

Danielle Marie New: You know, so now that we've done some of those introductions Lynn I would love, if you could just tell us a little bit about the piece in the show beating coven 19 to death.

Danielle Marie New: What are some of those main themes.

And how did those themes developed for you.

Whitford: I I suppose the both the name and the appearance of the piece make it pretty clear but I started doing that piece several months into the pandemic, when I was.

Whitford: feeling myself falling apart, I.

Whitford: I was trying to go to the studio and work on pieces that I had been doing and I just lost interest my studio mates were all staying away for to protect our health.

Whitford: So it was lonely and it just everything seemed like what's the point what's the point and.

Whitford: So I thought, maybe it would be therapeutic to really bang on metal and.

Whitford: For anybody who doesn't know about the process of raising, which is the main technique I use.

Whitford: It involves taking a flat sheet of metal and hammering it into a hollow form and it's a very slow process.

Whitford: That, little by little, you raise the you cut a disc of metal generally and by hammering it leaning against the steel steak and hammering.

Whitford: You slowly slowly slowly bring it up, and you can make it be pretty much with any kind of form, you want it to be so, I decided to do a funerary urn with the words coburn stamped all over the surface and to do that I described.

Whitford: concentric circles small ones, all the way over the surface of the metal and then I have little steel tools with letters on them, I actually have three different sizes, so all the way around each concentric circle I stamped code 19 in a variety of sizes of the letters.

Whitford: And numbers until I cover the entire surface with the words and at that point, I started raising it from the flat sheet into the funeral and so as I raised it.

Whitford: I kept hitting those letters with my hammer and.

Whitford: So I would raise it up, you know from flat to just slightly rounded, then I would heat it up to soften the metal coolant bring it back and raise it some more so I don't know 30 times or so, to get it to the final form.

Whitford: it's a very slow process and ancient process and very slow and, as I hit it the letters kept getting mashed a little bit and distorted, to some extent, and by the end of it.

Whitford: A lot of the words were not legible anymore, but some are and but they're elongated and distorted.

Whitford: So, if you look carefully, if you if you look at the name, you can you can find those words throughout the piece.

Whitford: And then I made a top where I also I did the same thing, but the top didn't need to be don't very much, and so the words on the top are clear so anybody can see what it looked like before I smashed it and.

Whitford: It was fun being.

Whitford: Making the words trying to disappear it's a metaphorically, at least, I was beating it.

Whitford: So that's it's a pretty simple meaning, this is like let's get rid of this thing, but the activity of doing it was also useful for me I just said, lost my.

Whitford: interest in doing the pieces i'd started before i've gone back now to work on them a little bit, but that's what it's about and I think it's probably pretty obvious since it's a funerary turn.

Danielle Marie New: Well, I love that because Hannah and I we actually how we.

Danielle Marie New: first saw the piece was in it's in that flat form, I believe that the gallery.

Danielle Marie New: Yes, photo of it and Hannah and I saw it and thought this is so perfect for the show we're doing, and then, when we when he contacted the gallery about it and they showed us the finished piece we weren't a little bit confused because we saw that first.

class.

Whitford: it's so important to find.

Danielle Marie New: out about this process for.

Whitford: viewers.

Danielle Marie New: appreciate hearing about this it's so it's so fascinating so thank you.

Whitford: it's very i'm really impressed with the way the gallery has adapted.

Whitford: To the pandemic where they couldn't have very many people in the gallery they've kept.

Whitford: It open I think straight through but with very few people actually coming in, and the fact that they got people putting on pieces in in process, I thought was very helpful and interesting it's a wonderful gallery I love it.

Danielle Marie New: I totally agree.

Danielle Marie New: Wonderful well i'm moving on to more about the show as, as you know, the exhibit standing still has a dual theme one of.

Danielle Marie New: feeling frozen and still in time and the second of resiliency and emerging from struggles still standing so i'm just curious what are some of your reflections on this theme, especially as it relates to your work.

Whitford: I think both of those are very appropriate for.

Whitford: This particular piece, I was feeling very frozen I have become a jigsaw puzzle addict because I just couldn't make myself do anything and that's it.

Whitford: is not very useful but it's at least harmless drug free way of escaping from what just seemed to me like such a nightmare.

