



Diversity and Making: A Podcast and Video Series
A Collaboration of Purdue Libraries and School of Information Studies and
Purdue Asian American and Asian Resource and Cultural Center (AAARCC)

Episode 3: Making Art (Release Date: November 16, 2020)

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PS: Pamela Sari

DG: It doesn't have to look like anybody else's work or sound like it or read like it, it doesn't have to, the beauty is it'll be like you - not like somebody else.

SH: Welcome to episode three of Diversity and Making. Diversity and Making is a collaboration between the Purdue Libraries and School of Information Studies and the Asian American and Asian Resource and Cultural Center also known as the AAARCC. My name is Sarah, and I'm an assistant professor in the libraries and I run the maker programming in the libraries.

PS: And my name is Pam Sari. And I am Director of the AAARCC.

SH: We created this project collaboration to foster discussions and projects around the questions "who are makers?" and "what is considered making?" for Native American heritage month. We are thrilled to have with us today, DG House, a contemporary Native American artist. We'll explore DG's work. And the crossovers between art and making DG House creates across a variety of media, including painting and printmaking. She is an artist in residence at the Grand Teton National Park, Yellowstone National Park, and she just completed her artist in residence with the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis, Indiana. DG House's work can be found in permanent collections worldwide, including the Grand Teton National Park and the musicians of Sir Elton John, Sir Paul McCartney and Michael McDonald. Thank you for being here with us today, DG. So part of what's so appealing and engaging about your work is the variety - and listeners, you can see her work@dghouseart.com and Instagram - but there are some themes that carry across, including animals, particularly the bear and traditional indigenous clothing. DG, can you talk about the tribe you are a member of and how your culture and nature impact your work?

DG: Absolutely. I'm an enrolled member of the Cherokee tribe of Northeast Alabama. And what that

means is that you are a member of - a legal member of, um, for most of us that includes some kind of identification card or, uh, some tribes, a specific piece of paper, but you have to be enrolled - a legal member of - in order to be recognized as a Native American, whatever, in my case artists. Um, so that's my enrollment. I, however, have lived in Montana since 1988. I think it is now, um, culturally for me, I have to back up just a little bit and say that I worked as a professional photographer first, um, and didn't get into fine arts for a good 15 years after I started. So I wasn't immersed in my own culture other than personally, at all, you know, daily. Until I made a conscious decision to stop photography. And that's a whole 'nother discussion. We can talk about why I did that and switched to painting. My first loyalty was to my own culture. That's why I wanted to do it. And the second is my just love and devotion to wilderness, wild lands, and wild places. And so between the two of them, that's what my art represents. Now you can certainly see my culture in it and I'm dedicating my time and, and whatever talent I have to recognize the people and the wildlife that don't have the predominant voice in the major culture that we're living in.

SH: Yeah. That's interesting. We both, Pam and I, came to your discussion at the Native American Cultural Center where you talked about your start and it is interesting - if you wouldn't mind talking a little bit about that and that's the photography. Yeah, yeah-

DG: Yeah. Well, it all starts with the lying and sneaking in.

SH: That's what we like to hear.

DG: Good role model. Well, I know it started, um, I was really fortunate to be, um, there's many fortunate reasons to go to a private school. Um, and for me it was the, um, first of all, we had no such thing as a homeroom or study hall. It just didn't exist. English four years, math four, you know, all of that - but we also had the arts. Um, so I took before I even graduated high school, I had, uh, ceramics, anatomical drawing, painting, jewelry-making, photography. And then of course at that time was 35 millimeter film. And you also developed the film in the dark room. You learn how to do all of that. Well, one of my great passions is sports and I grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio. So, you know, I had the Reds, I had the Bengals, we had basketball teams at that time. So there was nothing for me to get on a bus. And, um, at the end of my street, you can go downtown and just walk right into the stadium, like during practices. I thought that - I bet everyone gets a good laugh when I get done with this - I thought it's because I look so mature and I brought a clipboard with a pen stuck in it. So of course I was real, right, and my camera. But you know, now that I think about it, I walked in with all those, those photographers, journalists, all those men, they probably thought of somebody's kid, you know, that in my head, I would take photos and either, uh, my dad had dark room at work and I had a dark room at school. So one of us would develop them. And then, um, we had some connections to the sports page through a family member. And so that's how it all started for me with sports.

