

## Transcript

### Peter Drake on the Importance of Staying Informed as an Artist

Welcome to Down2 Art. I'm your host, Kristy Gordon, and today I'm joined by the artist Peter Drake, the Provost of the New York Academy of Art, to talk to him about how he found his voice as an artist, as well as the importance of being informed as an artist, understanding our history and critical theory to know how our work fits into the context of what's being created around us.

So, welcome Peter. It's so good to have you. Nice to see you, Kristy. It's always a pleasure. Yeah. And so you've been the provost of the New York Academy of Art for about 12 years now, and teaching there even longer. And the mission of the Academy is blending technical skills, conceptual awareness, and critical discourse. Can you talk a little bit about your background as an artist and as the Provost of the New York Academy of Art?

Yeah, I mean, it's funny, I went to school at a time, this was the mid seventies when, you know, reductive abstraction was pretty much had a strength, hold on, you know, exhibitions, galleries, museums, whatnot, you know, even magazines and just critical thought. And then when the eighties came around, everything got sort of shook up and you, you could argue that it happened a little bit before that, that the new image people and the Cal Arts Mafia, as they're sort of joking with referred to kind of new, moved to New York and took over the, the nonprofits and really kind of came with a new energy about pictures and what they could do and how they reflected the culture and the new image.

People were a different, slightly different generation of artists, but they were dealing with imagery, which was so at odds with what I had been taught at school when I was in school. And I was, I went to a very good school Pratt and I had some, you know, excellent teachers there. But at the same time, it was very difficult to be a figurative painter at that time because it just wasn't what people were doing, at least academically. But I always found a way to sort of work with narrative and with picture making by taking at least one illustration course per semester. And that actually kind of saved me. And, and finding artists like Rudolph Barnick for me and Joe Smith and you know, people that were working with the figure, but maybe were a little bit under the radar actually helped a lot too.

So, you know, by the time I got out of school, the art world had changed so much. And one of the first things I started to do, just from like a professional point of view was I started going around to all the nonprofits and trying to get my slides into any slide registry that, you know, at that time that was how a lot of the nonprofits would work.

They would, you know, they'd accept your slides and then they'd look through their slide inventory and you know, see if you might fit into a group show coming up or a selection show or whatever. So that always, you know, the nonprofits at the time were sort of the, the easiest route into the art world because as much as like the conceptual point of view of the art world was, as I said, very reductive. There were also very few galleries. People don't realize that the art world was much, much smaller at the time. And so there were very few that were dealing with, you know, emerging artists for interest. It was, it was always sort of blue chip, right? So the nonprofits had a very important function in that they allowed people to see emerging artists or

artists that were working with unusual materials or people that were doing things that didn't make sense in the marketplace.

And so, you know, I showed it drawing center artist space, alternative museum, bunch of places that were very artist friendly. And that that's, that's a huge thing to find, you know, a support system when you're out of school to try to find some way to enter into an art world that seems prohibitive at the time. Oh, that's so true.

And actually I'm not so familiar with like the art registries and the nonprofits. Is that still a system that like exists because I actually haven't done that. Like Yeah, they, they still exist. They function slightly differently. Oh, artist Space had a huge slide inventory that was open to the public. So curators could go to artist space and go through their inventory and sort of see, they'd always be cross-referenced. So, you know, if somebody was doing like, I don't know, color field painting, but it was influenced by, you know, whatever, you know, maybe pattern painting or something like that. You know, you could find an artist that fit inside of those categories. And actually Artist space or, well the drawing center did the same thing.

I actually ended up being a, an artist curator there for about four years in the eighties. Oh. And we would, you know, I'd meet with artists. I only had one day a week. I only worked one day a week. But I would meet artists all day long and have like 20 minutes to 30 minutes to talk to 'em about their work.

And that, you know, going someplace where you're talking to another artist about your art, especially post-graduate, you feel like, you know, everybody sort of hates critiques when they're in school. And then when you're out of school you're like, Hey, where is everybody? You know, like, so true. Anybody have any questions? You know? Yeah.

