



Episode 83: Why Art Matters - Part 1

Featuring: Mingo Palacios & Cameron & Richie & Greg

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Transcript:

- Mingo Palacios: [00:10](#) Hey everybody, thanks for tuning into the PD Podcast. You know, from time to time we get the luxury of traveling around the country and actually bringing our podcast to conferences and events that are happening all over the country. This conversation took place at Thrive Conference. It's an incredible one hosted by Bayside Church. Enjoy the episode.
- Mingo Palacios: [00:32](#) Welcome to the Urban Youth Workers Institute Podcast. We're here at the national nationwide conference and today I'm sitting inside the air stream with the collective artist representation. This is like so much art capital in one space. It's clearly a privilege. Obviously the work that you guys do a. It speaks on your behalf, but Cameron, we met just like five minutes ago or yesterday-
- [01:05](#) [laughing]
- Mingo Palacios: [01:05](#) Because I was wondering if you guys have space. This is your crew and this crew has a very significant

footprint at this conference and it's for good reason. It's because art in itself speaks in a particular way. Your craft speaks, your craft speaks, your craft speaks. Would you do me a favor? Would you introduce our listeners first to yourself and then your amigos and then just so that we know who's on the microphone.

Cameron: [01:33](#)

Yeah.

Mingo Palacios: [01:33](#)

And then we'll dive in. We'll talk about why this matters so much.

Cameron: [01:37](#)

Yeah. Well I would say it's all of us working together, but yeah, me and Richie, kind of like work really hard alongside Robert and Bobby and to just put this on every year and bring out friends to help and stuff like that. But yeah, so I'm Cameron. I go by "Camer1". I live in San Francisco. I'm part of a graffiti crew. I think we were the first Christian graffiti crew. We started in 1996 I believe, and we're called Gospel Graffiti. Also, I'm a full time artist and I consider myself like an entrepreneur and a businessman and I really enjoy that side of myself as much as I enjoy like doing art and stuff. So I find that really exciting and like figuring out how to not just be creative but find creative ways to actually make a living off it and to help other artists do that. So that's like a big passion of mine. Then yeah, my homie Richie next to me.

Richie: [02:39](#)

Yo what up?

Mingo Palacios: [02:39](#)

Introduce yourself to our crew. Who are you? How long have you been being you and-

Richie: [02:47](#)

All my life.

[02:47](#)

[laughing]

Mingo Palacios: [02:47](#)

How you got connected to all of this? Yeah, I've been myself since six.

Richie: [02:51](#)

It's kind of really interesting because I would have never really found this confidence unless it was for my friend Bobby. We went to church together for a long time and one day I guess I was drawing or something.

He saw what I was creating and he's like, "Hey, can you live paint?" And he asked me to live paint when DJ Promote was there at Church. It was so much pressure because it's DJ Promote, you know? And he's like, "Hey, can you paint this big canvas in like 30 minutes?" I was like, "I've never done it before. I'll give it a try."

- Mingo Palacios: [03:24](#) You said yes?
- Richie: [03:26](#) And I said yes. Yeah. And it was really cool because I felt like DJ Promote helped relieve a lot stress for me as he was DJ'ing between services and just to be around other artists is I felt like I can just feed off their vibe and their energy. But what I do is I'm more of an ideation guy. I present more creative ideas to events like this. I work part time with Urban Youth Workers. I get contracted by them, but I also freelance as well. So that helps fuel my other creativity.
- Mingo Palacios: [04:00](#) Yeah. You've got an entrepreneur inside of you. I feel like this is going to be a common thread that like art in entrepreneurial-ism, they weave inside and out. They make a person complete, right?
- Richie: [04:12](#) Definitely. Definitely. So it's a good balance because you can really, on the business side of working with organizations like this, you really feel like you're servicing yourself to better, these events. Also, you're giving back as well. And the same time, on my spare time I'm doing my freelance stuff. I have that creativity to really see the gift that God's given me. What He's created me for. Besides that, even my environment living in Long Beach, it's growing so much with the arts. Your community also is a big fact of who you are as in your identity and what you do.
- Mingo Palacios: [04:50](#) That's good. I really appreciate that. And then finally on seat three in mic three.
- : [04:57](#) I'm Greg Motor.
- : [04:59](#) [laughing]
- Greg: [04:59](#) Yeah. So, I've been working with young people for most of my adult life and in a variety of different ways

