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**Willea
Zwey**

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Interview with Artist Willea Zwey

Twitter @willzwey



Topic: Many Steps in a Few Words

Phil - Were your parents supportive of art and creativity?

Willea - So when I was little my parents always wanted me to do something creative. They sent me to piano lessons and drawing lessons. So I've always been the creative kid.

My mom worked in exhibition design at a museum so I've always been influenced by her. I always wanted to do something creative but I wasn't necessarily thinking to be an artist artist you know what I mean? But later in life I got into spacial design and leaned towards architecture. Because I was thinking about 'if I'm going to be an artist' I had that question everyone asks themselves in my head 'am I going to make money, am I going to make it?'. And so I found myself looking at something a bit more practical that has a side of creativity.

So I went to school and studied architecture and really liked it. I really enjoy it as a discipline. In school you have a lot of freedom to explore and do whatever you want to do. Then after I graduated I started working at an architecture office in L.A. and it felt really different from the practicing and academic side. From what I know a lot of people have the same problem. So after a couple years I realized it's not what I really want to do. And I was a bit compulsive with the decision and just quit without having a plan. I also felt like L.A. wasn't my city so I moved back to Chicago and looked for a way to do something creative but make money.

Then at the beginning of 2020 when covid hit I was spending a lot of time at home and I started to look into digital art because I wanted to find something that I could do right now by myself and not need help. And I thought, 'I have my computer, I'll get a tablet and get started.' And that's how I started!



