

Superpowers of the Arts Transcript

Samuel Lawrence Foundation
First Fridays
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Bart Ziegler: Welcome to everyone to join us for this very special August edition of the Samuel Lawrence Foundation's First Friday series. My name is Bart Ziegler, and I'm the president of the Samuel Lawrence Foundation. Today, we're focused on a topic that means so much to us here at the Samuel Lawrence Foundation. The arts. It's part of our work. We fund and nurture a great number of arts initiatives, both here in San Diego and around the world, because we know the power that arts have, especially for youth. Today's very special edition of First Fridays is assembled a panel of artists from a number of disciplines. I'll turn this over to our moderator, CEO of Brooklyn Story Labs, Lance Gould, to introduce our very special speakers. Thanks, Lance.

Lance Gould: Thank you, Bart, and welcome to all the country we live in and the world outside our borders as well is clearly very divided in this heated environment. It is difficult to even have a discussion on some issues, and that is where the arts can play such a powerful role. The beauty, precision and craftsmanship of works of art with their visual arts like painting and sculptures, or performing arts such as music and dance, offer audiences entertainment that soars and touches the heart, triggering a range of human emotions. But what the arts also do is offer us a cultural mirror, metaphors that tell us, well, more about ourselves than we we may even realize. Today, we are joined by five exceptional thinkers whose connection to the arts is purpose driven, and who will help articulate how the arts can give us insights into our society and even help unlock the mysteries about ourselves that we struggle to understand. Joining us today is panelists. We have in alphabetical order, ballerina Elisa Carrillo Cabrera, who is the only Mexican woman and the first Latin American to win all three of the most important international dance prizes. She is currently the first dancer in the Staatsballett in Berlin, one of the ten most recognized dance companies in the world, and is also an ambassador for Mexican culture and a member of UNESCO's International Dance Committee. Grammy Award winning music producer, producer and film director Mark Johnson, who has worked with such musical artists as Keith Richards, Paul Simon, Jackson Browne, Bono, buddy Guy and Taj Mahal, just to name a few. Mark is also the founder of playing for change, a global multi-media movement created to inspire, connect and bring peace to the world through music.

Lance Gould: Playing for change videos have collectively gotten 2 billion with a B views. Curator Catherine Kanjo, who is the CEO, and David C Copley, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, a leading contemporary art museum featuring cutting edge works from the 1960s to the present. Activist Carmel Martin, who is the co-founder of Art Power Equity, a sociocultural enterprise that supports underrepresented artists and vulnerable communities and promotes equity, access and opportunity in the in the creative economy. And we have a muralist, Hubert Massey, whose large-scale fresco murals can be found all over Detroit, including the Flint Institute of the Arts, Detroit Athletic Club and his alma mater, Grand Valley State University. Hubert learned the centuries old fresco technique from former assistants of the legendary artist Diego Rivera. Today, Hubert is the only known African American commissioned fresco artist in America. Thank you all for joining us. For our first round of discussions. We'll speak with our panelists about their work, and then in the second round of questions, we'll get their perspective on the power of the arts generally to affect change. So we're going to start with Alisa. Uh, as we noted at the beginning of the program, Alisa, you were a member of UNESCO's International Dance Committee, which provides a framework for international dialogue and cooperation for the global dance community to do a number of things, including strengthening the cultural, social, political and educational relevance of dance worldwide. Can you tell us more about this initiative?

Elisa Carrillo Cabrera: Well, through dance, my life has changed. I am very, very blessed for being a dancer, for being a principal dancer, to have the opportunity to enjoy dance and to get to know the beauty of it. Um, art and dance have changed my life. I want to tell you that I'm very lucky to. To have the opportunity to perform to. I think always the dancers. We cure the soul of the people who are watching us. And it's such a blessing to have the opportunity, having the opportunity to have a career, international career. One of my dreams is to bring art and culture to everyone, and especially in my country. I would love the people to appreciate it even more. So that's why one of the missions I have is to promote dance, to not just enjoy it myself, but to also to give the opportunity to new generations to have art as a part of life. Um, to be an artist is something wonderful. And sometimes people don't understand the power of art, the power that has in the humanity. And, one of the missions I have

since then is to do projects that will improve, the knowledge and to make people come closer to the art, and in this way to have a world with more respect and more beauty.

Lance Gould: I'm going to follow up with you on some of what you just talked about, particularly about the youth in Mexico, where you're currently joining us from right now. But first, let's take a quick look at some video of you performing here so the audience can get a sense of the kind of beautiful work that you do. Uh, there we go. Gorgeous movement.

Elisa Carrillo Cabrera: Listen to this beautiful ballad.

Lance Gould: Uh, wow. He's just following up on what you were mentioning a second ago. You also launched the foundation with the Mexican government that bears your name, which involves the.

Elisa Carrillo Cabrera: Well. The foundation. It's, uh.

Lance Gould: There we go. Sorry about that.

