

Talking Art Worlds with Rex Hausmann

Cory: Hey there everybody, it's Cory with The Abundant Artist, and I am excited to broadcast with you today and talk with Rex Hausmann. Rex lives and works as a full time artist in San Antonio and New York City. He's broadcasting today from Brooklyn, is that right Rex?

Rex: It's true!

Cory: Yep. He currently works in his family's warehouses that have been transformed as the- is it Hausmann or "House-men?"

Rex: "House-men."

Cory: The Hausmann Millworks: A Creative Community. So Hausmann studied business and art at the University of Texas at San Antonio, and then Baylor University and then transferred on a scholarship to Savannah College of Art and Design where he earned a BFA in painting. In Atlanta, Hausmann studied under international artists Sandy Skoglund and Patrick Doherty, he's worked on projects both nationally and internationally, and has shown and lectured globally. His work on large projects often revolving around identities found in communal and domestic contexts, tracing their connections to religion and history. You can find more about Rex on his Facebook or over on his gallery website, which you can find, there's two of them, they're [hausmannmillworks](#) and the other one is darn it, I didn't have it in my notes. So I'm excited to have you on today, Rex, I spent a bunch of time last week looking at your website and your art, and listening to interviews you've done with other people and you know, you're all over the place. You're a well-publicized artist.

Rex: Thanks man, I try!

Cory: I appreciate you taking the time to be here, one of the things that you've talked about with your art a lot, your career, is grow where you are. And now you live primarily in San Antonio, but you spend a lot of time in New York. So what does it mean for you to grow where you are?

Rex: We have on the outside of our family buildings "Grow Where You're Planted" or "Grow Where You Are". I just had a dinner last night with a guy named Felix where it was just being. And what's interesting about kind of that concept is I was told a lot early on, you know, you need to move to New York, you need to move to L.A., you need to move to New York, you need to move to L.A. and the reality was I just didn't have money to do it, and I just said well everybody keeps telling me to go away, like why don't I just work here? And it was really just about kind of that philosophy of showing up every day and doing the best you can with everything you can do. And that really hasn't changed and Don and I were just transporting paintings from his studio to a storage unit this morning, and last night I had dinner with a director who is on a national level who I was meeting with in 2006 at the very beginning. And we walked around in Tribeca and met at the Odeon and had drinks and dinner or just BSing about how cool life can be, and right now I'm accepting a residency at the Sheen foundation in April and May where I'll be creating a whole new body of work. But I've been making that trip for the past 11 years. 10, 11 years. It really is kind of a network of friends and good intentions and just trying your best. So to grow

where you're planted, it is more of a philosophy than it is just like a catch phrase that came up, you know, in some witty board meeting or something. And I think you grow with sincerity and you grow to the best of your abilities, kind of everything else falls in line.

Cory: Yeah, I love that. I, when I was in college I went to theatre school, and all of my classmates were planning on moving to New York and I was lucky enough to be in a show with a bunch of New York actors, and they all talked about like, we kind of got the inside scoop on how expensive it is and what life is like and all that stuff, and I thought why would I do that? Why wouldn't I just go somewhere cheaper and start building my career there? And if it takes me to New York, great! So that's what I ended up doing, is I- we moved to Portland, Oregon which was a lot cheaper than New York City and now Portland's all cool and all the New York people are moving here. So whatever. But New York is great and I go there a few times a year, so it is interesting to see how you can grow a career locally where you are.

Rex: Well I think just like New York will always be New York, I was just- telling Don about this all the time. He is a full-time New York artists, and it's just the- this place is just, there's such an energy here that's insane, you know? I mean it's just radically different than anywhere else in the world, really. Cause I've been in Hong Kong, I've been in Beijing and all over the place but in New York it just is this own little deal. But in your local community if you're really rooted to that, that becomes a big deal. And so Felix... we were talking about this last night, like San Antonio's its own little epicenter of its own little culture, and it loves it. And it's quirky and it's weird and it's awesome. And I fully embrace that, you know? But I don't, I don't think you should limit yourself to only that, you should always push yourself to do more, as much as you can within reason. And that's why I've always been making the trip to New York. There was about a three period hiatus with graduate school and some other stuff that kind of kept me, but when I was talking with my mom yesterday on the phone while I'm up here and she's like "Honey, go back up there again!" like "You're always so happy when you're up there!" But I'm happy because I'm rooted to where I'm from there, and I'm rooted from here. Does that make sense, you know?

Cory: Yeah, it does. It totally does. I have so many friends from- both artists that I know from The Abundant Artist and then my friends from undergrad, in New York. I love going out there and feeling the energy and then I love coming home and being comfortable. Yeah.

Rex: Yeah, it's that constant back and forth.

Cory: Yeah. So you've got this really, like you talked about San Antonio culture, you are really deeply involved in the San Antonio culture there, you've got a series of warehouses, the Hausmann Millworks, so just tell us a little bit about what that is and what happens there.

