

2-18-2010

Sam del Rosario Interview

Nancy Shaba
DePaul University

Recommended Citation

Shaba, Nancy, "Sam del Rosario Interview" (2010). *Asian American Art Oral History Project*. Paper 18.
http://via.library.depaul.edu/oral_his_series/18

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Asian American Art Oral History Project at Via Sapientiae. It has been accepted for inclusion in Asian American Art Oral History Project by an authorized administrator of Via Sapientiae. For more information, please contact mbernal2@depaul.edu.

Interviewer: Nancy Shaba
Artist: Sam Del Rosario
In Person interview- DePaul University, Chicago, IL
Date: February 18, 2010 7:15 – 8:00pm central time

*Note: The following interview was conducted by a DePaul University undergraduate student enrolled in AAS 201: Asian American Arts & Culture during Winter Quarter 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.*

Q-How do you identify yourself?

A-First thing that comes to my mind is I identify myself as an Asian American. My parents are both Pilipino and met here in the late sixties. I was born and raised here in Chicago. I identify myself more with an Asian American than a Pilipino American.

Q-Why do you say that?

A-I have more in common with how I conceptualize Asian America verses Philippines. I identify more with Asian American culture more than any other culture. Pilipino culture is more foreign to me.

Q-So according to your terms of what an artist is, do you consider yourself a real artist?

A-I consider myself more of a writer. But I guess I do consider myself an artist, but also a social worker. I consider myself an artist more so than an Asian American artist. I very much consider myself a social worker than just an artist. I feel like being Asian American can also pigeon hole you with unfair expectations made of you not just with people in our community but people outside the community as well.

Q-Why and how did you get involved with FAAIM?

A-I met Tim Hugh who helps run FAAIM. I just went to some of the films and it just looked like a lot of fun. I saw some amazing films. I got to be a part of putting that together. It was just getting involved with some fun people and having that advocacy of being a part of the Asian American movement and that being a conscious choice to promote Asia America.

Q-Has being in FAAIM answered some of your identity questions or brought more awareness to them?

A-It had definitely brought more awareness to them by just seeing the diversity that is produced from one community; which just reinforces the diversity from another community. It is always good to be reminded of that. For a lot of artists, it's very easy to fall into the pigeon hole of what is safe what is within the comfort zone. It forces us to answer what is Asia America. I don't think that there's one answer to that, its just fluid.

Q-What was it like to work with other Asian American artists?

A-Very challenging. This is the first time that I worked with artists as a big part of my life. Most of the people I knew and interacted with considered themselves artists and were and still are very serious about expressing themselves. I felt kind of like an outsider. I never really considered myself part of the art producers of our group. But I consider myself an artist. I was an artist that was not in front of people a lot. It was not necessarily visible or audible. I was still mostly a writer by the time I had just graduated from school and finished with second city. That was the type of stuff that helped me creatively in general.

Q-Did they influence your writing at all?

A-I think so; I think I'm more conscious when I write characters now. So when I perform characters I try not to fall into the easy characters. If I play an Asian person, I make sure I have a very thick Chicago accent because that is the character I most identify with. That was something that was high on our conscious, being aware of stereotypes and how they are best disrupted.

Q-I wanted to go back to the issue of the stereotypes and how they are addressed. In class, we discussed stereotypical Asian roles especially for women in the sixties and seventies. I would like to hear your opinion on that. Do you feel that taking those roles negative for the community or do you feel that it's a job and they need work?

A-Well someone's going to get that job, and as an actor you have to make a living. And yes there is that balance between taking roles that are moving forward and there are the stereotypical roles that we're still encountering. If you see the actor who had an accent play someone without an accent we'd be moving in the right direction. It just calls for the need for better writing. It's basically someone being lazy; they just want someone to fill that slot. Same for improv comedy, you see a lot of people playing stereotypical roles because everyone knows them and they laugh at them.

Q-Would you say that's one of the reasons you branched into writing?

A-I always had a liking for writing. I discovered my interest for writing towards the end of college.

Q-Have you incorporated your comic personality into your art and social work?

A-I use humor to try to gauge someone's decisional capacity or cognitive picture of where they are. If I make a joke and they laugh it, it gives me a perception of where they are with paying attention and making a connection. That's something humor has with people.

Q-Where do you see the Asian American culture headed towards? Do you see it progressing?

A-It's progressing. It's getting better with things moving slowly as they always have. The trend would be to have more images and movie production. I think it's going to be harder to not be involved with different cultures. I think people will first get their images through the media and art. Moments where people realize that just because this person is Asian doesn't mean he is a doctor are moments where our community progresses. Really good movies like Harold and Kumar help to change the perception of what Asians are. I think those types of things will help things move more effectively opposed to protests, or things that just hit you over the head.

Q-After stepping away for a little bit to earn your degree do you find it hard to get back into being an Asian American artist and working with the community?

A-Yeah, I've gotten what I needed from it for now. I wish I could do social work and be heavily involved in the community. I guess I'm just a lazy guy. I like naps. Social work is my job its how I make my money. Using the earlier point as a metaphor, do I sell out and take the stereotypical role and eat or hold on tightly to my ideals and not take the role. I think in choosing to be a social worker, I had to spend less time being an artist. I find myself very lucky, I love being a social worker, I get off of work I'm very tired but I feel like I've done something. When I was in college, I wanted to be a doctor but I think I would've been a miserable one. I'd like to get more of a balance with working and being a writer. There are a lot of artists who have professional jobs. They made their parents happy but now they're painters and doing this stuff and I really hate those people because they're great at two different things. I guess I'm just jealous of them because again I like naps. For most artists, that is the balance they need to strike.

Q-Did you feel an obligation to your family or the culture to work with the Asian American community?

A-I kind of did, but I always felt that I would be doing it anyway. I find the issues quite interesting. I'm able to bring my social work skills into the Asian community.

Q- What are you currently working on?

A-Artistically, I'm working with a friend of mine on a screen play like thousands of other people. It keeps me involved in the community. It makes me not want to be a lazy writer. I want to write real characters that people can really identify themselves with no matter how minor they are.

Q-What can we hope to see from you in the future?

A- A movie. My goals along those lines would be a movie with really good characters.

End