Elisa Carrillo Cabrera: The foundation was created because of the love I have for dance. And because of the wish I want of, wishing to develop dance in my country. I come from a wonderful country where ballet hasn't been part of our history, of our tradition. So I got to, perform and to be on stage. And that was one of the aims I had from the beginning to, help the Mexican audience to recognize dance, how important it is. And that's why I created the foundation. I come from a family that gave me everything possible, and I didn't have the possibility to have this career if I wouldn't have help from people who believe in myself, who helped me with the scholarship, who helped me to have a possibility to travel. So I think in life it's beautiful to receive things, but I think it's more beautiful to give things to other people. And in order to that, I thought to create a foundation together with my husband, who is also a principal dancer, to organize things and to help children to have the possibility to study in another place. So I'm doing many things with my foundations. I'm doing classes, I'm doing workshops, performances so that people get to know the power of dance. And through that, we can always have people who help other children through my foundation to make their dreams come true, and to also have a profession in the ballet world.

Lance Gould: That's beautiful. Thank you so much. Uh, Mark, playing for change has become an international phenomenon. Well known songs performed by some of the planet's most recognized musicians, spliced together from gorgeous locales all around the world. Tell us how. Tell us about how the initiative got started and how it really took off. Well thank you.

Mark Johnson: I just want to say again what an honor it is to be here and to be surrounded by such incredible artists. You know, playing for change was born out of the idea that no matter how many things in life divide us, they're never going to be as strong as the power of music and art to bring us together. So for me, the original idea came many years ago. I was working in New York City as a recording engineer, and I was on my way to the studio in a subway, and there were two monks painted, all in white with robes on. One of them was playing a guitar and the other one was singing. I don't know the language they were singing in, and I think most people didn't know the language. But on this day in a New York City Subway, everybody stopped and everybody's watching this performance. And during the performance, I just looked around and I would see a homeless man next to a businessman, and I would see a little girl next to an elderly woman, and they were so connected. And then when the music ended and everybody went their separate ways, I just kind of had this epiphany of two things, you know, one, when the music played, anything that divided us disappeared. And the other thing was that the best music I heard in my life was on the way to the studio and not in the studio. So that was the day I decided, let's bring the studio to the people with cameras, to the streets and into villages and in the Himalayan mountains and all over the world. Since then, I've recorded music in about 65 different countries, and the idea is to record and film all different styles of musicians, different politics, religions, economics, different languages, and to show everybody how music reconnects us to the one group. We're all a part of the human race.

Lance Gould: It's such a great back story. Thanks for sharing that I can as a New Yorker, I can just picture that happening and think, thank you for sharing that. Collaboration is such a key part of this effort. Obviously, in getting the artists to play in

harmony with each other. Can you tell us how the process works on a technical level? Does someone lay down a track first and then you play that for others, or are there multiple people playing at the same time?

Mark Johnson: Right. So the way we do it is we create, you know, the first part of the track, which could just be one musician playing with an acoustic guitar, and then we'll travel, you know, we'll record and film that musician live outside with a mobile recording studio. Then we go to the next place. Maybe we go to an African village and record a Zulu choir. They'll put headphones on and they'll sing over the guitar, and then we go to the next place and the next place and so on. So we build it step by step until, you know, all these different musicians are all united together through a song, and there is something amazing that happens that's very different from making an album in a studio, you know, in a studio. A lot of musicians, they just tend to play a lot. But because musicians know they're just a part of something bigger than themselves, with playing for change, they tend to listen more and play less, which is sort of a phenomenon in music, but it really lends itself to people wanting to find the way they can contribute to something bigger than themselves, which I think is an amazing way to make art.

Lance Gould: And again, just I apologize, we don't have the clip, but I just for that one video, watching someone from Bahrain play the oud and someone from it was either India or Bangladesh playing the sitar, and each one adding their own element to the song, and then someone from the Caribbean adding like backing vocals. It's just such a magical experience. I just, I'm so enthralled with playing for change and what it and what it means beyond the music itself.

Mark Johnson: You know, and also, you know, so one of the singers was from the Congo. English is probably his fourth language, but I remember as soon as Robbie Robertson heard him sing, he fell off his chair and was like, that guy has to be in the song. And I think, you know, I remember Robbie also telling me the oud is one of his favorite instruments. So it's really just about showing people that all these different instruments all over the world, they work so well together.

Lance Gould: And for those who don't know, Robbie Robertson was the band leader of the band, and the and the songwriter for The Weight. And he is he's in the video as well. He sadly passed away within the last year and, but he was a hugely involved in this in this project. Yeah. Um, now we're going to go to Carmel. Um, Carmel, there are a number of components to art power, equity, starting with supporting underrepresented artists. Tell us more about the mission there to give such artists more of a voice?