Oh, that's so true. Actually, I have been thinking about that a lot. Like the importance of actually once we get out of art school building for ourselves, a little community of artists that we really trust that we can show our work to regularly. I actually do it with a couple artists from the academy just every week or every two weeks for six years now, we will, we'll hop on a phone call, show each other what we've been working on, and oh, critically review each other's work. And, and we are so intimately like understanding about the intentions that we each have for our work, like that we can kind of problem solve with those intentions in mind with the other person. And it's been so supportive.

What do you, what are some of your thoughts about just the importance of that kind of community? Oh, Christy, I can't say enough about how important that is. And you know, obviously to some extent it can be the people that you go to school with. It can be the people that you feel you've got an aesthetic connection to. Sometimes it's generational.

But one of the things that happened to me is I became friendly with John Bowman and Mark Tanzi and Oh, Bob Ber and Hugo Bestus. And these were all figurative artists at a time when we were all sort of breaking into the art world sort of around the same time. And it was great just to be able to compare notes and to, you know,

there'd be times when everybody's applying for a National Endowment award and you find yourself being the only person who didn't get one. It feels horrible until you talk to your friends, they're like, ah, they dunno what they're talking about. And, you know, it's you that, that sort of camaraderie is really, really important. And, you know, I,

it's one of the things I really love about the academy. You know, if you look at like, something like Spring Break, we just went this past weekend. There's like 40 or 50 alumni that were in Spring Break. It Was kind of, It was like a reunion, you know? Totally. I love it. And I love

seeing students curating their colleagues into shows and creating context for how to view the work.

So it, you know, it, it builds community, which is great, but it also, you know, it's, it starts to define the aesthetics that you want to apply yourself to. It sort of defines who you are creatively. That is like so true. And it's true too about how it can open up opportunities as well without you even intending it to.

It just naturally like does. Yeah. And get me like hard moments. 'cause we all have those as artists facing rejection or criticism. And then you've got this safe container of your close artist friends that can be like, oh, I've been there. You know, like, You know, I, I remember one opening I went to and there was a post opening party and John and Mark and Bob were all there. And I was really miserable for some reason. I just felt like, you know, I couldn't, I didn't understand my place in the world or something like that. And John Bowman came up next to me, put his arm around me, and he just said, where would you rather be? He just knew I was miserable. And he's like, this is the only place you should be.

And I just felt great as an art buddy like that. Aw, totally. And I love that story. That's, and you mentioned too, like the context like this group of artists, whether it's a small group or maybe a bigger group of artists that were sort of working in a similar style to, it starts to create a context for our work.

And that also kind of has me think, I've been thinking about the importance of understanding our context that we fit in into the like broader scheme of the art world around us. Not necessarily just with our friends, but also understanding the context that we're creating it and how it's contributing to the dialogue that's kind of going on around us artistically. Can you speak a little bit about that and the importance of understanding how we fit in in that way?

Yeah. It's interesting how things like that grow. I remember there was a period when I first started showing out in Los Angeles and artists like Larry Gepe were working out there. And you know, we'd started to show in the same gallery Carl Bornstein and Carl was somebody who was very focused on, you know, contemporary, progressive, figurative art. And so, you know, suddenly you realize that, you know, this isn't just your little niche of, you know, friends, but this is like a bigger thing that's happening. And it, when I remember Larry coming to New York one time for a show at Bloom Hellman, and a bunch of artists got together, Debbie Brown actually organized this, which was kind of funny because I didn't know who Debbie was at the time.

And she organized a party for Larry at her loft. And all these people came from all these different sort of areas, but they were all interested in more or less the same thing. And you just realize that your small communities is actually being, there are these kind of ripple effects that go out sometimes through curated things, sometimes through writing, sometimes through just exhibiting,

you know, it just, you, you get to know more people and your nucleus stays intact, but you realize that it's, it's a bigger thing. Hmm. Yeah. That's true. Yeah. And I like what you said about how sometimes it happens in the art and sometimes writing too. And, and we're sort of doing lots of things as artists,

like trying to think about how to talk about the work, write about the work, or create the work that kind of ties into just like the importance of being informed as an artist and understanding critical theory and art history and contemporary art history. Can you speak a little bit about how you see that as an important part of being an artist? You know,

