

"UP CLOSE"

CHRISTOPHER STILL

MARCH 2008

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>> THE FOLLOWING IS A SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF WEDU, TAMPA, ST. PETERSBURG, SARASOTA.

>>Cathy Unruh: AQUATIC DISCOVERIES, FASCINATING LANDSCAPES, HISTORICAL PANORAMAS, VIEW FLORIDA'S UNIQUE HERITAGE AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF A NATIVE FINE ARTIST COMING UP NEXT.

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>>Cathy Unruh: WELCOME TO "UP CLOSE."

I'M CATHY UNRUH.

IN A STATE SOMETIMES BEST KNOWN FOR ELECTION SCANDALS AND HURRICANES, CHRISTOPHER STILL TAKES A DIFFERENT VIEW.

HIS ART DISTINCTLY HIGHLIGHTS FLORIDA'S COMPLEX HISTORY AND NATURAL BEAUTY.

HIS WORK HAS BEEN COLLECTED BY THE SMITHSONIAN, THE JOHN AND MABLE RINGLING MUSEUM OF ART, HANGS IN THE FLORIDA

GOVERNOR'S MANSION, THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS IN

ST. PETERSBURG, OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, AND IN THE PRIVATE

COLLECTION OF FORMER PRESIDENT CLINTON, AMONG MANY OTHERS.

CHRISTOPHER, WELCOME.

GLAD TO HAVE YOU HERE WITH US TODAY.

>>Christopher still: THANK YOU SO MUCH.

>>Cathy Unruh: YOU CURRENTLY LIVE IN TARPON SPRINGS.

>>Christopher still: YES.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND YOU WERE BORN IN CLEARWATER BACK IN 1961.

AND YOU SAY YOU WERE VERY YOUNG WHEN YOU REALIZED THAT YOU WANTED TO PAINT FLORIDA THE WAY IT SHOULD BE PAINTED.

>>Christopher still: YEAH.

I THINK, FIRST, I JUST LOVE TO PAINT AND DRAW ALL THE TIME.

AND THEN AS I -- AS I THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT I WANTED TO STUDY,

MY GOAL WAS TO GO AWAY AND KIND OF GET THE TOOLS TO COME

BACK AND PAINT FLORIDA WITH THE INTEGRITY I THOUGHT IT

DESERVED.

>>Cathy Unruh: LET'S TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THAT.

THE INTEGRITY MEANING THAT YOU SAID LOTS OF PEOPLE PAINTING

FLORIDA AT THAT TIME WERE JUST SORT OF PASSING THROUGH?

>>Christopher still: WELL, IT WASN'T AN EASY PLACE TO LIVE

IN YEAR-ROUND WHEN MAJOR ARTISTS WERE MAKING THEIR WAY

THROUGH FLORIDA.

AND OFTENTIMES, THEY WOULD DO THEIR LANDSCAPES OF FLORIDA

AND RETURN TO OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY AND ADD DETAILS

THAT I WAS NOTICING WHEN I WOULD LOOK AT THESE BEAUTIFUL

LANDSCAPES, I WOULD OFTEN SEE BIRDS THAT, YOU KNOW, WERE NOT

BIRDS THAT I HAD EVER SEEN BEFORE.

AND SO SOME OF THOSE THINGS I WANTED TO -- I WANTED TO GET THE DETAILS RIGHT.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND YOU WERE INTERESTED IN ART FROM THE TIME YOU WERE A VERY YOUNG CHILD.

>>Christopher Still: YES, YES.

I THINK PROBABLY SOME OF MY GREATEST PATRONS WERE MY TEACHERS, EITHER BECAUSE I WAS MISBEHAVING OR BECAUSE I WAS SICK WITH BRONCHITIS AND HAD TO STAY IN FROM RECESS, THEY WOULD, YOU KNOW, GIVE ME A BIG STACK OF PAPER TO DRAW ON. AND THAT WAS USUALLY SOMETHING THAT REALLY KEPT ME FROM BEING HYPERACTIVE WAS DRAWING.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND YOUR PARENTS HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT ALSO.

>>Christopher Still: ABSOLUTELY, ABSOLUTELY.

THEY BOTH LOVED ART VERY MUCH.

>>Cathy Unruh: YOU SAID YOUR FATHER WAS A HISTORY TEACHER, BUT HE PAINTED AS WELL.

>>Christopher Still: YES, YES.

HE TAUGHT AT CLEARWATER HIGH SCHOOL ORIGINALLY.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND DID YOUR MOTHER PAINT?

>>Christopher Still: SHE DID.

SHE DID A LOT OF -- SHE USED TO CONSTRUCT THINGS.

IT WOULD BE ANY TYPE OF BIRTHDAY OR HOLIDAY, SHE WOULD TAKE FRAGMENTS OF CLOTH AND CLAY AND BUILD SOMETHING THAT WE WERE

INTERESTED IN.

