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Masahiro Sugano Interview

Crystal Han
DePaul University

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Interviewer: Crystal Han
Filmmaker: Masahiro Sugano.
In-Person Interview: Home of Masahiro, Chicago, IL
Date: 2/18/2010 1:30PM

*Note: The following interview was conducted by a DePaul University undergraduate student enrolled in AAS 201: Asian American Arts & Culture during Winter Quarter 2009 - 2010 as part of the **Asian American Art Oral History** research project conducted by Laura Kina, Associate Professor Art, Media, & Design/Director Asian American Studies.*



Masahiro Sugano, Feb. 2, 2010. Photo by Crystal Han

Artist Bio

Born in 1972, Osaka, Japan. Moved to the U.S. at age 18. B.A. in philosophy from CalState, Northridge. M.F.A. in Film/Video/Animation from University of Illinois at Chicago. Currently runs a production company based in Chicago, Eye from the Sky, Inc.

Sundance Film Festival alumnus (1999). His next project is titled “Transcendental Joe” and it is billed as “Neo-Fundamental Buddhist Journey” across the U.S.

Question 1: So can you please tell me more about yourself?

Uh, my name is Masahiro, last name is Sugano. Born in 1972, Osaka, Japan. Finished high school there in 1990, same year I came to California to attend a school called Cal State Northridge. Finished there in 1995 with BFA in Philosophy, although I started in the film department, but I switched my major. And then in '95, I came to Chicago to attend UIC for the film department and got an MFA there in 2000. And went back to Japan, spent some time in Osaka, did some weird work here and there. Was it 2000? Yeah, and then 2001, I went, moved to Tokyo, got a job at this place called Office Kitano. I was a producer trainee. It was a very good position and you know, people nice and all. Somehow I couldn't really give up the idea of making my own films, so I left the company after 8 months and then winter of 2002, February or March, I came back to the states and then kind of struggled my way back in, 'cus you know – I worked and did some sushi making jobs, and I was teaching, ... then I started my own company in 2004/5, then that's the same year that I shot the feature which I just finished last year and here I am. And I'm married now with a kid; a year and a half.

Question 2: So do you have any other siblings?

I have a big sister and a little sister.

Question 3: And do they live in Japan?

They both live in Japan, yes.

Question 4: What about the rest of your family members?

Everybody's in – my immediate family, parents, my sisters, are all in Osaka. Every...All of my siblings are married. My older sister has two daughters and my younger sister just got married a year ago – about a year ago.

Question 5: Can you please tell me how you met your wife?

I met my wife, her name is Anida Yoeu Ali, and I met her through the group – they have this Asian American film showcase every year in Chicago and ... she is a ... she's a performance poet. That's the photo over there (points to the picture behind where I sat) is the group. They're called “Two-Tongues”. And they...their full name, I think, “I was Born with Two-Tongues”, that the name of the group. And they used to do this pretty dynamic performance poetry in the 90's and to 2000. And they're pretty big and used to do some shows during this film festival week because it wasn't just a film festival back in the day, it was... you had spoken word section, you had a music section, you had a fine art Asian American section, so it was kind of a celebration of Asian Americans and culture. And I ... she would check out, see some of my films that I would have or I would run into them in the party or I would go see their performance during the week, so I knew of them, I knew of her, and that's how I think I met her, kind of. And then...but she was married at that time with the...one of the other members, his name is Marlon.

So, you know, there was nothing of that, and ... a few years later, I think we ... she asked me to collaborate on some project. And I did some animation for her performance work that was going to be projected into the background and she does her performance in the foreground. So that's when we came to know each other personally and then after years later, we started dating. It was like, we don't really know the concrete moment where we met ... I knew that I had known of her for some time and she had known of me sometime before we kind of personally met.

Question 6: Okay, so you grew up in Japan?

Yes.

Question 7: What was it like growing up there?

...I guess it's ... I don't know what you mean (laughing).

Question 8: (laughing) Compared to your growing up in the United States for college...how do you think that changed your personality? – you moving to America.

