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Angel:

This interview is conducted in accordance with the goals and course description of HIUS 144, Race and Oral History in San Diego under the direction of Professors Luis Alvarez, Yen Espiritu and Simeon Man. In consideration of the recording and preservation of this oral history by students of the University of California, San Diego, you the Interviewee, Graham Hajosy, and I the interviewer, Angel Miguel Lopez hereby transfer to the University the rights to publish, duplicate, or otherwise use the recording(s) and transcribed interview(s), and any photographs and/or videotaped footage taken during the interview. This includes publication rights in print and electronic form such as on the Internet, the right to rebroadcast the interview or portions thereof, and permission to transfer the interview to future media. The University of California, San Diego hereby agree to preserve the products of this oral history interview according to accepted professional standards and agree to provide the narrator and interviewer with access to the taped interview(s). If you are in agreement, please say a verbal yes.

Graham:

Yes.

Angel:

Thank you. So we are starting this interview, this is being recorded. My name is Angel Miguel Lopez. I will be interviewing – if you would like to introduce yourself with a quick name

Graham:

Uh yea, Stephen Graham Hajosy.

Angel:

Today is the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2020. We are interviewing over Zoom, but both in San Diego, and the proposed subject of this interview is Graham Hajosy's work on the mural that is being put up in Chicano Park in Downtown San Diego in Barrio Logan specifically, um surrounding the life, death and story around Anastasio Hernandez Rojas. I will go ahead and begin, at anytime Graham, Just after I say the first question, feel free to begin.

So, if you could, paint me a verbal picture of your upbringing.

Graham

So in, in uh thinking about this question, The word I wanted to use was that it was a safe upbringing. So I was the youngest of four kids to a father who works still as a physician in the mother who had a small business in downtown La Mesa, a part of San Diego. Uhm, we didn't have any extended family in the neighborhood, my father Stanley lived in New York. He was an East Coast child, his parents were both Puerto Rican and Hungarian and then my mother, her father worked in the Army. So she traveled the country as a kid had five kids in her family and they met in Phoenix both studying medicine and moved to San Diego where they raised me and my other siblings. So we had a kind of typical Southern Californian life, I guess in the, you know, summers were swimming, riding bikes. And the other aspect of my childhood was education so, finding safety in school and I, you know always took education seriously. There were high expectations set in my families kids as well. But uh, I studied art you know as we do throughout our school and it kind of always stayed something that I enjoyed and even had a Sculpture class in high school, so I did uh a club for us to have extra time. So its always something I did but I wanted a more academic approach to education and I went and got a degree from the University of Oregon, came back to live in San Diego. And that's where I've been now for the last five years studying art. I worked at an Art Supply & Framing store. So I kind of gave myself time after I studied anthropology at Oregon to reinvest in what I thought art could be for me. And it's kind of where I am now, so I'm still very much a student of what art is student of what art is in San Diego. And that's brought me to this project. Now, we're doing the more the mural to commemorate, memorialize the death of Anastasio Rojas. So if there's anything else I can- I can add about my child- childhood I would, be happy too.

Angel:

I think you did great. Thank you so much Graham. I think we'll move on to the next question. So who or what is a significant influence on your current outlook on the world?

Graham:

So I uh, I think as artists one of our big jobs is to actually synthesize, all uh you know, what's going on in popular culture, what's going on in our histories, identities. And so I uh- I keep myself open to a lot. I've got a kind of academic approach to how I- how I do things you know, there's always even with its art, there's the reading aspect, then there's the practice aspect so, uhm how I'm synthesizing ideas is by staying in tune with it. Whether its reading, you know, being part of a community that were talking about ideas and then art also has that aspect where you get to digest ideas. So looking at other artists, they play an influence, my educators, my teachers and popular culture. And I think I can really get my hands on to digest and incorporate into my art, which is you know, representation of my outlook and perspective on the world.

Angel

Mm, I like that, very Global.

Graham

Yea global, great great word for it too, I think that's, you know a good element of where, where I am in, in my generation of, of thinkers you know, as a millennial and, and that's kind of it's own thing now in this COVID era where everything is digital and global.

