Evan-asks: It's going well. I don't...

Brian-answers: Are you...

Evan-asks: I'm in San Francisco.

Brian-answers: Okay, that's what I was...

Evan-asks: So we're both in the California, whatever this is, thing.

Brian-answers: Yeah, in the midst of it.

Evan-asks: Okay, so every artist I've talked to so far this year, since the pandemic started, there's been this mixture, right, of kind of hasn't affected my daily schedule, because my daily schedule requires me to be so routine with however I want to paint, whenever I want to paint.

Brian-answers: Right.

Evan-asks: But there is a reality, regardless, that something changed in your life. So what changed?

Brian-answers: Yeah. God, it's a tough one. I mean, it's true. I would say, like for me, nothingness... Well, certain parts of my practice didn't need to change, but they did change. I got back from Shanghai a week before they shut it down, or something like that. Maybe a few weeks.

Evan-asks: Yeah, okay.

Brian-answers: So I was there in January, and then everyone was planning their Chinese New Year's trips, and then it all got shut down. And so my show there was also shut down for months. So, it feels like 2020 has just been like nonstop that story. And I think it has for everyone, of course. But, so also, I tend to sometimes, I mean, I had other shows to work on right away. So I came back and hit the ground running, but there's also always a lull after putting up a show, a little like depression, and trying to get everything back up to snuff. And then when the shut down happened, I mean, I have two daughters, and so I kind of stayed home out of solidarity with everyone. Just like, what the fuck is this?

And that ended up becoming, like I just cleared out a little space in the garage, started working from home. Was first drawing, then started painting, just worked at a different scale. I could have come in here, and i would every now and then, but it just felt, I mean, whatever. We're all trying to figure that out. And it felt off to go off on my own. But it's funny, because then I ended up working a lot at home, and it also just felt like a... I mean, it's wrong to say a good opportunity, but it's more that I felt like, it felt so off to just go into the studio and adjust paintings or something.

Evan-asks: Yeah.

Brian-answers: Which always reminds me, there is this like Philip Guston famous quote that he always had about like, when all the... Like '68 and all of that, that he and felt like he was reading the papers, watching the news, and then go into his studio to, I think it's something like adjust a blue to a red, or something. And that that was a big part of this pressure building in him to shift things. So certainly, something like that was there all along, which is like, how can you not allow the moment to push you in some other way.

So I guess I was feeling that. And really, it was at a certain point, I started coming in here like a few hours every afternoon just to keep it on my mind. And then at a certain point when I knew I was getting closer to showing, I had a lot of works that I already knew were going to be in the show with [Anton 00:04:10], but several of them, I realized, like I think given the scale of galleries these days, it just felt like, these will work better at that scale, [inaudible 00:04:21] more variation, and I wanted to keep a lot of stuff. So it just kind of... So now I'm a little bit more back.

Evan-asks: Well, it's interesting you brought the Guston quote, especially considering the news that four of his shows or whatever canceled.

Brian-answers: Yeah.

Evan-asks: Or postponed, whatever, I actually don't... I think it's postponed. I'm not quite sure what they...

Brian-answers: Yeah, they said postpone, and it's so pathetic. I only found out about that this morning.

Evan-asks: Yeah, me too. And it's interesting you bring up that, because there's a couple things with that, obviously. But one is this idea, especially as this year's gone on, and especially as the social activism incredible moment on the streets that's happening, and still continues to happen even this week. That idea of going into your studio and being like, "I am going to adjust a red to a blue." Did you have moments where you were like, "What? Maybe I shouldn't be here today."

Brian-answers: There were definitely moments where I just wouldn't be here, but it's a really hard... It's strange, because you want to be able to... I think there's this human urge to make sense of things.

Evan-asks: 100%, yeah.

Brian-answers: ... contribute to things, and yet, obviously another big part of this moment is reflecting and listening, although things are coming out so fast and so hard that there's also a need for action. And I think any artist of any kind, kind of any person, but I say artist, because you're making things, I don't know how you can't go through a slight crisis of like, what are these things I'm putting out into the world doing?

Evan-asks: Yeah, right.

Brian-answers: And yet at the same time, I firmly believe that artists... But artists don't need to deal with things directly to create these pathways for people to imagine a world that's more like what they want-

Evan-asks: Absolutely, yeah.

Brian-answers: [crosstalk 00:06:42]. So I've certainly been, I guess you'd say, wrestling or struggling with all those thoughts, and not to mention privilege and all the, you know, like-

Evan-asks: Absolutely.

Brian-answers: It's, you know.

Evan-asks: If you were to go into your studio, and when you see the work that's going to be in the gallery in New York, do you have moments where you're like, "This came from this." Are there actual marks that you were noticing were being... Because as a painter, there's an urgency to create, but also, during social change, there's urgency that's even more immediate. So as an artist, you're moving at almost potentially a slower pace. But like you see it yourself, these change happening in your work as these extraneous things are happening around you?

Brian-answers: Right. That's a good question. I think, I don't know how well I can truly answer that. [crosstalk 00:07:38] I think my experience of that this time around was that like there's so much anxiety all around, and certainly within me, within my family for all, whether it's, obviously, coronavirus, but then with all the issues around racial violence and all and equity, and all of this coming up water. And yet, everyone feeling kind of stuck, which was this strange thing because it's hard to tell, did that help people really reflect in something? It seems partially yes.

Evan-asks: Right.

Brian-answers: Anyways, all I was going to say is that like that was certainly like I sense that coming up, like there's like a more activated quality in the work, but it doesn't... I still, like I was saying, I wrestle with the fact, like I don't think my work directly addresses any of this. And, again, it's funny to come back to Guston and hear this news, because it's like Guston is one of the people that, for me, when I first saw Guston's paintings when I was an undergraduate at Berkeley and went over to Berkeley Art Museum and they had this one really incredible one of like hooded man riding in a little car, and it was the first time I saw one in person.

