

Hobo #12 | Mark Gonzales



Mark Gonzales is an artist athlete – one of the greatest skateboarders ever. Or should it be “so far?” He’s done things on a board that seem literally unbelievable, combining incredible athleticism with artistic creativity. He’s an improviser. And his gifts aren’t limited to skateboarding. He draws and writes, and puts together zines that have moments of fantastic unpredictability equal to his more physical performances. Some of his zines have been collaborations with Harmony Korine and you can see Mark wrestle a kitchen chair to the death in Harmony’s film *Gummo*. I met Mark a few years ago, through our late mutual friend Shawn Mortensen, a free spirit and connoisseur of the same.

Glenn O’Brien. — Are you still making zines?

Mark Gonzales. — Yeah I make fanzines regularly, which is fun, except for sometimes, at Kinko’s there can be eccentric people - but I’m probably one of the eccentric people to other people. I might come off like a weirdo.

— *Yeah*

— So I mean if other people come off as weirdoes to me that must mean I must come off as a weirdo to them as well. But Kinko’s is open 24 hours so sometimes it’s nice if you can’t sleep to go there and make a poetry zine.

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— *Do you go to the one on Astor Place? I've done a lot of things there. But it's hard finding a nice person to wait on you there. I think they probably get paid like minimum wage.*

— Yeah, that's true.

— *So tell me about the zines you've been working on.*

— They're mostly the same. They're sporadic, and a lot of the poems are... I wouldn't consider them any type of tradition in poetry. It's just more like splatter or like a splatter-train of thought. Yesterday I came up with one – it says: "Life was worth my while but death was more my style." So poems like that are like not really poems, they're more like, I'd call 'em 'booms.'

[Interview by Glenn O'Brien / Photo by Ari Marcopoulos]

— *But I've seen like longer things that are more like poems, no?*

— Yeah I write longer stuff that's more like poems but I don't know exactly what a poem is. I mean I've read Robert Frost and I've watched *The Outsiders* you know, the movie. I really like the poem in that one.

— *I don't remember that.*

— It's the one where he says nature's first green is gold. It says something about like, "it's hard or it's hard as yours to hold, but only for awhile." That's a nice one.

[Editor's note: here is the poem...]

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leafs a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.
- Robert Frost]

— *It's like aphorisms.*

— Yeah S. E. Hinton – she's brilliant. Yeah, I like S. E. Hinton a lot.

— *Do you read a lot?*

— A little bit. I'm not a very good reader, but I read. I bought from St. Mark's Book Audio: *The Voice of the Poet*. It's Frank O'Hara reading his own poems and I read the booklet that came with it and it was pretty nice and interesting to find out about who he is and what happened.

— *Yeah, it's funny some poets you really don't get it until you hear their voice. O'Hara's voice adds another dimension. Did you ever hear those recordings that Kerouac made?*

— Yeah.

— *I like the "Blues and Haikus".*

— Yeah. I haven't heard those.

— *He did it with um two saxophone players and he would like read a line you know read a haiku and then they would like play along, you know like interpret it musically. It's really nice.*

— Wow. I'd like to hear that.

— *Are you musical?*

— No I don't play any instruments.

— *No. Do you sing?*

— No I don't sing. I've recited poetry in the past. I've recited poetry and my friend placed it to music. Yeah, that went pretty well.

— *Who was your friend?*

— Tommy Guererro. They published it in Japan on vinyl and on CD, and I don't know if it was well-received but it was received (laughter), and we took one of the ones that they used and added it to skateboarding. So it's a little bit trippy. And I mean trippy because it's like my voice, with my skating. You know what I mean, it's like, a little too much I think – too much of one thing. I think it's nice to have like his music, but I think it's nice not to have so much of yourself you know like, the star in a movie directing a movie - it's starts to be too much.

— *Yeah, I'm always surprised about people directing themselves, especially if they're in the lead role, you know like, how does Clint Eastwood do it? I mean I don't even know how people come out of character when they're acting. Does he hold a gun on the actors and ask if they're feeling lucky?*

— Yeah.

— *Um, you've done a lot of collaborating though right? You like to collaborate?*

— I love to collaborate.

— *Have you been collaborating lately?*

— I collaborated with Harmony, Harmony Korine yeah.