Kamaal Martin: Certainly. Uh, first of all, thank you so much for having me here. Uh, it's really a pleasure to be amongst a group of such accomplished and talented professionals and a range of fields. Um, for us, Lance, art at its most basic level, is really about the power of narrative and the power of ideas and the power of narrative to tell one's truth, to tell one story, to speak that truth to power in whatever medium it may occur. Uh, art is personal. It's also collective. It can be universal. Uh, art can be a product. Art can be an experience. Art can be a tool. Uh, and a lot of our work is focused around art as a tool to accomplish a number of ends. Uh, there's a range of practices that kind of exist under the hood of what art power Equity does. Um, we've been doing some work with youth enrichment and arts in the summers in San Diego Unified schools. Um, we have a really interesting equity activation series where we look at taking non-traditional art spaces and activating them and turning them into art spaces and building community through convenings, creating opportunities to expand the network and the market for artists. Um, we also work with philanthropy as advisors and consultants to continue to help kind of drive some of the conversations that happen around support for the arts and culture and the creative economy, and to further impress upon folks that the arts are not just a nice to have, that they're absolutely essential and a must have. Um, so that's kind of the origin story in that sense.

Lance Gould: Uh, it's so important. Uh, and as you said, it's such an important building block for for building community. Uh, another aspect of art power equity is using art to achieve social justice. Your website notes that, quote, we believe that art has the power to transform, strengthen and embolden communities. Ap is dedicated to using art as a tool for social justice and positive change. Tell us more about that and how you think art can bring about positive change.

Kamaal Martin: Certainly, certainly. Um, I think the first important element to keep in mind when we look at the untapped potential of art and the role that artists can play in changing the social environment, is allowing space for liberatory practices. Um, doing everything that we can to fight against censorship in all of its forms. Uh, and to also create opportunities for artists

who come from communities and places and spaces that we might not see historically represented in cultural institutions, in popular media and such. And we want to do everything we can to fight against art being used as propaganda, to reinforce, stories that can be oppressive or restrictive, or that take control of a narrative from a community instead of allowing them the space to control the narrative on their own.

Lance Gould: Could you give us one quick example of that? Uh, just, uh.

Kamaal Martin: Certainly, the curator and residents program that we're right in the middle of right now, started with the partnership with Art Power Equity and a local public relations firm, where we bring in different artists into a space. And mind you, this is, you know, a business that operates full time in the space and just creating an opportunity for artists to tell stories and kind of take over that entire space and to, you know, further promote equity and kind of parity in the field, instead of us selecting every artist that will come into the space. We started with an artist that we picked, and then we gave the power to the artist to then select the next artist that would be in the space. Uh, who in turn would then select the next artist that would be in that space. So we're trying to spread access and to bring folks from different communities, and also recognizing that we only know who we know and what we know. And the more that we can kind of gamble on the uncertainties of bringing folks into a space that we might not have had a pre-existing relationship with, and to use trust as kind of the default mode. Instead of thinking, well, we have to know who this person is and we have to verify them. Let's take a chance and a gamble on, bringing this person in and trusting that they're going to create something that's meaningful and valuable.

Lance Gould: Thank you so much. Um, I want to move over to Hubert. Now, Hubert, your work is influenced by Diego Rivera and Michelangelo. Some pretty good company there. Tell us about the art behind fresco painting, which is your medium and which dates back to caveman times, and how it differs from working with oils on canvas and how you prepare to execute such large scale projects.

Hubert Massey: Well, one of the things that, one, with the type of, artwork that I do that's, that's public art. Um, I do a lot of community forums, get communities involved. Um. Uh, never go into a community without having a forum so that we can listen to, the community's history, the culture and, and their stories. Um, so the form of a fresco, that sort of difference from, like, oil painting. And so fresco is a it's thousands of years old. Uh, it's from the, from river sand, marble dust, lime and oxidized pigments. All these, elements are from the earth. So you actually just take in almost like dirt, dirt. And you just take in the lime and you add water to it and you create a fresco. Um, it's a long process. A lot of logistics that's involved, more so than the form of, maybe if you're doing an oil painting, you do an oil painting, you just you prime a canvas and you can paint it with painting, with oil, paints. But with the fresco it takes, it takes three weeks just to put the three layers of plaster up on the wall.

Hubert Massey: And then, it also takes, a few days or just a couple of days when you're doing the actual fresco itself. So they call them jonathas being able to paint, a setting in one day. Um, the surface is drying, Uh, and every time you put the brush through the surface, you actually add water and add time to your ability to be able to execute the, the fresco. So you primarily only have about, maybe, 10 to 12 hours to actually do, to do a certain Janata, which is a day's worth of work. So it's an extremely, extremely hard medium to work with. Um, but I just enjoy it. So one of the other things I just wanted to say, if you went into a cave. The cave is all limestone. And if you took red dirt, which is oxidized pigment, and you mix it with water, and you paint inside the cave, that's when you have a cave painting. So basically, a fresco is basically the just like the form of a cave wall.

Lance Gould: Yeah. Well, it's an ancient art that you're doing so beautifully. In fact, let's take a look at some of your work here so the audience can see both the quality and scale of your pieces.

