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# 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: Don Wilkinson**

Ron Fortier

Hi, this is Ron Flier with another episode of the In Focus podcasts on the South Coast Artist Index. And today we have a A returned guest on Wilkinson and I'm not going to make him go through that whole crazy thing that I do with the podcast because he's already done it once probably. And or escaped it because he's one of the earliest. Actually. You were number two, I think #2.

Don Wilkinson

That's right, somewhere right there.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, somewhere around there, right? Right. So let's let's decide which way we're going to go with this today. Do we want to talk to Don the artist or do we want to talk to Don? The writer or like that word critic, you know? So which side do you want to focus on today?

Don Wilkinson

I don't really know. I mean, for me, they see. I'm not going to say they're interchangeable, but you know, 1 feeds into. The other so but.

Ron Fortier

Right.

Don Wilkinson

You know, I haven't written a review in a long time. Because of the pandemic situation, so now for the last year I've been. As you're aware, a. Profiler of artists so we could talk about. That if we want to spill into, you know.

Speaker

The advocate stuff.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, that's, you know. And there's another thing too. And and and I've been feeling it from your Facebook posts,



not within the last couple of weeks, but just before or around the before and around the holidays, there was this edge to some of your posts. Anxiety. Anger. I. Mean. Come on. We're all facing the same crap hole of a in existence. Because of what's going on in Washington and even the pandemic can't be written off as a standalone. And it's obviously affected all of us as artists and everybody in the art industry. Well, let's let's stick with that because this is timely and if this, you know, this is the premise of this show, the the artist Index website Project is about creating a historical legacy. Let's stick with that.

Don Wilkinson

Sounds fine to me. So do you have a? An opening question you now you've laid out?

Ron Fortier

Well, basically it's like so how you. Doing going I. Mean. How? How's how? How are you? Being affected by. All the sincerity, personal and and perfect way.

Don Wilkinson

The most obvious, the most obvious thing is that. I mean, I'm making a living as I always have and and so is my wife. You know we are. We were mildly impacted by the pandemic at the beginning, but you know, I work in a juvenile youth facility and my wife runs a childcare in Plymouth and we've done OK and I was delighted to be asked by the publisher of the standard Times. And she's also the publisher of the Flower Herald and the Brockton Enterprise. And the time is that Lynn Sullivan's her name and have been working primarily with Linda Murphy, who's the editor, one of the editors at the Fall River Herald, as opposed to Jerry Boggs in New Bedford. Now. So the idea of me doing these. Artist profiles, which is what I was sort of getting to. Learn and asked. Me if I would do that in lieu of. Not doing reviews with the idea that would keep a focus on the visual arts in. The South Coast, you know, so I bounced back and forth as much as I can between New Bedford and fall over, and I obviously lean much heavier in New Bedford because new bed, a flower has a smaller community and because it's a pandemic, I'm not about to go try to introduce myself to. I don't know yet and we certainly spill over into, you know, Little Compton and Westport and Chiverton and. And as far out as maybe Seekonk and and weigh our ham in the other way. But we're certainly not going to go into Newport. I'm not even interviewing. People that are. Working out of, say, Newport or Providence or Boston, so trying to stick right to this general area and it's been my experience that. Our artist community that I've been talking to and I don't know, I've done 25 of these, I guess weekly, maybe more than that. Certainly isn't thriving but adapting and. You know, certainly not being directly involved in the community as we usually think about it, at going to openings and visiting museums and sitting at the pub and be asking about our in life as. That might be what you were talking about beginning. That anxiety, that edge. You know is.

Ron Fortier

Difficult to deal with. Yeah, we, we, you know, artists, I read a very sociable, but they're not social social at all. And then there's always been that bad running joke, especially about painters. You know, we feel isolated. We feel isolated. So I've heard so many stories of people who went to hatch. Artist studios. Because they were sick of working in the basement. They're attic, the spare bedroom or whatever. And they thought they would have a community. And they're even more isolated because everybody is now just focusing only on their work. And there's very little time or or or even structure to come out and and have a cafe, you know, or sell or whatever. And I. I find that kind of. Weird because you know, when we go back into. Art history. If we look at the great revolutions in Germany, in France and in Italy. Specifically, it was cafe society.