Um, from there we had a, um, an ice hockey team there used to be something called the world hockey league, and it was the Cincinnati Stingers and somebody, I can't quite remember where the connection was to me, from them, but they asked me to take still photos because they were going to be the first hockey team to ever make a groundbreaking thing called a VHS tape, and they were going to make it on speed-skating. So I took the photos from that, and that's where I got to know some of the gentlemen that ended up at the New York Rangers because when the WHL disbanded the New York Rangers took those guys. And so, you know, just one piece falls in with another piece. And, um, at this point I've changed my major about five times, have you met those students?

SH: I was one of them.

DG: Where the professor, where your counselor, what do you call them?

SH: Advisor.

DG: Yeah your advisor says to you, if you take one more of those classes, you're going to have to change your major. You know, I was one of those kids, so I thought, okay, I'm going to go into forensic pathology because, you know, that's what one does. And so in order, I'm thinking now I'm going to go to med school, right? This has gotta be my fourth major. And I took a journalism class. And they said, if you get a promise to get something published by the end of the semester -get an automatic A. And I thought, well, I like sports, like ice hockey. I queried, Oh, I think it was called Ohio Magazine. And they took that. They said, yes. So all of that together started weaving, uh, some kind of, you know, story for me to go and, and, and be a sports photographer, professional sports photographer. So I took, um, photos of the New York Rangers on the road. That's how that started. And somehow through all of that Viacom - that's the name of the company, big conglomerate company that owns MTV now, back in the day, MTV played actual music and it was the only place really you could hear alternative music if you weren't a major city with, you know, 500 stations. Um, for most of us, that was it. And that was alternative, then that wasn't top 40. So, um, somehow somebody there found me and that's how the whole thing started with me taking photos of celebrities, if you wanna call it that, but really rock and roll photography. And that's how that happened.

But because the story isn't complicated enough since 1981, I had been coming out West to where I am right now - Bozeman, Montana. And I was working in Yellowstone and Grand Teton every summer. So by '88, my dream, what I really wanted to do was be a professional wildlife photographer. So like I gave up at all. And I came to Bozeman Montana because that's like, that's the biggest city around the park, you know, and I could get a job. And so I did that to '95. And then that brings us up to when I decided that, um, with the great encouragement of my husband and three kids at home under, probably under 14 at that time, it was scary. But I decided it was time. I was 35 at that time. And my husband said, well, what are you going to do - wait 'til you're 40? Wait until you retire? When is the good time? And the thing that it was amazing. And so I go to this, - there's one room open at the art center in downtown Bozeman, and it's 8 by 10 feet and it's \$50 a month. And I'm terrified because that came out of the food budget for children. I wouldn't have cared so much if it's just me, but, you know, so I opened that door immediately to the public and started going to farmer markets on Saturdays. As soon as they opened, I knew nobody, nothing, no gallery, no fine artists, nothing. And by hard, hard work and many kind people with a hand up, that's how I got here. 25 years later.

SH: When you moved to Bozeman, is that where you started incorporating your culture and-

DG: Yep, and there's a connection. It's so funny. 'Cause I always forget this part of the story because, um, because people concentrate now of course, on painting. It's funny when I do photography now, I'm now the painter that does some photography. And I, in the beginning of the course, as the photographer who wanted to be a painter is how.. right? But actually I was very practical in the beginning and I took terracotta pots and I painted real native symbolism on those pots. And that's when I opened the door to that studio. That's how I really started. And then slowly over that, about a year and a half, two years, I started putting paintings up in the studio. And two years later I had my first solo show as a painter. But how I paid the bills was painting terracotta pots. I had to make it. And here's what I, if you're going into the arts, you do not have to sacrifice any integrity of what

you're doing. You don't have to "sell out" as people, you know, sometimes say. You can paint exactly what you want to paint or write or dance, whatever it is, and still pay your bills. It's okay.

SH: You don't hear that. There's almost - what I've heard through the years is it's time to grow up. That's what you hear. Over and over. Put down your artwork, put down your instruments. You can do that on the side. It's time to grow up and get a real job. You can do that in your spare time. That's the message we get.

DG: And what kind of culture is that? What are we doing all the work for, right?

SH: Right, what's the-

DG: Why are we getting up and going to work every day? If there's, if you're not creating well, I'm making art and you're right. That is what they say. I had a, um, when I am an artist in residence in, um, as part of the guest American Indian artists program in Grand Teton National Park, uh, Native artists rotate in and out every week. And we have like a gallery and we sit in it and we talk to the public. Well, probably a nine year old girl walked in and said to me, you know, I wanna do this. I can't wait to do this. I think this is what I want to do. And you know, she's in there with just me so I could give all my attention to her. And so I'm telling her, yes, you can. And this is how you're going to do it. You're going to stay in school because it gives you all your opportunity. We're going on and on. And she's just beaming. Her mother walks in - no regard for the fact that, um, this little girl and I are in the middle of a conversation, whatever. And she goes, is she talking about that art again? - to me. And I said, "well, we are talking about art." And she looks at me, looks at the baby, the nine-year-old and says, "you will not be a starving artist. I am your mother, and it will not happen." Now, I want you to know, I would not say this if it didn't matter to the story. I'm sitting in a gallery in the middle of Grand Teton National Park. That's where she's telling the child, basically that I'm a starving artist.