it's, it's really an interesting debate because I think that for me, you know, I'm a visual person first. You know, I consider myself serious about informing myself. But in some ways, and I was talking to a student about this recently, being informed isn't necessarily about defending your own work, but just being aware of the issues that are current and basically not making a fool of yourself if you enter into a conversation,

which is a big part of it. It's like you have to be aware of things that are going on around you besides the work that are important to your own studio practice. So, you know, being informed, it's difficult 'cause it's always a moving target, right? You know, there are always people, there'll be a period where everybody's interested in Rosalyn Kraus and Hal Foster.

And there'll be another period where everybody's talking about Chris and abject art making. And then it, you know, somebody like a Donald Cuspid can be around forever sort of talking about figurative and representational art from a Freudian point of view. And it's like being aware of those things is important, but it may not actually shape your work directly. And I think there are times,

and there were a bunch of artists, I think in the eighties that were, you know, kind of focused on postmodern cri criticism. And a lot of the time it felt like their art was just an illustration of an idea. Hmm. And That's something I've never found particularly interesting. I like it when people are informed and information, whether it's coming from film or critical theory or just fiction, you know? Yeah. Informs work and just, you know, being a, a participant, being a, you know, quasi literate person. You, you know, you allow all these things to enter into your work. Yeah, yeah. Totally. And I, I think you're so right about how it's a bit of a moving target. Like it's a little bit overwhelming when we realize that we need to stay informed about what's going on in the art world.

'cause there's no way we'll know everything. But, and at the academy they have lots of good, you know, structures in place for that, teaching classes on critical theory and then the lecture program. And what would you suggest to someone who's sort of at home trying to like, learn these things and stay on top of it? You know, it might be,

you know, Hal Foster has a kind of compilation book of like, critical theory over the past, since 19th Century or the 19th Century, things like that where you just get a, a taste of what is happening or has happened. It's a good way to sort of create a foundation, but I, you know, the harder thing, believe it or not,

is staying on top of how quickly the art world moves. You know, that it's not just, you know, which galleries are showing what artists or what neighborhoods they're in or anything like that.

It's just being aware of emerging trends, you know? And that doesn't mean it's gonna directly affect your work, but I think, you know, if you're,

especially if you're in a city like New York or Chicago or LA where there's a little deep pool of talent, you really do have to, you've gotta hoof it. Like you have to get to openings. You have to see what's out there and see how things are changing or, you know, just finding artists that you're excited by. Yeah. Yeah. I always find it really interesting to see these trends.

It's actually fascinating to me to realize, I don't think that everyone's looking at each other either. It's like, it just comes to people almost in a mystical way. It moves through artists. And I'm not sure exactly how to put it, but it's interesting for me to see the types of trends that come up.

Sometimes. I, I also think it's funny to see when those trends make their way to academia.

Because what frequently happens in the academic world is that if people, you know, have full-time positions or they're tenured or whatever, there isn't the same incentive to sort of stay on top

of things. And it's almost like a baseball player that gets a huge contract. It's like, Hey, great. I'm good for the next 10 years. You know? But that's not true for everybody with a full Position. No. But you know, the, the hard thing is just the art world. It moves more quickly. It moves probably in five to seven year cycles, and academic world moves it more like a 10 to 15 year cycle. So you can actually be a little bit behind, even though you're going to a very, you know, currently informed academic environment.

It just, it just takes longer to seep in. I think That's, that's totally interesting, but also somewhat comforting just to realize we don't have to be perfect at it. We just have to do our best and Yeah. Muddle our way through. Yeah. Yeah. I Mean, that is one of the interesting things about teaching, though sometimes that's when you learn more from your students than you learn from, than they necessarily learn from you. Like there, I was speaking to an Iranian woman today about her studio practice, and she showed me an Iranian artist who I'd never heard of. And it looks to me like as interesting as like a hammer show painting. It was like, how do I not know about this guy? You know? Yeah. That's so true.

