

# ART + PRACTICE

## TRANSCRIPTION OF ARTIST TALK: MELVINO GARRETTI FROM JUNE 15, 2021

**JOSHUA ODUGA:** Hello everyone. Thank you for joining me for this public program, Artist Talk Melvino Garretti. My name is Joshua Oduka, and I'm the Public Programs and Exhibitions Manager at Art + Practice. I'm very excited to welcome you all to this program, which is being pre-recorded. This program will take shape in the form of a conversation between myself and the artist Melvino Garretti. Melvino has been working in LA as a sculptor and a painter and a multidisciplinary artist for over 30 years. He started off as one of the residents at the Studio Watts project and ever since then has been doing so many amazing things. So I'm really excited to talk to Melvino today and share a little bit about his art and his life with you all. Hi, Melvino.

**MELVINO GARRETTI:** Hello, how are you?

**ODUGA:** I'm good, how are you doing?

**GARRETTI:** Oh man, I can't believe it.

**ODUGA:** Doing good, doing good, yeah. Well first of all, I wanted to say thank you for the conversations that we've been having over the past few weeks leading up to this program. I mentioned to you that I saw your artwork a really long time ago before I was even thinking about having a crazy job like this or working with art, and it really stuck with me when I first saw it so I've been wanting to have some kind of conversation and meet you for a long time. I didn't think that it would be like this, but I'm very happy that we're doing it today.

**GARRETTI:** Thank you Josh for having me and thank Art + Practice for having a platform like this for artists to be able to be seen and be interviewed to sometimes speak in their own words instead of people talking for them doing interviews.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, I appreciate that. And that's one of the things I think that I really appreciate about the conversations we've been having and about your art as well is kind of just doing things your own way and speaking in your own voice. So I'm really excited for this conversation to really take shape in the form of a conversation between us. And I wanted to start it off by talking about really early on, just very briefly, when you first were making work in South LA, we had a chance to have lunch together and you were talking about your experience of making art and thinking about going to school and what that meant to you. So I wanted to ask you if you could talk a little bit about that time, about when you were working in South LA and you were thinking about going to University as a young black man during that time.

**GARRETTI.:**

I don't think that I ever thought about going to a University as an artist. I think that's something that just dropped in my lap after a while. I have thought about being an artist ever since I was about nine or 10 years old and was told that artists don't make any type of living. And I was born in '46 so by the time I was nine or 10 that was like '56. So talking about being an artist in those days when black people were trying to maintain jobs or get jobs, LA was unique in the sense that after the war there was a lot of employment and black people were able to get a lot of employment because this was an industrial town at that particular time. When I became a young adult, I could remember taking friends to look for a job and you ended up with a job because there were so many jobs available. We had in the city here Firestone, McDonnell Douglas, Hughes, Bethlehem Steel, there were just tons of employment.

And as we got employed, sometimes people maintained that employment status for lifetime jobs and that was never one of my objectives, even though that was one of my parent's objectives for me, maintaining one of those so-called good jobs. Like I told you the other day, when I was nine or 10, my dream was to become an artist. I didn't know exactly what that journey entailed, but here I am probably 50 years later, since 18 I'm 74 now. So I was 18, 50 plus years.

**ODUGA:**

That's really interesting, especially in terms of during that time when there's all these jobs. I talk to so many artists nowadays, people in my generation, and the idea is how do I make work? How do I have studio time if I have to grind out and I have to have a job? And nowadays we have technology and all these different things that you can use to help find a job, but it still seems like there's not that long term employment that you were talking about. So I always wonder during that time when you were making work and like you said you weren't thinking about University, which is totally on my radar, I totally understand how that is, you were doing some other stuff, moving in a totally different manner. It's really interesting then to think about when that opportunity does fall in your lap and you kind of have your parents in your ear, you have society telling you as a black man there's this job out there, you gotta take this opportunity. To then pivot towards making work and doing the things that you were doing, I think that it has to do a lot probably with the people that you were around, right? That's what I would guess.

