I want to thank everyone for taking the time to join us virtually today.

This is the first ever episode in a series that we’re calling Ask The ____. Today we are doing an episode of Ask The Artist. We have our two artists from the Shapeshifters exhibition: Jiha Moon and Joshua Adams here with us today.

If you haven’t had a chance to check it out, we have a 3D tour available [follow link to view: https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=hVA3X4VJgpq] for everybody to see online through which you can see the Shapeshifters exhibition in our John Cram Partner gallery. So if you haven’t yet, you can take a moment to take a look and wander through that exhibition as well as the other exhibitions that we have.

Before we get started with our artists, I thought I would take a moment to introduce everybody involved in this Q and A series. For those of you that don’t know, my name is Ani Volkan and I’m the Visitor Engagement Coordinator here at the Center for Craft, and I will be doing the interview part so you’ll be able to see me. I’ll be looking for your questions for the artists as well. Lauren Roquemore, our Gallery Coordinator is also here with us today. She is my amazing tech support.

Now let me introduce our artists to you. First up we have Joshua Adams. And for those of you who aren’t aware, this is some of the work we have of Josh’s in our Shapeshifters exhibition [shows slide of Joshua Adams’ masks on a wall]. So we are really fortunate to have some wood carvings and masks from Joshua Adams.

Adams, an enrolled member of the eastern band of the Cherokee Indians and trained woodcarver, often creates masks inspired by traditional Cherokee stories in order to educate viewers about tribal culture. Addressing his own personal experience, Adams observes the complexity of living in multiple cultural contexts and of maintaining Cherokee tradition in the contemporary South.

Now I’ll introduce you to Jiha Moon. So these are some of Jiha’s works that we have in the Shapeshifters exhibition [Showing a slide of Jiha Moon’s work on the wall at the Center for Craft].

Korean-born artist Moon uses symbols and paints her work with
recognizable imagery such as fortune cookies, dragons, and emojis juxtaposed with facets of Southern culture such as peaches, face jugs, and the southernism “bless your heart.” By playfully combining Eastern and Western symbols, Moon reflects on the intricacies of identity and nationhood in an increasingly global society.

Welcome artists! We’re so happy that you guys are here today and the technology seems to be working. Let’s go ahead and get started with some questions for you guys. So let’s just go ahead and get this out of the way: we’re all stuck at home right now.

What do you find yourself doing, how is this pandemic affecting your career as an artist right now?

Jiha, if you want to go ahead and answer first.

Jiha Moon

Artist

00:04:58

I’m sorry, can you repeat that again? I was really distracted by my son and husband stomping around upstairs. The last two minutes I’ve been texting them “be quiet.” And I’m sorry. And I totally---

[Everyone laughs]

Ani Volkan

Interviewer

00:05:15

Well I think that you’ve already answered that question perfectly then, right?

[Everyone laughs again]

So the question was, “How do you find being stuck at home affecting yourself and your career right now?”

Jiha Moon

Artist

00:05:28

Yes. Well, I’m an artist but I’m also a mom and I also teach at Georgia State University so there is a different role of me.

Before the pandemic happened I could go to different places and then focus on [a certain thing] at the moment and forget the rest and that was really convenient. Now, everything is just in one place. So believe it or not, I’ve been busy as ever just trying to separate that. But it’s always been challenging for me.

You know the reason I have a studio at home is to try not to spend my time on the road going to different places then waste two hours driving back and forth. So even if it’s really crazy it’s also good for me to save time and then deal with the situation so, I guess that’s what I’ve been trying to focus
on now.

Even though everything’s crazy right now, I try to separate my mind, try to meditate. While I’m folding laundry, I’m just folding laundry being a mom, but when I’m in the studio I try to forget the rest of it and then focus on that. But it’s been quite a struggle to be honest.

**Ani Volkan**  
*Interviewer 00:06:43*

Josh, what are your thoughts on being at home and how it’s affected yourself and your career?

**Joshua Adams**  
*Artist 00:06:52*

I definitely miss the classroom. I definitely miss the kids and the energy of that and the work and that scheduled studio time every day kind of thing.

Ahh, a lot of gardening [about what he’s doing during stay-at-home], a lot of washing dishes and washing clothes like Jiha said and ah, just trying to get to the studio whenever I can.

I feel like I’ve been getting to a lot of projects that I’ve had on the shelf for a long time. I’m approaching those just because we have nothing else to do. So it’s been very helpful in that regard.

But it’s just staying in the garden, staying outside and, and then still reaching out to my kids [his students], and I’m doing a Google classroom kind of deal with those guys and we have meetings every week and just try to stay busy with them.

Me and my wife do a lot of gardening together, so that’s the main thing.

**Ani Volkan**  
*Interviewer 00:07:43*

So it sounds like you both have this coping, separating certain aspects of work and life.

In that vein, we’re also wondering, what else have you found to be a good resource in this pandemic, is it creating more activities for yourself?