Angel

Yeah. That's more on point than I could have ever stated it. Perfect. Um, onto the next question, um, as an artist, if you can make sure one concept sticks with your audience when they view your work, what would it be?

Graham: [\(06:57\)](#)

And so I, uh, I thought about this and I was thinking that one of the ideas we pass around in art school is that viewers will only spend, you know, maybe even a matter of seconds looking at a piece of art. So you, you want to capture them, you want to bring them into an artwork. And, um, you know, a word I would use to describe an artwork is a discussion. So you're inviting them to look at it, but you're also inviting them to think on it. Um, and that's an idea that, you know, maybe are, can serve as having a message. And, uh, so, you know, maybe when they see my work though, understand that I have observed and I've developed, you know, to me, a truthful rendering of my thoughts and ideas.

So in that is an approach particular to me, I tend to draw from life and from observation. Um, so, you know, a lot of that I think is conveyed in the realism that my art has. You know, if I have a person I want to, you know, render in that person, you know, qualities of a story of identity and, and thought maybe

Angel: [\(08:24\)](#)

Wow, that, uh, I appreciate your answer for that one. That's very well thought up. Um, those are all three personal questions I have for right now. Is there anything else that you would like to add? Um, so that, uh, the people that will be watching this interview would like to know about you before we move on to the, uh, questions about, uh, Sen, Anastasio?

Graham [\(08:48\)](#)

Yeah. I want to do just a quick little, you know, they might have a personal information, but, um, I'm 29 years old. Uh, so I call myself a millennial who was born in 1991. Um, as far as the main group of design on the mural goes, um, I'm the youngest member. Uh, me and Cindy Rocha are the youngest. We, we, uh, attended school in classes together. So one of the things that I bring to this project is, uh, kind of a fresh, fresh outlook, and that isn't just in being young, but it's also being kind of new to the Chicano Park struggle. So, fortunately we have members like, uh, Victor Ochoa and Mario Chacon who have opened this idea of a mural up to the larger community. So me and maybe my background as an anthropologist, I can kind of bring in my perspective, but so much of what I'm doing now on this project is really learning

and embracing, um, the ideas of the community. And so the more I can engage in, in Chicago Park, more time I spend there, um, it's developing me as an artist. I think even maybe more than me developing the ideas and this project too, though. I am taking part in that.

Angel: [\(10:19\)](#)

Yes, we grow as much with our art as it grows with us, right?

Graham

I think so. Yeah.

Angel:

Thank you so much for that Graham. So I'll be moving onto my next set of questions. Um, the first one is, when learning about the story of Anastasio Hernandez Rojas, what most impacted you about what you learned of what happen to Anastasio and what his family has lived through for 10 years?

Graham: [\(10:47\)](#)

So last summer was, um, summer 2019 was actually the first that I really heard and engaged with Anastasio's story. And, um, part of that was taking the public art painting class with Victor Ochoa at Grossmont College. So we actually engaged with the ideas of what it meant to live on a border and had the chance to meet Maria Pulga, um, Anastasio's wife. So what impacted me of the story was, um, first off of like a personal aspect of loss. Um, about five years ago, I lost an older brother to a sudden car crash, um, accident. So there's a quality of tragedy when it's sudden like that, that with it, a lot of emotional grief and anger. And since I had had that experience with my brother, I kind of, I understood, um, to a degree what was happening with this family and felt that you know, I could, I could help with the project that I could also help myself in doing this and exploring it, you know, as we, uh, you know, create something uplifting, I hope from this tragedy.

Angel: [\(12:31\)](#)

Yes. And my apologies to hear about your brother.

