



Melodie Reay

Rösch Bakehaus - Baton Rouge, LA

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Melodie Reay in Long Beach, CA; Phillip Norman Reid in Denver, CO

Interviewer: Phillip Norman Reid

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Phillip Norman: All right. Today is Tuesday, May 17th, 2022. I'm Phillip Norman. I'm currently in Denver, Colorado. I'm speaking with Melodie Reay for a project about king cake baking traditions in South Louisiana. Melodie, could you introduce yourself for the recorder?

Melodie Reay: Yep. My name is Melodie Reay. I am currently in Los Angeles, California. I can't tell you who I am, but I can tell you that I like to make things [Laughter] Primarily out of clay and dough.

Phillip Norman: Cool. Awesome. Well, thanks so much for doing this, Melodie. I really appreciate it. Excited to hear your story. And just to kind of get started, could you tell me a little bit about where you grew up and what your upbringing was like?

Melodie Reay: Okay. I grew up in Burnaby, BC, which is a suburb of Vancouver, and my upbringing was pretty great.

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I played sports a lot as a kid, and I was outdoors a lot. And my extended family is all on Vancouver Island, so we spent a lot of time there and I have a lot of memories of camping and beach trips and things like that.

Phillip Norman: Very cool. What were your sports?

Melodie Reay: Primarily it was softball and basketball, and then basketball got a bit more serious, so I played basketball into college and my body fell apart. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Gotcha. Same thing happened to me with running in college, so I know how that goes. Well, cool. And Vancouver Island, so you would kind of do outdoor activities there, camping and stuff you said?

Melodie Reay: Yeah. Yeah. My grandparents had a motorhome, so I have very fond memories of trips in the motorhome.

Phillip Norman: Awesome.

Melodie Reay: Yeah. And close to the water. You've been there. There's lots of beautiful places to camp and hike and explore.

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Phillip Norman: Totally. It's a gorgeous area for sure. And were these your maternal or paternal grandparents?

Melodie Reay: The motorhome, paternal.

Phillip Norman: Okay. Gotcha. So introduce us to your family a little bit, your immediate family. What did your parents do for a living? Did you have any siblings?

Melodie Reay: Okay. Yeah. I have two older brothers, and my dad, he was in a rock and roll band. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Oh, cool.

Melodie Reay: But when they started a family he went to work in a factory, blue-collar worker in a box factory, and he did that up until he retired, like, two years ago. And then, my mom stayed at home for a while but then she eventually went to work as a ceramics programmer at the

arts center nearby. And she just recently retired and now she's spending more time making her art in her studio.

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Phillip Norman: Very cool. So she was a ceramicist while you were growing up, and knowing your dad is a musician, were you drawn to creativity because they were both creative or were you, like, that's lame 'cause my parents do it, or what did you think? [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: You know what? I don't know. I think my dad, he tried to give us piano lessons when we were little, and I think being good at something doesn't make you a good teacher. And yeah, he made me cry a lot. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Oh, no.

Melodie Reay: So I didn't continue the piano, but then eventually I did take his guitar and I learned how to play guitar because of him. And then my mom, same thing. I didn't really care for it when she was doing it, I just cared about sports. But then when I moved away I ended up doing the same thing.

Phillip Norman: Okay. So it was a long road back to the stuff they did.

Melodie Reay: Yep. Couldn't get away.

Phillip Norman: Gotcha.

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And then, what was your relationship like with your older brothers? How much older are they?

Melodie Reay: Jamie is, like, a year and a half and people used to think we were twins. We look a lot alike, I guess. And then my other brother, John, he is, what, five years older than me, and he was the one who got into trouble all the time.

Phillip Norman: Got it. [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: By the time I came around my parents didn't care. [Laughter] I couldn't do anything wrong.

Phillip Norman: Yes. The privilege of being the youngest sibling, which I am as well.

Melodie Reay: Yep. Nice.

Phillip Norman: I had a long leash. [Laughter] Cool. But what did you want to be when you grew up? You were playing sports.

Melodie Reay: Mm-hmm.

Phillip Norman: Did you want to be an athlete or what was on your mind?

Melodie Reay: Yeah, for sure. I wanted to be the first woman in the NBA. There wasn't a WNBA then so that was my plan.

Phillip Norman: Awesome.

Melodie Reay: [Laughter] But yeah, I blew both my knees and got them both redone.

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Actually, you were talking about physiotherapists, and I have to say I had the best physiotherapist ever and he's now working with the Golden State Warriors.

Phillip Norman: Wow.

Melodie Reay: Yeah, Rick Celebrini, he's the man. Anyways, but he couldn't save my basketball career. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: He wasn't that good. [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: Yeah. And then I went to college and after I stopped playing basketball I was taking a bit of everything and couldn't really figure it out. And also I struggled with depression a lot and I eventually dropped out. And when I finally went back it was for visual art and that seemed to stick.

Phillip Norman: Cool. Was visual art something you kind of came upon or were drawn to while you took that break from school or was that always an interest?

Melodie Reay: Yeah, I think so. I don't know. It's weird.

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I guess it was always there, the creativity, but it's like I seem to really focus on one thing and then everything else falls to the wayside. So I think when I played sports I didn't spend a lot of time doing other creative outlets. And the same goes with in between I really spent a lot of time playing music and writing songs and I thought that's what I was gonna do. And then, just things like baking takes over and then what's what I'm spending my time on. Or if it's not that then clay takes over and there's just no room for anything else.

Phillip Norman: Um-hm, yeah. You kinda get one-track minded with one pursuit.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: I know for me creativity kind of helps with-- I struggle with depression, too, and it's definitely a helpful thing. Is that the same for you? Is it kinda helpful?

Melodie Reay: Yeah. Yeah. If you don't have that outlet I think it can be pretty destructive.

Phillip Norman: Right. Kind of channel that energy.

Melodie Reay: Um-hm.

Phillip Norman: Right.

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Let's see. So yeah, you touched on a few different creative things you've done. So let's go to baking. When did you start baking and who were you baking with?