Don Wilkinson

The exchange of ideas. Exactly. So you know to speak of some specific examples of people. In this community that. I know has impacted them directly. I mean, Jim Chirac and Fall River, it's terrific, you know. You know he used. To be over at Kilburn Mills and. What he called the abattoir.



Ron Fortier

The abattoir, yes. The gun bolt is a gun. Back bolt. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Don Wilkinson

And he's certainly not your run-of-the-mill painter. He's not out doing landscape, he's doing some and he's done some really political stuff and some really funny stuff. And he's a cartoonist and and, you know, does mixed media work as well as painting, but he has respiratory issues. He's not going anywhere, you know, he's he was due to. I was going to hang a show of his work. The poor found. This past October, but and there is working in. There. But it's been up for many, many months. They're artists who who want to show there for a long time and now say have asked me, can we wait until this is because? Certainly. What's the point, you know? Well, fun is open, and I did go in the other day for the first time in many months and sat down and saw people haven't seen in 10 months. Same it's. Been there for a long. Time. So anyway, that, that, that. So because of Jim's. Physical the the danger he would be in physical if he is out in the real world. I understand his reluctance and want him to stay safe as I do everyone else and rich McCarthy, who obviously you know as a painter, but many people know him as a musician and has been a musician for many years in this community posted. Something on Facebook not long ago about an upcoming show. It was like in June of 2021. I was like, dude, thanks for the last. Minute notice. You guys said he.

Speaker

Was just so excited.

Don Wilkinson

To actually have. Something blocked certainly well, that that stuff is like, OK you guys.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, yeah.

Don Wilkinson

Have a sense of humor about this stuff and you know, I think that for the most part, we're we're pushing through.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, I mean. Unfortunately, I think we're quickly realizing on the 10th day of the year of the New Year 2021, it seems to be a mirror image of 2020. With with a lot more cayenne pepper thrown into the into the works.

Don Wilkinson

Or as I I it's. It's not my original thought about someone else posted and I've shared it many times at this point that 2021 turned around to 2020, so hold my beer.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. I mean, you know, a lot of us have of the same age thought we pretty much have seen. Well, with it seems a lot like an assassination. Every week Mega Evers. So. Martin Luther King, Bobby Kennedy. You know, starting with John Kennedy, the the Anti War demonstrations, the Democratic National Convention riots, the riots and riots in Chicago and Detroit. I mean, you know. You know Vietnam age and then and then. With my generation growing up under the shadow of the potential of a nuclear attack with the nuclear air raid drills and all kinds of craziness and.

Don Wilkinson

Any other? Yeah.



Ron Fortier

Yeah, duck and cover. And in the Catholic School, regular rosary first. But. But it just seems that. If there's been a one upmanship of surrealism, there's it certainly has been evidenced by what we see on a on a daily basis, so.

Don Wilkinson

On Wednesday, I was driving to my twice a week. Class and at a youth facility in time. Normally I would have 5:00 to 6:00 kids. I'd be teaching silk screening. I have one there now for any number of reasons, but. A lot of. It has to do with the pandemic. They're not bringing as many kids not only into the program, but into the facility itself because of the pandemic. The kid I have is, is great, very enthusiastic, but it's it's now he's getting a one-on-one education and greeting. But as I drove in on Wednesday and I.

Ron Fortier

Right.

Don Wilkinson

Was I had there with. My class starts at 3:30 and I'm. Always there early. And I was driving listening to Spotify. My radio wasn't on. I parked in the lot and I checked my messages and saw that there was Washington erupting. And I went in. I put CNN on the computer in there and we had a a slow work day planned, cleaning screens, basically maintenance work. And I said it's kind of events day. Kids sit down.

Ron Fortier

To me, you know.

Don Wilkinson

Is 9/11 was a horrible thing and.

Ron Fortier

Right.

Don Wilkinson

You may know that I may. Have told this. Before, but on 9/11 I was taking a train from St. Albans, Vt, to New York City to attend the convention and. We were distorted in White River junction because something had happened in Europe and none of us. Knew what it was, so you know. This thing this week though, that. That was an attack from the outside. This is attack from within and that to me is far more disturbing.

