

FACE TO FACE



CCA Students Interviewing Artists
2008/2009

FACE TO FACE

The interviews collected here are the completion of an assignment given to the students in the introductory course: Ceramics 100, Innovation and Experimentation, CCA Fall 2008 and 2009

Students were asked to select a professional, practicing artist either from a list provided or of their own choosing. Each student submitted their prospective questions for review and advice. Once the questions were approved the students set out to conduct and transcribe their interview.

This compilation is the result:

ENJOY!

Nancy Selvin, Instructor

My heartfelt thanks to the participating artists for their generous gift of time and wisdom:

2009

Terri Friedman
Sasha Duerr
Randy Rosenberg
Gina Gabriell
Bill Abright
Barron Storey
Emily Payne
Lindsey White
Sydney Cohen
Tom White
John Roloff

2008

Nance O'banion
Chris Johnson

Face To Face

INDEX Vol 1

2009

1. Shaun Vivares: A Talk with Tom
2. Tamra Segal: A Conversation about Art and Life
3. Mairead Roberts: Dreams of Art
4. Carol Pitts: In the Studio
5. Alexis Myre: A Dialogue with Art
6. Emma Rose Miller: Water, Motherhood, Art
7. Afton Love: An Inspiration
8. Jackie Lo: Hi Barron!
9. Ryan Humphries: Facing Art
10. Erica Grossman: Inspiration
11. Heidi Cooper: Connections

2008

12. Marie Sabillo: Questions for Chris
13. June Oh: Art is ____?

Shaun Vivares

Tom White

Interview

July 22, November 2009

A Talk with Tom

Shaun Vivares: A Talk with Tom An Interview with Tom White

Tom White is a visual artist who works in a variety of media. Influenced by the surrealist and abstract movements, he uses painstaking performances to create a visual experience that engages both the peripheral and central vision. After receiving his BFA at Cranbrook School of Art, he went on to attain his MA, MFA at UC Berkeley.

Shaun Vivares:

Tom White: So Tom, how long have you been an artist?

Tom White: My whole life.

SV: What age would you say you knew you wanted to be one?

TW: I think about 3 years old.

SV: And how did you know?

TW: Because I made my first magic, my first piece.

SV: Could you talk about that piece?

TW: The piece was under a cherry berry tree in our back yard and it was all dirt under this tree, not around under the tree) and I brought my little red wagon in under the tree and filled the wagon with dirt and then I went and got grapes from inside the house from the fruit bowl and I cut off the grapes off of the stems, saved the stems so that I could make my magic garden inside my wagon, in the bed of the wagon on the dirt. I put the grape trees along an

Shaun Vivares

Intro to Ceramics

Nancy Selvin

Due: 1 December 2009

A Talk with Tom

Tom White is an associate professor at the California College of the Arts. Influenced by the Japanese Butoh movement, he uses Butohdrawing performances to create a visual experience drawn from both the peripheral and central vision. After receiving his BFA at Cranbrook Academy of Art, he went on to attain his MA, MFA at UC Berkeley.

Being an Artist

Shaun V. Vivares: So Tom, how long have you been an artist?

Tom White: My whole life.

SVV: What age would you say you knew you wanted to be one?

TW: I think about 5 years old.

SVV: And how did you know?

TW: Because I made my first magic, my first piece.

SVV: Could you talk about that piece?

TW: The piece was under a china berry tree in our back yard and it was all dirt under this tree, (we played under the tree) and I brought my little red wagon in under the tree and filled the little red wagon up with dirt and then I went and got grapes from inside the house from the fruit bowl and I ate all the grapes off the stems, saved the stems so that I could make my magic garden inside my wagon, in the bed of the wagon on the dirt. I put the grape trees along an

avenue that I created so I built inside my little portable sandbox, my kingdom with the palace and the tree lined avenue that goes to the palace and then all the little things around the palace, the landscaping and the whole scene that's in the little red wagon, and it was magic.

SVV: What's your studio practice like, do you work every day, or set aside certain days to work?

TW: I'm supposed to work every day, that's my practice and I sometimes fail at my practice.

SVV: How do you find balancing your academic and artistic and leisure life?

TW: My artistic and academic life fit in the same studio. So my studio is portable like Abraham Lincoln when they ask where's your studio I go right beneath my head.

SVV: When working on a piece do you just lock yourself in for hours on end?

TW: Good idea, no, the piece evolves over a considerable course of time. I'm not necessarily interested in a single piece representing the work but each piece is an investigation or a document of where I'm trying to get to with the project.

SVV: Are there ever times where you just don't know what do next, when you're totally uninspired?

TW: Oh yea sure. That's very unprofessional.

SVV: And how do you approach this problem?

TW: I have a little talk with myself and say that's unprofessional, professionals work all the time so get it together and get out there and you know, let's see some work for today. There have been times in my recent history where I'm recovering from cancer and I'm physically unable to do any kind of work like that except for the fact that I keep my notebooks going and that practice is a daily journal and so the demand is that I write and draw in that book every day.

Butohdrawing by a painted green ice wash over the whole background as the beginning point and

SVV: Butohdrawing. Can you talk about that? What's the aim there?

TW: Butohdrawing is first of all, one word. Butohdrawing.com, Butohdrawing.blogspot.com, and that originated probably with my wagon with the sandcastle in there, my little empire, and it's still going on with me till the end of my life. What this project intends to do is link or interface Eastern and Western cultured through, with the human being with vision, and motion, the video camera, and the computer to investigate ways of drawing virtual space.

SVV: Where do you draw your inspiration for your butohdrawing pieces?

TW: Primarily from the martial arts.

SVV: Any in particular?

TW: The art of archer, Japanese art of archer would be my best example of one of the martial arts that has influenced me all along in this, with making these connections with digital information and real time peripheral experience.

SVV: In your blog, you say that you were trained as a painter but have "moved on" to Butohdrawing. Does this mean you have moved on and no longer engage in traditional or formal painting?

TW: There may come time when again I do find a need to create a painting but I have too many paintings already and nobody seems to want to buy these old paintings. They're probably quite good, in fact I'd like to put them all in the shredder and you know get rid of them, but my people won't let me do that. And so....I do paint a bit, but the painting happens in my journal and also on my pages, I write on actually pages that I call "textos", one was, you might have seen

it in the recent faculty exhibition. It's a very long, complicated story about these pieces, but there is often, let's say a painted green tea wash over the whole background as the beginning point and then there can be some very modest color introduced into these "probably classified as drawings more than paintings."

SVV: With your piece "Looking through the frame," what were you trying to achieve?

TW: When I have been the student of Japanese Butoh masters, I had the great opportunity to be able to step through the mirror, to know about the reality I have known pretty much all my life, here in the present now, to be able then to gaze into the mirror and to transport myself through the mirror into a kind of virtual space.

Just Curious

SVV: Just for curiosity's sake, if you didn't become an artist, what do you think you would've done? Where would you have ended up?

TW: Um, I don't know. First thing that jumps to my mind would be I would have been a gardener. Maybe a little farmer or something. Yea.

SVV: Well thank you for your time.

TW: You're welcome.

Impressions

With his steadfast work ethic, Tom is a model individual, not just as a creative mind but also as a driven professional. Whenever I feel uninspired or indulgent to an unproductive spirit, I always remember that professionals work all the time. No excuses.