Yeah. Teaching is almost like the final step in learning. Like it yeah. It exposes us to new ideas and, and also anchors in our current ideas even deeper or something like that. Yeah. Yeah. It's, it's part of what's fun about it. You, it's a little, a little bit intimidating. Somebody showing you like five artists in a row that you've never heard of and you're like, oh geez, sorry, I'm so that you have these experiences too. I always feel like, oh no, when I've heard it, when someone had noticed that I've, Yeah, I mean, you can stay up all night, you know, just trying to prepare yourself and, you know, look at review that comes out and go to every website and it's still not enough,

you know? 'cause it's so Much. Yeah, totally. And I really do think that that's comforting to realize that no, none of us are on completely on top of it. It's not actually possible, but we can do our best. And, and that's pretty good. I remember when I was starting at the academy, just hearing about this idea of like,

the need to understand the language for me of painting or, you know, or it could be drawing or sculpture, but understanding the language of the medium of her choice. And that seemed almost similar to this idea of understand, you know, being informed about critical theory and just contemporary discourse because it seemed so overwhelming, such a big concept. Like, how will I ever understand the language of painting and what does that even entail?

Like, it's actually broader than you initially think. You know, it's not just about the technique. It's almost maybe pulling in what types of references you might be making by using certain types of techniques. And it can get really complicated, but also really interesting. Do you wanna speak a little bit about just this language of a medium? Yeah. It's sort of in some ways my favorite thing to talk about because I feel like,

you know, people will talk about the word technique. And I, I hate that word, word actually, because I think it's really oversimplifying because language, you know, if you're talking about the language of Dutch 17th century painting, if you're talking about, you know, working with indirect pain, if you're talking about, you know, medieval, you know, egg tempera, if you're talking about, you know, sixties and seventies stain painting traditions, these are all languages, right? They're, they're alive. They're alive, they come with associations, they come with more than just, you know, an object. Technical awareness. It comes with to some degree baggage sometimes. But it also comes with real richness.

And understanding that, and understanding how these languages can work in concert with each other or that they can be oppositional is actually really important. 'cause I think that's when

language becomes metaphorical, that's when you get all of this additional oomph into a painting because you're talking about the way that the actual application of paint can bring meaning to a painting That is like completely fascinating.

And yeah. And I thought, oh, you put it so well. Yeah, it's fascinating. Can you think of any examples in your own practice? I don't know, I'm kind of putting you on the spot, but of where, maybe just to give examples for people if it's not too on the fly of where there might've been a moment where you used a certain technique that was drawing certain associations and therefore enhancing the meaning of the work.

If, if anything comes to mind. Yeah, no, there was a period of, an exact moment actually, and this, this is partly how my iconography evolved, but it's also how my language evolved. And I, I was literally living on the lower East side on Delancey, you know, in this just the tiniest apartment you could possibly imagine.

I literally sleeping on the floor and I'd have to roll up my bedding to pull out my drawing board. And I was, I had been working on these pen and ink drawings and I was using black India ink and white India ink and, and I was using the white India ink to some degree to correct make corrections, but it was also just to,

you know, turn form and things like that. And I ran out of white ink and I had this disaster of a drawing in front of me. And I just started sanding into the paper as a way of getting rid of the ink. And as soon as I did it, I was like, oh, this reminding me of something. And it reminded me of a couple of things.

One, I've been looking at a lot, lot of fresco painting. I was looking at Piero, looking at Jato, satchi, you know, all this sort of like the who's who's of Florentine painting. But I was also looking at, at j at Frescoes that were decay. And there was something about the decay that I found really interesting. Like it felt metaphorical,

it felt like it was talking about the passage of time. It felt like it was talking about destructive influences to all these things started to happen. And I wanted that to be in my work somehow. I wanted pl able to talk about contemporary culture, but from a point of view, view of the metaphor of decay. So as soon as I start sanding into the p the pieces,

a couple of things happened. One, I felt like I was rendering with light instead of shadow, but also I was creating a surface that was metaphorically loaded with all these associations.

Associations to you know to fresco painting, but also associations with just destruction in general. And I felt like this, if you're going to be talking about, in my case, the drawings that I was doing at the time where these four foot by eight foot drawings of suburban settings.

