

**Clintel Steed:** The painting starts with like the gesso, in a way. You know what I mean? So for me when I'm stretching up the painting and then I put that gesso down or whatever I use, the painting starts then. And then I always have one painting going while I'm working on another one. And sometimes I'm just using the mud from the palette – I know I'm not the only person doing this – but I use that mud from the palette to kind of make a layer. You know what I mean?

**Drew Beattie:** To get it going.

**CS:** To get it going. And to always, always have something in there... So that that experience in the studio is never really a stagnant one. It's like you're always moving, always thinking, you're always playing that chess game. You know what I mean? So, if I'm working on one painting, I'm thinking what's this next one gonna be, what's it gonna become? Where's this one gonna lead me into the other thing? And that's sometimes why I like to have themes. Because I feel like oh, if I can do a painting about this and it's successful, like I did all those aerial view paintings, right? The reason why I did so many is, like, once you do one, you feel like oh this works, then maybe I can do 10. And that's - and I'll run the gamut. So each one becomes like a- it's own novel but instead of it being 100 paintings, I mean 100 pages, maybe it's just like 10 paintings.

I don't want to be one of these people that have to be pigeon-holed into a certain experience. Like, like, like I love what John Yau said when he said "Oh, do we expect Clintel to make black work, you know, like black paintings". And that's always kind of been a struggle for me sometimes. Like you know I've made work about being African-American but it's not my whole story, you know what I mean. I'm a human first, I'm black second. Society can make me walk around and think about this all the time but up here, I exist in a very different world. Like I said. Like yesterday it started raining I could cry. Why? Because it's beautiful when it rains, you understand? So why wouldn't I put that into my work? And that's the reason why it's inconsistent. It's not- and if you look at our times, we live in a very crazy time, that's what I kind of love about this time cause' when you think about great art movements, they did happen when chaos was happening. And right now I feel like we're at such a juncture with the war, with politics, with all these things that artists really don't have anything to lose. Why don't we put in our ideas, see if they work or not, when the world is in this kind of explosive state anyway. You understand what I'm talking about?

**DB:** Yeah, yeah.

**CS:** So I think there's something, you know, it-it's... I think I've suffered from that sometimes. People say "Well, your work is not consistent or it needs to be" but I don't really care. I'm consistent as a human being first. And that's more important. My work can be anything I want it to be and art history's taught me that – in a way. You understand what I'm talking about? And I'm just looking for a truth, you know. Something that will say something 10 years from now, not just for tomorrow, not, you know, it's not like Kool Aid, you know what I mean.

We're very much process-oriented people, that's why I always go back to history. If you look at Picasso, he wasn't a big talker. You can look at his sketch books, I just saw one the other day. You should do it yourself. He would probably draw that figure about 30 times. You understand what I'm talking about?

Well, we'll do it one time, and we'll call it done. And that's not, that's not up to par. Like, if we're gonna be painters and we're gonna compete with Picasso, then we gotta bring the juice. You understand what I'm talking about? Because you know you're in art school right now and it's like - I see it sometimes like there'll be people and they're in school and everybody else is painting a figure and then they're painting abstraction and they think they're the cool one. Once you step outside this building you're just like the other abstract painters too. You may be different inside these walls but there's walls outside and that's the walls that we have to remember.

Being an artist, like sometimes people are like "Oh I'm an artist, so I'm talented." And that's not it either. Talent isn't everything. Being able to draw well isn't everything. That's why I say you have to have all the elements, you know, that's why I like the ideal of the Samurai. The Samurai pulls out the sword, it's not just him pulling out his sword, he's also thinking, he's also using his body. He's all these things that are going on at once. Right? So to me, this is like "Oh I have skill, I have talent, let me make something." But it doesn't feel like you're kind of, you know— like what if she was, what if this woman with this was on the back of that truck and I got the whole truck? You know, what if this painting was 4 foot by 4 foot and this was like a volcano that they were st— You understand what I'm talking about? What I'm saying is if I'm looking at them and I'm saying "Oh that's another person with a tattoo." I have a tattoo too but you know, after seeing so many people with tattoos, you're like "Oh my God, why did I even get a tattoo?" You understand what I'm saying, there's so many people with tattoos. Did I need one? But I got one. I guess I got it – I had to do it, you know what I mean. But that just, it just reminds me that you don't need that "Caught you looking". Give me the body. Give me the scene. Give me more of this woman climbing out the water, that's more mysterious than "I caught you lookin'". But that's kind of where we are mentally and it's a part of our subconscious. And we can't – you know, like you see people sometimes they paint like Dana Schutz. Probably just subconsciously. But you can't paint like Dana Schutz, she's like trying to paint like Matisse, she's too much of an entity now. You understand what I'm saying? So now you gotta come at it from another angle. Right, so, that's all I can say.

You know like, if I were you, cause' I do like these paintings, but I always like my Alfred Hitchcock analogy. He's a great guy to create a moment in a scene, even in a story. Like we don't have movies like that anymore but we should watch those movies like all the time because they do all those magical things that your paintings want to do. You should go home and watch [The] *Birds* or something. Or *Rear Window* and then maybe draw from that and see how you can make your paintings feel mysterious.

You know and I know it's like, you know, "Is she dead, is she alive, is she just floating?". You know all these things? But sometimes spell it out for me. Doesn't matter. That's the thing I love about Goya too like when I taught— you know this guy with the— when Goya did his nightmare series you look at them, you don't question them. You just feel that there's a demon haunting this dude. But it's the aesthetic, visually aesthetic, like he knew how to get it there so that you felt it even more. You're not questioning Goya's world ever, you just accept it.

Take out the words, just imagine this, that we were all mute and deaf, right? And when you left your painting behind, whatever you want to say would have to be said and then you should actually play a game with yourself. You should like make a painting and not say anything about it and then come ask a person, say "What do you think when you look at this painting?" And if they don't see what you were

thinking, then you failed. You should do it like that. You understand? Because there's a safety in school that I think sometimes we don't understand and that's the thing about being different. We can be different, I could be the different person in this room, I could be the only black person in this room right now but when I go out there in the hallway, I'm not the only black person. You understand what I'm talking about? So you've got to be conscious that you made this painting here but if you take it outside these walls, is it still gonna have the same strength? Is it doing what you wanna say?

We want to create something that holds something – that has something. You know what I mean? Otherwise why would you be here if that wasn't the reason? And all I'm saying is when you can forget about some of these things and then think about how these people lived, how they worked, how they got to their truth, then maybe we can get to our own truth. And that's all I'm constantly trying to do. I don't- I can't worry about popular culture, I can't worry about my pocket. I can't, all I can worry about is being a good citizen, a good person for my community, and try to make something that I feel like I've put in all my time and effort in. You know? And that's it. Because, because anything I do—you know I'm a black guy, I've thought about it many times. I could take all my clothes off, put a cross on me, put a bunch of honey and feathers on me and I'm pretty sure people would be like "Oh my God, what the hell is that?"

And the one reason that doesn't make me do it is because it's B.S. It's not me. I don't want to speak to that type of person, you understand what I'm talking about? I could be the person who's out for the limelight. Or how can I get the people to pay attention to me? How can I make people pay attention to me? How can I decide— how can I pull myself out of the community and make me become the God? But I don't need to be a God. I just need to pay attention to my life, to who I am, to what's around me. And those things have brought the poetry, those things are why it's happened. Do you understand what I'm talking about?

And that's what I'm saying if, if, if I can give something to somebody's honesty and truth, the more you're honest with yourself as an artist, the more you can make something that doesn't fall apart in front of your face, right? That has an aesthetic and craftsmanship behind it, the better off you are, to me.