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MBS ([00:00](#)):

Here's a quote from the newly returned King Aragorn or, as he's known when he's not acting in The Lord of the Rings, Viggo Mortensen. "To be an artist, you don't have to compose music or paint or be in the movies or write books. It's just a way of living. It has to do with paying attention, remembering, filtering what you see, and answering back, participating in life." That's a bold call to action or, really, it's a bold call to identity.

([00:39](#)):

Now, if you try that on, imagine yourself as an artist. How does that fit? I'm trying that myself right now, and I'm struck by the idea of being an artist is participating in life. That feels significant to me, and I want that. It reminds me of a quote I heard from Robert Green saying that, "There are two types of time, dead time, when you're waiting for things to happen to you and a lifetime when you're initiating."



[\(01:11\)](#):

So try on the identity of an artist. If you were, and humor me here, how are you participating in life and what does that tell you about the art that you're creating? How does it nourish you? And who, if anyone, do you make that art for? Welcome to 2 Pages with MBS. This is the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them.

[\(01:43\)](#):

Chadney Everett is a lifelong artist and explorer of the human experience. His work has been in galleries and theater and in television, even in film. Breaking Bad and No Country for Old Men, you probably heard of those shows. Now, when I said Chadney is a lifelong artist, I wasn't exaggerating.

Chadney [\(02:02\)](#):

Quite literally, the earliest thing I remember doing, my mother bought me a large roll of butcher paper when I was very young, and that is among my earliest memories is unrolling that and drawing on it. So I've been making art, and art has been central to my life for the entirety of my life.

MBS [\(02:19\)](#):

Why would you be an artist? I mean it feels like that's a hard life, at least if you want to make a living from it, and Chadney's successfully done that. But I wondered where he found the meaning in his work.

Chadney [\(02:32\)](#):

When we're doing it meaningfully and with integrity, art is a means by which the artist and the viewer are exploring themselves and what it means to be human and the shared humanity that is underneath our differences in sex, in culture, et cetera, but this shared baseline humanity that great art can connect us all through that place.



MBS ([02:56](#)):

Chadney's drive to create art is rooted in connection, which has led him to his current role as a senior creative director at Meow Wolf. Now, we'll get to what Meow Wolf is in just a second. But first, what is up with that name?

Chadney ([03:13](#)):

The organization named itself early on by sitting around and putting a bunch of words in a hat and drew meow out of one hat and wolf out of the other, and that's who we are.

MBS ([03:22](#)):

That process reminds me how Marcella and I decided to move to Canada. We were in a pub. We each wrote down the name of three cities on a beer coaster. On the count of three, we flipped them over, and Toronto made both beer coasters. So here, 21 years later, we are. But what exactly does Meow Wolf do?

Chadney ([03:42](#)):

So we make, I like to say, this large gilded frame, this highly ornate gilded frame that contains all of these other artists' work. So we have our original one in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and one in Las Vegas as well.

MBS ([03:55](#)):

So essentially, they build large, immersive art installations up to a five-story building that contain the work of other local artists, which in itself is a fascinating concept. In fact, I'm off to see the one in Santa Fe in just a few weeks' time. But that said, I was curious about how a lifelong artist would adapt to being in the business of art.



Chadney ([04:19](#)):

Early on, there was this expectation I had that the organization would make room for me to make my art. There was this kind of rude psychic awakening I had, not for any fault of Meow Wolf. But it's not Meow Wolf's job to work for the individual. We work for the whole. We're 1,000 employees now, and we all make this big thing together. So I realized, no, that's not Meow Wolf's job to make space for my art. I need to make space for that, and so I carve out time every day.

MBS ([04:52](#)):

What do I want to ask? I want to ask what fuels this commitment to be an artist, whether that's your internal drive or maybe what you draw upon to keep you thinking and changing and evolving as an artist?