Topic: Transitioning from Architecture to Art

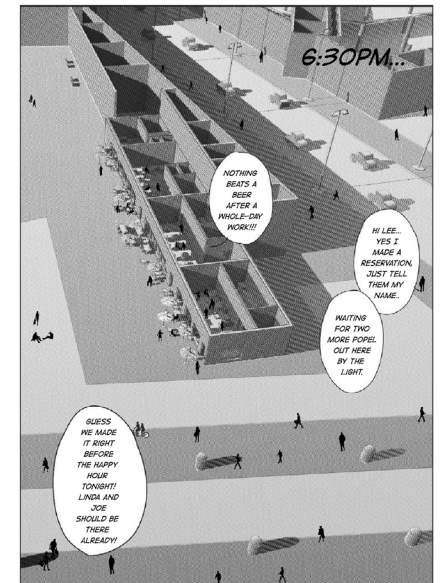
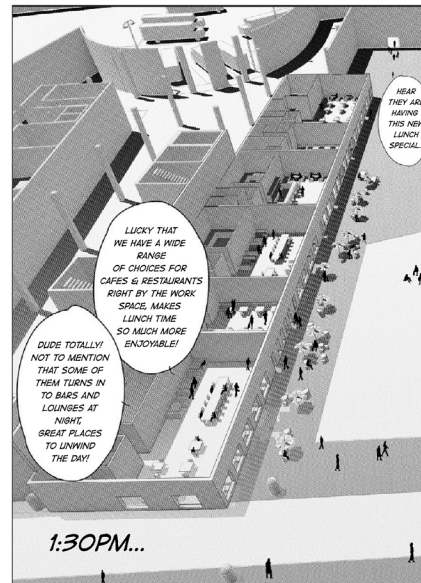
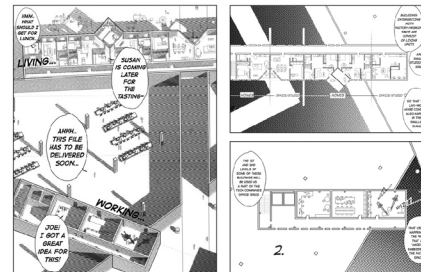
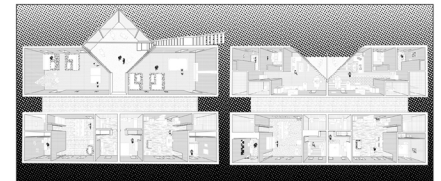
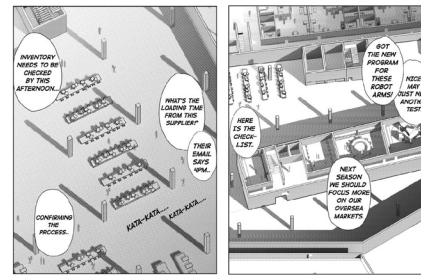
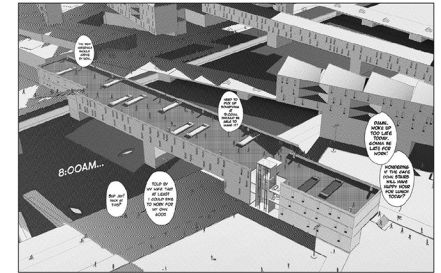
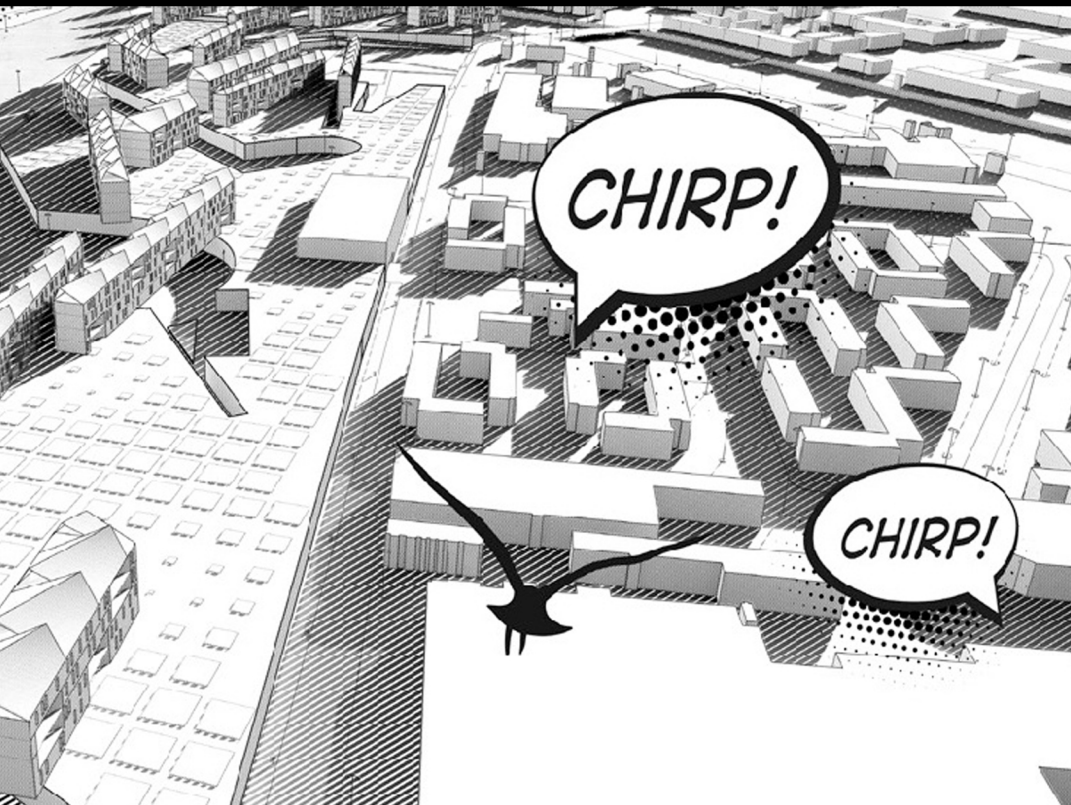
Phil - So tell me about the switch from architecture to digital art.

Willea - I got the idea of transferring what I learned from architecture into something new. I had been using a bunch of different software like photoshop, illustrator to make presentation drawings for architecture. So even though I wasn't sketching I was rendering scenes. I had had the idea and confidence that I could transfer that into something new.

Phil - Renderings are those visuals of what the building could look like if it were real? So not the plans but a real world view to give someone outside of architecture a better understanding?

Willea - Yah, and one of my favorite things to do in school was make those graphic presentations. At the end of an assignment I loved producing really cool looking drawings, like manga. And that got me thinking 'maybe I could use that skill set to create something new'.