and capacities. And so what I've found is that over the years, and it's taken me awhile to realize this, that at the intersection of working with young people has been art in a variety of different ways, but usually, kind of where the transformation happens, art has been kind of the centerpiece of that alongside an engagement of the Gospel and kind of working through what it means to engage our community and love Christ and love each other. So yeah.

- Mingo Palacios: [05:40](#) I appreciate that. I also appreciate the fact that you said that you had been working alongside of like youth, right? So this is an expression that was rooted originally in ministry. It was just serving, right?
- Greg: [05:53](#) Yes. Yeah.
- Mingo Palacios: [05:53](#) And then you find that your gifting and your heartbeat both coincide with one another and thus the expression or whatever it is, it comes to the surface. The question is if rollerblading and like baggy pants, all of a sudden were like, 'the thing', Motor, would you be like rollerblading in baggy pants?
- Greg: [06:14](#) That's great. The question to ask is that, did Jesus rollerblade-
- [06:19](#) [laughing]
- Greg: [06:19](#) And listen, I'm not done. Did Jesus rollerblade in baggy pants when he incarnated himself into our reality.
- Mingo Palacios: [06:31](#) I want to say He was fully bladed up and baggy panted.
- Greg: [06:35](#) While at the same time being fully God.
- Mingo Palacios: [06:38](#) Yes. Yes. That theologically stands at this table.
- Greg: [06:42](#) Okay. And that's an amazing table, I don't know what kind of wood that's made out of, but it's like captivated me since I've come in here. It's awesome.
- Mingo Palacios: [06:49](#) Yeah. John, our producer made it. Yeah. I was like, "Just go to Ikea bro and get it." And he was like, "That

is a disgrace to all things creative." So the man went, found this slab, built the table. So yeah props. For our YouTube audience, they don't get to-

- [07:08](#) [crosstalk]
- Greg: [07:10](#) So these days, Cameron and I go way back. He was my student back in the day at University and both of us had like these edgy youth groups. His youth group was in Tenderloin, San Francisco and mine was in Richmond, San Pablo. So both, so they could come together and not kill each other, which is nice. So Cameron's inspired me in my old age to kind of mess with marker art and that kind of thing. And so that's where I'm at now.
- Mingo Palacios: [07:41](#) That is awesome. That's actually great. Like, that's inspiration begetting inspiration, right?
- Cameron: [07:46](#) Yeah. We just vibe off each other. It works.
- [07:49](#) [laughing]
- Mingo Palacios: [07:49](#) I like the way you put it.
- Cameron: [07:51](#) We vibe.
- Mingo Palacios: [07:52](#) So, I've got a question because somebody brought this up earlier about the rhythm inside of an emerging generation is like a hustle rhythm, right? There's like the desire to be entrepreneurial and to have a thing, right? Social media helps us believe that we could accomplish this and I'm a product of that. I believe, like I see it and I go, "I could probably do a version of that some way, somehow." The church is having to deal with that belief as it enters into its doors. How have you guys either fostered that, manage that, come against that as a ceiling, right? Where it hasn't worked for you, what has been your experience with that rhythm? I'll just call it a rhythm for now.
- Cameron: [08:39](#) Man, that is a hard question.
- Richie: [08:40](#) I think we both have different approaches with this.
- Cameron: [08:42](#) I think so, yeah.

Richie: [08:42](#) And I've kind of got burnt out for doing social media for a long time. So I took a long break. But I was also in the point where I was hustling and trying to promote myself and market myself as much as possible, but I want to hear your side first.

Cameron: [08:57](#) Well, I might've heard the question a little bit different too.