— *You did a lot of zines with him right?*

— Yeah we've done zines together. Yeah those were pretty fun to do. That's what I mean by 'boom,' like, they're on the spur, on the moment, like whatever came to our head and they're so crude. Some of them are rude and obnoxious or like when you read it you can't believe that you're reading it because it's so like, off the wall or from left field.

— *Well, left field is great place to come from I think. Yesterday I was watching Harmony on David Letterman's show on YouTube, and he really annoys Letterman. At one point Letterman says "I could have this conversation with myself" but he could never have that conversation with himself 'cause he could never be that out of left field I think. That's what irritated him. He could never have that conversation with himself, but Harmony could.*

— Yeah, well in the interview, Letterman begins to mimic Harmony, 'cause you know in a sense, when two people engage in conversation, one will do a hand gesture slowly, and then the person listening to them will start to do the hand gesture back to them and in a sense, we start to copy each other as we're talking, even in the tone of voice. If one person starts to raise their voice, the other person will start to raise theirs higher and it's like, whoever is in control of the conversation will lower it and then bring it back down and you know like stop using their hands, and so a lot of times this is about who's in charge of the conversation, a lot of the times that's what it's about.

— *Well I think when you're somebody like Letterman it's definitely about control and so you know if he starts to lose control of his show then that's very threatening. Yeah. He started mimicking Harmony's nervous tick.*

— Mimicking Harmony's everything, his body movements, what he was saying. It became the Harmony show for a short second, which was funny I think.

— *It's always funny when people make Letterman uncomfortable I think – you're rooting for the person that's making him uncomfortable.*

— Yeah, well one that was also funny was Crispin Glover. I didn't see it but my girlfriend told me about it that he was trying to kick Letterman – throwing karate kicks at him.

— *Yeah, I saw that on YouTube. It was amazing. Karate kicks in platform shoes. I saw Captain Beefheart on Letterman a few times. The first time he was really nervous and he had like a bottle in a little brown bag and sort of stumbled out, but it turned out to be Perrier and he was slugging it, and he was talking about people cutting the beaks off of pelicans, and hat sizes. And living in the desert and hating it. I guess being next to Letterman can make you seem more eccentric.*

— Yeah, it's funny to see people in different ways, 'cause I saw Tom Petty on the Jay Leno show, and Tom Petty was stoned, and you know Leno's brain was ticking a lot faster, and since Petty was stoned, he was like "get this guy out of here," he was kind of like annoyed by the wavelength that he was on, or the mood he was operating on. But Tom Petty just held up his CD, and pointed to it, like, 'never mind what Leno's saying, buy this, you know like, this is where it's at,' which I thought was like pretty good. It was like sign language.

— *Did you see the one with Joaquin Phoenix?*

— Oh yeah. That was a good one too. Yeah, talk shows are strange. I liked the Jim Morrison one – when they did Ed Sullivan, did they do Ed Sullivan? The Doors – they did Ed Sullivan?

— *Yeah, that's in The Doors movie, where they aren't supposed to sing "girl we couldn't get much higher" and then Jim does it. Their TV appearances were great. I remember when they did "Wild Child" on the Smothers Brothers show.*

That was intense.

— I mean I don't know if there will ever be another Jim Morrison. I mean I like to think of what I'm doing is poetry, but I think he was a pretty cool poet. He was friendly to his readers. You know in the sense that he wanted to like share rather than to take, 'cause sometimes the writer wants to take from the reader rather than to give. Do you understand what I'm saying?

— *I don't know. I think Morrison kind of saw himself as like a shaman or something, like a medicine man, so I think poetry for him was really like a communal living thing, you know whereas for a lot of people it's just about the book, but for him it was a performance. Is that what you mean?*

— I mean some people write poems but their poems are taking from the reader rather than giving. I mean you have to read a lot, like, they're expecting a lot of your imagination - a lot of your mental capacity, whereas Jim Morrison's poetry, it's like giving more than taking. I don't know if I'm making myself very clear, but...

— *I mean, I remember being given T. S. Elliot to study and you were led to feel that you had to have all this knowledge to understand what he was saying, because he was referring to classical literature and history, and he had all these allusions to other things that made it seem like an intellectual exercise.*

— Yeah

— *For me if a painting needs an explanation, or if it needs a critic to tell you what it is, it's not a good work of art. It should just be complete in itself.*

— Yeah I agree with you, but a lot of people say that Jim plagiarized [laughs], or he just took other people's ideas – that he was just like a freak [laughs].