Chadney ([05:11](#)):

It's similar to what we were just talking about as the function of art. I am a person who's always been very interested in exploring what it means to be, and more specifically what it means to be me because that's the only vehicle I have to explore that with.

MBS ([05:28](#)):

The ultimate gilded frame.

Chadney ([05:30](#)):

That's right. So art is very much a part of that process, and my writing project right now is actually fully focused on that. I'm writing a series of essays right now on art, and one of them that I'm working on currently is about process and how I found my way from product to process and the process being that continual re-visitation of going through this little mini hero's journey in a way where you start with this fantastic idea, the treasure that awaits, and you have to battle all of your demons to find your way to it.



[\(06:09\)](#):

You go through that every time. It used to be a thing that actually deterred me from making art, and now it's the thing that it excites me about it. Even though it's challenging, it's that challenge that excites me now.

MBS [\(06:22\)](#):

I love it. Part of the hero's journey process is finding the nerve to cross the threshold. What makes you hesitate to cross the threshold? What gets you across the threshold?

Chadney [\(06:42\)](#):

Yeah. I think that if I am making my art and doing my work with integrity, and that means for myself, then I have far fewer issues and hesitations than if I'm concerned about what other people are going to think about it. That's when I start to hesitate and start to doubt myself and start to doubt what I'm creating. That is also not going to create the best art, if you're thinking about the audience as you make it.

MBS [\(07:17\)](#):

I can nod to that. But how do I actually do that? Because I write as well and I'm also trying to write something that serves an audience, not just serving me. Maybe I'm not an artist. Maybe I'm not sure what. A teacher-

Chadney [\(07:43\)](#):

I doubt that.

MBS [\(07:43\)](#):

... or a hack or something like that. Not a hack, but maybe I'm a teacher or a facilitator. But is there a sense with an artist that you just go ... I mean I've just been listening to the radio and Tears for Fears is being interviewed, and they're back, their first album after 17 years.



[\(08:02\)](#):

The interviewer's like, "How come your songs are still relevant 40 years after they came out?" And they're like, "Well, we just did what we wanted to do rather than tried to pander to an audience." How do you keep the niggling demands of a potential audience out of your gilded frame?

Chadney [\(08:25\)](#):

There's a huge leap of faith there and what that leap of faith is ... I think Kurt Vonnegut's a good example of an artist who, a great documentary that just came out about him-

MBS [\(08:37\)](#):

Oh, good.

Chadney [\(08:37\)](#):

... as well, but who absolutely found an authentic voice for himself that took many years for people to catch onto. His first several books were not even well-received. They just weren't received at all. Nobody was reading them. Humans crave authentic connection, whether we know it consciously or not. I would disagree with you. Everyone is an artist, and we all are artists in different ways. We all are creative. We all are aesthetic beings.

[\(09:17\)](#):

So when an artist is creating from a place of integrity and authenticity through their own BS down to that place of true communication with themselves, that will translate to other people. People will, when they see that thing, recognize it and connect with it. So even if you're writing even something like a schoolbook, let's say, I mean authenticity and integrity in that way matters very deeply.

[\(09:51\)](#):

So right now, because this is very much a focus of my writing right now, I'm actually moving away from the kind of universal we with a lot of my essay



writing and moving completely toward the I, the idea being if I speak with real authenticity about my experience with the thing and with art, which is the only viewpoint I can hold actually, and any other vantage point is a bit of arrogance. You know what I mean?

[\(10:24\)](#):

If I do that and really speak authentically, that is the thing that I hope will connect people to what I'm doing. Generally, in my experience, it has, and I think that's connected me to other artists' work.

MBS [\(10:39\)](#):

How do you walk that line, Chadney, as part of Meow Wolf? Because as you said, Meow Wolf has 1,000 employees. You have, it feels like, cities that you serve, Santa Fe and Las Vegas and Colorado as well. What that means is you've got people who are like, "We need this investment to pay off in some way, whether that's actual revenue or actual profit or just a cultural experience."