SH: That's right. She so ingrained in the mother, it is not meant to be cruel. It's - she's afraid because that's what she believes. That's what she's been told.

DG: That's right. And that the child would have no future, but I'll tell you what I did. I go to admit it to all of you, the mother started to walk out of the room, the baby's, you know, heads down. And she turned around and I went, come here, come here. She came over to me and I grabbed her and I hugged her. And I said, "you can do it." And sent her on her way. So, you know, maybe somewhere in her memory, you know, it doesn't matter if she remembered who I was or even where she was. But somewhere now in her constant subconscious, it says it's all right.

PS: Back in those early years, right? When you knew all the myths that people talked about, about the life of an artist, what sustained you in that very beginning? Uh, obviously you had a lot of courage, I think in you, you said that. What sustained you? What gave you hope in those early years?

DG: I'm look, I'm one of those lucky people that was born that way. What's um, some of us just are with hope, right? And I faced a lot of diversity, diversity I wish, I've faced a lot of diversity too - adversity I mean. I have faced a lot of adversity in my life. And, um, I just have resiliency. That doesn't mean I don't get down or, you know, I was, uh, talking to a group of upcoming artists last week. And I said, I have literally sat in hotel rooms and cried because I was just tired. Right. Or I had just had a really bad show. And now I got the last of my money. I'm going to the next one. And I get up the next day and I go, and I'm fine. But you know, it's not all rosy and all of that, I

think it was inner strength. And when you have a partner that is honestly with you, I have seen more than I'd ever want to see of couples where the one partner truly does not believe in the other one and the career that they're trying to do. And it is so painful to be in the presence of that. I, on the other hand, I have a partner, my husband says things like this to me, you know, the dishes are in the sink and I got a deadline and he's like, do you want to clean dishes? Or do you want a career? He says things like that. To me, that kind of, uh, you and me against the world, you know, that, that makes a difference. And the fact that I was in an art center or they'll be in there, wasn't all pleasant. It made it real. You went in, and there were people that were hanging their art or doing whatever, or making their pottery that gave some legitimate legitimacy to it too. And then just determination.

PS: I see that sense of hope, right? Even, even when we, Sarah and I attended your session with the NAECC where you talk to us about seeing beauty in our land and wherever we are, that was amazing. And to consider the history of our landscapes, right? What it looked like in the past, who lived there in the past. Can you elaborate more about that point of view, DG, for the audience? So when DG house sees the landscape, what do you see? And when we listeners look at the landscape now, what do you want us to be considering?

DG: All right. Here's how I see it. It - none of us know if what we see is like anybody else, right. You know, it was just recently, I found out that people don't hear their own - some people don't hear their own voice and their own thoughts thinking - there are people that don't do that. That scares me.

So the way I see the world first, I see tiny things for some reason, but I see things in color and shape around me. So that's why architecture to me is beautiful too. A good architect - you know, I admire that so much. And of course, because I'm blessed. I'm blessed. And I came on purpose to this wilderness that, you know, I live in now the big sky, we are known as big sky country, clouds alone. Maybe you're going to have to look past the buildings right next to you. But you know, human beings forget to look up. We just never look up. So that's why no one worries about what the ceilings look like in stores. Look up next time you go in a store, it'll be unfinished, because human beings don't look up! Um, I recommend that you look up, look at the clouds, find the birds in your neighborhood. See what that is. I had a great time researching where the Eiteljorg is now. The Eiteljorg Museum in downtown Indianapolis. It was actually waterlands. It was essentially for birds. And on the outset of that, that's where the farms, the Native American farms started. So when you're talking about, I like to picture who was there.