And this is probably like '88 or something, so I'd only come to know his work. I hadn't grown up really knowing anything about contemporary and, or modern art. So it was so powerful, and also really gave me that sense of like, wait, Painting still is a thing, and be really connected. And of course, I understood, like had... I mean, given the age difference, like the references made a lot of sense to me, and yet the scale, the way it was painted made me, it's like, "Yeah, I'd rather do that than draw a comic."

Evan-asks: Right.

Brian-answers: So, I forgot where I was going with that.

Evan-asks: Well, another thing that's funny about Guston is that, for somebody like yourself who is doing figures, Guston's move to figures was so dismissed and critically unimpressive to the critics at the time. But he has built a foundation for which many figurative artists nowadays use as a reference point. And it's interesting how so many figurative artists mention him as like the gateway drug a little bit.

Brian-answers: Yeah. I think that makes sense to me. I mean, he was so formative for me. Again, like it's funny since you're in San Francisco, and being... My experience of everything was also hyperlocal, because being at Berkeley then it was, like John Brown was there and various people, and Northern California funk. I'd also had a friend who was up at Davis, so like [William T. White 00:11:05], [Lady Arnison 00:11:05], all those people. I didn't go there as a student knowing about these things. These were the people who informed my reality, really. They certainly opened up the larger world of art, as did taking like T.J. Clark for art history there. So there were all these incredible people, and I was just this sponge.

I think before then, my interest in art had already like somehow I had come across like Giotto, these kinds of things, and then Piero della Francesca, and like those seemed incredible to me, and I was super interested. But it's not like I saw them like, because I loved these painters from 500 years ago, I'm going to be a painter. And then but then seeing that in like Guston and his ability to harness something so deep like that with also this crass other stuff, and this beautiful movement of paint, just like it's so inspiring.

And the great thing is it's one of those things that it looks easier than it is. So you see that and you think, "Yeah. I can do that." Which is good, because it makes you do it and you never know... You deal with the frustration which is a huge part of trying to make images in the first place, but you also, you only ever know what you know. So you make something that looks better than the day before, especially when you're young, and that's exciting. And I still feel that way, like however 30 years later.

Evan-asks: It's funny, because I'm looking at my notes, and you're taking me right into where I want to go. But this idea of the California artist, because you are a California artist. You were born here, you live here, you went to school here. What does that mean to you? I know that sounds kind of corny, but as a magazine that was based in California. It started as a West Coast magazine, really, but now it's grown to the international. What does being a California artist mean to you?

Brian-answers: It's a good question, and I thought about it. I don't know that I know exactly, because it is interesting, because so much talk about, certainly in the United States, things are either kind of like, this like LA versus New York or something. And the funny thing about both of those cities and the artists there is so many people just move to them.

Evan-asks: Exactly.

Brian-answers: From wherever.

Evan-asks: Yeah, exactly.

Brian-answers: And having done grad school in Chicago, you got that version too of like people from the Midwest moving up to Chicago. So I've always certainly identified as a Californian artist, and a lot of that has to do with the fact even that, like even if I... I love New York, I adore it and, but it's not like I could live there for decades and enjoy it all and still never feel like I'm not a New Yorker. And I don't have it in me to move there and adopt that persona. Some people, I think that's fine. They're looking to... And I mean I even had that in LA. I do love LA and, or when I was up in the Bay Area. It all feels like I never really knew where my home was, other than California, and certainly felt like so many of the great chroniclers in a iconic way of California, whether it's [Hawkney 00:15:06] or [Ruche 00:15:07], or...

There are people who moved to California, and they really, especially in those two cases, moved to an idea of California, then they were able to like really blow out, exploit and do these amazing things with. And I think my sense, I never had a conceptual idea of what California meant, because it's just, it was always home base. So within that, I think I've always liked the idea of just trying to, I don't know, to on some level let the peculiarities of, or even like, I feel like now, regionalism is something that people celebrate, where certainly a few decades ago, that was still the way people looked down their nose at everything. And like, I always loved that part.

And that's like, again, when I was first an undergrad and looking at David Park, Joan Brown, [Steven Corn 00:16:25], all of that. And it was kind of like, all these big shots that were so local, and it was exciting. And it would also be like your professors. I mean, I had a professor at Berkeley. This woman, Wendy Sussman, who was so important to me, and her work isn't very well known outside of a small or painting community. And of course you realize that. And certainly Chicago also it's like now that stuff has become a lot bigger, again, like imagism and stuff like that.

But my experience going there was kind of like, "Wow." All these people who were so supportive of me, and really big influences on my work. But at that point, it was still seen as very regional and not necessarily celebrated for that reason. And it's nice to see that, I don't know when that shift happened and whether it's like an internet, like influence thing to kind of be more interested in those qualities.

Evan-asks: I think now, it seems as if, especially with the art world, because it's so easy to transport yourself to a different place via your phone, that I think it's all blending in, where like these things don't... You could go to Chicago and it doesn't... It's like things are blending to the point where like regionalism almost doesn't even exist, even though there is still this, there's regional envy and bias. So it's a weird time.

Brian-answers: Yeah.

Evan-asks: What was your work 30 years ago? When you were first starting, you're in school, did you know that figures meant where something that you wanted to do or where you kind of a-

Brian-answers: Absolutely.

Evan-asks: Absolutely, okay.

Brian-answers: I always try. I mean, I would play with other things, but I need the problem of a figure to keep wrestling with the painting, or the problem of an image. And it's not that I feel that way when I see other people making like pure abstraction, but when I... Like anytime I've played more with abstraction, it was interesting intellectually, but I never felt like it's kind of like there was no friction for me, and I always needed this kind of the difficult part. And so on that level, and I always... I always have seen that as like that I'm interested in abstraction in the sense of like, whatever, like Matisse and Picasso, where it's about abstracting life or what you see into something that then when you deal with it has this otherness.

And whenever like I just need that, and it's funny because it's like, it's still interesting for me sometimes to do other things, but it remains very true. I always check in with every now and then make something and it's like, it can even be nice, but it feels more like if I also sat down with someone and made some EDM and said, "Okay, that's what I just did."

Evan-asks: Yeah, right. Okay.

