

# kate interview (2024-02-08 13\_22 GMT-7)

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00:00 David Allison

Hi, Katie, thanks so much for joining me today. I really appreciate your time. And I wonder if we could start just by having you introduce yourself, just share your name, and just maybe a little bit about your background and we can kind of go from there.

00:12 Katie

Yeah. So my name, my full name is Katerina Vuletich, but I go by Katie. I am a visual artist, among other things. I also have a background in social work. I've worked a bit of time in higher education. And right now, I'm going back to school at CU Denver.

00:35 David Allison

Fantastic. So tell me just a little bit more about your background, how did you come to be in this area? And, you know, maybe your family history a little bit?

00:49 Katie

Yeah. So it kind of depends on how far back to go. But I think as many people in the United States, I come from immigrants, far back, some a little bit closer to me. So on my father's side, my grandmother and grandfather, my nanni and grandfather, they were from Italy. And my grandfather grew up actually in Crested Butte, Colorado. And my Nanni, I believe, when she first immigrated, she actually emigrated directly to Denver. And they met there eventually. So my dad grew up in Denver, and my mom also grew up in Denver. Her family also goes back generations, but it's a little bit less clear, because they had less money. There were a lot of migrant farmers and so they were moving around a lot. But her grandfather settled in Colorado, and her mother and her family had been living in Colorado for a while. And then eventually, my dad and mom started having kids and they were living in Denver. And it's a bit of a story, but essentially, their house was robbed. And that was a very traumatic experience for my mom. And I think especially when she was having more children, she made the decision that they needed to move, and that there wasn't much choice in it. You know, it was time. And so my dad, actually he still lives in that Northwest home that they were living in before, Northwest Denver home. But my mom moved to Broomfield and she's been in that home for, well, she was in a different home. And now she is in a home that she's been in for basically my entire life.

02:58 David Allison

Wow, fantastic. So what was it like, in this area? What are some of your earlier memories of Broomfield?

03:08 Katie

Yeah, there was just less. (Laughter) There's just like a lot less. I also think that the suburbs were a lot more detached from Denver. So my parents have been divorced pretty much my entire life. And so when my dad would have us on weekends, you know, I just remember that trip was very long and boring, a lot of very empty space and then you get to Denver. And now it's, you know, homes pretty much the entire stretch of the way. I know that my mom liked Broomfield also, because it had just more open space at that point in time. And I mean, Broomfield still does have a lot of open space. I think my mom also having come from a background of migrant farmers, she had a bit of nostalgic feelings towards open land. And she wanted to be in a space that had that so you know, growing up, I just remember, you know, a lot of empty spaces. There are some things that are still around that I remember that I have, you know, fond memories of like the bike hills, which is kind of a hidden gem. I've talked with, you know, people who also grew up in Broomfield, some friends that I've remained friends with my whole life, and some of them didn't even know about it, but I think because my dad is a very sort of adventurous person and likes going on his bike and stuff. He would take us over there and I remember those pretty fondly. I also remember picking the wheat that grows, like volunteers, around that area and popping out the kernels and chewing on them, which is gross, just plain wheat. But yeah. So yeah, it was just empty. Broomfield was very open.

05:27 David Allison

So it sounds like, you know, going to ride bikes, that sort of thing was some of the activities that you did in your free time; anything else? Were you always interested in art from a younger age? Or was that something that grew over time?

05:40 Katie

Yeah, I was always interested in art from a pretty young age. You know, I think that it was also nurtured a lot. So, my mom, she has always had a lot of artistic inclination. But her parents did not foster that so much. They were both working class. So her father, my grandfather, was a golf course maintenance person. So he was, you know, constantly caring for that land. And then her mom was a nurse. And so, you know, that persuasion, they kind of pushed all of their children, like get sort of, you know, working class jobs, and my mom ended up going into nursing. And when she got divorced, she went into teaching. But that all kind of culminated in her being very supportive of her children. So she, you know, wanted us to pursue what we loved and what we were passionate about. So, you know, it's one of those things where I think sometimes people think that, you know, there are certain individuals that have a just natural inclination for things, but that's true. And, you know, nurturing those inclinations is important. So, yeah, and that's kind of what led me down that path. But as a child, you know, especially growing up in Broomfield and having my mom, she grew up in Denver, and then having had that robbery, made her want to move. She I think was always a little bit worried about us kids, even in a place like Broomfield, which now as an adult, I think is crazy. You know, it was just a very safe place. So we would go out every now and again. But, you know, we weren't like latchkey kids or anything. We would mostly just be homebodies, stay at home. And we had a huge, you know, the house, my mom's

still in, has still has a huge backyard. So we just run around and play out there and eat dirt and hurt each other. (Laughter) Yeah.