[\(11:13\)](#):

I really appreciate and understand that whole the eye is the perspective that I hold, and I'm trying to get to my own bedrock. But you're also a creative director in a big organization. How do you walk this line with that kind of more commercial responsibility, I guess?

Chadney [\(11:29\)](#):

Well, one thing that I will say that I appreciate about what Meow Wolf does is that we are not servants to our IP, to our intellectual property. We create the things that we want to make, and we're interested in making new things every time. They are developed from an authentic place. The voices of anybody within the organization and the inspiration from anybody in the organization can be the thing that leads to the thing being built.



[\(11:59\)](#):

For example, in Denver, two of the five main spaces within that exhibit were inspired by one of our longtime artists. They had created a 3D model of a city with sewers underneath it. We were like, "Oh, that is so cool. We need to make that thing." It evolved, of course, over time. But great ideas can come from anyone, you know what I mean, and so allowing for that thing.

[\(12:27\)](#):

Now, another answer to that question as well is that Meow Wolf very intentionally rides the line between art and entertainment, entertainment being the invitation and art being the transformation. So we get so many more people into our exhibits than would ever go see a museum or art gallery, and that's why we ride that line. I would use artists like David Bowie as a great example of someone who does something like this.

[\(12:57\)](#):

Now, I'm not comparing us to David Bowie. He's a genius, but he was an incredible artist and an incredible pop songwriter. Do you know what I mean? He was able to marry those two things. So the pure artists loved him, and people who didn't really understand pure art also loved him for his pop sensibilities. He invited them into an artistic world. That quality is something that Meow Wolf is trying to capture.

MBS [\(13:23\)](#):

Yeah, that's so great. There are some people who, I look at Bowie, one of them, Dylan, another one, name an album from Blur and Gorillaz, another one, you just get the sense that they're creating whatever the hell they want to create. I mean Dylan, some of the stuff he's put out, his Christmas album, it's an abomination. But also it is absolutely in keeping with Bob Dylan.

Chadney [\(13:48\)](#):

Of course.



MBS ([13:51](#)):

It's great in its own terribleness.

Chadney ([13:53](#)):

Exactly. He's another perfect example of that. Absolutely. Yeah.

MBS ([13:58](#)):

Chadney, what did you choose to read for us?

Chadney ([14:01](#)):

I chose something that may be not so easy, but *The Dehumanization of Art* by Jose Ortega Y Gasset. It is an essay. He was a philosopher from the late 1800s and early 1900s, 1883 to 1955. He was a famous Spanish philosopher, probably the most famous Spanish philosopher, but also an essayist. So he wrote plenty of essays on myriad topics, and this is one of them that he wrote on art. It was his thinking about the new art.

([14:37](#)):

This book is almost exactly 100 years ago right now. It's 1925. He was talking about the new art. What is that new art? We're coming out of the period of romanticism in the late 1700s, mid 1800s, and then the first modern art movement, which was realism, Led by Courbet and others. And then the kind of modernism that he talks about in this book, which is Cubism, Dadaism, Fauvism, Expressionism, et cetera, Surrealism, all being born in the early 1900s, this kind of blossoming of new art that's a reaction.

MBS ([15:15](#)):

The early work of Picasso-

Chadney ([15:15](#)):

Exactly.



MBS ([15:18](#)):

... is this kind of a statement around this is how I'm breaking everything.

Chadney ([15:20](#)):

Absolutely.

MBS ([15:20](#)):

Cubism, breaking everything, and randomly putting it back together.

Chadney ([15:24](#)):

Absolutely.

MBS ([15:25](#)):

How did you discover this?

Chadney ([15:28](#)):

Of course, I'm interested in the subject. So it's just one of the many things I've read on art along the way. It's interesting to revisit now, I think, 100 years hence, to think about, because Ortega tries to remain objective in this book, but he fails. He basically states, at the end, that the new art has produced nothing worthwhile. He says that Cubism is a total failure. He thinks Dadaism was ridiculous. Do you know what I mean?

