



SOUTHCOAST Artists Index

This story was collected through our partnership with the SouthCoast Artist Index, led by Ron Fortier.

These transcripts were produced using the Zoom transcription feature.

Interviewer Name: Ron Fortier Storyteller Name: David Mello

Ron Fortier

Hey, this is our forty once again with another episode of the In Focus Podcast brought to you by the South Coast Artist Index and supported generously by heavily spirits importers and. We are now approaching our 104th podcast, which is quite an achievement, and these podcasts are being archived. We're working in cooperation with the New Bedford Whale Museums. Common ground project and you'll be hearing more about that in the upcoming months. So without further delay, I would like to have our guest introduce themselves and spell his name.

David Mello

Hi, my name is David Mello. David. Mello.

Ron Fortier

Again, always important, especially for people who are traveling. Sometimes you know they can't get it right and you know, I've said countless time. About an announcer on PBS on actually National Public Radio, where I I just, it sounded like. The Egyptian sun God, when it was yo Aaron Roth, I believe was his name, but anyway, and also two Portuguese names. I forgot when the that that changeover was especially the Azores, where they started to. What's the word? I don't want to say unify. They tried to get some sort of a system because they were some names like demello would be spelled with 1L in one place and 12L's in another place, and sometimes they D apostrophe it's, you know.

David Mello

Sure. Yes. Exactly right, right, right. They tried to unify it a little bit. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ron Fortier

Beautiful. Yes. Yeah, you're fine. Exactly. Exactly. So we know you and I and other people who have been to your show that you presently have a show. And even though this isn't a time. Kind of a podcast. We know that you have a show that's now up. Tell us about that. See if our listeners can catch some of that. When, when it, if it's still open.



David Mello

Sure. Yes, it is. The show is man and beast. It is my third time. It's showing at the narrow Center for the arts. It's my first one man show, which I'm excited. About and, it is still ongoing. It runs I believe through the 1st week of January, so there's still plenty of time to see it and I believe the gallery hours are Thursdays 9 to 5 and Fridays and Saturdays and Sundays. Also 9 excuse me 12 to 5 on those days, Thursday through Sundays and it is on the third floor. Of the Narrows building. And yeah, I'm very excited about it being my first one man show. It encompasses sculptures, masks, paintings and drawings. And the theme is again, it's man and beast, and it's kind of the the world of. Man and animals but seen through the through the world of dreams.

Ron Fortier

Well, let's roll. Back, you know, the old time machine to, you know, day one, the the moment of of realization that. You were an artist or wanted to be an artist or or were wondering what the heck that was. But there was really. Attractive to you?

David Mello

Day one it that goes a long a long way back when I I was small. I guess that's I guess a lot of artists can say that. I always loved making things. I always loved forming things with my hands with clay. I love drawing. I had a when I was a child I had a small table at home. I would sit on the floor and I'd have my play DoH. I have my crayons or sketches and. I wanted to be an artist right from day one. I remember coming across anatomy books in the house that my my father had and some art books, and I loved pouring through them. I loved trying to copy the the the drawings on the pages. I was one. The viewers, the older viewers will remember this, but you might remember the old TV guides. That used to come out. You'd pick them up one for every week to know what was going on in television. Now it's completely different, of course. But on in the TV guides, there were these. There were these ads for learning how to draw. And you had to copy a picture of a pirate or copy the picture of a of a dog or copy the picture of a cat. And that was a a regular challenge for me. Every week I'd wait for the TV Guide to come look at that ad, and I would do my done just to copy that image. So right from day one, I knew I wanted to be an artist or some way just always be engaged in the arts. I was not interested in sports or anything like that when I was a kid and it it it occupied. My full free time. Even in the classroom as a kid, I wasn't the best of students because I was always doodling when the teacher was giving her his. Or her lecture, you know? A drawing on my books or on a piece of paper that was. That was it for me. It was always in my life always is.

Ron Fortier

Oh, did you? I mean, did you have those episodes where the teacher would take your? Drawings or you? Know. Just stop doing that or put it away.

David Mello

Or. Ohh yeah, a ****. Ohh yeah, all the time, all the time. I'm sure somewhere in some old classroom with the draw stuff with. My drawings and doodles so.

Ron Fortier

How did you pursue? It did. You go to school? Did you get? A formal education in.

David Mello

The arts or in when I was in high school, I I you know, I knew I wanted to continue. I I knew I. Always wanted to. Have all one way or another in my life. It would be wonderful. I could if I could make a living doing it, graduating from high school. I I went to UMass Dartmouth where I studied illustration and design. Upon graduation, I worked part time jobs. I worked for time for the Patriot Ledger for a few years, for the Patriot Ledger, doing illustrations for stories, editorial art work. It was very exciting, very engaging. The turn around was very quick. Many times I would get an assignment. That morning and had to have it off in the mail in those days. By the evening or the



following morning and yeah. I did. It was primarily black and white work, illusion, black and white illustrations, pen and ink, which was my forte back then, and I did some ad work for, for work, for different commercial agencies, ad agencies, local ad agencies. Lots of. Logo designs for businesses throughout the city, so I was always engaged but never working full time in the field. When I graduated from college, I took a position here at the library and here. I've stayed, ever. Since, but always working part time on the side and doing. Always doing my.