**GARRETTI:**

Pretty much my peers were very important and they always have even as I make art today. And man, I grew up in Compton and so making things and having space to make things was really available because I come from a, let me say, a neighborhood where everybody in the neighborhood were homeowners and they were complete families with a mother, a father and kids. And so that was sort of, it's unusual talking to people today when you have a full family. I'm going to jump around a little bit in talking about this or approaching my journey because I had the desire to become an artist but I didn't know how to pursue that desire until after the Watts riots and a lot of art projects appeared and educational opportunities appeared, so the direction was changed and talent came to our area. And I'm saying talent in the sense that there were professional

personalities that emerged in the media and came to Los Angeles, especially the Watts area. And some of these projects gave young people like myself an opportunity to join. There's some stuff going on in the background, I don't know if you guys hear, but once again this is part of family life and this is what was going on when I was a kid as a young man.

But those things are pretty much what makes my art today a lot of times is what's going on in the background and comes to the foreground in order for me to become creative. So I like sometimes what appears to be distractions but gives me an opportunity to think about some things that people recognize, opposed to always referring to art sometimes being abstract.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, and I bet, just to take it back to what you were just saying, during that time when there was so much of a spotlight on what was happening in Watts and people were making it, your peers and stuff like that were breaking in various different ways, I always think about when that happens it gives you the opportunity to be more abstract in what you're doing and to be more creative. When you have the space, like you were just saying, when you have the space to do that. And I always think about how some people when they want to make stuff they try to shut down everything and they try to go into this space where they try to shut down the world, and when I saw your work which we'll get into showing some pictures of your work in a little bit, it's very much like you can see that this person is not trying to shut out the distractions, that you're [crosstalk 00:09:51] so many different things in the work.

**GARRETTI:** No, I enjoyed my childhood as far as with my peers. The kids in the neighborhood were able to make kites, coasters out of the Union 5 skates, mini bikes out of the lawnmower engines and a little bit of, I don't even know how to describe this without becoming too criminal, because being a kid sometimes there's a lot of mischief in going into getting materials and how you gather materials. So I was about to talk about some stuff going into the laundromat and retrieving certain materials in order to make these mini bikes. I also raise pigeons so I have experience in building pigeon coops and various, always making things and everybody in the neighborhood was making things.

**ODGUA:** Yeah, doing as much as possible right.

**GARRETTI:** Unlike kids today that barely want to go outdoors. We were always outdoors and that's pretty much how my life goes today. By about six o'clock I'm ready to go outside, in the morning, if it's no more than to just stand in front of my house and stand on the porch.

**ODUGA:** And I wanted to talk to you about the work about what you were just saying, that idea of being outside, having all these different influences. I thought it was really interesting when I first met you and I talked to you and I was like, "Yo, I'm really excited about your sculpture," you're like, "That's not all I make. I don't only make sculptures, I'm making so many other types of work." And I look at so

many different artist's work all the time, and people really love to put people in those boxes and sometimes there's reasons why you might need to do that, but I thought it was really interesting that you're just like, "Yo, I don't only make sculptures, I don't only do this."

**GARRETTI:** Well, it's not that I don't only make sculptures, most people put me in the clay box, I'm a clay worker, I'm a potter. And now today I kind of embrace that. I enjoy being connected with one of the oldest professions on the planet and how the transformation from tribalism to civilization has occurred through this material called clay, which is a plastic and plastic meaning moldable. And today, a lot of times that is the root of my still making things and how you can change this material into a lot of variables of tangible objects. Besides conductors and the paneling on the space shuttle, it gets beyond that. Besides in your bathroom all the toilets and sinks, to the days of creating clay sculptures that participated in various rituals.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, and were you thinking about this way back in the day when you first [inaudible 00:13:46] with this material, or do you think that this is something that over the years of working with the material both as an artist, and then I know that you also work with other artists assisting and doing all this other work that as an artisan, as a maker, that would entail. Do you think that that philosophy is something that you've built over time?

**GARRETTI:** Yes. The journey permitted me to sometimes indulge into the history of making things and in understanding that history sometimes a lot of times you find out what is an easy material to create a model from? And clay has been the vehicle for centuries, centuries, and sometimes we are not aware of the fact that how it has evolved and how it's, like I say, changed tribalism into civilization with tools, with storage, with learning how to harness fire or learning how to take care of air or how to utilize water, irrigation, to pipes and things. Man, there's so much that it has contributed and how you still utilize all of the five elements when you're making something out of it.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, it never ceases to amaze me. And I bet that you are probably still learning new techniques and applying new things on the regular as well, right?