Whitford: So I was very stuck I the pieces I had started before I didn't feel like working on didn't feel like going to the studio but the ability, finally, to go back.

Whitford: and put some of that into words and then be through words and actually be using my body again and pulling myself back to the studio was very helpful and did lift me at least slightly out of the depression that the.

Whitford: endemic has caused.

Whitford: i'm really interested in seeing what other people have done as well, and how they.

Whitford: answer these questions.

Danielle Marie New: yeah I think that that's a lot of beauty of what we're of what the interview process is trying to accomplish for us, we love, having heard about you know people's different experiences and.

Danielle Marie New: You know there's some pieces in the show that reflect a little bit more of the positive outlook on on things and some that are beautiful deep reflections on the harm that's been caused and.

Whitford: I think the.

Danielle Marie New: aerie really well together.

Danielle Marie New: So you're so right I.

Danielle Marie New: I totally agree.

Wonderful.

Danielle Marie New: um and then, how do you hope your art will impact the viewers of this show, if at all.

Danielle Marie New: What ideas or emotions or conversations might you expect viewers to have.

Whitford: Well, I hope.

Whitford: At some point in the not too distant future will be passed this pandemic so it's I hope it'll be a reminder of nothing anyone who's going through, it will forget it, but.

Whitford: I guess I just hope that people see.

Whitford: What I.

Whitford: mean to convey and that it in time just becomes a reminder of the terror of this pandemic, which has killed so many people.

Danielle Marie New: yeah that that's a it's it's definitely a great reminder but it's something that that we all have to you know reckon with I agree.

Whitford: I you will you may know, from from the piece and from my other work that i'm much more of a glass half empty person in the glass half full so i'm glad they're a glass half full people around the world, and who can find the.

Whitford: it's, not that I can't find the good but.

Whitford: I tend to see into the depths pretty easily.

Whitford: So I did I have during this pandemic.

And that's important, I think, so too, you know.

yeah.

Whitford: it's been a very strange time to live through I mean i'm glad that we have lived through it, but I mean that we're alive, but.

Whitford: You just can't feel Okay, when you read the newspapers and listen know how it's affected other people how many people have been lost.

yeah it's it's it's such a tragedy.

Danielle Marie New: And you know we're we're so grateful that you're here, speaking with us today, and you know, please you know feel free to share as much or as little as you want, but we'd love to move into discussing a little bit about your past year, it has been about 12 months since.

Danielle Marie New: The pandemic has arrived in the US and so i'm just wondering how these past 12 months have been for you personally.

Whitford: And you know I really lost my sense of time so that that part is part one of the ideas of your show, and I just find it strange to think.

Whitford: I mean normally i'm a very i'm shy but i'm a social person within my small group I live with other people I work with other people I have family i'm very close to and normally see quite a lot, even though none of them live near me and.

Whitford: So the isolation, I mean i'm I have a good husband to share the House with them, I know that i'm luckier than many, many people and that I am able to shelter in place, I didn't have to go out and risk my life, the way so many essential workers and medical people have I could and did.

Whitford: My house is big enough, I can afford good food and can keep eating well but.

Whitford: I still have felt really isolated and we do zoom calls with our family and.

Whitford: it's a lot better than nothing, but it's just very strange.

Whitford: And my studio was with set it up, surely after I finished graduate school and I was in my early 40s and it was for friends on belt smith's who rented a space and collectively got tools and, since then, some of the people, some people have moved away and other 17 we're now.

Whitford: Five medals and a hat maker, but the spaces and we each have our own hand tools and.

Whitford: But we share the rent and we share the Vance system and.

Whitford: We share the space and we help one another and.

Whitford: The hat maker turned into a mask maker, and she kept coming into work she has sort of her own space within there, but the middle people were not in very much so, it just got very lonely and.

Whitford: I usually am okay with I work there alone, some of the time and it's fine, but I realized, it was very different when no one was going to come in and no one ever came in.

Whitford: and

Whitford: And I have to say i've gotten pretty depressed and anxious and.

Whitford: So i'm now getting back to work or i'm actually now fully vaccinated which is like having a superpower.

Whitford: So bit life is beginning to return and and i'm getting back to the studio more and i'm working on some other pieces but but it's just been a.