Hubert Massey: So the same thing for public art when you do a piece of public art and, and it's done well and it's done with the quality of materials, it can last for hundreds of years and it can last for thousands of years. And just the mere fact that of being able to create a piece of artwork that has a major impact upon communities and, and has a major impact upon environment, it's just really intrigued me how I became more of a fine artist was I just thought the technology had changed and I had just bridged over and did. The Athenaeum Hotel. The Athenaeum Hotel was my first commission in the city of Detroit. It was a 30 foot by 15 foot diptych and it was all done in oils.

Lance Gould: Beautiful. And that really helps give a give a sense of of of what we're talking about here. Just being able to see to see your art in that context. We have other panelists here today, Elisa and Mark, who represent the performance arts. But as a visual artist and a public artist, tell us about how your relationship with the audience is different. Clearly, you don't get that instant feedback from an audience like a dancer or musician does. So tell us about your relationship with the audience that way.

Hubert Massey: Well, so because the pieces that I do is in the public side and, uh, Uh, like I was referring to before, I tried to get the community involved because when I come into communities, I create these large pieces of artwork or installations and all. So we do, community forum, we have dialogue, and when we have dialogue amongst the community, we really get a good sense of history and culture of the community. Um, for instance, in the in the city of Detroit, there was a place called Ferry Street where African Americans could walk on Ferry Street, around the, the, the early, or early or early 20s or so and, so, Mary Bethune, she was buying homes throughout the United States, bought a home on Ferry Street and, Brush Street. And so the person who was selling the house said, well, we'll sell you the house. If you move the front entryway from Ferry Street to Brush Street. So if you go there, go there Today you actually see a beautiful porch with pillars and a bricked-up wall, but you see the entryway that's on the Brush Street.

Hubert Massey: And so in the mural, I did a large tile mural was 30ft by 30ft. We incorporated that in the mural, because we wanted to tell be able to tell that history and that and that story, about those experiences and all. And, just to get that, that type of information by having those conversations. Really brings things to life, so that we can work on change. The other thing was. Uh, there was a large, mural that I created, when people were doing Black Lives Matter. Uh, we did, power to the people. There was a 300 foot by 25 foot mural that we put on the street of Woodworth, right down in the heart of Woodward. And, there were so many people who resonated with that one. Detroit went through a lot of things in the 67 uprising. And two, Detroit is a little different. And we want to pretty much showcase or express ourselves, through the art of language that we use for the power of the people. And that resonated.

Lance Gould: Well, thank you so much for sharing that. And I think what you've highlighted there is the power of storytelling and all the guests today, if you think about it, the audience thinks about each of the work that they're, that each of these artists presents is really a different form of storytelling, particularly when there are bits of history, painted right into the murals. Incredible, about what you mentioned about about Miss Bethune and and her home. Uh, Catherine, moving on to you. San Diego is situated not far from the border with Mexico, and there's a vibrant art scene in Tijuana. The museum. Your museums, by national mandate, includes a focus on artists from both sides of the border. Tell us what that is like from a curatorial perspective, monitoring two distinct cultures and making sure the result is as a sensible coming together of two different perspectives.

Kathryn Kanjo: Yeah, no, thank you, Lance, and thank you for to you and to the Samuel Lawrence Foundation for including me and the museum and this esteemed group today. Um, it's true. I mean, it's we have a bi national mandate to pay attention to what you described as two distinct perspectives. Um, the two. But I think a thing that we try to do by focusing on the bi national is to emphasize the oneness of it, and that that it is a region that has shared issues and shared, creatives in the sense of our artist community. You know, they don't you don't just stop at the border and not visit spaces in Tijuana or artists that are in Tijuana, for example, don't not come to San Diego. So it's acknowledging that that we are a community that is much more, porous and interactive than, you know, just one or the other, even though, you know, folks are coming from a particular nationality or politic. But, you know, our region, like artists, are multivalent. You know, artists don't just have one, answer to put out, you know, so we have artists who are who are from our border region, who are addressing the issues of the border in a more sort of political way. You have artists that that aren't, tending to that at all. And then for the museum as an institution, you know, we think about what we can do, and, Hubert was talking about community and audience, and, you know, the, and Mark two talked about, like, the folks in the subway stopping and listening. You want your art to connect one's art, want art to connect to people, you know? So, so at this institution, we can think about how we frame the art that artists are making to help it be, perhaps, you know, more readily understood by our audience. Right. So. So we can be this bridge between the artist intent and our, the the artist's intent and our audience's curiosity.

Lance Gould: So thank you for sharing that. And, let's take a quick look at some photos from, the from the, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego. The audience can get a sense of the site right on the Pacific Ocean.

Kathryn Kanjo: We've recently expanded the building, so we've quadrupled our gallery space. And, it's allowed us to put out the collection that, really begins in the 1960s with with such sort of abstract and pop works that you're seeing here in these, in these different, different galleries, but continued to the present. I mean, we're contemporary museums, so so we pay a lot of attention to what's happening today.

Lance Gould: Well, we were we're talking a second ago about the border. So coming back to the question of the border, there may there may be no bigger issue right now in American politics, rightly or wrongly, than the border. Tell us, what role does immigration play from an arts perspective, and how can the arts help us see this collectively from a different point of view? What can we learn about immigration through the eyes of artists?