Rex: Well the Millworks is a large manufacturing facility that was my dad's, he did architecture with my mom for about thirty five years. And they did stuff as interesting as intricate as the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC, the Central Public Library in downtown San Antonio, and a number of attorney's offices including like the capital, I mean they did all the judge's chambers. And so I grew up in an environment of a very working class kind of industry, and my brother and I were pushing brooms when were ten and eleven for a dollar an hour. And so, I mean we learned how to work really really hard, early on. And just being in and around kind of

that environment of a small business, teaches you a lot more than any education can teach you, it's like the education of life, right?

And so my dad started renting, actually, with a friend, at a school, and it just grew and grew and grew. And then for about thirty years the company, and then there was a time of transition where we said oh- I think what's interesting is actually in failures, or in the pursuit of something you're dreaming, something else comes up and you just have to be sharp enough to pick up on it. And so I still remember when we started them all, I asked my dad- I don't want to turn on the water or the electricity, and I just kind of want to have that as my studio, I'm paying rent right now every month and insurance, and it's just killing me, you know? I'm doing all this work and doing all this stuff, and it's fine, but getting the ball moving, what about the old space in the back? And so I remember this story about Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. Robert Rauschenberg was a really famous New York painter as you know, and Leo Castelli was visiting his studio, and he said "Hey, who's that?" and he said "That's my friend Jasper."

And as I was kind of, you know, running the gallery in Boerne, everybody knew that I was doing things, and then moved into downtown San Antonio and all the connections that I had made from just doing when I was in a geographic location that was close to the downtown center, everybody already knew who I was and what I was doing, and then they just started to visit. And so I remember I would have David in the studio next to mine, and we started with two people, and then he started to meet the same people that I would meet, and then some of my other friends, Russel Stevenson and Patrick Wen and Kyle Martin and David, we all got together and we just started throwing shows out there. Like in a small town, not nowhere, we called it the middle of somewhere, like Mason, Texas. And so we just started building this energy, you know?

And then my family started to get involved, and we started to go okay, well you can have the space over there by that pylon to that belt grinder, you know, this guy named James, and then another person came in named John, hey man, can I have that little office over there? We're like yeah sure, go for it. And we were able to turn on the water, so we had running water, that was a pretty big deal. And then we turned on the electricity, you know, it was like alright! We can do this! And it became this big, I don't know how to- very organic, man. Like I was moving all the machines and making space for artists, and then my dad said "you know, I could build some walls..." and we had never really thought of that before, we just kind of used the old existing closets and stuff. And my dad started to use his engineering abilities and started like designing these little studios, and so it started to notice like people really needed space! Like they just needed space. And the sense of community or someone that was in the same trenches, so to speak, as they were. And I mean, I'm an artist, I still spend about 75% of my time on my art, and painting and calls and shows, and that just grew and grew and grew, and my mom started to bring her love of education, love of nurturing people. And she started a little thing called PAVE, which means People Access Vision and Encouragement, and we started to invite different directors to come by the studio to just talk with people. Like how do you put together a portfolio? How do you build a website? How do you meet people, you know? Like how do you- we just had a thing at the studio called how do you take someone to lunch? And we're not really like a school or a nonprofit or anything, I mean we're just studios. But we have all these little things that [unintelligible]. I guess the month, two months, something that we were very conscious about, well what would I want to hear? You know, or it helps someone. What would

be like a little luncheon we could do? And so I found that with that knack of like caring, it really grew something very cool. And so that's- that's it in a nutshell. And we've been doing it for ten years now. It's really wonderful to be a part of.

Cory: I love that so much. We had, a couple of years ago we had an artist on the podcast named Stephen Goldsmith, who kind of a similar story, he just needed some studio space, so he and- it wasn't family, but a bunch of other artists got together and found a rundown old building in downtown Salt Lake City, and turned it into sculpture spaces, and they all lived in the- they lived in the floor above. They eventually turned it into apartments and stuff, but initially it was just crashing in an empty building that they bought. And it's a great story, you should go back and, when we put the show notes up I'll put a [link](#) back to Stephen Goldsmith's article, but he's- that experience of going from buying an empty building and turning it into something, he eventually ended up being the city planner for Salt Lake City for the 2002 Olympics. And now he's an emeritus professor at the University of Utah architecture department.

Rex: Oh, that's fantastic.

Cory: So maybe, I don't know where this will go for you and your family and the Millworks, but I love seeing artists make things happen in their communities like this. It's something that for whatever reason, a lot of artists are really drawn to that and that energy of change and moving a city around meshes really well with the energy of an artist.