**Jiha Moon**  
*Artist 00:08:10*

Ah, yeah, meditation meaning I try not to scream or yell at my husband and my son. And just count the times, three times, let go, three times and then finally they’re not controllable and I just have to go...[sort out]..the situation.

But when I’m in my studio after my son goes to bed I can pretty much
focus on my work. My husband is also an artist...and we have a big house so we just try not to have too much face time, that’s the key.

I mean, the meditation part is I just try to stay calm as much as possible, and try not to read too much news because that really distracts my mental health. I do a daily dosage but I try not to go overboard, like reading [the news] too much to keep myself [from having too much anxiety].

I also try to find my way to connect with people because, it’s funny being an artist I have both sides. I am super active and outgoing but I also can be super shy and withdraw myself. And that duality can be really difficult.

Here we’ve got trapped in so I’m trying to connect. How can I connect with all types of people? I have some friends who are really active with texting, some of my friends like to use Facetime. For me, I’m not a big fan of FaceTime. But texting, emailing or even talking on the phone, everybody has their preference, so I’m really busy trying to follow that up and then also keeping my family kind of close.

And so I say meditation but I’m not really good at it.

**Ani Volkan**
*Interviewer*
00:10:02

How about you Josh? Other than gardening, do you have any other go-to resources right now?

**Joshua Adams**
*Artist*
00:10:10

Definitely yoga. Meditation as well. I think that helps a lot with the creative process. And settling your mind just to be able to create something and to have that focus when you get to the studio. I think if you meditate or do any kind of exercise it just kind of leads right into the studio for sure.

**Ani Volkan**
*Interviewer*
00:10:29

This is a good way to segway then into your studio practice. I’ll ask you this first, Josh:

When did you begin your studio practice? What started you on this journey?

**Joshua Adams**
*Artist*
00:10:56

I would say my studio practice probably began somewhere in the early 2000’s. Just with simple paintings and stuff like that. I was always kind of an artist growing up in highschool. I already knew that I was going to be an artist. Graduating highschool and going to college and stuff like that.

But the main studio stuff, especially the carvings started around 2013, somewhere in there, when I got the position of woodcarving instructor at
Cherokee Highschool.

That was like a springboard. I finally had the ability; just that woodshop and having those tools that I didn't have before, to go to the next level scale-wise. And, increase productivity. I think that’s what really led to my studio practice, just being in that classroom, that opportunity I got to teach that class.

And I completely forgot to mention, but if you want to talk just a little bit about this: you are the woodworking instructor, right, at Cherokee Highschool?

And you said you started that position in 2013?

Somewhere around there. ‘13, ‘10, something like that.

Yeah, if you wouldn’t mind telling us about that a little bit? What is that like?

The woodcarving class is, ah, something very specifically Cherokee. It’s a class going on, I think it’s been going on around seventy-five years now? It was started by a man named Goingback Chiltosky. He was the shop teacher, in the traditional sense, at the Cherokee Working School on the reservation. And he was a carver as well but he did just about everything. Like if you look at Goingback’s work, like, I’m sure there's some stuff of his in Nashville as well, he did everything from furniture to any kind of carving to any kind of woodworking, he could do it all.

And he was the one who started it and he later hired his niece who is Amanda Crowe. She was the one who was kind of like the pinnacle of Cherokee wood carving. I think she taught forty plus something years at the school. She held the position for a long time and inspired countless other woodcarvers under her.

My teacher was one of those people [she inspired] and his name was Bud Smith. He inherited the class from Amanda. Bud taught the class for around twenty-something years.
And then when the opportunity came, he handed down the class to me. It was kind of like passing the torch almost? And I was very fortunate to get the position, and honored. It’s one of those positions or dream jobs that you don’t think exists until you get it and you’re just like, “oh my god, I can’t even believe this is a job really.”

It’s one of my favorite things. It’s definitely where my heart is, in that classroom. And just wanting to keep that alive and going. [And the opportunity to teach] our enrolled members about mask making and certain aspects of our culture that rarely get talked about outside of that classroom.

Ani Volkan  
*Interviewer*  
00:14:20

I see what you mean. It sounds like you’re very fortunate to have that job that really supports your practice and has this really good overlap.

Joshua Adams  
*Artist*  
00:14:32

Yeah, definitely.

Ani Volkan  
*Interviewer*  
00:14:20

Jiha do you want to describe, how did your studio practice begin? I know you are also a teacher. If you would like to talk about that too.

Jiha Moon  
*Artist*  
00:14:45

Well, yeah, I’ve been always an artist, you know, ever since I was young. Out of all my interests, that’s always stood out the most. And you know my parents always encouraged me. So, without anybody forcing anything I just became an artist very naturally and I felt like that’s the only thing I could really do.

When I came to the United States around 1999 to pursue my second MFA, I landed in Baltimore. I hated it there, and I had a culture-shock. I love Baltimore now, but at that time, this brand-new person arrived in [the city], it was just a very big culture-shock, and I couldn’t really deal with the situation well [at the time].

