**Inclusive Arts Vermont**

**Artist Talk with Dominick Gabrielsen**

**Featuring: Dominick Gabrielsen and Heidi Swevens**

**Heidi:** Hello and welcome to the next MASKED artist talk with Inclusive Arts Vermont. My name is Heidi Swevens, and I am here today with artist Dominick Gabrielsen. So glad to have you with us. To start I'm going to do a brief verbal description of myself and surroundings for access purposes, and then share a little bit more about me and the MASKED exhibition and then we'll turn it over to, to Dominick. So for access purposes, I have blue eyes and pale skin, with short brown hair, and today I'm wearing purple shirt, a light blue vest. Behind me are angles and shadows of blank walls.

And there's an air pump behind me. I use she/they pronouns. I'm the Director of Community Partnerships with Inclusive Arts Vermont, and one of the things I get to do in my role is to work with the artists and the exhibitions and venues and partners, and I feel really really grateful every day to have that be part of my experience in the, the world of work.

For those of you who don’t know, MASKED is the current visual arts exhibition that is presented by Inclusive Arts Vermont. It features the work of 22 Vermont artists with disabilities, and it's currently installed at the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. My colleague Kat and I earlier this week installed it there, and there were staff members passing by just great to have our back on the walls and so It's nice to have the art in that space stay tuned for more about that. But without further adieu, I wanna welcome and invite Dominick to introduce himself.

**Dominick:** Hello, Hello! I'm Dominick Gabrielsen. A participants in the MASKED exhibition and Inclusive Arts Vermont. What else would you like me to say?

**Heidi:** If you wanted to do a verbal description of yourself and surroundings that's great anything else as a starting place we're not… pretty open-ended.

**Dominick:** White, you know, kind of golden skin with a beard, mustache, short blond dirty bond hair. I do have blue eyes, I'm wearing a lilac colored button-down shirt behind me is the white wall and a mirror, and um, yeah.

**Heidi:** Wonderful thanks for being here Dominick. We just so the audience knows we send out questions ahead of time. We have this conversation, but Dominick and I, we were reflecting before we started recording. I first met, first met Dominic by phone about a year ago. When the application process was happening, and so some of our back and forth might be spontaneous, based on not just the questions, but you know some of the, the joys and inspirations that come in the moment.

So for the audience, this will start with Megan Bent our colleague, my colleague, is behind the scenes. She's going to do a screen share of Dominick's piece that's in the MASKED exhibition and do a verbal description of that. And then Dominic I will ask you to add anything that might have been missed from that. So Megan.

**Megan:** Up on the screen. We have Dominick’s piece from the MASKED Exhibition. It is 25 papier mache masks umm in a circular pattern around a large, I think 4 by 4 piece of black foam core. There are masks sort of like emanating inwards. The circle, like the circle, is full of the 25 masks.

Some masks are masks for adults. Some masks are masks for children.

Each mask is painted in an individual way umm with metallic paint.

The, the tones of the different masks range from orange and blue and green and gold, and white, and some masks have a combination of colors like blue and gold or green and blue or gold with a blue cross.

**Dominick:** So to elaborate on some of the details of the mask construction. I created the masks from papier mache

The paints are either a metallic acrylic or oil on top of a white marble gesso. I worked with either the idea of making them into like a bronzing, or a copper sheen, or a gold sheen. Otherwise into something which illustrated a brush stroke on the surface. I partially was working with the contrast as well. So again the masks to reiterate, there are children and adult masks, and the children's masks were made for my family for my cousins, and so on, and so forth, their children and the adult mask were made for my, my adult family members.

**Heidi:** Great. Thank you, Dominick and the title of this piece is Masks and Brushstrokes. And I love the image description and you're, you're elaborating on the story the, the image that we have now on the screen is different than the way that this is installed in MASKED, and we can

share a little bit more about how the size of this and I’m, I'm moving my hands and in broad ways didn't quite meet the requirements or the moveability. So Dominick and I were in conversation about how to have the artist's intent with the display of the masks. Be kept with some different size considerations. so, Dominic, do you wanna have us zoom in on some of these, so we can share with the audience a few of the, the details on some of the masks?

**Dominick:** Yes, if you, if you like to. yeah,

**Heidi:** Also unique, that highlighting a few might be fun for the audience.

**Dominick:** Perhaps the What was the first one was the orange and ultramarine. Trying to call me I'm gonna skip that call. So I could talk a little bit about it. so Here I was going with like a deep color in order to bring out the metallic sheens. I wanted to go with something that wasn't black only because I wanted to make it I don't know it's just black seem to seem too easy maybe. I, I do like how the, the slight auburn of the orange on top of the gold really feels warm.

You know. I guess I was trying to give it some depth, but I like I like that particular mask. I'm not sure what to say. say, of it but I, I felt it was a successful one.

**Heidi:**  Yeah. and you know, sometimes you like things for, for non-reason reasons. Just because you like them. So there’s that possibility, too?

And I really appreciate hearing more about some of the masks in this, this large piece that speaks to you, or have meaning for you Dominick.

**Dominick:** Yeah, I just really enjoyed the contrast. I was able to pull out of that one. But to me, it kind of looks sculptural you know starts to come alive.