Ron Fortier

Yeah. Yeah, it is, in fact. You know what, as artists and so on. And so forth. You know what? I'm getting into a long. Better tribe of. From abstract to more objective work and highly emotional work and and then I I started another series with the Arctic whaling disaster because. At one point and that was very emotional. It was about being stuck between a rock and a hard place. I mean, what are you going to do, I mean. You're in a vessel that you're safe and warm in for, and then it starts to get crushed by the ice. And now you're on the ice. And what do you do? When it's that kind of which? Oh my God, it just sort of hit me. It's sort of like, you know. An analogy for today. You know, and then of course. Once the ice starts to break. Up, you're really screwed. But this thing about Washington? For some reason it it just. Got me so amped up that I I just wanted to go paint it out. And The thing is is. What? What are we going to show? Yes. I'm going to put down. You know.

Don Wilkinson

We're going to see lots of people with Viking helmets and panties and you know, it's that clown show, you know, dangerous, deadly clowns. But there's still clowns and we'll be exploring this subject for a long time to come.



Speaker

Yeah, yeah.

Ron Fortier

Exactly. Exactly. So now the entire art industry, I mean all of us have been impacted. You know, I'm I'm the program coordinator for the Dartmouth Cultural Center and pretty much everything that we've got proposed is going to be virtual shows, you know, trying to. Playing a show is just sort of futile because you know we're going to be rolling back. This mess is going to continue on and we've known this for the last six months that we're not going to be out of the woods until December at the very least of of this year. So working is kind of a virtual reality. There doesn't seem to be anybody who has. Done a real breakaway. There are some programs that have, like a virtual reality tour of galleries and stuff, but they seem to be clunky and some of them are like exasperating, especially if you're trying to look at it on the phone. What have you seen as far as that's all concerned?

Don Wilkinson

I've been asked. Thousands of times to review a virtual show, and so far I've not agreed to do it. I can give you a good example, you know every year for as long as I've been doing this decade of doing reviews. I've covered the graduate show from UMass Diamond and it's usually such an important show. I think in the Community that it's usually A2 Potter because I you know, you've got 30 grad students passing through who have. A tremendous amount of time and energy and for the most part have a tremendous amount of talent and a wide variety of concentrations and disciplines. I don't feel that I can look at someone's jittery handheld camera and look at someone's painting for 40 seconds and judge his or her Graduate School career on that, so I chose just not to do it at this point. Hopefully, when this is all down, when this is done. I will have the opportunity, I will track those artists down and do them justice.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, it's. There's, there's a lot. I mean, you know, the the old marketing brain, you know, the, the, the part of my brain is still engaged in in marketing just by, by by habit. I'm trying to understand what's going on. I I see people being, you know, inventive. But one of the things that that's been kind of phenomenal is the artist who really ever sold, if at all, are selling more when they have their entire careers and those who used to sell quite well. But independently or through a gallery. Are now. Not selling at all, right?

Don Wilkinson

I have a little centricism. Yeah, but certainly there's a lot of people doing Commission work right now and that's good. And and people and some people are. Doing very well. Not to be. Denigrating but.

Speaker

A lot of.

Don Wilkinson

People suddenly who were because of the. Because of unemployment and the had money they had before and they weren't going anywhere, they were going to eat. Yeah. So some people have a little bit. More disposable income and that may have made. You know. Allow people to make some. What might have been frivolous choices? Ultimately, but.

Ron Fortier

It's kind of interesting that they chose. To buy art. So think about that.

Don Wilkinson

Gather, gather.



Ron Fortier

There's got to be some saving grace in that concept.

Don Wilkinson

Right. Right. So yeah, I I unhappy for the people who are doing well, but this too will change, you know. So we're going to we're going to shift to something else. I don't know what it is.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, because again, you know, I always used to ask the the question about the great and you know you for the story before about the wine lake, which is a term that wine people in the wine industry use for all of the unsold wine. Now that unsold wine does not necessarily mean it's inferior. Some of the finest vintages ever were thrown into this lake, which is. Virtual repository because as many, many locations of wine that either a was unpalatable or B quite good, but they had to reduce their output because it. Was such a bumper crop. Crop that would affect their price levels. OK, so anyway, so you got all this wine and they turned it into vinegars. Acetic acid and and so on and so forth. Well, I've tried to do research on a similar art lake which ever comes up on Google is the the old deceased weatherman from Channel Channel 10 in Providence. But there is A and I've discussed this with the with Rick, Doctor Richard Connor who's? A mid century collector of estates there's a rising tide of estates. There's a whole generation that's dying off and living behind trailer loads of work. We all have work stashed all over our houses wherever it'll fit and stay safe. And yet we continue to produce.