[09:02](#) [crosstalk]

Mingo Palacios: [09:02](#) Interpret as you will.

Cameron: [09:03](#) Yeah, I guess like referring to, I feel like to be an artist, you have to have a hustle mentality. But I think what is happening in this day and age is there's, and I'm sorry if I sound like an old guy, "back in my day" but there's an expectation that it should just happen and if-

Mingo Palacios: [09:30](#) If I make it, it will sell.

Cameron: [09:32](#) Yeah. And if you're a true like creative, which I believe everybody is a creative, you know, to a certain degree. But I think it's more than just like creating something and expecting something to happen. I think we were talking earlier about this, but I have a couple people in my life who were like some of the best artists I've ever met and they can't sell a piece for anything. And then I know like some people in my life that are absolutely terrible artists in my opinion, and they sell everything. Their creativeness is like their hustle, they're creative in their hustle. And so I think it's more than just being good at a craft. It's being totally like encompassed by your craft, like where you're going to do a lot of stuff to get your stuff out there if that's what you want to do. So maybe it comes down to like we should be defining art as professional artists and maybe that's even a little too arrogant, but maybe some type of artists as opposed to like, "I like to create things on the side."

Mingo Palacios: [10:43](#) Yeah, I've heard it divided or distinctly categorized by like hobbyists, right?

[10:49](#) [crosstalk]

Mingo Palacios: [10:49](#) I dabble. I'm am hobbyist. And then you have an artist, right? That artist is like, "For the sake of expression, buck the prophet or the potential money in it. I just want to create for the sake of expression." And then you've got the artisan. This person is like, "I obsess over this craft and I will make a living out of it because I'm so obsessive about being immersed in it."

Cameron: [11:16](#) And I think I think all of those things can coincide, but I don't think that's for everybody. And I'm not saying that all coincides in us, but I don't know. I just know for me personally, I mean, my friend Fasm over there, he's one of my mentors and just best friends. Fasm knows I've been addicted since day one to art and he's kind of seen my career and stuff like that. And so encouraging to me. But he sees that in me. He always tells me like, "You are so hungry for this." And like he's so encouraging. But it's like I just obsess over the fact that I can't do something and I've never had an art lesson except for from friends. And it's almost like that video game that you can't accomplish when video games were hard. Like Nintendo, you die and go back to level one. It's like I cannot beat this thing and I get so addicted to it because I like have to accomplish this.

Mingo Palacios: [12:21](#) You have to understand it, pursue it.

Cameron: [12:22](#) Yeah. And I think it's that type of artist that is going to like, you can succeed. It's, you have to have that something undertone where no matter how much it's frustrating you, you're just going to do it anyway. And I think that's maybe a struggle that newer people are having with it. It's because like, "Whoa, this is hard, right? Like, this hurts me."

Mingo Palacios: [12:43](#) Well, social would tell you that you could just post a picture of it and you make a living out of it. And it couldn't be farther from the truth about any of that. Even in ministry like, "Hey, I got a sermon, so therefore I'm going to build a church inside the house."

[13:00](#) [laughing]

Mingo Palacios: [13:00](#) Keep the thought going. If there's something resonating, you bring it to the conversation.

Richie: [13:05](#) Hmm. Yeah. I think for me, my upbringing has really affected why I create art. I think for me it was more because my past came from a place of hurt and it was not as encouraged in my family, just imagine being an Asian family coming the states and more focused on just trying to survive, you know? So as I was growing up, I knew I had this thing inside of me and why I created it is because we didn't have much. I didn't have toys or video games. It was more the fact that it was accessible. So, you know, it's easy just to pick up a pencil and a paper and just draw. So, the times that my brother was playing his video games and he was like hogging all the stuff that we had.

Mingo Palacios: [13:51](#) Sounds like an older brother.

Richie: [13:53](#) Yeah, he's an older brother. Yeah, he punked me for everything.

Mingo Palacios: [13:58](#) That's awesome.