I think the biggest difference for somebody who is forming U.S. sense of identity. I grew up as one of the vast majority ever, you know, in Japan. Like, being a Japanese in Japan means you're like... that's it. And if you look at different people that travel, you don't live there, and that's ... that's the notion we have. I know if I had spent time in high school here, I would have had a very different sense of identity, 'cus I think that is where you get pushed around or you can have ...claim yourself ... you know like, how you look, not only in terms of ethnicity, but it's also like social status and culture, blah blah blah. 'Cus in junior high and high school, all we do is study. We don't really do...we don't really explore our identity in Japan in that age. I mean, that happens once you go in college because then you don't have to study. But since you're in... from sixth, seventh grade through twelfth grade, you study. That's when you study the most in your life because which college you end up determines whether you gonna be... you gonna have a good job or not. And it's not like here where you can go back to college at the age of thirty, you really have to start college at the age of eighteen or maybe a year later if you fail an entrance exam, blah blah. So then again, I think it kind of moves like a conveyer belt, and so you really have to study from that seventh grade to twelfth, unless you've already given up, you know. So that's what most kids do and then what happens in the personal side of life is rather...it's not an exploratory time period and you know, things that could happen is something nasty, where you could get picked on, blah blah blah, or you have like, a sense of great existential crisis 'cus you're judged on how what you scored on all that. So I think that would have been the biggest difference if I had grown up here, I would probably have time to explore who I was at that younger age and probably explore more in terms of...and then have more consciousness of race and being a minority...I'm...I'm kind of grateful that I don't have to feel like a secondary citizen... enough that everybody feels that way just 'cus you're a minority, but I'm sure there was pressure of feeling like...you're not, you're not...I grew up seeing Japanese people being the worst person in the world and the best person in the world, most beautiful person in the world, and the ugliest person in the world, you know, worst criminal in Japan is a

Japanese. Most generous, you know, person is also Japanese. So you know, like, I didn't have the idea that Asian, of being Asian, had to play out in a certain spectrum, while in this country...it's like...so that's like the first thing I had to face, like man...that baggage right on you, boom. You know, you are not seen as an individual, first you have to explain yourself as an ethnic or you have to deal with what they think of you because of your ethnicity and that's where you have to start and that's such a...you know...big. And I tend to ignore it because I don't give a damn about it. And I know it's such a narrow spectrum, but if you had grown up in that kind of, like world view, I think I would have had a very different idea about myself or I think I...I would have gone very rebellious in high school, which neither which happened, so I think that would have been the difference – awareness of ethnicity, yeah.

Question 9: Do you regret coming to the United States for college?

No, not at all. I think that was the best choice I've made in life. Well, second best, I think the best choice is marrying my wife (laughing). And I think the second best choice I've made is coming to the States... I like this country... Most people around me don't like this country. Very critical. 'Cus you know I hang in a culture and whatnot, but I love this country and what it stands for, so no regrets.

Question 10: So going off along that, how would you identify yourself?

In this society? I'd like to s-I'm ...there are only two cards I would play. One is Japanese, but actually, I want to play the Osaka card. I don't want to be just Japanese, I – I – I, I'm from the city of Osaka, we have a strong identity there. We speak in a certain way and that's more important to me and the only group of people I bash openly in the world is people in Tokyo. ...They are to me, the secondary citizens (laughing). You know, it's kind of a joke, but that's kind of where I would really play that kind of aggressive identity card. I'm proud to be from my city. Being Japanese is kind of a bigger category, but that's less important thing from Osaka. Another category, I am getting more used to is definitely the label of Asian American because I mean, I'm not even American. I'm a permanent resident. I don't even have a national...and I have had such problems staying in this country for a long time...be a student, you can't work, you get visa this way, that way, ...top those, you know...you have to jump through so many hoops. It was like, reluctant to claim some Americanness on me, I was treated as a freaking alien on a daily basis. Not just by the way I look, but legally. I have to fly...I have to get...everytime I had to leave the country, when I was...I would have to go to the office and get a signature and authorization so I could re-enter the country...so it's like you're reminded that you're not part of this country...on a constant basis. So it was very difficult, but when I go show my film at the Asian American film festival, they're like "Oh, you're an American, you're an American, man, we're inclusive" – thank you for being inclusive, but that's not how I feel, that's not how I'm treated by the legal system. But now, finally, having a kid, I'm...you know, marriage, family, all that, I think I'm feeling less resist...less angry about being called Asian American. Although legally, I am still not. And I think that's, that's my future identity, is being as such, although the term itself confuses me because I think that's a term that they created. You know, in such a way, that probably Turkish people are probably put in the same category in some ways, or at least as far as Pakistanis are put in the same categories, which is, I think