Yes. And I wanted them to look like decay frescos. I wanted them to have in some ways the monumentality of fresco. But I also wanted that decay to be there to talk about the loss of some kind of innocence or the loss of some kind of ideal. And everything started to come together at the same time. The language was suddenly perfectly in sync with the iconography that I was trying to develop.

So it was, it was just one of those aha moments where you just realize, okay, I've got a lot of work ahead of me. Like there's so much that I can get to through this language and through this imagery. And it was really important to me. And you know, that approach to drawing and painting has been on and off consistent,

right? Like right now I don't, I, I only work sub attractively on drawings, but I, you know, you know, I tend to work ly in, in when I'm painting. But the idea of looking for decay in the imagery, that's been pretty much a consistent aspect of variable in my work. That's so interesting and such a perfect example.

Yeah. It is like amazing when the technique starts to enhance like the meaning and you feel it happening. Like you kind of know, you're like, finally, I definitely understand the language 'cause I can see this association that I'm making with this mark making. Yeah. And it's really interesting to hear more about how you found your artistic voice. I've been looking at your work for many years now and I've seen it really crystallized.

Like I, it was always pretty crystallized the whole time that I've known you, but I feel like it's actually become even more clearly like what you're like meaning to do. And so I was wondering what it was like for you finding your artistic voice. I think a lot of what you just said kind of touches upon it. But can you think of anything else that you did or that was a part of that?

The hardest thing really in some ways is to sort of find your voice and then to realize that your voice, voice is gonna be evolving throughout your life. That it never, it really shouldn't stay static. Oh yes. I think that's the one that surprises people the most in their life is that, you know, suddenly something shows up in your studio and you don't know what to make of it.

And you're, it can be a little frightening to sort of let go of what you may think of yourself or what other people may think of you. And then to sort of strike off in a new direction That's So true. Takes a little nerve. Yeah, that is so true. And I really like admire artists when I see them go with that like impulse.

Like there should be new images that you're interested in. There should be new ways of doing research that you're interested in and all these things, even new technology that you can bring to your work. Like, there were a number of years ago, I did about 10 animations in Adobe After Effects. And I was using toys, soldiers and things like that.

But when I first started animating, it was like, oh my God, they're alive. You know, it has this like weird, magical sort of Frankenstein like moment of like, oh my God, that horse looks like it's galloping. And it was great. But I also realized that there were times when I would scroll through the animations when I would find a frame that I would never have conceived of by myself.

But because you're doing things like moving the camera or changing the lighting, you know, there, there are things that happen in between frames, almost in between your, your narrative beginning and end that lent themselves to new paintings for me and I and compositions that I never would've come up with otherwise if I weren't looking through the lens of this software. I Remember those animations.

But that's really interesting about the in-betweens, it seems like just staying open to the epiphany, sort of trying things out and then staying open to when something sort of, that you didn't expect has suddenly really caught your interest and then going with it y yeah. Yeah. I was talking to a couple of students today about that, that a lot of art making I think is just remaining open.

You know, like just almost training your eye to see things. And I was talking to this one student about the minimalist that in some ways, you know, I actually love the minimalist period. There's this thinking, something about it that just really appeals to me. It's partly because I went to school during that period. But you know, they also in some ways trained your eyes as a viewer to sort of look at the world that they were seeing.

Hmm. You know, you would see, you know, bricks in a different way. You would see cement blocks in a different way. You know, it just, it had this effect of sort of reorienting your, your consciousness. And I think most great art does something like that. It tells you how to see the world or gives you another way to see the world.

Actually, I remember at the Academy, John Jacobsmeyer saying something like, show me how you see the world, or something like that. And I thought that was like really interesting. That

seems to touch on what you're seeing, that it's kind of Yeah. Altering the way we look at the world. Ooh, that's interesting. What about like this whole idea of style?

Like I, I know a lot of artists wanna like, have a style and, but how have you seen style actually develop for an artist? Oh, it's so funny. You should ask that. I was talking to a colleague about that just today, that Mark Tanzi, people don't realize that he was Helen Franken follower's studio assistant when he was very young.