Brian-answers: Maybe it's kind of like, I can't even tell if that means anything because it's not the core. It's like, it's not what I'm driven to do.

Evan-asks: It's like checking an impulse almost.

Brian-answers: Yeah.

Evan-asks: Checking in with an impulse to see, because I did the same thing with just even, just anything I'm listening to or anything I'm doing, any book or any authors. I check in with a book or author and be like, "Okay. Yeah, okay." Like, all right.

Brian-answers: And it's important.

Evan-asks: It's imp... Exactly, it's very important. Yeah.

Brian-answers: But, you never know, but for some reason, yeah. I think, to go back to Guston again, at some point it's like he, I think referred to it in his later year, talked about being image written, and it's like that's absolutely how I feel. And I mean, especially now, it would be easy to think in the kind of era we live in, where images are just way too much, constantly, they're always dealing with visual stimuli that you might want to not add more to it. But I definitely, part of I think why I paint and why I make images is trying to slow down the flow and consumption of them and create something that is at least a momentary, like not stopping point necessarily, but definitely slowing you down some kind of oasis or something.

Evan-asks: Yeah. I've been at Juxtapoz since 2006, and there was this period of time, there were figurative painting was... It wasn't gone. It just had hit a lull a little bit, but then, and it obviously picked back up in such great ways with younger, so great younger generation of painters. And then 2016 and Trump, that election, the body became so important. The body as something that was being painted, changed dramatically. I think, looking in hindsight. I think at the time it was hard to figure it out. But now I'm looking back at some of the older issues of Juxtapoz from the last couple of years and it feels like we even pivoted a little bit. So it's fun to watch these trends come and go for various reasons.

Brian-answers: Yeah. No, it's weird. There's kind of this, I feel a very slow tick tock that goes back and forth between the market being interested in abstraction or figuration. And it seems to go in about 10 year [inaudible 00:23:05], all of a sudden. And it's funny because you know if I... You hope that artists keep doing what they're doing, and I certainly at anytime that I've taught, I've told people, "Stick to your gut because eventually these things come around." But of course also it's perfectly healthy to play with these, but it's always funny when, obviously you do see some artists who were making abstract work and then all of a sudden they sense the return in figurative, start to see those elements, and it's not.

Evan-asks: Yeah, yeah, for sure. Yeah. But that tends to be market driven as opposed to perhaps genuine-

Brian-answers: [crosstalk 00:23:49] in so many obvious galleries, collectors. Artists. There are so many people who really have a hard time not having that market driven. And it feels like that part has gotten worse over time, which I think is partially like what can make me nostalgic for when regionalism was still a slam. [inaudible 00:24:12] kind of like, well, you know what? I'm perfectly happy with this small community and we go see the shows and something like that. But-

Evan-asks: Yeah, I was going to ask you that. It was in my notes too, is do you... I love that idea because I think we've lost. Sometimes in New York, I feel that if I'm out for openings and I'm going around and I'm seeing a bunch of stuff and I'm with a couple of friends and we're all going out and it's like, I kind of drop my Juxtapoz hat and I'm just enjoying myself, which is rare. But who do you consider your generation and your peers in painting? Because, and it'll lead to a question after this, but I was curious when I was doing some research the last couple of days, who you consider to be your group? And if you consider you have a group.

Brian-answers: Yeah. I do think I'm kind of a loner by nature, but-

Evan-asks: Is that being an [inaudible 00:25:17], you think? Or is that just you in general?

Brian-answers: I think it's me in genera. I mean, even when I was a student, I was early into the studio, stay at the studio, work, work, work, work, almost like I was a nine to fiver. [inaudible 00:25:35], and then I wouldn't really hang out for the... There would be all these people, both as an undergrad, or then certainly in grad school, there was kind of the like stay all night, party crew, make work. And I was like, that wasn't really my scene. And yet at the same time, I would say, it's not like I was a total loner when I was younger, but for instance, in Chicago, I was much more involved in the music scene. But so I would make art, do all of that, then leave the studio to be social to go see shows or playing bands and things like that.

So, and that I liked because that was, like it was interesting after having total control of your work all the time in the studio to then go out and collaborate, because I didn't really want to collaborate art work. But certainly there are people, and I don't have a... I don't stay in contact daily a lot with too many other artists, but there are like Maureen Gallace's a painter who's been very important to me for years. And she and I communicate fairly regularly. [John Pastoni 00:27:02], a painter, who I've first met at Berkeley. We've remained friends for many years. And then it's funny obviously over time, like communicating more casually with people with the social media type of thing, which I can feel super ambivalent about.

And yet there are interesting... It's nice that you can see so much work in different context and communicate with people. And I really, I do like being able to see what younger people are making. It's really interesting. And to do that, not in the context of teaching and only seeing who is at the institution you're at or something like that. It's like that part is been interesting to me, especially loosening that sense, I think it's so easy to get stuck in this micro-generational thing, where you feel like you look up to some of the people who are older than you, but you don't look up to people younger than you.

Evan-asks: Yeah, for sure.

Brian-answers: It's so fucked up. And these are the things, the older I got, the more I just wanted to be able to get rid of, because it's the excitement of looking at, to me, painters who've only been painting a few years and thinking of that moment of like, it's all happening at once. You're learning... You don't know what necessarily you're doing or you haven't figured out the materiality of it, and that that's what creates these really seismic events and this really exciting quality.

Evan-asks: It's interesting as, speaking of music how, and I always bring this up because it always does come up, when you're a musician, youth plays such a pivotal role in the composition of music. And it just seems like when you're younger, music flows out of people in a different way than when they're older. I, unfortunately there's rarely an opportunity where you're listening to a band that's been around for 30 years or a musician's been around for 30 years and they have their best album, 30 years into it. There's very few people who pull that off, if ever, and painters, it's like a weird flip, where as you get... If you add it, sometimes 30 years in could be your best body of work. Do you think about that ever?

Brian-answers: I do. I take a lot of solace in the fact that I think painting does provide a weird medium to stay nimble and plastic, and open to change in a way that I agree; does not seem as easy in a lot of other mediums.