**Heidi:** Where else can we go In the mask, the masked tour of the masks,

**Dominick:** The bottom two lighter ones that look similar.

These are meant to be a little bit more glowing or ethereal, or ghost-like

So I, I did use a darker color similar to a pains gray, maybe a little bit more towards the gray than blue, and pains gray, and I actually carved out the negative space and left the light. Like I was actually painting with the light but I was just blacking out the areas around it, and so you'll see around the eyes and the nose and the mouth. You'll see that the lightness kind of creates the, the, the features. So it's almost like shading working in reverse Yeah, I just thought that those were. I don't know they they have a nice glow to them I enjoy a lot.

**Heidi:** Yeah and for the verbal description Megan, who's behind the scenes is zooming in on some of the masks, as Dominic's describing them, and one or two more Dominic.

**Dominick:** Sure, if you can now perhaps we'll show one of the successful bronze or gold ones Yeah, yeah, you really start to see. So getting the metallic sheen on this. You can even move up to the other bronze ones a little. I would i've just really enjoyed being able to pull that off. It's. it's probably 3 or 4 layers which isn't the same as normal oil paint glaze, which could be up to 15- 20- 50 layers. But yeah, I very much enjoy that metallic look. It makes me think honestly pride you that I to make a thicker papier mache that has a bit more of a texture to it.

If we can zoom out again. try to find another one it's a little tricky being I apologize I'm on my phone.

Heidi: Being in the moment.

**Dominick:** Oh, I mean you could pick any of them. Really it's hard for you to see them from here, which would you pick Megan?

**Dominick:** Okay. The only white mask. Yeah. Well, the yeah. that was just really. I guess I was just trying to see what happens if I highlighted the main features, and that's last week. So that's why I put the gold up but I consider the stripe on the forehead and on the chin going up and down. I just felt that it needed that to have some, some substance to it. Yeah, Yeah, that's just applied with dabbing, dabbing the brush.

And then the top and bottom brush strokes

**Heidi:** Well, beautiful,  And, and thank you for the added sort of detailed description, and also kind of the, the tour of the pieces.

Megan, I'm gonna ask if you stop screen sharing for now and Dominic, and I will get back into conversation. So for the audience Dominick I, I'm curious the call to artists went out with the mask, and clearly, this, this is masks and brush strokes.

So I, I wanna ask and I know you and I've talked about this. But how did, how did you find out about the call to artists? And you know your introduction to Inclusive Arts Vermont. how does this connect with that theme and your experience of it?

**Dominick:** Okay, Well, I was actually my mother that told me about the, the show and I had originally contacted your group through I think email, I'm not sure who the first person I spoke to was but it quickly got on, I think got onto the phone with you, I mean, I can remember at one point you are waiting for a bus or something. And yeah, before yeah, before we had a video call and you know, I guess what to, to talk about is that

I felt what happened - Well, it had been many years since I'd painted and I just started to paint this last year of this exhibit.

But, Covid kept me from delivering these paintings and several of the boards I had. I even painted boxes. I was giving the gifts in to my, to my family. So I wind up, having done a kind of semi-introspective, and meant to be fun, and even wearable project that seems to fit really well with, with your, your program. Then during our talks I think my real understanding of Inclusive Arts Vermont comes through you. And that's something I probably should I'm imagine you're gonna ask a question about that later But I'll, I'll highlight that that has been both a journey, an inspiration, a kindness, community, talent, sharing and open-mindedness, and lot of and’s - I would say also reassuring comfort to have a group to share thoughts and feelings and questions with. It's been, it's been very very special so when that comes first from my mother, of course, with my workings with you and your organization.

**Heidi:**  Well, thank you, Dominick, I'll invite you to share a little bit more about the group, cause maybe the audience doesn't know about the artist networking, but to kinda loop it back to your piece when I, you know you the jury there's visual pieces there's artist bios and statements as options. But we don't know the full story so when I heard somewhere along the line after the piece was accepted, and the requirements were 3 feet by 3 feet. This is an exception to that requirement based on kind of where we were.

It's 4 feet by 4 feet. and so the configuration of the circles and the masks in that photo has shifted a little bit, and I'm gonna ask you how you put together the, the mapping and the engineering.  So every time we

install it's like a puzzle but before I do that. I just wanna say one more thing and then I'll remind you of the question because here I am, and storytelling. But when I said these were gifts for your family, and then, because of Covid you couldn't give them then took on this new kind of configuration in an art, you know exhibit. It just it, it touched my heart in a way, and it you know the that it has a different life, even though it was originally intended for one thing. And now I shared this before with you Dominick but we've done some tours with students with disabilities,

high school students, we’re doing other tours in gallery settings where we invite students and people to engage with the art and this piece with the masks. People are so enchanted by - people have done selfies in front of it, and one right, And, and I was really playful the last time, you know like art can be serious but also the art on the wall people make meaning from it.

And Alexandra, one of my colleagues was with a group of students, and so people were in the gallery and making art, and she brought in masks very similar to the kind you know that we're bought the papier mache masks and then materials so students could create their own masks, kind of inspired by the brushstrokes and the colors, and the metallic and the, the meaning-making that you were putting on there from your, your family and other things and students were able to make something that they could take with them from the gallery setting. And I just, I wanted to reiterate that, that your, your family gifts have been on the walls and prompted spontaneous things and also art making and you know people

putting masks on and off and I, I'm not a numbers person really so I can't tell you how many but that it's one or two you know is, is something I just want to offer to you. So you're your creativity is continuing on.