— *He was a freak for sure. Did you ever perform, I mean aside from skateboarding?*

— No, not really. I'd like to perform though. I'd like to do something new. I mean my body is older now, I'm like 41-42, but, thinking about it, I'd like to just bust straight through a brick wall on a skateboard, come down a shoot and then just hit the brick wall, and then just bust through it, I mean to me that would be great.



— *Yeah I was thinking like you're getting to the age where like the baseball players of your generation are starting to retire you know, the basketball players are retired... how you feel about that as an athlete.*

— Well, with skateboarding there is no such thing as retire, because it's such a, such a – I don't know how to explain, especially if you're such an inventive skater, you're constantly looking at architecture, and different types of things and like thinking, oh I could jump onto that and skid across there and then come off that, and there's tons of things your mind is always thinking about, so even if you're not riding a skateboard, in your mind you're skateboarding because you're thinking of possibilities. I mean I could be riding in the taxi with my girlfriend and then I'm looking off and I'm seeing something perfect to skate and that's, in a sense, never quitting, like that's never retirement. You know what I mean? I'm sure baseball players aren't like ridin' in a cab and all of a sudden thinkin', "Oh I wanna hit a curve ball."
[laughs]

— [laughs]

— I'd love to just hit a curve ball right now. So do you see what I mean a little bit?

— *Yeah, but in baseball they'll say, "Well you know he's lost his step, he's still good, he's still got the control but his fastball isn't what it used to be" or whatever.*

— Oh yeah I'm sure, I mean I'm already at a place where I don't feel as though I'm like 100%, but I don't practice as much as I used to. I wouldn't call myself on point, but it's nice to be on point. You can be on point when you're old. There's other skaters that are super old that are on point but they're never like learning new tricks, they just stay to the level that they're at, so it's like a yo-yo kind of like, you know you do yo-yo tricks, soon as learn one yo-yo trick you can do that trick all the time. So as soon as you learn one skateboard trick you could do that trick all the time. No matter how old you get you can just still repeat that trick, but uh some skaters they keep their tricks and stay up to...

— *So for you to, I mean, you'd have to practice to be able to do stuff that you used to do?*

— Yeah I mean I can do some new tricks you know, and it's not that I don't want to do new tricks it's just that it's like – I don't know how to explain it to you, it's like, for me it's like physical and mental. Like the

physical and mental – there’s no difference, that’s why I was saying you never really retire there’s no difference ‘cause it’s always mental, you’re always thinking about it mentally and you can’t stop that. But I did have a nervous breakdown in Japan, and it was strange ‘cause they told me that I was a skateboarder and I was like, I didn’t know what I was ‘cause I had a nervous breakdown. I was just totally hospitalized and they brought a skateboard and showed me and they said “you know you’re a skateboarder” [laughs] and I didn’t know what to think. That was the only time that I was unconscious, or I unaware that I rode a skateboard or had any involvement with skateboarding and that was pretty strange, that was probably one of the strangest things in my life.

– *That’s like amnesia in the movies.*

– Yeah but I mean that was really weird, that was one of the weirdest experiences that ever happened to me. And I don’t even know how it happened, but it was like amnesia.

– *Was it like being in a strange culture or something, like being some place where nobody understood what you were saying? Or, you don’t know?*

– No because I can speak Japanese.

– *Oh you can?*

– I can speak Japanese pretty well and I learned more Japanese while I was in the hospital and it was nice to be there. It wasn’t like bad or anything. It was like taking a break you know? Taking time out.

– *I had a friend who took time out in jail in Japan.*

– [laughs]

– *They found an ounce of herb in his golf bag.*

– Oh really?

– *Yeah, but uh he got out of jail by pretending to be crazy. He soiled himself and they thought that was so unspeakable that they deported him.*

– Wow that’s crazy.

– *So when you talk about tricks, I guess it’s like doing something that hasn’t been done. But when that happens, is it like you might be sitting around the house thinking maybe I’ll try this, or is it something that just happens spontaneously when you’re skating? Is it like if a saxophone player is improvising and they just hit on something new, improvising in the moment, or if it’s a more theoretical thing – what if I could do this?*

– Well, I had this one theory that skateboarding maxed out is limited to fifteen moves, so if you max skateboarding out, it’s only limited to fifteen moves, and then from those fifteen moves, derives more moves. So there’s only basically fifteen moves, and then from there it’s like a tree – other moves that come out of it like branches.