IF I WAS INTERESTED IN LOOKING AT AN AQUARIUM OR SOMETHING, SHE WOULD CONSTRUCT KIND OF A DIORAMA OF A WHOLE AQUARIUM SCENE AS A CENTERPIECE ON THE TABLE.

>>Cathy Unruh: SO THEY REALLY SUPPORTED YOUR CREATIVE URGES. YOU, IN FACT, SOLD YOUR FIRST PAINTING WHILE YOU WERE STILL IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

>>Christopher Still: YES, YES, YEAH.

>>Cathy Unruh: TELL ME ABOUT THAT.

>>Christopher Still: WELL, I STARTED DOING OUTDOOR SHOWS THAT WERE IN THE AREA AND PEOPLE WANTED TO PURCHASE THE WORK FROM THOSE.

AND, I GUESS, BY THE TIME I WAS IN SIXTH OR SEVENTH GRADE, MORE IN JUNIOR HIGH, I WAS SHOWING A BODY OF WORK AT OUTDOOR SHOWS AND SHOWING PROFESSIONALLY.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND THOSE WERE LANDSCAPES AT THAT TIME?

>>Christopher Still: UM, SOMETIMES THEY WERE LANDSCAPES.

SOMETIMES I WOULD WALK AROUND AND DRAW.

SOMETIMES THEY WOULD BE LIKE A SMALL, LIKE A NURSING HOME.

PEOPLE WOULD BE SITTING OUTSIDE.

I LIKE TO DRAW OLD PEOPLE.

I LIKE THE INTERESTING WRINKLES AND INTERESTING FACES.

I'D DRAW PEOPLE OR I WOULD KIND OF LEARN FROM THE WORKS I WAS SEEING IN THE BOOKS ABOUT ANDREW WYETH, AND I WOULD GO INTO BARNES AND OLD HOMES AND DRAW THE TEXTURES OF RUSTING

LOCKS OR WOOD OR, YOU KNOW, I WOULD -- IT WAS A COMBINATION OF THINGS.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND YOU FELT THAT IN ORDER TO PERFECT THAT WAY THAT YOU WANTED TO PORTRAY FLORIDA IN YOUR PAINTINGS, YOU NEEDED TO GO AWAY AND STUDY.

>>Christopher Still: YEAH, I DID.

I THOUGHT THERE WAS -- I MEAN, FROM AT LEAST WHAT I UNDERSTOOD AS A CHILD, I THOUGHT THERE WERE CERTAIN THINGS THAT ONE SHOULD DO TO BECOME AN ARTIST.

>>Cathy Unruh: SO YOU WENT TO THE PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FORMAL TRAINING.

>>Christopher Still: WELL, I WAS STUDYING IN A LOCAL ARTS CENTER HERE, AND SOMEONE SAID, OH, YOU LOVE PAINTING PEOPLE SO MUCH, YOU'VE GOT TO GO TO THE PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY. SO WHEN I WAS APPLYING FOR A SCHOLARSHIP, THAT WAS THE CHOICE I HAD WRITTEN DOWN WITHOUT ACTUALLY HAVING GONE THERE.

AND I DID GET THAT SCHOLARSHIP.

MOVED TO PHILADELPHIA.

AND FROM PHILADELPHIA, I MET SOMEONE WHO INTRODUCED ME TO AN ARTIST IN EUROPE.

AND I LEFT THE SCHOOL TO GO APPRENTICE UNDER A FRESCO PAINTER IN FLORENCE AND CAME BACK TO THE ACADEMY AND RECEIVED SOME SCHOLARSHIPS TO GO BACK TO EUROPE AND STUDY

AND PAINT.

I WENT BACK A FEW TIMES, AND SO THE ACADEMY WAS A LARGE PART OF IT, BUT IN THE END, I PROBABLY STUDIED WITH 70 OR MORE ARTISTS.

>>Cathy Unruh: YOU ARE BASICALLY, CAN WE SAY, CLASSICALLY TRAINED IN EUROPE?

>>Christopher Still: CLASSICALLY TRAINED IN EUROPE, BUT AT THE SAME TIME I REALLY WANTED TO EMBRACE ANY STYLE OF ART THAT I MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE IN THE FUTURE.

SO I WAS WORKING WITH THE MOST CUTTING-EDGE, CONCEPTUAL ARTISTS, LIKE JODY PINTO, AND AT THE SAME TIME, WAS WORKING WITH RENAISSANCE TECHNIQUES OF ARTISTS THAT WERE IN EUROPE. SO I DIDN'T REALLY DRAW THE -- I DIDN'T REALLY DRAW ANY LINE BETWEEN CLASSICAL ART AND MODERN ART.

I WANTED ALL THOSE SKILLS.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND YOU BROUGHT ALL THOSE SKILLS AND ALL THAT KNOWLEDGE BACK WITH YOU TO FLORIDA WHEN YOU CAME BACK IN 1986.