**Dominick:** Thank you. That’s nice to know that there's been inspiration.

And there was a question in the beginning.

**Heidi:** There was, and thank you for the reminder. So we have this 4 by 4. blackboard and then we can't take the masks in the vans with on the things, so you put them in a box, and we wanted to keep artistic integrity. So how would they end - So you had this great idea, and I wonder if you could share with the audience how you set that up. So we we got it so that the masks are in the the correct location when we hang it

**Dominick:** Right so there's a series of challenges. One, the masks themselves are not flat. Two, there’s 20 something of them three, they were originally made to be shown individually, but as I put them together I saw a grouping or they therefore need to, to be on the wall together would be very difficult to hang them up and decide how to configure them.

So I had to preconfigure the masks into at least a relatively decent orchestration. Then we had to create a mounting block or board, and I had to find a way to hang them with the you know mounting hooks of some kind or pegs, you know, it was many things we tried. And then it had to be collapsible because it's got to go into your van with the rest of the art.

So you've got this board some hooks or pegs, a bunch of masks that are 3 or 3 inches deep, or something like that. And so that actually kind of gave birth to the semi installation art we have today. Which is that yeah, the board with with the mounting, and then a picture to give a guideline for a pre-configuration the kind of array of the masks to be assembled each time taking the workout of it, and then the one mask on the side to be touched and felt and played with.

**Heidi:**  Yeah, thank you for that reminder about the tactile element that part of the access features for MASKED or Inclusive Arts Vermont exhibits are to have multiple entry points. So visual is one. We do verbal descriptions that are available in braille, and large printing on audio bios and stuff like that, too. We also do tactile representations that we partner with the Association for the Blind for them, and then tactile elements. So oftentimes people go to galleries like there's things on the wall and there's this untouchable, like very distancing part which has its place.

But for some people touching the art is a way into it. So you so generously offered to give us an extra mask. We literally have it, Dartmouth Hitchcock for example it's to the, the left of the 4 by 4 with a sign that says, please touch. And you know. So I'm curious how that will go but yeah that that tactile element of just a different way into the art, and I have low vision, you know. I see some things I often say enough to get me in and out of trouble but to, to touch the mask and actually I was sharing this with you yesterday to hang it like I was taking them out of the box and handing them to Kat, and, and noticing the colors as they went by and the different shape of the face, it's just a different experience when touching it. And one detail that I want to add to your very clever innovative engineering configuration is that each of the masks has a number on it, and so in the box that they're held in there's a map with the numbers, and this is like a puzzle is it it's so much fun. So we like, we appreciate your creativity that even went into that. It makes hanging it both fun and more simple because we would want to keep the integrity of how you had imagined it. So. yeah,

**Dominick:** Oh, I'm glad yeah and, and they were always meant to be played with. I had imagined my specifically my cousins Natasha Tanya and Anita have had have young children and even some newborns, and so I had imagined their children wearing them so I’m, it's always been meant to be touched.

**Heidi:** Yeah, Well, after the tour ends in April of 2023, you'll have them back, so maybe they'll be passed on to family at that point. I don't wanna name what your mask experience will be but just we're so grateful that we've, we've had them with this tour for the time that MASKED out in the world. You're talking about an installation and how this sort of evolved into an installation process project. and I learned yesterday that you like big-scale art. So I'm curious and wondering If just how the audience a little bit more about your creative process. How long you've been making art? What mediums you use that sort of wide open. Tell us about Dominick as an artist.

**Dominick:** Wow. I began drawing as young as I can remember. My grandmother taught me still life painting when I was 3. I had my first easel. I remember the first thing I decided to paint on my own was a 3 headed dragon still life. My grandmother was an artist, and, as was the case in her time, not a lot of women went to art school. Maybe textiles or something, so she always had ambition for us to, to enjoy arts. We always had notebooks, and sketch pads around. My parents always did as well. I,I mean I I've, I guess I've done so much with art though I, it's hard to- I, I dove into art from the first time I had an art class. It was the most important, most fun, most lovable part of my week - of my day with Miss Jensen in elementary school. And I remember many of her classes in many of our projects, and I had never realized it but she had always kept me in an elevated advanced class. And I think the prerequisite, and I'd like to say this as a bit of an aside, but I think the prerequisite for, for true art making is a love of art, and art making. And I think Miss Jensen spotted very young, that, I loved to make and create, and to study life, and to draw and, and do my scientific studies as well.

I did, I was very fortunate to have an excellent artist-teacher, incredible in elementary school, and went on to middle school. And we had Miss Bokman, my gosh I haven't said that name in a long time. She had recently graduated from a top art school and I think had graduated from our high school, and she came to teach middle school, and she was exceptional. And I also began taking in middle school private lessons with Chris Garr’s mother Mrs., Mrs. Garr. I took private art lessons outside of school, and the first thing they started me with was the statue of David and gouache paints and drawings.