Rex: I think the main thing that we've found, and it's become like kind of a double-edged sword because you deal with so many people, right? So there's a lot of- we keep drama pretty much to a minimum which is wonderful, our studios are fabulous people, but there's just a lot of people, you know? Like, and whenever you deal with a lot of people there's a lot of "stuff". And I think at the core of what my family and I believe, and I really have to stress it really is a family effort, and it's a studio effort, so we really see each individual as an individual. Some need more attention than others, you know? And we try to honor like whatever stage you're at in life, that's what we try to honor, like some artists are just like I just ... I'm happy there are other artists around me. There's not like a chop shop and a, you know, tattoo parlor, and you know a bar and a you know, like a quilting thing next to you know, a storage facility. You see what I mean? Like there's a very conscious- no, we don't rent to these people, yes we rent to these people, we have a creative group of people that's really what we click here. And sometimes you have to learn to say no, just because you're saying well that's really not a fit for this community. There are other communities. I remember specifically someone had a studio with us and left, and he said it's been thirteen months that I've been here and I've only ever seen 2 people period, in thirteen months. Whereas at the Mill we try to create a very conducive, you're going to see people every day. Whether you like it or not, there are going to be people there. What I think is funny, is people, they kind of make a beeline to their studio, but they'll like wave at someone, and that's all they want. But just that being there, with a Keurig in the front, and we do some gallery stuff, I think our main core is that we're studios and we care, but we care within reason, you know? Like we're not in the business of building careers, that's your job. Our job is to have four white walls with a door, but a group of people who care about you. You know? And I've found that that intention and that real heart of the thing has grown it. And I'd like to say that just like, it's the constant daily effort that makes that possible. Does that make sense? It's

not like the one board meeting or any monthly meeting that makes this happen. No, it's every day, you know? And adjusting every day. So, and we could talk about the mill for three hours, man. I mean that thing is a beast.

Cory: I love it. I love how excited you are about it, everybody should definitely go check that out. And we'll have links up in the show notes and everything. I want to give a shout out to the people who are watching us live- a couple of comments from Chris and Nicolette Yates, saying that they love the live sessions that we're doing and saying hi from Kentucky and North Carolina. So thanks ya'll for listening. Yeah. In our- so we had some back and forth via email, between when I first introduced myself to you and you agreed to come on, and one of the things you mentioned you know artists get into selling their art for different reasons. They get into making art for different reasons. And one of the things that came up when you were talking about that in the email was you emphasize that artists need to get into discerning shows. Shows that actually have a juried process. And I want to talk a little bit about that and ask you what you mean about or rather why you think that is important. Why do you think it's important for artists to get into these shows?

Rex: Well I think- let's talk about what stage of your career you're in, and what age you are. And so let's talk about those two things first. I don't mean age bracket for art, I mean listen. There's not going to be a prodigy that's fifteen years old that shows at the Pompidou you know, I mean that's just. I mean maybe it'll happen. But-

Cory: Never say never.

Rex: Yeah, I mean never say never. You know. Look at Duchamp and the urinal. So I mean, I think that [unintelligible] are important. And I think when we talk about discerning shows, that isn't just the Whitney Biennial, that isn't just Site Santa Fe, or Art Basel Miami Beach and all the commercial stuff. And that's not just one museum show. I think it's kind of an aggregate of any and all. And the thing to understand is there's not just the art world as in one art world, there are art worlds. As in plural. So there's like the western art world. And then there's the contemporary art world. And then there's the design art world. And then there's the art world of you know, the dude on the river walk doing portraits. And then there's like the classical art world. And then there's like the atelier art world. There's all these art worlds. And very specific, like, dos and don'ts, where'd you go to school, do you talk about Vermeer, or do you talk about ... or do you talk about Kehinde Wiley? You know like those are all very different conversations. And they're happening at the same time.

Cory: So a question that's coming up from our live audience, Rex, is Sara O'Connor is saying "I've been looking for some heavy hitting shows," and I happen to know a little bit about her- she is an up and coming artist, she's doing a lot of outdoor shows right now, and doing pretty well at these outdoor shows. But she's looking to sort of level up and get to some shows that where she can, her art can be sold at a price that is you know, more respectable and sort of at the next level of her career. How- if you're in a local town somewhere in the country, you know, how would you recommend figuring out which of these big art shows to go to?

Rex: I would say what kind of work do you make? You know, like you're not going to go to Art Basel Miami Beach if you're a portrait painter. I mean you may, but you would be better going to

Santa Fe. You know what I mean? Or Taos, New Mexico. If you're a portrait painter. Like an old school you know, unless you like Lucian Freud a lot. Well then you definitely gonna go check out the Lucian Freud shows. Or like Chuck Close. You could say that Chuck Close is a portrait painter. He's really not. He called the portrait the landscape. And he's a highly critical very Yale, very driven contemporary artist. And it went back to like the roots of him forgetting faces cause he has some kind of mental thing that he doesn't remember people's names, like literally.

So what I would say to that is know your marketplace, does that make sense? Like know the different brackets of like a five hundred dollar painting is different from a \$5000 painting is different than a \$10,000 painting is different than a \$50,000 painting is different from a \$250,000 painting. Those are all completely different art worlds. And you can wind your way through those, which is fine, but know that there isn't a quick race to this whole thing. It's really a lifelong, very committed, very specific track. And I mean like the track, let me explain this a little bit- a chief curator named Rene Barilleaux told me something once, I was lecturing at a college and I said "Rene, what would you say to young artists?" And he said "Rex, your career is like a train track with multiple stops along the way. On the stops you may dabble." For instance- I started in installation art. Why? Cause I had just finished graduate school, the economy tanked, nobody wanted to buy anything, and a critic named Robert Storr said it's a really good time to be an installation artist. At the same time I had been coming up to New York and seeing stuff by- well one particular show called [unintelligible] which started in Ballroom Marfa, moved to Miami Beach, and then those guys came up to New York and started doing some really crazy installations in the lower east side, and I really liked it. I thought it was interesting. So I spent a lot of time doing installation work.