**GARRETTI:** I don't know about new techniques as much as taking old information and trying to make new objects or developing myself into either further craftsmanship with. Because a lot of it is about practice. Process itself is how you practice. And if you don't practice a lot of times, utilizing the material, and material, a lot of times has limitations to it. And sometimes as you learn about the materials, there are some philosophies that are employed like inferior materials a lot of times have limitations.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, so imagine that trial and error is probably a big part.

**GARRETTI:** Yeah. But also, superior materials don't have any limitations to it because a lot of times you don't get a chance to work it thoroughly. And sometimes that philosophy is cultural and they are great ceramic cultures and a lot of times we sometimes don't understand that. The Africans did earthenware and they ended up making a dwelling besides a sculpture or statues or rituals with clay. The Europeans were similar in the fact that they used earthenware along with the Africans. And Asian culture had what they called stone ware, which helped to develop how to use fire. And their ware was a lot harder as far as density and so the purpose changed.

**ODUGA:** So in a work like this one that we're looking at, you're thinking about all of these different things as you're formulating the work I imagine?

**GARRETTI:** In this work a lot of times, this is accumulated experience. I have already had a chance to understand the usage of clay. These are sort of recent works and I'm saying recent within the last 20 years. I've got a 50 year relationship with clay, minimum.

**ODUGA:** And then other elements start to come in as well.

**GARRETTI:** This is a collage which you're showing, or assemblage.

**ODUGA:** Are there some clay elements that you made here as well or is all just assemblage?

**GARRETTI:** This is all assemblages, and these assemblages sometimes represent materials that are laying around. They end up being models for things that I can make out of clay. And that's been an interesting experience for me to create something like this and then mimic it in clay, make the hat, make the shoes, make the beaded work, make clay look like it's cloth. And those are the sculptural aspects of manipulating the material itself as opposed to just gathering various materials. And these materials a lot of times are experiences that I've had with objects. That's my old hat I used to wear. [crosstalk 00:19:56] dressed up.

**ODUGA:** It's funny that you mention that, because when I see all of your work one of the things that I always think about is I want to know the story behind some of this stuff. And I've seen other work that's sculptural that brings in other elements that might be similar to assemblage, things that you might have around your studio or stuff like that, and I feel like that's so much reflective of your personality as well. So when you say that was my hat, I'm just like, "Yeah."

**GARRETTI:** So these are relationships.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, it's relationships. Yeah, and that just goes back to what we were talking about and what you were saying in terms of your relationship both to the medium and then I think to the practice at large and what that means to be an

artist and all of that in the various different ways. And this is the same work, just a different view of it?

**GARRETTI:** Yes it is. Along with myth and idio, how do you say that, idiosyncrasies.

**ODUGA:** Idiosyncrasies, yeah.

**GARRETTI:** Yes. The bone in the hat, the bone in your nose. But yet there are rituals in various tribes and how you bring it to a contemporary sense today.

**ODUGA:** I feel like you are a person that makes a lot of observations in a sense, and I'm always a fan of artists that make those observations about themselves and about things around them, because it's always interesting the various different ways that that creeps into the work that you're making.

**GARRETTI:** I was told to be an astute observer, that's how you make art. And because a lot of times, I was telling you about my little thing that I've been writing about in the last 40 years in this art practice about me no longer being an artist, I'm an urban and suburban anthropologist. I mimic other artists, industry and products. So I don't have to be that unique as much as being observant.

**ODUGA:** That's so interesting as you say that because your artwork comes across as so original, but then in a sense you do get a sense of like this person is tracking so much different kinds of information in the work that they're making. Like a lot of times you see people's artwork and you know very clearly and squarely the point of reference that they're coming from, like what they're talking about and all of that stuff. You might even be able to pinpoint exactly where they went to school and who taught them if you are that well versed in it. But I feel like if you are an observer, if you're a person that's creating and you're observing on that level, it's really hard to only reflect one point of view or one style or one medium in the work that you're doing.

