



Mary Ann Peters - *the map is not the territory*

SPEAKERS

Grace Kook-Anderson, Mary Ann Peters, Jon Richardson

G Grace Kook-Anderson 00:05
You're listening to the Portland Art Museum Podcast, a community-driven audio series brought to you by, well, you. If you have an idea for an episode of the podcast, fill out the form at pam.to/podcastidea, and we'll do our best to make your idea come to life. On the last episode, we heard from Charlene Vickers, an artist living in Vancouver, British Columbia. On this final podcast in the map is not the territory series. We hear from Mary Ann Peters, an artist living in Seattle, Washington. Relevant links are included in this episode's description and a full transcript can be found at PortlandArtMuseum.org/podcast. I'm Grace Kook-Anderson, the Arlene and Harold Schnitzer, Curator of Northwest Art. You'll hear my voice from time to time, but only when necessary. Until then, this is Mary Ann Peters.

M Mary Ann Peters 01:12
My name is Mary Ann Peters. I'm an artist. I live and work in Seattle, Washington. I've been living and working here for half my life and then some. And I came here from Los Angeles, in the Los Angeles area, Santa Barbara, and never thought I'd stay, but here I am. You know, I think I just had an inclination towards being an artist as a kid, I had an older brother and sister and so I was by myself a little bit when I was a kid because they were on off being teenagers or whatever. And I just entertained myself and then I was the kid who had the eye hand coordination, got asked to do all those little things you do in school posters and whatever. And I always thought I would use art as a conduit for social

services. I never imagined that I was going to be able to make a career out of being a practicing visual artist. I'm not practicing by the way. I went and got a master's degree at the University of Washington, which is why I came here. Michael Spafford was one of my key, I'd have to definitely call him my mentor, although I think he would question that. I mean, he just was somebody that taught me how to think in a compositional way and how to be self critical in a proactive way. And to understand that if you have an idea, it'll come back. It's not like just off in the ether. So to trust your instincts on trying things that may not make sense to you. So I credit Michael with my education with really kind of affirming my education. And then I right out of graduate school, I went into a collective studio and I have to credit those artists. They were all practicing artists, and They were fully engaged in a lot of things we take for granted now from video to printmaking, sculpture, painting everything but you know, performance. And I was somewhat of a naive artist. I went to school because I had the skills and I didn't understand it really as a what we have to say as an overlay on cultural practices. And those people, Carl Chu, Norie Sato, Bill Ritchie, Sharon Markowitz, Nancy Mead, Dennis Evans - there were all these artists that had just got spit out of the University of Washington, and they made this collective studio and pulled me in, and that was, that was definitely my maturation as an artist. And I credit them for that. Well, I think there was certainly a tradition or at least a discipline of artists and art therapy focused ideas. And I quickly dismiss those because I don't really actually think of arts that way, it can be therapy therapeutic, but I didn't necessarily want to follow a construct that was aligned with art therapy. So I could envision myself as an artist in residence in some sort of social service facility. Or I could imagine that I wouldn't try to make a career of fine art that I would teach or some sort of alignment that would have been besides myself entertaining myself. And in truth, that's happened as an artist. I've done a lot of work that's outside the realm of my studio that has been proactive for the arts in the northwest and nationally. And that just fits my personality, I think. Yeah. Well, for me, the Seattle creative community is endless, you know, because I do try to pay attention to all the layers of it. I mean, every artist community has its own neighborhoods, and they There are some that I don't have access to as regularly as others. But I try to see the work. I try and see as many people's exhibitions as possible because I feel like I that I owe them that respect the respect of their effort. And I so that way i'm familiar and I have entree and conversations with artists from multiple layers of the art world. I also worked on first amendment rights in the arts, which put me in kind of in front of the camera actually learning how to go to bat for artists, when they feel like they're being censored or to help them understand the difference between an agreement and that has had its failings and censorship. And they're different, they can be different. And I learned a lot doing that. And so I've been fortunate I can move in a lot of different directions in the art world in Seattle. A couple of years ago, after Managing and being a partner in an alternative, not an alternative space. That's not the right word. But it was a communal studio space called Noodleworks. I was in a building in Pioneer Square that had a fire. And