So I did apply to different grad schools. I [ended up going] to the University of Iowa and I got to meet my husband there, and then I had a huge studio. I was the only international student, you know, in my group. And there were only a few like, two or three maybe at most even in the entire art department. So I guess I really did enjoy the attention I was getting.

And also within the situation I really had to learn English. So the first year
of grad school I felt like “am I an artist or an English major? I don’t even understand.” But I understood, in order for me to communicate with others I had to learn some language.

So after grad school I followed my husband and we started out our artist careers in the DC area where my husband grew up. I really didn’t have a choice, my husband is from there so I moved. It was a small size of art community, no I shouldn’t say small. It was a decent-sized art community but not as big as Philadelphia or New York, so I wasn’t that intimidated.

Also, I did apply to larger juried shows and try to invite people to have a studio visit. I tried to make my own community. And I followed some of the people that I really admire. I wanted them to see my work so I constantly was trying to be exposed. That’s where my art career kind of started.

And then I had my first commercial show with Andrea Pollan at Curator’s Office. And then my work got collected at the Hirshhorn museum. And I had a little bit of a pension, and I got to go to New York and have a show at Drawing Center and at White Columns.

By the time my career was doing well, my husband got a better job so we moved to Atlanta, Georgia. I feel really independent here because we really have nobody. Just me and my husband and now, and my son, who was born in Georgia so he’s really a Southerner. He even has a Southern accent, and he’s half Korean.

[Everyone laughs]

So it’s really hilarious...[00:17:49 connection lost]. and um, because we don’t really have any attachments, we’ve been very independent. Also, we have so much freedom with responsibility. And we’ve been here about fifteen years now. So this is the city where we’ve lived the longest.

And I finally got a teaching job at Georgia State. I mean, this is my first year teaching full-time as a lecturer so it’s really easy, I’m teaching four classes. I’ve been always teaching, adjunct, or at a visiting artist program in universities all over the place. But teaching in the one place...I’m making a connection and I’m building my community because I not only look at their work but I also learn about them.

So critique can be a little bit tricky. I can’t really talk about work by itself but I have to observe the student, and who they are as a person. I really love it and there are very hard-working students and then, you know, they’re not just art students. They have jobs, and they are very busy with their lives as well. I feel really good about working with a student who I like that likes me, so it’s a really diverse community here.
Atlanta is not just an art city either it’s a big Southern city that focuses on lots of different things, not art as the first thing but there’s a decent amount of artists and there are a lot of good artists coming out of the city. I feel really good about how we act as a community to build this...to get attention from outside of Atlanta. So that’s almost like a community responsibility or our goal.

Can you listen? Can you hear me?

**Ani Volkan**  
*Interviewer*  
00:19:56

Oh, yeah! You sound great!

**Jiha Moon**  
*Artist*  
00:19:57

I thought I saw your concerned look so, okay, so yeah, that’s what’s been going on and I feel really great living here. And it’s quite beautiful in Atlanta.

**Ani Volkan**  
*Interviewer*  
00:20:10

This is just something I had a thought of while hearing you both talk. I know it’s not on the list of questions I sent, but I was just wondering how your teaching has impacted your art career or your studio practice?

Do you feel like teaching has improved your work, or does it have the opposite effect?

**Jiha Moon**  
*Artist*  
00:20:39

I think it’s both. For me, of course I have such a lack of time now I’m constantly…right now I’m online teaching four classes, I’m not even good at it, I have to teach myself to teach them [on the online platforms]. And I’ve tried every single method I know to be connected with my students. And I spend so much time on the computer that it gives me anxiety.

But then, my work is so much about learning from people. My work is not just like, art history book, flip through and try to get a reference just to make work. My mask work is based on people that I meet. Not a single person, like, everybody little bit and I create this new persona.

So teaching definitely has taught me about how to be patient and also to have empathy for people. It kind of gives me opportunities to be a better person.

It’s kind of similar to how I became a mother. I mean, some people think that if an artist talks about being a mother “oh my gosh, that’s a career killer.” But I really don’t think so. I think being a mother is wonderful and it
actually gave me an opportunity to be a better artist. Although life became more hectic and more difficult because the person I made is with me forever and then he gives me so much trouble and every stage there’s something new to learn. You know? So it’s a really difficult thing. It’s like himself, raising him with my husband is also artwork, for me.

I mean, I don’t want to sound cheesy but it’s kind of true. All teaching is kind of like that.

And also in a way, this is my last addition to it for myself to be; I’m a teacher, I’m a mother, I’m an artist, I’m a female, I’m a daughter, I’m a friend. And this is probably the last thing I’m adding on, it’s so very heavy worded. But definitely they are adding so much for me to learn.