Graham: [\(12:36\)](#)

Yeah, um, but I also wanted to say to an accident, since I had a chance to look at this question, that this for me also took part in, you know, 2018, 2019, as we're seeing, um, more people, um, being brought into custody for crossing the border. So, you know, kind of coinciding with this, this issue of Anastasio's life and death was this also cultural, um, response to what was happening with the child camps. And, um, yeah, heightened border security, the wall, all of, all of that, but it, it was for me a chance to become a little more politically active. And at one of those protests, we walked to the border and had just met Maria Pulga at Chicano park, had the very nice opportunity facilitated by Victor Ochoa that we could talk, we could ask questions about the story. And, uh, and then, so about a week later, I'm at the march and Maria Pulga goes up with microphone in hand talking about her story. And it was that other layer of connection that I now had to this forwarder story. And that's, you know, maybe about eight months ago now at this point. And it was kind of the seed that started, you know, me wanting, wanting to involve myself in this project. And, and I understand it a little bit more.

Speaker 1: (14:27)

Wow. So the long continuum, how it's grown with you.

Speaker 2: (14:32)

Yeah. It's, it's both, it's both been quick and slow. It's hard to think that it's not even quite been a year since I met Victor Ochoa and, and started on the project, but, uh, and so that's, that's the wild thing, cause it's, it's been a year, but there's been a lot of growth, a lot of, a lot of change.

Speaker 1: (14:57)

Yeah. Especially now in this COVID era where we have to deal with all the complications that comes with that as well.

Speaker 2: (15:02)

Yeah. Perfect.

Speaker 1: (15:05)

So, uh, I'll be moving onto my next question. Um, were there any personal aspects of Anastasio story that you found related to your own personal history or events in your life? And I know you talked a little bit about your brother. Um, so thank you for sharing that a little bit earlier, but I wanted to see if there's anything else that you'd like to add on top of this question.

Speaker 2: (15:22)

Yeah. So I did mention, um, the loss of my brother and I, I, you know, maybe even as, cause I think of things as an artist, but I break it up into themes and it's, it's for Anastasio and for my brother, Matt, you know, it's the theme of a young man whose life was cut short. Um, the, you know, I, I had watched my mother go through the death of my brother. So it was watching Maria herself, a mother, a wife, um, you know, mint, you know, several years after, but dealing with the issue. And when I use I've used the word digest, but you know, how do you digest the trauma?

So, and I'm still doing that. I'm still doing that with my family, so, it impacts your life in a lot of different ways. Um, there's a lot of differences between my story and Anastasio's, you know, I, wasn't crossing the border that wasn't, that wasn't part of my life and upbringing. Um, but I could understand someone who would do it and who had a family and that was part of their life and, you know, having kids, but being part of both, both communities, community in Mexico, and community in California, and then just the tragedy of loss and, you know, understanding, you know, how art can keep people alive, can keep them in our minds. Um,

I think, I think it's, you know, when, when you, you do need to kind of bring yourself your own personal history to a story to understand it, but I think that's the, uh, the empathy to the, uh, you know, me as, you know, kind of feeling like an outsider. Sometimes I can still bring a lot of empathy and I can help people to maybe see something of it that they didn't see themselves. Maybe that's through my, my story and my history or just through that process of listening.

Angel: [\(18:04\)](#)

Yeah. We could all use a little bit more empathy in the world right now.

I will be moving onto my next question. Um, is there anything you'd like to add about the previous one?

Speaker 2: [\(18:22\)](#)

Uh, because I thought of it. Yeah. I will add that. Uh, uh, there's, there's a place for healing and art and I think we'll, we'll get to that later, but, um, you know, you don't, you know, our, our mural itself, isn't just for Anastasio story, but it is a story for the larger community and, you know, and one thing that we're doing with it is we're talking to people and we're bringing in the, uh, things that people are thinking about things that have happened in their lives. So just wanted to add that. So there's should be aspects of our own lives, but of the larger community in this final project.

Angel: [\(19:17\)](#)

Yes, I completely agree. Perfect. So my next question is going to be, uh, what is it about Chicano Park that makes it an appropriate place for Anastasio mural to live? How does it contribute to the overall narrative about the history of she Chicano Park and how does it compliment scene or compliment themes seen across other murals in the park?