Melodie Reay: The first time I really remember liking baking, really getting into it, was in high school. I took a home ec. class and I think the baking-- every time we learned something I would go home from school with my friend Becky, and we would make that thing and eat it. [Laughter] And the first thing I remember was this apple pie, but it wasn't really an apple pie, it was like a biscuit crust with a pile of apples on it and streusel, and that was the first time I just felt really impressed with what I'd made. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: That's awesome. Sounds like a classic home ec. dessert.

Melodie Reay: Yup.

Phillip Norman: That's very cool.

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And last time we talked you mentioned baking a little bit with your grandmother. Was that in high school or before, when did that come along?

Melodie Reay: Yeah, I think it was before. I was actually talking to my mom, and she said that my grandma said that out of all the grandkids she couldn't teach me anything because I knew everything already. [Laughter] So I guess we don't have the same memories of that. But I do remember helping my grandma in the kitchen. And my grandma was the type, she didn't really have recipes. It was sort of like take this pot and fill it halfway with milk, so I think a lot of people weren't able to continue on with her recipes after she passed. And I'm one of the few grandkids that can make the grandma buns.

Phillip Norman: Wow. What are the grandma buns?

Melodie Reay: They're full of milk and butter and they're glazed with a bit of sugar syrup on top.

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So they're just light, fluffy, a tiny bit sweet. They're just so good.

Phillip Norman: That sounds delicious. And this is your mom's mom?

Melodie Reay: Yep.

Phillip Norman: Okay. What was her name?

Melodie Reay: Helen Lundgren [sp].

Phillip Norman: Okay. Cool. Well, were there any other family members or just outside the family, mentors, formative people to you as you were growing up?

Melodie Reay: Yeah. Actually, one thing about my Grandma Lundgren, it was a really big family on that side, and everyone sort of stuck around really close by except for my family was the only family that moved to the mainland. But there was this tradition of Sunday pancakes and

every time we'd go over there it was Sunday pancakes. It was a tiny little house and a tiny little table, and people would just sort of cram in. There was only a number of people that could fit at the table and then everyone else just kind of waiting for their turn, and my grandma would just turn out pancakes for hours.

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And when you were done you had to get up and wash your dishes so someone else could sit down. And that is ingrained-- I don't know a cousin who doesn't do that now. Even when I lived alone I made myself pancakes on Sundays.

Phillip Norman: Oh, wow.

Melodie Reay: It's the thing that just, I don't know, brings me to my family. So that's probably one of the biggest traditions that we have. But my mom definitely is the most influential person to me, I think. She insists she's not a baker though she very much is. She's just sort of-- I don't know, she's a maker. And she just always makes everything special for people. She'd always make the thing that was your favorite on your birthday or if you were down.

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Or if there's a guest coming there's always gonna be baked goods. And she would make cards and just everything she made was so special. And I think that maybe I got a little bit of that from her. Just the gesture of making things for people I think I got from her.

Phillip Norman: Right. And the emotional connection there.

Melodie Reay: Um-hm.

Phillip Norman: What were some of your favorite things that she made you growing up?

Melodie Reay: Oh, gosh. She's made so many things. Well, a few years ago one of my uncles passed away and she drew a picture of me and him playing the banjo. It was one of the last times I saw him. And she just drew this scene. And yeah, she's done a few things like that that have just kind of blown me away.

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And when me and Jim got married she made us this ceramic dish that has a crawfish and a maple leaf on it or something. [Laughter] The house is full of things that she's made.

Phillip Norman: That's amazing. But she insisted she wasn't a baker. Why do you think that was?

Melodie Reay: I don't know. I think she does that especially because of my baking. She insists that she baked out of necessity, and she could follow recipes, but she didn't really like to make up her own recipes. And I think that when I started baking she was just glad to not have to do it all herself so she kind of just insists that she's not the baker, I am. I gotta make the pie.

[Laughter]

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Phillip Norman: Right. Taking off some responsibilities, for her

Melodie Reay: Yep.

Phillip Norman: Well, awesome. That's really cool to hear about your family and how family time was going back to the island, like you said, you were the only folks on the mainland. How big is Vancouver Island, do a lot of people live there?

Melodie Reay: Yeah, I guess so. Gosh, I'm terrible with numbers like that.

Phillip Norman: Yeah, me, too.

Melodie Reay: I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of people, but it's definitely gotten so much bigger over the years. Victoria is a relatively big city. It's the capital. But Nanaimo, where my family's from, was sort of mid island and it was just rural. And I remember as a kid when they put the highway in and just how the highway going through, not their property so much but really close by, and just how the traffic has changed and developed over the years. Last time I was there, maybe last summer or the year before, I could walk to a distillery from my grandma's property, which is just-- that says it all.

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It's totally developing.

Phillip Norman: Right. Where it once was a very rural place.

Melodie Reay: Um-hm.

Phillip Norman: Just you describing going to a rural place to have family time, it does remind me of the dynamic in Baton Rouge when I've done oral histories with people who grew up in Baton Rouge because that was also, like, going from the city and suburbs to the country to be at the grandparents' house with the family.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: So it's kinda interesting. Two very different places but they have that similar exchange.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: Just growing up in that part of Canada did you find you generally liked it? Were you ready to get out? How did that place shape you?

Melodie Reay: Yeah, I think I liked it. I loved it.

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And especially since I've left, now I've realized that is sort of my home of all homes. But also I think I'm the only one in my family that had that itch, that had to go elsewhere. So yeah, I'm the only one that moved away and I'm the only one that went to school. The first time I left I think it was in between going to school when I had sort of left school, I spontaneously took a Greyhound trip to Montreal with a friend I didn't know very well at the time. And that I think, when I got to Montreal, that was the most-- I hadn't left BC, I don't, think before then, so that was just the most amazing place. It didn't even feel like Canada, it felt like a different country.

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And then I ended up moving there so, yeah, I think I've always really liked being in new places and unfamiliar places.

Phillip Norman: That's quite a Greyhound trip. That's a long way to cross Canada.

Melodie Reay: Oh, three back-breaking days were brutal.

Phillip Norman: [Laughter] Right.

Melodie Reay: Oh, to be young again. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Right. And why this friend who you didn't really know that well?

Melodie Reay: Well, I think the timing worked. He was going to do this backpack across Europe trip, and I had just dropped out of school, and I thought that I had months of an itinerary and all of the sudden I had all this free time. So just-- I don't know, what the heck. I just went along.