ridiculous, you know – I think South Asians have their own glorious civilization, you know? Why are they bundled together with some East Asian like myself? ...That, you know, it's great, they're awesome, but that's so their point of view, and not ours. So that's the only minor problem...that's the problem I have, but in the future I would definitely playing that card – Asian American, but I'm still in the transition between Japanese and that.

Question 11: So you said you play the “Osaka” card...

Yeah.

Question 12: Why that specific card? What is in that culture that you grew up in compared to, you know, from Tokyo or being Japanese. Can you explain a little more about that?

There's a pop aspect of ... it's actually very common for people of Osaka to not succumb to the superior ...like the Tokyo-ness of it, while the rest of the Japan type would love to ...they, they basically admire Tokyo like, you know, how countries like Europeans admire Paris. Osaka people have always been rebellious in that sense or defiant of the Tokyo's centrality. There are some cultural differences – we don't give up our dialect or accents, even when we move to Tokyo, but most people who are from throughout the rest of the countryside tend to be ashamed of their dialect...while we rub it on the rest of the people. So we have that kind of like, sense of identity and we're also known for being abrasive, cheap, and funny which are kind of a working class culture thing that you can see anywhere in the world and that's the part of the identity in Japan...I mean, Osaka, they...not a big merchant, although Panasonic headquarters are located in Osaka and there are several other big corporations. It's known for small time merchants making their way with quick talks and quick bargains, like women from – housewives from Osaka are known to be notorious bargainers. Although, if you do the thorough research, it's not true, but that's the stereotype the rest of Japan has and we are proud of it. You know, like, you can't cheat...we know what's up. And then, ...we are street smart, while Tokyo people are known for having more money and they spend a lot more money on fashion and being fancy while Osaka people are known to go bankrupt from eating food and not ...you know, how do you go bankrupt in Tokyo? You spend too much money on fashion. How do you go bankrupt in Osaka? You spend too much money on food. So we are like, we're real people – we eat, we talk, and then we bargain. And I like that sense of...I think it has something to do with the class of it, that...some are grounded and more working class, so that's where my sense of identity comes from, yeah, and that's important to me.

Question 13: So when did you first become an artist? Or a filmmaker? How did you find your passion and what made you interested in this particular field because I know said you used to be a film major and then you switched to philosophy, why did you do that switch as well?

I wanted to become a film maker when I was twelve, before that I wanted to be a comic book artist, like most of the kids in...those were the only two dreams I really had. And I

was coached on a film called “Mad Max 2” which is marketed as “Road Warriors” in the U.S. with Mel Gibson, have you ever seen that?

Response: I have not (laughing).

No? Anyways, it’s like this crazy car action movie from Australia and it’s like, wow, it blew me away, I think I was like...and then I really wanted to make film after that, that was at twelve, so that’s when I worked. When did I become a filmmaker? I don’t know what means. I mean, does it mean when I have pension or a full-time job as a filmmaker (laugh) or does it mean when I finished my first film? I think first film I finished was in high school with VHS tape. First feature I finished just last year. I still can’t support my family or buy a house in filmmaking, so in that sense, maybe I’m not a filmmaker yet. As to why I do I, did I change major from Philosophy – I mean, filmmaking, film to philosophy...first...there just wasn’t much in the film department. It was intellectually dull, at least maybe in that school and I quickly realized in Undergrad is a stupid thing to do. You should probably study English, photography, or painting, or something like that – something that nurtures your vision, but you don’t really have to major in film to learn how to make film. It’s really not important, I mean, you know, in Graduate school, yeah, sure, why not? So, that’s what I quickly realized. And I also had some minor problems in there...I got into a physical fight in my first production when I was a director and I got into a fight with my DP, and it kind of got strange. I didn’t feel comfortable. And I felt like I made a fool of myself, and...okay, why do I stick around? So I just made that switch to the philosophy major.