You know, one of my favorite funniest things is, when I, the first time I was ever artist in residence and I had an audience and I was talking to them about, who are your tribes? Who lived here? I had fifth grade through elderly. Not one person could answer me in the room, which of course I started to make them laugh. 'Cause I said, you don't know who the Indians are, in Indian-apolis? In the state of Indiana? And it is funny, half the room said they never thought of it, but Indianapolis, the city of Indians, it's amazing. I know I'm getting off subject, but I just want you to hear this story. I go to the senior center as part of my residency. And we're talking about that. And an elderly woman said, I know - the Delaware. And I'm like, yeah, that's one of your tribes, the Delaware. She said, I know because my parents bought our house from the Indians. The whole place goes, well, what?? She goes, yes. I still live in the house. And I have, I have the original deed. Just, do you want me to go home and get it? I just lived down the street. We're all like, yes! She brought it back. And indeed her parents bought the land from the Delaware Indians. And it's right on the certificate. I can't remember who I was with from the museum, but you better believe we shot copies of it. That's how

close we really are. You know, it wasn't that long ago. So when you are there, no matter where you are in Indiana or wherever, you're watching this from - get yourself to your local park, your state park. And if you're lucky enough to have a national monument or a national park in your state, get yourself there. Humans crave wildlife and wilderness. We need to be outside.

PS: One way that also that this active seeing and looking into history plays out is how communities now start using land acknowledgement. So why would, in your opinion, why would land acknowledgement serve as one of the expressions of active remembering of history and in your perspective as well - What should accompany land acknowledgement to express the active process of remembering?

DG: Oh boy, you touched my soul. Let's see if I can handle all of that. I would start by talking about our world as it is today. And this term, uh, "cancel culture." I, there's no cancel culture. There's a refinement of information. My opinion. Let us as human beings and, um, with kindness and with acknowledgement of all, let's get to the best version of the story, the truest version of the story that we can get to, all together. It is just amazing that some of the things I talk about- and the kids, especially like the fifth graders, third graders I talk to, to them it's thousands and thousands of years ago. It's not 200 years ago, but it's the same for adults. When you think that we, we had ancestors, just a generation behind me that saw plane flights through, going to the moon in their lifetime, things accelerate so fast that you think things happened so far ago and they didn't. And that our other problem, I think, is that for some reason, I don't know if it's just in the United States, but we think that people before us didn't really somehow exist. Like they didn't really fall in love or some weren't awful. Some weren't great. You know - real feelings only happened when we got born. That's another, it's insane, isn't it? But it's true. We don't think about, you know, the people we're talking about, let's just say a hundred years ago, they thought they were in the here and now and, and things had advanced and all that. They were there for that. They're not history, you know, in that, in that sense.

So anyway, to answer your question, um, it was really important in the state of Montana because as we all know, history can be written by whoever the culture thinks is the winner. And they were places here in Montana and I've only been talking in the last 10 years. There's a very offensive word. And, um, I'm going to go ahead and say it in the word is "squall" and it's highly offensive. And you can't tell you how many places named squall-something were all through the state of Montana. And I'm sure other places, we just changed those back to either something generic or the original term from the people that were living on the spot. Um, so in the case of Yellowstone, it was the people that came in, uh, in the 1860s or so they named them after their wives, their daughters, their, but there are already names for all those places. So we are starting to revert back to that in the national park system, the national park system right now is slow and frustrating as it can be. There's only so many people and such a big budget that they are actively searching for the stories of the original peoples on all those different lands. Um, there, the curators are calling in members of the tribe or tribes that lived on those lands. I can tell you that there's great hope and real work, not just talk, being done to give the real history. If no one's ever told you that this is the land - I'm just making this up - this is the land of the Crow people. This is why it was their land. This is where they kind of went. And there was No Man's land, which is what Bozeman is. It's really the native term for where I live in this Valley is the Valley of the Flowers. And many different tribes came in and it was kind of a no man's land. It was a hunting ground for Buffalo here. If no one tells you that, and you're not living in that culture, you know, and the other part of this is teachers are afraid. They're afraid because they don't want to make a mistake. It's different when you're at the university level and you have studied and you have researched, but when you're teaching fifth grade, which already you're

overworked underpaid, you're trying to, especially when there was, the, what was that the no child left behind or whatever? Every day you had to hit the mark on what had to be done that day. And then you're told you have to teach some kind of Native American history. That's daunting. I know this isn't the subject we're talking about right now, but I think it's just a great resource. If anyone wants to learn more, or there's an instructor/educator out there, you can go to, um, the Office of Public Instruction, state of Montana, and then you look under "Indian education for all." They will give you lesson plans. They will take you through the history, especially of Montana, but a broader history too. Or, and/or the Smithsonian Institute of the American Indian. You go to the education side of that, and you can feel confident with either, either one of those.

So as hopefully, um, I think we're living in a moment of breakthrough culturally in this country. I really do. So as this happens, um, let's help for better curation of signs and names and recognition. There is no railroad without our Chinese immigrants. You know, the entire government is based on a, um, Iroquois system of government. I don't care if people don't want to know, we are one, we are one, the beauty is the diversity. You know, to me, that's all the colors, but we're one painting. Right. And I think there is hope. Yeah.