when that fire happened, we were displaced, of course, and needed to find a new space. So myself and two friends found a space it was 6700 square feet of empty warehouse space right at the edge of the International district. And we made 10 Studios including two live workspaces. So I knew what kind of studio community I wanted to be a part of, and what I didn't want to do anymore, which was basically worry about all these other people. So when we gave up that lease, this was two years ago. It was brought to my attention that Equinox studio where I am now was having an opening that it is hard to get into this facility. There's a lot of people that want to work here, but I think That my experience was part of the reason they were interested in having me work here. And I was in need of a new space that would give me versatility because I have right now I have a variety of projects I'm working on that go from my private work to big public art projects. So I came in here and here I am.

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Grace Kook-Anderson 07:22

Equinox is a remarkable artist community in the Georgetown neighborhood of Seattle. What appears to be an industrial back road soon reveals itself once you realize that the giant rusted fixtures are actually welded into sculptural shapes and designs. Hidden behind street signs are displays of public art. The Equinox building itself appears to be a factory, but the roof is lined with giant golden eggs. When you walk inside the walls are covered in advertisements for art shows. And as you can probably imagine, pieces by the Equinox artists. Mary Ann's studio is a loft with plenty of space for her large sculptures, and a loft area where giant windows allow natural light to spill across the entire space.

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Mary Ann Peters 08:15

Equinox - the beauty of it is that it is not only a deep seated Georgetown community, but it's got artists who are doing certain kinds of what would you say? The artists and community here is enormous. The skill base is enormous. I'm kind of probably one of a minority of people that are working within the art world as I do. I think most people have a much more grounded possibly and focus use of their skills and it's just a gift. As I was saying, I feel like there are things now where I can have an idea which is going to happen with my show. That I'm producing for the Portland Art Museum. There will be work in there that I can do because there was somebody here that answered my question on building something I was thinking about.

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Grace Kook-Anderson 09:11

Mary Ann is alluding to Impossible Monuments (the gatekeepers promise). It's a tall structure made of welded steel, glycerin and jewelry. Having seen the many steel

sculptures that surround the Equinox studios, it is not surprising that Mary Ann was able to find a welding coach.

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Mary Ann Peters 09:32

So Equinox is at once an artists space, but it's definitely a community center. And Sam Farrazaino is the man behind it. And Sam and I have known each other since I don't know we've known each other close to 30 years. He's been doing this he can't stop doing it. He's actually an artist, but he doesn't get a chance to make his own work. He's convinced to make a new South End arts community for the city of Seattle and he's doing it and this is one of them.

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Grace Kook-Anderson 10:02

Having worked in the city for so many years, Mary Ann's practice and influence is widely present in Seattle. Even more so her studio. That's why we asked her how her environment influences her work.

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Mary Ann Peters 10:16

Well, this environment is good because it's two levels, right? So I can imagine myself I can visualize various perspectives for work. But if you mean how does it psychically inform me, I would say that I feel I don't feel the weight of the weather, because I don't have my natural light is on the second level. And I've made myself a bowl of light here so that I am just in the comfort zone of this very even keeled kind of space. And also, I've moved here at a time when I've been following a trajectory of thinking that this is only bolstering that work. And so I feel like this environment is conducive to me getting at things I don't even know what they are yet. To be an artist, it has to be sort of so integrated into the way that you spend your days that you don't question it as something that's worthwhile or something that has some sort of precedence for other things. It made me understand it as a job. And I take it seriously. I come to my studio most days, I understand that there are challenges for me to resolve and to apply my particular skills to and I always have some aspect of my thinking that is clumsy and in that area of I don't know how this works, and that keeps me going. You know, but I think first and foremost, I make sure that the person that is Most, you know, feels compelled by the work is me. If it's not interesting to me, it's certainly not going to be interesting to someone else. So I don't let anything out of here that I'm not feeling fairly strong about. I don't make work for the production of it. I make work for the impact of it and have been fortunate to have that kind of support to do that. As a graduate student, I had the clarity of mind to understand that if I was going to be an artist, I might be working with a commercial gallery, and I didn't really know what that