Evan-asks: Right, yeah. And that's why I love the art world, because I love the fact in artists that I've liked forever could have their best show years into a career, whereas I never... I mean, rarely is there a band that I like where I'm like, "I'm really excited that they're putting out an album in 2020. This is their 10th album." So very rarely do I go like, "Well, I can't wait to sit down with this, buy the vinyl, have a whole..." It's a different experience.

Brian-answers: No, it's true. And it's funny because I mean, there, I feel like I have... You see that a lot, where people my own age, people who I knew when I was younger, who were in bands, where you're like amazing, amazing, and they're still doing it. And yet some of them, it's like, "Am I going to tour with on my older work or the newer work?" And you just realize it's... And it's very natural, and I even thinks it's interesting, but it's funny how, especially with the streaming and the way that [crosstalk 00:31:21] things fall apart, then people I feel have been pushed more towards, it's like not like doing like an oldies tour, but it is like, wait, do I... No one expects me to make a show that's the paintings I was making in 1994

Evan-asks: Right.

Brian-answers: That's just not a thing. And it's like, yes, someone can put together a retrospective, but you're not... The good news, bad news is you're not asked to do that, you may not be asked to do anything.

Evan-asks: Right.

Brian-answers: So I feel very blessed on the level that it took... I've had shows and been lucky enough to show for many, many years, and I, personally, have always just wanted longevity, and you see a lot of people come out and then they come up real strong. And obviously, I don't think I've ever been someone who understands the market quality. I feel very blessed and I am lucky to make a living doing what I'm doing. But when I see some ways that some people are very good at pushing things, but it's like, I don't know how you keep your sanity or your happiness, if you're then needing to justify that whatever price point. To me, that would seem incredibly stressful and I think I'd be miserable.

Evan-asks: I had this feeling, it must've been... Pardon me, I'm having a hard time remembering what year's what at this point, but last Spring, you had the solo show in Paris at [inaudible 00:33:10], correct?

Brian-answers: Yeah.

Evan-asks: It was last Spring? Okay. I was actually having a hard time remembering of it was 2019 or '18. I was thinking about that when I went through that show, because I had a nice... Actually, my girlfriend was putting on a show in Paris at the time, so I had a wonderful trip of no work and just go look at art and not have any pressure writing anything, just enjoying myself, which I rarely get. And I remember going to see your show and like really happy to see it, it was a beautiful show. And I remember thinking, you've had lots of shows and you've had... You've been blessed to be able to show in Paris and New York and China, but you were talking about it earlier about how, there's a little bit of depression that happens after a show. And it's funny you mentioned that, because I was wondering like how... You've had so many shows. What is your pregame and your post-game for these kind of bodies of work?

Brian-answers: Drawing really.

Evan-asks: Really? Okay.

Brian-answers: Drawing is such a... is my daily... I keep sketchbooks. I do these little thumbnails all the time. I take it out with me, I don't know, when my daughter is riding a horse, I'll just take this little thing and sketch. And so at the times where I feel least able to contemplate standing in front of a canvas for something, I just draw and I repeat myself. It's like a cow chewing on it's cud. I just do the same drawing over and over or start thinking of a painting I've made and try to draw it from memory. And at some point, something jogs it; something. Or I'll have like a teeny two inch by one inch sketch. And I think like, "I think that would work really well at five feet."

And so then I go into the studio and just try it. And then your work, and then it's like cooking. It's like, oh shit. I need more something else. You get over it. So that was a lot more difficult when I was younger, because I think I, over the years, I've... especially having kids. I have a 15 year old and an 11 year old, and I was surprised to see becoming a parent made me less anxious in general and certainly made me much less anxious about art. I used to have this, like most people, but are a lot of artists, I would brood over things or get really, feel like, "I have this show in four months." [crosstalk 00:36:06]. You know?

Evan-asks: Yeah.

Brian-answers: Especially these would be the kind of things that you just be drifting off to sleep and then you'd remember it [crosstalk 00:36:16]. And I just don't have that anymore.

Evan-asks: Is it because that these moments and these figures start coming to you as you're just living life in a way that's more natural? Or, and is there something about the fact that you're a parent, your kids are getting older and your life with them, you can find moments and pockets of inspiration in different ways, so that the anxiety goes away?

Brian-answers: I don't know.

Evan-asks: [crosstalk 00:36:44] not to be a therapist. That's not a therapist question.

Brian-answers: There's some of that, I'm sure. A lot of it to me is just like the... There was a certain clarity, it's like, "What the fuck was I ever worrying about?" This is not a life or death situation. And then certainly also just experienced over time, I've realized like, I know I get anxious at a certain point in the process. I know how you feel like it's never going to get done at another point in the process. When I have that moment, I tend to have a few nights of restless sleep, then I get in and really I'm like, I have to get so much done in this next week and a half. And it's like, I don't, but I do get it done. And then I get this rush of like, oh right. This is what happens when you try to change your speed, work more quickly, work with more abandon.

And then you look at it and it's like, "Okay, wait, this is exciting me now." And you can be, it's like, you get a little bit outside your head. You start to see things. And mainly, you just start reacting to things. I'm at my worst when I'm trying to like think up a show, and now I just don't. I start with a painting. I start with a few drawings, I start a few paintings. They start going, they make me think of something else, and it's just an ongoing process. And really, I just see myself as someone who makes paintings and drawings every day. And every handful of months, I edit them into being an exhibition. And I just trust that like, there's only so much that I'm going to be thinking of at any given time. So it kind of edits itself into coherence.

Evan-asks: Right. I mean, okay, so at what stage right now are you for the show coming up in, is it opening in November?

Brian-answers: It's opening, I think October, 29th.

Evan-asks: Okay. So at what point in the process are you right now? Are you done and you're chill, or are you at the last moments of that rush?

Brian-answers: I am possibly done. I could be done. It could ship tomorrow, but whenever I'm at this point, I have a lot of loose things that I still work on. At towards the end, it's this funny thing where you feel like you've got all this downhill momentum and things are just happen more easily. So I try to go with that spirit, both to see what other exciting thing could happen that will energize this body of work when it's up. And if it doesn't really get done or fit, those are wonderful to have that are like, they're in the studio waiting for either the next exhibition, or I mean... We have less of this now with COVID, but the art fair dilemma of people always wanting things, it's always nice to have a few [crosstalk 00:40:11].