SH: Yeah. I agree. It's scary. 'Cause all this stuff is coming up, but I've seen the power through these, through this tumultuous time. When you tell the story and then people accept it and things change.

DG: Yes. That's where it is.

SH: You're saying it's like you don't, if you don't tell it, you don't tell, you tell, then people don't have to accept it.

DG: I find that most humans want to find part of themselves in the story, whatever story you're telling. So we got to get back to the fact that the - everybody before us were human. There were great people - I won't say what I say when I'm live in the classroom, there were great people. And they were, yeah. And that has nothing to do with the has nothing to do with grace, you know, but I, but listening to each other's story, um, kind of on that subject, but it's an interesting one is this is something that Native American artists actively talk about. The depiction of Natives by non-natives continually stuck in the 1880s, wearing regalia. Where - the problem with that is what we're talking about. How can we tell people we are alive today if the only imagery they see - if you don't look like that, then you can't be an Indian. If you don't look the same and God love all you Plains Indians, I have, I love you all. But if you don't look like a Plains Indian in regalia in the 1880s, then you then the general public thinks 'they're not native.' So here's the discussion. I have no answers for this. This is just a discussion I've had non-native artists pull me into discussions and who doesn't love that on Facebook about, um, is it not all right for non-natives to paint Natives? And I said, I would argue that as an artist, if you are so inclined, you paint, whatever you want. However, if you're painting, a teepee with Natives that never lived in a teepee or a teepee with three different tribes sitting or symbology on it, because you don't know one from the other - do some research first - don't put Lakota clothes on Assiniboine warrior. And if you know your stuff, whatever. Boy, did that get heated fast! Here's what I ended up saying at the end, if a group of people that you're talking about, tell you that what you're saying is racist, homophobic, whatever it is, then you get a chance. You get a chance to listen to them and stop, or you have a constitutional right to keep talking. So you choose.

SH: Yeah. Where do you want to grow or not grow?

DG: Yes. That's up to you. Yeah, but if you ask me, honestly, I'll give you - intent is everything.

SH: I think you can feel people's intentions when they mean, well, if it doesn't come out, right, they don't have the education. They didn't do the research.

DG: I have never been insulted by an honest, loving question. I, in fact, some of you might have heard or seen a lot of things about, uh, "something else", that term, "something else" on Facebook lately. Yes. I've had two or three non-native people write to me privately. Privately said, "I'm afraid to ask out loud what's going on." That's all right. That's fine. I explained that it was a poll or the new station and we are 6% of the population. And for 6% of the population, they wrote something else. So being the smart ass that I am. I declared myself something else.

SH: The artists who, Ricardo Cate he's out in... Have you seen, he had some good, good-

DG: I love everything he does.

SH: Yeah, I am a fan.

DG: Me too.

SH: I encourage the listeners to check out the art he's made in response to that.

DG: In response to everything!

SH: and everything.

DG: He's just brilliant.

SH: Yeah. Okay. So we know you don't identify as a Maker necessarily, but you do printmaking. And I, you know, you do a lot of hands on, working that some people would consider making. I'd like to talk about that space that artists makers do share And that space of creativity and innovation that makers often talk about Makerspace as being that safe space to create without the pressures of academia or industry. Can you tell us how you build a safe space to create? And do you have any lessons for the students about creating that space? I think that that carries over to artist space. Makerspace, it's safe knowing that you can just experiment.

DG: It's all in your head. That safe space is in here. Practically though, I have found that if you are struggling financially or to eat, any of the real basics of life - it's hard to find it. If you can find it though, in the midst of that kind of adversity, your art will be beautiful. And a representation of that. I, however, wish for you that you never have to be in, in that space. Once your basic needs are met as a human being, all of that safe space is inside of yourself. It's how you're and how, not only how you're looking inside, but how you're looking out at the world. So you can make yourself feel unsafe to make art if you put these rules with it. Like what's the point if I'm not selling it? What's the point when I could be making money doing this? So it is, it's an emotional and a mental kind of thing. Uh, for me, I am - I don't think I can do anything else. And by that, I mean, nothing would ever give me this much pleasure than to create. And once again, I don't know what the hell's wrong with me. Fearless when it comes to making art, I'll buy supplies on a medium I've never did before and make an entire piece. I know some other artists that do this too. I never stopped to think what if this sucks. I don't. I swear to you, I don't. It's just full speed ahead. I don't know how I, if I could bottle

that or tell somebody how to get that, the only way I can is you have to tell yourself it's okay to jump right in.