 So I began to draw and study Michelangelo's sculpture, David on medium and small scales. And then I began to paint his face, from whichever angle I was most inspired by, and have notebooks of that. And as those continued studies of the human form went on which I think in many cases don't happen for people the age of ten, eleven, and twelve, etc.

I began to do some personal full paintings with her, like a scene to give a gift to my parents, where I would do several fishing boats and the dock in the pier and the sky in the water. I remember that was still hanging in my house.

So again I, my second-year personal studies I was taking art in middle school with my art teacher. My aunt also owned an art store Janet Splendid Art Purple Store and Cotona, and then I was doing my private lessons with Mrs. Garr and I started a, an internship with Mr. Silverman, who was a successful graphic design artist from my area.

And I think also, I was very young to do such a thing, and I think that they were very excited to have me be so interested at such a young age, and whether I showed promise or not they were very generous - all 3 of these learning experiences. And art as an activity having gone from watercolors and tempera paints as a child, with my grandmother and all kinds of clay and, and carving and, and stuff, and in elementary school into middle school. I hope this isn't too long, but into middle school

I was then doing a lot of at-home studies for Miss Bokeman. We were doing still life in class. We were beginning to incorporate photography. I was doing my human form drawing and my personal paintings with Mrs. Garr, and with Ken, I was doing a participating in commercial projects. And we would add one more element which would then carry us into high school, and at the age of 12, I bought my second computer for $1,700 a Gateway 2000,486 DX, 2-66, with 16 MB of ram. And it was it a 16 megabytes My Gosh, it was anyway, so long ago that the modem at the time was blazing fast, and nowadays wouldn't be able to put a picture through it.

But I, I began practicing building worlds on the computer using Ken Silverman, that is two Silverman's I was studying with but Ken Silverman's editor program. I was building castles, parallax skys, which are skies that move, you know. You put the sky into place, and then you would animate it. Everything from waterfalls. I mean in ultra-realistic things that you wouldn't again see until the 2000s.

This was such a far-ahead editor. And, and so I was doing those, those things very passionately. while doing other studies. sadly in high school, Miss - the Garr family, my very best friend moved to Bozeman Montana and my private studies ended. But we went into a program that was run by Miss Curry the greatest art teacher I've ever had in my life and and Miss Curry was a wonderful strong woman who even knew Andy Warhol, just a fantastic sweet endlessly knowledgeable, passionate person. And she had created a program that I started doing a photoshop illustrator in the labs. I was doing not model drawing nude model drawing, but you know we drew models with Miss Kellogg, Ms. Kaiser, and Ms. Curry you would graduate to Curry you had to move to the three teachers - it was Miss Curry's, program. And we began doing still lifes more. I had done ink throughout. We began some carving and what was very, very, very remarkable about our program is by the time you're in junior and senior year every that you did was part of the required application piece to the top 4 art schools in the country and in the world at the time. MICA Maryland is to College of Art, what's your other one, not Cranbrook, SVA School of Visual Arts in New York City, Parsons which is now New School, and the Rhode Island School of Design. So by the time we finish the curriculum we had completed before, in time for your application to come, we had actually completed every drawing you needed to apply to RISD, Parsons, SVA, or MICA and I applied to all 4 of them. I did, which was a bold thing. I was also applying this, like Kari tree school, and I was, you know I was very into rocketry and programming and all kinds of stuff.

But yeah, so I, I got in. I got in, and I could. I could scarcely believe it, Heidi. And

**Heidi:**  But can I? just I was just gonna say that as your sharing stories?

And I'm noticing the people the teachers the way like the influence, and also one of the things you said if I'm not gonna get it exactly.

But okay, the biggest prerequisite is the love of art you know just the love of it, and that people saw that in you. And I, I feel that as you're talking about it so you were saying you got in, you got in! and excitement, and I interrupted to echo back that, that love of art and Yeah.

**Dominick:** Not an interruption its a chorus

**Heidi:** Quite a journey with the art. So the, you work in different mediums, all of that. If you want to share more about college or more of the, the timeline story, we can do that. If you also want to, I could ask - I mean choice points I guess. Where do you find inspiration for your art and the creativity, the process? It seems like it's just part of you. Where, where does the inspiration come from for Dominic, the artist, or, or the human?

**Dominick:** So that and that is, actually was the next part.

First thing they asked, and, and I will say that my teachers created an environment of quietness. But we could all speak to each other, and we could, we could choose which music was playing. We could have food in as long as we didn't make a mess. We had a very free environment, but everybody chose to focus on their work, and we all do inspirations from, from different things.

Since I was a child, my primary inspiration was was to master the control of my hand, and before brush, pencil, ink, etc. to the form, I was studying, and so for many many years that was my, my inspiration. My challenge was to actually as perfectly as I could capture the form itself, study the form. That bled into a love of the study of life. Birds, the animals, people smiling. and that turned and from that that was very young that that transformation happened, that was elementary school to middle school, and from there the transformation began to be where I started to want to explore expressing myself through mediums, and how I could get the softness of a cheek, you know, not just with tools.