Evan-asks: Yeah, right. Kind of like these works that sort of fill in the body of work that you made for a particular show.

Brian-answers: Yeah.

Evan-asks: Yeah.

Brian-answers: So anyways, I started a new painting this morning that may or may not be done by next Thursday just because I realized it's based off an image that was the start of all of the things I'm doing, but when I made that painting, I knew I wanted to keep it. So now I'm doing a variation on it, because as I was looking at the final checklist, I was realizing like, "That's kind of weird that that's not in there, but I don't want to part with painting." So I'm seeing if I can, if wrestling with it one more time creates a painting that will fit into the show.

Evan-asks: So thank you for sending a little bit of the new body of work. And I was doing a little bit of comparing to the stuff earlier this year. Well, it would have been done last year for the China show. But what are some of the things that you... Looking at this kind of complete set of works, are you feel... When do you kind of go like, yeah this is... Do you feel like you've tried some new things out? Do you feel like there's a conversation that is reflective of the year? Are you feeling good about... Will this be you're like, "Yep, that was definitely the work I made in 2020."

Brian-answers: Yeah. I mean, I feel that way for better or worse, but I feel... It's funny, because I've made... I would say that generated a lot more steps that I'm not putting in the show in this year, which I'm happy about, because, again, especially when I was working in my garage, I feel like I've generated a lot of smaller images, and they made sense to me within that context. But that doesn't even really answer the question, which is to say...

I feel more of a continuum in my own work, but I always, when I look at work I made in one year versus the previous year, or especially if I look, compared to two years previously, I don't really notice the shifts as I'm making them. But then when I look at the work, I generally am like, well, it seems recognizably my work, but I really see like, yeah, they change more than I think do.

Evan-asks: Yeah, for sure. I was thinking about that too. And I was looking back at your previous bodies of work, and I was going to looking at this, so there's actually drastic changes, but it's still you, which is, I think that's part of the, I draw every day part of being an artist. Is that you aren't just like putting the guitar down and I'm not going to write a song for it. It's just this continuum and things reappear and things go away. And I love that about an artist career, is the things that come and go and reappear because you give yourself that opportunity to.

Brian-answers: Yeah. And that's one of the exciting things to me out over... I started painting in probably like '90. I had drawn my whole life pretty obsessively since I was a kid, but I didn't really know you could [crosstalk 00:44:02].

Evan-asks: What would you draw? What were your things? You weren't like a comic book kid or anything like that, or were you?

Brian-answers: I was a mad magazine kid, so it was all pretty much that. And then I wasn't really a comic book in any kind of like serial, or I was... but like peanuts, older things like that excited me a lot. And then definitely right before... I would say late high school, I was pretty into Raw magazine and all of that kind of era like school of visual arts people. And so that seemed really interesting. And I, like that, I feel like it was one of the early times where it started to shift more towards like, huh, because I grew up in the Central Valley, so I didn't really... It's not like I was going to museums or galleries, and I was pretty ignorant to what was out there.

So anything that came to me was more through TV or certainly like album covers and then interview magazine, face magazine and some like music magazines. And then when I was probably like middle, at some point in high school, I started traveling up to San Francisco. I had older friends who lived there, so I would just take the train up and stay there, or drive down to LA with friends to usually go see like music or something. And that's when I started to also get a sense of these other, that you could kind of do these things, so.

Evan-asks: Right. Well, it's weird is that We live in a time now where art has become so much more popular in the sense where people just drop into gallery shows now, and people want to be artists. And it's such a shift in the last 20 years, where the hopes of being a professional artist are higher. I don't know if the success rate is the same, but the hopes of being an artist have changed and... And of course Instagram helped that.

Brian-answers: Yeah. It's a weird, it's a strange thing that all of a sudden it became, again, like not a loser profession.

Evan-asks: Right, yeah. Or not even like... Yeah. And it's like, of course you lived in the Central Valley and art wasn't there, because it really wasn't in... It wasn't part of people's daily lives really anywhere except for parts of Chicago and New York, parts of LA sort of, San Francisco in it's weird underground [outsidery 00:46:51] way.

Brian-answers: Yeah. Yeah, it's funny, I saw today that Robert Bechtle died. And-

Evan-asks: Did he?

Brian-answers: He did, yeah. And it's funny I was communicating with a friend and saying that, it's so strange because I very vividly... My first kind of, I feel like going to a gallery that wasn't a funky space started out by someone that year that wasn't around the next year or something was going over to Paule Anglim to see a Bechtle show in, I don't know, '89 or '90. I can't remember exactly but, and just being like, whoa. This is really nice, and the subtlety and quietness of the space and the work, and the intelligence.

I remember thinking like, "All right. It'd be really fun to try to make a show for a place like this." So, but that was just when I... It's probably the year I started painting. And it was so different than kind of you're like how it looks like in a movie or on TV where an art opening has to always be this stupid thing, where-

Evan-asks: There's wine. Everyone's drinking champagne or wine like white wines and-

Brian-answers: And the artist always acts out, and-

Evan-asks: Yeah, exactly.

Brian-answers: Which I... I loved those, but it's like, I've been at very few openings where anything like that happens.

Evan-asks: I've been at a couple art openings and maybe this is just the Juxtapoz thing. I've been at a couple where there's been definitely been some acting out. And I kind of go like, "Yeah, it's cool. I'm glad it's still happens."

Brian-answers: Yeah.

Evan-asks: But it is what it is. Is it weird to you to think that potentially, because you've been doing this for 30 years and you have a significant body of work and so many people appreciate what you do, like that do you feel like it's weird that you could be somebody's Guston in a way?