Question 14: What’s the DP?

DP is the director of photography. The person who runs the camera, the lighting. It was a group project, kind of...I was like eighteen or nineteen.

Question 15: Do you consider yourself an artist?

...I like the term filmmaker better an artist. Artist is such like a overused term, it’s so American to call themselves artist. And to me, growing up in Japan, artist means the person who actually does only that and lives off of that, if not, don’t even claim yourself an artist. That’s the kind of attitude we have. Here, you just do a doodle and you can call yourself an artist, you know, so I don’t like that term because of how it’s diluted, I’d rather be called a filmmaker because it has that craftyness,...so yeah.

Question 16: Can you tell me about your upcoming movie, “Second Moon”?

...Yes, it was a film that I conceived in two occasions. One was when I was gliding down the Chicago river on a canoe with my friend, she was bundled up, it was cold, it was like in late October. She looked like Santa Clause that was on the tail end of the canoe, it was like, wow, it was funny, Santa Clause is rowing canoe down Chicago river. And then, so that was an image, and I was reading... a novel by Milan Kundera, he, what’s the name, “Unbearable Lightness of Being” and I was very fascinated with that novel, I thought it was an awesome piece of literature. And, so I wanted to do something about it and I had some idea...it’s basically about relationships. And, what’s happening? Is there a maximum hedonistic...not hedonistic...is it the Tiger Woods version of love that’s kind

of fun? You know, is it happiness? When you can sleep with so many people, are you happy, or is it when you're with one person? And that's the question that this novel keeps asking. Not in terms of sexual relationships only, but it's about when are you free? I mean, when are you happy? Are you happy when you're free or are you happy when you are burdened? You know, ...I mean, it's easy to say, "Oh, when I'm free", but are you sure? When you're not grounded, can you be that happy? And I know that sense of like, existential crisis that you face when you're so free. So that was an interesting question for me, like what is happiness? Maybe it's about being burdened. It's the curse of human life that makes us happy. I like that idea of kind of irony. Anyways, so I wanted to do something with that kind of theme and combine with a visual, boom, I wrote a script and I shot it.

Question 17: How did you go about making this film? What materials did you use and how did the production work? And how long did it take you to write and produce this film?

Writing was probably a year and half. After a year, we put into the pre-production...I was ready. I was ready to just go and shoot and ... so I put together a group of people and I put together a package in which I had still photos of what the scenes would look like, with the fully dressed actors and models. And...so I made a pamphlet of what the film is going to look like and I did fundraising with that. And so, with that money...and we managed to raise funds pretty fast, actually, that's when everybody was lush with cash, that's 2005, real estate was well, you know, mortgage companies were making buku money. And a lot of money actually came from the real estate enterprises. And so we did that with money, shot it in October, and then, so the shooting was all done in October and November of 2005 and it was done with an HD camera, the crew was pretty big and time, it took us what, four weeks? And I was editing it, went back and forth, and yeah.

Question 18: How did you edit the film? Like, did you go into a production studio or...?

No, nowadays you can do everything your computer. Today, you can do it on the laptop. And this thing (points to a small DVD-sized disk) could carry a whole film in HD and even smaller than that?

Question 19: Very interesting. Where did you get your materials? Like, Best Buy or...?

Oh, you mean like the film stuff?

Response: Yes.

Oh, those, no, you get these...it's an... we shot it on a tape called HD camera, those you get directly from the dealers, like Sony dealers and Panasonic. The cameras are pretty big, too, so you go to special rental stores and make a deal because you rent it for like, four weeks. Yeah, that's how we did it.

Question 20: How did you get the actors and choose the locations?