>>Christopher Still: YES.

>>Cathy Unruh: HOW VALUABLE WAS ALL THAT TRAINING ABROAD?

>>Christopher Still: IT WAS TREMENDOUS.

IT TOOK A WHILE TO KIND OF FILTER THROUGH WHAT HAD HAPPENED AFTER STUDYING WITH SO MANY PEOPLE.

SO IT TOOK ME A WHILE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO APPLY ALL THOSE DIFFERENT THINGS.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND WHEN YOU CAME BACK AFTER HOW MANY YEARS WERE YOU AWAY?

>>Christopher Still: IT WAS ONLY ABOUT SIX OR SEVEN YEARS.

>>Cathy Unruh: WHEN YOU CAME BACK, DID THE NATIVE LANDSCAPE LOOK DIFFERENTLY TO YOU?

>>Christopher Still: IT DID.

IT WAS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN I HAD REMEMBERED.

IT WAS A LITTLE BIT OF A CHALLENGE, BECAUSE WHEN I CAME BACK, I THINK PEOPLE WERE EXCITED TO SEE MY WORK THAT I HAD DONE IN THE NORTHEAST AND THE WORK I HAD DONE IN EUROPE. AND IT WAS PAINTING THE ACTUAL REGIONAL LANDSCAPE WAS NOT AT THE TIME THE MOST POPULAR SUBJECT MATTER THAT WAS SEEN AS BEING FINE ART.

AND IT'S EXCITING TO ME TODAY THAT SO MANY ARTISTS ARE PAINTING THE FLORIDA LANDSCAPE AND OUR FLORIDA CULTURE. BUT AT THE TIME, IT REALLY WAS NOT NECESSARILY THE SUBJECT MATTER SEEN AS IMPORTANT ART PAINTING PALMETTOS AND PINE TREES.

>>Cathy Unruh: WHY DO YOU THINK THAT'S EVOLVED?

WHY IS IT DIFFERENT NOW THAN THEN?

>>Christopher Still: I THINK BECAUSE WE AS FLORIDIANS WE'RE STRUGGLING TO SAY WHO ARE WE, WHAT IS OUR CULTURE?

SO MUCH OF WHAT OUR CULTURE IS IS OUR LANDSCAPE, IS OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

WHERE OTHER AREAS MIGHT HAVE GREAT WORKS OF ARCHITECTURE OR

GREAT HISTORIES TO LOOK BACK UPON, PART OF OUR IDENTITY IS DEFINITELY HINGED WITH THE ENVIRONMENT WE LIVE IN.

>>Cathy Unruh: BUT BACK IN 1986, THERE WASN'T MUCH OF AN ART SCENE AND WAS FLORIDA ARTWORK TAKEN SERIOUSLY HERE OR ELSEWHERE?

>>Christopher Still: WELL, WE HAD GREAT MAJOR ARTISTS LIKE RAUSCHENBERG AND ROSENQUIST LIVING IN THE AREA.

AND THEY, I THINK THAT -- I THINK THAT YOU KIND OF HAD, MOST OF THE PEOPLE THAT WERE PAINTING REGIONAL WORKS HAD NOT NECESSARILY GOTTEN THE ADDITIONAL TRAINING TO, PERHAPS, MAKE THAT WORK COMMUNICATE ON A -- MORE ON A GREATER OUTSIDE OF THE AREA, IF I COULD SAY.

AND IT WAS -- IT'S NOT REALLY WHAT YOU PAINT, IT'S HOW YOU PAINT IT.

AND SO I WAS DELVING BACK INTO MY CHILDHOOD FOR SUBJECT MATTER TO KIND OF APPLY ALL THE THINGS I HAD LEARNED.

>>Cathy Unruh: AS MUCH AS YOUR LOVE OF LANDSCAPE, YOUR INTEREST IN HISTORY AND PEOPLE HAVE DEFINED YOUR WORK.

WE'LL GET INTO THAT AS WE LOOK AT SOME OF YOUR WORKS.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE TEN MURALS THAT YOU CREATED FOR THE FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

YOU USED OLD MASTER TECHNIQUES THERE.

TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THAT AND HOW THAT HAPPENED.

>>Christopher Still: WELL, THEY WERE DOING A TOTAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE HOUSE CHAMBERS AND HOUSE SPEAKER JOHN

THRASHER REALLY WANTED -- WAS COMMUNICATING THAT HE WANTED TO HAVE THE INTEGRITY OF THE SPACE IMPROVED AND GIVE IT MORE DIGNITY.

AND HE DID A NATIONAL SEARCH, AND I WAS FORTUNATE THAT I WAS ONE OF THOSE NAMES THAT CAME UP.

I THINK THAT THE PROJECT JUST KEPT GROWING.