Ron Fortier

Artwork. It's funny. They they talk about the gig economy today, but for artists it's always been a gig economy.

David Mello

Yeah, right.

Ron Fortier

You you mentioned a. Couple things. Did you work for John Scanlon? In fall.

David Mello

John John skeleton. No, but I. Was aware of him? No, I I don't believe I did. Any work for John? Because I know he had right on North Main Street, he had his. Yes, I don't. Believe I did. No, no.

Ron Fortier

OK, it was him and. It was a graphic reproduction house. On Rodman Street, I think it. Was and it was upstairs. Can't remember. The name, but we probably. Passed by, so to speak, because it was the same. You know, I was in the same. Sort of. But yeah, yeah, I.

David Mello

Did a. That's what kept me busy on the side for for for a number of years and. But always doing my own artwork on the side and then I just got into fine art. Yeah, that was where my true love always was. And about, you know, going back well over 30 years. I I met Ryan Brett Brenner. And that was that was a. A serendipitous meeting because I've always had a love of masks. That was always a primary interest for me, and so I got to pursue that interest doing masks for the theater. He would always have me come in at least a couple of times a year to design masks for a particular show, and it would. Allow the the the kids to have experience working with something other than their own faces and taking on the persona of another character through the masks. And it was a a different way to for them to develop their acting abilities, and that was always exciting for me when I would go. In and and do these shows. And then I from that I just kind of developed a pursuit, my own mask making on the side, doing them for more decorative purposes. And and that's when I really started delving really deeply into the fine arts through through my mask work. Over the past five years, what's been a lot of. Fun for me is. I got back into painting once again, and this particular show, man and beast, it's a it's a good example of that. These are new pieces that I've done over the past five years where I started painting in acrylic. And so it was. It was exciting to get back into that because I had stopped it for over 20 years.

Ron Fortier

Did you ever run across of any love Groves?

David Mello

Yes, Danny and I know each other quite well. Very talented guy, musically and artistically. Just love his work. I love his puppetry, love his masks, our our paths cross quite often, as a matter of fact, very talented guy.

Ron Fortier

Now, when you were at University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, was it University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, or was it?



David Mello

It was SMU back then, yes.

Ron Fortier

OK, so southeastern Massachusetts University, OK. And Barry was your illustration?

David Mello

Yeah, yeah. Teacher, was he? Yes. Well, yes.

Ron Fortier

Can't remember his first name.

David Mello

First, yes, I can't. He opened up the 1st.

Speaker

I think it.

David Mello

Was the 1st. A greeting card company. Where was it in? Some unusual place. I don't know if there was. Hawaii or not? Yeah. Ohh I cannot think of his first name, but I can see him in front of me. Very slender man. The shock of white hair, the glasses. Very nice gentleman. Very talented guy. We have his. We have this Christmas book here at the library. Which is about I cannot. Think of the mouse. The mouse and the Christmas tree. But yes, he is my instructor illustration instructor.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, there was. I I you know what, what years, if you don't mind me asking, were you there?

David Mello

I graduated in. You have to think now. I graduated in 83. Yeah, 1983.

Ron Fortier

There, just as the Swain school was being absorbed. It was, yeah.

David Mello

Exactly. It wasn't a part of any of that. I I kind of missed out on that cause I think it was a very exciting collaboration after after that, but no, it it I believe it was a couple of years after I had left that Swain became involved.

Ron Fortier

Now going into the advertising realm again. And and it it is name dropping and it's it is for the record because you know there are so many artists. I just have a neighbor. Her name is Vivian Lewis. She worked as a graphic designer for Jordan Marsh for about 10 years and then she became the head graphic. Designer for Bradley's department stores and I've yeah, she's in the early onset of dementia. She's down from Philadelphia with her daughter to clean up the house, so to speak. The house has been. Old and her sister had been living. There as well, she passed away in May, but we were. You're dropping names like Milton Healy. Who did all the illustration? Actually, the murals for whites of Westport before they did their grand expansion. Ohh. The room and yeah.

David Mello

Right, right. Right. Right. Right, right. Yes.



Ron Fortier

And then you know, you reminded me of John Scanlon. And but there were so many people who made a good living, were well known. And then the sad part about it. And that's one of the reasons for this podcast is. As they fade from memories, they fade from consciousness.

David Mello

Yes, you're you're right, yeah. And unless you're able to go to a place where you can see a physical example of their. Work at the at the. That's true. It's it's it's kind of sad in that respect. You know, as I. I don't know if it's if it's like this for all artists, but I know as far as myself is concerned, I I want to be remembered. I don't want to be forgotten. I think that's why I I do a lot of art work. I I produce a lot of work and I have several murals there at the library and I. You know, you you don't. Well, you don't mind if you yourself is forgotten. Let me say that if I myself. But I want my work to be remembered. You know, it's something that's a part of you throughout your life. You're creating these pieces. You're creating these works of art. They mean something to you. And I think, like all artists, as a side of us that we want it to be. To mean something to the general public, to to be accepted on some. Some level as being a contribution that you made to the Community or you made to whatever we call this world of art that we were at 1:00. Time a part. Of it, we were here. We had our own vision and we'd like that to be remembered in. Some small regard, yeah, we.

Ron Fortier

Contributed to it.

Speaker

I don't know if.