Sample



Topic: Theme to Reality

Willea - I usually start with a subject or theme for my work. Then I'll spend time thinking about it.

Phil - Can you give an example of going from the theme to the work?

Willea - Sure, so I was part of an NFT show and the theme was Chicago. And when I think of Chicago I feel like we tend to think big, physically big. The architecture, the museums, but that felt too big and I wanted to focus on my own personal experience. And I love to travel so I thought about how Chicago is like a hub that connects me with cities around the world. From there I began to create and branch out from this theme.



I really appreciate when an artist or architect puts in the time thinking about making their work timeless or as a statement.

- Willea Zwey



**Topic: Giving
people a Starting
Point**

Phil - I noticed on your site you often have a description or small poem that accompanies the art.

Willea - I think that is a connection back to my architecture training because you would always have descriptions about the design so people could better understand. Sometimes they were vague and the viewer would have to interpret and other times they'd be very direct. I always hated doing this. Haha.. I didn't know what to say about my projects. But I still bring this practice into my work. I want people to have at least a few bullet points about how the project started or what I was thinking. So they can have a starting point while

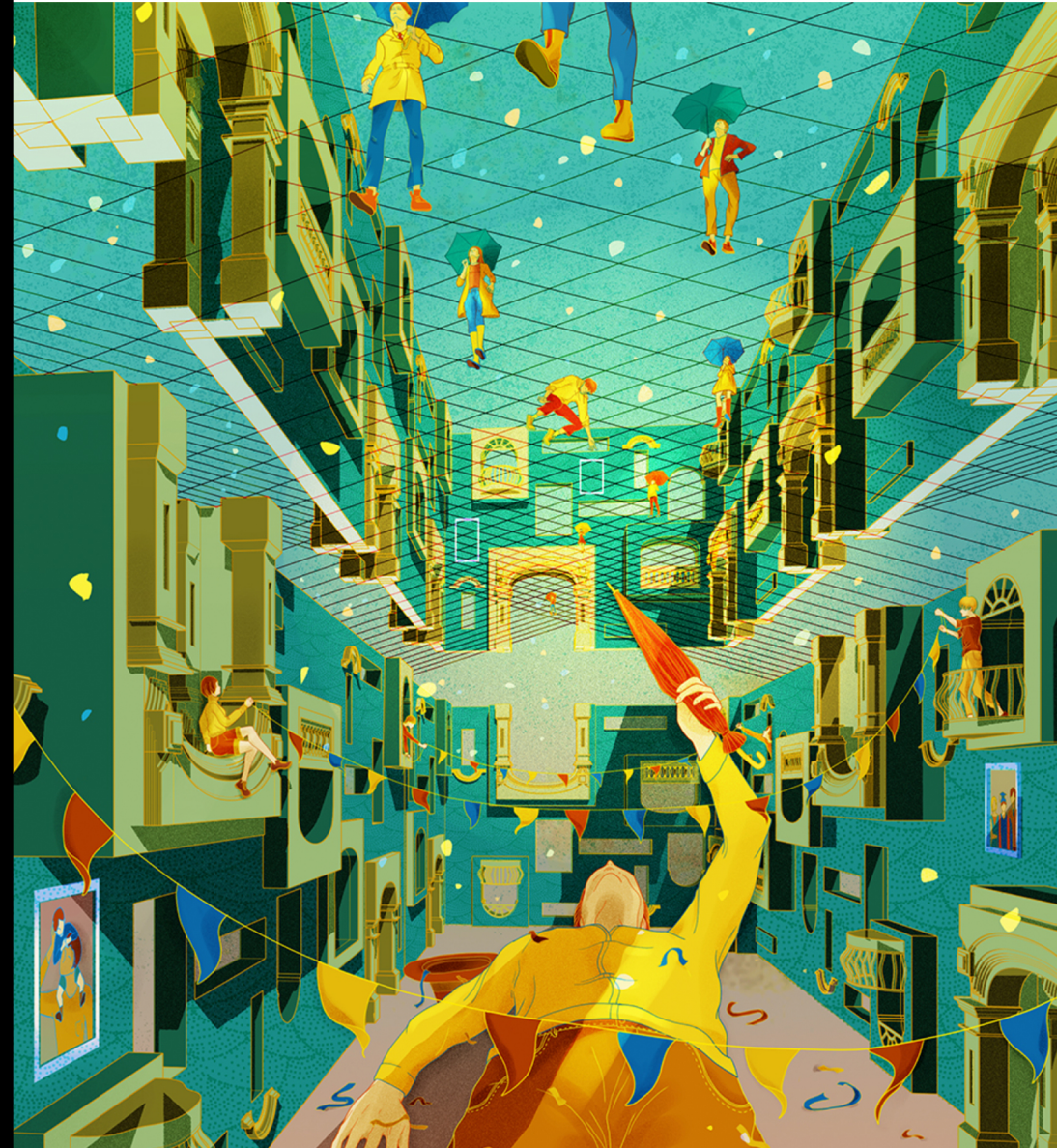
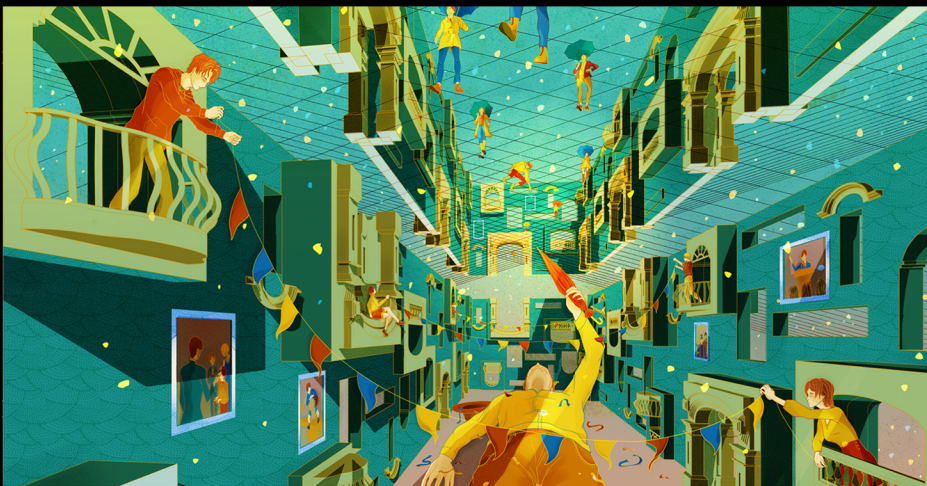
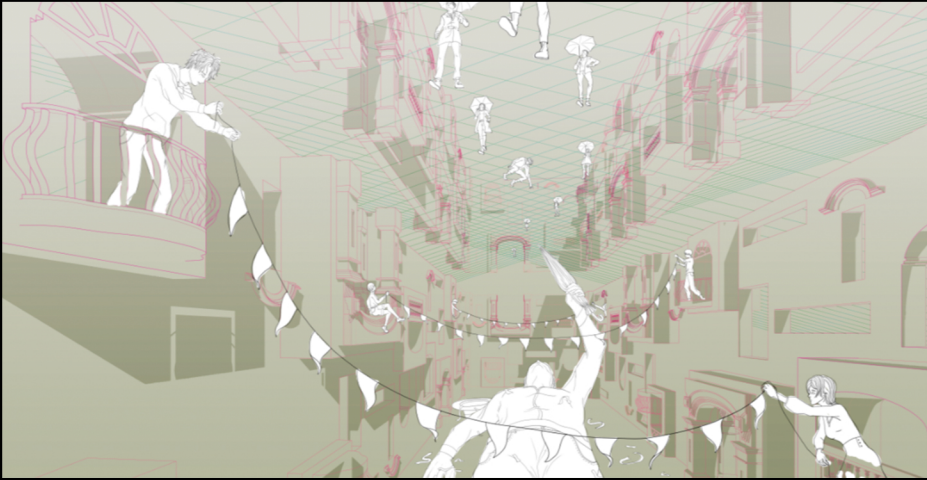