Don Wilkinson

Yeah. And there is something, you know, I have a good friend who does state clean outs and has a keen eye. He knows what's valuable. What's not, you know, antique furniture and and artwork and. Vintage clothing and whatever. And I had spoken to him about someone in the community who had asked me to take a look at some things he had and reached out to this college. And he said, you know, nothing's worth. What it? Was meaning in terms of the pandemic again, where it's hard to think you know a month ahead six months, a year ahead and think. Well, am I going to really buy this old meat coat? Am I really going to buy this? Painting. You know when they're. Concerned about? You know brass tax and and putting food on the table and being able to pay our mortgage or rent, you know, which is not to say I haven't. Made a frivolous purchase or two. I bought a great Boston Matthew. Penny, I commissioned him. So you know, sometimes they're just. Like, OK, you know what? I just. Want to go? Spoil myself. I want to do something fun. I want to, you know, and certainly, you know, for Elizabeth and I. When I taking vacations, when I went out to dinner, so, you know, it seems OK to maybe. Be a little frivolous sometimes. It's good for the soul.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, it's also kind of a feather, your nest as well, because I mean, one of the the, the, the crazy after effects of of this pandemic is that the. Big box Home improvement store. Have been done a booming business. People are painting and wallpapering and redecorating and remodeling and.

Don Wilkinson

Are there certain materials that I? Buy you know for, you know, some of the work I do, but. That you just couldn't get? Try try buying. Epoxy for boats. Right now it's almost impossible to.

Speaker

Get a hold of really.

Don Wilkinson

And for a long time pressure. Treated wood was like you know. Yeah. So.



Ron Fortier

That's that's. That's interesting. And then of course too, you know, there's no shortages of of certain state. That they still haven't recovered from. Frozen vegetables has been one of those wacko things and he.

Speaker

Yes, yes.

Ron Fortier

Tried to find frozen peas.

Don Wilkinson

This is Josh.

Ron Fortier

Mason Jazz was another one. Exactly. Yeah. It it's it's all this, this craziness that's. Going on so. I I don't know if you you you have any futurist abilities or if you've ever, you know just part of your crack character to try to ponder what what's around the next bend or whatever but. How do you think? We're gonna come out of. It not get out of this. Come out of this.

Don Wilkinson

We're talking the pandemic or.

Speaker

Are there?

Ron Fortier

Yeah, about the pandemic affecting us as as well, that's that's a whole nother story right now. That's like a three legged stool and it's.

Speaker

Well, let let.

Don Wilkinson

Let me address the the pandemic. We I think we're gonna get out of this, OK? I mean it's it's been, you know, this is not you know 1918, you know this is science is is better logistics seemingly is better. We are. You know, we're not in a World War, you. Know there there. Are there are these things that I think as long as that the the? Vaccine can be. Distributed equitably around the world, so everyone gets this, and we convince the never vaxxers that this is necessary. I would even go so far as to say. Like if I were an employer. And you know, I used to be a FedEx truck driver.

Ron Fortier

That I did.

Don Wilkinson

Not know. I could not imagine that FedEx or UPS is not telling that drives you get the. Shot you don't have a. Job here because they're not going to, you know, contaminate their customers, you know, and then set them those up for lawsuits. And I see airlines. Be doing this? There are certainly countries that won't allow you to fly there if you haven't had this vaccine, I think it's going to be, I don't know, that the government necessarily needs to in to see, but social pressure and the pressure of. The wallet will make people act in the way. That they need to. And if we get to that magic number, you know, 75% or something where we supposedly reach herd immunity, then



