



Smithsonian
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Oral history interview with Tyrone Weedon
and Stefan Bauschmid, 2020 August 10

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Tyrone Weedon and Stefan Bauschmid on August 10, 2020. The interview took place from Weedon's home in Baltimore and Bauschmid's home in Washington, D.C., and was conducted by Ben Gillespie for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's Pandemic Oral History Project.

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

BEN GILLESPIE: This is Ben Gillespie, interviewing Tyrone Weedon, an artist at Make Studio at his home in Baltimore, and Stefan Bauschmid, Associate Director of Make Studio at his home in Washington, D.C. It is August 10th, 2020, and this is the Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Art Pandemic Project.

Tyrone, could you tell me a little bit about how your work and life have changed since March of this year?

TYRONE WEEDON: Uh, well, um, I remember the last time I go to Make Studio that, um, I did finish up the Toni—Toni Morrison piece, and I did during the, uh, the fashion show. And then, um, going to Massanutten with my family, uh, for my late mother's birthday. And then, came back from Massanutten, the pandemic begins, and my office, uh, at my job, is closed, but, um, I still contact with my boss. And, uh, staying home, it was—it's a little stressful. It's—it's hard sometimes. But I've got to learn to think positive.

BEN GILLESPIE: Do you find that you have more time for art at home? Or is that, um—how are you occupying your time at home?

TYRONE WEEDON: Well, it takes a—a lot to get used to it. And, um, I've been doing a lot of art at home. I've been, uh, drawing, just reading books, watching movies, uh, and everything.

BEN GILLESPIE: Have you found something especially compelling in—in 2020? Is there a—a subject matter that you've gravitated to?

TYRONE WEEDON: Well, mine's right now, for doing some Black Lives Matter pieces. I tried to draw all the victims that was, um, killed or shot by police officers. And, um, put everything on a sketch book. I tried to put them, as many as I can. I did use a big piece on the—on the artwork.

BEN GILLESPIE: Could you tell me a little bit about the collaboration, um, you made with Melanie Sanderson?

TYRONE WEEDON: Melanie Sandersons [sic]? Oh, man, I'm—I'm sorry. I for—I totally forgot. Could you, um, ask, um—

BEN GILLESPIE: The art therapy student at, um, at Notre Dame Maryland? We could ask Stefan about that, too.

TYRONE WEEDON: Yeah, you can ask Stefan. Yes.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: So—so, I think, you know, um, I think it was about the—the collaboration with other artists. I think Iragi may have been part of it. And it was—I think it was a—you may have been in touch or worked on it with an art therapy student.

TYRONE WEEDON: Okay.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Which—that was her name. And so, you know, I think you were interviewed for a—a quote. Do you remember any of that? It would have been in the last few months. And then, your quote was being used in, like, a video. And then, like, I think Iragi made a—made a comment, and a couple of other folks. So that was—that's what you're being asked about. It was basically—I mean, that was sort of a collaboration.

BEN GILLESPIE : Mm-hmm [affirmative].

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Yeah.

TYRONE WEEDON: Oh, okay.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Was there anything that you sort of remember about that that, sort of, stood out to you?

TYRONE WEEDON: The quote.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Well, just, you know, talking to that art therapy student about it? Like, working on that collaboration, is there anything that you remember? That—that you enjoyed? Or that meant—that was meaningful to you?

TYRONE WEEDON: Um, I actually enjoy—it's very therapeutic.

[00:04:55]

BEN GILLESPIE: Um, well, Tyrone, as you're—as you're reading and working at home, um, has—what's been your favorite thing that you've read? Or what is, maybe, you feel, the most engaged during this time?

TYRONE WEEDON: Um, I watch, uh, Black documentaries about—about, um, police brutality, including, uh, *16 Shots*. And, uh, we are understanding about Black Lives Matter. But right now, um, I focus on the book called, *How to Be an Antiracist*. Um, and everything.

BEN GILLESPIE: Well, what do you miss the most about your pre-quarantine life?

TYRONE WEEDON: Oh, to be honest, I totally miss having conversations with—with everybody. I miss, um, having lunch together with, uh, with the artists. And doing so much hard work. But—but it's kind of, really, depressing and sad. Well, it's a good thing that—having a conversation, uh, with my family in the phone number. But this is my second time for using Zoom since, uh, having conversation with, uh, with people.

BEN GILLESPIE: And how are you staying in touch with your family, friends, colleagues, other artists you've worked with? Uh, is it mostly through Zoom?

TYRONE WEEDON: Yeah, I—I do a conversation with, uh, my family by phone calls. And doing some texts, uh, to, um, my colleagues.

BEN GILLESPIE: Yeah, that's a very different connection, though, versus seeing someone in person.

TYRONE WEEDON: Yeah.