– *Yeah*

– That was just a theory that I came up with. But yeah I’ve invented tricks and it just came out. I would call it like jazz you know like, not skating and then like moving it this way or moving it that way and then like thinking about things. It’s kinda like jazz, in the sense that it’s not like someone’s pitching a ball at you and you’ve gotta hit it, it’s more like, sometimes you’re aimlessly moving through traffic or through people and then you stop for a second and then you look around and then like, a lot of times people are watching you and you’re like, they’re watching to see what you’re going to do, and they want to see if you do something good, and then like you’re like ok what can I do, and then you’ll do something fantastic or amazing. So I think part of it is showing off, part of it is the need to create new tricks to show off. I mean [laughs] I’m just being honest with you.

– *Yeah, I mean a lot of art and lot of sport is like that I think.*

– I hate to think of it that way. I would like to think of it as more like jazz, more like something that you like working on, like a note or something, and then you like hold the note longer. You know it’s more like – one skater will do something and make it look really nice, and then another skater will say, “Well, I’ll do that, make it look nice and then add a second touch it.” So in a sense it is similar to jazz, you know like

guys working off of each other, but in another sense, it's like showing off, you know like, I'm gonna do this better, and I'm gonna do it higher, I'm gonna do a bigger trick. You know in a way it's like, watch this, watch what I'll do next. And a lot of the times, it's like who could do it without having any fear. That's the part that excites people, and that excites other skateboarders, like if he's fearless, they're like, "wow," you know they like that more than anything, 'cause after all fear is what keeps us in our place.

— *But when you skate, is there a line of fear where you get to a point where it kicks in? I read in an interview that you did, where you talked about how the mentality that was necessary to do something great was to be able to say I'm ready to die.*

— Yeah, yeah!

— *So that's kind of a state of fearlessness right? You're thinking about going through a brick wall, so...*

— Yeah, yeah I'm thinking about going through a brick wall, yeah that's true. I would think to put my elbow up to protect my rib cage, put my elbow up, wear a helmet, like a pretty thick helmet, use my head to bash first, and then follow through with my shoulder and then the rest of my body come through, and hopefully break through the brick wall in one piece. Well, not the bricks, the thick bricks, but just cinderblocks, like the ones that can be broken.

— *Well, these karate guys, we've all seen that ...*

— Yeah I'm too old for that now, but it would be so nice, it would be so cool. I remember at The Cow Palace – was it Keith Haring that drove a Cadillac through TVs?

— *Yeah. It was some artists. I think it was Ant Farm or the Survival Research guys from San Francisco, I think.*

— I like that. It was cool.

— *Yeah, yeah that was good.*

— Didn't Keith Haring have an affiliation with that?

— *I think it was before Keith's time.*

— I like that, that's cool. It's funny, I don't like wrecking crews or seeing a building get demolished, but I like setting up for destruction, I like preparation for destruction. It's the part of the preparation that I appreciate rather than just plain old destruction. People like to see things get like you know, cars in accidents, people love to watch that and stuff, but I like to see the preparation beforehand, and it's like the anticipation and then they do it and then it's like wow.

— *Those Survival Research guys must have been right before your time, 'cause they were from San Francisco. They would make these machines that would destroy themselves, and things like that.*

— Yeah, I like that.

— *They were really interesting. And they kind of started a movement. I remember a few years back there was a TV show that was a competition of people making robots that –*

— fight each other?

— *Yeah, yeah. I think they kinda started that whole thing. I like the idea that there's sort of this architectural thinking involved in skateboarding. What makes an inspiring environment?*

— Well, as soon as the cars started to get more bubbly and rounded you know, curves instead of squarish, I rented a car and tried to just skate straight over it, like just like a bump.

— *A moving car or a parked car?*

— I wanted to do it moving. I wanted to ollie up onto the hood and just ride straight over the car, and we tried it, and I smashed the window [laughs] – it broke the window. It didn't work so well. But you know, you gotta try. That's the one thing that people are most nervous about in art, in poetry, in anything creative, is trying you know.