([16:15](#)):

It's really interesting that he talks about how all new art starts off as unpopular, or let's say not popular. So he makes a distinction between not popular and unpopular. It's elite that will get it at first, and it takes some time. It's interesting that he himself did not really get it.

MBS ([16:42](#)):

That's great. I love that you bring it up just because I know less about art. I know a touch more about literature, and it's basically the 100-year anniversary of



James Joyce's Ulysses coming out, and that is the literary equivalent to Cubism. It's like, "What the hell have you done to the novel?"

Chadney ([17:00](#)):

Absolutely.

MBS ([17:01](#)):

Some people going, "This is extraordinary." You have people like Virginia Wolff going, "This is a cesspit. What the hell are you doing?"

Chadney ([17:07](#)):

Right. Exactly.

MBS ([17:08](#)):

It's that same interesting point of response and reaction.

Chadney ([17:12](#)):

They're the gatekeepers, the old guard or the gatekeepers for-

MBS ([17:15](#)):

Exactly.

Chadney ([17:15](#)):

... what they consider to be art, in finger quotes, and the fact of the matter is that all art forms play out over time. That's one thing Ortega talks about. They have to make way for the new forms. It's a must.

MBS ([17:28](#)):

I'm excited to hear the two pages. So, Chadney, over to you. Thank you.



Chadney ([17:36](#)):

"In the following, I will speak more in general and consider all the arts that are still somewhat alive in the Western world, that is not only music, but also painting, poetry, and theater. It is amazing how compact a unity every historical epoch presents throughout its various manifestations. One in the same inspiration, one in the same biological style are recognizable in several branches of art.

([17:57](#)):

"The young musician, himself unaware of it, strives to realize in his medium the same aesthetic values as his contemporary colleagues, the poet, the painter, the playwright in theirs, and this identity of artistic purpose necessarily produces identical sociological consequences. In fact, the unpopularity of the new music has its counterpart in a similar unpopularity of the other muses.

([18:19](#)):

"All modern art is unpopular, and it is not so accidentally and by chance, but essentially and by fate. It might be said that every newcomer among styles passes through a stage of quarantine. The battle of Hernani comes to mind and all the other skirmishes connected with the advent of romanticism. However, the unpopularity of present-day art is of a different kind. A distinction must be made between what is not popular and what is unpopular.

([18:46](#)):

"A new style takes some time in winning popularity. It is not popular, but it is not unpopular either. The breakthrough of romanticism, although a frequently cited example, is a sociological phenomena exactly the opposite of the present situation of art. Romanticism was very quick in winning the "people," in quotes, to whom the old classical art had never appealed.

([19:08](#)):

"The enemy with whom romanticism had to fight it out was precisely a select minority of irretrievably sold to the classical forms of the ancient regime in



poetry. The works of the romanticists were the first after the invention of printing to enjoy large editions. Romanticism was the prototype of a popular style. First born of democracy, it was coddled by the masses.

[\(19:28\)](#):

"Modern art, on the other hand, will always have the masses against it. It is essentially unpopular. Moreover, it is anti-popular. Any of its works automatically produces a curious effect on the general public. It divides the public into two groups, one very small formed by those who are favorably inclined towards it, another very large, the hostile majority. Let us ignore that ambiguous fauna, the snobs.

[\(19:50\)](#):

"Thus, the work of art acts like a social agent which segregates from the shapeless mass of the many, two different castes of men. Which is the differentiating principle that creates these two antagonistic groups? Every work of art arouses differences of opinion. Some like it. Some don't. Some like it more. Some like it less. Such disagreements have no organic character. They are not a matter of principles.

[\(20:11\)](#):

"A person's chance disposition determines on which side he will fall. But in the case of the new art, the split occurs in a deeper layer than that which differences of personal taste reside. It is not that the majority does not like the art of the young and the minority likes it, but that the majority of the masses do not understand it."