[Laughter]

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And then we ended up moving there together, so it sort of changed my trajectory a lot.

Phillip Norman: Right. What were you doing in Montreal when you lived there?

Melodie Reay: I got into McGill for English and then I think that's sort of when, again, I struggled a lot at school, and I sort of adopted my boyfriend's camera and I found a darkroom at McGill that wasn't being used. And so that sort of started this change in directions, I think. And then the next year I applied to Concordia for photography and then got in. And then I think as an elective I took a ceramics class, and then I was spending way more time in the ceramics than in the photography, so I ended up switching my major.

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Phillip Norman: So yeah, you've really run the gamut of artistic disciplines through your life.

[Laughter]

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: That's cool. And then, ceramics is what brought you to LSU, right, and to Louisiana?

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: So why did the LSU program stand out to you or why did Baton Rouge stand out to you?

Melodie Reay: So LSU is sort of famous-- they're one of the top ceramics programs in the country and so that was one of the reasons that I had applied there. And then, also I think similar to the way that Montreal was attractive to me Louisiana was just the most foreign, unfamiliar, unknown, different place I could think of to go. And at that point my relationship had ended, and I just wanted a complete start-over somewhere.

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So I gave away everything I owned and showed up in Baton Rouge with a suitcase and that's it.

Phillip Norman: And going in, what were your perceptions of what was going to be really different from what you had known?

Melodie Reay: Well, I made the mistake of watching *Easy Rider* right before, so I was, like, what have I done? [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Yeah. [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: But no, I definitely had ideas about the culture and, yeah, definitely a different landscape and that sort of tropical climate. And this was after, like, eight Montreal winters, too, so I was really looking forward to some heat.

Phillip Norman: Totally, yeah.

Melodie Reay: And yeah, the music was the biggest draw, I think. Yeah, I got sucked right into that.

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Phillip Norman: Yeah. What particular music or musician?

Melodie Reay: I think I could go either way, like, west to Lafayette and Cajun music or east to New Orleans and the jazz. And honestly I ended up spending a lot of time in Cajun country and going to music camps and going to dances. I think that was the most exciting part of living in Louisiana for sure ‘cause I didn’t know how to dance, and I was super shy, and I feel like it was just this goal to have as much fun as everyone else was having.

Phillip Norman: So going to those festivals kind of like opened you up a little bit?

Melodie Reay: Yep.

Phillip Norman: Yeah, that’s awesome. I just had my first chance to check out Festivals Acadiens in Lafayette.

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And while I was living in Baton Rouge I did not get over to Lafayette enough and I’m sorry I didn’t ‘cause it is a very cool cultural scene over there for sure.

Melodie Reay: Yeah. Well, it was kind of heartbreaking that everything that made Louisiana so special was put on hold for the last two years that I was there. So there’s a lot of things I wish I could’ve done one more time that I didn’t get to do. But Festival, we moved the week before. Ugh!

Phillip Norman: Right. Brutal. Were there any people you remember meeting at some of those events that kind of just introduced you to Louisiana? Who were some of those folks?

Melodie Reay: Oh, yeah. Bart for sure. I have a weird magnetism for older men. [Laughter] So I would show up, I'd go to these dances, and I'd just always make friends with old guys, and they'd teach me how to dance.

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And there's one friend at Blackpot Camp. I don't know if you've heard of Blackpot Festival?

Phillip Norman: Unh-uh.

Melodie Reay: It was the best. It was four days of just a camp where it was in Eunice and you camped there and then you can take any classes you want, either in music, Cajun guitar or fiddle or all sorts of things, dancing, or cooking. And every night a band would come in and there'd be a big dance in the barn, and it was just a party every night. And then, at the end of the week there'd be the music festival that everyone else would come to that didn't come to the camp. And it was just the most amazing time. And the first time I was there I volunteered, and Bart was also volunteering. And so we were both working in the parking lot, and he would teach me how to dance while we were working. [Laughter]

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And I remember he'd tell me where's a good dance and I'd drive to Lafayette and hang out with them for a night. And yeah, I think I learned about a lot of neat places to go and dance because of him.

Phillip Norman: Yeah, that's so cool. That camp sounds amazing. This is like adult summer camp? [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: Yes.

Phillip Norman: Very cool.

Melodie Reay: It is so amazing and if you ever get a chance to go-- it's October. It's usually the weekend before Halloween.

Phillip Norman: Okay. Cool. That's awesome. And you kind of like pick a discipline for the week or do you dabble around in all of them?

Melodie Reay: You can flit around as much as you like, yeah.

Phillip Norman: That's so neat. What was the name of it again?

Melodie Reay: Blackpot Camp.

Phillip Norman: Blackpot Camp.

Melodie Reay: Because part of it, the cooking, the actual festival along with all the music there's also a cook-off so a lot of people would enter this contest and have their big black pots and cook all sorts of Cajun food like jambalaya and gumbo and all this stuff.

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And they would give out food and samples all day. So you'd just be eating all day and dancing and listening to music. It's the best.

Phillip Norman: Wow. Amazing. What were some of your favorite foods you got introduced to in Louisiana?

Melodie Reay: So, funny enough, I'm not a vegetarian, but I'm a pescatarian. Which saved me because there's a lot of seafood I could eat. But otherwise so much of the food I didn't eat because I don't eat boudin, except for on Mardi Gras. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Oh, yeah. It's an exception. [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: If you do the Cajun Mardi Gras, the Courir de Mardi Gras in Eunice you're walking for hours and halfway through you get to a field and they give you boudin and you're so hungry you eat it, and it is delicious. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Yeah, totally. So you've done the-- where they run with the--

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Melodie Reay: Almost caught a chicken!

Phillip Norman: Oh, the chicken, yeah, yeah, yeah. Wow. Okay. So you've had very authentic Mardi Gras experiences.

Melodie Reay: Amazing. It was so amazing, yeah. One of my favorite experiences for sure.

Phillip Norman: That's awesome. Well, I'll ask you a little bit more about that when we get to king cakes, but I'm interested to hear a little bit more about just, like, why— you know, you're learning how to dance and doing all this awesome Louisiana cultural stuff, but you are here to study ceramics. So how was that going and what drew you to ceramic art? Why was that the discipline that you kind of latched onto?