AND IN THE BEGINNING, IT WAS EIGHT SPACES THAT WERE SUPPOSED TO BE DONE IN A YEAR.

BY THE TIME IT WAS OVER, I HAD PEOPLE HELPING FUND THE PROJECT WHO WERE SUPPORTING IT TO DO TEN PAINTINGS THAT TOOK FOUR YEARS.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND WERE THE IDEAS YOURS IN EACH OF THOSE PAINTINGS, OR DID SOMEONE ELSE OR OTHER PEOPLE SUGGEST TO YOU, HERE'S WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE?

>>Christopher Still: I THINK SPEAKER THRASHER WAS JUST VERY SUPPORTIVE OF SEEING THE BODY OF WORK THAT I HAD DONE.

AND HE WAS SAYING THAT HE WANTED IT -- HE WANTED THE HISTORY AND THE LANDSCAPE SOMEHOW PORTRAYED.

HE WANTED TO JUST TURN THAT OVER TO ME AND LEAVE THAT UP TO ME.

BUT I -- MY CREDIT WOULD GO TO THE MANY PEOPLE THAT I WENT OUT AND STARTED INTERVIEWING.

I KIND OF SYSTEMATICALLY STARTED SAYING WHO IS THE FOREMOST HISTORIAN IN THIS AREA OF HISTORY, AND I STARTED DIVIDING UP EACH ONE OF THOSE EIGHT SPACES INTO A DIFFERENT WINDOW OF

FLORIDA HISTORY.

>>Cathy Unruh: ONE OF THE THINGS THAT YOU DO IS YOU TALK TO PEOPLE, TALK TO PEOPLE, TALK TO PEOPLE BEFORE YOU PAINT.

>>Christopher Still: UM-HUM.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND ONE OF THE TERMS THAT'S BEEN USED TO DESCRIBE YOU IS A "VISUAL MEMOIRIST."

DO YOU FIND THAT PRETTY ACCURATE?

>>Christopher Still: THAT'S INTERESTING.

I LIKE THAT.

I KNOW A LOT OF SMART PEOPLE, SO IT MAKES -- MAKES ME LOOK LIKE I KNOW STUFF, BUT I'M ACTUALLY REPEATING MOST OF EVERYTHING I SAY, THINGS I'M REPEATING FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE GENEROUS ENOUGH TO SPEND TIME WITH ME.

>>Cathy Unruh: WELL, I FOUND IT FASCINATING THAT YOU USE THE EXAMPLE BEFORE WE WENT ON ABOUT A WATER BOTTLE.

IF YOU WERE TO PAINT A WATER BOTTLE, YOU WOULDN'T JUST PAINT THE BOTTLE.

WOULD YOU KNOW WHO HANDED IT TO YOU, YOU WOULD GO BACK THROUGH THE GENESIS OF WHERE DID THE WATER COME FROM.

TAKE US THROUGH THAT PROCESS.

YOU CAN USE THE WATER BOTTLE AS AN EXAMPLE IF YOU'D LIKE OR NOT.

BUT JUST HOW YOU DON'T JUST PAINT AN OBJECT.

YOU KNOW PEOPLE AND HISTORY AND EVERYTHING BEHIND IT.

>>Christopher Still: WELL, I LIKE TO LEARN THE ANATOMY OF MY

SUBJECT THAT I'M WORKING ON.

AND IT'S DONE FOR THE REASON THAT THE MORE EXCITED I CAN PERSONALLY BECOME IN THAT OBJECT, THE BETTER I WILL BE, THE BETTER I WILL TRANSLATE IT ONTO CANVAS.

I'M NOT A PERSON WHO WANTS TO SIT DOWN AND JUST TEDIOUSLY DO DETAILS.

I AM ACTUALLY A PRETTY HYPERACTIVE PERSON, BUT WHEN I PERSONALLY LEARN THE HISTORY OF SOMETHING, THAT GIVES ME THE PATIENCE TO DO IT IN A LOVING WAY.

SO IN THE CASE OF ANY OBJECT, I LIKE -- I LIKE TO FIND OUT, YOU KNOW, WITH THAT OBJECT THAT I'M PAINTING, WHO HAS TOUCHED IT, WHAT THEIR FAMILY HISTORY IS AND IF I COULD USE THE EXAMPLE MAYBE OF A ROCK ON THE BEACH.

IT'S EXCITING TO ME TO THINK THAT THIS ROCK CAN BE A HUNDRED MILLION YEARS OLD.

AND IN THAT ROCK, IT CAN BE COVERED WITH FOSSILS DEPICTING THAT HISTORY.

BUT ONE DAY THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, A NATIVE RESIDENT WALKED BY AND PICKED THAT ROCK UP AND HELD IT AND LOOKED AT IT AND THREW IT OUT INTO THE WATER.

AND THEN THE TIDES MOVED IT BACK IN.