meant. So I went to one of the largest galleries in Seattle, it was the Linda Farris gallery and I went to Linda Farris and I said, I will work for you for free. I just want to know how the system works. And I did do that I did it all through my graduate when my last year of graduate work, and then I started installing shows for her and then I showed my work with her. I've always had a kind of queasy relationship with power constructs in the arts. So I never really invited her to my studio until she asked. same was true with being able to escort other curators or artists around town. If they asked to see my work, I always, of course, wanted them to but I didn't see it as my privilege to just kind of take advantage of them. I've always been kind of hyper aware of taking advantage of people. And but thankfully Linda Farris became quite an important figure in my life. She really allowed me to mature as an artist, and she was loyal to the end. And, and there was an end I ended up leaving her gallery after 11 years, which was kind of a shock to people that were involved in the gallery and those that were watching my career, because it was a successful one. But I just felt like I had lost interest in the commercial gallery system, and that I was taking someone's place that might really enjoy it. And they were things I wanted to know, I wanted to know how to do large scale work, I wanted to do temporary work, I wanted to do public art work. And the only way I could do it, I felt was to leave. And I did. And I was out of the gallery system for quite a few years, and then went back in and then came out and went back in and now I show my work with the James Harris. And that's been a good relationship for me, but I, I really see these figures as they're signposts you know, it's like go this way, until it doesn't make sense to you. And then you have to think of your own trajectory as an artist and what it is you want to do. Which brings me to now. Well, the body of work that I've been working on for the last about four years now came because of visiting the Middle East, my family is Lebanese, or some would identify them as Syrian Lebanese, because when my family immigrated to the United States, there was no Lebanon. And I had always been interested in less westernized cultures all the Lebanon is very westernized culture. When I was in college, I was an exchange student in Pakistan. And I went back to that part of the world after I graduated newly married and traveled overland from Turkey through Iran and Afghanistan and Pakistan and India and back. And it further cemented my interest in trying to address various kinds of aesthetics, and also various premises for making work from those that are socially relevant to just the decorative arts. I also come from a really active family. My sister is involved in global media and has been for decades. She's also a radio overseer she she worked on the end and was the director of the what we call of the studio at the University of California in Santa Barbara, her husband is a very respected scholar, a Black scholar. As a young adult, I was introduced to the world of civil rights and social activism, because of my sister's marriage. And because I was being raised at a time when there was a collision of events in the United States and elsewhere. I had not been to the Middle East, I had always been alluding in my work to non Western cultures. But I felt that I wanted to move beyond the sentiment of cultural ties and try and look and understand things from from a stronger

historical and interpretive stance. So in 2010, I went to Lebanon, the Arab Spring happened, the Arab Spring collapsed. And I found myself thinking, in this discussion of multiculturalism and the arts, one facet that is constantly sort of swum around or not included are artists who are from the Arab world, or that have Arab ties. And I felt like if there was anybody that should be tackling the the crossover of world events and the Arab world on an US policy and on US experience, it should be somebody who has that association. And that happened to be me. But I was very hesitant for a long time to do that. Because I am a second generation Arab American. And I find that all those alliances, have their responsibilities and their perspectives, and you need to understand them. And once I convinced myself that having that perspective was valuable to the larger discussion, then I started making a series of pieces called Impossible Monuments. The Impossible Monuments by my read are those incidents or events that are under the radar, but feed larger topics and deserve reverence, but they will never be elevated to the status of a monument. So I the very first Impossible Monument that I made was I bronzed series of or set its, excuse me as a better word, a set of pita breads that was based on having read that there's a drought in Syria, there's a drought in that region. It's a long standing drought. It's not just contemporary, but it has fed the contemporary civil unrest in Syria. And I felt that people didn't understand that they didn't know about it, or it wasn't in the larger discussion of what's going on there. And so I made a work that was a massive decorative rug that was made entirely out of baking flour. And it was called Impossible Monument (on my eyes in my head). That means in Arabic, that expression on my eyes in my head, means I would do anything for you. And if you've traveled in Muslim countries, or if you've traveled in non Christian countries that have alignments with Islam, or the various extensions of Islam, that's a common tenant. If you need help, somebody will help you. So I that I started making these pieces and I haven't stopped. I, I guess I will stop when I feel like there's nothing to say, you know, I've that I've exhausted that topic. But I don't know.