Locations, I had...I think I had a pretty good idea of things because I used to bike more often. I knew kind of little places in the city; it's based on memory and some location hunts, my production coordinator helped me to do it, especially some interior shots like condos, apartments, or restaurant scenes – those I had to ask some people to give me some reference. Other than that, it's just based on my experience and memory what I had seen somewhere. And that's how we found the location. Casting was...I worked with some casting director and I worked with...I asked my actor friends that I'm looking for this type and that type and can you just spread the word, so just word of mouth. Half word of mouth, half like, casting director type of thing. And yeah, that's how we got directors.

Question 21: Did you do any types of sound effects for this?

Yeah, we got – a year after the production, we actually went to Pusan International Film Festival and then that time, we were offered to do sound mixing and design by a company in Seoul, in Korea, so we ... and then they put some like footsteps and sound effects and for us. It worked out alright.

Question 22: That's good. Do you ever address Asian American identity, themes or histories in your work?

It's not blatant, but it's always there.

Question 23: Can you give an example?

Like, in “Second Moon”, it has a lot to do with sex, and it's just like, not...like that's where my upbringings difference comes in. I think in this society when you want to show an Asian American man and Asian American woman, having sex or kissing, I think, a lot of us, even I feel the need to have to explain something. Like, look, I know this is not what you think it is, but that's what it is. ...I don't know, it's like, it's not a taboo, but you're showing some kind of exception and anomaly when it's not. And in Japan, people are having sex, or kissing, or romantic relation, whatnot, it's not an anomaly, it's a fact of life. It's ...like being portrayed in a movie, the only issue you would have is how much exposure? You know, like is it pornographic? Is that the issue? While in this country, I think showing an Asian person, like, I heard there was a kissing scene between two Asian characters on “Lost” and there was like...”Oh my god, there's finally a kissing scene!”, and I...it's frustrating both ways, like yeah, it's great that it's finally there, but be like, man, do we have to make a freaking big deal about it? Like, what's the big deal? And us, having that sense itself is probably self-defeating, you know. That portrays scenes like that and make sure there's no sense of like, “Uh, I don't know if I'm supposed to be here”, you know what I mean? It's like, sense of embarrassment. I think that's what I try to defy; expectation from others and expectation from within, where we are not sure if they would appreciate us kissing on the screen or not throwing a doubt. It's part of life anyway, so that's the kind of attitude I try to have, rather than making a statement, “Oh, by the way, I know we haven't seen anybody kiss in twenty years, but here you go, let's celebrate”, and then it gets goofier, like dude, man, why do we even have to accept the fact that it's not even portrayed? That's just bull crap, so that might be the difference in approaching this issue of Asian Americanness on screen is that

I want to deal with it as ridiculous ...hang-up rather than something that needs to be dealt with. I don't deal with it.

Question 24: Have you ever been included in an exhibition that was contextualized as Asian American or have you been labeled as an Asian American artist/filmmaker?

Not too much, except that ... my films has been shown in Asian American film festivals along with other places. I still don't know how well I'm appreciated as an Asian American filmmaker because I don't take the conventional-conventional sense of identity. I think it lies ...it comes from the fact that I was born and raised in Japan. And most Japanese people have a very difficult time considering ourselves a minority, that's why so many of us...like part of White community in this country, or you know...most Japanese people I know distance themselves from Asian American or any kind of ethnicity related movement, so in that sense, yes, of course, I don't want to vision hold, but I like Asian American people. I like going to the festival and hanging out with them and exchanging information and having fun.

Question 25: Which Asian American film festivals have you been in and did you show your work?

You know, I think, I used to make more short films in the 90's and ...pretty much all of them, you used to be invited that...I wouldn't keep track of and then as a filmmaker, personally, I love Asian American film festivals and going there, hanging out. The marketing value from those venues are not great, like putting it on a resume, I didn't view it as a great asset, I'll go there, but...Sundance I always bold-face it on my resume and any other better known ones, but when it's Asian American film, I usually put it on the lower end of the film screen that specific title enjoys, so yeah, I guess that's how I treat it. It's changing now, but marketing promotional value of Asian American film festivals are very low.