07:59 David Allison

So tell me, how many siblings do you have?

08:02 Katie

So I have two older brothers. Yeah, so I'm the youngest. Y Yeah.

08:10 David Allison

Very cool. Tell me a little bit more about that kind of nurturing. I like how you phrase that, that some people have, you know, there's a gift you're born with, some kind of natural piece there. But then what does that nurturing look like? What are some of the tangible things that you did in your journey?

08:30 Katie

Yeah, um, so, you know, I think part of it was just my mom would get me a lot of artistic material, she would, you know, get me a lot of materials that she thought I might be interested in, or that she wished she had had when she was a kid. And, sometimes she would have me sign up for classes. We didn't have a huge amount of money growing up, especially just immediately after the divorce. So my mom would sometimes enroll us actually in classes through the community center, the Broomfield Community Center, because they tend to be a lot more affordable. And they also are short term so it fits with the attention span of a child. So when I told my mom, I wanted to be a ballerina, she'd like, okay, and you know, sign me up for a month, and then I realized that I did not want to and it would change. So. Yeah, just little classes. You're in there in between. Yeah, my mom also, you know, I wouldn't say that this is directly tied into artistic practice the way that buying art materials is, but she would also have exchange students. She had a couple of exchange students because we couldn't afford to travel. So instead, she would have, you know, the world come to us. And I think that also, you know, broadens your horizons and like, makes you realize that there's a world and kind of can get the creative juices flowing and make you start thinking about things differently.

10:23 David Allison

Yeah, absolutely. What can you share? This is really interesting. What sorts of, I don't know, who are some persons that you met in that process?

10:36 Katie

Yeah. Yeah. So, you know, it's kind of, it's a good question and a complicated question. Because I think, as I've gotten older, you know, the influential people throughout my life, they almost fall off, right? Like, they get replaced by a new one, like, oh, this professor I had was really influential in my artistic practice. But there are a lot of people that came before them. So you know, I had a high school teacher, I think her name was Miss Ellis. And she retired in my senior year, so she's gone. I know that there's still a teacher that I had that I also really enjoyed. He was the digital art teacher, but now, I think, he is just art teacher at Broomfield high, Mr. Mickens. And I've actually talked with some younger adults, like I've done some tutoring and stuff with art and art lessons with young adults who are currently in high school at Broomfield High and they don't believe me that he also used to be assistant coach for football. Yeah,

they're like, that's so funny. I never knew that. So yeah, I'd say like, high school was super impactful. You know, I had some teachers in grade school that I really don't remember as well. I remember there was one that I really loved, but she was only around for a year or two. And yeah, I'd say like, that high school was like really big, and then there was also Mr. Costello, who did photography, and he did darkroom photography, specifically. I don't know if Broomfield is still doing that. I hope they are because it's a really unique process. It also gets you very familiar with the physical properties of photography, and, you know, sensitivity to light and exposure, things like that. So yeah, I'd say all of them were just absolutely.....they were great teachers. Yeah.

12:55 David Allison

Super cool. So tell me just a little bit more about, we've talked a little bit about growing up and that sort of thing. So as you graduated from high school, what was the next thing for you after that? Yeah.

13:08 Katie

So after I graduated from high school, like I said, I wasn't really a latchkey kid, you know, I didn't go out very much. So I was very much a homebody. And not only because of, you know, in-state tuition, but also because of that just, you know, proclivity, I was looking for in-state schools. My eldest brother went to Regis University, my second eldest brother went to CU Boulder. And I was looking at both of those schools because I had no idea what I wanted to do. I knew that I wanted to do something with art, but I wanted to do art and.... which is still the way that I am today. So I applied for both of those schools. Got into both of them. But you know, if I'm frank, Regis just offered a better financial package at the point when I was....(laughter)

14:10 David Allison

Fair enough.

14:12 Katie

Yeah, I also knew that they were, based on my brother Joe's experience, a much smaller school. And so the class sizes were a lot more intimate and that sounded a lot more appealing to me. And it's liberal arts, so I could very easily do art and,,,and I ended up doing something completely unrelated. I did art and economics, so I double majored. And I've used the art degree more than I've used the economics degree. So yeah.

14:42 David Allison

That's great. Yeah.

14:45 Katie

Does that answer your question?