BEN GILLESPIE: Um, well, Stefan, I'd like to ask you a little bit about Make Studio. Could you tell me about the—the challenges that Make Studio has faced during the pandemic?

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Sure. So, um, one of the main, so the main challenge, sort of, right off the bat was how can we stay in touch with, you know, with our 30-some artists? Um, uh, and we're still kind of working out challenges with—with a few of them, you know, who are limited with their internet access and that—that sort of thing. Um, basically, we spent the first few weeks, uh, of the shutdown working on retooling what we offer the artists.

Um, and so, I think in April, we basically had, sort of, a skeleton that allowed us to—to reconnect, with everybody who was interested, via Zoom. So, we—we kind of started—you know, and it's obviously not the same as a regular studio session where, um, I think, the nature is—was—is—was different. And—and just, like, a normal studio day at Make Studios is usually six hours. So, when we started with those sessions, we basically worked on two and a half hours. Um, and kind of getting every—helping everybody get back into the groove. So, that was—that was the one side.

The other one was to, basically, work on ways to provide the artists with materials and supplies that they needed. So, one of my colleagues, Terri [Ball], actually, is on an ongoing basis, taking orders and requests from everybody. The, uh, text message or email, um—I think, in—in Tyrone's case, since—Tyrone has been a little bit apprehensive about Zoom, but he's getting

into the groove, which I'm very happy about. So, I think he's gonna try and have regular art check-ins with me, at least. Um, but Terri has—has been supplying him with, uh, reference images, if I'm correct. Right, Tyrone?

TYRONE WEEDON: True.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Yeah. So, uh, basically, I think you have been sending Terri images that she is then going to print out for you on—on our studio color printer, because that's how you like to work.

[00:10:07]

Like, you like to have printed out visual references for your—for your art.

TYRONE WEEDON: Yes.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Um, and especially since you work a lot with—with portraiture, so uh—uh, there was a lot of ground to tackle. Especially with the nature of the pieces that you just mentioned. Like, you know, pieces around Black Lives Matter. You know, remembering, you know—

TYRONE WEEDON: Yes.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: —people like—like George Floyd and—and so forth.

TYRONE WEEDON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: And you—you have shared with me some of the initial sketches via text.

TYRONE WEEDON: Yes.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Which is how we've been staying in touch. So, yeah, we're using every channel at Make Studio that we can to—to stay connected with the artists who may not regularly go on Zoom. And that's been working pretty well, like everybody's pretty much has a cell phone or, you know, is on email.

TYRONE WEEDON: Or even a laptop.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Oh, yeah. And we—that's also been a way for us to actually collect art that has been finished. Um, because we're still adding new artwork, uh, to our online shops. Um, and it's been, you know, given that we haven't had any traditional, uh, exhibition opportunities, uh, we've been selling art regularly since—since March, basically. Uh, which has been encouraging. Um, so that's it, basically, for the—for the artists, in terms of just keeping something that resembles studio activities going.

Uh, the other piece is, at the moment, just—just moving forward with exhibitions. Um, we have since—since we had to, um, stop our regular operations, we've had since mounted three exhibitions. Uh, two of them were completely online. Tyrone was actually one artist featured in um, in a two artist show with a—a local artist who—excl—who, basically, makes art with makeup paint, um. And that's been pretty great. Um—

TYRONE WEEDON: Her name's Gloria.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Yeah. And, uh, currently still, we've had, uh—the show is coming down, I think, at the end of the week, of—of five Make Studio artists—women artists who were—who teamed up, all, you know, remotely, through online, uh, sessions on Zoom, with five, um, women artists that were Sondheim applicants. And so—so, they worked on art collaborations around voting, and, like, you know, the anniversaries of—of women's suffrage, but also, the Americans with Disabilities Act. And—and that's been, to me, really gratifying, to see that happen. Just how, you know, it's still possible to—to work on art projects and, maybe, try to have at least a small physical portion thereof. Um, but that exhibition has been—has getting local attention, which was really nice to see.

Um, and at the moment, um, we're already planning our next invitational, um, show, *Cordially Invited*, which—where we feature art by, uh, progressive art studios, such as Make Studio, that—uh, nationally and internationally. And so, this—we've had, um, an online component of that in previous editions, and so, this year, I think that may be a very limited physical portion for

domestic programs, but the majority of it will also be online. Um, and so, yeah, we're—we're making—basically making the best we can. Uh, we're, you know, um, working on, sort of, limiting the financial damage, uh, and—and surviving as a non-profit. Um, but so far, we've—we've been managing pretty well, I would say.

BEN GILLESPIE: That's wonderful. Uh, could you tell me a little bit—have you noticed that artists have shifted mediums or subject matter over the course of 2020?

