very specifically. So if you say like, yeah, you're a terrible artist, you have no skill. That's not specific.

Like, where did I mess up? You know? Yeah. Yeah. So, so that, that's like, that's kind of the sort of general format that I follow for critiques. Do you have any like, other critique theories?

Because I think that is like a really important part of Teaching. Yeah. I mean, what I tell, you know,

viewers is, here's an art to asking for delivering and interpreting feedback. And so two of those aspects are on the artist themselves. Like you're, how you ask for feedback can play a big role.

True. So asking somebody, what do you think is not gonna give you an answer necessarily. Like, you're not it, you know? So take some time to figure out,

like, okay, first let me figure out how I connect with your work. I identify where you're stuck, what you know, what your objectives are or, or something. Or if you're gonna ask something open-ended, be okay with a response anywhere. Maybe you want to just throw it, you're throwing a dart for feedback and you're like, all right,

what do you think? And you're just trying to get a response. And maybe that inspires you to think about, but you gotta do that with a certain amount of intention. Then delivering feedback again, when you can find somebody who can deliver the feedback and you have a trusted partner, then that it's their responsibility to, to, to understand, you know,

it's, it's a relationship. So they understand like, well, what is this person looking for? What are my thoughts? Take some time to slow down, think about it and articulate it. And then once you get that feedback, figure out what you're gonna do with it. Because you, you are in control as an artist of what you're gonna do.

Like, and sometimes you get, I'll get some really good feedback, but I'm like, it's not, I'm not quite sure what to do with it yet. And you sit with it, you think about it, and you move on and you figure out like, how am I gonna get beyond that? And maybe you ask, and maybe it's this dialogue back and forth where you say,

well, this is the next step. This is the, this is what I think you should do. Or, you know, you, you wait. It's a dance, it's a relationship and, and it takes a certain amount of sensitivity. And I, and I can hear some people saying, you know, oh, you're, you know, being too,

too delicate with this, and you gotta be harsh. And I'm like, well, maybe that may be the, the technique that's required here. And, and sometimes it's important to, to just say, look, me know, this doesn't look very good. Are you, do you want it to like, but you know, like, or if you like, where do you want, where do you want to go with this? And, you know, but again, it's that, it's that relationship. And just be careful with who you're asking your feedback from. Because like, like I said, I think putting, say family members or friends on the spot to give feedback, it's not fair to them. It's not fair to them.

And It can be risky. Like they'll just blurt something out, like, man, it doesn't quite look like the person. And they miss the fact that painting a portrait is hard and you've done like a solid structured portrait. Maybe it doesn't look exactly like the person, but there's like a lot good going on. Yeah. A family family can be kinda brutal.

Yeah. And, and you gotta, and there is, I mean, I think it is worth it to develop that, a sense of self-confidence. Oh. Because I think also like the worst is like when like it's all, when things aren't said, you know, like you have your work up and maybe, maybe you put it up somewhere and people are walking by it and they're not saying a thing.

You're like, oh, okay. Boy, they're not you. Cause you would love to hear somebody walk by and say, oh my God, that looks amazing. Did you do that? I'm like, yes, I did. And when they say nothing, you're like, oh, ooh, what's happening? Cause I really like it. Just like say, I just need to shed all of that. Just just my planning. Get clear, get clarity on what you want out of it. Yeah. You know, if, if you're doing work that if the goal is to get it noticed and it's not, then a lack of reaction is, is valuable evidence. True. So, but yeah, it, it does take, I think, like I said, it's an art and I think on, on all sides, it's an art and it's worth taking time to really develop that. And, and it can be helpful to find, again, find that creative partner that you can really trust. Yeah. Because that also, that also strengthens your own conviction.

When, when you're getting feedback from maybe somebody you don't trust or somebody's just giving shitty feedback, you know, then, or they're just being a jerk. You're like, well, all right, no, I, this is what I trust this expert here. Yeah. So Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I've like totally had that where someone just blurts out something and I go back to my trusted like, team of artists that I check in with, you know, and like, oh my God, this person said this. What do you think? You know? Yeah. And they help reel me back. And, and having like a group of people that you check in with regularly, like, I have this, I have like a couple, a few artists that I check in with regularly about our work and over, we've done this for like, at least a couple years, maybe a few years. And, and so they really know my work really well now, and I really know theirs. And that's the kind of relationship that I like to develop in my heart mentoring program. Yeah. Because as you've been saying, there's so much self-knowledge involved. Like what is your intentions?

What is your goal? What do you want your work to look like? That it actually takes time for us to even figure that out. And, and kind of having people that you work with for a while, you help, you sort of figure that out together and then they know what you want and then they can kind of, you know, tweak their feedback.