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Grace Kook-Anderson 20:05

Before we hear more about Impossible Monuments. I wanted Mary Ann to go into more detail about the 32 years between getting her MFA in 1978 and visiting Lebanon in 2010.

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Mary Ann Peters 20:19

What happened in between was, I got a couple of residencies first to the McDowell Foundation, and the McDowell colony is the oldest residency program in the United States. And you're just put in the middle of these kind of incredible thinkers. And that got me started to try and look at what is what are the alignments in my work that I've never specifically said that was there. So like, even seemingly incidental things like when the

way I paint is very calligraphic, Sometimes, And what's that about, and I've always been interested in architecture. And I'm always reading about the way images are integrated into architecture. So then I started to seriously consider that the what I needed was a much stronger foundation in history, and geography, in philosophy in the political overlay of these various countries, including Lebanon. So I applied for a grant with Art Matters Foundation in New York, and they gave me money to do research, based on a migration out of the Middle East. Really, it's the Near East, there really is no Middle East. But will that's all another discussion, to follow migration that my family was a part of that happened at the turn of the 20th century, on the heels of the Ottoman Empire collapsing, going through Europe and into the Americas. So I went to Paris and I was for two weeks in residence at the Arab world Institute, which was kind of an incredible thing. And then I went to Mexico City, and was given access to archives and historical records in Mexico City of Arab influence in Mexico. And little by little, I started seeing the associations, and always something would surface that I had no idea and other people had no idea was there. And so I found myself attracted to the tendrils of information over the dominant information. And I became very aware that there is a dominant discussion in all of these historical surveys of countries that are not within our necessary in our purview. And if there was some sort of patch, patronizing or colonializing of a certain section of it of the world, then that perspective is the one that you got to read about. So I found that it really my job was to try and find what are people on the ground saying, so I took the record of that migration at the turn of the 20th century, and started comparing it to citizen journalists that are recording and broadcasting and uploading information on the web today. So those 200 year distanced events are feeding my work, I'd have to say that the work I'm doing now is much more specific. So I feel that the most important piece of my conceptual reasoning is that there is an event or some sort of historical record that I can point to for people and say, this happened. And I'm trying to interpret what happened. So for example, I've been doing a series called This Trembling Turf.

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Grace Kook-Anderson 24:00

This Trembling Turf is a series of 60 by 48 inch clayboard with fine swirls of white pigment that almost looks like a cross between an animal's fur and the landscape. And when you look at them long enough, they actually appear as if they are moving. Links to photos of This Trembling Turf are in this episode's description.

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Mary Ann Peters 24:24

That series is based on when I was in Beirut, doing a residency, I got to go to Beirut. It sounds like I'm constantly in residencies. And I've been pretty lucky. But I'm not constantly in redundancies, but I am targeting residences so that I can get more learned about these