Question 26: So you went to the Sundance Film Festival, what artwork did you show, what film did you show and how was your experience with the Sundance Film Festival?

It was the first student film I did. It's called "Hisao". It's a photo collage animation, it was nine minutes long. It was on this singer, songwriter who's a Japanese guy and ...he used to perform in coffee shops in LA and I ran into him one day and I did a photo documentary and that evolved into that animation process. It was a documentary, but it was done in this fantasy, collage world, so I called it a subjective documentary. And it was okay, I went to Sundance. I wasn't going to go 'cus I knew...I had no other projects to pitch, oh you go there, and make conversation. People have this idea that you go to film festival, you make connections. Some people probably do, but that's not how I look at it, I mean, that's not how the deals are made. Deals are made prior to the festival. You already have contacts. You go there, and then you know, reaffirm the connections you already made, but you don't go out there out of the blue and then make some contacts which are going to turn into something else. You hear about those crazy deals that happen in Sundance, but that's only for like those feature films. Anyways, so I didn't

think there was much reason to go. Everybody's like, no, you gotta go man, so whatever. So I went there with two of my friends who accompanied me so I would go and it was okay. I think it was as I expected, there were celebrities. Kevin Bacon was playing with a band. The Bacons were there, okay, that's good. Bacons are here (laughing). And we were eating dinner and then kind of goofy with...we didn't have any like, exclusive tickets for those fancy parties and I was there in 1999 or 2000, I forgot, but it was the hay dates of Sundance. Sundance is down now, they're not selling much there. There was that commotion, it was fun to watch that, but other than that, I just watched some films and that was it. The thing that I enjoyed the most at any festival is watching other movies. I get to spend a couple days just watching movies and that rarely happens and that's what I enjoy the most. And meeting other filmmakers, but Asian American Film Festivals, you get to see more Asian...it's easier to get to know people. Someplace like Sundance is like, it's weird in the sense if you're not somebody, like, don't waste my time kind of thing. It's not necessarily a place that you nurture comradery, so it's okay, I just basically I can just, been there, done there. There's nothing spectacular about it.

Question 27: So, is identifying with other Asian American filmmakers and being Asian American filmmaker, is that important to you personally?

Yes, looking in the future and stuff, I am proud to be an Asian American filmmaker. I am proud to be one of them, you know and yes, it's an important part. I do approach it in different ways, but it seems like people are accepting me as who I am, so it's cool.

Question 28: Why is it important to you?

I guess I got used to the reality of politics in the U.S., you know, you can't, I mean, okay, we didn't start this label. I didn't want to be grouped with Koreans, and Chinese, and the Pakistanis, but that's what it is, you know. And they're cool. I love them. And I love all those artists from those regions and my wife is Muslim. So I actually started having more personal connections with the South Asians and Pakistanis, you know, like that's the far end of Asia, right? Pakistan and Turkey. I don't know if Turkey's involved, I don't know, maybe they're trying to view it? You know, Afghan, what is it? Central Asia or is it Asia? So, yeah, I love them and I have chances to learn more about it and I'm really proud to be involved in and I like being put in the same category as Cambodians, which is where my wife is from. Never thought that I would be identified with Cambodians, but now that I am married, it's like, man, this is great, this is power. The diversity that we have within our community is power and I think we might as well take on that advantage of this jumbo mumbo, so many different entities are called "Asian American", you know. Good. Let's just make good use of it. That's how I feel.

Question 29: What types of exhibition opportunities have changed or stayed the same for you over the course of the years?

What do you mean?

Question 30: For example, do you continue going to the film festivals and how did you find all these opportunities to go to them?