Like Yeah. Accordingly. And, and, and like when you build, like you said, your team, there's a shorthand that gets developed, right? You Yeah. You know, each other's direction. Yep. And then also the feedback, it's, it benefits both sides. You know, ideally the person that you're, you're requesting feedback from is also looking at your work and saying, oh, what's in here that can help me with my work? Right. So that's, yep. Yep. I think, again, that's really where it's really valuable. Now, I think that's different from kind of a critic, right? You know, I, I've never had the opportunity for my work to be written up by a critic, but I think that's where it gets really muddy for some people when you have the word critique.

That's why I specifically choose feedback. Okay. That's interesting. I never thought, I mean, I think when, when, when you have a critic, they're, their vision, their, their objective is, is fundamentally different. Their, their objective isn't to make an individual artist work better. Their objective is to, to identify how this work says something or connects with a larger community Yeah.

And how it contributes to that larger dialogue. And that's just, that's just fundamentally different. And it's gotta be really hard for people to navigate. But, but I think that's where I think like,

again, critique implies a hierarchy that could be challenging, I think for some, because it's like then, cuz then you're looking at, you're like, all right, I'm bringing this to you. I want you to criticize it cuz you, it's like you're, you know, I would almost say a critique is more akin to a commercial art endeavor where you know, somebody is paying you to do this and like, all right, let's, you, you asked me to do this, you know, you created this thing for this client and they're gonna criticize and they're gonna say, well, this is, or this isn't what I asked for. Right. You know, and maybe it's just a matter of kind of clarifying it that way. But, or if you have a panel of kind of quote unquote judges to say, well, did this meet the standards for our organization? Right. Like, they're gonna critique that, you know,

based on a set of criteria that they've established then that's different than I think, than like what you're talking about a team of people that where you're, you're giving feedback that is intended for mutual growth and, and it's kind of the behind the scenes nitty gritty of the, you know, the, the dirty underbelly of the art making process. So Yeah.

And so personalized, like you say, oh, that's so true. I might like, and I think the wording that we use for things is important. I might actually totally change what I call these things. I think I just took the word critique from art school, but you're right. Yeah. Anyone has the word criticism almost embedded in it. I don't know for sure if that's like the root of the word.

Yeah. But it sounds like similar. It's totally more like personalized feedback. Like that That's actually really good point. I mean, to me, like a critique implies a very specific objective and then you're critiquing it to see whether or not it met that objective. And so I think there are certain instances where it makes sense. I think group critiques are very valuable in that.

Again, because there's a short certain amount of shorthand where you can look at one person's work and say, well here you can see this person is doing this. You could all benefit from this and here's why it's valuable that this or, or, you know, but you know, of course delivered in a kind way that I think is, is really kinda supportive.

And the idea in that group is that, like you said, in a team, like you're all lifting each other through this process, you know, like, sure if I make a painting that that fails in certain ways, everybody else can learn from that too. So the, yeah, I think, like I said, I think it's just a matter of determining like if it,

are you analyzing it based on a certain set of criteria or are you offering feedback that is kind of more kind of undefined in, in a way? Yeah. That, that's like so true. And a l I guess a lot of the time. I mean, I really think art's so personal, like it all depends on what the person's intentions are.

So who am I to criticize any, unless I know what their intentions are. It might be exactly their intention that it doesn't look realistic or something like that. Like yeah. It's like presumptuous to think otherwise. Yeah. Ooh. Well this has been such an interesting talk. It's so good to talk to you and pick your brain on all of this.

Where can people find out more about what you do? See some of your classes, look at your page? Sure, yeah. Go to [artistnetwork.com](http://artistnetwork.com). You know, the show is drawing together. So you can, you can do a search on YouTube. The book is see, think, draw. So that's on Amazon and Barnes and Noble right now.

And then in my, I have a website, [Scott Meyer art.com](http://ScottMeyerart.com), where I don't really update it nearly as frequently as I should. Some links there. And I'm looking to, you know, just continue to make more content, especially around drawing and painting. So I think I wanna expand into, you know, painting instruction and, and go. So,

yep. I'm gonna, Ooh, and, and what's your Instagram name? Oh, Scott L. Meyer. I think. Don't, I'll double check it and Put it in the ok. Scott l Meer. Yeah. So, and it's m a i e r for those listening. It's a weird spelling, but No, that's internal. Yeah. So the, yeah, I think that's, that's it. Yeah. Sweet. Well Thank you so much for having me on. This has been an awesome conversation. Aw. It's always really great to talk to you and I always learn so much. Thanks for chatting. You're welcome. I, I'm very honored to be on here. Thank you so much. Well, it was really good to talk to you. So I'll talk to you soon. Bye Scott. Bye.