Like with a work like this, I'm so familiar with your work and then you sent me images for us to talk about and I saw this and I was like, "I have to talk to him about this," because I've never seen any of your works like this before, and it's so good.

**GARRETTI:** Well, this is me being a painter, but yet still having [inaudible 00:23:22] involved, also the fact that where I had gone to school as an artist and in understanding its application with my own imagery. And I don't know if it's my own imagery a lot of times as once again we're talking about how we observe things and it's just the way that I lay it down. It's like taking a musician is taking a tune and rearranging it. And that's what's been done as me being a painter sometimes and me being a painter or even with my ceramic stuff, a lot of times when I'm using color and lines and stuff, I'm merely making marks. And the marks add up to being a form. But how you practice it a lot of times reveals your personality.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, like how you apply it, how you choose to apply those things. And you make a really, really interesting analogy to music and I think you mentioned before when we were talking about technique a few minutes ago, it's like a remix, you make a remix. And what's so really interesting, music is my point of reference to a lot of different art, that's what I first started off with, and what's very important about a remix is that you have these master sections, you have the original parts of the original file and you're switching it around. So you might have the same trumpet part, you might have the same drum loop, all of that stuff, and it's not necessarily about reinventing that completely, it's about how you're going to make it your own, how you're going to flip it into your style.

**GARRETTI:** Yeah, you can play a Thelonious Monk tune but you're not going to sound like Thelonious Monk.

**ODUGA:** You're not going to sound like Thelonious, yeah. And it's really interesting, Thelonious is a really great reference for that because some of his stuff, some of the stuff I really like to listen to is listening to the various different versions of a live performance that he did and how vastly different those things are. And I think that's really important for people to know when you talk about jazz and Thelonious is the person for you to really [crosstalk 00:25:39]

**GARRETTI:** Oh man, he's phenomenal with playing the same tune and it ends up having a different arrangement. Just the mere fact that he doesn't even try to arrange it the same.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, and you mentioned the mark, making marks and doing that kind of stuff. And I think people who are doing that, it's very easy for them to take on this method of making work that you're talking about, so I wonder for yourself, do you do sketchbooks and things like that? Is that something that you do frequently? Or are you going straight to the canvas and straight to the clay first and then it forms that way?

**GARRETTI:** I vary. I've done a lot of drawing and then I have done a lot of stuff that's just straightforward. I'm one of those people also that I move according to the ideas that I have a lot of times and how immediate or how accessible I am to put something down. It's not just a sketchbook and then I copy it out from the sketchbook. No, it's sometimes a canvas in front of me and I jump in a mood and at two or three o'clock at night or during the day I start applying my method. Because I'm one of those that have all of a sudden dumped dirt in a cafeteria and hooked up a water sprinkler to it and turned it into mud because I like performance art too. I did a lot of early performance pieces in the early '70s and practiced with some people from the Studio Watts days in the late '60s.

**ODUGA:** And those things were based a lot around, was it improvisation or was it more like you were moving rehearsals and things of that nature?

**GARRETTI:** It ended up being rehearsed in the sense that you rehearsed making marks, but when the performance came the performance was always fresh. And as a result of studying that system, I kind of do that in my art practice today.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, that's really interesting because there's so many [crosstalk 00:28:19]

**GARRETTI:** I got a chance to work through Studio Watts in the '60s with a performing artist Anna Halprin. And I learned a lot about spontaneity as a result of practicing something. Spontaneity doesn't mean that you haven't practiced a routine or a mark, it's just how the performance is composed ends up being your product.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, that's really interesting that after so long you still have applied. And I imagine an experience like that, it sticks with you, especially working in a group and working so intensely with a group of performers. And that was like your first entry into performance, correct, when you were working with Anna?

**GARRETTI:** Yes, so this is a performance actually, and it's a performance about me having a life experience, somebody stole my car. And you see I got a gun and a baseball bat and instead of beating the person I put it on canvas because that's exactly where I really wanted to go, I wanted to beat the person up. And I put some other little elements of spirituality, how you find yourself, but yet the anxiety is there, the anger is there. Not psychically having to do anything to somebody, you really wanted to, but there's some principles.