14:42 David Allison

Yeah, it did. That was great. And then, so you then graduated from Regis; and then what was next for you after that?

14:59 Katie

Yeah. So afterwards. I knew I wanted to do, for a long time, probably since the age of 14, I always had a desire to do either something with AmeriCorps or a similar volunteer program, full time volunteer program. And so after college, immediately after actually, in one of my classes, which now I actually speak at some of the classes for senior thesis in art. I met an artist, Randy Pusan (spelling??). And he, at the time, was doing contemporary realist sort of paintings, very different from what I do. But he had a nonprofit in San Luis Valley and so I went down there for a month. Randy also influenced my career a lot. He's since had a stroke, which has been very impactful on his career, obviously, but he and his wife, Evie, seem to still be creating, which is important, but they've since moved out of state and the nonprofit is no more. That's a tangent. But anyway, so immediately after I did that, and that was my first time going out of state, which really, it was, literally right on the border with New Mexico. So I think that that was a good experience, an important experience, you have to be able to, like get out of the home and like, No, that is fine. It's also just a very rural community. So you know, it's like an hour drive to the nearest grocery store, on a highway. So that one, I think, was a very important experience for me to just understand how, you know, different parts of the world can be. After that, you know, during my senior year, I applied for a full time volunteer position and I ended up getting paired with a nonprofit called Urban Peak. They are a shelter that serves youth experiencing homelessness in Denver. They're actually the only shelter that serves youth experiencing homelessness. And during my college process, I had been an RA. And so they felt like, you know how to work with youth. And so I actually wanted to work with women and children, or in the environment, but that felt like a better fit, based on my experience. And I did really end up loving it; you know, excuse my language, but it really kicked my ass, if I'm frank. Social work is really, really difficult but it's also really, really fulfilling. So I did that for the year. I did a full time volunteer year, and then I worked with them for like another two years; and then, did what's called relief staff, which is basically filling in when other people leave, because there's a very high turnover rate in social work. So yeah, and I still actually do some things with them today. I've done some murals with the kids. I've done different little art projects with them.

18:37 David Allison

That's great. Yeah, that's great. And while you're doing that, were you in Broomfield? Or were you down in Denver?

18:46 Katie

Yeah, so a little bit of both. So during the full time volunteer year, the program that I was working with, they offered housing as part of it was an intentional community. So you lived in a community with other individuals and the other house didn't get along very well. But my house got along very well. We had folks from all over the country and even all over the world. We had somebody from Swaziland and a woman from Cambodia. And yeah, it was just a very interesting program. And during that time, I was living in Denver, so it was in the Five Points neighborhood. And then when I was working with Urban Peak afterwards as an actual employee that was being paid. I was living off 17th in Denver, with the man who was now my husband. But with my partner and we we lived there for a while; he's now finished, but he was doing a masters and a PhD program at CU Anschutz at the time. Yeah, I mean, it gets very muddled. Basically, yes, during my work with Urban Peak, I was mostly living in Denver; and then shortly thereafter, I ended up moving back to Broomfield for a number of years. My husband was actually in Boston for several years doing a postdoc and now he and I are both living in Denver again. But there was a lot of ping-ponging back and forth in between that; there was also a point in time where

I lived in the San Luis Valley again for another six months with Randy and Abby. And yeah, just kind of all over the place, but always back in Brookfield, still visit my mom every weekend. Always.

21:29 David Allison

What did she think about you being back in Denver, when when you first were like I'm gonna be in Denver, was she nervous kind of?

21:39 Katie

You know, I think so. I think any parent kind of is. I think there's always a bit of nervousness about your child going out into the world, regardless; it wasn't so much about Denver, you know, it's just if I had gone anywhere, she would have been worried.

22:02 David Allison

Right.

22:03 Katie

So yes, she was, but also Denver had changed a lot since I was a child. You know, like I said, I remember visiting my dad on the weekends. And I remember....I think actually, yeah, so this was after my parents were divorced. I was still a child, he was actually robbed a second time. And this is now what is the Highlands, right. So super gentrified neighborhood currently, but at that point in time, was still quite sketchy. And there was a point in time where I was playing at a playground near my dad's house; there's a library not too far from his house. And there was a shooting across the street. So everybody had to get down on the mulch, ducking for safety, basically. Yeah. So you know, it has changed so much. But I think like what my mom felt about it, still remains. But my mom also was very much a homebody when she was a child. I mean, she grew up in Colorado, she remained in Colorado. She also just didn't have the money, her family didn't have the money to travel around very much. So, I think it's difficult to say whether that nervousness was coming from just like Denver, or the fact that we were just going into the world. So even when I was, you know, living on campus at Regis, it's like, I think she was worried. Like, this is a stupid safe campus. (Laughter) It's very small. But she was still very concerned for us, because every parent usually is.