[\(20:34\)](#):

That touches on some of the points we were talking about, about unpopularity and popularity. Also, Ulysses is a great example of this thing where it's anti-popular in a way. It's not meant to be got by everybody.



MBS ([20:45](#)):

Right, exactly. It's not trying to pander to the majority.

Chadney ([20:49](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([20:52](#)):

How do you sit with the majority? Do you feel they're the hostile majority, or do you feel a different way about how your work meets the world?

Chadney ([21:04](#)):

My personal work and my work with Meow Wolf, throughout my life, my taste ... I've always been a generalist. I have many, many interests. I could talk as much about cooking as I could about art, as I could about working on classic cars, as I could about many things. I have many, many interests. Also, that applies to my tastes in art and other things. I like high and low, and I think there's value in it all.

([21:35](#)):

So my concern is more how art connects to people, because that's its function. Its function is to make a connection between the artist and the viewer or the reader or the listener. If it doesn't make that connection, the art has failed. Even if you're trying to connect to a very small group of people, still, you need to make a connection. Not everybody's going to get Ulysses.

MBS ([22:04](#)):

But for the sake of what? For the sake of what does art need to make that connection?

Chadney ([22:08](#)):

How interesting. If we can answer that really truthfully, we will have defined art on this podcast.



MBS ([22:17](#)):

If you could wrap that up for me in the next 30 seconds or so, that would be great.

Chadney ([22:22](#)):

What drives us to connect with one another, and what drives us to connect with one another and ourselves into the mysteries of who we are and why we are? That thing is what drives us to make art and also to engage with art is to engage with that thing that we don't know how to describe any other way, and we don't know how to explore any other way. It's the only vehicle we know how to do it, and it's an imperfect vehicle, which drives us to continue using that vehicle and exploring it from different avenues.

([22:56](#)):

Painting explores it in one way, in ways that if you could write it, you would write it. But you can't, so you do it through a painting and music in its own and writing in its own, et cetera. So those are almost like spokes on a wheel leading toward a hub that we're trying to find where that hub resides.

MBS ([23:20](#)):

There's so many interesting things going on. Let me try and weave one pattern out of this in a provocative way. The call to be the artist is to find yourself and focus on yourself as your audience. You're writing this for you. In that, you have a chance to connect with others because there's a sense of resonance that may reach out and connect to others. We connect to know ourselves and learn and perhaps evolve. Art is rejected by the hostile majority. Are we doomed?

[inaudible 00:24:03]-

Chadney ([24:02](#)):

Short answer, yes.



MBS ([24:03](#)):

Yeah. If art is a way that we progress our humanity and art is rejected, the very nature of art, it's inherent in the art is that it's rejected. Do we get a chance to evolve? I haven't got a question. I've dumped a bunch of stuff on the table and go ... I mean how would you put some of this stuff together?

Chadney ([24:30](#)):

A lot of it can be like six steps forward, five steps back.

MBS ([24:34](#)):

Or five and three-quarters steps back.

Chadney ([24:36](#)):

Right, yeah.

MBS ([24:36](#)):

And then one step to the side.

Chadney ([24:38](#)):

There's a very slow evolution. We make these big leaps. You can think of big movements that happen in society, like the 1960s, et cetera, and the 1920s before that, where they definitely have an effect on society. But then what the fallout from that effect is is what's long lasting. Also, Joseph Campbell has a really interesting quote where he restates that, "The role that shaman used to play in society, artists play today."

([25:09](#)):

I really love that, in that ... That's when an artist is doing it with real integrity and diving into those deep, dark places. That role that shaman played was that they were the ones courageous enough to go into these very dark places and then bring back what they found and were able to share it with their people in a safe



way so that their people could digest this thing in a safe way, but still get this information.