things. And when I was in Beirut, I had access to the Arab image Foundation, which is this marvelous photographic foundation that was started by artists and photographers to give and keep a visual record of the region. And while I was flipping through a book, I found that in a very short couple of paragraphs, that there is most likely a mass grave under the largest, well, the only not largest, the only golf course in Beirut. And no one would confirm that Robert Fisk will confirm it, because he wrote a book that includes that actual event. But nobody would confirm it in my questioning, I think for obvious politic reasons. It's adjacent to a Palestinian neighborhood. There's an agreement, obviously, between the golf course and the Palestinian leadership, there is some sort of desire and who can blame them for hiding what was a really horrible event. I making it sound like I only look for tragedy. But what that does for me is it allows me to say, What don't I know about and I don't know about forensic anthropology. So that event that nobody would confirm, led me to try and understand how things are found underground. And so I started researching anthropology and forensic anthropology and they have devices that when there is something solid it blips. So if you look at the drawings that I've done, called This Trembling Turf in all of them, it's trying to do a cross section of the ground, or something might be and there are blips in it. And that's, that's how so many things have been uncovered in in modern technology. And I don't know, if, you know, is it important that people confirm that there might be a mass grave? Of course, it is, you know, but there is a a country on the planet that doesn't have the same kind of I'd have to say, tormented past. And so what I'm interested in is, what's the footprint? You know, what is the footprint of these various things? I'm all I'm almost hesitant to bring it up. Because it's such a sensitive topic. I mean, I think another part of Lebanon, that people just they cannot wrap their minds around this is that the Palestinian refugee population in in Lebanon is at least half its population. And it's 50 years in, and there's you would go into a neighborhood and it's not a camp. I don't know what people are imagining, but they're very integrated, but they have no rights. You know, really, no, you can't even go visit a POW in one of the neighborhoods if you don't have some sort of permission to do so. It's it's kind of it's it's powerful. But I again, I'm not a scholar, I'm I'm not versed on how it works. I just know that it's sensitive. There's huge political overflow on the various factions that are operating in Lebanon. And I wouldn't want to begin to act like or look like or seem that I have any kind of authority about it. I just stumbled on to a strange little fact, in this painting that I'm working on. Usually it's all connected together, but it's called Slipstream by the Light of the Moon. And I do think about my titles, I think seriously and strongly and I angst over good titles, and it's called Slipstream, because I did an exhibition that was the double meaning of words. So slipstream is the obvious one of the wake behind a boat. A second layered meaning for slipstream is to be pulled along against your will. So I wanted to make a painting that was about the sensation of being in a boat, trying to escape some circumstance, always doing it in the dead of night because you don't want to be discovered. And that's kind of where this painting went so this piece is called Slipstream

by the Light of the Moon.

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Grace Kook-Anderson 29:28

The piece Mary Ann is talking about is part of the map is not the territory, and it is one with which visitors often spend a great deal of time. Much like This Trembling Turf, It is a large black clayboard with fine swirls of white ink. At first, it almost seems abstract. But after you read Mary Ann's carefully crafted title, it becomes clear what you were looking at. That's something else we definitely wanted to learn more about -- The titles for Mary Ann's work.

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Mary Ann Peters 30:03

Right now I feel like the titles that I'm using are nuanced. And their intention is to get somebody to be curious. It's not for them to hop on my train, so to speak, it's more for them to get curious about why I would make something and what its source material is. So a lot of the work that I've done in the last few years around this, these series always has something that I've written that explains the source material so that people are in some ways, it's a different kind of respect for the viewer to say, I'm not just making this stuff up out of the ether, but also to say this is I'm just one person, giving it a go, you know, trying to understand what is proven to be a really volatile situation in contemporary times, and I feel like my titles are really sometimes quite accurate. You know, there's another piece that I'll have in the show in Portland called this Impossible Monument (flotsam). And I speak about that just a little bit, because I've come on to the narrative behind that piece by accident, I had been invited to do a talk. And there was, there happened to be a table set up by Doctors Without Borders. And I started talking to this nurse about why I was at this festival and what my talk was, which had to do with this work. And his work, and he was working in the Yemen and people don't realize that Doctors Without Borders is been is often the go to organization for a lot of things that they don't advertise. And in this case, they had been approached by Yemeni fishermen who were coming across the belongings and the remains of people trying to cross the Mediterranean and not succeeding, and that they knew that there had to be a respectful way. And it was important in the religion most likely to manage these findings. So Doctors Without Borders was teaching fishermen how to respectfully retrieve the lost remains of these people. And I just, it just got me and so I started thinking about what would that be like you're fishermen, you're out, just doing your job and you pull in your catch. And there's something entirely different than what you imagined would be in the catch. And how do you normalize that and how do you give it some level of reverence under the circumstances so I made That piece. flotsam is what gets thrown overboard.