Brian-answers: Yeah, it's really weird. I would immediately, it's like, if I want to be anyone's guest and I need to step it up. I mean, to pay respect to him. But yeah, it's amazing already. I have certainly met some young artists or heard from young artists who talk about this moment that they saw a painting or something, and it's funny to realize... I think part of doing this, it's like you experience time in a really different way. You're just part of making images for so long, it feels like I'm not experiencing the time in the rest of my life I gave, but it feels like an ongoing conversation in my own mind that I just have an ability to put out there. And every now and then, especially you meet someone and you realize how strange it is, that I totally believe I just control whatever I do in my own image making, and then I put it out and it's not mine anymore.

It's absolutely someone else's. So to hear what it means to people or what it signifies to people, it's really fascinating. And the notion that like... I see image making and painting as a continuum that's been happening since humans first started scratching on a wall. So, anything to me that like the fact that I can just be part of that conversation is so exciting, because I do think it's amazing that something as peculiar... It's like singing on the level of like people realize, "Well, I can make sounds and communicate, but I can also sing." This strange thing of like, "What about if I do voice like..." And like harmony and all these... These things that are like, whoa, it's so basic, but it's in your body, and it's this weird hand-eye coordination and this whole other way of communicating.

To me, that's so exciting. So yeah, there's nothing that I would love more than to like help it keep moving it down the line. And for me, what keeps me excited and I feel like makes me feel young in the studio is that I do feel like I'm communicating with dead artists from all the centuries before us, but you're also trying... You're also like you need to speak to your moment at the same time. And that balance is what keeps things fresh. It's like you look back at Caravaggio or something and it's like, they were so hardcore the present moment, but obviously speaking everything that came before, and Guston, again, a perfect example.

But many other artists and that's the part of me, again, to go back to why I feel like I deal with figures, why I deal with images, is I love that sense of continuity. And it's like dealing with things that are a little more recent. When I was a student, I would make, deal with video art every now and then. And it was exciting and interesting to play around with, but I felt so oppressed by the recent history. It's like, this history is really only gone back to like the sixties mainly. But then it felt so omnipresent because the things that had broken through were so... It's like, "Right, that's what you do." Where you [inaudible 00:53:17] variation of that, where painting... The fact that painting for so long.

I feel like this may be confusing to some people now because painting is held up a little more or seen as like, "Right. Contemporary art." But it was just such a bastard child for so long. I knew so many people who went to grad school as a painter and started doing sound art or installation art or something, and it's like, I don't mean to belittle that, it's just that it did feel like who would really want to be a painter. And I always, I felt either being cursed or blessed that it's like, I just knew it's what I wanted to do.

Evan-asks: Well, it's funny, because I wrote in my notes here. Bridge the gap. In ways that, I think for you in particular for a lot of younger painters bridge the gap of like, because you're in blue-chip galleries, you're in the big art fairs, and you bridge this gap of where you've been doing it long enough, where it's like, I can do this stuff long enough. I can do it and have a successful career. And not do that weird year where I did only sound art and now everyone's for... These weird pivots where it maybe is not really what people wanted to do, but they thought that was what they were supposed to do. That kind of thing.

Brian-answers: Right. Is that a question?

Evan-asks: It's not really a question. It's more of an observation.

Brian-answers: Yeah.

Evan-asks: I think it was just an observation of how you've helped be this part of these pillars that get people from where they want to go and seeing how the slow evolution of it without this major, I have to for this show is where we do the hip hop in the gallery thing. I don't know, just some, where trends come in.

Brian-answers: Yeah, yeah. No, I mean certainly also when I was an undergraduate, I would say one of the biggest influences I felt just out of desire and excitement was [Mike Kelley 00:55:29] and [inaudible 00:55:31], it's funny because it would make me think constantly at that age, when you should be thinking of what form should I be playing with? That age still, just it was like, he's so inspiring, he's so fucking smart. This is so revelatory and I'm going to go make a painting. And it's just I feel... And I felt like a mule on that way, but I also, I think it was-

Evan-asks: Yeah, it's like Robert Williams who founded Juxtapoz. It's weird because Mike Kelley is the opposite of him, but he loves Mike Kelly, but he would not like Matthew Barney, you know what I mean? There's certain, we don't have to keep that on the record, but-

Brian-answers: I can understand that.

Evan-asks: But, yeah, you know what I mean? There's something about that that's very interesting about certain people who play with so many different mediums and different styles and different avenues who can charge up a painter to go paint, whereas there are certain people who do that and they're like, it just doesn't work for me.

Brian-answers: Yeah.

Evan-asks: But that's, I think that's just why Mike Kelly's a certain particular figure.

Brian-answers: Absolutely. I mean, he's... Yeah, he's-

Evan-asks: Yeah. What excites you right now in painting?

Brian-answers: I haven't seen a lot, obviously, given the way things have been going. I want to get into LA to see the Yevgeniya Baras. I'm not sure how you spell her name. It's Y-E-V-G-E-N-I-Y-A or something B-A-R-A-S. I think her works seems really incredible. I've only seen a piece in person. I think it's at the [Landon 00:57:45] Gallery. I want to go and to see that even though I haven't gone to see any art since whatever.

Evan-asks: Yeah.

Brian-answers: I think I've been excited by Alvara Barrington's work. And it's interesting, and I mean both of them are more abstract. I think lots of times I'm actually, I do find myself often pulled towards abstract work. And I think a lot of that, again, is because I sense in that the same sense of wrestling with something and resolve that I lack if I would try to communicate in a more abstract; purely abstract manner.

Evan-asks: Are there things that you borrow from that? Or is it more just like, almost like a undefinable energy that you get from it?

Brian-answers: Yeah, I would say it's more energy, but I mean, again, I feel so out of practice from seeing things in person that it's hard to say, especially now missing it, because by nature, I don't go to see a lot of things at this stage of my life like I did when I was living in cities or something.

Evan-asks: Right.

Brian-answers: Even then I would always feel like, "Oh shit. I really wanted to see that show at the museum but I didn't make it."

Evan-asks: Right.

Brian-answers: But now, it's funny now that we're in this strange moment, I feel more the quality of missing seeing things.

Evan-asks: Yeah.

Brian-answers: So I do look forward to seeing things in person again.