AND THE EXPLORES -- EXPLORERS CAME THROUGH AND STEPPED ON THAT ROCK COMING ONTO THE BEACH.

>>Cathy Unruh: LET'S LOOK AT CHANGING TIDES.

IF YOU GLANCE AT THIS PAINTING, YOU MIGHT SAY, WELL, THERE'S

A PIECE OF REALISM, BUT THERE'S A LOT GOING ON IN THERE.

TELL US SOME OF IT.

>>Christopher Still: WELL, THIS PAINTING IS REALLY A COLLECTION OF THINGS THAT SHOW HOW PEOPLE SURVIVED ON THE WEST COAST OF FLORIDA, STARTING FROM APALACHICOLA DOWN TO KEY WEST.

AND IT FOCUSES MOSTLY ON MY HOME OF TARPON SPRINGS.

THERE'S ANCLOTE KEY IN THE DISTANCE AND THE ANCLOTE KEY LIGHTHOUSE.

A LOT OF THE OBJECTS IN THIS PAINTING HAVE TO DO WITH THE HISTORY OF SPONGING.

AND A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE THAT THAT WAS ONE OF THE MAJOR INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA IN ITS DAY IN THE EARLY 1900s.

>>Cathy Unruh: SO PICK OUT A COUPLE OF OBJECTS AND TELL US HOW THEY RELATE TO THE HISTORY OF SPONGING.

>>Christopher Still: WELL, UM, YOU SEE THE DIVING HELMET WHICH IS A GREAT INVENTION THAT WAS BROUGHT OVER WITH THE GREEK DIVERS IN THE EARLY 1900s WHEN JOHN CHENEY WAS STARTING UP AN OPERATION IN TARPON SPRINGS.

AND UP UNTIL THAT TIME, THE FLORIDA NATIVES WERE DOING HOOK SPONGING ON LARGE, LONG POLES WITH A HOOK ON THE END OF IT, AND THEY WOULD LOOK THROUGH A BUCKET WITH GLASS ON THE BOTTOM AND HOOK THE SPONGE AND PULL IT UP MANUALLY.

THE GREEK DIVERS THAT WERE COMING OVER FROM EUROPE WOULD WEAR THESE DIVING HELMETS AND WALK ALONG THE BOTTOM AND

COULD GATHER AND HARVEST SPONGES IN GREATER DEPTHS AND MORE SPONGES.

>>Cathy Unruh: LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT ANOTHER ONE.

THIS IS A LARGE-SCALE MURAL THAT WE'RE GOING TO SEE NOW.

"RETURN TO PICNIC ISLAND."

YOU SAY THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW YOUR WORK IS EVOLVING.

>> YEAH, I THINK IN A LOT OF MY WORK OVER THE YEARS, YOU COULD SEE THESE COLLECTIONS OF OBJECTS THAT I WOULD BRING INTO THE STUDIO.

AND EACH ONE OF THESE OBJECTS WOULD SYMBOLIZE A PART OF THE FLORIDA STORY.

AND I AM TRYING TO MAKE THE PAINTINGS MORE NATURALISTIC IN THE SENSE THAT YOU MIGHT LOOK AT THIS PIECE AND SAY, WELL, IT LOOKS A LITTLE DIFFERENT BECAUSE YOU DON'T SEE THAT LARGE COLLECTION OF OBJECTS ACROSS THE FOREGROUND.

BUT IN ACTUALITY, THERE'S MANY MORE OBJECTS IN THIS PAINTING.

ACTUALLY, THE SAME COUPLE -- THE HENRY SCHARRER YOU SAW IN THE LAST PAINTING, THAT IS UP ON THE DUNES IN THIS PAINTING WITH HIS DAUGHTER MYRTLE.

AND THEN THERE'S A LITTLE COTTAGE IN THE CENTER PART OF THE PAINTING, AND THAT'S MYRTLE'S DAUGHTER MARION, AND THEN FROM THAT COTTAGE, YOU CAN LOOK OVER TO SOME PEOPLE SHELLING IN THE DISTANCE, AND THAT'S MARION'S DAUGHTER TERRY.

SO IN THE ONE PAINTING, I HAVE THE THREE DIFFERENT

GENERATIONS, AND THEN WAY OFF IN THE DISTANCE, YOU CAN SEE TERRY'S DAUGHTER WHO WOULD BE THE GREAT, GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER OF HENRY IN THERE.

SO I TELL THE STORY OF THAT ONE FAMILY.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND THAT'S VERY COMMON FOR YOU THIS CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN PAINTINGS, THAT YOU CONTINUE THE STORY, SORT OF, FROM PAINTING TO PAINTING.