I met some other artists along the way, Michele Carollo which I just met with a couple days ago, the new museum, Franklin Evans who's doing some really amazing stuff if you're into that, very specific people doing very specific things. But I found along the way that I'm really more of a painter. And I started to focus more and more shifting away from installation more to like static paintings and series. And I have a point in all this, I'm trying to answer your question but it's more of a roundabout way, you know what I mean? Does this make any sense?

Cory: Yeah, what I'm hearing you say is if you want to find a show that's a good fit for you, you need to get to know who's showing where and sort of pay attention to what's going on in the art world.

Rex: Yeah, I mean that's- pay attention and ask questions. Go to a museum. Show up to an opening. It doesn't matter if you're in Kansas City, the Kemper is amazing. If you're in Houston, the Contemporary Art Museum of Houston is really great. A lady named Valerie ran that for a long time, now she's somewhere else, but they were very accessible if you show that you are doing what you need to be doing as an artist and you're learning. Like just keep learning I guess would be my answer.

Cory: Yeah. We will, in the show notes for this episode, we have a list of some of the bigger shows, we'll see if we can publish that and we have a couple of other resources for finding shows so we'll publish those in the show notes. Just for those that are listening later.

Rex: And I want to add an aside to that because it's really important that you know the difference between Art in America and ARTnews. And Hi-Fructose. Those are all very different, you know what I mean? Like Artforum is different than Cabinet is different than ARTnews is different than Art in America is different than-

Cory: Hyperallergic, whatever.

Rex: Yeah, there's a million of 'em. So knowing that I'm- like I said a very hardcore representational painter, I'm not going to send my images in to you know, ARTnews or Artforum. I mean unless it fits in that context like Chuck Close or something like that, you know? Like you just- you've only got so much energy. Invest it well, you know?

Cory: Yep, yep. So let's talk a little bit about your art career, so you sell in New York and San Antonio, do you- you sell primarily through art galleries, right?

Rex: Well, a little bit of all. I would say that the gallerists that I deal with I've known for a long time, and they're very cool people that I really see eye to eye with. And I've known them for a long time, I sell a lot out of my studio as well. And I sell to a collector base that I've been able to build that are pretty discerning about what they buy, you know? And there's a lot of trust that goes in there, meaning they met you seven years ago but it took them seven years to make a decision and then finally when they did, they bought like four. You see what I mean? And so like, I think the key about the whole business end of this thing is that you do everything you can with integrity, do the best you can to like a base of people that believe in your vision, that could be a gallerist, that could be a museum director, that could be a museum curator. And you're very clear with your vision. Or at least you're trying to be clear with your vision, you know what I mean? You're not gonna give like bullet points of this is what I want to do and this is how I'm gonna do it, and you know this is when it's gonna happen. That's not really realistic.

Cory: It doesn't really work that way.

Rex: No, it's more like this is what I'm on the way to doing, this is what I'm trying to do, and you know. And if you do that long enough and over enough time, people have a way of really trusting what you're trying to do based on what you've done in the past. You know? But for instance one of my big breaks was the McNay Museum of Art, and I'd been speaking with their chief curator for going on nine years. And I didn't even know he really liked my work, quite frankly, because I just didn't know. And then out of left field comes in my email box and I'm like you've got to be kidding me! You know, this is awesome! But he's known me for a long time. And then saw my shows kind of go from you know, self-curated fun shows to some more seriously like, you know, showing in a little museum and then showing in a little bigger museum and then doing some projects in New York or whatever. And then finally like it hit the right place right time, and it was like yeah Rex, go for it. And it was great. So that's really what I encourage people is like keep... you know, don't bug people, like don't email them weekly, but when you have something to say, tell them! You know?

Cory: Yeah, interesting. So did you- was it intentional for you to sort of go the traditional gallery route and work through these museums and these high- bigger named things? Or did it just sort of happen organically? Cause there's a lot of artists out there who are making a living just selling

you know out of their studios and they're not showing in museums and they've never shown in a gallery, you know, how did your career go this way as opposed to the other way?

Rex: Dude, I started in coffee shops, man! For real! Like I was young and I just was like you know, I had these old truck paintings and I want to show them at a restaurant, and I remember I was doing hard core representational painting of old trucks based on my granddad, and they were very kind of country western kind of things, but just because I didn't know much about, you know, just painting what's in front of me. I didn't know about the whole like conversation quote unquote of art, if you know what I mean.

Cory: Uh huh- when you say conversation of art what do you mean by that? Because I think if you didn't go through the BFA/MFA route you may not know what that means. Just explain to our audience what that means.