Melodie Reay: Ceramics, working with clay in general, I think clay is the most rich material. It is just so loaded-- it's literally earth.

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It's earth, and it's sort of a perfect symbol or metaphor for the material world, the physical world. And I think putting my hands in clay is like connecting to the earth. It connects you to the space you're in. It kind of connects you to people throughout history. It was the first material that was

ever written on, the written word. And then utilitarian, and the ritual uses, and art, it's just everything. Yeah, to me it is the most interesting material to work with for sure. It can last forever but also it can just disappear, like it just goes back to the earth like dust.

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Phillip Norman: Yeah.

Melodie Reay: But I think when I first moved to Baton Rouge, like I said, I'd given away all my stuff and now I'm supposed to be this object maker and I was sort of, I don't know, mistrusting of objects in a way because I feel like my life then had totally dismantled. It was the first big breakup I've ever gone through, so I didn't know what to make because I just didn't feel like making nice objects anymore. And so I did a lot of impressions of things and not firing them and kind of temporary installations and things like that. Anyways, I am totally off topic. What was the question? [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: No, this is super interesting. No. Definitely keep going on this. This is super interesting.

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It's interesting how you're, like, it's a very almost like spiritual connection to the material and a historical connection. But yeah, what you're saying, it's like you're at this point where you didn't really want to necessarily make it into something whole and perfect. That really says a lot about where you were at.

Melodie Reay: Right. And just the accumulation of things, I realized what a burden objects can be, especially when you're moving across the country, you realize pretty quickly. So I think I was kind of having a crisis in grad school. Everyone has a crisis in grad school. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Right.

Melodie Reay: But I did, I was the only person that really spent time in the space as opposed to just in my studio. I wanted to make things that were a reaction to this crazy new place I was in, so yeah, I did a lot of exploring that other people didn't do.

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And I think my work was better for it for sure.

Phillip Norman: Is there an example of a piece or an installation that you feel like was reflective of having gotten out and experienced Louisiana?

Melodie Reay: Yeah. So when I didn't know what to do and I needed to feel like I was doing something every day, even though I was just sort of in my head-- and it's hard when you're in a program with people that make pots and it's, like, they have a wall of pots. Like, look what I did today. And you're just kind of like brooding and thinking and you have nothing to show for the work that you're doing in your head. And so I made a little task that every day I would take an impression of something, like just to press clay onto something.

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Phillip Norman: Right.

Melodie Reay: And so it would make me go out and look around and there would be something that I would take an impression, something would stand out for whatever reason. And I was just

hoping that eventually this would lead to something else. And again, I think what I was doing in Louisiana, a lot of what I wanted to do was do things that I was afraid of like dancing and just-- it was part of living alone for the first time, I think. And so I ended up-- there's this spot in Baton Rouge on the river. Actually, it's where the-- do you know where the water campus is now?

Phillip Norman: Yeah.

Melodie Reay: So it used to be a totally derelict wharf with holes, eroding steel, and it was sort of this dangerous place to climb up onto and have the best view.

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And so I would go sit on that ledge and I was really terrified of heights, and so that was part of my self-torture was do something that you're scared of.

Phillip Norman: Yeah. Exposure therapy. [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: So I would sit on the ledge, and I ended up taking impressions of myself sitting on the ledge. And so I ended up with all of these really thin clay impressions, kind of like skin-like, and I stitched them all together in a figure sitting. And it was super fragile because it wasn't fired clay. So yeah, I think that's probably one of my favorite pieces that I've made just because I think it came from not really having a plan but just doing this task that I wanted to do for myself anyways.

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Phillip Norman: Yeah. And sort of getting something out of this experiential method. That sounds super cool.

Melodie Reay: Instead of thinking I have to make this project now for my review.

Phillip Norman: That sounds really compelling. You should send me a picture if you have any.

Melodie Reay: Sure, yeah.

Phillip Norman: I'd like to check that out. So was that a final project or when did you finish grad school and what did that look like?

Melodie Reay: Yeah. That was one of the first projects I did in that style, actually making something out of the impressions I was taking. But then I did end up-- my thesis show, it did have a lot of impressions of people and situations, little sort of vignettes.

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And yeah, there was a lot of different stuff going on in my thesis show. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Yeah, sounds very invested in storytelling through clay.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: It sounds like that's one thing that interests you about clay.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: So what year did you graduate and then what was next?

Melodie Reay: That was 2016. And then, because I really fell in love with Louisiana, I ended up extending my visa so I could stay on and work for a year. So I worked at the gallery, and I did some teaching at the university and then about the time my visa was running out-- no, I met Jim pretty much right after I graduated and then we got together and then my visa expired. So then we got hitched so I could stay. [Laughter]

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Phillip Norman: Perfect. [Laughter] And the gallery you said, was that the Baton Rouge Gallery or the LSU?

Melodie Reay: The LSU, the Glassell Gallery downtown.

Phillip Norman: Okay, cool. Downtown, right. And then, how did you and Jim meet?

Melodie Reay: We met at a friend's. We had a mutual friend. Jeremiah is a photo professor who you probably know.

Phillip Norman: Yep, right.

Melodie Reay: We met at one of his parties. He had for a while this great-- what was it called-- the back porch sessions where he'd have musicians play. And I played one night, and Jim was there. And I remember him leaving without saying goodbye and I kind of called him out. He was trying to do one of those Irish goodbyes, slip out the door or something. I called him out and so he came back.

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Yeah, I guess then that happened. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Yeah, the rest is history. What were you playing that night?

Melodie Reay: Oh, what did I play? Well, I mostly played a few songs that I had written but I did play "Honky Tonk Man" by Johnny Horton.

Phillip Norman: Nice. What instrument were you playing?

Melodie Reay: Guitar.

Phillip Norman: Guitar. Okay. Cool. That's a very romantic meeting story. That's a good one.

[Laughter] And then, you two would later go into this cottage baking business. So when did that come along and kind of tell me the origins of that.

Melodie Reay: So it was something that he had started before we met. He started it I think in 2015. That was sort of when it was a legit business. He was making pretzels and he had quite the following. He would do festivals and stuff, and he supplied a couple restaurants, too, and his pretzels were amazing.