David Mello

It's a selfish thing. I don't know if it's.

Ron Fortier

No, I. I don't think it is. I mean, you know, if you if we go back and I've said this several times, that was one of the premises, you know, the elevated speech for when we developed the artist index was, you know you you have to encapsulate it. So it's like, well, what do you guys do? Well, well, we're we're building a. And it and people would just stop the head back like you watch building a pyramid. And now you have them engaged. Well, why would you do that? For the same reason they built them originally because they were built. They were built to preserve the body. They were actually built to preserve the memory.

David Mello

And the to their memory had the deeds. That they had done in their life. So that they would be remembered through generation after generation, yes.

Ron Fortier

And so that when they came back, because there was a point of time where they felt they would come back from Orion's belt, that nothing would have changed. Everything was familiar to them again.

David Mello

Yeah, right. You know exactly.

Ron Fortier

Right. Right. So yeah, it. It is important, and I've I've written a. Couple of articles. And I've done a podcast specifically about artists estates with it's being called Doctor Bellman called Doctor Cause he hates it. Doctor Richard Connor, who is an evolutionary biologist, now retired from. The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth,



who is a voracious collector, and he has probably 4 estates that he's handling now, and he could handle way more. If he had 67 or 800,000 square feet of warehouse because there's an entire generation that is passing on and leaving behind. Mountains of work in overwhelming families and so much of it, unfortunately. Is either being burned.

David Mello

Yeah, it's.

Ron Fortier

Or being landfills.

David Mello

Yeah. Yeah. And that's horrible. After an artist dies that, you know, that's the part of him that lives and and to throw away their work or to be forgotten. It's dying over and over and over again. I think for them, you know, so. Yeah, it's 9.

Ron Fortier

Many deaths, that's that's that's very true.

David Mello

Yeah, yeah.

Ron Fortier

Other than the portrait. Whose name we can't remember, and I can see him as well. He was you. Know presence in the hallways.

David Mello

Is it? Jim Barry.

Ron Fortier

James Berry. I don't know. Yeah. Yeah. Anyway going backwards. What other instructors do you remember?

David Mello

It's terrible, I've forgotten everyone's names. It's horrible. I.

Ron Fortier

This is exactly what we're talking about.

David Mello

Yes, it's it's awful. No, I've I've always. Been this way I can see their faces. Ohh, it was the wonderful I had him one year for for for illustration and design, but his primary. His primary art form was calligraphy.

Ron Fortier

Ohh, how the Glasser.

David Mello

How the? Howard glasser. Yeah, his work was phenomenal. Yes, I I remember. He would do a lot of poster work for the for the university as well. And, you know, I I never had an appreciation for the the printing and and calligraphy until I met Howard. Cluster. I mean, what a phenomenal talent he was. And so I didn't get to study with with Howard and. I I studied with Linda Catan, also a designer, and I studied with Peter Schickel for sculpting only. Had him for one year. What a fantastic. I'll tell you what. Fantastic sculpture he was and sculptor instructor



he. Really, he's one. Of the people who taught me how to see. And taught me how to look at things and not only the space that a physical form occupies, but the forms that exist around the shapes. And I never thought in those terms until meeting this gentleman, but he was a very thoughtful, very analytical. But not overly so. In in structure and I I really gained. A lot from. Him, as a matter of fact, he, he, he. Was tempting me. To no end to pursue a path in sculpting, but I ended up going in a in another direction, but he made it very exciting.

Ron Fortier

But oddly enough, from the work that I've seen of yours, it it the the the the works, it is sculptural, yes.

David Mello

It is. So yeah, yes, yeah.

Ron Fortier

He obviously was correct.

David Mello

He he had a a huge influence on. Me and one of the person. That I I. Have to point out. That made such an influence on me. When I was. In high school is. That my high school art teacher Tom Tavar. Chris, what's his name? And I, I, I I wish I knew what happened to him. And I never. I used to go and visit him quite regularly after leaving high school. But what a tremendous artist he was. What a a vision the man had and and a tremendous worth. Like work ethic as well and. Have a lot to a lot to thank him for as well. Really taught me how to look at art and appreciate other artists and appreciate the way other artists would see and not just dismiss them because their style was very different from my own or wasn't immediately. I I I you know. What I was familiar with, but he taught me. He taught me a lot.

Speaker

I'm going to.

Ron Fortier

Drop a couple of other names again, it's just for the record. And you know when? Yeah, you know at. Our age it it's going to take. Two of our brains.

David Mello

Ohh God yeah.

Ron Fortier

To to to get there. But was George Miller still in the in the Sculpture Department?

David Mello

Yes, George Miller was exactly he left before George left before. Before I graduated, I retired. Yeah, he was older and also Professor Todd. Mary. We talked. Yes, Todd. Yes. I love that man. Yeah. What a what? A character he was. But I was under his tutelage for a.

Ron Fortier

I heard he was ill. Oh my, my.

David Mello

Couple of years.



Ron Fortier

Right. There was Herb Cummings. So Todd and Cummings, yeah.

David Mello

Yes, right. Yeah, your your memory is much better. Than mine for things, yeah.

Ron Fortier

Another another another one. And you know, with George Miller, he was an intellectual. I never got him. He tried to push me to a level that he. Thought I could see.

David Mello

Yes, you're right.