[\(25:34\)](#):

Art has the capacity to do the same thing, where the artists can go to these kind of fundamental places of humanity when they're doing it well. And then when they share that work, we're all able to connect with that and get at least a moment of recognition of our expansiveness and our potential as human beings. So that thing is essential to art. That, to me, also is essential to the effectiveness of art.

[\(26:11\)](#):

Ulysses is able to do that thing very, very well, but it's doing it for the people who ... There's a more limited group of people who have the capacity to go to that place with James Joyce, right?

MBS [\(26:24\)](#):

Yeah. I mean I have literally published academic articles on Ulysses, and I haven't finished reading it yet because it's too hard. I don't understand most of it, but somehow I wrote an academic piece about it that got published. It's a cheap irony I'm sure Joyce would approve of.

[\(26:46\)](#):

Meow Wolf and, therefore, your work with Meow Wolf, it's about immersive art. I'm wondering how important that word, immersive, is.

Chadney [\(26:57\)](#):

I mean all art is ultimately immersive if you're doing it well. If you're in a good book, you're lost in it. It is immersive art.

MBS [\(27:05\)](#):

Yeah. I'll tell you why I asked this, because when I go to an art gallery, and I like going to art galleries, or at least some of them. I walk by the pictures. I spend



more time reading the label of what the picture is than I do looking at the picture. I remember reading somebody, I can't remember who now, just going, "Look, I make people sit and look at a picture for an hour. It's excruciating because people aren't used to looking at it for an hour. But the picture emerges from an hour's interrogation and examination being present with that piece of art."

[\(27:44\)](#):

But often, a trip to a gallery or other ways we experience art is as a passing glance rather than a sense of immersion. I'm just wondering what immersive means in terms of helping people feel art in a way that it might not have done before.

Chadney [\(28:06\)](#):

Right. Yeah. I mean I think that even I, who I'm a lover of painting as a form, I don't spend that long with a painting. I think the longest I've ever spent with a painting was when I was in Madrid, Spain, and saw Guernica for the first time, which-

MBS [\(28:22\)](#):

Right. Is that the Prado?

Chadney [\(28:24\)](#):

It's at the Reina Sofia, I believe.

MBS [\(28:25\)](#):

Okay, got it.

Chadney [\(28:28\)](#):

They designed the reveal for that painting so well, where you kind of get set up for it and you see all the sketches. And then you turn a corner, and there it is in a much grander scale than you ever could have imagined it might have been. It's



an incredibly emotional experience. My wife and I both teared up when we saw it. I probably spent 10 to 15 minutes with it. Do you know what I mean? It was very impactful. To linger any longer is going beyond the point of impact. Do you know what I mean?

[\(28:58\)](#):

So even with my favorite paintings, I don't spend that long with them. It's the same with a page of a book. I'm moving through the book at a pace and to linger on the page too long, you lose the thread of why you're even reading the book. You know what I mean? You keep moving. And then what you're left with, the same as the '60s and societal movements, is you have the big impact and then the residual aftereffect of the thing.

MBS [\(29:27\)](#):

You remind me of I was, just before the whole pandemic thing happened, in Vienna because they had a exhibition of Bruegel's painting. It was this extraordinary, we've gathered as many of the Bruegels together as we can from around the world. We were on the last day it was open, and it was a kind of after hours tour. We'd paid a bit of money to do a special getaway from the crowd.

[\(29:52\)](#):

I remember being in a room by myself with two of my very favorite paintings, Tower of Babel paintings. He did two of them, and they're quite different. It's just me and these two paintings in this room. I'm like, "This is amazing. This is what it means to be a pope or an emperor or something." I sat with them as long as I could, but it would have been 10 minutes maybe.

[\(30:16\)](#):

But it's an interesting phrase you used, which is if you stay too long, you start to lose the thread. But I wonder to what extent art is in some ways about trying to have you lose the thread.