Kathryn Kanjo: No, I think that's I think that's a tremendous question. And I think artists are taking on the issue. Uh, they're taking on the issues of today, which include immigration. And frankly, that has been a topic, migration, population shifts has been a topic for artists over time. And we contemporary artists are today's history painters, right? If they are, exploring that kind of content. Um, and I think, I think what's artists can do is take content that we might know in a political or in a journalistic way, and translate it into the materials of art, so that we maybe, we maybe are more open to it. You know, it's a new language. So artists might, might really exploit, the metaphors of material and not be so, so literal. I mean, they might give us an abstract reference to what it means to be a migrant, or to be displaced. I mean, you know, we're here at the US Mexico border, but the exhibition that we just closed in the museum's galleries was Art, from the Caribbean diaspora from 1990s to the present, you know, and I had people come in and say, well, we're not in the Caribbean. I'm like, well, guess what? You know, we're on a global border. And the issues that that, you know, have affected the Caribbean, have affected our world order and should resonate with us here in, in the US, Mexico border region as well.

Lance Gould: So true. I mean, so many of the issues that that plague the Caribbean plague, you know, whether the islands there that are that are vulnerable to climate change, just as Mexico is. And, you know, Hurricane Beryl that just barreled through Mexico. But Grenada first, you know, there's so many there's so many issues that affect the that affect all of us in similar ways. Um, thank you, Katherine, for for this next round of questions, we're going to move to more of a group discussion. Let's start with Elisa and Hubert. Uh, we noted at the top of the broadcast how art can often be a mirror, or in some cases, a barometer of a society. Tell us your thoughts there, Elisa, and how art reflects the problems of society and can spark the changes that can make it better.

Elisa Carrillo Cabrera: Well, you know, through the choreographies. We have, we can always explain the problems that the society is living. So, you know.

Elisa Carrillo Cabrera: Art has been giving the public an option of, let's say, like a real mirror to see what's happening in the world and maybe, in a way, make them think, you know, there are so many choreographers that take, ideas from the situations that we're passing. They express it through the movement that it's being played on stage. And I've been having a wonderful feedback from people saying that sometimes let's say they they perform something about different situations that are happening around the world. And when they watch on stage, performance with this subject, it can really touch their heart and make them analyze that. Sometimes, you know, like we have to find a solution to problems. We have to keep together. We have to, be sensible about each other. So I think it's wonderful the way, dance can tell people what's happening, but also can give you a mirror, like a view of actually how the world is being affected by different situations and how we can think about it and in our own way, change something. So I think this is a wonderful way that we have as dancers to express what we feel, but also to share to the public, to the audience. Um, maybe a thought that can help change things.

Lance Gould: So, Hubert, same question for you. How does art reflect the problems of society, and how can it spark the changes that can make us better?

Hubert Massey: Yeah. So art really? Art really reflects in the community, especially when artists are are passionate about their communities. Um, when things happen in the communities, when there was the George Floyd, situation and how murals were popping up all over the country about the expression of what was going on in the communities and all. Um, art is the barometer. It's the barometer that tells you, of what's happening. Um, it galvanizes communities. Um, and at the same time, it celebrates communities. Um, yeah. So just, when I was telling, when I was talking about the, having the, the, community forums, and when you listen to what people really want to get out about what their community is all about, because sometimes, there's negative things about communities that people are never even been to. But, through art, it's a way of celebrating those communities through a form of art. So when people come by or when they drive by and they see, mural up on the wall and it tells about the history and the culture of that community. Um, that changes. Changes the way people think and way they see things. And it beautifies the community and makes people feel more in touch with their community. And, and it just, you know, it just does it just does a world of good just, just through the form of art. That's that's.

Lance Gould: Incredible. Uh, Mark, next, next question for for for you and for Elisa. Also, Covid 19 was a traumatic experience for the whole world as millions died from the pandemic in every country, navigated it differently. But when doors were shuttered to performance spaces, how did that impact our ability to interact with the performance arts, which rely on live audiences? Uh, just as a side note, I know playing for change was launched in 2002 well before Covid, but it seems like such a brilliant response to Covid musicians playing together from remote locales all over the world. So just tell. Tell us a little bit about about, about navigating Covid and your perspective on that.

Mark Johnson: Right. I mean, I think for me, it was one experience, the first time I've ever experienced something that the whole world shared at the same time. So for me, we're all living, we all share in this planet. So it's an opportunity for us to see how connected we are, and also to really learn to appreciate the importance of humanity and connection. So when you see musicians from all over the world performing together, it just reminds you that, you know, we have the ability to create the future we want, but we need everybody. So I feel like what Covid did is as terrible as it was. It also reconnected us as a planet, and we can now decide what kind of future do we want to live in. We want to live in a world that's more connected, that cares about each other. We have the opportunity to do that. Music, art. They always give us the ability to see that opportunity. So for me, I feel like it really gave everybody a chance around the world to really, I guess, to just appreciate the moment and time we get on this planet and to realize that we're all in this together and that we need each other. And I feel like that gives us the opportunity to come out of something like Covid much stronger than we've ever been before.