Ron Fortier

And I I. Didn't trust him because I didn't really know what the heck he was. Talking about. The books that I I still have today from one of his classes called the necessity of art a socialist approach by Ernst Fischer. And I opened that book up maybe about 15 years ago or. Ohh and it was like Oh my God, I wish he was still alive. Cause George died of cancer. And actually I got a chance to I, his wife, came to an opening and she introduced herself. And what, you know, one thing led to another. I was like, Oh my God, I have. To apologize to him through you. Because I just didn't get him, I read that book. I've read that book so many times. It's. Taped together and held together with. With with. Wow. But yeah, there was tonari. There was Cummings. There was Frank McCoy. Who? I didn't get a chance. He passed away. Just only maybe within the last five years. And he was on my apology tour as. Well, because he was always talking about big flat shapes and he was from Kansas and I thought to myself. What the hell? Else, does he know? It wasn't until I was teaching your class and I screamed.

David Mello

Right.

Ron Fortier

Ohh in French. I said big flat. Shapes. Oh my God. I have to. Apologize to Frank.

David Mello

I'm sure they're hearing I I'm sure they got the apology.

Ron Fortier

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But. You know the reason why. I bring them. Oh, and then there was Willoughby Elliot. Bill Elliott, who just passed recently. Yeah.

David Mello

Yes, yes, I see. With him throughout the four years I was there, maybe when you were there as well, he always had the pin on his lapel ideas that she did. Did he always have that?

Ron Fortier

He always had something, he.

David Mello

Yeah, it's impossible.

Ron Fortier

Was he was he was enigmatic. I I guess somewhere to really describe him he was enigmatic and he pushed me.



He pushed me. In in, in. It was a gentle but forceful. Way if that makes any sense.

David Mello

Yeah, yeah.

Ron Fortier

He would always get to that core by being. And always gentle, never swore, never. Never, you know, never embarrass me. But he always made me feel as though I better listen to him. Yeah. Yeah. And I did get a chance to speak with him and. It was it. Was a phenomenal education now of the the four. Toneri was very well known. He was a sold quite a bit. He was up in Newbury. He he was the father, the the developer of acrylic paints for artists. Herb Cummings was very well known at the time, yet trying to find a piece of either of their work, unless it's with their children.

David Mello

Right, right, frank.

Ron Fortier

Volquez work? Still exists, it's in paid their village, primarily at Norton's Gallery, which is he? He had a. Relationship with him. All of his adult life while he.

Speaker

Right.

Ron Fortier

Was here in in the area and Bill Elliott. Was very, very much esconced with the Marion Arts. And there was just a retrospective showing him a couple of months back.

Speaker

OK.

Ron Fortier

The point being is that. We were taught by Giants. And there's really no, I mean. How long is it gonna take you for somebody? Oh my God. You know, I all I ever wanted out of my practice is to be significant. I figured everything else will fall into place after.

David Mello

That right, right. Yeah, so.

Ron Fortier

Let's talk about your themes. You know the man and beast kind of thing. I I'm going to investigate it. I've been very much mesmerized with it. Chapter 87 of Moby Dick, the Grand Armada. Where does that be calming? The sea is like glass and they look down and through the surface of the water. They see the cows, the the female whales nursing their calves. And there's this weird thing that's going on where it's their world, our world. You know, and you know, the killing is going. To begin. And you know, so like the tension, just like builds up. Absolutely incredible. Is your man and beast kind of? Is that the kind of relationships that we're talking about? Because I'm going to go see your show tomorrow on my schedule. Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

David Mello

Ohh great great happy. Yeah. For me the, the, the, the theme of it's. I it develops a lot from my dreams. OK, I dream a lot of of animals and a lot of confrontations with animals in my dreams and it kind of kind of comes from



that. A lot of it. And the and the imagery that you'll see is is kind of indicative. And also it it goes back to I ever since I was a child, I've always loved the images that I've always incorporated men, men and beasts together. The the covings of the ancient Egyptians, as you might be well familiar, the all covings, the statuary. I always found that fascination of the the the man falling with intertwined with the image of of the beast, and the more I get into it as you get older, you're reading into this about the the religious significance, the ties that they that. The the the that religious, that mythical tie that they had with these gods who were animal and represented by animal form. It just fascinated me. Yeah, exactly. And and it's part of the our our human nature. We we look to nature we look at these animals.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, animism, animism, yeah.

David Mello

And throughout history, they're they have these wonderful abilities, the ability of flight, the ability to to, to climb mountains and trees. And they have these senses that we don't have and we look upon them with envy and we wish we had these qualities. So a lot of that is and our our. Are are almost at the A a type of envy that we have of these creatures, but yet on the other hand we can be. So cruel to. Them, and it's all that dual fascination that I that I have for it, for that relationship between man and animals and and also I I. The animals that I portray in my. In my work and and you'll see it for yourself when you go. I'm I'm always influenced by the the world of fantasy, the world of dreams and the animals that I I they have betrayed in my work. They're animals. You'll identify them as birds. They have feathers, they have beaks that the dogs have legs and, you know, tails and the snakes are identifiable snakes. But there it it ends. I I don't go into much. Don't delve into much research as far as NAMI goes. I try to rely on my own memory. You know my own fallible memory of what a bird looks like and what a dog looks like because I want them to take on that type of the essence. That type of imagery, as if you're trying to remember them at that point. When you're coming just out of the dream, that kind of hazy feeling that you get when you just wake up from a dream and you're trying to remember what has just occurred or trying to remember the imagery and it's just not quite. Right. And that's the the kind of essence I I like to see in my work.