SH: There is something unique. I think most people, myself included, would relate. I think of the quote from Georgia O'Keeffe who says "pretty much everything scares me, but I do it anyway." Yeah.

DG: It couldn't have been said more beautifully than that. I mean, I don't walk up here swaggering as I come through the door. Guess what I'm going to do today. And it's never like that. No, I look at a blank canvas and I think. Here's the difference for some people. I have no fear when I look at a blank canvas. I think, Oh, the opportunities they are endless of what I'm going to do with this. It's, it's a choice to be happy. You know, a choice to be happy and creative does not mean you didn't ever suffer. In fact, some of the time it means you did suffer. And now I choose. I choose to bring beauty into the world. I choose to make this art. And like I said, if you have to make money to pay the bills and most of us do, you do not have to sacrifice. Do not have to sacrifice your integrity. That is a total misconception. When you do a hundred percent, the way you want to do it, uh, magic happens and people come along with you. It's when you try to pretend to be something else. Then it won't work.

PS: I think that was something like Sarah, that was something that we have been talking about in several episodes that we are in is that maker, making activity, give us this opportunity to just go right into it, right? Imagine, and then, Lo and behold something...

DG: Something happens, something good happens.

SH: There's something magical about it.

DG: I will not abide by, "I have no talent. I can't do this." I say the same thing every time. Really? If we were to sit down, - one of the great people I met at Purdue was Yo-Yo Ma.. Um, so performing what's the big white building. I can't remember! Go up the steps.. He was there and I was speaking in a hall next to him and they're like, DG, would you like to meet? And like, as casual as can be, um, it was thrilling moments in my life. So you don't walk up to Yo-Yo Ma and say, well, I have no talent. And he says, how long have you been playing? Never. You got to give yourself a break and just start. It doesn't have to look like anybody else's work or sound like it or read like it, it doesn't have to. The beauty is it'll be like you, not like somebody else.

SH: I think, you know, what you're talking about is - and again, I'm not much of an international traveller. I can speak to my experience in the US and there's this either "You're a failure, so don't do it and get a real job," Or somehow you're magically famous and brilliant. And there's no in between. And those famous, so-called famous, brilliant people don't interact with a whole group of creatives. They don't work in a vacuum. They work. It's a community and it's a range of people's talents and how much money they're making in the space. They're creating.

DG: No, it's also an illusion. This is still one of the funniest stories ever. I was at a Walmart back before COVID and, uh, a woman walked up to me and said, "I would never have expected to see you in a store." And I'll try to think, if you're in an awkward moment, you're thinking, what does this mean? I don't shop. I don't, you know, I'm trying to figure out what I'm supposed to say next. And she said, well, I'd never thought you would have time to like, do your own shopping. Who else is going to go buy that stuff? I mean, it's very, it's very sweet too. Um, but it is that part's an illusion and I can tell you for many, many years, poor me every holiday where other people were

on vacations or doing whatever - I was working. It's like, um, what's that song about? I'm making a living and watching everybody else having fun? For many years, every July 4th, every, every major holiday, there's an art show. So we're begging and, you know, loading cars and lugging stuff out, setting up tents, and everybody else is walking by with cotton candy. You know, I'm willing to make that sacrifice. Don't get me wrong. But, but that love is an illusion too. Cause the people come in the booth and "well, how, how'd you do all this? I wish I was you." You're like, well, you're not going to take this down on the pouring rain in two hours, you know. But also at the same time, I'm incredibly grateful, of course. I paint bears for a living. Are you kidding me? It's what I do, but it's work.

PS: That sense of, you know, that making will, there's something that will work out.

DG: Yeah. I understand what you're saying to me. Try to go on the journey of the making and somehow something will happen, and you'll have done it yourself, but whatever happens in the human brain, when you make something, I don't care if it's a loaf of bread, you know, it's a piece of art, it changes something in your soul.

PS: So DG in the NAECC event that we talked about, you, we work on, you taught us about journaling art, and you showed us the journal that you are currently creating. Uh, that includes old books and paintings. And you taught us the same idea that whatever, um, mediums or instruments that you use, it will somehow work out magically.

DG: And the more diverse, the more interesting.

PS: Yes.

DG: It is. You know, you can sell something and put those in a journal, you can sell a story and attach it, all those textures. And that to me is just glorious.

PS: So for those who are listening right now, DG, can you please describe what it looks like? And why the making process of that journal is meaningful to you? And we're thinking, especially during this pandemic, right, this can be a particular meaning for art-making activity.