But I started taking my finger like I did when I was even very young, and, you know, applying like a soft pastel on the finger on the face wipe my finger and I would, you know, until you could get that perfectly soft even the glow of the skin. And so that you know, and that was again a mix of the medium. Yes, and I think the mediums I opened up to using them even together. But the inspiration there was from falling in love with the subjects, and appreciation of the human form in the model, and wanting to give you know these to people that I loved and, and to share with people, and and and ever and always to become a more skilled and better artist.

I drew so much of my inspiration from Michelangelo and DaVinci, eventually, the abstract expressionists, and -then my inspiration grew yet again in college. A bit more scientific, and also into feelings.

So I explored architectural rendering with Louis Kahns illustrated Drafter for Louis Kahn.

Derek Bradford, I was one of his only 3 students that he took that year, and I have the I don't have that piece at this house at the other house, and that was 50 shades, 50 coats of, of ink to get black.

50 coats. you can imagine the patience I, I didn't have before I did that. And that's one end, and on the other end, I had Victor Laura, who wanted us to close our eyes and use our fingers with charcoal to draw the model we had just looked at on, on huge pieces of newsprint. And so I just I mean It's so blessed with those experiences that I dared to do something I had never done. Where I had done, done everything from illustrations of dinosaur bones to, to Greek statues at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

I decided to become more abstract, and a lovely pair of shoes.

I'll try to send over to you that I painted at one of those points.

But I started working large, and I would take a what- my wall was 15 by 7, 8, 9 feet. So I bought a 300-foot roll of canvas and I covered my wall with canvas and I think I was telling you just yesterday, and it’s been a long time since I thought about the first thing, I realized was that when I made an arc for the underdrawing, for a shoulder, on a, on a on a moving figure, my arm became the, the shape maker instead of a ruler, or, or you know, a, a curve architectural form, and it was just I'm gonna use a, a nerdy super unused word. It was resplendent, the feeling. It was a resplendent feeling. And that led to a lot of lyrical things. I started painting jazz music and who would have thought painting jazz music? But it would very repetitious, and oh, and I forget.

My teacher is my, my graphic design guy that I was an intern for he was really a teacher. He would take me to something he did called sound brush and his friend played piano, and he would paint, and they would do it on an overhead, and then they would give the painting, sell the painting.

So I had seen it before. but I'd never done it yeah, So I think you know, those are some of the inspirations. And as time went on, I may have sought less the scientific study of nature, and more into the exploration of expressing myself through the painting.

And so, instead of it being like a complete figure or form, perfectly rendered and dotted into super-realism with a finger pat of like, almost make-up powder on the face of a woman, I could represent a few through gesture through a single line painted a, you know, 6 feet, with a few swirls in it. Sometimes you can create a figure by painting this behind it. And you know I just found a lot of things that I became more confident in exploring.

Yeah, Yeah. And that brings us probably to the final inspiration which I'm gonna take a quick pause and have a sip here.

**Heidi:** Yeah, please, of course. Glad you're taking care of yourself.

**Dominick:**  And the final inspiration for me which brings me to I guess, to where I became later on is I switched majors from painting to architecture, and then I in illustration. And, and when I went into illustration I had to take the required 6-credit major curriculum course, as I said, there in the class the, the teacher William Drew, Bill,  Good old Bill! He walked up to me. He walked up to each student and he looked at me he stood right next to me, and he looked up at me because he's a much shorter 100% (inaudible) man, and he said, I know you what's your name he said, I said.

Dominick, he says, Dominick did You take a class with me like 4 years ago? I said Yeah. Weren’t you my teacher's assistant? I said yeah. He’s like Weren’t you supposed to come with me to Italy or something?

I said, Yeah, I left to school for a year. He said how'd you like to teach this class, Dominick? Well, sure I love to but I have to get credit.

He took me aside. How about you get paid to, to teach the class?

You get credit for the class and, and something I don't remember the other thing he offered, and of course, I couldn't say no, and that you know this teacher is the one that taught me twelfth-century Sienese style glaze technique which is paintings that last 1,000 years, and I, I won’t go into the gesso process, but it's marble dust, and it's 18 layers and you start standing with sandpaper you end sanding with linen and silk, and it creates like an egg sheen it's so unbelievable glows the light permeates and glows from within.

And then he taught me the glaze technique, which is the, the pigment

Ultramarine, raw ultramarine which is like $25,000 for a brick, and then you would take an egg yoke and remove the sack and you do one brush stroke, clean the brush. one brush stroke, clean the brush. Okay. So if you can imagine doing up to 80 layers of that for a Titian painting and you know, I, I leave that part out. But that was what I learned from him years before and so in this class, I was really the teacher's assistant, though he would give me lots, you know, setting up still lives, driving people to field trips. But I, I learned to teach, and to learn is to teach, and I learned that to the true teacher is one who is ever learning and treats his students as peers, and just maybe I've gone a little further down the trail in the woods, and I can tell them to watch out for the stones and where to cross the stream. And that opened a whole new world of inspiration, because I remember their eyes when they learn these, these mysterious and nearly lost techniques that Bill was one of 100 people that could perform, and I, I could just see the excitement in their eyes when they got it right, and that turned a different light on inside me. Something I've never known. yeah, turn a different light on inside.