— *Yeah.*

— Because with trying, if you try and you fail then it's like a big blow. But I'm not afraid of failing and

that's another thing. Skateboarders are supposed to be fearless, and they have to be fearless to do these tricks that they do, but another part is not being afraid of failure, you know what I mean? Failure happens so much in skateboarding.

— *If you're trying something new or difficult, how many times, would you get it right the first time?*

— Well, when I was younger I used to make everything first try, like all the time, 'cause your brain and your body work together when you're younger, and as you get older your body doesn't respond to your brain's commands. [laughs] Depressing, but that's how it is. I don't know.

— *Did you ever play golf?*

— Yeah I like golf.

— *That's an architectural sport.*

— Architectural sport?

— *In a way, I mean it's landscape architecture, but it's, a lot of it is about the place. And failure.*

— Yeah, I had a dream once, I mean it's not to sound stupid talking about dreams but, [laughs] I had a dream, and I was listening to the radio while I was sleeping 'cause a lot of times I like to listen to talk radio while I sleep, 'cause it's nice to hear a voice while you're going to sleep, and all of sudden it was like a golf special, the history of golf, and all of sudden I dreamed that I was a golfer (laughter). It was incredible, but it was one of the most pleasant dreams I've ever had.

— *I have a lot of golf dreams.*

— Oh you do?

— *I have for years, and I could see a whole round you know. There are a lot of courses I've played years ago and I could still draw the 18 holes of that course. It's interesting that it would really penetrate your mind that much.*

— Yeah. Man and land [chuckles] - they go together. Man and land. I like golf 'cause there's less aggressiveness in it, whereas skateboarding has an aggressive element, and most of everything man does is aggressive, it has a hunting aspect, an aggressive thing. Golf, it's not so aggressive, even though you have to make a swing at the ball and stuff. It's more like man and land like, peaceful rather than...

— *I think it's really a Zen sport. I never watch golf on TV, I don't care about Tiger Woods, but I like to play. I mean I'll bet with my friends, but really for me, it's just about trying to beat myself instead of another person.*

— That's what skateboarding is about pretty much, beating yourself, or being better than yourself, 'cause at the end of the day it's usually, am I disappointed with myself or am I excited with myself? You know, it doesn't matter if you tried to show off and you didn't make it, that's one thing, but at the end of the day are you happy with yourself or are you unhappy with yourself.

— *Yeah. I just did this project where I wound up interviewing a bunch of kids and asking them all some of the same questions. One of the questions was, "If you had any super power what power would you want?" And I was interested that several of them said the power to stop time.*

— Wow.

— *I thought they would have said to fly or whatever, and I thought that was a really interesting answer, and then I was thinking maybe it has to do with certain kinds of activities like skateboarding. Do you feel like you experience time in a different way?*

— Well, when there's traffic and there's people walking, you actually do stop time, 'cause you anticipate being at a point, at a certain time, and then the person walking meeting up at that same point, so in a sense you stop time because you arrive at that point, quicker than the person walking, and then you pass them without hitting them. So it's time control.

— Yeah

— It's not stopping time, but it's definitely controlling time, because if you didn't speed up, you wouldn't

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zip past the person walking, without them knowing. One of the worst things in skateboarding, in walking and riding bikes, is if the person sees you, 'cause as soon as they see you they freeze in their tracks, or they try to move out of your way and the way they try to move out of your way is the way you're going. It's just natural. It's just the way it is and then you hit 'em. Yeah, Tom Sachs made these boards that have these big wheels on them and they're soft wheels and they're big, and they suck [laughs] 'cause they go too fast, and so can't gauge your time. With these bigger and softer wheels, I rolled a lot faster so I couldn't gauge my time the same as if I'm riding the smaller wheels that are harder. You see what I'm saying? So I've hit two people already. It's so terrible and I mean I'm a pro.

— *Well I was watching something on Youtube where you were skating and you hit a bike messenger or something and you say, "Oh I thought I was gonna go over you" or something like that.*

— Oh yeah that's true, yeah. He saw me.

— *One of William Burroughs' better sayings was the secret of invisibility is seeing the other person first.*

— Yeah, that's true. I like William Burroughs' gun paintings. The splatter you know?

— *He was good – he was quite a thinker. Do you have insurance?*

— Yeah, I have insurance.