Whitford: I would say, a miserable year compounded by guilt that feeling sorry for myself when I know, most people have a harder time than I do, and we haven't lost anybody to the virus ourselves as just people I don't know but I I feel so strongly that.

Whitford: we're all connected and it's not okay to hear about those people if you still feel terrible even when they're not your own people.

Whitford: gone down.

Whitford: And we do know quite a few people have had it, but nobody who's died of it.

Whitford: So that's my year.

Danielle Marie New: yeah I mean i'm i'm so glad to hear that that you're fully vaccinated that's so that's great news um but yeah I mean.

Danielle Marie New: Thank you for that reflection, because.

Danielle Marie New: I feel, at least that it's so important to discuss these things.

Danielle Marie New: And you know everybody's hurting and it's it's but it's also great to see that you know okay I i'm okay and.

Danielle Marie New: to feel that empathy for others who are in a worse situation you know.

Whitford: it's part of mine and a nice show is is about as well mm hmm.

Whitford: You think.

Danielle Marie New: Over the past year you learned anything about yourself personally or or as an artist at all.

Whitford: You know I think what I learned is.

Whitford: There isn't exactly things I didn't know but they're just much more vivid.

Whitford: lived knowledge, rather than just I mean i've always I would never have I never have lived alone and I wouldn't live alone, and I would not have set up a studio on my own.

Whitford: i've even like collaborative work working collaboratively with other artists and I do it very smoothly I don't often even remember what part I did something I like collective action that's just how I work, the best and.

Whitford: But it became really evident during the pandemic, when I was working there alone, and not just the loneliness but I realize much more at a conscious level how much my studio mates.

Whitford: helped me, I mean that it's like when i'm trying to figure something out, and I can go over one and say what do you think about this, you like it better with this or that way and.

Whitford: This and getting their opinions, is helpful and not only opinions, but they we do things for one another.

Whitford: Because we each have different techniques we're.

Whitford: particularly good at or some we don't do what we need, so I don't do any casting, for example, and so I need to get somebody else to do the casting and and I have studio mates who can do it, and so we trade or do things for one another and.

Whitford: Even for doing i've been doing a lot of.

Whitford: etching in the last 10 years or so, which I learned from studio mates To start with, and I use a some of its handwritten stuff written.

Whitford: With a pen that's resist that I can use for etching but others I actually use a special kind of paper that you can heat transfer, you can add you can Xerox onto it and then he transfer that onto the metal.

Whitford: But you need a really good particular kind of Xerox machine and the only one, I know of is in a local technical college for one of my studio mates teachers and another one takes classes, so I used to be able to get my xeroxing done there now I, so I can't do any of that.

Whitford: I can't do that kind of etching until the pandemic is over, and someone can help me but it's it's one of those things where I look at the pieces and I think I have to wait until so and so's back for this, and I could get the casting done.

Whitford: So I really the interdependency just became more vivid if you had asked me before the pandemic and I thought about it, I could have told you all that, but it wasn't so evident to me how much difference, it made towards how smoothly, I can work.

Danielle Marie New: yeah I think i've also kind of realized that i'm a much more social being than I thought I was you know.

Danielle Marie New: yeah yes i'm introverted but it's a whole new level what during this.

Whitford: Year, as you know, yeah it's one thing to be there and think somebody else might stop in and sometimes you think oh good nobody's here, I can bang away and not worry about.

Whitford: About bothering anyone but.

Whitford: At some point I wanted to bother them.

Whitford: When people around the whole building in fact my studio is located in an old bus station.

Whitford: which has many different businesses.

and

Whitford: So a lot of them were just a way, you know that there was nobody in the hallways now they're back and we're all masked and you know, some people are back, but it's you can't.

Whitford: there's some new businesses and waiting till everybody's vaccinated and we don't have to wear masks and we can meet one another and get together again there's a.



Whitford: bakery there is a bar and a brewery and people can sit outside and have their drinks, but it's just not the same it's it's waiting for life to.

Whitford: Like waiting for your plans to come up in the spring i'm waiting for the people to come back up.

Danielle Marie New: That was a really beautiful quote.

Danielle Marie New: about the flowers in the spring.