**Heidi:**  Dominick. Thank you so much. I, I there's there's so many pieces that are of what you said that are kind of staying with me, and I just want to sort of mirror back or reflect on your description of texture and details, and visual like the softness the way that you appreciate the subject.

I mean, I think that comes through your language and just how you describe both art of what you're studying in the form.

And then also, as you moved into talking about and I'm gonna move my arm like the big arc at the 6 foot that you're you're on became the tool that you were almost merging with the creative process as part

of that expression, and exploration that's just really beautifully described, and I understand, is, I mean, from a distant perspective kind of art making in a, in a new way from all the things that you were studying and expressing and exploring. And then this, this last inspiration which is teaching, and somehow that there's something about like learning, and I love the metaphor of you know, going in the woods, and you know, knowing a little bit more like watch out for the stones, but learning to get that reciprocity.

This is beautiful very, I mean, I just. I feel that it resonates in so many ways. And it, it's sort of echoes to me some of what you've talked about, even with the, the masks piece that you were wanting to give that you were wanting to, to share it and you couldn't so then it got shared in a new way, and you know all of the little. I say little - I don't know what size there but the sparkles that might come from that in the connection.

So, thank you for sharing more about your process and your inspiration.

And I'm curious if there's anything that you've left out from that.

And then I have some other questions about you know some of what you and I've talked about the networking and the, the connections with Inclusive Arts Vermont, and just gonna invite you to share more about that after. But I don't want to move on from that process and inspiration.

If there's more to say.

**Dominick:** Yeah I, I actually I think I got lost in that elevated wrapped away myself. I haven't recounted that all at once in as long as I can remember. Well, I, I will add that we spoke yesterday about inspiration and, and I was saying, inspiration is, is something that can't necessarily be defined. If it's a bird blown down on the tree, and a sketch pad in the hand to catch it, the look of your mother's eyes, you know just that as artists we're here to, to show that you know? And in our work our expressions, I think it brings life to that, and allows other people to, to experience moments of inspiration as well as find them, find them on their own. Now I know I said it much better yesterday, and I broke the definition I even just gave.  But yes, well, there is a little more to add, because that's the final chapter in, in learning, as it were for me. That was my last year in, in Art College. After that, I would go and start about a 200-artist community in California, and a bunch of things that we did over the years.

But I lost all my, all of my paintings, paints, all of my brushes, all my oils, all  my pigments, all of my binders in a flood at my parent's basement, and I couldn't even you can't even I can't even calculate how much it was.

So much of it was gifts that I had boxes of pastels that were a hundred years old, that had 200 pastels in them. I had things that I mean I've never even seen my teachers have given me.

**Heidi:** Hmm

**Dominick:** Yeah. And I made canvases, which is something I should add.

I always made canvas. I would do stretchers, I would build the teacher's own, you know, 5 by 6-foot canvas. But I didn't paint for a very long time, and I lost my inspiration when I lost my materials, and you know rediscovering it itself has been, has been a journey in a new life, and a bit of a rainbow.

**Heidi:** So I don't know that I knew about your flood. I'm sorry to hear about that, and I don't know how far back it was, but it, it seems like in the sort of journey of reflecting on an artistic life, a major part of it. So thank you for being sure to include that. And I think what you said was you know I lost my inspiration when I lost my materials, and you know sort of rebirth isn't your word but sort of finding inspiration again in a new way.

Because maybe recently, you did say early on that you hadn't painted in a while, and then you started to paint the mask so I gonna check in about that, you know, like what was the pause in painting? And you know without getting too direct. or personal, because I think something the audience might be able to relate to is you know, fits and starts and creative processes and in, in life, you know? I think this part of life is sometimes there's not just a continual thread of something there's ups and downs and ins and outs.

**Dominick:** There there are. if this does bring us to why, we have our kinship, which I became sick shortly after my work with my, my equipment was flooded, and after I had a, a betrayal with somebody I was working with, and I walked away from the artist community I had founded because the other leader had tired, a friend whose life I had saved, tried to take it over. It turned out he had some, some problems in his life and explained his behavior later. But I became sick with Lyme's disease which of your- till this day, essentially but it's a it's a 12-year sojourn and became disconnected a bit and had a lot to go through.  So coming myself - back to health, one of the first things that I was able to enjoy when my the fog of my mind and my body cleared, was just finally being at ease and feeling like sketching, and I just would sketch small things, or I sketch-  I've always been an inventor, so I would sketch inventions that I had across the years, and I do that in 3-d on computers as well. And then sketches turn into some color and then some digital color, and, and then you know, that turned into painting, and it was just a process whereby almost as if, while I was healing, I was reconnecting with making line, and color. They kind of came together, and I just felt it's such a relief. Heidi I, I don't I didn't explain it, but it, it brought a lot of relief to me, and it felt quite natural. And it had been many years I'd say it's 10 years before I painted again after the loss of the flood that I experienced.

I'm not sure if I answered your question exactly but because it's kind of hard to define. but it, it just came back to me, and that the pieces that we have here was I felt you know inspired enough to say Oh, they make everybody's gifts this year.