24:05 David Allison

So could you describe a little bit, just to change the conversation a little bit you mentioned that you were working with, kind of interning with Randy, who had a very different style than yours. So how would you describe your style of art?

24:24 Katie

So I like to paint on trash. (Laughter) So it's a bit of a joke, but it's true. I prefer mixed media collage. So one of my very influential professors when I was going to college, Tony Ortega, is a very prolific, at least I would say, very prolific Chicano artist here in Denver. You know, a lot of people in the art community know who I'm talking about when I bring him up. And I think the great thing about Tony is that he is never limited by his mediums; he's always trying to do something new, and trying to experiment. And he has continued being able to do that long into his career, which I think, is sometimes a rare thing, because oftentimes the whims of the consumers dictate what art you create, especially



when you're represented by a gallery. But, Tony, I think, also just Chicano art in general, oftentimes does kind of push those boundaries, even like, you know, sort of Neo Neo Chicano art continues to kind of experiment with mediums and has a lot of liberties in that regard. So I, having learned from him and been very interested in his style, and his processes, and also his having taught the techniques that he uses, started using that in my own artwork. And I mean, mixed media collage can be really anything. Sometimes I don't do collage, necessarily, but I do always do some sort of element of mixed media. Currently, I've been really interested in found art. So you know, finding objects and trying to recreate them for certain, you know, quote, high art settings. But I also don't necessarily have a ton of faith in the high art world, always. So I try to make my art as affordable as possible. So I enjoy creating really small, accessible pieces of artwork. I do a lot of mini pen ink and watercolor paintings. I've done all sorts of little found objects, tiny artworks.

27:15 David Allison

Very cool. Very cool. I know you've done some things here in Broomfield artistically; what were some of those projects that you've worked on in the past?

27:29 Kaitie

Yeah, that's a great question, because that's like a completely different thing than what I usually do as an artist. So I think, probably about two years ago when I was still working with Urban Peak. I wanted to do chalk art, because I had heard about the Denver Chalk Art Festival. I had never done it before, though. I also was very uncomfortable with large scale works because I'm a very detail oriented person, so it's just much easier for me to work on a small scale. So I had, that was my first year doing chalk art, like two years after college with the Denver Chalk Art Festival, when it was still on Larimer Square. And I actually worked with kids at Urban Peak on a project. And yeah, it was a lot of fun, and it made me, I think, a little bit less worried about it and a little more familiar with the material itself, a little more comfortable with large scale generally. That was actually kind of my jumping off point for large scale works generally from, you know, murals to continuing chalk art and to permanent pavement installations or I should say, semi permanent permanent. I think all public art is semi permanent....

29:10 David Allison

just as a matter of course. Yes.

29:15 Katie

So that was my first time doing that. And then, since then, I've done a number of chalk art installations with the Broomfield Library. I've done some chalk art with the Environmental Services Broomfield. I don't know if they're the environmental committee. I can't remember what they're called now, currently, but I've done some work with them on Earth Day. With the Broomfield Library. I've done both, sort of maker-in-residence activities, and I've done some summer library adventure, which is their annual summer library reading thing. So I've done those sorts of things with them. You know, I think chalk art, it's fun and people always will ask about it and "oh, that's like a nice thing", and I also really love when kids want to get involved. So like leaving chalk out for them on the side, because they see somebody doing it, and they want to do it. (Laughter) So those sorts of things.

And then one, two, about two years ago, something like that, I applied for a call to do The ARTery, which is very new to Broomfield, and very exciting. And, you know, for a while now, I've had a really good relationship with Cheryl German. I also just think that she's a really nice person. She's super friendly. And yeah, she sent this call out, and I was like, oh, you know, I should give this a go. And it's worth saying that, I've applied for some calls that I just don't get and that's just the nature of public art. But I applied for this one, and myself and another artist, Paige Brown, got selected, and we did Pollinator Path on the ARTery.

31:38 David Allison

Which is beautiful, by the way.

31:40 Katie

Thank you so much. Yeah, I really enjoyed doing it and Paige was just so much fun to work with. And she and I, you know, worked very well together.

31:48 David Allison

That's great.