Graham: [\(19:42\)](#)

So, first off, it's a, it's an honor to work in the park. Um, it's an, it's an honor as an artist, it's an honor as a student as well. Um, and part of that is because I get to spend extra time in the park. I I'm, you know, up in the scaffolding even. So I'm seeing different aspects, different perspectives of the park. Um, I get to talk to, um, you know, the elders in our community like Victor Ochoa, who bring their own perspective of having worked in the park over a period of several decades. So the narrative of the park is, you know, kind of always expanding. Um, you know, in my limited time in interacting with the park, with the steering committee, that's part of what they do. They're, they're 50 years in now and they're deciding what the history, you know, what the future will, will be for the next 50 years.

And our mural has as an important part in that it's got an important part in occupying that space, you know, occupying it with, with ideas and color and narrative, um, appropriate for the community, you know, nothing, nothing we do, you know, would, would, uh, reflect poorly on that. I hope, but that's not to say in that, because this has been such a hot button issue in our own discussions. And so then, you know, you don't want to reflect poorly, but then how do you, how do you engage with the story that is about oppression and about violence and not tackle some of the concepts that occur with, you know, racial violence, um, and, and important narratives that are part of the history of Chicano Park? I think it's important, you know, from my perspective, maybe because the community spoken up and said that they want it. So, you know, as a, as an artist, I think that's part of my places I get to fill that need, uh, you know, I get to help out by addressing that, um, public desire that's out there.

Angel: [\(22:24\)](#)

Has there been any, um, other mural that you've seen in your time since you've been spending a lot of time in the park that has influenced your work on the current mural?

Graham: [\(22:37\)](#)

Yes. In short, yes. I can say so first off, we're, we're painting on pillars that already had paintings below them. So there's the design. And also, um, there's a process of incorporating those designs into what our final project was going to be. So that occurs, but you, you can't help, you kinda can't help taking in what's down there at the park. And part of that is seeing how other artists handled things. How did they handle the figure of the human figure? And in some cases, you know, they're very, they're very large, they're massive. And that's, you know, the great one of the great qualities of them. So, um, I observe, you know, observing, stealing even, you know, what, what works well seeing what they did, this the first time I've handled the project, that people are 40 feet away from what they're ultimately going to be seeing and engaging with. So there's a technical aspects of how I look at the park, um, in quality. So Victor Ochoa's Most recent project was the, uh, Asta La Bahia mural. And that mural has kind of a two, two color, um, dichotomy and ours does too. So we are engaging with some of the same ideas that are happening in other murals, which from a purely aesthetic standpoint, I think is a great way to approach, you know, making your mural fit in a space that already exists. And then so much of, of, of the other murals has been worked on by people like Victor Ochoa. So they've got a living memory, you know, a muscle memory of what it takes to do one of these projects, whether it's the supplies, the time, the community outreach. So it's, it's the experience of working in a park that is that the living memory of the people that are in it. And then also the kind of the simple things of seeing how, how visitors interact with the murals in the park. So you're always kind of reading and looking and engaging with the park as it is as, as you build it up also.

Angel: [\(25:33\)](#)

Yes. And, uh, the living memory of the people is a great, great, uh, phrase that transitions actually perfectly into my next question, which is, is there anything you'd like to, you'd like people to know about the community within Chicano Park?

Graham: [\(25:51\)](#)

I, so, yeah, w at the very end and I'm, I owe a lot of thanks to the community in Chicano Park. So I would express that to anyone that, that, uh, I felt welcomed into doing this project to being encouraged, to learn, to take part in other community events that have happened, you know, in the eight months since I've been part of this project. Um, and also that to me, you know, maybe it's kind of what I'm understanding about the park is that something happens to people and something happens to one of the members of our community and we stand up for it and we stand up for it by occupying space, by, by painting, by making visuals of how we feel our grief. Um,

And so that's, that's, I think the story that Chicano park offers the larger community of the world too, is the ways in which art has impact on people's lives, identity. Um, and I would, so I, you know, if, if I were to encourage other people to get to know the community, I would invite them to come and visit and lock and read. And so reading of artwork, you know, I want people to know that there's different cultures represented by the artwork in Chicano Park. There's different languages, there's different belief systems, just, you know, how great this community supports this type of endeavor.

You know, it values human life and, you know, the philosophies and ideas and love. And, um, you know, the, I guess, you know, in a lot of words, to the types of things that overcome the grief that a community like that in Chicago park has also dealt with.