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But I think he was sort of doing that as a distraction. He was going through a rough breakup, and I think, yeah, that just kinda took up all his time 'cause he also had a nine to five job. And so, while he was really successful, I think he was getting kind of burnt out by the time I came along and he was sort of ready to stop, and I sort of convinced him, *No, No. You just need some help. I'll help you.* And so we did that together for a bit, but I think mostly he was tired of working full time and doing that, whereas for me there was a long period where I was waiting for my visa where I couldn't actually get a job and so I just kinda helped out with the bakery, but it just sort of became my thing.

0:36:59

And then he went back to school for social work, and then the pandemic happened. And that's when I got furloughed, that's when it went, like, full-time baking.

Phillip Norman: Okay. Gotcha. I've heard a lot of cottage baking out of pandemic stories for this project.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: Yeah, very real.

Melodie Reay: Absolutely.

Phillip Norman: Before that had you been still baking quite a bit while you were in school or was that kind of a return to baking after not doing it for a while?

Melodie Reay: I was baking on the side, sort of. So I had taught a couple adjunct classes and I was working at the gallery, and I think people started ordering-- it started to pick up and so I started to bring orders to the gallery and people would pick up at the gallery, like, for king cake season.

Phillip Norman: Oh, cool.

0:38:02

Melodie Reay: King cakes were always-- I don't want to say successful, but people were keen on the king cakes right from the beginning, but I didn't do a lot of baking all year round. And I think I started catering the gallery receptions and just sort of started baking a bit more on the side. And then when I couldn't do anything else for work that's when I just baked as much as I could.

Phillip Norman: Right. Right. And tell me the name of the business and what is the meaning behind it?

Melodie Reay: Rösch Bakehaus. It's really funny, actually.

0:38:53

I think it's a terrible name because apparently I don't speak German and neither does Jim, but because he started making pretzels after a trip to Germany where he just thought it was the best thing ever and so he kind of dedicated himself to formulating the best pretzel ever. And then he called it Rösch Bakehaus because Rösch is German for crusty. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: “Crusty Bakehaus,” nice. [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: And then, it's, like, after— I thought so much about rebranding but it's like everyone already knows this, why bother? Why start over? But yeah, I think now that technically the business has been dissolved, that name, and so when I do start up it might be time to rebrand.

Phillip Norman: Yes. Give it your own flair. [Laughter] And when you were transitioning and kind of being the main baker and over the business, what were you learning about what it meant to be a cottage baker and the laws governing that?

0:40:02

What was that like, just adjusting to that?

Melodie Reay: We didn't follow all of the rules. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Sure. Most don't, yeah. [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: Particularly, like, at the beginning Jim owned the house and so that was totally legit, but then in the Garden District we did not own the house and you are not supposed to conduct business out of a rental, but that's what happened.

Phillip Norman: Yeah.

Melodie Reay: But yeah, we did everything sort of through the website and so taxes and all that was easy. We didn't do a lot of Venmo and stuff. I don't even know if that was a thing yet.

Phillip Norman: Yeah, 2016, [20]17, probably not.

0:40:59

Melodie Reay: Yeah. And supplying other restaurants and stuff. But I think the biggest annoyance of the cottage food law is the cap is super low. I know that now it's just been raised, I think, but to twenty-- it was twenty to twenty-five now, or thirty?

Phillip Norman: I'm not totally sure.

Melodie Reay: Or they just raised it to twenty-five. And that's just not enough. And for me it was okay because I would leave for the summers anyways and go back to BC, so there was a limit to what I could make anyways. But it could never be a full-time job because you were not allowed to make a living doing it.

Phillip Norman: Right. So when you say twenty-five, that's, like, twenty-five-thousand dollars a year you can make off--

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: -- baking out of your home? Gotcha.

Melodie Reay: Um-hm.

Phillip Norman: Yeah, that is low.

Melodie Reay: It is low.

0:42:00

I think in California it's, like, fifty.

Phillip Norman: Yeah. Interesting. There must be some brick-and-mortar bakeries lobbying to prevent that from growing.

Melodie Reay: Right.

Phillip Norman: Yeah, I haven't researched it a lot, but I've heard, like you were saying, they increased it recently. I've heard different people say different things about that. So that sounds like the most significant challenge of baking and selling baked goods in that way. And what were some of the rewards of just baking out of your home and [inaudible 0:42:34] business?

Melodie Reay: Oh, yeah. It was just lovely. It started out as just sort of a small kind of following and it just word of mouth grew. And so it always-- I've never worked in a commercial bakery.

0:42:53

I've worked in commercial kitchens, but I just couldn't imagine it feeling nearly as intimate as having the same people look forward to your baked goods every week and telling you that their mother is visiting and could you please make any kind of cake. Or all of these people, some of them have really become good friends to me. And getting to know my neighbors and just feeling like a part of the community, I think. That was the best part. And also no one is sad when they're coming to pick up baked goods. Everyone is super happy. And so no matter what, especially during the pandemic when it was just everyone was not feeling great, everyone was still super delighted for baked goods. And it's just a small bit of joy that you get to share with people, and that is definitely the best part about it.

Phillip Norman: Yeah. I'm sure people looked forward to that all week during the pandemic.

0:44:01

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: It's, like, the highlight. And it sounds like it's an extension of-- coming to Louisiana you were just so experientially focused and wanting to connect, so it sounds like that allowed you to continue to do that sort of in a new way.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: And with the pandemic baking, or just as you were getting more and more into it, what were some of your favorite things to make? What were some of the hardest things to learn how to make?

Melodie Reay: Yeah. I guess it was really fun. And I could've made it a lot easier on myself if I had just sort of stuck to some things, but I wanted to do different things every week. [Laughter] And so there was a lot of experimenting. And that's sort of when I taught myself laminated pastries. I wasn't making croissants or anything like that before then, so that was fun.

0:44:59

That was rewarding. That felt like, oh, I'm a real baker now.

Phillip Norman: Right. That's difficult stuff, yeah.

Melodie Reay: Yeah. Probably the most rewarding thing I made was, in Montreal there's this bakery called Kouign Amann, and it's named after that delicious pastry. And you see it everywhere now, but nobody makes it like they did. First of all, people now, you see it in bakeries and it's a little individual thing, like made in a muffin tin. But I think more traditionally it's made as kind of like a pie that you slice.