**ODUGA:** Your work really reflects a lot of different emotions simultaneously at once and I think this is a good piece to talk about that in it, because one of the things I thought when I first saw your work is like, "Man, I would really like to see a video of this artist making the work." So it was really funny that you mentioned that you see this as a performance.

**GARRETTI:** It's a performance because bottom line, if I hadn't come home and started working on this, I'm one of those that have a bad reputation sometimes, I have been known to lay outside your house and wait for you.

**ODUGA:** So you use your artwork and your practice in general as an artist to work through some of those things?

**GARRETTI:** Oh for sure, for sure. The obsession will turn into a compulsion, and the compulsion ends up being a physical thing opposed to just thinking about it. So I go off road a little bit and put it into some materials instead of putting it on somebody.

**ODUGA:** And the work is very visceral in that sense as well, sometimes it's very imposing or intimidating or even scary at the same time. I took my kids to see your latest show that was just up this year that closed about a month or so ago, and it was really funny to hear their reactions to this kind of stuff because they no point of reference ever for who an artist is or why they make the artwork, they're really



just taking it at face value. So to walk into the room and to see one work and they're like, "This is funny, and this is scary," and all of these different things, I think for me as a person that helps artists put their artwork in a museum or in a gallery, that's all you can really ask for. All the other stuff is secondary, [crosstalk 00:32:14]

**GARRETTI:** Those were a lot of emotions that I put out there because that show was entitled something about a carnival, and sometimes we think that a carnival is always about enjoyment, but the enjoyment sometimes is what end you are at doing the affair of the carnival. Because they were hanging black folks and it was a carnival. You come out there with some popcorn and some hotdogs and watch somebody get hung. And that was a carnival atmosphere, and a lot of the pieces that I did in this last show had to do with real dramatic situations that I've had to experience, especially with relationships, especially with relationship with my significant other or with my kids or with the school itself as far as the ideology of society that ends up being the ideology of society. Looking at what people spend money on, why they issue money, or being a predatory capitalist and not wanting to be a part of that but understanding that if you're not a part of that you won't be able to make any art unless you get a job.

And so that's the hard thing to figure out when you are a young artist, even when you become an older artist, how to prevent your stuff that you made from just going out to the trash. So a lot of times you prepare yourself, especially at my age, for somebody else to take care of and not realize that how long can they take care of it if there's no collectors?

**ODUGA:** Yeah, it's so interesting thinking about all of these things that you just said in terms of a carnival, kind of like a circus, that life feels like sometimes. I definitely have been feeling that myself and thinking about it in the past year, and more and more when I talk to artists they're saying that. So it's really interesting to talk to a person like you because so many people that I know look up to you and they're making work that is definitely reflective of the work that you have been making for so long.

**GARRETTI:** But I'm not unique in that area, not to just cut you off, there are a lot of artists that I admire and I follow too, and like I was saying earlier that I mimic product, artist and industry.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, and that's what I was going to say, still being at the level that you're at being on the grind for as long as you have been and still asking questions, still being comfortable doing that kind of stuff, I think is something that anybody can learn from in any kind of career path that they're taking, whether it be art of whatever. I think that's just really interesting. And I really love this piece as well because I think it starts to creep towards a combination of all the different things that you do. Because what I was first drawn to here is how some of the paint and the different colors are applied to this work. And I was really interested and wanted to talk a little bit to you just briefly, kind of talking about

this work about how you make this with your hands, how you begin the process. And we've gotten into that a little bit, but I thought we could talk about it specifically based on this work.

**GARRETI:** This is a gathering of materials once again, and transforming those materials into an object that has some ritual meaning. I almost want to say this is almost like me being in drag, because parts of this are carved out of a palm leaf, and at this time that I was making this object I had been carving a lot out of palm leaves that tend to fall off those large palm trees. And I wasn't able to go out and buy basilwood, which is a softer wood, but these palm, I don't know what you call them exactly, I'm saying leaf but it's more than just a leaf.