Angel: (28:24)

Thank you for that Graham

Speaker 1: (28:26)

Um, before I move on to my next question, is there anything more you'd like to add?

Speaker 2: (28:32)

No, I'm, I'm good with that. Yeah.

Angel: (28:35)

Perfect. So my next question is, what do you hope to be the end result for your contribution on the Anastasio Nana's Rojas mural? What would you hope for people- What would you hope people would take away from this mural and specific?

Graham: (28:52)

So I have, uh, you know, the tech, the technical qualities that I want the mural to have. Um, I don't, I don't even really yet know what those will be because of the process of this mural. You know, we're, we're working in layers, so we're, we're layering ideas and we're layering the different qualities of artists that are on this team. So there will be, you know, a technical contribution that I want to bring to the project. And, you know, some of that's having spent time to work on the preliminary painting that we did, having spent time with the other, talking about ideas, listening to each other's ideas or already even just with the progress that we've done on the mural. I can see what I've done. And as an artist, that's, that's exciting. So it's, you know, the physical design of what you've done. Maybe it's also the ideas that you brought into the discussion. Um, I've seen our little model become this huge 40 plus foot monoliths that are the pillars down there in the park. And it's incredibly exciting. Um, it's in some ways exactly what you expected it, and it's a larger version of the small model, but it's so much better and exciting. And I guess why I say that is because I don't personally know exactly what the end result of, of the mural will be. I think even COVID, you know, kind of came out at a time where, you know, it was it's own blossoming. I will start with saying, it's, it's hurt us because it's stopped us from working on the mural. But personally, it's given time to think about what the mural is, you know, even, you know what art is in the time of COVID. So I want it, I want a mural that I'm proud of technically, but I want it to have a story. I want people to engage with that story, maybe over multiple times the visiting, because it takes that much time to see You know, why an artists put that figure there, why that faces there, or why they chose that plant that color.

You know, that that should be reflected in our art that we've talked about it and designed it over a period of years and months. So that's, that's the fun thing, you know, I kinda, you know, maybe it's like a scavenger hunt in a way, but, uh, there were, there will be a story, you know, and 50 years we know we're the, we're talking about the next 50 years of the park after this first 50 years, and we've designed it to live that long. So, you know, without any other, any problems, you know, maybe also live that long to see how people are responding to it in 50 years. And that will be a nice thing.

Angel:

Your legacy will live on through your art.

And, and I don't, you know, I do want people to take away the things from the mural that we've talked about, those qualities of healing, the story itself. So elements that tell the story, but I don't, I know cause personally, like I don't demand that everyone knows everything that's going on, but I want them to be able to find it and to have it there and memorialized.

Angel: [\(33:10\)](#)

And luckily they'll have this extra interview to be able to learn a little bit more about your perspective.

Graham: [\(33:16\)](#)

I think. Absolutely. And I don't, I'm kind of soft spoken in general, so I don't, I don't usually, um, delve this deep into things, but I've appreciated it. I'd thought, you know, when you work on a project for so long until you do develop pride in it certainly pride and, um, and still, you know, I'm learning new things

Angel: [\(33:48\)](#)

Perfect. Um, is there anything else you'd like to add before I move on to my next question?

Graham: [\(33:53\)](#)

Yeah, I think I'll leave it, leave it at that. Perfect. Okay.

Angel: [\(33:56\)](#)

So next question is, how does this mural contribute to collective community healing? Does this piece serve justice? And if yes, how so?