Phillip Norman: Hmm.

Melodie Reay: And no one makes it that way. I don't know why. I guess maybe it's not as easy or convenient to make that way. But yeah, I went on a bit of a kouign-amann bent and I really wanted to master that. And I'm not gonna say I did because I'll never be able to make that perfect.

0:46:03

There's something magic about that place. I've never had it like that anywhere else. But I was pretty happy when I got pretty close to that.

Phillip Norman: And as you were learning, is it through Instagram, you're checking out cookbooks from the library? How did you self-teach?

Melodie Reay: Yeah, both. A lot of internet and a lot of library. Actually, Baton Rouge has an amazing library that no one seems to use.

Phillip Norman: Super good.

Melodie Reay: Yeah. Cookbooks. It was the best. I had a lot of cookbooks all the time. And so just trying different versions, making little tweaks and it just sort of evolves and they get better.

Phillip Norman: I think that I might've tried a kouign-amann and not known what it was, but there was rhubarb in it. It was one of the muffin sized ones.

0:46:59

Melodie Reay: Yeah. But not traditional at all. I think that was [inaudible 0:47:05], too, and-- yeah. So I tend to stray from the originals a lot.

Phillip Norman: Even that day I went it was such a spectacular variety of things there. You definitely do not make it easy on yourself. [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: No, I know. That was such a gong show, ‘cause we were moving the next week and I would not budge. I told Jim, “This is happening. I’m doing this. I am not leaving this place without one last big throwdown.” Even though it was just like-- ‘cause we couldn’t pack up any of the kitchen until that happened.

Phillip Norman: Right.

Melodie Reay: He was not impressed with me. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: You made it happen.

Melodie Reay: I’m so glad that we did that. My one regret was that I spent all the time just trying to turn out pastries and I didn’t spend any of the time actually out there with the people.

0:48:03

Anyways, that’s a reoccurring problem I have.

Phillip Norman: Right. Getting in too many pots. Another challenge of being a cottage baker that we talked about last time, you developed tendinitis after that last bake throwdown, so yeah, it’s a physically taxing endeavor.

Melodie Reay: For sure, yeah. I don’t know if people realize what hard physical work being a baker is, and especially if you’re doing all this stuff by hand. There’s no dough sheeters. You’re rolling out pounds of frozen butter. Yeah, it’s not easy to move that stuff around. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Oh, my goodness.

0:48:59

Right. And in your house, not having tons of space and specialized equipment, like you said.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: How early did you get up that day of the last bake sale?

Melodie Reay: Oh, I didn't really sleep that day. No, I did. I slept in because I was up until one prepping and then I think I got up, like, probably not until five, to be honest. Yeah, that would be another challenge is just like setting boundaries and just because it's in your home, too. And I think I felt bad-- if it was just my home then no biggie, but it's a shared home and I would sort of inadvertently end up taking over a lot of the space when I couldn't just keep it little and manageable. I always wanted to do more.

Phillip Norman: Right.

0:50:02

So, I did an interview with Moeko Glynn of Maru Bread Company, and she was talking a lot about, particularly in Baton Rouge, trying to do croissants and stuff, having to check the weather and get up earlier depending on when you need dough to rise and stuff like that.

Melodie Reay: Yeah, definitely. That's another thing that you could control in a proper bakery, but the temperature and humidity fluctuations were just insane. So yeah, there was a few times where I had to tell people that their orders weren't gonna be ready for a couple more hours because this is just not rising, and what can you do?

Phillip Norman: Right. So many complications.

Melodie Reay: Um-hm.

Phillip Norman: Well, let's dive into the king cakes and maybe start with-- so you mentioned earlier some of your initial Mardi Gras experiences but, yeah, tell me how you got exposed to Mardi Gras and then to king cakes.

0:51:00

Melodie Reay: So I think Mardi Gras was just part of my initial research. When I moved to Louisiana I wanted to do everything. [Laughter] So yeah, I had a lot of good Mardi Gras experiences in New Orleans and in Eunice. I guess the king cake is more of a New Orleans direction, not so much the other way. But yeah, the first king cake I had would've been at school. It was probably with some ceramics meeting or, like, a visiting artist when someone brought one. And it was a grocery store one. It wasn't homemade or anything. And yeah, it was kind of disappointing, underwhelming. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Yeah. Right. [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: I don't know. It was a lot of hype and then it just tasted like subpar cinnamon bun.

0:52:02

Phillip Norman: Right.

Melodie Reay: So yeah, I guess I was so into the whole carnival, festival season energy that I just thought it should reflect the hype a little more. Like, I think this could have a little more energy put into it.

Phillip Norman: Right. [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: Yeah. So I think I started baking them right away. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Just to make it better, yeah. Do you remember the first one you made? What was it like? What were the flavors?

Melodie Reay: Probably the first one I made was a traditional cinnamon, maybe. But I think right away I did a chocolate lavender one. Chocolate lavender-- oh, and there was a raspberry. I did one with frangipane, like, an almond frangipane and raspberry preserves and that was super good.

0:53:01

Yeah, that was one of the first ones I made.

Phillip Norman: That sounds amazing! That's what people told me about your king cakes, it's really interesting flavor combinations. So how do you come up with those?

Melodie Reay: I'm not sure. I think a lot of it is what's in season. Luckily, during Mardi Gras season the strawberries are gonna come out, so that's fun. And then, I would use Tin Roof beer a lot to make either like a chocolate ganache or some kind of lemon curd or something. If it was Valentine's Day week then I would incorporate flowers, floral elements, things like that. Just kind of every week, it's like, *What am I gonna do this week?* [Laughter] It keeps it exciting but also probably a bit more complicated than it needed to be.

0:54:02

But I think that's also part of the fun is, I don't know, switching it up weekly keeps it exciting.

Phillip Norman: Right. And that is what's exciting for people who follow cottage bakers and are coming every week to try something new.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: What were some of the first comments you got the first time you started making king cakes?

Melodie Reay: It's so funny. A lot of people say-- I think they throw it around a lot, but you hear a lot of, "This is the best king cake I've ever had and I'm from New Orleans." [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Yeah, "So I know." [Laughter] Right.

Melodie Reay: Everyone has their favorite king cakes, so I think when someone likes a king cake that's what they say, this is the one.