Grace Kook-Anderson 33:03

Impossible Monuments (flotsam) hangs in a corner of the map is not the territory, and visitors often spend a great deal of time with it. Mary Ann's work balances perfectly with the seven other artists in the exhibition. And it has been an honor to showcase her work. Upon my first visit to Mary Ann's studio, I was certain that her perspectives aligned perfectly with the show's themes.



Mary Ann Peters 33:30

The humor in this is when she came to my studio, I thought I had to convince her to let me into this exhibition. I mean, I was kind of stunned that she wanted to come talk to me and, and so I, I probably just bored her to tears with 900 stories. But I, I it all came down to this kind of cross referencing and overlaying of kind of conceptual reasoning behind the artists that she was thinking about and she just said she was stumped. She didn't have title. And so I, in my research, in all these places I've had the opportunity to go to, I remembered that I had stumbled onto this, this philosopher, who was actually a semanticist, and he wrote a paper and gave a talk called the map is not the territory. And what his premise is in the cliff notes version is that the world as we understand it, is basically neurologically wired to who you are, you can only understand so much as what your own, you know, cranium Can, can process and but it also brought up for me the fact that the map is not the territory means there that the territory is psychological, the territory is spiritual, this the territory is not lines in the sand, the territory is how you understand parameters. And if you, for instance, have had very constricted life experience, your notion of parameters and borders and boundaries is going to be very different than somebody who's had the capacity to move around the world. And I also liked that, that the whole notion of mapping, I mean, mapping is everyone's intrigued with mapping, who isn't. And because, first of all, you know that even if you look at a map, when you get to that place, there's not any way that there's going to be necessarily definitive and identifying of that's where you are, you just have to trust it, you have to really trust it. And I think that with this exhibition, for me this concept is, is the overlay of all the work I'm doing. The map is not the territory, the territory is how humans treat one another, the territory is the footprint of cultures trying to reinvent themselves, when they're forced into movement, the territory is the alliances that you make, that either give you the freedom that you need to think yourself through a circumstance, or its constricts your ability to pull yourself out of something that could be detrimental. And some of it is certainly by design. And some of its by happenstance. So I feel like whoa, if my work does nothing right now then make people look at a part of the world that they would never put on their radar, then I did my job. That's what I want.



Grace Kook-Anderson 36:51

Curating an exhibition with living artists is especially collaborative. And Mary Ann's suggestion for the show's title is a perfect example. Over these past eight episodes of the podcast, we've heard everybody's interpretation of the map is not the territory. And although they differed in many ways, their thoughts often overlapped. I encouraged the eight artists to share their thoughts about the title with one another, leading up to the exhibition, as well as their research. That's another thing about the artists, they often have a thirst for knowledge. And there's usually a lot of research involved.



Mary Ann Peters 37:32

Well, research is really key to the work that I'm doing now. I mean, I am kind of a news wonk. And I do read a lot of articles, I wish I was more of a literature wonk and read more books, but I find that I read more articles than books. And I find that the research gives me some sort of handle on what my particular fascination might be. And sometimes the research tells me not to go there, don't go there, there's no way that I can comfortably or ethically address the idea. And I think that ethics is a big piece of my thinking all the time with this work. It's it's it behooves me to make sure that whatever the topic is, for me, is respectful of that source. And I think it's really easy to be sidetracked by the fascination of creativity, and to not understand that it could impact someone in a negative way. And to really understand that before you put something out in the world. So you know, my personal idea, and identity is what triggered me wanting to make this work. But my personal identity is miniscule. In in the long and short of it. I mean, I feel an important alliance with people of Arab descent, because I think it's kind of one of the last closeted communities in America, people are, especially Arab men are really hesitant to tell people that they have some sort of Arab association with particularly in this political climate. And so in that way, I feel that it's important that I identify myself as having these kinds of cultural and familial ties. But the story is really about how people normalize, seemingly unnormal circumstances, and what could that look like? And how can I, in some way, take research and take my connections, and take my misgivings and my need to be better informed and put it with some sort of aesthetic framework into the public domain. And I feel like, I'm as close as I've ever been, with this work. Well, my working practice is that I work all the time, I mean, I'm very well aware that everything I touch is not golden, in in so and I'm not naturally talented, like some people are, where they can just whatever they do is like, you just want to bow down. So I understand it, as I'm a workhorse, I have to keep my chops up just like an athlete, you know, you just have to keep your chops up. And that for me is drawing and painting. So the wall behind you is a wall that's notes from these various residencies and ideas that I've garnered from things I found, and sometimes they're ideas that I just try not to edit. I mean, that's one piece of my process right now is just to go with an idea, just make it, give it a face if you can, and then you edit, you know,