Chadney ([30:29](#)):

Interesting. Yeah. It's an interesting thought. It's one I hadn't considered before. But I think that, at least from my perspective, art is absolutely meant to be a transformative experience when it's done well. So, in that case, in that sense, yeah, designed to make you lose the thread in that hopefully it causes you to reflect and then you're breaking free of some calcifications in yourself.

MBS ([31:02](#)):

Chadney, what I loved about what you were reading was ... I guess his surname is Ortega Y Gasset, which is a great surname. He's like, "You know what? Everything has its epoch. Everything is resisted initially. It needs to find its time. It needs to kind of reveal itself. And then, yeah, but this modern art is rubbish."

Chadney ([31:24](#)):

Exactly.

MBS ([31:25](#)):

I'm like, "You need to reread your own essay here." How do we sit with resistance to art? If we're feeling that resistance, that whole I know what art is and I could do this myself and this is a load of old bollocks, is there a way that we can shift that resistance or change that resistance?

Chadney ([31:49](#)):

One of the things that he talks about in the book, and it's interesting in that book that he's complex, almost like Nietzsche in a way, where he contradicts himself throughout his writing because he also talks about how traditional forms, let's say, a portrait, if you're looking at the subject of the painting, you're not looking at the art of the thing. We have to forget the subject and look at the piece as a whole to see the art.



[\(32:18\)](#):

So we're not connecting with the subject of the portrait. We're connecting with the creation, that thing. So that's what he talks about with modern art is modern art has ... By the way, I think it's really important to state, and I haven't stated this yet, when he says the dehumanization of art in his book, he's not saying to take away our humanity. What he's saying is taking the humans out of art, and so humans are no longer the subject of art.

[\(32:41\)](#):

That's an important thing to note in this because it can be misinterpreted. So what he's saying is the modern artist, what they're doing is they are releasing the illusion of space and subjects in reality and trying to capture reality because art can never capture reality. It must acknowledge that it is a metaphor. So the new artists are leaning totally into that, and they're saying, "Okay, art is absolutely metaphor. Let's go for it."

[\(33:1\)](#):

So releasing all pretense at reality and leaning into it like, "How does it make me feel? What is the metaphor for the thing?" So he acknowledges that in his writing, while at the same time saying, "But I also don't like it."

MBS [\(33:26\)](#):

So if I'm a viewer and I'm walking around the corner of something and there's art in front of me and I'm like, "What is this about?" Do I just move on? Do I sit with it? How do I be with my resistance?

Chadney [\(33:43\)](#):

So again, art is about communication. If a new form or any form, even an existing form, doesn't communicate with you ... It's like there are many, many people who do not, let's just talk about opera as a form, do not connect with opera as a subset of music. I love opera, but I also love punk rock. Do you know what I mean? Again, I'm a generalist. I love it all. I love opera because I get it, or I



feel like I get it. You know what I mean? Though there's some operas that are a little bit convoluted.

[\(34:18\)](#):

I'm going to go see some Wagner this summer. He can sometimes be a little bit more challenging. But anyway, there are people that connect with writing, like yourself, and more than they, let's say, might with the visual arts. So it's what connects with you. In other words, there are plenty of artistic vehicles for us to find one that might be the vehicle that works best for us to find our way toward those deeper truths.

MBS [\(34:53\)](#):

Yeah. I guess I wonder whether I should work harder to learn how to hear what's being said. I don't get opera, and I've sat through a few operas, including a few Wagner operas, and I'm like, "I don't know. Isn't this a bad version of singing with a bad version of music with a bad version of acting? Isn't it the worst of all three things combined together?" It's like a terrible smoothie.

[\(35:19\)](#):

And then there's part of me going, "So what am I not hearing here? How do I need to be different to hear what's being said?" Because otherwise, I just have this arrogance of going, "Look, I am who I am. I am at my peak. If you're not speaking to me, that's your problem. It's not my problem."