maybe we'll be OK, I think. We'll get through. This. That said, I've lost a cousin to it. I've I know at least 20 people have had it. Most have recovered. But yeah, it's it's a scary time. But I think when you know through this in terms of the insurrection and there's and this insurrection is not over yet, you know, when I see what happens on the 17th and on Inauguration Day and beyond, but. You know, I would. I can't even believe I'm about to say this, but I recommend if you. Haven't seen already. Google Arnold Schwarzenegger today talking about what? Happened in Washington and it is it. Brought tears to mind. Yeah. Yeah, it's just. How we will rise above this? And him coming from, you know, born in Austria and, you know, seeing what he talks about the night of the broken glass. Right and. And how we this was ours. And we better take this as a wake. Up call and even works. Conan sort into this somehow and. It makes sense, so yeah.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, well, yeah, even a little the the characters with some, you know, run away from the signal in the in the. And then, Hilda, there, the we're gonna leave and leveling and all that other crazy stuff, but. And I just keep having these flashbacks to Peter the Hermit and the the first crusades. I mean, how? It wasn't the intellectuals. It wasn't. The the movies, it was like the nobodies that created this enormous insurrection. Well, and the French Revolution too, which? I found I. Had a couple of relatives that went to the. To the was what was the the lady? Over the what? No, no, no. The guilty was called the Something lady. Yeah, yeah. But anyway, yeah, it it. It's kind of crazy and, you know, projecting your head. I'm, I'm. I'm wondering especially in the community of artists.

Don Wilkinson

Alright, right.

Ron Fortier

Is this there going to be like this massive celebration? I mean, you've you've talked about this. You know, kicking up your heels, getting out there, you're. Having a a. Massive party. There's no other word for it.

Don Wilkinson

You know what, you know. I I've talked with. You know Fitz Carmel Lamar and Jake Grant, you know, and jokingly, but half seriously, like we are going to have a post pandemic problem things that.

Speaker

We need to.

Don Wilkinson

We discover our community.

Ron Fortier

We need to blow off that steam. That's that's definitely.

Don Wilkinson

Of course, but yeah, but we need to not be separated.

Ron Fortier

What have you noticed in doing the profiles of of the I think. When when did you start doing them in earnest?

Don Wilkinson

Around March, I guess.

Ron Fortier

Alright, so let's let's save 9 four. Yeah, you're you're you're you're probably closing in on 30-40 something. Have





you seen the thread trends? You know running through all of the profiles?

Don Wilkinson

I don't know exactly that that's true. I mean I think that a lot of it. Has to do. With who I'm speaking to and some of that is affected by things. Like their age. And their gender and their. There are professional status, I guess you know. I mean a young artist who's feeling his oats is not the same thing as talking to someone like JP Powell or Jay Ryan, are you know guys in their 60s and 70s, Roger Kusick, this is gonna be next week's profile. 75 and still kicking \*\*\*\*\*, you know. So they have a totally different perspective on this stuff, you know, kind of. Like they, we've been through this all. In some way. Or other maybe not exactly what we're saying now. But some of the other.

Ron Fortier

Right.

Don Wilkinson

And the younger folks, you know, I said that what they, they may have apprehension.

Speaker

But they're like.

Don Wilkinson

Hopeful and determined, and this is their world. And they're ready to keep moving.

Ron Fortier

I've got a couple of. Recommendations for you? I don't. Know if you know Christine Bean.

Don Wilkinson

I don't think.

Ron Fortier

So is is is incredible watercolorist. She's 100 years old and still still chugging along.

Don Wilkinson

Where is she?

Ron Fortier

She's out of. Dartmouth, I believe. And we're talking, I mean her hand. Her her work is her signature. It's that it's that good. I I met her. I've spoken. With her and even with. You know, supposedly good memory that I have. I can't remember what the circumstances were, but I. I can. Still see her working. I was just. Floored by it, you know. Another gentleman, if you can get. He's a bit of. A crew nudge. And he was at one time considered America's foremost marine painter. You know, total traditionalist John Stobart.