it's like, well, that's I don't know how to realize that, or, that's not as interesting to me as something else. And so I, I draw a lot, and I think a lot. And then sometimes I just work, making sculptural pieces is new, I'm most noted for being two dimensional worker. And so when I first started bringing out these 3d pieces, and these installation pieces, even though I hadn't made them before, I just was not given the support to continue them. There's a lesson in there somewhere, but I'm too late for that. But I felt like Well, I certainly think dimensionally. So I should be able to embrace the full, full range of possibilities. I have not made videos, I I'm hesitant to make videos, but people have asked me if I ever will. And I you know, I don't know. But I feel really satisfied by using my ideas in a variety of forms in and some forms make more sense in some circumstances than others. So I'd have to say, so it's just a kind of a daily practice of coming in and looking around and, you know, grappling with demons, like all artists do, like nobody really cares about this, you know, and making sure that I care about it, and and then try and bring it to fruition. It's it's, it's never boring. I will say that. Yeah.

G Grace Kook-Anderson 42:32

If you've listened to the other episodes, or been through the exhibition, you know, that two major themes are decolonization, and centering indigenous values,

M Mary Ann Peters 42:44

there's an everything that I'm working on has been affected in some way by colonization, there's no question, you know, so and subjugation of some sort. I mean, we, I mean, it's, it's the human condition of, you know, somebody's pulling rank on somebody else. And it just is in the hands of the observer to either not allow that to happen or acquiesce. And I'm just trying to understand it. But I don't know that I'm not a scholar. You know, I'm just curious and trying to follow my own curiosity about what I think are verifiable, and sometimes very much lauded or exposed histories that I'd want other people to know about. Can anybody who's thinking about history or geography or the political ramifications of actions, not bump into an indigenous territory? So in that sense, you know, I'm, of course, as complicit as as the next person. But my work is not about indigenous communities. I'm very well aware that I'm on indigenous land. My studio is on the banks of the Duwamish River. And so there's no way that I can not come in here and, you know, show my respect for the history and the people that were here before me.

G Grace Kook-Anderson 44:22

Mary Ann is absolutely right. We should all be aware of the peoples who were on our lands before they were colonized and recognize them regularly. The Portland Art Museum is

situated in downtown Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon, a place which rests on the traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas bands of Chinook, Tualatin, Kalapuya, Molalla, and many other tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River. We at the Portland Art Museum make an effort to recognize the indigenous peoples of the Portland area on whose ancestral lands the Museum now stands, paying respect to their elders past and present. We realize that you are listening to the podcast and aren't necessarily in or around the Museum. But we would like you to please take a moment to consider the legacies of violence, displacement, migration, settlement, and resilience that brought us to where we all are today. Violence, displacement, migration, settlement and resilience are themes that have been brought up by all of the artists in the map is not the territory during this series of the Portland Art Museum podcast. And each artist was chosen specifically for their contributions in uncovering those truths in their own ways. Mary Ann is no exception. And though she has been a working artist for a long time, it is our honor to showcase her work in this exhibition.