>>Christopher Still: AND PEOPLE WHO KNOW MY PAINTINGS WELL KNOW THAT, LIKE, THE DIVING HELMET THAT YOU SAW, YOU'LL FIND IT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES' MURALS TARNISHED AND CHANGED IN COLORS OR THINGS WILL MOVE OR MODELS THAT WERE IN ONE PAINTING ARE IN ANOTHER PAINTING.

AND THAT'S -- THAT'S PARTLY THAT I WANT TO EXPRESS WE ARE CONNECTED TO THESE THINGS.

>>Cathy Unruh: AS YOU'RE PREPARING TO PAINT A PIECE, YOU DO A LOT OF RESEARCH.

YOU TALK TO PEOPLE.

DO YOU SKETCH AHEAD OF TIME?

>>Christopher Still: OH, I DO LOTS OF SKETCHES.

I MEAN, PEOPLE CALL IT RESEARCH.

I GUESS, THAT'S WHAT IT IS.

I DEFINITELY JUST WANT TO BECOME ABSORBED IN LEARNING ABOUT A SUBJECT.

AND IT'S VERY EXCITING TO DO THAT.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND TO THAT END, YOU WILL ACTUALLY, WHAT,

SKETCH WHILE YOU ARE SCUBA DIVING?

YOU WILL IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE ENVIRONMENT.

>>Christopher Still: YES, YES, YEAH.

>>Cathy Unruh: WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF DOING THAT.

PUT YOURSELF INTO THE ENVIRONMENT.

>>Christopher Still: WELL, I THINK, YOU KNOW, I WANTED TO PAINT A PAINTING AGAIN, IT WAS A SUBJECT MATTER THAT WOULD BE KIND OF TABOO AS A FINE ARTS SUBJECT, PAINTING UNDER WATER, PAINTING THE CORAL REEF, AND YET CORAL REEF IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL NATURAL PLACES THAT YOU CAN FIND IN FLORIDA.

AND SO I WOULD AFTER DIVING AND LOOKING AT THE CORAL REEF, I WOULD THINK, YOU KNOW, HOW CAN I ACHIEVE ACTUALLY DOING THE STUDIES I NEED UNDERWATER?

SO I DID, YOU KNOW, DESIGN OF AN UNDERWATER PAINTING BOX THAT CONNECTS TO MY TANKS.

AND, AGAIN, YOU KNOW, I HAVE FRIENDS WHO -- ONE FRIEND HAD A COMPANY THAT MADE INDUSTRIAL PLASTIC COMPONENTS, AND HE HELPED WORK ON IT.

AND THEN A MARINE BIOLOGIST HELPED WORK ON IT.

BUT IN THE END, I CAME UP WITH A BOX WITH A GLASS, ANGLED GLASS FACE ON IT THAT I COULD PUT MY HAND INSIDE WITH VELCRO BRUSHES.

>>Cathy Unruh: THE IMAGE OF THE ARTIST ALONE IN THE STUDIO PAINTING IS DEFINITELY NOT ALWAYS TRUE FOR YOU.

>>Christopher Still: NO.

>>Cathy Unruh: A LOT OF PEOPLE, A LOT OF HISTORY BY THE TIME YOU GET TO ONE OF YOUR PAINTINGS.

>>Christopher Still: THERE ARE LOTS OF SEASONS TO MY PAINTING, YEAH.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND WE -- IN AIRSIDE C OF THE TAMPA AIRPORT.

>>Christopher Still: YES.

>>Cathy Unruh: YOU HAVE A LARGE MURAL THERE CALLED "FINAL BOARDING CALL."

>>Christopher Still: RIGHT.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND ALSO A SCULPTURE.

AND YOU DO THESE OBJECTS AND PAINTINGS AT PUBLIC DISPLAY, HOTELS AND OTHER PUBLIC PLACES A LOT.

>>Christopher Still: YES.

>>Cathy Unruh: DO YOU THINK THAT IT'S IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE JUST PASSING THROUGH WHO CAN'T AFFORD PAINTINGS FOR THEIR PRIVATE COLLECTIONS TO ALSO BE ABLE TO ENJOY THIS ART?

>>Christopher Still: I LOVE DOING PUBLIC ART PROJECTS, BECAUSE IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THINGS TO A CHANGING AUDIENCE.

AND MOST OF THE PAINTINGS HAVE TO DO WITH MAKING SOMEONE FEEL A SENSE OF PLACE WHEN THEY ARE THERE.

IN THE CASE OF THE TAMPA AIRPORT PIECE, IT'S REALLY A HISTORY OF THE FIELD THAT WAS THERE FIRST, THAT WAS FIRST A CATTLE PASTURE.

AND THEN IT WAS A MILITARY BASE.

AND THEN IT WAS AN EARLY AIRPORT.

AND THEN FROM THAT POINT, IT BECAME AN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT THAT IT IS TODAY.