Rex: Well the conversation of art is like where we're at right now. If you're a contemporary artist quote unquote, the only thing that means is you're making art now. Like, contemporary doesn't mean like a movement. That just means you're alive making stuff. I think people attribute contemporary to like a puffball on a string suspended by a cinder block, like painted in feathers or something. You know what I mean? They think that's just- that's contemporary.

Cory: Is that a real thing or did you just make that up?

Rex: No I made that up. But go to the Whitney Biennial, you'll see it. But I think curiosity is what really got me into the art history thing. And questioning, like I went to art school, started as a business major but then switched to art and went from a 2.75 to a 4.0 because it just fascinated me. All these artists, all these movements, all these languages. And I started going up to the MET, you know, and I'd see a painting at the Metropolitan. And then I'd go to a library and I'd read about it. And so you do that over a longer period of time, you're going to start going down the rabbit hole, you know? Like you're going to start going okay Mondrian doesn't really do it for me anymore. He'd go with that. Or okay Picasso's great, but you know who's this guy? And you know who's Anish Kapoor? He's cool or who's Anson Kiefer, that's neat. And you know the more you start to like refine I guess your taste, that's the art world. You're gonna burrow in and you're gonna see some weird stuff and you're gonna talk with the living artist that made it, probably doesn't speak that much English but you like his stuff and he gives you a catalog, see what I mean? So there's really this like little world within a world that's grappling with itself trying to figure out how is this relevant to today? Or you can just make stuff, you know? Like if you like making paintings of blue dots well then go for it! You know? Like, but if you're putting out a painting of a blue dot [unintelligible] spent most of his career in blue. Know what I mean? Or Matisse had the blue dancers. Or- and actually you find in Matisse referenced the sea of Nice, which they both grew up in, lived in, and it's where the sun, the sky meets the water and becomes all blue. Anyway, aside. That's what I mean by the conversation of art. It's a very refined historical look at why we still make this stuff and have for 3,000 years. If that makes sense.

Cory: Yeah, it totally makes sense. And I can see, like a lot of artists who are like you who do have , who are steeped in art history, you know, you have an understanding of where your art is in context with other artists, and historical movements and even broader cultural conversations.

But some artists don't want to do that. Some artists don't want to have participate in that conversation or they just sort of ignore it.

Rex: That is fine! That is totally cool. You know, like, and I think saying that's important, you know. I think people need to say hey, it's cool if you just like to make bunnies. Right on! Like, paint bunnies all day long. That's awesome, you know. Like if that's your thing. Or if you're like into graffiti art, you just like graffiti. Go for it. You know what I mean? Like do your thing! Whatever your thing is. I think I was having dinner with Felix last night and I said, you know art is just that you have to make stuff. That you just have to. You're not happy if you're not, you know? And I think that's a really really big point, is some people just gotta quit. You know? They don't know why. They just have to. That's the Gee's Bend quilts. And they just happen to turn into this thing that is at the Atlanta High Museum. You know what I mean by that? Like, I think there's artists and makers of all kinds of stuff. So.

Cory: Yeah, so people, people either make art as a form of self-expression or a way of getting something out, or they are making art as a response to something that's happening around them.

Rex: Yeah.

Cory: And one of the things that I saw you talk about in an interview which I jumped on, was you mentioned reading Francis Mallmann's book, and Francis is a chef. And I- he is interviewed for an episode of Chef's Table which is a Netflix documentary, it's amazing, it's like- just food art. It's so gorgeous. And I'd love- I'm curious for you, like where's the connection between things like reading books about food and your art, you know, how does that influence your work?

Rex: I don't think, you know, I mean some people do. Some people think like a painting sits on a wall and that's it. And then there's a history to that. I see art as more like a lived life. It's more like a, it's like a metaphor, you know what I mean? Like, and so when I saw Francis Mallmann's lifestyle, I thought it was very artistic. And speaking of Francis Mallmann, the reason you're watching Francis Mallmann is he was like a three star Michelin chef that's incredibly talented. I think he served like potatoes at like the world's summit on culinary whatever. And he won. You know? And so there's something to Francis that is an ass- I mean, to be quite frank, he's very very full of himself. But it takes a certain person to live on an island by yourself, you know, catch fish and fileting them and then making a dish for people. You know? So I really loved his simplicity of life. And I read his book, the Seven Sacred Fires, mainly because a guy named David Chang referenced him. Again, which I love David Chang by the way, if you've ever been to Momofuku in New York, it's one of my favorite restaurants.

Cory: It's one of the big ones.

Rex: It's brilliant, have you been there?

Cory: I have not but I'm familiar with the place.

Rex: Well anyway, yeah, there's the noodle bar and then there's the Ssäm bar which is like a little step up which is where I go. It's still expensive, but it's not like astronomical, you know? Anyway, I digress. With Francis Mallmann, I just saw a guy that was incredibly talented and then

became very rooted to his regional whatever you know, Patagoni, and he just wanted to share it with people. And I think that sincerity comes through. He's like listen guys, let's just filet a beef cow and put it over a big fire, and you know, make cool awesome meat teaks. But he's not just a dude butchering a cow. He honors that tradition of the gaucho, you know. So he's kind of a combination of a mystic, a poet, and a cook, and a really interesting dude, you know?