DG: Absolutely. And you don't need any funds at all to get started. If you do have funds good for you, I'll tell you how to buy good things for that. All you need is paper, some kind of paper. Um, I saw a journal recently that was all done with junk mail. They painted on junk mail or stitched on it or marked on it. And they took envelopes. You know, when people send you, you know, send this back and there's just endless envelopes, they did printmaking on that. Then they tied it all together. Isn't that fascinating? You can take a composition book, those 50 cent composition books, and you can turn that into an art journal. You want this thing to be juicy. You want it to not be able to close. You want it to be half open, full of delights in there. You can decide what the theme is. There does not have to be a theme. It can just be your reflections every day. And that's why now, as we face this together, this worldwide pandemic. Now is a great time, uh, freedom to reflect on what's going on with you personally and in your community. You can do that through writings. You can download things off the internet and put it in your book. Um, you can paint, you can draw, you can collage on these pages. You can buy something called a mixed media sketchbook, which takes water media and other things better. You don't have to have it, glue things in, stitch things in, um, tell a story if you want.

I love, uh, also taking pages out of an old book and you can erase all the words that you want to find a sentence that you love inside that entire page. It's another way to do it. You can make your journal out of an old book that you have in the house and start drawing on it like Natives did during reservation era art, when you were forced on a reservation and all you had to draw on was whatever was left at the, I was going to say base - at the fort, um, stock certificates and ledger paper and receipts. And you either embrace what's on the page or you totally forget what's on the page and you make your art to reflect that, or you make your art in spite of the page you're working on.

So I think at this time, and I know, um, what I want is for you to have that in this moment and now, but remember we're not always going to be here. Can you imagine in a hundred years when people look at the journals, um, how important that art is going to be of the story of what we've all gone through together? You know, imagine your family two generations from now looking at your journal, because they want to know who you were and then there's your handwriting and your drawing. And I would love to have that from, you know, different family members that have gone on, but really in the moment right now, just be, you know, this is yours. No one ever has to see it if you don't want to. This belongs only to you. And, um, I recommend, if you can, that you can keep it with you at all times.

SH: On a final note, let's talk about ledger art. The project we have put together for students is a ledger art activity. DG, can you give us the history of ledger art and a couple of prompts for students to create their own?

DG: Absolutely. You know, the history of native American art is a history of storytelling. This is how we told the stories. 500 different tribes before Europeans came, we still have over 500 different tribes right now, 500 different languages, none of them written down. So how do you tell the stories? Of course, voice, oral tradition, song, dance, and then we start with... We'll take it, not into Meso-America, we'll take it back to, we'll take it back to petroglyphs, pictographs, cave drawings. For us out here in the West, it's rock walls, [that] have the stories on them. Some of them have been dated back three to 7,000 years. There are ones in France. This is a human thing. There's ones in France that are 50,000 years old. Humans all over the planet have done that from, from that point on for Natives, we go on to, we can talk about the storytelling and pottery and wood carving and weaving, but the one we're gonna talk about today is hide painting. The most important animal to the Plains Indian. And I know it's hard to imagine. You know, we were just talking about, we're only talking hundreds of years. There were buffalo in Indiana. If a grizzly bear could survive, a grizzly bear lived everywhere in what is now the continental US. Um, hide painting tended to be out here where I'm at, um, on, on the Buffalo, which the real name is bison. I have to say that, the scientific word is bison bison. Um, we'll use what most Indians say, uh, today, as we talk, which is buffalo, that's the most important animal. You only needed one thing and a Buffalo to survive on your own, you didn't need anybody else, and that was a buffalo and water. You know, we will talk sometime, another time, about why that was so frustrating to the US government.

So we would hide paint and you would tell the stories. And one of the ways is something called a winter count and it's told in a spiral and all the members, all of us in our tribe, we would know what each symbol meant. So from December to December, that's our history. Somebody drew it. Somebody had to be the high keeper. And so we could read our own story. It was our history book. Now we get to the reservation era and that's the 1800s, you know, 1830s, when you're talking the Southeast. It's more, it's closer to the 1860s. When you're out West, you know, as the Europeans and, um, the Calvary made their way across the country. Now you're put on a reservation and you

are not allowed to leave in those days. It's not what it's like now. But back then, that was you're in jail. You're in a concentration camp. You can't come and go as you please, you wear what they put on you, you eat what they give you, which means no hunting and without hunting, there's no hides now. How are we going to tell what's going on with us right now? Right now we're using a journal to tell what's going on with us back then they had to find the paper. At the same time, soldiers were issued watercolors, color, pencils, or crayons. So you could get the media from the soldiers, trade them for something. And then if you go into the office of the fort, there's tons of accounting paper because it's a government agency. So how many horses came in, how much flour came in? You know, they're keeping track of all of that. And then of course, you go through the wastepaper basket and any paper that was thrown out. This is now your blank canvas. And this is how you tell your story.