Chadney [\(35:37\)](#):

I would suggest that the question isn't what am I not hearing or how do I need to change? My instinct when I am confronted with an art that I don't get is, because I'm consistently concerned with the quality that art has to affect me and make me know myself more deeply, is to think about when I'm confronted with this art, almost like a therapy in a way. What is this making me feel right now? Why am I resistant to it? Do you know what I mean?



([36:09](#)):

Through my understanding of my resistance maybe I understand myself more deeply and maybe then it has had an artistic effect on me, even though seemingly negative on its surface. So I mean that thing-

MBS ([36:21](#)):

Interesting.

Chadney ([36:21](#)):

So hoping to understand and then also you gain some clarity about, because we're not all going to like all things, why I don't care for this thing helps me understand what I do like and what vehicles do work for me.

MBS ([36:41](#)):

Chadney, this has been an entangling and interesting conversation. So thank you helping me try to understand art.

Chadney ([36:51](#)):

I don't know if we succeeded. I don't know if we ever will-

MBS ([36:51](#)):

Of course not. It's all a metaphor.

Chadney ([36:52](#)):

... and that's why we need to keep making it, right?

MBS ([36:54](#)):

Exactly.

Chadney ([36:55](#)):

Because we never will. Yeah.



MBS ([36:57](#)):

The question I always love to end on is this one. What needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this conversation?

Chadney ([37:03](#)):

How interesting. I don't know that it hasn't yet been said, but maybe not explicitly that going back to Vonnegut where he says, "We're here to fart around-"

MBS ([37:21](#)):

I love that.

Chadney ([37:21](#)):

"... and don't let anybody tell you any differently."

MBS ([37:25](#)):

That's a great quote.

Chadney ([37:26](#)):

It's like don't forget to maintain your childlike wonder and explore. That is part of the function of art, to explore who we are in the world because that literally is the definition of the quality of our life.

MBS ([37:51](#)):

I'm wired to be a bit of a contrary person. I like to zig when others zag. I mean it's why, for instance, I called my company Box of Crayons. It's why I'm trying to disrupt, in a mild way, the usual interview format for the podcast with this two pages idea. So this line from the book Chadney read from really struck a chord for me, "Modern art, on the other hand, will always have the masses against it. It is essentially unpopular."



[\(38:20\)](#):

I started this episode by quoting Viggo Mortensen saying, "We're all artists." Now, trickier, it seems that to be a modern artist, you need to create things that are unpopular. That's not just not popular. That's pretty easy to do. I've done 1,000 things that nobody's ever noticed. But unpopular means it provokes. It makes people go, "What the hell is that about?"

[\(38:48\)](#):

Here's what I find most helpful about this. It challenges me not to collude with my own need to be liked. I mean don't get me wrong. I actually do want to create things that become popular. The Coaching Habit is a great example of that. But I first want to create with integrity, something that is real, something that is true. I've got a feeling that the stuff that lasts, paradoxically, is the stuff that starts off unpopular.

[\(39:20\)](#):

If you enjoyed my interview with Chadney, and I hope you did, I thought it was fantastic. I've got a couple of other artists, actually, who I would recommend my conversation with. Sarah Stein Greenberg, that interview is called How to Love the Unknown. She works in d.school, a design school, and writes about what it takes for creative people to be creative. And Tope Folarin, that interview is called Living in Two Worlds, in part, because he is a published poet and he's also the executive director of a nonprofit. So I was curious to know how he balanced both of those things, both fascinating conversations.

[\(39:56\)](#):

For more on Chadney, you can check out his website, Chadneyeverett.com, in the show notes as ever, but C-H-A-D-N-E-Y-E-V-E-R-E-T-T dot com. If you want to go and see what Meow Wolf are up to, meowwolf.com. Thank you for listening. Thank you for reviewing. Thank you for passing the word along. That's how we grow best, when you find an interview you love and you send it to



somebody you love and say, "You should listen to this." I'll finish by simply saying you're awesome and you're doing great.