AND SOMEHOW BY LOOKING AT THAT PAINTING AND SEEING PEOPLE HUGGING EACH OTHER AS THEY ARE WALKING OUT TO THEIR AIRPLANE, IT MIGHT PUT YOU INTO A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE OF WHERE WE ARE TODAY.

YOU KNOW, WE CAN NO LONGER WALK WITH SOMEONE OUT TO THE AIRPORT.

WE CAN'T CARRY OUR OWN BAGGAGE OUT TO THE PLANE.

AND IT'S NOSTALGIC LOOK AT WHERE WE WERE.

IT'S A WAY OF ADDRESSING CONTEMPORARY THINGS THAT ARE GOING ON IN OUR LIFE.

>>Cathy Unruh: SO FROM THESE HUGE PIECES, THERE ARE ALL SORTS OF MINUTE DETAILS IN THERE.

>>Christopher Still: YES.

>>Cathy Unruh: YOU SAY YOU ARE HYPERACTIVE.

YOU DON'T DO THAT JUST FOR FUN.

>>Christopher Still: NO, IT IS FUN.

>>Cathy Unruh: BUT YOU LEARN THE MINUTE DETAILS BECAUSE ...

>>Christopher Still: WELL, DETAIL -- I THINK -- I THINK ONE OF THE BLESSINGS OF WHAT I DO IS THAT I LOOK AT THINGS FOR A LONG TIME.

AND HAVING THESE CONVERSATIONS WITH PEOPLE, THEY SHARE A

VERY PERSONAL, BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS WITH ME.

AND I LOOK FOR THINGS TO SYMBOLIZE THAT.

>>Cathy Unruh: BUT EVEN IF YOU'RE GOING TO PAINT A FISH, YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW THE FISH'S GILLS WERE.

>>Christopher Still: YEAH, ABSOLUTELY.

>>Cathy Unruh: HOW DOES THAT HELP YOU IN YOUR FINAL PUTTING IT ON CANVAS?

>>Christopher Still: WELL, I HAVE TO IN ONE IMAGE PORTRAY SOMETHING, GET THAT IDEA ACROSS.

AND AS -- YOU KNOW, AND SO WHEN I -- I'M IMAGINING THE VIEWER, AND I WENT THROUGH A GREAT CHANGE IN MY WORK.

AND THAT WAS THAT I LOOKED AT MY PAINTINGS AND I SAID, YOU KNOW, WOULD I STOP -- I GO THROUGH A MUSEUM, AND I WALK PAST PAINTINGS THAT DON'T IMPRESS ME AT ALL, SOMETIMES, AND I SEE A PAINTING THAT LIFTS ME UP AND GIVES ME A GREAT FEELING OF JOY TO LOOK AT IT.

AND I STARTED THINKING, IF I LOOKED AT MY OWN PAINTINGS, WOULD I STOP AND LOOK AT THEM IF THEY WERE IN A MUSEUM?

AND AT THE TIME, I REALLY THOUGHT -- I REALLY WOULDN'T STOP AND LOOK AT THEM.

WHY NOT?

AND I THOUGHT IT WAS THE DEPTH THAT WAS MISSING OF OBSERVATION.

SO I TRIED -- I TRIED TO PUT THAT INTO IT.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND NOW YOU'RE WORKING ON A PIECE FOR RUTH

ECKERD HALL'S 25th ANNIVERSARY.

>>Christopher still: YES.

>>Cathy Unruh: A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE GOING TO SEE THIS.
YOU'RE WORKING ON THAT RIGHT NOW.

>>Christopher still: YES.

>>Cathy Unruh: TAKE US THROUGH THAT PROCESS AS YOU BUILD
THIS.

FIRST, YOU HAVE YOUR INITIAL IDEA IN YOUR SKETCHES, YES?

>>Christopher still: YES.

AND THE WHOLE STARTING OFF FROM THE POINT THAT IT'S CALLED
RUTH ECKERD HALL, RUTH ECKERD WAS LETTING ME CROSS THE BEACH
AT THE ISLAND WHERE I WAS LAST WORKING ON THE SAND PEARL
PROJECT FROM HER HOME.

AND SHE PASSED AWAY.

AND SHE -- SO SHE WAS -- SHE WAS SOMEONE THAT I ADMIRER A
GREAT DEAL.

SO I'M TRYING TO PORTRAY THIS HALL SHOWING PEOPLE WHAT'S
BEHIND THE NAME OF A PLACE.

>>Cathy Unruh: SO YOU START WITH THE IDEA.

THAT WOULD BE YOUR IDEA.

AND YOU SKETCH IT OUT.

AND THEN YOU LOOK FOR PATTERNS?

>>Christopher still: I'M LOOKING FOR PATTERNS.

I'M ACTUALLY PORTRAYING THE AUDIENCE ITSELF.

HOW THAT HALL WAS CREATED BY THE COMMUNITY AND THAT IT'S THE

AUDIENCE THAT KEEPS IT ALIVE.