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Um, it's been—it's—it differs from artist to artist. Uh, because everybody has a different workflow, and it's—it's a different—it's—it's different for me to, you know, to respond to their workflow.

[00:15:00]

Or to, in some cases, keep them motivated. Because you have, you know, I—with certain folks, um, I have to think about, you know, managing fatigue, for example, like, midday fatigue, and things like that. I mean, that's obviously easier to do in person than—than virtually. But, uh, with one artist in particular, we kind of, do a lot of—I don't want to use the term stream of consciousness. But I, basically, come up with—with ideas based around things that—that interest him at the—at any given moment. And we actually have a back channel that we use for that, with—with texting images back and forth, while we're on a Zoom call, because this—we usually have between like, two and six artists on—on any one session. Um, so that's—that's, like, one example.

Another one is, uh, where one artist is coming up with all these really interesting, uh, theme mashups, as he calls it. So, we've had things—we—there was a mashup project around, um, *Grease* and *Hairspray*, as the—the musicals theme, sort of, mixed together.

Another one, currently, is, um, *Dr. Who* and the next—the upcoming third *Bill and Ted* movie. Um, so, I think, for—for the most part, I would say everybody is kind of sticking with—with their preferences. Um, of course, the—the virus is—is a subject matter, and it has come up in—in certain pieces. Um, but I think, for the—for the most part, it is possible, which is something that—that I'm very interested in. Like, I'm, you know, even with these challenges that we're having at the moment, I'm—I'm trying not to, just sort of, fall back into the mode of teacher and teaching a class. Because really, that's not what the—what a regular studio day looks like. Like, everybody makes their own subject matter choices, and then I, as one of the staff, is basically there to—to provide support as needed. And so, I mean, that's sort of one of my main motivations to, kind of, keep that going as—as best as possible.

BEN GILLESPIE: Okay. And, Tyrone, I wanted to ask a little bit—do you—how—can you envision how your work might change as you're reading *How to Be an Antiracist* and, um, continuing under quarantine conditions? Do you feel, um—what sort of subject matter comes from that for you?

TYRONE WEEDON: Um, my focus on to be a—a better person. That's something that I'm working on. Treating people with respect. Learn how to appreciate life as it is. That's what I'm doing.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: I have a quick question for—for Tyrone, because, I think, it would—that's sort of a—a good question to have. Because over the years, we've been working on, you know, kind of, helping you come out of your shell a little bit more. Like, you know, kind of, taking a step forward in—in—in public, which is what we're doing right now.

TYRONE WEEDON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: But what would be interesting to me, Tyrone, is, I'm wondering, do you think that once—once everything's, sort of, back to normal, and we can interact, do you see yourself coming—being a little more forward with others? Or do you think you're just, kind of, gonna continue to be a little more reserved?

TYRONE WEEDON: A little reserved.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Okay.

TYRONE WEEDON: That's how I'd put it.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Yeah.

TYRONE WEEDON: And I have to learn how to come out of my comfort zone in Zoom, that I'm doing right now.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Yes. It's been a process, but, uh—we're in the middle of that process, and it's happening.

BEN GILLESPIE: Well, I'm very happy to be part of that process. And so, by way of wrapping up, I'd like to ask both of you. What are your hopes for the future for Make Studio, going forward from this moment, in 2020 and beyond?

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: You go first, Tyrone.

TYRONE WEEDON: Um, sure. Um, learn from the past, um.

[00:19:58]

Learn something from the pandemic about how you grow, how you, um, communicate with your family members. And mental health is very important. Uh, take your skills to a whole new level. And most importantly, be yourself. And also, love yourself. That's it.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: That was pretty great. I think it—it touches on a lot of things that I was going to say. Um, as one of the—the founders of Make Studio, I—it—it was sort of—I sometimes think back, because we just, we celebrated our 10th anniversary just a few weeks, uh, before we had to close down. Uh, with a fashion show that Tyrone had mentioned. And that was—everything was just really great. Everybody had a great time, and then we had, what? A couple more weeks after that? And then, it was time to close down. So, I think, my hopes are that, uh, we will emerge of this, um, stronger and better than we were before.

TYRONE WEEDON: True.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Um, and I think that, you know, uh, I think that we—we will be able to value our friendships and acquaintances that we've made through Make Studio. I think, in a—I think there will be a new dimension to that, I would hope. Um, yeah, I think those are my—those are my hopes to—to make that happen, or to, kind of, yeah, return with the same force that we—we had before. Because I mean—here, talking to the artists, that's what most of them, most of us, really wish for right now.

BEN GILLESPIE: Well, thank you very much for speaking with me. Always happy to—to hear about the good things in Charm City. Um, yeah, and that concludes our session today.

STEFAN BAUSCHMID: Great. This has been fantastic. Thank you so much.

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