Phillip Norman: Was there a most popular of those flavor combinations you were trying at first or just people loved it all?

0:55:03

Melodie Reay: I don't know. I feel like the "Melvis" was a popular one.

Phillip Norman: What does that entail?

Melodie Reay: Melvis is a riff on Elvis but me and Elvis share a birthday so one of my friend's dad's nicknamed me "Melvis." And it's a peanut butter banana type deal with bourbon, salted caramel, and bacon smoked salt.

Phillip Norman: Oh, my God.

Melodie Reay: Yeah, it's a crazy one. So that one always gets a big buzz. And I think that honestly the lemon IPA cheesecake, the Tin Roof beer one, is a really popular one. It's one of my favorites, too. And the roasted strawberry with pink peppercorn and mascarpone.

0:56:01

When strawberries come out that is always exciting, too.

Phillip Norman: Roasted strawberries? So, like, smoked or how do you roast strawberries?

Melodie Reay: You just cut up a bunch, stick ‘em in a pan, toss ‘em with some sugar and balsamic vinegar, and roast ‘em until they get kinda charred.

Phillip Norman: Okay. Wow. That does sound good.

Melodie Reay: And syrupy, yeah.

Phillip Norman: I was gonna ask you what you do you feel like sets your king cakes apart and makes them special? Do you feel like it is sort of the unique ingredients, the flavor combinations, or what do you think?

Melodie Reay: Yeah, I think that’s probably the hole, in Baton Rouge, that I feel like that wasn’t really there before. I feel like, yeah, just kind of exciting, trying new things, experimental stuff was probably what made me stand out.

0:57:01

But also, I don’t know, I think as opposed to places like a grocery store where there’s this long list of ingredients and you can’t pronounce half of them, and bright colors. I would dye the sugar with blueberry juice and turmeric, so everything was sort of more subdued, but everything is natural, everything is-- I don’t know if simple is the right word. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Right. Not emulsified.

Melodie Reay: I think honestly something homemade like that, everyone can taste the difference.

Phillip Norman: Right, It's definitely a very grocery store king cake town, or was for a long time, for sure.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: Well, cool. And then, when you were initially figuring it out, and we talked about this last time and I was interested in what you had to say, but a king cake being authentic, what parameters do you feel like you have to abide by, and then, where do you have room to innovate like you like to do?

0:58:03

Melodie Reay: That's funny. I'm not really a stickler for-- maybe this is a point of contention for some people. I think a lot of people would say a king cake is the traditional cinnamon and that's it, none of the other fluffy stuff. I don't know. But I think that as long as-- first of all, it has to be in king cake season. I know I made some exceptions this year because it was my last year, and I can't say no to people. [Laughter] But I really feel like there's a specific time where-- let's say a babka can be braided into a circle and maybe decorated in a certain way.

0:59:04

That makes it more or less in my opinion authentic enough, a king cake.

Phillip Norman: Right.

Melodie Reay: If the intent and the celebration that surrounds it, I think that's sort of what makes it a king cake.

Phillip Norman: Um-hm.

Melodie Reay: So all of the flavors were all topped with different things, and they all looked really, really different. But I think I would put a little sprinkle of each color of sugar just somewhere, somewhere small on it, just as a sort of salute, like, here's the tradition right there. Might not be anywhere else but . . .

Phillip Norman: Right. Some sort of nod to the more traditional ones or the grocery store ones. So yeah, it sounds like you're big on seasonality, like, it's gotta be during Mardi Gras season and then you can do whatever you want.

1:00:01

Melodie Reay: Yep.

Phillip Norman: Which is not a rule that is always followed, 'cause you do have a lot of bakeries that are, like, we'll make your wedding cake a king cake. We'll make a king cake whenever you want to buy one. You can understand why, but yeah, I think it waters it down a little.

Melodie Reay: Right. Yeah. That's a tough one. For a wedding, I don't know, maybe I would do that 'cause it's just so special and it's, like, you should get a free pass if you're getting married or something big like that. But you can't just be making them for everyone's birthday and stuff, unless your birthday is during Mardi Gras. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Then it's allowed, right. Well, another salute to tradition that you abide by, and tying it back into ceramic art, is you make your own fèves for the king cakes. So when did you decide to do that? Did you do that from the start or when did that come in?

Melodie Reay: I think I probably did actually, just as a fun thing to make.

1:01:00

But I don't know when I started putting them in the king cakes. But to be clear, they're not just automatically-- that is a serious upcharge because those things take a lot of time to make.

Phillip Norman: Right. For the audience in the recording, the fève is the knickknack that goes inside the king cake, usually a baby.

Melodie Reay: Right. But, traditionally, fève actually means bean and so that would be my default. I would put a little bean, a red bean, a Camellia red bean to be precise, so another little local pizzaz. I thought it was kind of funny. But the little frowny babies, they're really fun.

1:01:58

I don't know if you've seen them. They're really, really tiny, like a penny maybe, and I carve little tiny pouts into each face so they're all different. But yeah, they're all really cute. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: But they're all frowning?

Melodie Reay: Oh, yeah.

Phillip Norman: Okay. How come? [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: I don't know. Babies cry a lot, right?

Phillip Norman: Yeah. That's a more accurate representation of what a baby-- yeah, totally.

Melodie Reay: Right.

Phillip Norman: I saw some pictures on your website when I was researching and yeah, that is a very small thing to make out of clay so I can see why there would be an upcharge.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: And what does ceramic art look like for you now? I know at your bake sale you had some ceramic for sale, as well. So you still kind of work in both mediums?

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

1:02:55

Oh, that was sort of another regret of that day was I meant to actually-- so I had a bunch of boxes of ceramics and, of course, I was so busy making the pastries that I never had time to put out the ceramics. So I think Jim and my neighbor tried to help out and put out my throwaway pieces, and even some pieces that weren't my work. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Oh, no!

Melodie Reay: So I came out there and I was, like, oh, my goodness! And I was taking them back. So I didn't really get to put out the work that I wanted to that day. But yeah, I think I would really like to find a way to do them more simultaneously 'cause it is just so hard to do both. Anyways, for Makers Markets, I really liked how the Mid-City Makers Market didn't mind if I brought both my baking and my ceramics, so that was a fun venue to bring both.