Cory: A performance art chef.

Rex: I think the poetry of that is really cool, you know what I mean?

Cory: Yeah. So you talked a little bit before about your work being autobiographical and maybe early on you weren't 100% sure that it was autobiographical, how- for some artists they're afraid to put that level of investment or emotional capital into the work. Did that just occur naturally for you, or were there barriers that you had to push through?

Rex: Yeah, I think again, like that's the way I make work. Not everybody makes work like that. Like, and I want to stress that there's a lot of different ways to make work. And a lot of different reasons to make work. The way I make work is I was actually speaking with a pretty neat curator Friday, at his museum, and I said "Marcus, why is that painting so interesting? I keep looking at it." It's Sorolla, which is Juquin Sorolla, he's a friend of John Singer Sargent, it was said with Sargent that if he was full up on commissions he'd say "Call the Spaniard." You know, Sorolla. "He's as good as I am if not better." And so Sorolla did a painting of his wife, and I've seen this painting probably six times over the past three years. And I keep going back to it. And I said "Marcus, why is that so good?" I mean I'm looking at six portraits that Sorolla did. And they're all good. They're rendered well, but the care of his wife is just phenomenal. Is the reason that I keep doing these autobiographies with my brother, with my mom, with my dad, with myself, and I'm constantly referencing my own understanding of reality. Does that make the paintings better? And he said of course it does. And he said well because you're personally invested into it. You're thinking through it. You're thinking through the painting rather than just painting. Does that make sense? But again that's my process.

Cory: Yeah. So we do you know I talk to a lot of artists who say things like they go into a trance when they paint and they don't think and it just comes out. And I think that there's some validity to that, to you know not getting in your own way when you're painting, but there's also I think a challenge with not putting enough thought into the work or enough emotion into the work. And I'm not sure what that is or where that needs to come from.

Rex: Yeah, I think like a lot of things to say is like a lot of people make work for different reasons. You know? Like a good friend of mine David, he's very specific about why he makes work. It's about the stencil. It's about a story. But it's not really about him, it's about things that he finds interesting. Which inevitably is about himself, but kind of in a roundabout way. Or my friend Don, who you know is right in the next room, his painting is just in a day or two and that's it. But he's got his own processes. He's got his own way of making work. For whatever reason I have to make these huge systems in my mind and I think I go back to the installation work where I say I don't know why I have to make this, I do. And I think that's kind of what happens with figuring out the way that you work. Does that make sense? Because inevitably it's up to you to do it. Because nobody's gonna do it for you. Unless you've got like forty studios. That's

fine too, whatever. You know, like that's like Takashi Murakami, you know, the whole studio systems, you know what I mean? Hang out in Brooklyn in some obscure spaces and figure out life and then.. you know what I mean? It's not better or worse, it just is.

Cory: You mentioned just a second ago that you build systems in your mind before you paint something. What does that mean?

Rex: So- Don's laughing. I have to create these structures, and it's like a movie, right? So I'm comparing Larry Graeber who's a painter in San Antonio and he said "Rex there comes a time when you just accept who you are and you just go forward." You know? And for me, especially the newer series I'm working with the Sheen center, I have to create these hero myths. And I have to create these kind of ... about whatever. There's a beginning, there's an end, there's a cast of characters which are paintings, and then that cast of characters and that narrative may wind on for two or three years, and I really- I mean I write about it, but it's more like disjointed. But at the end of it the paintings come out. And I was talking with Felix last night at the Odeon and I said "Felix, I don't know why I have to build all this stuff, but honestly who cares? It makes great paintings." You know? So as long as the end product is something interesting, that's all that matters. You know? And the way that you spend your time rationalizing that existence, it just makes the paintings more interesting. Some people that'll tell me like you're totally full of it, why do you need to make this, it's a waste of energy. I'm like, well not for me! You know what I mean? For someone else I'm sure it is. But for me, I enjoy it. Other people enjoy it too. So.

Cory: Yeah, that's interesting. So one of our audience just said you're a script writer but instead of writing the words you paint the words. I think that's pretty interesting analogy.

Rex: Yeah! I'm dyslexic, and when I was a kid the Greeks said know thyself, and so in my dyslexia I was told I wouldn't pass the fourth grade. Actually I wasn't told that, my parents were told that. They said well forget that, we're gonna put him in different learning. And so we went to a small private school and an art teacher, Gail Smith who I still talk to today, sat me in a corner and just said you're a studio student. And I've kind of spent the rest of my life in that corner, you know? She figured how to get me out of some other classes so I could take more art, you know? And I think being a scriptwriter I've always wished I was a movie maker. But I don't have the money to do that, and number two I don't have the resources or the know-how. I know how to paint, you know? So cause of my own devices I just paint what I know. I love film, I reference it in my art, artist statements which some people probably don't get, but I love like Michel Gondry he's a French filmmaker who did like Be Kind Rewind, or there's like Wes Anderson, you know The Royal Tenenbaums? Which is one of my favorite movies in the world?