Evan-asks: And do you get to go to your New York show?

Brian-answers: I don't think I will. I do get to, but I don't think will.

Evan-asks: I guess technically we can fly to New York. The thing is, I tried to go to Vermont a couple of weeks ago just to get away from the smoke, and I've always wanted to go to Vermont in the Fall. And it's just they're really, it's very difficult as a Californian to go to Vermont right now, because of-

Brian-answers: To quarantine, and [crosstalk 01:00:12]-

Evan-asks: Yeah, and it's like, I can't commit to 14 days in Vermont. It sure sounds great, but the whole point is be able to go take walks and you know.

Brian-answers: Yeah, that's how I feel about like... I think New York still has that with people from California. I don't know. But even if I could go and... I just think I'd be dealing with the kind of... The last thing I really want to do is go somewhere and be much more social than I am now. And also, I miss that part, because this is another part of my process where it's then you go and you put it up on a wall and you get to see, oh shit, the stuff that feels chaotic in the studio like... I mean, here, I'll show you a little like just the way everything just [crosstalk 01:01:07]. Whoops! There goes my water bottle [inaudible 01:01:10]. It's just like-

Evan-asks: Yeah, it's like this...

Brian-answers: Everything, everywhere. So-

Evan-asks: By the way, I really like this body of work.

Brian-answers: Thanks. So.-

Evan-asks: And you also, you're not... It's funny, because you're at the stage of your career where your work is going into these beautiful, pristine, white places. With the chaos, it's not going to be replicated in such a space.

Brian-answers: Yeah, that's what's funny. And that's what to me, I look forward to that. For me, I had this slight revelation, five years ago I had this retrospective in Dijon at the consortium, and it was the first time anyone had ever wanted to do that. And then it ended up in Belgium too. The consortium is this beautiful building and you're in Dijon, it's like-

Evan-asks: Yeah, great. Yeah.

Brian-answers: And knowing and just seeing the installation and it really flipped a switch in my brain, because as much as I've always shown, or I had already been showing at like what I think are really good galleries [crosstalk 01:02:40]. They all still felt intuitively matched to me, and I felt there were people who supported me and they were certainly funky and had industrial elements or something. This was the first time I was in a place where it looked like in my mind, where you put someone else's art [crosstalk 01:03:01]. And I think I just always identified as scrappy and all of this stuff that felt important to me. But, and then seeing it there, and I was... I thought if I was ever going to do that, I would need to do something else. I need to up my game, and then seeing it and being like, "Oh shit, it's really the architecture." You could do that as a criticism of how work is seen, but it was so beautiful and giving it that space, I realized, "These are up there with whatever else. It's not to..." And I don't mean that in that braggadocio-

Evan-asks: No.

Brian-answers: It was like these hold this space.

Evan-asks: I think, because artists can be so self-critical, you need those moments though.

Brian-answers: Definitely.

Evan-asks: To like get... I mean, interviewing artists for 14 years, I always feel they have those moments where like, well, it's just... These kind of downer or thought really, but you need to have those moments where like they hold up in this grand place, because these are the things that help keep you going.

Brian-answers: Absolutely. And for me, that had been before then it was more than a decade before that was when I was included in that group show, Dear Painter at the Pompidou. And it was insane to be in the show with Polka and [Alex Katz 01:04:26], and all these people, where you're like, "Holy shit." And then going in to this museum that I've been to and you never imagined your work being in there or one doesn't, and then seeing it and being like, "It looks good."

Evan-asks: Right. Actually, I think that's really good because we have a mixture of readers, but we do have a younger readership too. It's good to know that, oh shit, still happened 30 years into it.

Brian-answers: Yeah.

Evan-asks: Because I think people feel like, Oh shit's, they happened that one time and that's it. But it's good to know that oh shit still happens.

Brian-answers: Yeah, absolutely.

Evan-asks: It's the most unarticulate yet perfect way to say it.

Brian-answers: Yeah. Yeah, no, we all live for those moments. And it's like being able to still be surprised that also something as humble as like putting paint with a stick onto fabric can somehow communicate to people in other countries, all around. It's bonkers.

Evan-asks: Right. It's really cool because the guys who you're doing the teapot with, they had seen your show in Shanghai.

Brian-answers: [SK 01:06:02] was there [crosstalk 01:06:03].

Evan-asks: Yeah. So-

Brian-answers: Which was great.

Evan-asks: Yeah, and it's so cool that how these things do travel and especially nowadays, where Asia is starting to open up to so much and be more receptical, reciprocating and just there's so much happening in the world that was not happening. I still think it was struggling to happen even 15 years ago, and now it seems like it's opening up so much more.

Brian-answers: Right. Yeah, it was really interesting going there. I literally went there absolutely not knowing what the deal was going to be, whether anyone would even be at the opening. Since it was a new space for [inaudible 01:06:52], and I hadn't worked with the team yet, and so there were just various things that I went in with this leap of faith, and traveling was a little more difficult, trying to get there [crosstalk 01:07:08], and then getting there. I felt so excited by the energy. It's a pretty young energy and really generous people and it just, again, it's so surreal to me on some level that something I do in my little space or every day that then allows this... that go out there and find homes.

Evan-asks: Yeah.

Brian-answers: It's incredibly humbling. I mean, it's exciting. And again, I feel ridiculously blessed and privileged to do it.

Evan-asks: Yeah. Are you a one show at a time guy? I know you were saying that you have extra work that goes to fairs, but are you... Well, after Anton Kern, I've got this... Or do you try to do it like...

Brian-answers: Some years ago, I would have absolutely just answered yes. And then I had a few different times where, a few years ago at one point, I made a show for my London gallery, Corvi-Mora, [inaudible 01:08:45] in Paris, and a small show for this space cabinet in Milan. And I flew to, I can't remember which one first. I think I flew to London first, had an opening, then flew to Milan, had this little thing and then went to Paris and hung the show and stayed there. And my family met me on the later into that, and it was really doable and fun. But it was strange to try to... It was different for me because I had to think what different things are happening in these different shows. And yet, it was doable.