1:04:00

Yeah, but right now I am gonna set up another studio in the garage, but I can't set up my kiln here because the electrical is just not wired for that. So yeah, I'm gonna have to figure it out, find somewhere to fire my work, and hopefully find a way to keep doing both.

Phillip Norman: Yeah. And this just got me thinking about the overlap of the two and what you were saying earlier about making with clay, you get some of the same therapy or connection to working with dough. Is that similar?

Melodie Reay: Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. I don't know. It's a very humbling thing, just like clay. It's a humbling medium.

1:04:58

It's something that we've done forever. It's like the most basic form of sustenance, well, bread in particular, not necessarily king cakes. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Right, right.

Melodie Reay: And like I said about the connection to people, I think it's also one of the easiest fundamental ways to connect with people is through food so, yeah, I think there's a lot of overlap there with ceramics and baking.

Phillip Norman: Yeah. I'm gonna have to send you this short story I just read that really painted that picture with bread. The last line of it is, "Bread is love among strangers."

Melodie Reay: Hmm.

Phillip Norman: I was, like, dang, that is so on point. [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: Absolutely.

Phillip Norman: And yeah, such a rich history. Every culture has their bread.

Melodie Reay: And I think honestly, both things are political in a way.

1:06:03

Just the choice to do the slow, harder thing for less profit and try to bring more of that into the world, I think that's just sort of a small effort, a way to contribute that I think, I don't know, makes-- as hokey as this sounds, makes the world better. I think it's just better for people, it's

better for the world—the earth. So I think both of those things kind of-- the less efficient way to do things I think is oftentimes the best way to do things.

Phillip Norman: Right. Making that dough by hand and working the clay by hand and all that work that goes into making a single object rather than mass producing it.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

1:07:01

Phillip Norman: That's really interesting, definitely a political position. That's cool.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: Just seeing what we haven't gotten to in terms of questions. Let's talk about just where you're at right now. So you've moved to Southern California but you're considering coming back to bake king cakes.

Melodie Reay: Um-hm.

Phillip Norman: So talk about that.

Melodie Reay: Yeah. I kind of have seriously mentioned that when I announced that we were moving, and I had a few offers that sounded pretty serious. I don't know how I would turn that down. That sounds like a dream. If whatever I'm doing here allows a little hiatus and I can come there and bake, even just for a couple weeks, a few weeks, that would just be so much fun.

Phillip Norman: Right.

Melodie Reay: I was really sad to leave.

1:08:00

I think it wasn't until I said that I was leaving and just so many people said the nicest things about just how much the baking brought to the community. I would love to stay a part of that somehow if I could.

Phillip Norman: Right. Absolutely. So these are, like, super fans who have offered to put you up in their homes and kitchens so you can come bake king cakes? [Laughter]

Melodie Reay: Yeah. Although I don't think they have any idea what they're actually getting into. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: It's not just the kitchen, it's the whole house.

Melodie Reay: Yep.

Phillip Norman: That is amazing, though. That definitely speaks to the connections you formed, that people are willing to open their homes to you. That's super cool.

Melodie Reay: Yeah.

Phillip Norman: So with where y'all are at right now what are the general aspirations or in terms of baking what are you looking towards in the future?

1:09:03

Melodie Reay: So I have to get this wrist better because either way I need my hands to work. Right now I'm kind of open. I'm not quite sure which way it's gonna go. Like I said, the big dream is to do both, to find a way to do both, so I'm just sort of gonna to be looking for ways to continue to make ceramic work and teach and also to bake in whatever way that looks like, if that's working for a bakery or starting up a new cottage bakery first. I don't know. Your guess is as good as mine. [Laughter]

1:09:58

Phillip Norman: The move is very recent so, yeah, there's a lot to figure out. Right. Well, I'm sure it will be amazing whatever you do. I'm excited to stay in touch and hear about what direction you go. And you can make a little more money cottage baking in California so that's good.

Melodie Reay: Well, yeah. But also it's a little more expensive to live here.

Phillip Norman: Yeah, that's true. It might cancel out. [Laughter] Well, is there anything we missed about the future or just really good memories of the baking business in Baton Rouge or particular stories around that, anything we need to fill in?

Melodie Reay: Yeah. I have a good memory, actually. Tin Roof, this year we did a popup. We did a few popups, but I think it was the second one we did. There was a big crowd and I guess they had shown up early, or probably I was late. [Laughter]

1:11:00

And so when we were on our way the owner, Mandy, had said, "You know what? There's a big crowd here. Instead of setting up the by the door here, why don't you set up on the other end of the field?" So that's what we did. We pulled up and we started setting up and I guess everyone sort of realized what was happening and they just came running towards us. And so I looked up and just saw this mob of people literally running towards us. And that's a good enough memory alone, but there was a pretty loyal customer that I really like, and she had shown up really early and was first in line, but then when the line moved across the field she ended up at the end of it and didn't get a king cake. And I didn't realize this. I didn't even see her until afterwards I saw

her sitting on the lawn and I asked her, “Where’s your king cake?” And she told me what happened.

1:12:00

And, oh, I felt so bad! I made her a king cake that weekend, but also she told me I had given the bartender a slice and he shared it with her, and so that was the best because there’s a lot of stories of people just being ruthless with king cakes, but there’s a few stories of people sharing their last slice. And so I thought it was super sweet. [Laughter]

Phillip Norman: Yeah, that’s very beautiful. And this is Tin Roof Brewery, which is a local brewery in Baton Rouge?

Melodie Reay: Right, yeah.

Phillip Norman: Awesome. Yeah, that’s a generous act. That’s rare during king cake season.

Melodie Reay: Karma is now on his side for sure.

Phillip Norman: For sure. Awesome. Well, I think that’s a great one to end on unless there’s anything else you want to add?

Melodie Reay: No. I think this is the most I’ve talked ever.

Phillip Norman: Right, yeah. That’s the goal, and it was phenomenal. [Laughter] I really appreciate you, again, sharing the story. It’s super fascinating.

1:13:00

We have to leave thirty seconds of white noise for editing purposes, so I’ll just let the recording run for, like, thirty seconds and I’ll let you know when that’s up.

Melodie Reay: Okay.

[End]