Don Wilkinson

Not familiar with them either.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, he's really from what I heard, a bit of. Bit of a character you know very seamless ways. You know, sitting on his walls, but the perspectives of them would be quite interesting. Other than Steve Remick, our mutual friend and and painter. And Jim charrette. I'm not, nothing else is. Popping into my head about artists who have. Mirrored the pandemic. Who have hate to use? The word embraced it. For whatever their emotional needs are. I



mean, Jim Charrette is showing the craziness of the pandemic through the current administration. And Steven remix, as you know, I did an article on him about the nurses. UM. Is there anybody else that? Comes to mind.

Don Wilkinson

No, there isn't. Those are. The two that would immediately pop into my. Mind. But I do think that. You know. Years ago, when the Boston Marathon bombing happened, I wrote an article about that. And what our reaction as iris should be? And I. Thought about, you know the the old. Line about putting away childish things, right? And it's easy. To think of crayons and clay and paint and. You know. A drum set is being childish things. And I realized that. That just continuing to make a. Is in itself a political statement to just keep moving and. I think that's that's the way people, you know, not everyone's going to sit there. And I mean ramic. And she's doing terrific work, but that's not what everyone's going to do. And that's not what everyone should do and. I think that people just need to keep painting what they've always painted, paint the new paint the landscape. Go, you know. Right hip hop lyrics go dance. Go do whatever it is you. Need to do that is a political statement.

Ron Fortier

Can we parallel? That in history. With the with the the the Spanish influenza.

Don Wilkinson

I I think so and and you know right in after World War 2 to the roaring 20s, you know, what was all that but a reaction to the heart of their proceed. Right. So I think that. Yeah, it's just a natural thing to do and we we don't run away from this stuff. I mean, I don't think our has escaped this. I I mean I think our is a confrontation. So look we're we're confronting what is import.

Speaker

OK.

Ron Fortier

As you continue doing these profiles well, first of all it's it's got to be similar, similar experiences trying to, you know, chalk up people for for podcasts. You know, people are running still running around, still living their lives. So it probably takes you probably an entire. Or, if you're lucky, I guess to make the initial contact go back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, you know, give them the questionnaire, you know, wait for it to come back the whole 9. Yards. How has that affected you? Well, I think the deadline where I well actually you know we have the Monday deadlines.

Don Wilkinson

Well, the profiles you know in some strange way and and it's not the way I would have gone about it probably say that the pandemic happened, but. They are sort of a continuation of the bark. Chats. You know where I was. Sitting down and you know the poor farm are. You know anywhere.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, yeah.

Don Wilkinson

That with an RSL tape recorder going and much, much like what we're doing. The conversations were for the most part, freestyles I would. Go in with. You know. Seven or eight questions and then get to #3. And just throw the notes. On the floor like.

Speaker

Somewhere else? Yeah.



Don Wilkinson

Which is fine. I enjoyed that a lot, but that meant me bringing back. My little, you know Walmart tape recorder. And you know. Putting my earbuds in and trying to. Transcribe it, yeah. I know there's programs that do that, but I haven't found very well. But this where I'm actually, you know, making contact with someone and many of the same people that you've been dealing with. And then I send. Them like I. Did you 10 or 12 questions right and that allows things to go very differently. I mean, when I did the profile of you a month or so ago, I really thought we were gonna be talking about your podcast.

Ron Fortier

And it wasn't even mentioned.

Don Wilkinson

Because they're, like, made that connection to your mother.

Speaker

As a father.

Don Wilkinson

Singer it just it went somewhere else and. He that was. The excitement that you know that that I was discovering something new.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, it's funny because I I likened it to, you know, you asked me those questions. I answered them. Honestly. And then I realized, you know, also it was being a writer and like, OK, this is going to be like putting £5 of poop in a. £2.00 poop. Bag you know and. Then what are the editors? You know? How are the editors going to want to sway this thing? I don't know how much sway they have with with, with what? You know what you put out, but.

Don Wilkinson

Very little, I mean. I wish I would catch the the typos.

Ron Fortier

Oh yeah, like there was, there was one that stood out. There was one one word that is like the first paragraph, whatever. But you know what? You always catch those when you're not writing. Then you know exactly, exactly. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So.