— *Are you insured when you're skating?*

— No. I don't have skateboard insurance.

— *It was funny when you hit the guy in the little wheelchair thing – and you ask him if he has insurance.*

— Yeah, well it's funny 'cause I was always brought up from when I was little to respect your elders, and I always try to respect my elders. But I also think that to respect them is to treat them as an equal, and like to treat them normal, 'cause if you treat them normal, then they don't feel like an elder, or they feel more like they're in touch still with what's going on. So the guy, as soon as I hit 'em says "what are you talking..." he says, "yes I've got insurance!" You know what I mean, so he's like... he's on point! He didn't say "fuck you" to me, or anything like that, it was more like normal. And I've had people that are older than me be real nice to me and I was wondering like why are they nice to me, or like why are they treating me as like I'm one of them 'cause I'm not that age yet, but I've had that and I really like that. That makes me feel nice, you know like kids – my son he says to me, "when you get little like me you can play with my toys," and I'm not gonna get little [laughs]. He doesn't realize that yet, he sees it the other way around, but it's pretty crazy that already at such a young age he can distinguish getting something – getting younger, getting older. I don't know.

— *How old is he?*

— He's two and a half.

— *I have a nine-year old, nine and a half. It's an interesting age, 'cause then they're more like, they're into reasoning more, but sometimes they go along with childish stuff if it's to their benefit. Like he's still losing teeth you know, but he said the other night to me, "it's ok with me if you're the tooth fairy."*

— Oh yeah? Wow, so he's a smart one.

— *Yeah, so I said will you take a check?*

— What'd he say?

— *He said, "yeah."*

— Does he have a checking account already?

— *No he has a savings account. I don't think he's allowed to have a checking account.*

— Yeah I had a savings account when I was pretty young.

— *Yeah me too.*

— It's nice. It makes you feel good. Not to sound stupid – but in the ghetto, kids that are poor, if they had a savings account that would be cool 'cause then it could teach them like, I'm gonna put this away and then I'll have it later. Rather than just living, and not thinking about the future. I think that was one of the

problems with me, that I didn't think about the future even though I did have a savings account when I was little. I didn't think about the future, that's what made me fearless.

— *Yeah, but it's good to be in the moment. I think too many people live in the future. A lot of people live in the past or in the future. That's why those people aren't satisfied.*

— 'Cause they're not living in the moment?

— *Yeah, I think.*

— Yeah.

— *My kid just found out that you can make money with art.*

— Oh really?

— *So now he's getting more into the art.*

— Is he making art?

— *Yeah, he made a sculpture. Andy Spade put it in his shop, you know, Partners and Spade. Some guy offered a lot of money for it, and Oscar was really excited, and now he's got a whole bunch of stuff over there, sculptures that he made.*

— I like Dubuffet. His sculptures are pretty neat.

— *Jean-Michel Basquiat was really into Dubuffet.*

— Yeah?

— *I was gonna say to you before, when you were talking about your poems being 'booms' that 'boom' was Basquiat's favorite expression.*

— 'Boom' was his favorite expression?

— *I mean if something really cool happened, he'd just go 'boom'.*

— Yeah 'boom.'

— *"Boom for real."*

— Yeah I really like Basquiat. I wish I woulda met him. And uh, I guess his paintings are here. His paintings and artwork are here.

— *Yeah. The paintings still work.*

— Yeah. It's crazy how you think about Dubuffet, and then you think about Basquiat, and you could see how he inspired him, but Dubuffet on his sculptures, he just went, he kinda went crazy. He just went crazy with his sculptures.

— *For me the sculptures are his best work. Don't you think?*

— Well yeah I love his sculptures, but they're just crazy. I loved the way he only used red, blue, white and black. Except for they have one in San Francisco that's silver and black only. Yeah Dubuffet was great. I like Baselitz too, you like him?

— *Yeah.*

— You like Ellsworth Kelly?

— *You know I never liked Ellsworth Kelly and then in the last couple of years I've sort of changed about it. The hard edge stuff never really appealed to me, it seemed academic, but I like it more now.*

— Yeah.