**ODUGA:** Is it the big bark looking part that falls off?

**GARRETTI:** Yes, there's a section of it that I would cut off and then carve into it. And then I also was telling you about having this family history of my grandparents making things and so they had cleaners and at this cleaners they collected a lot of objects because after the cleaners they had a restaurant, my grandfather had an auto mechanic garage. And so I kind of inherited this building and all of these [inaudible 00:38:01] materials were left in this building and so this is a collective of some of those materials and then transformed into this object with some little bits of some ceramic things to ornament it. Because there are some little ceramic pieces inside this object.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, like inside the star looking part there and towards the bottom it looks like there's some there.

**GARRETTI:** Well, inside this opening, that's the tail of one of those toys of a dinosaur. And the feathers were from some sort of shawl. My grandmother and great aunt also made hats for all the women at the church, so I had a whole bunch of materials left for me, man. And I'm just like them, if you ever come over soon, and I hope to have you over soon, you'll see that I'm one of the most junkiest guys. I got so much junk. When people started dying off in my family and my grandmother was left alone, I didn't even know if she could even get in her bed. She had so much junk gathered around her. And I'm almost similar.

**ODUGA:** And do you think that goes back to that idea of you being an urban anthropologist like you said?

**GARRETTI:** Yes.

**ODUGA:** Because I feel like you are a person that you ascribe a lot of meaning to objects. And I'm like that as well, that's definitely 100% why Art + Practice has me in this role because I think about objects and I think about them and what they mean to people.

**GARRETTI:** Yeah, one of the artists that I admired a lot that had a sense of that was John Outterbridge.

**ODUGA:** John Outterbridge, yeah.

**GARRETTI.:** Yeah, and man, and communicating with him I could always get grounded and in making things that are sometimes, we go to art school, we try not to be that unique as much as look at art form, but an art form ended up being a magazine, so we mimic what we see in various magazines and books opposed to sometimes what your emotions are, what your feelings are, what your insight to society could be. Because I have a lot of fantasies still going on that I don't even know if they're real or if they're false.

**ODUGA:** Yes, having that feedback is important to you.

**GARRETTI:** I used to terrorize my family sometimes in my earlier life, but they didn't like the objects that I made. In fact, sometimes I've had to tame down because of the fact that a lot of times art is really hard to live with outside of it getting decorative. People can put something on their wall that's decorative and walk past it for the next 20 years, but when you get an emotional piece of art or something, you can only view it for a little while. You don't want to get up and go to the bathroom and fall out because you think somebody's behind the door when it's a piece of sculpture or somebody's looking at you because it's a mask on the wall, it's not a personality nor is it a demon.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, it's funny that you mention that. And I think, this wall behind me, that's how all my house looks. I don't put a lot of art up on the walls in my house, but I do have lots of objects and little sculptures and things like that. I think it's because of what you just said, and I never thought about that. I ascribe a ton of meaning and emotion to art and something like that, so I think even if I were to get a piece of art from a person that I enjoy like yourself and you told me what it was about, I would think about that every single time that I looked at it. So I think for me I like to keep it minimal in that sense to clear the noise in my head and all of those things, as a person that's looking at so many different kinds of art all the time. But I think that also goes back to that idea of being an urban anthropologist or something, always being so observant, when does that end? When do you stop doing that and just take it back into your work? And I think I would struggle with that, but I think you do a really good job.

**GARRETTI:** I struggle with it. I'm struggling right now, to tell you the truth, because I was telling you before we came onto the air here that I'm a little raw, I can be real raw even though intellectually I'm a progressive. But my language skills sometimes allow me to say some things that are not appropriate. And when I make things sometimes, they're not appropriate. I noticed before I would do that, in the earlier days, women buy a lot of ceramic objects but they don't want to buy a lot of fetish objects from men as much as they would buy fetish objects from women. And I like making fetish pieces sometimes. I've had to tame myself

or redirect myself in order to make some monetary compensation for being able to live this life.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, that makes sense, as a person that has such a long practice as yourself. We live in a different time now so none of that stuff is going to fly.