I feel like I want to prove this is possible. I want to put that out there to people who look at me like “oh she is a teacher, full time professor, and she wants to be a good artist as well, is that possible?” I’ve actually heard that from people before. And I want to give them a good, big punch.

You know? I’m doing it, and you know, so far I’m okay. I’m goo-, I don’t want to say confidently I’m good. But I’m doing great.

Ani Volkan
Interviewer
00:23:30

[Everyone laughs a little]

I’ve definitely heard that as well, the motherhood thing, so, I will say I think you’re doing great.

Jiha Moon
Artist
00:23:46

[Laughing]

Thank you.

Ani Volkan
Interviewer
00:23:47

So yeah. Josh, how do you feel? Is teaching helping impact your studio practice in a good way?

Joshua Adams
Artist
00:23:55

Oh absolutely. There’s nothing like being in a classroom with a bunch of kids that are really into it. That fuels me because when I go in and work every day I know that if they see me working then they work too. So it’s one of those things where you just go in with the mindset “I want to do this today” and “I want to work today” and “I want to help all these guys,” and you get that rhythm going...I think that rhythm is what leads to really good artwork.
Especially if you get around a bunch of people that are all doing the same thing, who are all participating in the same kind of artwork, that process, I think that fuels that process forward and really can inspire you to create some of your best work in the classroom for sure.

Ani Volkan  
*Interviewer*  
00:24:36  
I agree with that idea of how it does hold you accountable a bit more in terms of how you approach the subject and how you make and how you create—

Joshua Adams  
*Artist*  
00:24:47  
And highschoolers are brutal. They’ll let you know right out of the gate, like, “oh that sucks, you need to start over” or something like that. There’s no filter with those guys, and so I think that’s, that leads to a level of honesty with your artwork where if it’s not any good, they’re going to let you know about it, and you have to be able to [laughing] deal with that.

I think that’s one of the best things about being in the classroom, is that connection with those guys.

Ani Volkan  
*Interviewer*  
00:25:17  
So hearing you guys talk about that it must be difficult to teach now, not being physically there so I suppose you’re just making do the best you can by teaching online, right?

Joshua Adams  
*Artist*  
00:25:37  
Yes.

Ani Volkan  
*Interviewer*  
00:25:38  
Jiha, I remember that you said you’re teaching yourself how to teach? I feel like we’re all kind of in the same boat too, especially with this, and I appreciate you all who have joined. This is a whole new world for us [in terms of pandemic stay-at-home], but it’s great that it still affords us a connection, especially getting to hear you guys talk.

So I’m gonna shift our focus to the *Shapeshifters* exhibition now. I know our audience might not know this but you two have not met until just now. Josh and Jiha were supposed to meet at our closing reception that was scheduled for March 27th when they gave their artist talks so we’re really glad we could have you guys still have that meeting.

In addition, *Shapeshifters* was supposed to be a group show, and it ended up being a two-person exhibition, so my question for the both of you is, and Josh if you want to take this one first, is-
I was wondering if seeing your work next to each others’ caused you to see something new or different in your own pieces?

**Joshua Adams**  
*Artist*  
00:26:41

Definitely! When I first saw Jiha’s work, and I might even have talked to you about this, the first time I came to see the show I loved the contrast of it. I loved her style versus my style. It was almost the perfect match. I love when you can find another artist that makes you look at things in a different way. I started thinking about ways I could paint masks like she was painting masks.

I love seeing other techniques and seeing other artists really push forward with different styles and stuff like that and especially with her cultural background and my cultural background...it’s something you don’t see a lot of. I think that was a really good thing for the show.

**Ani Volkan**  
*Interviewer*  
00:27:30

What about you, Jiha?

**Jiha Moon**  
*Artist*  
00:27:31

Well, I think that Marilyn, the curator, did a wonderful job. When I had a studio visit with her, my studio visit was over two hours and we just, constantly talking...we were just really bombastic about the idea and then enthusiastic about the show. And she talked about Josh’s work and then I did Google him and looked at his pieces. It was a really great and authentic match.

And I was really excited about being there and seeing the show in person which didn’t happen.

Having a show, me and Josh’s there and then the curator is the third person who actually put it together. For me that’s a really important act.

And I feel like her curatorial mind is there, and how she became very curious, excited about putting us together is a whole unique perspective. So kudos for the curator.

And I’m really thankful for the opportunity because I always wanted to be in these museum settings that honor craft. And because there’s such a really interesting dynamic in the art world and we often categorize things like “this is craft, this is fine art, and your work is borrowed from craft but it’s really fine art,” who decides what and what causes more trouble? And what goes to the museum and what not? These are all people’s inventions that people created based on their needs and their interests.
But our job as artists is to make the most interesting work and not worry about those categories. Be free of category.

And I really felt that there’s a really interesting thing going on between me and Josh’s work. Not just the craftsmanship but also socially, politically, like how people think about people we have forgotten and craft that we’ve forgotten. All of those anonymous artists that I often think about in my studio, and those culture baggages all there, just borrowing our hands and our ideas.