Now, ledger art. I'm going to use this term, but I don't mean it in the way I'm saying it. It's not a 3D art. It's a 2D art, kind of like a flat cartoon. You see why I didn't want to say that word? But I want to give you a mental image of it. This is storytelling, not shaded, fine Western style art. Although I've seen it done that way now, nowadays, but when it started. So here's the idea. If something happened a mile behind you, that was just as important as what's happening, where you are in the plane of the painting, the picture - you'll be side by side. It's not about perspective. We're telling a story. All right. So one of the great, you know, and you'll read about this yourself, but one of the greatest empowerments of ledger art was at the battle of Little Big Horn. And after that battle was over the ledger artists that made art about it, their story matched, that's not what went in the history books or the newspapers, not until the 1980s. I think it was 80. When the battlefield burnt to the ground, they found casings and bullets and people. And scientists, you know, read all that evidence that ledger art in the news findings of the scientist that matched exactly. The power of telling your own story. If, if our people hadn't told their story, we wouldn't have known that it was right. You know, how long would it have taken? Would they have ever told the truth? I don't know. So this medium was only men only drawing about a battle. Now, today is still being done. Yes. Now men, women, children, it's about love and, and it can be humorous. It doesn't have to be serious at all. Is our culture - many of us were taken and put into boarding schools. We have ledger art from the children that we'll put in the boarding school. Imagine they were journaling like we're talking about today. And now we're reading their journals and understanding the history of what happened to them. From there, sometime in the early 1900s, it started to swing that ledger has gone on, but that's when we kind of swing into that Western style art. Um, and then we get to IAI the all Native, um, art school. Um, and then we start with like an Allan Houser and then we get a Kevin Red Star and then, then the decades have gone on until now. So for ledger art, all you need, I mean, you can go buy ledger pads at Staples. They still exist, but your plain old notebook paper, like they're used in grade school, or maybe you're still using it now, that'll work. And then even just colored pencils, even a plain old pencil to get started. So here's, here's the prompt:

You tell a story about your own life. Without words. It does not have to be huge. It could be one day in your life. It could be one hour. I've had third graders - I had a third grader draw, um, his little sister opened the pantry and a can of beans hit her in the morning, and he was, you know, he still thought that was the greatest thing that ever happened. So that was his piece of ledger art. What, while we want to know, what we'd like to know is that you can look inward and tell a story without words, and to tell it with imagery, you do not have to be an artist to do this. Although I would argue we're all artists. You don't have to think of yourself as an artist, challenge yourself to tell a story about you today. It is all about you, not every day. And then you can either keep that for yourself, or you think that could be the start of a journal or a journal page in there. So ledger art is what it's called. Nowadays, some people are calling it, let me get this straight. There is a, um, an educator native educator that likes it to be called now, um, Native American graphic art. I know it

is ledger art or reservation era art.

SH: Do you remember? This is an older author, her name, Leslie Marmon Silko wrote Ceremony?

DG: Uh huh.

SH: That concept of nonlinear storytelling. In my mind, I am trying to pull together this idea of ledger art when something's important. It pulls up next side-by-side, even if it happened a day or two ago. And I, my logical mind is saying, is there some connection between you, you did this - you motioned a circle when you talked about native American storytelling and it means, yeah-

DG: Did I?

SH: It made me think of that. Not linear, a circle.

DG:It's all a circle.

SH: And then the idea of the ledger art, something can be side-by-side even if it happened. Are there any connections there? My mind is trying to...

DG: I'm sure there is. And I didn't even know I made that circle, but in Native culture, the circle, the sun, uh, you know, the teepee, um, you know, ceremony done in a circle. You enter the powwow and you enter clockwise, your life cycle, the life cycle of anybody, um, that everything's in a circle. Um, I've heard argue also about one of the things that was confusing when Europeans came was the idea of an acre and a square. It just, this was incomprehensible that somebody wanted to own 50 feet of a Creek over here. There's no logic in that. It is a way of looking at the world and it's circular. It's just a different way of looking and structuring your thoughts.

PS: Thank you DG for this special time. And thank you also, listeners for joining us today. In the episode page, we will let you all know the pickup information for our making activity. The page will also have information about DG House, her website, and also pictures of her work that we discussed today. Our next episode will be in February 2021. So we hope that you will wait with excitement until then, keep on making and boiler up!

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