Lance Gould: Elisa, how about you? What are your thoughts on how the pandemic impacted the arts, particularly from a performance arts perspective?

Elisa Carrillo Cabrera: I completely agree with Mark. I find it's, it's really it was something that would just like make us think, what do we want in the future? I have to say that one of the only things that I can, I could enjoy a lot during the pandemic was art, because they brought, like, art brought us together. You could see how many artists around the world created things that we could share, and people had the opportunity to see what was happening in other parts of the of the world, in the dance, in the art, in the like, music, music, any art expression. Um, you know, I think it was a good moment to understand that that was the thing we had. It was each other's, let's say, energy, each other's creation, and the way that people and artists were trying to do something to keep people busy and interested in new things. So I think it was a also very many, many difficult moments during the pandemic. But I think it was nice to see how people like the whole world stopped. But art creation and the people wishing to share something with the world didn't happen, like didn't didn't stop. Sorry. This continue happening, through the media, through videos, you know, so I think it was a very important moment to show the world that art can transform society. Art can give us a lot. Art can change our world if we wish. So I think we also learned, and of course, we were not able to be on stage, but we were going on the social media. We were sharing things and people sometimes will just sing. People will start to draw, people will start to dance. So the pandemic, in a way, brought us together and reminded us that actually we are born and we are everything we can create with our own hands and our own thoughts and our bodies can be something beautiful, and we can be a world that can be better if we share arts.

Lance Gould: The arts can inspire us and power us through the powers, through the hard times. Uh, this next question is going to be for Catherine, Carmel and Mark and Carmel. We're going to also try to get a look at the video of your gallery, in this

section. But it's hard right now for people to see across the aisle, politically and outside of politics, that manifests in a very divided society. Two echo chambers inside, two bubbles inside two silos. How can the arts help us break out beyond those bubbles, and maybe help us see a point of view that we hadn't previously seen, or given fair consideration? Let's start with Catherine on that one. And then, then we'll come to Kamal and see Kamal's video.

Kathryn Kanjo: Well, I feel like I'm hearing it in all of our comments that, I mean, the arts, I think, help one see their their region and their world and themselves differently because it gives us a new language or it lets us, it lets us be more empathetic. And we felt that. I think that's why everybody wanted the arts during Covid as we were. We were aching and we needed to identify with something that connected us to to one another. Um, you know, but it's also, I mean, that that arts Arts can play on, on the metaphor with, of, of the issues of, of vulnerability, of power, all of those things can be represented through, you know, the movement of dance through through the, the pigments. You know, that that Hubert, you know, embeds on on the buildings or whatever material, actual material an artist chooses. So I think it's that it sometimes maybe catches us unaware that it that it's impacting us because, we think it's just art, but then we understand that it's opening up feelings or that it's that it's, teaching us something.

Lance Gould: Camille, before turning to you, let's let's let's take a look at Kamal's video, at Kamal's gallery. And then we're going to hear from Mark after that.

Art Power Equity Video: This is water. This. This is feeding. This is this is you're nurturing. You're nurturing these guys, you know, this is I can't say how important is this is the age where they are sponges. They absorb everything. And then, you know, you get these little sponges and you get that water in there in their brain, so to kind of speak, you're feeding that, you know, you're feeding the water, but the art is the water and it's, it's nurturing. It's it's how can you live without art? And it's throughout the world, these kids will always remember this. They will always remember drawing and drumming and dancing and singing and a lot of the things that are no longer part of the educational system.

Lance Gould: Well, that was a I believe that was an artist who's a part of your community. Tell us about, how, art can help us see a point of view that we hadn't previously seen or given fair consideration.

Kamaal Martin: Certainly. Uh, art often has a unique way of bypassing a lot of the usual kind of tools of cognition. We we employ when we hear and think and learn and process and the ability to kind of go straight to like the subconscious mind and impact is tremendously powerful and really can't be overstated. Whether it's music, whether it's dance, whether it's visual art, I think all mediums have a really, really powerful way of getting under our skin in ways. And when we hear so much that is oppositional or inflammatory or offensive, art can kind of back door our minds in ways that allow us to open up ourselves to possibilities, to perspectives, and also to factual information that we wouldn't be able to receive otherwise because the vehicle delivering it, you know, previously, maybe we'd been turned off to. Um, and I think that's tremendously important. And some of what we saw there in that video is the work that Art Power Equity is doing in San Diego Unified schools. Uh, those kids are transitional kindergarten through second grade. Uh, and through some of the thought partnership with the folks whose logos you saw around the table, including the Samuel Lawrence Foundation. We were able to introduce a design thinking element to some of the work as well with these young kids, some of whom had never even had a classroom experience. Uh, to start to think critically around the environment. Um, environmental pollution and issues at the border with the ocean. And to some of Catherine and Mark's point, the border is a physical object, but like water pollution and air pollution and environmental pollution doesn't stop just because there's a political demarcation here. Uh, San Diego, the home of the busiest border crossing on the planet, wouldn't be what it is without our connection to Mexico and Tijuana. Uh, so Art, again, you know, allows us to introduce these concepts which are really deep and profound to, you know, a multitude of ages in a really unique and organic way.