Their work had nothing to do with each other. So it's kind of the weirdest coupling of assistant to, you know, whatever master. And I love Franken follower's work. I think she's one of the most amazing, you know, post Abbott painters in the world. But she turned to Mark at one point, he was just talking to her about like the business of being an artist.

And she said, well, mark, you find a signature style and you do that for the rest of your life.

Which is funny 'cause it's not what she did, you know, But it's what a lot of people thought.

That's how you survive in the art world. You found your one signature thing and you just did that ad nauseum. But I mean,

I think that's the deadliest approach to a studio practice. It's so self-limiting and it's really, it's really more about business when it comes right down to it when somebody does that. And it feels like when you do that, you know, obviously there's some people, and I believe like somebody like Agnes Martin shouldn't have done anything but what Agnes Martin did, and which is very reductive,

but purely who she is. Hmm. I wouldn't wanna see Agnes Martin make a, you know, a gestural painting. I'd be probably sickened if I saw something like that. But I think most people make that decision as a way of sort of securing their livelihood. Yeah, yeah. But if that's all you're doing, like sell real estate, you'll make a lot more.

I know. Yeah. That's what I feel like too. It's like, why would I become an artist then? I'm right.

Exactly. There's better options for money. Yeah. So much better. God. Yeah. And so what do you think is a more effective approach to like developing a style in an authentic way that maybe emerges and probably evolves,

like you're saying too? Yeah, I think it, it evolves, but I, I think there are times when, you know, if you start to do like an inventory of the things that affect you, like the novels that affect you, the movies that affect you, like when you walk into the Met, what's the first room that you go to and why do you go to that room?

You know, what is it about certain pieces that just keep coming back to you, or certain periods even where you, why are you more interested in dust 17th century painting than French 18th century painting? What, what is it about these periods that draws you to them? I think I, it's worth it to do those kinds of inventories on a kind of regular basis or just check yourself.

Why, why is it you're drawn to certain things and I think that, you know, some part of your style or the evolution of your style will be a reflection of that. Yeah. Being honest about love. Yeah.

Yeah. That's true. And it is worth it to do this kind of like, conscious, make this conscious effort to kind of figure out what it is that we like,

not just hoping it'll come to us. This is go. And then as far as like brainstorming ideas, I was wondering, do you do like quick sketches, like little thumbnails before you create a larger like piece? Or do you just start right in on the larger piece? Or what's your kind of brainstorming process? I, I've approached it so many different ways.

There was one period in my life and I, you know, I'm a really bad sleeper, so I would, you know, I'll wake up 10 times a night and there was one period when I was working almost exclusively



from Dream Imagery and I would just make little notes to myself and just really simple sketches. And then the first hour in the studio I would spend just trying to flesh out those sketches.

And then I'd usually turn them into like a watercolor and wash sketch, which would get up, blown up to maybe a, a subtractive drawing. And then maybe I would do a bunch of different sketches of different aspects of the piece. And I mean, each piece would take about a month for me to just, you know, from sketch to final resolution.

And that was a, a really interesting period. It was very thoughtful, it was very sort of immersed in the process. But then I, I've changed there, there was a period where I worked almost entirely from Photoshop files, but I would do all of my collaging Photoshop and all of my sketching in Photoshop. And then I got to a point where I found that a little bit frustrating because I felt like I was just reproducing creative document that I had always already created.

Yeah. So I sort of went back to basics. And I remember seeing pictures of Eric FI's studio way back in the day where he'd have a painting up, but he'd have like a photo source from one magazine here, or photo source from a nudist magazine over there. And just like the, like the collaging was actually happening, you know, during the process of painting and the editing. It never happened in the sketch. It never really happened in Photoshop. It happened in like this kind of woolly world where the seams would actually show. And there's something about seeing those seams that I find a little bit interesting. Just not, they're not like glaring or anything like that, but it's, it's about, it's not about the perfection of a Photoshop document, you know? Yeah. Yeah. That's, that's really interesting. What kinds of tools do you use to kind of bridge this gap between like flow where you're just creating almost intuitively a little sketch or thumbnail and then taking that, blowing it up first to the watercolor maybe, or, or to the larger piece. What kind of, I think every artist has to figure out how they do it for themselves.