So I’m really excited about, and I actually really want to see Josh’s work in person. Wood work is something I’ve never done and, you know, except in college courses, but I really want to see Josh’s wood workshop. So I’m very excited about the future possibility after this pandemic time.

Joshua Adams  
*Artist*  
00:30:13  
Come up any time after this is all over.

[Everyone laughs]

Ani Volkan  
*Interviewer*  
00:30:16  
Right? Well that is definitely taking us perfectly into our next question.

But before we move on, Marilyn just wants to let you guys know that she loved working with you both.

Joshua Adams  
*Artist*  
00:30:28  
Yeah, thanks Marilyn!

Ani Volkan  
*Interviewer*  
00:30:31  
I think the feeling is definitely mutual.

The *Shapeshifters* exhibition contains the themes of masks and transformation and personal identity.

So if you wanted to spend a minute on how the mask became a symbol in your work I think people will be really interested to hear that. Josh if you want to take that first?
Joshua Adams
Artist
00:30:50

Traditional Cherokee mask work is kind of one of those things that’s really old and it’s one of those avenues that you can go down...like when I first started carving, you know, you don’t start out carving masks, obviously you start out with something, simpler stuff. Ducks and owls and animal effigies and stuff like that.

And the more that I got into it, the more that I started realizing that the more traditional form of wood carving, especially from a Cherokee standpoint was, really are masks, because that was one of the things that were left, that we would find in you know, say in a mound and stuff like that.

The properties of wood being that it disintegrates with time, there’s not a lot of masks that we can go back in time and say “yeah, this was an ancient Cherokee mask.” Those exist, but there’s not a lot of them.

And so that’s what led me down that road of carving masks and kind of revitalizing that artform and pushing it forward because [mask carving] adds such a strong cultural background once I started looking at it from that aspect. Wood sculpture is one thing but you tack on the traditional Cherokee mask-work on top of that?

And I think that’s what really led me down that road was just knowing the culture and knowing the history of certain things and especially certain masks and their role in Cherokee culture, and that’s something that I didn’t want to ever go anywhere. Like, I wanted to continue...not only my work but the work of Cherokee artists since the beginning of time basically.

So...I didn’t just want to focus on masks but I knew that was going to be my mainstay going into wood carving.

Ani Volkan
Interviewer
00:32:30

What about you, Jiha?

Jiha Moon
Artist
00:32:35

I’ve been a painter for a long time. So working on canvas and on paper with ink and acrylic and then sometimes I do collage work. I started out making ceramic work around 2012 and got a grant, and then I started going to a local clay studio to understand the material and get used to it. And then I’ve been making these objects, and I feel like objects have power that paintings don’t have.

Painting for me, traditionally, like old format, you know you go to the gallery or a museum. Beautiful painting on the white wall, stands alone and doing
nothing, and it’s really kind of confrontational, kind of scary. And oftentimes people get turned off, like, you know, it’s kind of boring.

Right now we have performers, we have 3D, we have 4D, lots of moving images and computer generated work and all kinds of entertainment sorts of art, and painting and drawing is such an old medium.

And for me, so I wanted to do that practice, but I also wanted to entertain and energize, and sort of mimic a portrait of people. So for my paintings it’s more of a landscape I would say, so my mask work is more of a portrait, portraiture for me.

And also just interesting mask tradition all over the country, in the folk art, and type of different traditions, there’s a common thread, so they use it often an object or artifact for performance pieces, to wear, and they just pretend to be somebody else and criticize politicians, who are like you know corrupted people.

I felt like this is a great ground for me to come up with some interesting personas, and I could throw some social political issues and, you know, portrait, made portrait of something. I can research and borrow imagery and combine and hybridize images of different cultures’ faces. And like, from the past, the present, and even people that I met in the grocery store, have beautiful dreadlock I could kind of put in there. Also something that I make or something that I can find, so a found object can be used at the same time.

So there is a really big playground element for me. The fact that people look at it and then sort of project their face and then sort of think about themselves behind the face, it’s sort of becoming a different persona, I guess that part of the performance element is really fascinating to me.

So that’s the conceptual part. For ceramic also, I feel that I’m using underglaze and glaze as a type of paint. So I could still paint and draw on the mask work. 2D- 3D can be seen at the same time. So there is lots of complexity that I can bring in and explore but become not so specific, still open and still be very mysterious and then open up to interpretation of people. So for me it’s a really big playground.

I was wondering, before we move on, since we’re talking about masks, I know you’ve hung one behind you Jiha. Do you want to briefly describe it?

Because you said they were based on ideas of people or individuals or characteristics? Is that based off of any in particular?
Jiha Moon  
*Artist*  
00:38:09

[Jiha shows mask, holding it in front of her face]

I mean it’s…unwearable I can’t even see out...so this is not the purpose. This is nonfunctional.

I’ll just show you one more time...