**Heidi:**  You know there's not a way to run there wasn't a ,a question I feel like we're in conversation at this point and just thank you for being real about that. You know disability, sickness changes into like what a body can do. That’s not a little thing in life you know especially in the world that we live in. And so, with my role in my personal friends, life, I get to talk to a lot of artists and a lot of disabled artists for whom art is just part of wellness and a sign air quote “sign” of kind of being back in the game, if you will.

I have a friend who years ago now was you know going to the medical world a lot of times, and the doctor would ask her how she's doing?

She's like “Don't ask me how I'm doing. Ask me how my art is!” you know like, and then you'll know how I'm doing, you know? So I think I relate in my own way and I know lots of people who do, and not to minimize all your experience, but just to say, Yes, I hear you, and he may not be exact but, you know, in the like 6-foot arcs of abstract getting it like in my body getting it. I feel like, yeah that you answered the question if you will.

By, by showing up and being real and yeah and you know I, I wasn't aware that the masks were the, the first kind of part of the sketching into the colors, and all of that and just think that's really again I'm hearing that description of not leaping in full-on but just little by little stepping into it.

And then, you know, maybe I'm curious you know if your art process is changed after your lymes diagnosis, or you know your understanding of inspiration being the bird flying or the look in your mother's eyes If if that has always been the case, or if that has shifted, and you know that may not be anything you have an answer to right now.

I - my deep philosophical questions sometimes need a little noodling.

But, you know, just curious about that as your life changes does your art change, or your inspiration?

**Dominick:** Oh, Yeah, I mean you know sure it's natural.

But it can be as harsh as the encounter. Yes, it has changed. I mean there was a time where I was insistent on stippling or you know I I only worked in oils or I was doing classical studies. I mean I used to draw a life drawing every day, or at least you know, 4 or 5 times a week for many years, and with the disarmament of my health became a disarmament of my notions, and some of my skill sets, or even the ability to wield them.

As I've reassembled I see no borders in my ability to blend mediums mixing colors, abstract things in ways I'd never thought of. One time a friend of mine realized - We had a competition, and I was always wanna one, if not no, no, no, brag - But I was at the best at this competition. And then I left for a long time, and I came back again, and his name as Seth Gas and they all got on because they've been practicing everything while I was away for months, and then I got on, and I and I had the competition.

I once again the first time I'd you know played them you know almost a year. And Seth said you're even better than you were when you stopped and that always stuck with me because it was something fun that we did, and it was just a coordination, and that kind of thing. But, but I think with painting I've kind of painting, I mean, I call it painting. But it's, I think, with creating expressing myself and observing life, and sharing moments.

And I think I've broken past the borders I had the last time I was a participant in the process. Yeah. and I and I'm just exploring what that means.

**Heidi:**  Yeah, nice. no barriers. Just possibilities, and exploring one of the things I appreciate about are is that it's a process as well as a product.

 It's just something we talk about at Inclusive Arts Vermont all the time.

Sort of process focused and we kind. of take away some of The societal notions of right and wrong and perfect and staying in the lines and get into the process. there isn't a wrong way. There's learning there's growth there's connection. It's not always comfortable. Or something that we like air quotes like at the end but there's value in that process, and think for my creativity and again from many artisan- Now, this is, this is me sharing not me trying to take over a conversation. But it's in me it's like in the well I'm not a cook, but some people making dinner or you know just the way things are arranged in a home, like gardens, like creativity is everywhere for, for many people. And there's value in that and, and inspiration. Sometimes in the snow, with my white cane, I'll like to doodle along the side. My last doodles were, you know, smiley faces or dandelions that have gone to see but standing waiting, I just feel impatient, and I see this blank canvas with snow. And I wanna connect with it, you know, make something.

**Dominick:** It reminds me of something we talked about maybe 3 meetings ago, and I tried my best to explain that I think some of the best pieces I've ever made were on newsprint and, and ratty cardboard boxes, where I just the preciousness of the canvas or the material, and I could just expressing, you know, paint my heart out.

And yeah, I think the same. I like to draw on the snow.

**Heidi:** And again we're gonna wind down soon but we keep talking about meetings and I'm not sure if the audience or people watching, and listening are aware that one of the things Inclusive Arts Vermont started pretty early on in the pandemic was an artist networking via Zoom.

We were here in artists at the time, So this was 2020, that people for all sorts of reasons, but particularly because of disability people are feeling isolated and just wanted a way to connect.

So we open up a meeting a couple of times a month and Megan and I now are the staff members who are present and benefit in so many ways.

But for artists who’ve been in one of the exhibitions to come talk about their art and creativity and for many of the artists disabilities intersected into that. So it's kind of a both and space. So we shared works in progress, and we always ask if the arts want feedback or comments. So it's really a space where people can share as much or as little as they'd like. But over time, you know, relationships develop and people get to know each other. And I think inspiration happens. And yesterday we were talking about, you know, art on t-shirts and things like that.

 So, Dominic. I just wanted to explain a little bit, because people may not know it has been for exhibiting artists only just to keep the groups small and, and safe. But if you wanted to share any no pressure, but if you wanted to share anything about your experience with that you could or not just the - It's part of how Dominic and I get to know each other and remember those things, from that, that conversation 3 times ago.