Like for me, I use photo reference and I sometimes make little plastic models. And I know some artists use three D modeling. What kinds of ways do you have to support yourself in making that leap so that you can make a finished painting out of your idea? Well, I've got a, you know, a bunch of different ways that I approach my image making lately.

I mean, there have been times, you know, I will go back to these methods frequently. Like I have gone through family home movies, right. Frame by frame. And I'll find a frame, you know, like let's say you're looking at a birthday party or something like that. If you look at the movie, it's all continuous and it's consistent with the primary narrative,

which is you're having a happy birthday. But if you look at it frame by frame, there's always gonna be a frame where somebody is doing something a little bit weird, fresh, your face that says a little bit more than what the primary text is saying. And I, I find that an interesting tool to play around with, to sort of look for,

you know, the subtext. And you, I, I've done that with television shows where like I would, I was taking these television shows from the fifties and sixties, like, you've never heard of this one, but it's called Ozzy and Harriet. And it was basically following a family, but it was a real family. It was like a it,

the kids were their kids. It was a married couple. Whoa. So in some it was like the first reality show, right? Yeah. But it was all scripted. So, and I always found it really fascinating because it was a husband and wife that were, you know, a production company that made this television show that was incredibly successful. One of their kids ended up being like a music, you know, like a rock stars or pop rock star. And, but it was all about this sort of very, in some ways cleansed understanding of American culture. Hmm. And even though they would deal with

some difficult topics, believe it or not, especially like the role of men and women in the marriage and like issues controlled, things like that,

it was still pretty much a glorified view of American family life. And so what I started doing is scrolling through those television shows and finding those same moments where there seems to be a text that's at odds with the primary text. And again, as a tool, it's just kind of a fascinating way to look for pictures. You start to train your eye to look for that unexpected moment, you know? Ooh, that is interesting. I like this. Looking at the in-betweens in a lot of your work, like with the, the other movies and then the, the animations that you're making. Actually one final like question just popped into my mind. I'm working with someone right now who's been, she's using a lot of like references to movies and she's always kind of wondering how that fits in with copyright issues.

And I know a lot of artists that like work with movie stills. How do, how do people like navigate that? I don't know. Or what thoughts? I mean it's a gray area in all sorts of ways. It definitely is. I mean, if you were to talk to Jeff Koons, I'm sure you'd have very different perspective than I do most of the time.

If you're choosing frames that are in between the primary text, nobody even recognizes the primary text. They're not even sure what you're talking about. Sure. So it's actually kind of funny because it's a way of sort of flying under the radar, huh. But also these shows are so old at this point. They're probably Oh, true. Odd. They're like 60 or 70 years old.

I don't think anybody's looking, you know? Yeah. In Harriet they've been dead forever. Yeah, totally. Maybe are, would they be in the public domain? I don't know if that happens for movies, Right? I think, I think they probably would be, but I don't, I mean that's one of those things I used to have, I ran a professional practice course at Parsons for many years and I'd always bring in a volunteer lawyer for the arts because those are the questions that people always ask.

Like, you do not mess with Disney, for instance. Like anything Disney, if you try to use that in your art, they will sue you like crazy. Oh yeah. That's interesting. Certain companies may be more on it than others. That's actually a really good point. I never even thought of that. And then I see a lot of artists though referencing pop culture,

like, you know, star Trek or other movies and things like that. And of course when we're not that well known, I doubt anyone will sue us. But, but I wonder for someone who's like really concerned about, yeah. I don't know, what do you think about Star Trek? Do you know anything about that? I, I don't,

but I think that that you're right, it's, it's really your prominence. Like if somebody, yeah. You know, if you copy something from Disney and it's on, if it's for sale in the secondary market at, you know, Sotheby's or something like that and it's selling for \$2 million. Yeah, yeah. You're gonna their lawyer. Yeah. Yeah.