Graham: [\(34:07\)](#)

Oh, so it does heal on a, on a variety of levels. There's, um, you know, even for the artists, there's a lot of healing. I think it's been important for us to address the healing of Anastacio's family directly. And to say, you know, here are these people who were most closely impacted by the loss of this man and, and, you know, create something that, that is him, you know, as a physical representation, you know, a portrait of him, um, you know, personally, you know, I don't, when my brother died, we didn't bury his body anywhere, but the school he was attending, he was studying to be a nurse. They planted a tree in his honor and a little, a Memorial plaque. They went with it, um, a little gesture. They went really far personally with me. So I kinda got to see how that process helped in my own grieving and my healing. And in fact, you know, it's still serves very much as a place that I can go back to. I can spend time to think about my brother, um, you know, in like an artwork that offers visual qualities that are pleasing, you know, his, his treat us too. So there's the value of place, of ownership of place. Um,

Angel: [\(36:05\)](#)

take all the time you need,

Graham: [\(36:17\)](#)

I don't know if this piece serves justice. And that, that to me is a really difficult thing because it's a, it's a, it's an abstract concept, um, to family and community or seeking justice for, you know, um, criminal or,

you know, liability for what happens. That's its own struggle. And, you know, maybe because we are working on this project, we can bring attention to that struggle and we, we can bring justice. But what that means, I don't know. So, you know, I, I'm creating, uh, an artwork that has these dualities. They kind of serve to express the idea that the justices is really difficult. That's, it's something that you fight for continually, you know, maybe we're, you know, we're going to have images of protests, um, the phrase "Justicia Para Anastasio." Um, so "Justice for Anastacio" will be present but this is, you know, a chapter in the larger book of justice, struggle of injustice. So I do, I do, you know, I am optimistic about what kind of community I could live in, in the future. So I think that, that, you know, working on this mural serves to express what I think justice looks like, and, you know, as a, as a puzzle piece and helping to create what I envision, you know, as justice and healing, um, and kind of leave it at that. But I would say also you, we talked in our informal interview about me joining the education field and part of my classwork and credentialing to become an educator focuses on, you know, why our own personal beliefs in what we want, but why I mentioned that is just because you focus on those personal beliefs and what you want. Um, but you don't know when you're going to get there. Um, you don't know how far along you are and you just kinda keep, keep working along and community collective effort. That's, you know, that's how we do it. That's how we help each other. Yeah. We're social. And, you know, it's, it's definitely going to be a piece that explores, you know, loss and pain and you know, you're not, not going to even necessarily be happy with everything that's explored in the mural. But, you know, also just making everyone happy, maybe doesn't serve to create a more just model as well. And so I don't know if you have any more questions to explore that, but I think that's a good place to stay there.

Angel: [\(40:32\)](#)

Unfortunately not, I don't have any more questions to explore that, but if you would like to keep going and elaborate, that'd be more than great. But if not, I do have some other questions.

Graham: [\(40:44\)](#)

I'm just going to take a second to look at it one more time here all the time you need. Um, we've talked a lot about community healing in our project. Um, the nice thing for me is I think that that's kind of a niche where my art, you know, approaches the viewer is, you know, I don't just personally, I don't tend to create like scary things. I don't think, but even if I do, you know, there's, there's some hope there's some underlying belief. I don't know. I don't even know if it's optimism, but it's, you know, the life, life goes on as well. I I'd like to say I'd like my art to say those things. So I, you know, I, I keep them in mind when I work and, you know, the final product follows in line with what you're thinking and is created from that.

Angel: [\(41:56\)](#)

Thank you for that Graham. Um, before I move into my next set of questions, is there anything else you'd like to add?

Graham: [\(42:09\)](#)

That I'm again, grateful, thankful to be part of this project. You know, it's helped me on a time when I'm learning about what it is too, to create new roles, to be an artist. You know, even I, it's funny, I don't call myself an art of this though. I am working with activists. So

learning what that means, um, and enjoying it I'm, I am actually kind of sad that I'm stuck in home now because of COVID-19 and I can't get to the site and let that magic happens when you just start putting paint, paint to your surface.

Angel: [\(42:57\)](#)

Yeah. It's a certain type of a satisfaction you get, right. When doing your art?

Graham: [\(43:02\)](#)

it is it's, you know, maybe it's then too, it can be, it's frustrating too, but, uh, but I come, I come back from it replenish, you know, I've created something, um, I've gotten myself closer, but maybe I'm not quite there, but that, that happens with painting them.

That's the physical manual labor. Um, but I enjoy it. And I'm trying to, trying to find little ways to keep it in, but it's tough. Not as I've said, you know, this break we've had from working on this mural.