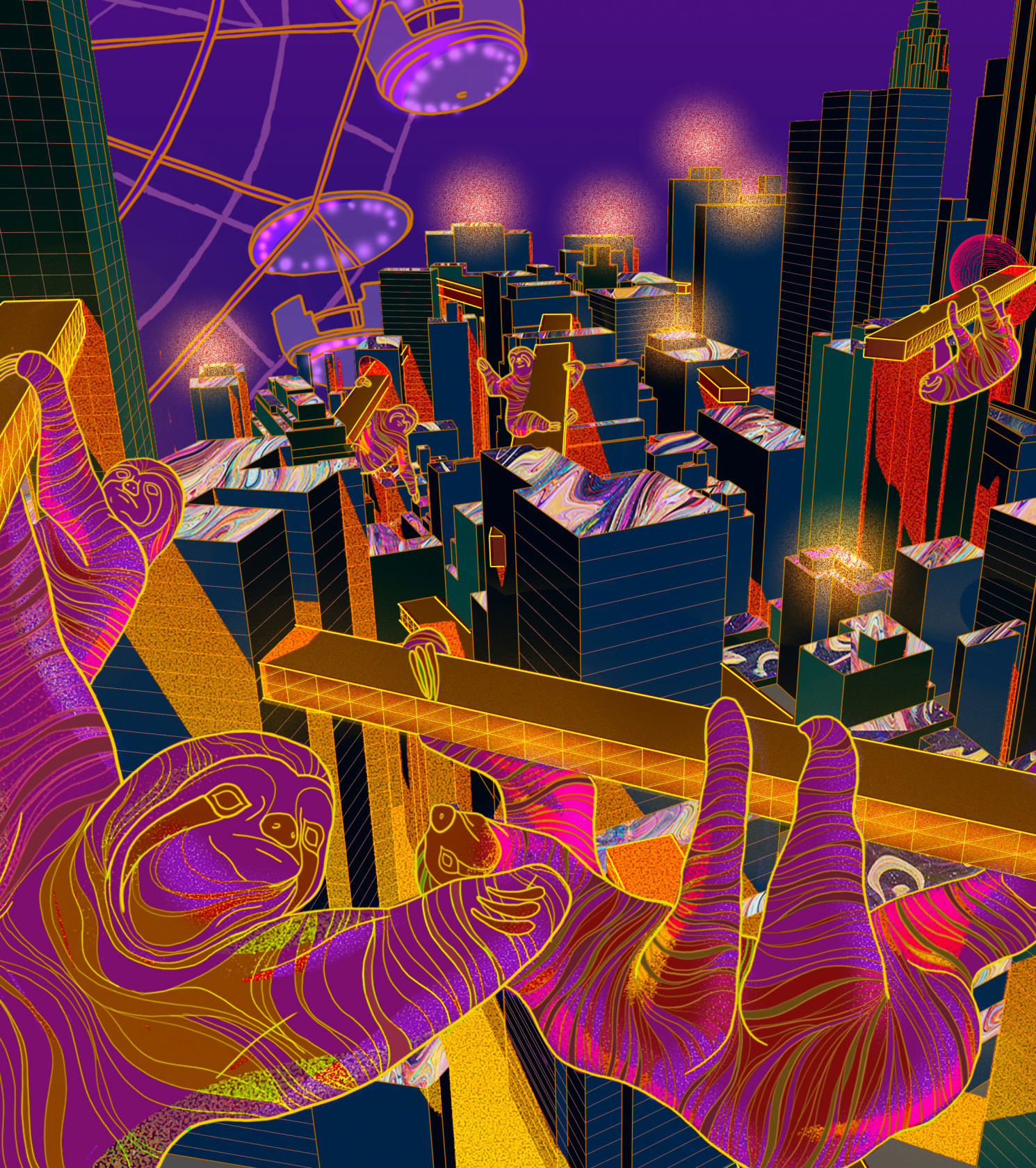
As daughters of the burning land walk through the ring of fire, they part with the fear, sorrow and doubts from the past, and walk into the nirvana to rise again from the flames.

Topic: Mixing Dimensions

Phil - So do you still explore architecture is that something you go back to and explore?