**GARRETTI:** I don't know if we live in a different time, because we're in pretty much the same time, people are pruders and the difference in the time is that people like yourself have this format to interview people now, opposed to that we were excluded prior to. Because that was the thing about going to art school, I got a chance when I was at the San Francisco Art Institute to see some of the most bizarre performances that my neighborhood would frown on. And when people came from Los Angeles to San Francisco to visit me and saw some of this bizarre performance they were trying to figure out exactly what type of person I had turned into.

**ODUGA:** Just anybody that goes to an MFA program and their friends are not artists.

**GARRETTI:** Not just that, but San Francisco had a community that was a little more bizarre, like men wearing dresses coming off the heel into a minority community with beards on or with glitter all in their head and you're living there in the early '70s and they come to visit you from your hometown. They're like, "what's going on here? Why would you be living here?"

**ODUGA:** Yeah, and for a person like yourself I'm sure that you were just taking it all in and just being like, "I'm doing my thing."

**GARRETTI:** No, I was a participant at times.

**ODUGA:** I love that, I love that.

**GARRETTI:** Because you don't have to be of a certain persuasion to have some acceptance and to embrace. And that's the hardest thing to talk about a lot of times and especially even today, we think that this thing about Black Lives Matter, I love the fact that that's the issue, but it's been the issue since I've been alive. It's been the issue since the 1870s after the reconstruction after slavery. Our lives matter but it's always had to be contained. And it's easier today because of the fact that bizarreness is not that unique anymore. People do some way out. And I love cable TV because of that, I'd be better off on a cable channel.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, you need that air time where you can be uncensored.

**GARRETTI:** Yes, I can just say exactly, and the flow would even be a little bit easier as far as [crosstalk 00:48:18] even though I know how to behave through coming up. You don't get into higher education without being able to behave. I'm not going to fool myself and think that I'm so radical because of the fact that I've gotten a chance to be on various programs and do certain things and usually when I dip

too far, that's when they get rid of me. But initially I can get there. I can get through the door but I can't stay in the room too long.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, I feel it. We're doing this, so far I haven't had to hit the button on you yet. So I feel like we'll make it through this. But there was something that you said that brought something up in my mind that I wanted to ask you about on this call because you mentioned that you still look at a ton of work, you still see yourself as a part of a larger conversation and you're not the only person making the type of work that you make and all of this. And I wanted to know, one, are you still out there looking at shows? Are you going to look at new work?

**GARRETTI:** For sure, as soon as I get off this platform, I'm going to visit a gallery today.

**ODUGA:** Oh yeah? What you going to see, you going to say?

**GARRETTI:** I don't want to promote.

**ODUGA:** That's a great answer.

**GARRETTI:** Because of the fact that whoever's listening to this, a lot of times they need to be doing their own investigation. And sometimes we stay right here instead of widening the polarities. And I'm one to see a lot of different things, like I just told you besides looking at the Renaissance artists or something, I've also been in rooms where when the lights come on, all the men in there had on petticoats. And I was probably the only one without a skirt on or something and I was shocked out of my skin, but I didn't show up the next time like that, I was just as bizarre.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, so funny.

**GARRETTI:** I'm one of those people that, I'll take off my eyebrows maybe one time. But you would have to notice that I had removed my eyebrows though if anything.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, well I don't really have any other questions to ask you or anything like that, I think we touched on all the really great things that I wanted to talk about about your work and all of that. I wanted to say thanks again for making time to have this conversation, for making the work that you've been making for 30 plus years and doing it the way that you want to do.

**GARRETTI:** Say 50 plus years.

**ODUGA:** I'm not trying to date you like that.

**GARRETTI:** I want to be young, but I'm dated.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, I feel it. But I wanted to say thank you for doing it your way and unapologetically because it makes space for a person like myself to be able to

host a program like this and have a conversation with you where we just talk about whatever we want to talk about. And I think that's really important and I look forward to hanging out with you again in the future soon.

**GARRETTI:** I look forward to you hanging out with me. And thank you once again, you and Art + Practice. Before we went on I asked you, "What do I look like? Am I looking good?" Because you know I'm a ham for aesthetics.

**ODUGA:** A ham for aesthetics, yeah. You look good. Thanks again and I hope everybody enjoyed this conversation.