Cory: I love Wes Anderson, yeah.

Rex: Oh my god, fantastic. So much fun to watch. That's actually how I explain my family, we're like The Royal Tenenbaums, just less eccentric.

Cory: Wow. That's awesome.

Rex: I mean we really are, my mom rides horses, my dad designs furniture, my brother plays like ten different instruments. Nuts! You know? And in a good way. But I think that explains a lot.

Cory: That's pretty cool. So you mentioned in an interview that one of your favorite videos is Alexander Calder's performance- circus performance. And if you haven't seen, we'll put a link up to this on YouTube. When I heard you talk about it, I went and looked it up. And it's kind of crazy, cause I didn't know that Calder did anything like this. And I know Calder from his mobiles. And then he has this whole other thing where he made these dolls out of wire and other materials, and they're so cool. So I'm curious, why did that have such a big impact on you?

Rex: Well, I think there's a guy named Peter who lives in Houston that's a teacher at Rice. And we were working on a project in China with them through the UTSA with Doctor Romo and Arturo Herrera, and I helped create the show, and we went over to China and I know these different photographers from Texas. Peter Brown is a very well-known photographer, he and his wife are incredible and their dog Maddy. And Peter came over to my studio to see the Mill and he said "My god, your studio is just like Alexander Calder." And I said "Why?" And he goes [unintelligible] and I said you have got to be kidding me. He said "No. I knew him quite well." And I said "That's interesting!" He said "You actually remind me of Calder a lot." And I said "Well thanks Peter!" And so I wanted to find out well why did this guy that knew Calder so well think? And so I started digging into Calder, and good god! The man is a giant child! He's amazing! And anybody that knows me knows I'm the same way man, I'm a big spaz and I love playing with stuff, my studio is a total bomb blast of toys—yeah Don just said he can vouch for that, right Don? He's like yep! So I'm like a big kid, and my brother's about to have a kid and I'm secretly stashing all these books and socks and baby shoes and little toys everywhere I can find them, because I'm really buying them for the child, but I'm really buying them for myself, you know. I'm a kid of course.

Cory: We have- we don't have kids at home but we have two like furniture ottomans that you can remove the top they're like storage containers, and they're full of toys for all of our friend's kids and I love it. I love having them.

Rex: It's the generation we grew up in. Like we're toy freaks, you know? Like I mean, think about some of these collectors toys that are going for like- look at like I mean, that's nuts! And I mean, anyway. But I was just [unintelligible] from Japan.. a Gundam.. and they're like oh my god you have a Gundam I'm like yeah, I mean Gundams are awesome! I don't think I really get into all the storylines and stuff, but I just like them for themselves, you know.

Cory: What are Gundams?

Rex: Gundam is like a little- it's like a samurai suit that moves with a- it's a big nerd thing, but my brother and I used to watch Gundam on Toonami when we were 13 and 14 and had always remembered that, and then my parents took TV out when we were 13 and 14 and so it's like my mind stayed in that 1998 era, and so for whatever reason I never progressed. And so I've always stayed in that era of Toonami, you know, and so. I still remember when I was up in New York eating sushi [unintelligible] Sloan fine art, but he was Takashi Murakami's studio assistant, like his manager. And he moved to New York for his painting career. And I'm sitting there eating sushi and pick up this Japanese newspaper and I go "Oh my gosh, that's a Gundam!" It's a 59 foot robot in Tokyo. Google it, man! 59 foot Gundam in Tokyo. You will freak out.

Cory: So, one of our- Sharayah, from our team who does all of the show notes and transcription for these interviews, she's watching this right now and I'm imagining that she's rolling her eyes trying to figure out how she's gonna figure out how to spell all of this stuff that you just rolled off.

Rex: Well God bless you. It's Gundam g-u-n-d-a-m. But what's cool about it is I love the object of play, to come back to Calder. You know? His art was more about risk, it was like can I make this thing work? Can I build this thing? What is it gonna look like? Another [unintelligible], he was very much the same. And so knowing kind of this playful, serious playful take on things, does that make sense? Like you can talk with me you can tell really quick that I'm pretty serious about you know philosophy and painting and art history, but I'm not hemmed in by it, you know? And I really have fun, man. And

Cory: That shows up your work took right? The donuts pieces.