Angel: [\(43:47\)](#)

I can only imagine actually it goes in great into my next set of questions, which is about this whole COVID-19 situation. Um, and just for the folks that are listening to the interview, um, we have now passed our second month of being in quarantine. Uh, I'm pretty sure, correct me if I'm wrong, Graham I think we are in our second month. Um, and it's been a very interesting time to not only deal with how we approach our art and approach our work, but approach our life in general. Um, so my next set of questions has to do with just a little bit more personally, of how you've been dealing with this whole situation, if that's all right.

Graham:

Go for it.

Angel:

All right. So my first question is going to be, what is one of the things you miss most in starting quarantine?

Graham: [\(44:34\)](#)

So you, you hit on a few things, but, uh, the quarantines changed so much about, you know, about art, just about how we, how we live our lives. So, um, I'm personally, I'm kind of an introvert, uh, naturally.

So when quarantine first happened, there were kind of some things that they were like, good. You know, I spent some extra time to clean my car and organize things around the house and you know what

I mean, if you've been spending a little more time cooking for myself, um, but that's tough. Um, I consider myself fortunate because of the community I'm in. I can social distance easily, you know, I'm not living on top of other people, um, physically. Um, but I, you know, I miss my, my group of artists that I work with in a collective, um, preparing for events that we would vend that. So, you know, I feel it was, uh, like our Sunday meetings. That was really the thing that I did because I enjoyed doing it. Not just because, because I had to because of work obligations or, or education. So, you know, it's funny you, I

I'm weighing cost and benefits, but, but it's tough, you know, I, I, I'm eight o'clock at night and I don't even know what time it is because it's been quiet all day and I don't, I don't have the same connection, um, to work schedule, um, to a lot of things that I think kinda keep you regular, keep you focused. So it's been normalcy, it's been very disorienting.

Angel:

Yeah. Well, I can only imagine, uh, luckily, um, we all have our little things that keep us, you know, uh, alive and well during this time. So that goes into my next question, which is, what's something that's made you happy in these difficult times?

Graham:

Um, biggest thing. Yeah, I'm a dog- dog owner. So, you know, it's slowly thing beginning now being with the dog that was already something that, that made me really happy. So the dogs really happy that she's getting walked, you know, extra 30 plus minutes a day. Um, definitely family it's, it's tough with quarantine that there's, this need to social distance. And, um, I've got kind of different family groups. I've got my father in one area of the County, my mother, and one area and my brother and his children and another, and it's meant I've had to make a lot of decisions about how I keep everyone safe, how I keep myself safe, but I have, you know, kind of gone out of the way to see my family. Know if I can go have a poodle day with my brother, those little things. I think we think we take them for granted. Um, I spent less money going out, but I've missed going out. Um, and, and my life hasn't even been affected that much. I still take online classes. Um, I can still, you know, work on art, but yeah, so I, I walk the dog a lot and I've gone through so many beef liver bite treats treating this dog well well and having a good time and trying to try to keep regular.

Angel:

Yeah. Our furry little friends always help out. Perfect. Uh, on my next question I have is how did your organization react to this sudden changes and uncertainty brought up by the current situation.

Graham:

So it's kind of a few different things going on in my life before the shutdown. And one was the mural. So our, our mural site, Um, we had to leave, we've been able to communicate digitally through Facebook messenger, but it's, uh, it's been tough. It's, it's lost a lot of the sense of urgency since we can't be at the site. And then I'm also taking classes. So my university, you know, they told us what they were going to do. My online classes really haven't changed except that I'm in the teaching credential program. So I'm focused on how our schools are reacting, whether they're going to choose to open up in the fall or remain digital, and I'm doing the distance learning. And then I had a group of artists that we worked with in a collective, and we'd been doing about one event a month where we tabled and sold artwork. We're really enjoying the chance that gave us to interact with the community, you know, to have a digital Instagram presence, to work and collaborate as artists and creatives. And that was really hurt by the shutdown because it meant that we couldn't meet with each other and couldn't do a lot of the, the face to face stuff that we, that we enjoyed, which is kind of funny. Cause I think we're a lot of introverts, but it gave us a safe space to collaborate and work on something collectively that unfortunately has really been hurt, um, by social distancing.