Ron Fortier

Do you have pets? Yes, any pets? OK, what kind?

David Mello

I have a dog, one dog.

Ron Fortier

OK, being where your mindset is in. What have you noticed about your dog? What kind of dog is it?

David Mello

My dog is Italian greyhound. And my dog is I I refer to it as a dog. That's like another. Human being, I've left with a lot of people. It's. It's another human. Being as far as I'm concerned, you know.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, I I don't like calling my dog a dog.

David Mello

Talked to it like I would.

Ron Fortier

Either I call. Her a soul.



David Mello

Yeah, I talk to my dog like I talk to my children or I talk to my wife. And sometimes I think that here's and understands me more than they do, right. And some, I'm some levels as well.

Ron Fortier

Let me let me ask you a question then. Are there moments where you swear, I mean, and? And it gets really, really tense and your heart starts to race because they're looking at you and you swear they're going to say something because Daisy are, are American Fox hound is like that. And and I I can see it in her eyes. Like she wants to communicate something. And it's almost like a bursting kind of a thing. I mean.

David Mello

Well, I'll tell you what, what what goes on with my dog? Well, my wife and I will sit in our living room, watch TV. We'll be reading or whatever it is. Whatever it is, my dog will sit with my wife. But my dog will watch me. With unblinking eyes. That if I'm sitting there for three hours, my dog will be staring at me for three hours and it's like, what are you thinking about? If my wife will say, what are you doing? Are you doing something? Something to the dog? His his sight hasn't left you. You know, he's just staring at you. And I don't know what it is, but he just stares and stares and stares. And then I'll say. Something else what? Are you looking at and? Then I'll come on over to me and engage me, you know, and walk over to me. But it's like, he's like, I don't know what he's looking. I don't know what he's seeing or just trying to figure me out, but. Yeah, you wonder what's going on inside their heads.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, it's funny because as you were saying that all of a sudden, I realized, you know, just going back to classes, going back to toneri and and and to Cummings, they were my painting as well as my drawing teachers. And and they would always say you can. Yes, you you are looking but you are not seeing and yet they know every inflection. They know when your heart rate goes up they know.

David Mello

Ohh yeah.

Ron Fortier

Phenomenal. It's phenomenal.

David Mello

Yeah, they, they.

Ron Fortier

It's phenomenal.

David Mello

Look when when my sometimes when I'm in. My little studio. My dog will be with me. If not, something's not going right. I'll probably make it. Just really not will sound like growl. My dog will get up and will leave the room.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

David Mello

Daisy will hang out with me as long as I'm.



Ron Fortier

Mellow, yeah.

David Mello

Yeah. And it's like they can sense that. I guess he can sense the tension and he'll get. Up and he'll walk out, you know, so.

Ron Fortier

Let me ask you. About animal spirits, have you ever encountered an animal ghost?

David Mello

Let me tell you no. Well, let me tell you a very interesting story. And I've never told this story. On a podcast, I'll tell it with individuals, but since you mentioned it but talking about maybe just the the sensitivity that that animals might have to. The other side. This is when I was in in college and I was living in the at the time I was living at the House I. Had grown up in and I would get my assignments from school I'd worked. Downstairs in my. Basement. It was a six tenement home and I I lived in my basement as a child basically and in my in my early teens and early adulthood. I had a. Little studio there, that's where I would do all my painting assignments, design assignments from college. And I was downstairs one evening and it was. In the fall. It was in the winter time I remember, and I was in one of the rooms of the main area of the basement. There was a a smaller room that I had as my studio and as most nights I was working kind of. Right, working on an assignment at my drafting table like the one you have behind you and my colleague was right at my feet. I had a collie at the time and she was right at my feet as I was doing my work, and while I was working, I heard the seller door, the stairs door open. That led down to the cellar and the cellar door had a very distinct sound. It stuck the door stuck. You'd have to pull on it very hard to open.

Ron Fortier

Yeah. Make noise or whatever. Yeah.

David Mello

Exactly. So you could hear it throughout the house. When it opened up. And this was that night when the outside door of the house to to come in was closed. I had an elderly aunt living on the 1st floor. She went to bed. Maybe 7:00. Mm-hmm. At the time, there was no one living on the third floor. And my parents lived on the 2nd floor with my grandmother. And I heard this door open and I heard a voice. From the upstairs and it was something like hello. Is anyone down? I'm. I'm coming down. That was it. I'm coming down. The stick man's voice and then footsteps, and let me tell you, at my feet the dog my colleague perked up. Lady perked up her ears. Stood straight on end. She got up. She left that room, went out to the outer cellar where the person would be coming down, heard the footsteps coming down the stairs. I got up. I didn't recognize the voice went to the. Her room. And there I saw the door dog with his feet on the lower steps, looking up the sound of the footsteps ended. And there was nobody there. This is a true story. And I tell this to people. It's a true story. And the dog is there ears. Fully up in the air, air expecting to hear someone and there was nobody there. And I tell the story. I I have the hair standing up on the back of my neck right now, as they did that night. And I immediately sense that this is not right. There should be someone there I should be looking at someone at the bottom of the stairs at this time. And even the dog. You could tell it was befuddled. I ran like a bullet. Up those stairs. I I ran until I got to the second floor. I raced into my parents. House and. I I told them what was going on. I was. I was shaking. I wasn't scary. But I didn't know what was going on. This was not normal. This was not right. There was nobody on the way going up the stairs either. All the way up. And I remember my grandmother coming out of her room and I told her, you know, she was there. She was listening. To the. You know what has happened? And she. Said. You know what? She said don't be afraid, she says. That's probably your grandfather. He was just like you. He here in the basement. He was always doing something down there. And she said, you know he. He died before you were