Don Wilkinson

Yeah. One thing that I I've been thinking about though, and this I think we're doing a similar thing with your podcast and these profiles and. And some other. Commonalities that we've spoken about in the past, but. There's something that I've realized about this community in doing these profiles, so when I think and we've talked this in the past and about the swine school design and you. Why is such a big part of the New Bedford community in Swain and, and, you know, start with as well, especially since the merger and the. And the star store. Buildings reinvention. But when I was at Swain and I know you've heard some of this. Before my class. 33 people, they'll. Probably want more than 110 or 15 people in the entire. You know four classes in any given time. And it was family. If you know them. And then after I left and did various things and moved to New York City and was. There for three. Years or thereabouts. And certainly knew a lot of ours there. But. I never felt that. Sense of community, and that was partly because it's. Too big of. Course too big, you know. And I mean, there are certainly a number of people that I know quite well. You know my most of my classmates, you know, Diane Kenoyer and Pete Dickerson and Clayton Lewis and Don Beal. And you know, a dozen others. We were swaying folks who lived in that same neighborhood, so we still had. You know a connection and we socialized and we. Visit each other studios. And a lot of them were at Parsons and the number were at Pratt and. Other places but. Many years later,



it came back up. My degree this is. This is going to a conclusion. So here. I was then married and Elizabeth and I moved up to Burlington, Vt, which had. A on our community. But it was the opposite of New York. It was too small. So there were certainly some very good hours. We know there there's some. Some of those artist workers in this studio with me but. There was never that real sense of community there and I think just because there it wasn't. Big enough, even though that. You know, the University of Vermont is there and Champlain College is there and there was never a swinging gallery saying there was not a with the exception of the Fleming and the museum at the university was not really much beyond that. And Matt, in fact, Elizabeth and I at one point, we were living in Saint Albans, you know, 25 miles north of Burlington. And we, along with some of our friends, other artists start doing. We would hang pieces of plywood from our front porch and had the and we had. The Front porch gallery. That would do once. And it was. And people loved it because it. Was so hungry for culture.

Ron Fortier

Yes, yes, yes, yeah.

Don Wilkinson

Anyway, so one too big Burlington, too small and then back here and doing all this, I've realized how important this community is. The seeds of Swain and sweets, seeds of SMU. And the people who are not connected to any of those places but came and and sort of married into the. Family, so to speak.

Ron Fortier

Right, right.

Don Wilkinson

But you know, I realized, especially in this vacuum, this social vacuum, how important that is and. I don't know if you know Chad's front filter, but he was. An artist who was at. Hatchery if I think he was. At Hatch Street I. Can't remember, but a few years ago. He had a an illness that laid him. And I wrote an article about it. What happened? Because the art community came together and raised money and support. And also, and I barely knew the guy. But, you know, it was like this kind of. You know, I look at. This art community, like I look at a family and like, yeah, like uncle, so and so, so much and that. Alright, that's all.

Ron Fortier

Right, right.

Don Wilkinson

That's right. But when it comes down to. Need help each other. We do it? Yeah. And since? And Mark St. Pierre's funeral. The wake. I should say. I like everyone else, was overwhelmed by the the and he. He was, you know, much admired. Teacher and a good friend. And he was a vibrant, proud of the community from the day he got here till the day he departed. And so but that. Turn now show me and showed the House community how? Much this our community. Means to each other.

Ron Fortier

Yeah. Yeah, it's it's almost become. Our third industry, from whaling to textiles to art. Yeah. Yeah. We're gonna wrap this, this this up dawn. And again, this this is your second one, but this isn't going to be your last one. The the the invitation is always open, you know. Trying to get. This wonderful idea that looked like it was controllable to another stepping level because this this is this is like the ancestry.com for the area and there's so much more potential, but there's only so much. A couple of people can do to to to keep this going and and you know, now we're in perpetuity so. Any, any parting parting words?

Don Wilkinson

I guess there's nothing I would really need to say that doesn't already echo what? You know, I just said just as you



always. Sign off, you know. You persevere state, of course, right. Just this is what we need. To do, we're going to get through this \*\*\*\*.

Ron Fortier

Yeah. Yeah, we will. We will. Don Wilkinson, artist art writer, man about town was. The virtual the virtual. Man about town. Thanks so much for joining us. And once again this is Ron Fortier with another episode. Of the In Focus podcast. Us and till we see you next time be kind to each other and persevere no matter. What? Thanks a lot. Bye bye.