M

Mary Ann Peters 46:00

I have a really strong reputation in Seattle, I've had lots of opportunities. I am not on the radar of curators, for some reason. So to have Grace chase me down and want to talk to me about this exhibition was breakthrough. You know, I haven't ever shown my work with any of these artists. And again, I think that goes back to, I think it's been hard for possibly for curators to weave me into exhibitions that I don't know that I would even have my own work be a lead in with this kind of a community, I would just want the work to be interesting, and people want to see it. So I'm not, I'm not looking for circumstances that would have all these social overlays in the work of other artists and myself. And so to be in the company of these people, it's it's kind of a remarkable thing. And I'm really curious to see where there are relational moments between our work, I know that I, I appreciate that there are some people who seem to embrace more heavily certain aspects of their work than others, there's some that are are certainly aligned with what we would consider to be aesthetics. And but many of these artists, I think, are using materials and sources that don't fall under the norm of aesthetic concerns or practices. And I think that's really interesting. I could be wrong about that. I mean, I'm sure that the people who paint want to make good paintings, and the people who make videos want to make good videos, and you know, the people that make sculptural things, it matters to them that has presence. But I don't know that the reason they make that work is for what we consider to be more traditional notions about why art would end up in a museum. So that's what's interesting about this show, for me. And you know, the other part of it is, I feel I feel a little disingenuous sometimes because most people think that all the exodus out of the Middle East right now the whole with the Syrian crisis, is across water. Actually, over 80% of

people are crossing by land, they're not doing it by water. So I'm, I almost spanked myself for getting so fascinated by it. But it's not the I mean, the pieces I've made are not just aligned with water crossings. But that's I'm in and I'm a little I would hate for people to think that the drama of the events of migrants trying to cross water is why I would make work about this, I think we all have to be really careful that we don't, you know, theatricacise these moments, somebody asked me what I thought of Ai Weiwei's moment with the child on the beach. And my knee jerk reaction was I thought it was horrible. But at the same time, he's a powerful figure. And he's using his status to bring people along and a topic that maybe they don't want to think about.

G Grace Kook-Anderson 49:29

If you are listening to this episode, on the day of its release, there are only a few days left to see the map is not the territory. If you haven't had the opportunity to visit the Museum, or won't in the next few days. Please keep an eye on these artists to see where their work will be shown in the future. Should you have the chance to see Mary Ann's work in the future, please keep her following words in mind.

M Mary Ann Peters 49:55

My experience so far with my work and various stages of my career has been that there is an emotional response to my work. I don't want people to come away feeling minimized or shamed by my work, I would hope that what happens for them is that they would have never imagined it in its iteration as I've done it. And that they would find themselves when they flipped through a newspaper or website, that they catch something that came because my work suggested it. And that's about all I can hope for. And I hope that people walk away with an after image. Because that's where work lives. If there's no after image, there's, then you've got to get back to the drawing board, I would have never imagined I'd be making the work I'm making now. Not in a million years, not even 10 years ago. And I think for myself, as an artist who's had more experience, one of the things that happens to you is that you think, well, I have nothing to lose, what do I have to lose, to venture into territory with my work that people are not expecting from me, I have nothing to lose. And everything to gain from my own maturation and curiosity and enrichment of thinking about all these narratives that were always kind of trailing me, kind of behind me, my little ghosts, and I just am grateful for being able to make this work. I'm grateful to Grace for having confidence in this work. I'm really grateful to my art dealer, Jim Harris, because I went full circle on him like three, four years ago and said, I'm going to do this thing and are you with me? And he's been great, You know, I mean he's, he's been very, very affirming about it and as have my peers, which comes down to the final thing I want to say, which is my peer group, other artists, they're the ones that probably I make the work

to, and what I want to have the respect of my peers and anything after that is just luck.



Jon Richardson 52:23

Thank you for listening to the Portland Art Museum Podcast. I'm Jon Richardson, this podcasts producer. I'd like to thank everyone who has been submitting their episode ideas at pam.to/podcastidea. Your suggestions have been fantastic and integral to the concept of a community-driven podcast. Because bringing these ideas to life takes time, the next episode will be an Artist Talk from our archives, where we invite a local artists to speak about their work as it relates to a piece from the Museum's permanent collection. If you haven't already, please be sure to subscribe and we would love it if you would rate and review the podcast if you use an app with such an option. I'd like to thank the eight artists from the map is not the territory, Grace Kook-Anderson, and you, the listener.