Willea - Well, actually my work is a mix of 3d and 2d so I still build up any buildings or spacial elements in a program called Rhino which is a standard architecture program. Then I bring it into programs like photoshop or illustrator and continue. Having this mixture is really important to me because I feel like it shows where I come from and, I think, frankly, that's what makes my stuff unique.





NFwhaT?

Phil - So how would you describe NFT to someone that knows nothing about it?

Willea - If we're talking about NFT from a technical standpoint it's literally just a technology. I just see it as a tool. The NFT technology could be applied to so many other things, like it could be used as a utility like a ticket. I think art is a way of getting NFT's in front of more people's eyes but I think art is just a very small part of it. As time goes by there will be a lot more applications for NFT's. It's a tool and it just depends on how you use it.

Phil - Okay so, NFT in art is kind of replacing the certificate of authenticity. Like if I buy a physical artwork from you and you give me a certificate of authenticity. And on that certificate you say it's a genuine artwork from you and you sign it. Is an NFT almost a digital equivalent of that? It's you giving the sale your stamp of approval. And the person who owns the NFT kind of owns that proof, that documentation.

Willea - In short, yah, that's what it is. It's the proof of ownership for a work that has been minted and documented on the blockchain. And it's going to be there forever. So you can always trace it back to see whoever made it, bought it, and sold it.

NFT Community

Phil - How is the NFT community? Welcoming?

Willea - Yah, everyone is really welcoming and supportive. Because in the NFT space you really need to know people, build and connect with people in order for your work to sell and do well. Most of the people in the space, from what I see, are very supportive in a genuine way. If there are groups that are underrepresented people will build and help promote them to get their work seen. And if people see there's something missing in the space they'll speak up and jump in to work on creating what's needed. It's quite different than what I've experienced other places.

Phil - Kind of 'if one succeeds we can all succeed' attitude.

Willea - That's what makes the space more special. It's cool to be able to make income from NFTs but the most important thing for me is the people I connect with. That's the most valuable and memorable part, the people that I got to know on this journey.

Phil - I remember reading that years ago in big cities there were art bars. Places that artists would hang out and talk about their work. (Oh, that's cool) But what about scams and people lying? I wonder if that will change and get better with age?

Willea - Well, there's still some sketchy people in there trying to money grab, or do this and that. But if you're in the space long enough you'll be able to tell people's real intentions. And those people won't be around long. Maybe they could lie or scam once or twice but it's not sustainable in the long run. And people recognize that.





Topic: Pricing Art in Crypto gets weird

- Phil - We're seeing Crypto go through some fluctuations these days and I wondered how much that affects you as an artist. [Quick note: Ethereum is a common Crypto Currency used for buying and selling NFTs. Ethereum is often referred to as ETH which is its currency abbreviation and is pronounced with a long "e" sound, "eeth".]
- Willea - It's funny cause now I have to consider the financial variation of Ethereum and Crypto as a whole. I'm still trying to figure out what the best approach is. Like, when I drop a new piece, I have to look at the price of Ethereum and depending on where it is I have to figure out how to price my work. It's a pretty unique experience to have as an artist as it only happens in the NFT space. Because if I typically sell my work for X (in Ethereum) but now since Ethereum has dropped in value by 60-70%, do I bump my price way up? This is something a lot of artists in the space are trying to figure out.
- Phil - That's really interesting because if Ethereum goes back up you'll have this anomaly in your price. Like, back when ETH was at its high you might sell a work for 3 ETH but now the value of ETH has dropped and you might sell a work for 10 ETH. Then maybe a year down the road Ethereum has increased ten fold and let's say the value of your work has also gone up so you sell a work for 1 ETH. From the outside 1 looks like less than 10 but in this case it could be more. That's a seriously weird problem to have!
- Willea - Yah, and in the (NFT) spaces people are always going to see the art's price in Ethereum not Fiat. So it's interesting, it's not just how much you value your work but also how people perceive that price. Do people look at the work in terms of Etherium or as USD. So it's complicated.



Topic: NFT's don't destroy the world

Willea - The main argument is that the blockchain consumes a lot of energy but it's just a simple equation to put something on the blockchain. Most artists who make 1 of 1's are only going to make a few hundred works in their entire career and I think the energy for that is less than taking a couple flights.

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