Rex: The donuts is a very- it's a specific reference, man, like when I first started coming out to New York I crashed on John Kallen's couch, he and his wife Vanessa are amazing. They just moved to Boston, but John would let me crash on their couch. At the end of my stays usually what I had money left for was a box of donuts, but I never told him that but it was always my thank you at the end of the stay, it was just some donuts. And that pink sprinkle donut was my favorite, and John's favorite. It was like a cream filled or something. But sprinkle donut became this icon for me, it's like if I can just have enough money left over that I can say thank you, you know. That's all I need. And so that very... it's a small thing, but it's what you can do. And then I'd go back home and sell some more paintings and you know re-up and pay all my bills and do what I need to do, you know what I mean? That's what I think- speaking of food there's a shift that's in, I think he's in Mississippi or something, and he's this really cutting edge guy, and he said he oved from wherever to open a restaurant and the guy was really famous, at least in the region. And he was able to hold his restaurant, it was like a really one star or something like that, and the guy said well you can live in my office while you're ... out of this game and retire and I want you to take over. Can you do that? And so the years went on and the years went on, and the guy was true to his word. And you know all these years go by and the guy learns the business and has his clientele and then he hands him the key to the apartment, or the restaurant, the guy buys it, he puts up enough money to buy it, or a loan or whatever, and he says my advice to you is pay the rent on time, take care of your clients and do what you love. And that's it. He left. Like advice, that was it. You know-

Cory: That's pretty good advice.

Rex: I would say the same. Pay your rent on time, love what you do, and do what you say you're gonna do and take care of your clients. You know? And I think that's really the key to all of it. Your clients being your friends, your family, people that work, you know directors that gave you like a big break, say thank you, don't forget them. You know? I was eating- I'm gonna take a shout out to Felix Padron who was the director of the office of cultural affairs for like 25 years in San Antonio. I saw on Facebook that he was in New York, I said "Hey Felix, you in the city?" He's like yeah! And so I went to dinner with my friend Don and his friend Kim and I said "Guys I really gotta go, I gotta meet this guy. He's an old friend." And yeah mean, go, do your thing. And so I took off, went down to Tribeca, and Felix was like "Of all the people that are in New York right

now Rex, we're having drinks at the Odeon, you know why I picked here?" I was like "Why, Felix?" He was like "Cause I started my career waiting, like running a restaurant right around the corner. Some of my clients were Johnny Depp and Robert De Niro. And that was the beginning of my life. You know? Like and I came to the Odeon on Friday night with all my friends who were chefs, and this is where we hung out 'til three in the morning." And he goes "Tribeca is a totally different place now." I mean if you were walking around at this time of night, you were taking your life in your hands. You know? Now look at it, you know it's got the Tribeca Film Festival, it's got all these really super high end things. But he said something to me last night that was really neat and I wrote it on a napkin and I wanted to give this advice to whoever, it's learn how to be. Does that make sense? Like just learn how to be. In life. Meaning it's a way of life. And then he said to me- "They're going to remember what you left behind as an artist, not so much who you are, but they're going to remember who you were." And he also said "Don't forget people." You know. And he said "Really successful people that get this, it's not about success, really." Because at the end of the day, if you really try hard and all you can do is buy a donut for someone, well that's .. in an of itself. And so I think what I would say more than anything is to really learn what that is for you. Does that makes sense? You know, like- if you want to drive a Bentley, well I would not suggest becoming an artist. If that's important to you. Some people may drive a Bentley and be artists. Good on you man, right on. You know, you made it. If that's your goal. Some people, they've never sold a painting in their life and they never want to. They just want to make great quilts to give to their kids. But that's... do you see what I mean? Like...

Cory: I do. Learn how to be.

Rex: And I think it needs to be said more and more quite frankly, and we're around a lot of artists and people and they're like "Oh I never got to show in ... and I painted for thirty years... I mean good example is Robert De Niro. I mean we went into his restaurant, I think it was like 12 at night, they were closing up, but Felix told me like "Hey, did you know those are Robert De Niro's dad's paintings? I said what? He said "Yeah, his dad was a painter and when he bought this restaurant he put all his dad's paintings up, and he kept his studio, his dad's studio kind of like a time box you know like Pollack's studio up in the East Hamptons or whatever he kept his studio as like a museum. And that's- that's cool. So something to think about – it may not be in your lifetime that you become the thing you were needing to be. But do you think De Niro's dad could ever be happier than seeing his son be who is? You know? That's just cool. So I try to encourage people to see the longer game. I think it's- I mean art is cool, right? Painting is cool but if you ask my friends and family I would hope they would say I was a good human, not a great artist. And I mean I hope a great artist, that's really great! I mean that's a great goal. "You're okay." Yeah, whatever Don, thanks. I would really hope that, you know, you're a good human being.

Cory: Yeah. Thanks for the comments Don. Cool. Alright. Well Rex, this is probably a great place for us to wrap up. If people wanted to know more about you and your work, where should they follow you or connect with you at?

Rex: Well I think the best way is just go to my website rexhausmann.com, designed by my brother's wife, shout out Dacia, you do a great job. And my brother helped update it, and then Facebook. I love social media. Like it's really quite fantastic. I do Instagram and I do Facebook a lot. I mean don't bombard me with stuff, gotta figure it out, but. And I'm gonna be on a plane in like three

hours back to San Antonio. Also I have a residency at the Sheen center which is in the west.. what is it? Um.. and in April and May and I'll be having a big exhibition in 2019 there. So that's really the way to kind of keep in touch with me. Or come down to San Antonio! I mean come to the studio anytime!

Cory: Sounds good man, thanks so much for taking the time.

Rex: Thanks for doing this Cory, you rock!