Danielle Marie New: Well, wonderful, is there any little thing that you hope others can take away from this past year's events.

Whitford: What I hope I hope at some point.

Whitford: That the terrible polarization we have as a country.

Whitford: guys back some.

Whitford: With jump out of office and and that at some point that people can that we can look back over this.

Whitford: pandemic and see how much we did wrong and think about how to deal with the next one, because you know if there's any.

Whitford: bad thing I take away from this year, I did not, I would not have anticipated how many people there are who are.

Whitford: On willing or unable.

Whitford: to care about protecting other people, I mean it's it's not fun wearing a mask but it's really not that big deal.

Whitford: And they have so many people unwilling to do anything something as simple as wearing a mask to protect other people as though it's only about them it's I just don't get it and.

Whitford: You know, it makes me cry I.

Whitford: I don't understand it at all it's you know, maybe you won't get sick and die because you're young and healthy but you'll give it to your grandmother or your neighbor the checkout person at the grocery store and it's not that hard to understand, I think, part of the problem has been really.

Whitford: inconsistent messaging and you know, some countries have done a lot better so i'm hoping that when this is over.

Whitford: And things calm down and it stops all being about which side are you on that we can think about how we might have saved so many thousands of lives.

Whitford: and keep funding from the CDC and keep funding research and listen restore science to something that's not equivalent to some guys God, you know it's it's.

Whitford: that's what I hope I hope there'll be some reckoning, I mean this is the same thing a tragedy it's hit different communities very unequally by racial group and age and income and.

Whitford: I think if we can't do some more better redistribution of resources will stay on this mess, but.

Whitford: With all lot of luck, maybe we can I mean we've got global warming on the horizon and species die out and so many things that are going to hurt us if we can't get together and act more collectively, for the good of.

Whitford: Our our species and the animal and plant worlds so.

Whitford: Maybe it's not I don't know how how optimistic to be but.

Whitford: it's my hope.

Danielle Marie New: really hit the nail on the head with that response.

Danielle Marie New: And I were nodding nodding a lot when you were speaking just.

Danielle Marie New: Now yeah that's it's such a.

Danielle Marie New: it's such a beautiful hope for what could be, I think.

Whitford: You know if we act collectively, we can do a lot, and if we don't we'll go down It just seems that simple.

Whitford: A lot of the pieces, I was working on actually before the pandemic were.

Whitford: pieces, where I was trying to address things like climate change and species die out and also loneliness I didn't think about that I was.

Whitford: Before this interview, I was looking back over the work of the past 10 years and there are a number of pieces that are about loneliness and others about.

Whitford: invasive plants and how we how we think about invasive, which is to me a complicated issue, it was like too close to how we think about people so very mixed feelings about calling plants invasive so one of the pieces I did is about that, like whom can we call invasive.

Whitford: Thinking about things come and go anyway, these are issues that went in my mind way before the pandemic but way more vividly now and.

Whitford: Maybe we'll come out of it with.

Whitford: Some maybe we can make peace I hope.

Danielle Marie New: I hope so and, and you know your work is so thoughtful and I can see those those themes in what you do and I, if you have anything else to add about your work or about the show just feel free you know before we decide to wrap up.

Whitford: and running, I would just say if anybody's interested in seeing more of my work traver gallery had has a great website and some of its air, but I also have a website, which is just limited for calm.

Whitford: which has a lot of the older work, so you can see my trajectory from the first work was more about.

Whitford: objects and their relationship to their people and a little more formal looking and then gradually i've moved into work that's gotten more.

Whitford: about the kind of issues we've been talking about so it's it's all on there, as far as this show i'm just really looking forward to seeing it so whenever it gets online i'll be i'll be there.

Whitford: To look at what other people have done and listen to what they say.

Whitford: My kids may be able to get to see that show in person, I think.

Whitford: we'll get out to Seattle, in May.

Whitford: But probably not later in the year, but since two of the kids and my brothers live in Washington and they go up to shy and My guess is that they'll be able to stop and see the show in person, maybe take some pictures for me.

Whitford: I hope.

I hope we can.

Danielle Marie New: Okay wonderful well well Thank you so much for your reflections today and, and it was just great you know, being able to speak with you, I can go ahead and stop the recording for now.

Whitford: Okay, thanks.