Evan-asks: Yeah, right.

Brian-answers: It's nothing I would rush to do again, because I like the rhythm of thinking. I've always tended to think, and most shows tend to be like this, where it's like, I always thought of it as making an LP. And so it's in the traditional-old, where you have 12 songs on a record, and you've got a few hits, you've got a few deep tracks, maybe an instrumental. And it's like, I always felt like painting that seemed really like you do want to. There are hits, but it looks... I feel the painting I like least that has the highest visibility are people who are always making a hit, and I won't name names, but there are things where you just realize, it's a full-proof aesthetic, you know how to do it. There's probably a line of collectors going around the building twice that wants one of these things, and so you do it. And I understand that, but it's like I just-

Evan-asks: It's not what you do. It's not what you can-

Brian-answers: No. And I can't imagine, I think I would fail at doing it because I don't think I could keep up the mental and physical energy to do it again, unless I'm having a problem.

Evan-asks: Right.

Brian-answers: And to me, making art is the problem part of it, not be like, [inaudible 01:11:31], block this in and, here, you work on that while I work on this.

Evan-asks: Right.

Brian-answers: It's just that's not the way my, whatever, libido works.

Evan-asks: What's the hit in this show, do you think? Do you have a couple of hits?

Brian-answers: I don't know, now that I've said that. I feel like I can answer that question better if I saw them, if I was there for the installation and saw them, or maybe just when I see the installed shots. I don't usually feel that way immediately while I'm working on them, so I don't know. And sometimes it's funny, certainly, I don't think I'm the best judge of that. And there have been plenty of times where some paintings that have turned out to seem like it's over time, were things that seemed like it went completely under the radar when I made it, and maybe even for a while there afterwards. And then for whatever reason, they start to resonate, which to me is exciting because I think that's like looking at many artists over time that come to the scene. Their longevity comes to mean something very different than they did even.

Evan-asks: Yeah. You know what it is? To me, what it sounds like is... How do I articulate this? But it sounds like, it's being precious about process and not precious about every single painting, because meanings in things can change. And the one thing that you can control is the process of the fact that you draw, the fact that you find ideas and that you apply that. And that story is the one that is the most important for you.

Brian-answers: Yeah. No, it's true. And it's funny because then every.... Sometimes with galleries, you're dealing with, they'll be like, you show them this a body of work and they're like, love it all, but there'll be a painting or two that they're like, "This one is strange or something." And you either fight to have it in or not depending on how you feel. But the funny thing is sometimes those are ones that I'm like, "Oh no, that has to be in there. I love that one." And then, there often are, there'll be like that one person who... There's a collector who's bOught a few of what to me seemed very peculiar ones I've made, that it excites me that this one person it's like, huh, I wonder why those appeal. And it's very exciting. And to me, I think in someone with... I think they have a really good eye, but that they also like a more complicated image.

And these are, the ones in particular I'm thinking of, which of course isn't that helpful if you're not seeing them, but were ones where there were a few more confused closing down of the painting then opening it back up, so that they have these slightly odd feelings of, what is this even? And I love those paintings [crosstalk 01:14:58]. When I was younger, that is just the way I painted. And it was painful on some level, because I just didn't know how to resolve a painting. I didn't believe in making a preparatory drawing and then making a painting. I would just start painting and see where it, and that was really difficult. And over time, I realized, again, especially that I would make these drawings and I just realized, huh, this really primitive, teeny things seems like something that could hold a much bigger space.

Once I realized that could happen, within reason that that works. You get this skeletal thing and then you keep working until it resonates and a space to where I know it's done being mine. Now it's someone else, or anyone who looks at it gets to enter it.

Evan-asks: Right.

Brian-answers: So, but there are still sometimes that keep getting away. Every show I paint up, there's a handful of paintings that I start and really go off the rails and a few of them just get abandoned. But then often again, once I ship it, I'll get it back and just think, "Should I take this off the stretcher?" Or then sometimes I'll think, well, I'll just spend... I get myself, I've got two hours before I need to go somewhere, paint's already out.

Evan-asks: You'll work on it a little bit.

Brian-answers: Yeah. And then sometimes these really funny, strange things occur. Again, you just have to remain open to all these possibilities, otherwise your work gets so stagnant. And I think that's the ultimate, for me, that's my nightmare is just to not figure out a way to keep things morphing into something else.

Evan-asks: Do you have a name for the show?

Brian-answers: Not yet. I probably will. I haven't titled any of the paintings. I did title, I went through... I shipped off a bunch of drawings yesterday and so I titled them. And I never really title anything until the last minute. It's a different frame of mine, but I enjoy, I like having titles.

Evan-asks: Yeah. No, it's always interesting, because when that process comes in, because for titles mean a lot to people and naming a show seems like the most stressful thing to me.

Brian-answers: Yeah.

Evan-asks: I mean, because sometimes when a band named an album and it's just so bad, but 10 years later, you're like, "It was perfect. It was great." I feel there's so many bands I love and I'm like, "Why did they name her third album that? It's so like, what the hell." But I don't know. When you're dealing with art shows, it seems like, it's like... I think it has to be the last minute thing to do.

Brian-answers: Yeah. Yeah, I mean the nice thing with naming a show is it doesn't seem necessary. I don't like having untitled paintings personally. I'm okay with the show just being like-

Evan-asks: New works by?

Brian-answers: Yeah, [inaudible 01:18:38] whatever. But normally, I try to have something... And it's funny because I did.... During like what? I guess it was back in April, I was supposed to have a show in London at Corvi-Mora, and we just canceled it. Let's just figure out a time down the line when we'll have the new one, but it was titled, Waiting, which was just funny, because that was before all of this. [crosstalk 01:19:07], and then it got canceled. So it's like, "Okay, that seems oddly appropriate."

Evan-asks: Right. And you can keep that title for whenever you want.

Brian-answers: Yup. Keep it in your pocket.

Evan-asks: Keep it in your pocket. Well, I got a lot. That was awesome.

Brian-answers: Thanks, man. It was good time.

Evan-asks: Yeah...