You apply sometimes, sometimes you have to look up things. I'm kind of re-promoting myself. I wasn't very serious of promoting my feature while my producer was on...and it didn't go much...many places, I decided I have to promote my own film. So I started doing what I used to do as a student, which is just go through every film festival in the world, check it out, does it qualify or not, how much does it cost, blah blah blah. I mean, wherever it seems to fit, you send it. It's like carpet bombing, just hit every one of them. So that's what I started doing with my last couple of shorts that I finished. I restarted doing them in November. I hadn't promoted myself since I was a student back in the 90's. And so that's how you find...just a list, bam, one after another. And I have some, I'm pretty good at assessing the scale and the purposes of the film festivals. There are some film festivals...that just want to make money by having entries. It's not worth it. Most film festivals in Europe are supported by the cultural department so the entry fees are free and then they actually take the culture of film very seriously. Some places focuses more on industry-related things and all that, so I pick out the things that I think is fit and just send it out and that's how I also entered this film festival in Switzerland and that's why I'm flying out in March, but I had never known that festival until I looked it up. So that's the process.

Question 31: How did you get the name “Eye from the Sky” for your company and what inspired you to create this company?

I had an image of an eyeball falling off...out of the top of the ball dropping onto another marble and this eyeball is like rolling off this marble sphere. And I thought that could be an interesting image and so that's why I decided to call my company the “Eye from the Sky” to describe that and I made the eyeball thing a logo, although I made it into an abstract two circle instead of drawing just an eyeball.

Can you explain to me more about your company and what your company does?

We, I do a lot, actually it's more like freelance, although it has a company form. And productions for commercials and do a lot of animatics. A lot of animation, motion graphics, usually local, regional commercials, if not pops and mom's restaurants on the corner, like Giordanos, like that kind, it's not a national brand, but it's regional or like some midwest bank, it's not city of Chicago, but it's only like three or four states, so...that level of clients that I deal with regional clients. I sometimes do KFC, but not national. It's more for the regional franchise commercial there are like two tiers of that management. So it's like that. I do like some big...what have I done, the big ones I do national level, I do animatics which is animated versions of the commercial and then they use it for market research and if it seems to work, they actually put in big money to shoot it for real and right now there's this commercial by, what's that name, Ziploc (laughs). If you see a Ziploc commercial with a dude throwing steak over his shoulder, then that's the animatics I did for it. I didn't do the actual commercial, I did the animatics and then they took it to the market research. I heard that it's being played with it.

Question 32: Very interesting. Who or what motivates you?

Who motivates me? In terms of big names or personal names?

Response: It doesn't matter; either or.

I guess, you know, peers motivate me. And when I was twenty, everybody around me wanted to become a filmmaker, direct a feature. By the time I turned thirty, like only one eighth of those people are still trying. By the time they are my age – I just turned 38 – there's only like one out of fifty people from that time who are still making, 'cus people are still trying to do it are down-right broke or they actually cut into the industry.

Although there are some people who made it into industry, they quit their directing – reality TV shows and stuff, they're not necessarily doing their features, so it still kind of inspires me to see people of my age, close to forty, not having security, not having you know, like they're intelligent people, you know, they could be making buku dollars if they had gone into Finance and all that, but instead, they just chose to stay in the arts, still doing it and doing good job – that inspires me. Whether they are making a lot of money or no money, if they're still doing and if they still believe in it, and if they're still not afraid of the future, what might happen to them, because we don't have savings (laughing), right? And that inspires me. Okay, cool, you're not afraid, 'cus okay, then I'm not going to allow myself to be afraid. People of my kind of area, artist of my age, I think anxiety attack is actually a regular occurrence, like what the fuck man, I don't have pension plan. You keep hearing all these things, like oh, you need this and that before you are fifty and sixty, and you know, it kind of scares you, but it's nice to see other people like you know, they probably have as little as I do and they keep going, I gotta go, too. What the hell am I afraid of? So that's what inspires me.

Question 33: What are you currently working on right now? Are you working on anything?

Right now I'm finishing up this short film that's gonna kick ass. I got back into short film after I finished the feature last year. I finished shooting ...I'm going to shoot another one...very productive on that. Finishing up a script of the next feature film that's gonna be my, that's gonna be my career defining feature and I'm gonna be on the map after that, thank you very much (laughing). After that, I'm gonna have a pension plan. So that's what I'm writing, and making short films, finishing up one of them, so yeah, keeping myself busy.

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