Lance Gould: And, Marc, how about your thoughts on this? Uh, how can how can art help us break out of bubbles that we're, that we're so used to? And so we're looking to leave?

Mark Johnson: Yeah. I mean, probably the most important thing for me. And I think, you know, art transcends the things that divide us. I think also, the more the world or the media or whatever it is that try to divide us, the more we need to focus on the

connections and the inspirations to make people care more about themselves and than each other. You know, we have the playing for Change Foundation. We have 35 music schools around the world, also dance and art schools. And one of the first ones is in an ancient village in the country of Mali in West Africa. Thousand year old village. And I remember going there one day and they asked me, you know, well, listen, there was a little conflict between the hunters and the fishermen regarding some land, and but I went they invited me to come. And when I got there, they had about 40 of these instruments called the kora, which was sort of the ancient harp also leads to sort of the guitar. They play they have 40 of these instruments playing. They sit down the entire village, 1800 people, and in the middle of the village or the chorus, and they play for about 20 to 30 minutes to calm everybody before they decide to, you know, resolve the conflict.

Mark Johnson: By the time they're done playing, nobody even remembers why they were upset. You know, the conflict is over. But what's magical about this is this is what music and art was invented for. It was invented for us to be able to deal and face with the conflicts we face, and to move forward in positive ways, where we learn to be inspired and care more about each other. I couldn't agree more with what Kamal was saying. I mean, to me, you know, music and all of art just it really has the ability to transform, give us a new way to see the world and to inspire us. And that's what we need to do. We need to inspire people to care more about the world. And I think art is the best way to do it. And it goes back thousands and thousands of years. As Hubert can attest to, as far back as we go, so is the power to inspire and the power of art.

Lance Gould: I love that story about calming people with music before a tense scene and meanwhile at the Republican National Convention, we have kid Rock doing the exact opposite. Um, speaking of kid Rock in Detroit, Hubert, how's that for a segue? Uh, Diego Rivera's work is so influential to so many and made a major impact in your hometown of Detroit. Yeah. Uh, where he did a 27 mural series called Detroit Industry, which had political implications. Uh, Hubert, tell us about the political power of the visual arts and how they can evoke such visceral responses, like like Diego Rivera's work.

Hubert Massey: Yeah. So? So Diego Rivera's work had a.

Lance Gould: Who influenced you, by the way? And again, just to reiterate and who who had assistants that you worked with with you pointed out to the audience. Yeah.

Hubert Massey: So Riveras, Uh, artwork had a real big impact upon me, his assistants. That's how I learned how to do, how to learn how to do frescoes. What's up? Under his assistance. But really, what really drives me was, Diego Rivera is a storyteller. And, when he would inspire me, when he went into the factories to listen to the factory workers and.

Hubert Massey: To photograph and to come back and create this beautiful piece of artwork. Uh, actually, that we have the largest fresco painting in the United States in the city of Detroit, was really, was was really, a powerful to me. Um, the idea of him being able to take, a sense of humanity, he shows the different cultures, throughout the world in the mural. Then he shows how man works together. Uh even though they're working on the assembly line, to create this, this automobile, because he was really fascinated, by the technology and all of that time and all, but, really strong, and powerful way of his narrative, the way he told the story. Um, yes, he was, controversy, controversial at times and stuff. Um, but his, his point of getting his information was very strong. In fact, it was such of an impact I went down to Mexico City to see Siqueiros, Orozco and Diego Rivera's work. Uh, down there. I spent time at the, the, the the Palace of the fine Art and, to see to see their work. Uh, unbelievable. Um, and for me, as being an African American, a lot of, African Americans were influenced by a lot of the Mexican mural mural painters, artwork. Uh, Elizabeth Catlett, who, who went down there, Langston Hughes, who spent a couple of years down in Mexico City. Um, so there was a lot of artists that were in Charles White, who went down to Mexico City. So, yes, the, the artwork that he showed and, and, and that's at the Detroit Institute of Arts was, very impressive and very powerful.

Lance Gould: It's fascinating what you just said about the influence that Mexico had on African-American artists. Thank you for sharing that. Uh, Katherine, let's let's talk about the setting of art and how that can impact a viewer's experience. The location of the mcasb is, as noted, right on the beach in La Jolla, just like the Louisiana museum in Denmark, which is a famous museum over in Europe, the interplay of the art in a stunning setting, a stunning setting outdoors can leave lasting memories with visitors. Tell us about how the natural world and outdoor settings can influence the meaning and interpretation of art.