Totally. No, I mean this is all always a developing area too. The whole copyright thing. It's always like changing, but I'm glad we got touch upon it. Yeah. Yeah. This has been such an amazing conversation. Thank you so much for taking the time. Peter, where can people learn more about your art and, and the New York Academy of Art?

Well, you can always go to my Instagram account. That's always a good way that I tend to keep that probably more current than anything else. But, you know, I show with Craig Head Green Gallery in Dallas with Linda Warren projects in Chicago and Michael Healy contemporaneous in Mexico. And you know, shows come up now and again and just the usual kind of thing.

Nice. I'll definitely include a link to your Instagram and the description. Yeah. But again, part of what's interesting about that is the ways that social media is changing the delivery systems of art

and the, the, the reach that artists can have That is actually so true. How do you see it having changed things? I mean, just to give you an example of this, a woman got in touch with me about a year and a half ago through Instagram. I didn't believe it was real. I thought it was one like those Nigerian things where I, \$50 million, what I wanna buy your art. But she ended up buying two really substantial pieces for her family. And I was joking with my wife Janice, about this and I said, do you think it's too soon to ask her for a recommendation of a gallery in Dallas? 'cause I've never shown there before and I've always wanted to. And Janice is like, oh my God, it's way too soon. We just met this woman literally next day she Instagrams me, she dms me and she says, Hey, I know this gallery in Dallas that I think would be really interesting in your work. And literally within a month I started showing with the gallery. Whoa. Yeah. That Wouldn't, that would not happen any other way except through social media. Yeah, totally. That's like everything that an artist wants, like painting, sales gallery shows. Like, it just all I know to you that's like amazing. And it's without anybody else reaching out except through, you know, this delivery system that, you know, the images are tiny. Like how does anybody make a decision about something like that? And she was so, it was just a, it was kind of a amazing, but you hear more and more artists that's happening for them where Totally. You know, they just, you know, most of their sales are not happening through galleries. They're happening through social media. Yeah. Yeah. Totally. And what do you think about how artists need to navigate this whole system though? Because I find that I need to be careful about when I post my work. Like not show it when it's in a vulnerable stage. Only show it once it's finished. Yeah. Otherwise it connects with my process. I don't know, I don't think everyone's like that. But do you have any theories around that? You know, The way I get around that is I do, you know, an animation I'll frequently, we'll take a picture of a piece I'm working on at the end of the day for the course of a month. And then I'll stitch it together into an animation and it sort of shows the process. 'cause I feel like that's an interesting thing to share with people is just how you think and how you edit all of that. And it, and by the time they actually see it, the piece is done so there's no commentary midway through it. You know, so you don't get messed up that way. Ooh, that's, but I, I, I love seeing, I love seeing people's process. I mean, I love watching other people's videos. Me too. Yeah. Yeah, me too. And I find that the way you and I are both doing it, where we might show the process once the painting is totally finished, it keeps it so it actually feels safe, it doesn't feel too vulnerable. Like I can create and try out whatever I want in my practice and then post it, you know, safe on Instagram without, you know, too much risk that it'll get. 'cause people may say that they like it or they may say that they hate it, but it won't affect the piece at that point. Yeah. Already done. I'm done With that. Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, totally. I'll definitely include a link to your Instagram and the description. And then for the New York Academy of Art, I'll include a link to that too. I'm sure people will be curious to learn more about. Yeah, we just had a really wonderful event. We do this every year. It's wilcott drawing party where we have three setups and probably 40 or 50 artists drawing from, you know, live models. And it's, it's always a lot of fun and Will's super charming and most people end up giving their drawings to the school for auction. It ends up being a nice kind of fundraising, you know, event. That sounds really fun. I'll have to make it next year. I haven't actually Yeah. Seen it. Sounds amazing. Yeah. Oh, you'd love it.

Yeah. You'd be perfect for it. Yeah, I would love that. Yeah. Well, oh, thank you so much for joining us. You just had so many great, like, such great wisdom to share with everyone. So thank you so much, Peter. Yeah, my pleasure. Always a pleasure to see you. Aw, thank you. And I'll talk to you soon. Bye Peter. I hope you've enjoyed this episode of Down2 Art. Thank you so much for being with us.