**Dominick:** Well, I and do you mean about my experience with our group?

**Heidi:** Yeah with you, if there is anything you want to share. that you think the audience might appreciate or

**Dominick:** Yeah, I, I mean, I think, especially during Covid.

We all realized one- how much we need each other two- how far apart we were just working every day, or whatever your grind is, and then

Some of us are isolated, you know, and or kept from seeing people in nursing homes or elderly and stuff. So well one of the most important things for every human, but especially the arts, tends to be you know who you, who you share your time with what you do when you're sharing your time and this group has been a group of the most open-minded, heartfelt sincere extremely beautifully humble and genuine souls from different parts of art, making different age groups.

And you know I think I've looked forward to every meeting that I've been part of, and I've missed the ones that I haven't been able to and it's just been such a wonderful inspiring strength to draw from that we talk about color, and how to make something look like a feather, or, or a flying unicorn, or a photograph of a, of a beautiful flower. And we share this palette of, of human communication, and human expression human.

And when you and I’m, I'm not trying to generalize for others.

But when a person has an extreme physical chronic illness, mental illness, of any kind it becomes difficult to sometimes to get out sometimes to be around people sometimes to be exposed to people for fear of getting sick if you're immunocompromised, and you know but the whole it's just again. I'm maybe generalizing, but I, I mean for myself at least you know a lot of making artists study in the practice and the execution, and process of making it. But once you're done you want someone to share it with- family, friends, strangers, and you always care what do you think of this crazy thing I came up with here. how does it make you feel?

And, and we got to do that, and I I only wish more people did.

And I only wish more people had it during Covid cause it was especially excellent for us to have that window with each other. So I couldn't tell you how thankful I am I, I just I am, and, and I hope to always be an honest and good participant, and I try to bring my, my best observation skills to our meetings and talk. Yeah, yeah, I could go on but I hope, hope I've said, said some.

**Heidi:** Yeah, Well, thank you for that. and I think it might be helpful for the audience to just no a little bit of backstory about how we're answering back and forth here. But also the, the authenticity with which you know you've just described your experience. I appreciate that, and people can show up as they are, you know. I think what you were saying about some of the ways that social isolation can happen for disability, for covid and immune situations, also for mental health and you know, depression, anxiety, all of the things that keep people from staying connected.

Hopefully, this is a safe place where people can be as they are, you know, and make mistakes, and, you know, say something that they might wonder about, but also just be vulnerable and real and connected, and asked for opinions and other things in this art world, and I love also what you said about when you make something you want to share it.

You know like that's a level of vulnerability. But also there's something about that that you know is it the creative process is one thing, and then how it connects with audiences is a parallel universe, I think of meaning and a number of artists have said I, I make for me, and then the audience phone is that's a you know That's a bonus but they're both kind of part of where there's value in meeting.

**Dominick:** So there's a heart again. I've I've been able to join you from ski mountain lodges and winter, to cranberry farms and harvest on the west coast Oregon, to- I've been on the road sometimes driving through mountains, canyons, deserts, I’ve spoken to you from riversides every I mean. I've been in every environment. and, and I just yeah yeah, I think I was speaking to once when I was racing dune buggies around in the sand.

**Heidi:** So I didn't know that!

**Dominick:** Yeah just pulled over and yeah, and it's it, It just winds up being one of the one of the best parts of of the week.

**Heidi:** Yeah, yeah, I think with technology, there's a lot of challenges.

But, but and also there's a lot of ways that it has kept people connected and varying degrees, and I sometimes joke that I know what time zone you’re in because, because I don't and I don't need to and now, I'm, hearing more of the places that you've you've been when you join in. So that, that also makes me smile just because you know, people need people, and the ways that we can stay connected as disabled artists and make space for that exhibiting artists that they think is valuable. So thanks for taking time. As we wind down I'm wondering if there's anything else you want to share before we wrap up for today, and we'll have a chance to add on as we go live but anything else for today Dominic?

**Dominick:** Oh, I can't quite think of it. Just yeah. I hope that, if people get a chance to listen, they feel some inspiration to share themselves and know that yeah, the rest of us are glad to, to listen and see share ourselves. So one of the things that I used to ask the class at the beginning of, of the class when we started teaching a semester. I would ask the students, what is the difference between yourselves here, all of you, and the person down the street at the Rhode Island Arts Club today who has a show of their work? And they would raise their hands there. Oh, raise your hands, and I pick on, you know, pick and let them answer, and no one ever got a wrong answer because there really is not necessarily a wrong answer unless it's that one person trying to give you a wrong answer. But no one ever actually guessed or what I was looking for and that is that it took that one person to believe in themselves and their artwork enough to convince one other person who happens to own a gallery that their work was worth showing. And but I liked about the truth of that is that they would all kind of sigh and feel little inspiration. And oh, this is really only that I can do that and they could you know. And that’s something I thought I wanted to share.

**Heidi:** Thank you, Dominick.

**Dominick:** You’re welcome.

**Heidi:** I’m so glad that your mom encouraged you to apply for MASKED, and that we've got to know you and stay tuned for more masks and brush strokes conversations and selfies and thanks everybody for listening today. We will go Live in a couple of weeks. Dominic, thank you so much again for your art, your creativity, and you're just being a real human with a caring heart and the love of art.

**Dominick:** Oh you’re welcome and thank you, Heidi.