Angel:

Yeah. So really all aspects have been hit of your life, hasn't it? Um, from the mural project to your own personal art and to even your schooling.

Graham:

Yeah. I'm and again, I go to the word disorienting. I I'm, um, I'm interested in how other people are, are handling it. Cause I think in a lot of ways I've, um, been fortunate, but it makes every decision you make is now under this context of safety and you know, how much risk you're willing to take. And unfortunately that's stressful and not productive, I think maybe to, to be creative artistically cause now your, your other needs aren't being met.

Angel:

Uh, I have one last COVID-19 question. Is there anything else you'd like to add about the previous ones?

Graham:

Uh, let's move on.

Angel:

Alright. And the last question I have is, Oh, for the COVID-19 questions is what, if anything, has this pandemic revealed about our socioeconomic problems?

Graham:

Um, I think it's, I think it's revealing a lot. Um, and we are still so much, I think in the early stages of this, that it's hard, um, parts to know. And when I first looked at these questions, I thought about the grief cycle and the stages of grief and wondering, you know, where we are and, and I'm not sure we've, we've really grappled with all the problems we've had and some of those are socioeconomic. Um, we're still at this early stage of trying to predict, you know, how much job loss is going to happen. Um, what's going to happen with people's rent. So I, you know, I can really only speak from what I've gathered from the media and from my research reference, but- but it's not, it's not good, you know? Um, and they don't, I'm not sure it's revealing what we didn't know, but it's this type of quick collapse that suddenly breaks all those parts that, you know, you knew were failing, but you thought you could just get a buy with quick fixes- and, I don't, I don't know. It's really so hard for me to wrap my head around that- That there are so many people who have new needs that they didn't have because of the economic crisis. Um, But I, I, I, I'm optimistic, you know, I trust the, then, you know, what we're doing largely is learning from what's occurring. I would like to say. Um, but yeah, and I mean, I, I, for a personal perspective, I don't think it's revealed positive about socio economic disparities of our community. Um, having some people with a lot doesn't necessarily make you quick to react to problems like this, and it scares me and you know, it's another level of uncertainty. Um, the, that is global and we've used, used that word and thinking globally, it's a global- Global problem.

Angel:

That is definitely true. Uh, that was the last of my COVID-19 questions. Is there anything you'd like to add before I head into my last question for the interview?

Graham:

Uh, no. It's, it's, you know, it'd be, would have been a great interview even with it, with it before the COVID-19 questions and all that. I'm, I'm glad again, to be a part of this and we'll still see, you know, as far as COVID-19 goes, how that continues to, uh, to affect us and trying to figure out what that means, you know, how do I, how do I handle this topic as an artist? Because I think that's the way I'm going to have to try to grapple with what I don't understand and, um, try to visualize maybe solutions in art. Art can do that for us.

Angel:

Yeah. Most definitely. So for my last question, I would like to start off by saying thank you for your time and all your responses to all the questions I've had so far. I really appreciate it. For all the listeners that will be viewing this later on, what is one thing you'd like the readers and listeners to take away from this interview?

Graham:

Well, I hope they, uh, gained a better perspective about who I am and, um, how I, uh, how I became part of this project, how I approached my input on the project. Um, I think that's really important for people to have, um, you know, I could talk about the story and other things, but I think largely what you get as an audience, as you're learning about me and the perspective that I have. And, um, so that's, that's changed the law in doing this project. I'm excited to see, you know, what the next year means for us on this project. And when we finally take away that scaffolding, I'll also be in a position to be just a viewer myself and see what kind of life this project take saw. When we put down the brushes, we step away and enjoy it as a community, digest it.

Angel:

Perfect, well those are all my questions. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we finish this interview?

Graham:

Thank you too. Thank you to you, Angel, and for your help with this, uh, you know, well, what am I trying to your, uh, creating our history here. This is our first draft of the history and, you know, thanks for collecting all of these perspectives.

Angel:

Of course. I appreciate you giving me your time. Um, so this was, uh, Graham Hajosy.