So um, I’m just playing with clay and I mix[ed it] with porcelain and some colored blue clays... together so I have the marbling effect. Which I could kind of get by painting it in a watercolor style, but then after the clay is somewhat dried, I started drawing on the surface with underglaze. So there’s so much about just drawing quality as well.

And then I play with the glaze, and then here’s little rocks. Lapiz, I think? It’s a found object and color-wise I think they go well together. I just kind of glue them. And there’s this dangling component it’s like a hello, not hello kitty, this is a cat welcome, like the Japanese—

Ani Volkan  
*Interviewer*  
00:39:17

Oh yeah, the lucky cat.

Jiha Moon  
*Artist*  
00:39:18

Lucky cat! That’s right. So this is a found object at a Chinese market in Atlanta. And then here’s a dreadlock that I found on Amazon. I, you know have a couple places that I order. And sometimes I do hand-make dreadlocks. This one’s a machine-made one you can kind of tell. And these are all Hanji beads that I got in Korea. It looks like a beard but it’s kind of weird. And then, there’s lots of different elements of the mask. It’s a wall hanging.

Like I said, it’s a portrait. So it’s 2D and 3D at the same time. And there’s a lot of stuff still you can see. But when you see my painting, it’s very labor-intensive sometimes. There’s a lot of...mark-makings and ethnography.

You kind of miss it if you just all at once try to look at it. And some people come back and look at it again and find out. That’s the beauty of having a 2D work. You can revisit it over and over again. And if you own it, you can live with it forever to study that piece.

Oftentimes 2D pieces like paintings kind of turn people off. I don’t know why but I feel like the object has such a friendliness. Because your uncles, your grandma, they always collect something when they go to different places, bring a little souvenir, and they hang it, and the mask also is like a
picturisric sort of object. So we all feel familiar with it.

So I’m trying to borrow the popular cultural reference that everybody can enjoy and it’s something they gravitate towards to build an interpretation, and they look at it again [and think] “wait a minute, this isn’t just a souvenir, this is really weird! What’s going on?” and they look at it again and try to make a connection with it. I feel like the object has that kind of friendliness to it.

And I think that’s the reason I want to make objects, because they have a power. And people want to touch it.

When they try to touch a painting people are like “oh don’t touch it, step away!” In the museum they have a line, I mean, 3D or 2D, but you know, it’s a lot more friendly. So I want to make people come, and then show the painting and drawing quality within my ceramic work.

Ani Volkan
Interviewer
00:41:53

Yeah, I definitely want to touch everything in that exhibition.

Jiha Moon
Artist
00:41:57

Oh man, we’re not supposed to touch anything these days right?

Ani Volkan
Interviewer
00:42:02

No, I know it’s so hard.

And this, again, leads perfectly into this question for you, Josh, because your wood carvings are so smooth-looking I just really, really wanted to touch everything in there [in Shapeshifters].

I know you brought some masks, so I’d like to see what you have.

But first what I want to know is, why are you drawn to working with wood as your primary medium? Is it through the teaching? Is it just something that you always wanted to do?

Joshua Adams
Artist
00:42:37

It’s one of those things that was in my family. I have an uncle who carves, and my dad carved, and my great uncle was a man named James Radley and my aunt Irma Radley, they were two people that made their living woodcarving.

When we would go to their house, and have family reunions and stuff I
would walk into their studio and also on their front porch there would just be chisels and knives and carvings laying there. So that’s where I picked it up.

Traditionally Cherokees always used wood, because of its abundance here in the mountains. That was our go-to for anything. For tools, for weapons, for, you name it, we made it out of wood, we carved it out of wood. And so being a wood carver was...I was a wood carver when I was around seven years old. So I always knew that I was going to be a carver, and always had it around, and it’s always been there for me, and it just always felt like it was my ace in the hole growing up.

I kind of hesitated to just [go] forward with it when I was younger, especially in college. I don’t know what it was, but I kind of put it on the back burner, and then flash forward four or five years after college, getting the opportunity to teach revitalized that. Let’s go for this, full steam ahead.

And as far as masks go, I just finished this guy here [showing mask], so this is like a bear mask.

Ani Volkan  
*Interviewer*  
00:44:09

Oh wow!

Joshua Adams  
*Artist*  
00:44:12

So this would be like a traditional bear mask for the Bear Dance. And this would be the lead dancer’s mask. In the bear dance, you have a female bear and a male bear and they dance together and they gather together and they fight each other a little bit. But it’s all about being harmonious with that animal. And so this would be the lead dancer for that dance. And this is one of our more traditional masks that we have.

Some of the masks that are in the show aren’t necessarily traditional, I think we talked about that, but this is one of those that is traditional. Can everybody see it?

[showing mask, both sides]

Growing up around this stuff led me straight to it, as far as having it in my family and knowing, hey, this is what we do.

This is a little deer mask.