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born. He never got to see you. So it's it's just probably him in his way of of, of looking. In on you so. It was nice to hear that, yeah. The longer I remember my older brother. Was there, he said. You're hearing. Things you know, you're. Crazy. You know? That's ridiculous, you know. He didn't want anything to do with it. I want to say about two months went by. We were both. Downstairs, my older brother and myself and the dog, we were in another portion of the cellar. Heard the cellar door open up again late at night. Heard the voice. Didn't couldn't make out what it was saying this time. Heard the footsteps coming down the stairs. The dog ran out to greet the footsteps. We both went out. We saw no one was there. We both flew up the stairs and so. He believed me after that. You know. Yeah. Well, he kind of, you know, and and he he kind. Of pushed it off the whole experience, but. There was nobody there. But that's my that's my only. Any experience that I can say with animals and the other side the other side if you want to call it the other side?

Ron Fortier

Now does does any of this experience come into? Any of your.

David Mello

Work. It always comes into my work. My, my in in, in my family. There are many stories. With the relatives that passed on that that made. Appearances later to. Other family members, many stories coming from my from my father about his mother and these stories were always always in the back of my mind. I've always had a fascination for those stories and. As a storyteller, I've always geared toward sharing stories of the supernatural story, sharing legends and, and stories of mythology that always focus on the the world. On the other side, and it always figures in my work.

Ron Fortier

Do you have any familiarity, for example with, you know, the the mindset, the the culture of philosophy of, of indigenous peoples, where I think you were kind of touching it on on it before, where OK, you know each animal possesses a skill, a. A talent. A. A power? Yes, and. You know that's you're the eagle, for example, indigenous culture is the hawk in. Yes, of course, the, the, the Falcon in in the Egyptians, the owl. So birds have a very, very powerful symbology.

David Mello

The owl. Yes, yes, yes.

Ron Fortier

In many cultures around the globe.

David Mello

Ohh yes. They they in many in the different legends, the the birds where the the bringing it bring us a fire to the early people the, the the Raven and the crow in the legends of the northwest Pacific Indians like the quality figures it's the the legends of the Thunderbird. These are magnificent, magnificent birds that flew through the through, flew through the heavens. They created the rain where they would flap their wings when they blinked their eyes. It brought about the Thunder and the Lightning, and these were birds and the creatures that were to them were not myth. They were actual animals. They were connections, ways of us on this world. Connecting with the spirits with the gods on the other side and many of the animals in many of the animals in nature were looked upon as being sort of like emissaries. To the gods or the spirits of nature that we don't have a direct connection with. They were the emissaries they would bring. They would bring knowledge of the other side to to people they had that connection with the with the secrets of of nature. Of Secrets of of the gods. And and that is why it to this day, many, many civilizations in costumes, in body decorations, it's with these images of of animals and birds the, the, the. You know we we. See them in there. They they. The Eagle dancers and the the never the the Hopi snake dancers. There's always that hamage given to to nature through animals, that realizing that you. You know, we could not survive without their guidance. That guidance that comes from the other side.



Ron Fortier

I wanna try to meld these two things that we you talked about, your spiritual experiences or, you know, experiences that, you know, you could try to use logic to figure out what caused it, possible spirit of your your grandfather and then now with birds and. And and, you know, had a friend who who he and his wife, they lost their young young son. Tragically, quickly, but expectedly, you know all those words.

Speaker

Yes, yes.

Ron Fortier

And you know, there's been a lot of. Signs and it gets people to share their past experiences. I've heard people say, OK, I'm not a religious person and I wasn't even spiritual up until that point. But my younger brother, this is a colleague I had at UMass passed and. This cardinal popped out of nowhere. I I can't remember. The first time I saw a car, no love of mine, the last time and this cargo was there acting very unboard like like conking its head.

David Mello

Right, right.

Ron Fortier

And listening to the to the to the.

David Mello

Many stories like that, yes, yes.

Ron Fortier

A. A friend of mine who was completely infatuated with Jonathan Livingston Seagull. A good friend you know helped me through a tragic period of my life and after his internment coming back from the the cemetery. What is following my car from miles and miles and miles alongside my car, and then over the hood of my car, but a seagull? Unexplainable and then you share these stories with other people and they'll start throwing similar stories that are very, very, you know, people finding bird feathers.

David Mello

Right, right.

Ron Fortier

All of a sudden that you know, I lived in this House for 35 years and never found the bird feather. You know, like especially one of a a bird of prey or whatever.

David Mello

Sure. Right, right.