— *But I like abstract painting a lot.*

— Yeah. I mean I consider myself an artist but as an artist, it's hard to create sometimes. I mean you have it in your mind, what you want to do, and then you have to actually make it happen, and that is two

different things. It's hard to make it happen, and make it happen in a way that it's like what you want, what you envisioned. And then sometimes it's not what you envision and it looks better than what you thought. You know what I mean? But the whole thought process that goes into it before you do it, kind of annoys me.

— *You mean the conceptual stage, like when you're thinking about what you're going to do?*

— Yeah that annoys me 'cause it's not like 'tick, tick, tick, tick, tick.' It's not like a 'tick', it's not a 'tick,' it's like more of a 'tock', you know it's more of a second thought. It's not like on the first go. So that annoys me [laughs].

— *I spent a lot of time watching Basquiat paint you know, and he'd paint this whole thing and then when you're thinking, wow that's great, and really digging it, he would just take a brush and then cover half of it up...*

— Yeah he and Raymond Pettibon are my favorites. I mean, I'm not a nationalist, but they're like two American greats, and like globally like, I mean they're both recognized globally. I think Raymond is more appreciated outside of America than he is in America.

— *Yeah I think so.*

— I wish that more people would appreciate him here.

— *Well I think that's 'cause he's so close to the nerve you know. You know I'm going to talk to Harmony tomorrow, so I put on Gummo last night, and my wife said "I hate that movie" and I said, "Do you know why you hate this movie? Because it's like the town you grew up in." I said if I wanted to explain to somebody what Middle America is really like, I'd give him this movie, because it's just like this country without all the illusions you know?*

— Yeah. That's pretty true.

— *I mean, where my wife comes from, we'll go there at Christmas, and her family is great and they live in a nice neighborhood, but you go to the mall and you see all these 350 pound women in Pittsburgh Steelers jackets and it's really strange.*

— Yeah, have you seen the movie *True Stories*?

— *The David Byrne movie?*

— Yeah. That's pretty good too.

— *That's good yeah.*

— I liked the fashion show. I don't know why but I like fashion a lot. My girlfriend's involved in fashion and I like fashion a lot, like it's cool. I like the fashion show in *True Stories*, but that has nothing to do with *Gummo*. [laughs]

— *I don't like the fashion business but I like people who express themselves through how they look, because everybody, especially men, are so regimented and afraid to look any different, and it inhibits their personalities.*

— Yeah well *Gummo* is like an American movie and *True Stories* is an American movie and it's so funny because a small town has a fashion show you know, and then the fashion is so outrageous. Yeah, in a sense, literature and art are just like fashion you know, styles come and go. You know sometimes Basquiat will be real popular and then other times he's less popular. Sometimes Raymond Pettibon's hot, other times people aren't so into him. Just like skateboarding, sometimes a certain skateboarder will be hot, everybody likes him, and the next day no one likes him.

— *I like to watch it but I don't know anything about skateboarding. But I had one of the first skateboards I think.*

— Oh you did?

— *Yeah I got a skateboard in 1966, I think. I thought it was just for going downhill. I was a freshman in college and we had a big hill, and I would just get on that thing and see how far down I could make it before I wiped out. I had no idea that there was other stuff you could do. It was like really kind of small*

and had metal wheels.

— I wish I could have been around during that time. It seems so pure. One time, this is like a terrible tragedy but, you know it's like when you're on the skateboard and you're just gliding you know, and there's that moment of freedom, where the wind's blowing and everything's smooth – I was in San Francisco right by the Mint, and I'd seen this guy bombing a hill but on his bike, and he's going down the hill on his bike and he's totally like into the moment, totally, his hair's flying, he's got long hair and his hair is flying, he's on the bike getting totally like free, all of a sudden the light's gonna turn red, so it's gonna be green for him, but it's red for the cars coming the other way, and a lady from behind me, goes around me and smacks him, and hits him and she killed him.

— *Oh man.*

— Yeah but it was the most incredible thing I've ever seen in my life, 'cause I saw him beforehand and I saw how free he was, and it was like an angel, just straight into like 'boom' into tragedy. It was crazy.

— *I guess it's not a bad way to go.*

— That's how skateboarding is when you're rolling you know, and you said you went down the hill. That's how this guy was coming down the hill, like the wind blowing and you wait till you fall, fall off the board, but he waited for a bigger kind of fall [laughs]. Yeah. Is that a good note to end it on?

— *That seems pretty good. Is that too negative?*

— No, no, it's good.