31:50 Katie

I actually was just talking with her and she just had a baby. So it's really exciting. But that was, I would say actually, one of the largest semi-permanent chalk art, or I can't say chalk, but one of the largest semi-permanent sidewalk paintings that I've done. And we had the community help out with the pollinator footprints that kind of lead through it and that was a lot of fun. It was a lot of fun to have, you know, little kids contributing to it, and their parents working with them. And, you know, even just some adults who are like, "I need to get out of the house". So that was a lot of fun.

32:42 David Allison

Okay, cool. Cool. So what are some of the things that you've seen change in Broomfield over time? And what are some things that you're excited about, maybe?

32:51 Katie

Yeah, I mean, it's just gotten bigger. That's a big part of it. But I also think with that, there's been a lot more intention, when it comes to what we think about community. I think it's very hard for us as humans, just generally to think about space and community before it exists. I think also just when resources are limited, because there's, you know, less money going into these endeavors. So you kind of have to do it as it happens. And you know, with that, I've seen just like a lot more community-oriented endeavors. So I know that there, oh man, I wish that I remembered the name of some of these organizations. But I know that there are a lot of different cultural organizations that have started happening, which is really cool. I know that, in this time, the library's intention with programming has changed and expanded. At the same time, as you know, just the entire city's intention with programming. You know, even the CSU Extension, those sorts of partnerships coming out of this. I think it's interesting too, because there's a lot I would say, there's a lot of sometimes nostalgia that people have where it's just like, oh, you know, Broomfield, used to be like a farming community and stuff. I think that it's important that we hold on to those memories and those those histories, but we also use them to



sort of frame our future and we consider what it means then as a community to grow from that and how we can, you know, be more inclusive and more intentional with the choices that we make. So, yeah, I just say it's gotten bigger.

35:18 David Allison

Thank you so much; I appreciate that perspective, because, yeah, people will say, I remember when Broomfield was like this, but then the next question is then, what do you envision Broomfield in the future? And how do you see that evolving? And I think the way that you explained that was really beautiful.

35:36 Katie

Well, I appreciate that. Yeah. You know, not to go on a nerd tangent, but there's this phrase that comes up a lot in art history, and even architectural landscape theory, this idea of imagined past. It's like we have, it's not the reality of what the past used to be, but it's this imagined past that's in our head. It's the nostalgia that we feel for it and I think that it's natural to have that. But I also think that, you know, we have to challenge ourselves and say, "Is this actually something that used to exist?" And, you know, how can we create, you know, a more perfect society going forward? And looking forward rather than just trying to go back to something that never existed to begin with.

36:29 David Allison

Right. Absolutely. Yeah, acknowledging that there are also things in the past that we want to just leave there, and we don't want to come back.

35:36 Katie

Absolutely.

36:41 David Allison

And being nostalgic for that, when in fact, it's not really the society that we would want to be a part of

36:45 Katie

Absolutely. And I think it's, you know, Broomfield's become just a lot more diverse and beautiful. And, you know, people come with their own image of what they imagine the perfect society looking like, right. And, you know, it does take time and intention and cooperation, which is easier said than done. But I think Broomfield is still one of these places where it's so small, relative to other parts of the state that, you know, you still have the opportunity. So this is my own thing, but several years back when Broomfield didn't allow for backyard chickens. One of my friend's fathers was going to City Council, pushing chicken. And just by chance, I was starting to get really interested in urban farming. And I was like, yeah, like, let's do this. And there weren't very many people there. So it's like, you know, still an opportunity to be a heard voice in this community, and to put your input, and there were people at those that really disagreed with the idea of backyard chickens, they had a lot of issues with it. But I think that's one of the beautiful things about a community is, you know, allowing voices to be heard and coming to consensus,

38:15 David Allison

Right, and working together for what to do. Yeah, absolutely. Anything else, either about your work, or this community, that sort of thing, before we finish up, that you want to share?

38:30 Katie

Um. I don't know if I really have anything specifically that I want to share other than that, I'm glad that Broomfield's growing. And, you know, more people are coming into this community. And you know, when I told somebody the other day, I met somebody who lives kind of in the Baseline area, the Baseline community area, and I've done some work with them as well with the Baseline community. And they're doing some really cool and interesting things. But I didn't even know that Broomfield was that large. (Laughter) I drove to the site, and I was like, this is much farther than I had understood. So yeah, it's good to see it growing.

39:24 David Allison

Well, Katie, it's been a delight talking to you, thank you so much for your time today.

39:27

Yeah. Thank you. Appreciate it, David.