[holding up another].
Joshua Adams  Artist  00:45:21

Yeah. Lots of patience, lots of time. A little love.

Ani Volkan  Interviewer  00:45:37

I just really love the way that the surface is so compelling, very tactile.

Joshua Adams  Artist  00:45:43

I think for me that hand sanding or that quality that Jiha was talking about...just getting that level of intricacy woven in to whatever you’re working on, I think that’s really important, especially when you’re doing art because, like she was talking about, you want people to be interested in it. You want people to keep coming back to it and finding things in it. Especially if they buy it. And I think that’s why you put those hours into sanding, or you put those hours into detailing is because that’s what leads to a really good piece of artwork.

Ani Volkan  Interviewer  00:46:13

Just going off the things you make and what you’re drawn to, as a way of ending our discussion with a little bit about your studio practices.

I think we’re both in your studio spaces? Is that correct?

So if you want to answer this first Jiha, how would you describe your studio practice? How do you integrate it into your everyday life? Is it a challenge?

Jiha Moon  Artist  00:47:17

Yes, it’s a challenge to even come down here [to the studio]. We have a living quarter upstairs, and then the entire basement is my painting studio and ceramic studio, and then my husband has a studio here too. And we have a little bathroom.

So once I come downstairs, I just try to get in my working mode and try to ignore what’s going on upstairs or what’s going on in school. Which is kind of hard.

And also between my practice, I have a painting practice and a ceramic practice, and I try not to be anxious about the other one when I’m working
on something.

So when I’m painting, it needs quiet time, super focused. Unless you’re doing labor intensive work that I can just put on music and then just draw for hours. But there’s a moment of each painting, maybe for an hour or sometimes twenty minutes, when I have to be super focused. And the certain mark-making has to be very fresh, and I’m really hoping, cross my fingers that I do my best.

So I’m rotating that. Like when I’m frustrated with my painting, I go to my ceramic studio, and wedging and throwing and doing other work. But then, I have a lot going on and ceramic needs drying time, so I...step back and come to my painting studio and go back and forth.

But definitely the other one is bothering me, I’m thinking about another project, which I try not to, I try to focus in the moment.

If the pandemic was not the case, the weekend is my studio time. Weekend is my family time and my studio time. I come home and then I just work. And then also summer break and winter break and Thanksgiving break, any chunk of break...it’s my studio time.

And my husband’s been very helpful to support me for that, so it’s been working great. Other than that on week days I just focus on teaching.

Sometimes when I’m too tired, I come back and go downstairs and I ruin my work. It has happened before. And it’s better not to be in my studio when I get super tired and make bad decisions and then just ruin the work that I’ve done before. Like, in a painting, you can’t really go back. I mean you could go back but it’s kind of different.

So I try to focus on my work on weekends, and then weekdays I focus on teaching.

**Ani Volkan**
*Interviewer*
00:49:58

So is it the same kind of situation for you Josh? Is your studio in your house right now?

**Joshua Adams**
*Artist*
00:50:03

Yeah. Well, I have two. I have my classroom studio, which is the [main] woodcarving studio. And I have a little woodcarving studio up here too [at home], but it’s just not as intensive, all the machines and stuff are there [at the classroom].

I set a ritual, like at this point it’s definitely a sacred ritual to me. Any time I
claim a studio space I’ll move around, like especially with my wood carving stuff I like to move around a lot. I’ll move to different parts of the house and different places outside to work. I always just try to have everything set up and ready to go.

I’m a really firm believer of having it ready...you know, when that moment hits, when I have that painting in my head I want to make sure that everything’s ready to go so I can get it on the canvas as fast as possible.

And the same thing with carving. I try to leave those areas set and ready to roll whenever that feeling comes of creativity. And just making sure it’s there for you. Gotta have music, I always have to have music. It’s going to make the time go by faster and to keep that rhythm going while you’re creating stuff. But at this point, it’s definitely a ritual.

I get really weird when people mess with my studio stuff or mess with my brushes, mess with my knives and stuff like that. I’ve gotten a lot better over the years, especially with highschoolers, being like “okay, you can mess with this,” but if something gets out of place I...want a tool to be where it’s supposed to be. And I try to instill that onto kids too, like “be organized in your studio.”

And not everybody’s like that. I know there are artists whose studios are madhouses and I’ve been like that too, at certain points in my career, where you couldn’t tell my studio from a garbage dump.

[Everyone laughs]

I think the more I organize my life and the more I organize my studio, the better my [work turns out].

Ani Volkan
Interviewer
00:52:05

I can not believe it’s almost been an hour. Still, I feel like we could go on and on and on. I think we have time for at least one or two more questions, if anyone [in the audience] has a question, now would be the time.

But on that note, like on how your studio practice is working, do you have any advice for those of us who are trying to work at home right now? Josh, do you want to take that one first?