Ron Fortier

So this man and beast thing. Your ultimate goal is it it is it. Yeah, you did speak about, you know, people have to be a little bit more respectful of animals. I mean, yeah, I I can't watch those commercials when I hear those commercials of those abused animals, I I just shut it off it just it just it bothers me. It rages me.

David Mello

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.



Ron Fortier

And and and and and it and it. I'm I'm I'm too sensitive to I there's nothing I can do about it. I mean right then and there. I mean, you know, reaching in my wallet is not doing anything.

David Mello

Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's it's just a mindset that you have to have, you know? And and there are a lot of you'll you'll see several birds in the in the show, you'll see several, several fish in the show, and you'll find you'll see these birds. And when you look into them, you'll see. Human face is hidden in them and it's just. My way of saying that. We we occupy. This same world, and it's a small world. And and just like people in general, we have to see ourselves. In these animals. We have to see ourselves in each. Other if we're going to survive on this planet. What we do affects? Each other and and there's just and if you hear now in everything, it's just almost like a battle cry. It's just respect and tolerance for each other. And just for. The world in in general this is. This is what we. This is what we have. This is our island. This earth is our island and we have to take care of it. We have to take care of each other. And so we should see ourselves in everything around us in order for us to to, to just appreciate. What we have and to appreciate the world around us and it's so easy to to just forget these things to, you know, to just be. You know be self. Centered and just to live in the moment. But. We should occasionally be reminded that, you know, we're we're all we're all interconnected and it's one of the things that I I try to show. In a in a way, in the show you'll see images of of these animals, and there's attributes of of of ourselves. In it. I want people to look at these. You know these birds see the images of the of of, of, of, of faces and it see ourselves in these in these animals you know and and in the. In these creatures. Now, have you ever had?

Ron Fortier

Any compunction to write stories based on these creatures that you've created? I mean, there's back stories to them. They're side stories to them.

David Mello

Ohh yes yeah.

Ron Fortier

There's, you know.

David Mello

Yeah. And that's the other thing. I love these and there are some mythological creatures in the show and myth and and folklore has always played a major part for myself as well As for all artists and all writers. You know, we're so indebted to these wonderful legends and these. Myths that people have, you know, they put it, they're out World Heritage. They're they're passed down from generation to. And and I I like to interpret them in in my own way visually and. But you know, there are so many wonderful, wonderful stories about amazing creatures from all sorts of different lands. And you'll see some of them in the show like the the Manticore from. Middle Eastern Middle Eastern mythology that's represented. I have of course the Phoenix from from Persian folklore and myth there's. And there's various types of camera that you'll see in in my show, but. Yeah, they're just. Fascinating amalgams of different. Creatures from the the world and also from man's imagination. I I love mythological animals.

Ron Fortier

I'm just. I've never.

David Mello

What else? I I've never been compelled to. Be a writer. I I don't consider myself writing.



Ron Fortier

I mean it it. Was a thought because it's a I mean, there's a possibility they or even collaborate with someone who is a writer. Yeah. Who could really pick. Your brains. But I'm. I'm thinking back on my, you know, 40 years is my father's name. He's he it's, it's a. It's a French name. French Canadian name. Uh, but my mother is Portuguese and I'm trying to think of, you know, Lizzo culture, Iberian culture and all I could think is about is the God of about cells, the, the, the.

David Mello

Ohh one of my. Legends, as a matter of fact, one of my previous shows had a a tribute to it. There was a a mask, but. Always a story I love and I I love retelling it whenever I get. The chance, because people, I mean. In Fall River and you beg, especially in Fall River, you can't go anywhere into a Portuguese bakery or many a restaurant without seeing the the, the, the, the rooster there. And people don't understand what it is. So I always look for the opportunity to educate the public when it comes to the Barcelos rooster. But I wonderful, wonderful legend.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, I mean. A lot of people think you know at best, like, oh, you know. It's a sign of. Hospitality, you know of. Which it's kind of evolved. But yeah, the idea of of of, you know, condemned man being saved by. A rooster is.

David Mello

Exactly by a rooster with no hedge.

Ron Fortier

Yeah. Now going back to. A couple of pieces that I that I've that I've seen of yours, that Chuck Boucher, a mutual friend of ours and your long time very most childhood friend. Yeah, that he posted. I believe it was a man coming out of a.

David Mello

Yes, talented artist.

Ron Fortier

You look like a codfish or. A nondescript fish. I. Mean his his head was coming out. Of the mouth. Of of the fish.

David Mello

Yeah, right. Right. Yeah, yeah.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, that brings up the whole Fable Ghost.

David Mello

With ghostfish, yes.

Ron Fortier

Yes, yes. OK. Could you elaborate on that?