Kathryn Kanjo: No, no, that's that's a nice question, Lance and I, I mean, we're fortunate here that we have this kind of, you know, nature and culture. You get both experiences when you come in. You can, you know, enjoy both of them. And the power of nature especially is, you know, seen on our coast is is overwhelming. But it's also helpful to remember that, you know, nature reflects back our culture, you know, and that our histories are carried in our landscapes. Um, so we can see that in artworks that, artists might make, you know, it's not always the case, but, speaking like of our binational mandate, which should probably be a tri national mandate because we're, we're mindful that that these lands were occupied, you know, prior to us by the Kumeyaay. So in our collections, for example, we have work by a young Kumeyaay artist whose name is Fox Maxey, and they make a video that that in some ways looks like a kind of a trippy rock video. But with all this footage of of the Pacific Ocean out here, and it's got this great aesthetic to it, to, to, you know, any lay viewer, but to, to somebody who is, from the Kumeyaay Nation, it's it's a story of their origin place, you know, so, so that there's, there can be more to know in a work of art than just what we get at our initial impression. Um, at any rate, it's fun to be able to, to kind of, highlight and point those those possibilities out in the artwork that we have on view here.

Lance Gould: Well, thank you for sharing that. And thank you for reminding us that of the tri national element of, of the region. We have to we have to pay and honor the people who are here before us and who have too often been ignored. Um, we're coming toward the end of our of our program, and I know that some of our guests have to leave for for other commitments. Right. Uh, as soon as this ends. So I'm conscious of time, but I want to give each guest an opportunity to give a closing thought. Uh, please share with us one thing that in this very contentious time, the arts can give us that offers hope. We'll start with Elisa.

Elisa Carrillo Cabrera: Well, I would love to share. A thought that in my world of dance, I think it's very important that people who have the possibility to help and to promote art will think about it and really do it. Uh, in my beautiful country, Mexico, we have a lot of traditions and, many things that, um. I wish the world will see very beautiful things. Um, dance has been changing lives, I can tell you that. The last years have been promoting dance have changed something. And I especially see in the new generations, generations that, have another possibility of dreams that can see art as a way of living And what we need is help and support. We need people who have the possibility to really invest in art, people who have the possibility to help, people who have interests to change our world. I think, this is something I would love to, to ask around the world, whoever has the possibility to give spaces, to create places where people can perform will be wonderful. Because I am sure that dance, music and every expression of art can transform ourselves and the society. And I think, we should really believe in the power of art and really, try to use it in everyday life and also to. Give it to the new generations. For a better future.

Lance Gould: Excellent. Same question for Mark. Uh, give us one one thing in this, in these contentious times that the arts can give us hope.

Mark Johnson: Well, you know, one of my great friends, mentor and, partners, Norman Lear, had recently passed away at 101 years old. And Norman used to say to me, you know, there's three things in life that remind us we're all connected. Music, laughter and transcendence. The idea of being a part of something bigger than yourself. And I think it's time we focus on all of that. This is our, you know, music brings the connection, laughter brings the joy, and transcendence brings the purpose. We're all in this planet together. We get to choose together. And we are the ones we've been waiting for to create a better future for everyone.

Lance Gould: That's awesome. Thank you. That's beautiful. Uh. Um. Catherine.

Kathryn Kanjo: You know, I feel like I often talk about art as a language, you know, and it helps us articulate things, but it's also a fuel, you know, that that drives us. And I think, art gives us a particular type or opportunity for provocation, for contemplation. And these days especially, I think, solace.

Lance Gould: Carmel.

Kamaal Martin: Uh, maybe that growth and change is a result of friction and antagonism. And to step into that, and that the folks who are often at the margins of society and the farthest away from centers of power, have some of the most important

messages and create some of the most salient opportunities for us to learn. So, like lean in to the friction and the tension and allow yourself to be provoked and conflicted and troubled.

Lance Gould: And I'm going to give you the last word. Uh, what what do the arts give us that gives us hope in these contentious times?

Hubert Massey: I think art gives us. Art gives us a sense of humanity. It gives a sense of freedom. Um. I talked to a kid. This kid was doing a drawing, and I said, did you know that the drawing that you're working on right now, no one else in the whole entire world is doing what you're doing at that precise time and moment. And that right there gives you a sense of freedom to be able to create the world that you really want. Um, it's. I always say, if you want roses in your garden, plant the roses. You know, and this. And it celebrates communities all around the world.

Lance Gould: So that's a that's a great last word to end on. Thank you, Hubert, and thank all of you. Thank all of you for your for the wonderful conversation and for sharing your perspectives here today. You're all doing such inspiring work, and we're going to have links to everybody's work. Uh, when we have the final video of this recording next week. Uh, that concludes our program today. To rewatch this podcast or to see a transcript, go to the Samuel Lawrence Foundation website in the coming days. And again, we'll have links to, everyone's work there. The website is SamuelLawrenceFoundation.org. Thank you so much to our five panelists. And, thank you to Blue Planet Alliance for their partnership in First Fridays. Please also visit the Brooklyn Story Lab Net to learn more about the purpose driven work that we are doing globally. And lastly, come back next month on September 6th when our next episode will be previewing the massive Climate Week NYC and the annual September UN General Assembly meeting, which brings so many, thought leaders from around the world. Thank you and goodbye.