Joshua Adams
Artist
00:52:52

Just some of the stuff we talked about, you know, keep everything organized, and definitely have it set up. Having it ready to go would be my number one tip. I’ve found that if I don’t have things set up, and I have that idea or if I feel like painting and it’s not set up and ready to go, I won’t do it.

[connection lost for a few seconds]...time seems to disappear with none of
us having to go to work or anything like that, the days seem like they’re just hours now. So, I think just setting a schedule and setting up your studio is the number one goal.

**Ani Volkan**  
*Interviewer*  
00:53:53

Definitely I see scheduling, especially now, being super critical because weekends, week-days, they’re all the same. At least for me.

**Joshua Adams**  
*Artist*  
00:54:04

I am very fortunate that Lauren’s in school too. Lauren’s in online classes and she needs time for that and so it just works out perfectly. Whenever she goes to class I come up here and go to work.

**Ani Volkan**  
*Interviewer*  
00:54:16

What advice do you have for us Jiha?

**Jiha Moon**  
*Artist*  
00:47:17

I don’t know what advice I could give because I’m still struggling too. Let me see...[Everyone laughs]...we just have to enjoy it. Right?

One time when my last show travelled to about ten different museums and places, I worked with the Halsey Institute [of Contemporary Art] and the curator and director told me, when I sent him a little bit of a frustrated email about how it’s great that my work travels but I need to sell my work. So, my email was kind of childish and full of frustration. But he said an amazing thing to me, and told me “amazing things can happen in humble places.” And that’s when I was like “okay, that’s the best thing I have ever heard.” So I’m always thinking about that moment because I was going through a couple things at that time, having a difficult time, and I thought that I was struggling. But now I think back, and that was a triumph. That was a good time.

This is really like rock-bottom for a lot of people. I mean, we get trapped and frustrated, lots of people [are] losing their jobs and, I just feel like I want to remind myself [of the advice] that I got from Max from the Halsey Institute. He told me, “amazing things can happen in humble places, amazing things can happen in horrible times.” And if I think that way, it gives me hope. And I’m a hopelessly hopeful person. I always want to hope.

So I’m just thinking of my student who was talking to me like “I don’t have all my materials, I can’t make work,” I just tell them “grab a pen and whatever paper you have, you have printing paper or a scrap of paper, you have it. You just draw. I’m not going to criticize you about your material,
let’s see what we can make out of nothing.”

So be creative and try to make the most fun, and try to enjoy this time. I know we are all struggling in some way, but maybe a couple years later we will look back at this time and think “well at least we were with a loved one and got stuck together. I mean we hated it at the time but now, looking back, that was an amazing time.” And we can laugh about it.

[Everyone chuckling]

I mean if I think that way, it kind of gives me peace of mind. So maybe we’ll just use junk material and make some masterpiece, at least something memorable. We can make something memorable for our life, and we can then kind of laugh about it.

Joshua Adams  
*Artist*  
00:57:18

I think it’s a good opportunity to make...[cuts out]...it makes you work differently. It forces you out. I know Jiha talks about working outside the box a lot, and I think that in this scenario it’s going to change the way everybody works, and especially your artwork, it’s going to change your artwork. There’s no doubt about that.

I think it’s almost an artist's dream to be stuck at home forever, but not in this situation, you know? You always want that time to paint and create, and now we have it and it’s like “oh, this is too much time.”

Jiha Moon  
*Artist*  
00:57:52

Right. I want to go to school! I want to go to school and be away from my husband and my son!

(Everyone laughs)

Joshua Adams  
*Artist*  
00:57:18

Yeah, I told my kids, I was like “I bet you never think that you would miss school!” And they were like “I can't...[cuts out]...away from family.”

Ani Volkan  
*Interviewer*  
00:58:12

Are there any last thoughts you want to leave us with as we’re winding this down?

Jiha Moon  
*Artist*  
00:58:23

I want to say thank you so much for organizing all of this.

Working with the Center for Craft has been a really amazing experience. I know, small nonprofit museum in beautiful Asheville, I always wanted to
visit. I definitely am planning on going, after this pandemic time is over.

And I know what you guys are doing is really amazing. The *Shapeshifters* exhibition was really amazing. And thank you so much for taking care of us.

**Joshua Adams**  
*Artist*  
00:59:02

Definitely. And thank you to Jiha for everything as well, and to you [Ani] and to Marilyn as well. It was amazing, and I love the 3D walkthrough. I got to share that with my students and that was really cool. Thank you to everybody involved.

**Ani Volkan**  
*Interviewer*  
00:59:34

I just want to thank our artists so much for being here. Thanks for attending. Everyone is saying thank you, Marilyn, Erin, it looks like we missed some other thank yous.

So on that note, if you guys are ready, we'll say our goodbyes and again. I am really honored to be able to host you two, I loved hearing your thoughts and answers to all of these questions.

I hope you all find your balance, find your meditation however it fits you. If it's trying not to scream or if it's yoga, and just stay sane and healthy during this time.

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**Interview ends**