David Mello

Ohh there many many different levels fit to it. One is it? It that was from a show from about six years back that was all marine life starfish, fish, octopus and which human faces. Were incorporated all and horseshoe crabs. I have a fascination for horseshoe crabs and you'll see them in the shell. And it all began with a a horseshoe. To me, seeing a receiving a A. A horseshoe crab shell from actually Ryan Brenner. He handed it to me and said here make a mask of this and I just. Dismissed him. I. Took it, took the horseshoe crab shell, threw it in my back garden



in my backyard, stayed there for three years and then I was doing some gardening work. I came across the shell and I'm looking at it and looking at it. Ohh, there's a face in there. So I have a fascination with the paradolia seeing things and and tile floors and carpets and and ceilings. I'll I'll be staring into walls and people will think I'm in the daze, but no, I'm seeing things, you know, making out. Happens, but it it kind of developed from there but also. Just my fascination with. Again, animals and and and also. Life after this life, what will you know what happens to us when we die? Will we come back as a fish? Will we come back as a dog? You know, so it it kind of ties in with that as well and and it's just. Just my way of playing with with dreamlike images as well. But but I. I I I I. A. It's a. It's a. It's an area I just revisit time and time again, melding in the human face with, with, with animal forms and you, you'll see a lot of it in the show.

Ron Fortier

So we're going to start wrapping up the show, but I want to close it with asking you this one question. If you had. Any one thing that you would like to do over in your entire life?

David Mello

OK.

Ron Fortier

What would that be?

David Mello

What would that be? I I would say. I would like. I would like to have had a quality in myself. I would have liked to have been bolder. I would have liked to have been one who would would be taking more. Risks, I think. At a younger age, I always in in certain pursuits I wanted to do in, in, in, in younger I was always kind of held myself back for a fear of. Fear fear. Fear of not succeeding. Fear of not living up to what people expected of me, and it's I wish I would have been bolder when I was younger. And it's something that I'm more comfortable with myself now, and I think it's reflected in my work. In in a way too, because I don't think. I would have done this type of thing. And when I was younger, because I was afraid to, it might have been afraid of what people thought they would. Would not, you know, people would think this type of work silly people would not understand it at this point in my age and and I guess you, you get a little bit older when. You get older. I don't care. I I don't care what people think. I'm I I'm I and I'm much. Happier now as far as far as an? Artist I would also I. When I was younger, I was trying to make things satisfying myself in a way, but. Trying to make things that maybe I thought would sell, or maybe I thought people would like or or making things that would so kind of please me. But would be. On a level where other people would appreciate it as well. And it may again, it might be selfish, but I don't care. I'm only here for a a, a limited time left. You know, I don't know how much. Longer I have here, but it's important to me to. To really be an artist now, and that means to go where? Where I feel I should be going, where my inner and you'll see a lot of arrows in my show where my inner compass is telling me where to go, where I feel is my direction, where the people understand my work, or whether they don't if people do. Because I realize that image is not something that everyone can understand or or appreciate, you know they're they're not pastoral scenes. They're not seascapes, but they're images that. Delight me. And I am not. You know, I am not the best painter. I'm not the best sculptor, you know. I'm not the best artist out there. But I I my I do the best I can with the skill. Sets that I have. And when I do my pieces. I I am. I'm delighted with them that the the show, the piece that end up on the walls and the show are pieces that means something to me. I am please. With them they they reflect me as an artist and I I'm I'm proud to put them up on a wall because they are me at this stage of my life where I'm saying this is my work as an artist where I am now. And if you know, I I'm not da Vinci, I'm not. Picasso but this is me and I want you to look at my work and enjoy it. I want you to look at my work, maybe shot by it, maybe scratch your head when you look at it, maybe say to yourself ohh, I don't fully understand that, but that's an interesting image. It's got an interesting narrative to it. These pieces are my story. They're my narrative. Whether you understand it completely or not, this is done in, in. My own language. And and and. That's what I want, people. To see, that's what I want. To share and I think that's what everyone every. Artist wants to share it to



some. Level and but yes. An answer to that question, I wish I. Would have been. Bolder when I was young and I could have been at this stage, maybe. A lot longer than I have been now, but again, when I look at it from another perspective. It's part of. The whole learning process as as you know, as we're never, it's part of that.

Ron Fortier

Everything that's putting it everything in this. White space place and time, yeah.

David Mello

It's it's, it's. A journey every artist take, you know.

Speaker

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

David Mello

And but I I'm happy at this point. As you know in in, in where I am creating things and and in the vision I I've kind of developed for myself and I'm I'm happy.

Ron Fortier

There's, you know, there's. A bad manism you know the old grouchy, crotchety manner when you say, how do you know I want to? Get to this place and he just looks at you. Steeler and says you can't get there from here. You know, and yeah, everybody laughs. And I just thought of it. Right now, like, oh, my God, how?

David Mello

True is that it is, you know, so. A journey. It's a journey and and. Sometimes it takes a while, but.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, yeah, that's great. I want to wrap it up, David, thank you so much, David Mello. Thank you so much for. Being our 104th guest, I believe.

David Mello

Well, I'm honored to be your 100th and 4th. Thank you very much for this opportunity. I I've enjoyed talking to you very much.

Ron Fortier

You're welcome. Samia, Samia. And I'm I'm, you know, really looking forward to seeing the show tomorrow.

David Mello

I'll do.

Ron Fortier

It's been a busy couple of months, but it's it's all good. It's all good so that my folks thank you once more for joining us with Fall River artist, David Mello. And you know, you can read a little bit about him on our podcast post at the artist index.com. And thank you for joining us once one more time. And listening to the Artists Index podcast, The InFocus podcast brought to you by the wonderful folks at at heavily spaced imports, importers of fine French spirits, Kodiaks, Armagnacs so on and so forth. So. With that line. See you later. Thanks. Bye. Bye.