SO I AM BEHIND MOST -- MOST PERFORMANCES.

I'M BACK THERE UNDER A BLACK DRAPE DRAWING AND SKETCHING THE AUDIENCE THROUGH A PERFORMANCE.

>>Cathy Unruh: YOU SPEND A LOT OF TIME BEHIND THE CURTAIN, BUT ONCE YOU HAVE ALL YOUR RESEARCH DONE, THEN THE NEXT STEP IN THE PROCESS IS GETTING THE CANVAS.

>>Christopher Still: IS DRAWING IT OUT, AND I WILL DO IT IN TONES OF GRAY CALLED A GRISAILLE, AND IT WILL BE WORKED OUT IN ALL THESE DIFFERENT TONES OF GRAY, AND THEN I WILL START PUTTING VEILS OF COLOR TRANSPARENTLY OVER THE TOP OF IT.

>>Cathy Unruh: AND THEN YOU TRANSFER THE SKETCH ONTO THE CANVAS.

>>Christopher Still: YES, YES.

>>Cathy Unruh: THE FINAL STEP, OF COURSE, IS?

>>Christopher Still: WELL, YOU KNOW, ACTUALLY, THE UNDERPAINTING OF DOING IN TONES OF GRAY HAS TO BE DONE IN PAINT FIRST.

AND THEN THE COLORS WILL GO OVER THAT.

SO THERE'S MAYBE 20 OR 30 LAYERS OF COLOR OR MORE THAT WOULD GO ON EACH PART OF THE PAINTING BEFORE IT'S FINISHED.

>>Cathy Unruh: NOW, YOU HAVE A HUGE HONOR COMING UP.

THE GULF COAST MUSEUM OF ART IS DOING AN EXHIBITION CALLED "CHRISTOPHER STILL: COMING HOME."

THAT'S GOING TO OPEN IN OCTOBER OF '08 OF THIS YEAR.

HOW DOES THAT FEEL?

>>Christopher Still: THAT'S EXCITING.

IT'S GREAT TO BE ALIVE AND BEING SHOWN IN A MUSEUM.

I MEAN, THAT'S USUALLY -- USUALLY DOESN'T HAPPEN THAT WAY.

>>Cathy Unruh: HOW DOES THAT LITTLE BOY IN THE BACKYARD WHO SAID, "I WANT TO PAINT FLORIDA IN A WAY THAT NOBODY ELSE IS PAINTING IT" HOW DOES HE FEEL NOW?

>>Christopher Still: I FEEL GREAT.

I FEEL GREAT THAT I'M BEING ASKED TO PAINT THINGS THAT ARE PERSONAL ABOUT THIS AREA.

I THINK THAT MEANS THAT THIS AREA IS REALLY STARTING TO COME OF AGE IN THE SENSE THAT WE'RE STARTING TO APPRECIATE WHAT WE HAVE.

THE FACT THAT I'M DOING A LARGE PAINTING OF A MULLET AND A SHEEP'S HEAD AND THE THINGS COMMONLY FOUND HERE INSTEAD OF WANTING IT TO BE A PAINTING OF SOME OTHER PLACE IS JUST A REALLY POSITIVE REFLECTION OF HOW WE VIEW OURSELVES NOW.

>>Cathy Unruh: IS THERE ANY DREAM PROJECT FOR YOU STILL IN THE WORKS THAT YOU'D LIKE TO DO?

>>Christopher Still: EACH ONE OF THESE IS A DREAM PROJECT. I DON'T TAKE THE PROJECT UNLESS I REALLY THINK THAT IT'S SOMETHING THAT'S GOING TO PUSH ME BEYOND WHERE I'M GOING. THE RUTH ECKERD HALL PROJECT WILL MEAN PAINTING HUNDREDS IF NOT THOUSANDS OF FACES INTO THIS INTERESTING LIGHTING THROUGH ALL THE STAGE LIGHTING AND AS YOU WERE SPEAKING OF

PATTERNS, I LEARNED FROM PAINTING THE THOUSANDS OF SHELLS ON THE BEACH THAT THERE ARE PATTERNS OF PEOPLE IN CROWDS.

>>Cathy Unruh: YOU SEE THINGS IN A DIFFERENT WAY THAN WE DO, OF COURSE, AND IT SHOWS ON YOUR CANVAS.

AND WE COULD JUST STARE AT THEM FOR HOURS AND TALK FOR HOURS, BUT THANK YOU FOR BEING WITH US.

>>Christopher Still: THANK YOU SO MUCH.

>>Cathy Unruh: WE APPRECIATE IT, CHRISTOPHER. CONGRATULATIONS ON EVERYTHING.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CHRISTOPHER STILL'S ART, VISIT WWW.CHRISTOPHERSTILL.COM.

THANK YOU FOR WATCHING.

WE'LL SEE YOU NEXT TIME ON "UP CLOSE."

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