Richie: [13:59](#) But yeah, I grew up in Compton too, so we didn't have much. And you know, your parents would tell you, "Yo, you can't play outside because there's like violence or whatever going on." So, you know, be creative. Be creative with what you have. Even thinking about now, you know, I was looking at older photos of where I lived, there was barbed wires. Just imagine it your backyard having barbed wires and your windows with bars.

Mingo Palacios: [14:26](#) Yeah.

Richie: [14:27](#) And then when I was a kid I was like, I never thought about that. But then like 20 years, 30 years later, I was like, dude, I was kind of like in a cell, you know? Like a kid-

Mingo Palacios: [14:35](#) That's a crazy way to see it and perceive it.

Richie: [14:38](#) But you know, as a kid, you're very innocent, you know? And I'm starting to embrace that more now as an artist, to captivate that experience of when you

didn't really necessarily, not say care about everything, but be more-

Mingo Palacios: [14:55](#)

Carefree.

Richie: [14:56](#)

Carefree. There you go. Yeah. But my art now in terms of how I market myself, I've been more tapping into that aspect of just feelings and emotions and being more intentional with the viewers and the audience of who sees my art. I feel like a lot of things are going to move now because we're such a high pace society that we just want to create and put things up even if it's not even that quality, you know?

Mingo Palacios: [15:27](#)

Yeah. My friend Jeff Moors, he says that we are in "Instagramificatious" society where like it's not just for the sake of me enjoying it for myself or the people that I live life with, but I obsess over getting it up for the sake of somebody to react to it. And in that is like that weird dopamine flush. That's like "Ah. Attention. Yes, people liked me. I like this." So their motivation goes to the thing instead of the love of the origin of the craft.

Cameron: [15:57](#)

And I think what that is doing is like people are less prone to fall in love with what they're doing.

[16:04](#)

[crosstalk]

Cameron: [16:08](#)

We're graffiti writers by tradition and upbringing, but so we grew up with like Krylon Rustoleum, right?

Richie: [16:16](#)

Terrible stuff.

[16:19](#)

[crosstalk]

Mingo Palacios: [16:20](#)

Home Depot. Home Depot. I need you to open the cage because I need a few colors.

Cameron: [16:28](#)

But like that tool alone weeded out people who did not care about graffiti. So if you were going to do graffiti, you did it because you were absolutely in love with the art form and now our tools are so easy to use and user friendly first time doesn't even drip. Uh, and so now you have so many people doing street art-

Richie: [16:51](#) [crosstalk]

Cameron: [16:53](#) For like a couple years and then they're over it because they accomplished it so fast. Whereas like there's something in the process of struggle that creates longevity in what you're doing, you know? And hearing your story too, I think that's why with street art coming in right now, and it's like the fashion right now. I will never forget graffiti. It's because so many people that are so passionate about graffiti have a similar story of struggle and they might have this pride that a lot of people don't understand. And it's because, dude, this is all they have.

Mingo Palacios: [17:31](#) It can be misconceived, right?

Cameron: [17:32](#) Yeah. This is all the graffiti.

Richie: [17:34](#) You know, I actually did a little talk about this, not just graffiti art, but just hip hop in general. It all came from a struggle. It all came from gentrification back in the Bronx where, you know, you have the city building this freeway and was destroying a lot of neighborhoods and communities were forced into other communities that they weren't comfortable with. You know, so just imagine like Hispanics, blacks were pushing into like Italian communities that were just gang infested and they had to fight for themselves, you know? So they use art as a way to settle things. And it wasn't, you know, not fists and blood. It was actually art that they had to figure things out with that and be creative with it.

Cameron: [18:13](#) And they were like 13 year old kids using a can that was never intended to paint. And it was never created ever in history and now we have a culture probably a culture that has made more money out of any other like visual art form ever.

Richie: [18:29](#) Yeah. And to think about my history about how I got into drawing, they were using stuff that they had access to, which is this stuff that was cheap and affordable. So for me, that's why I'm such a traditionalist because of who I am as a person and the history of why we do things. But now it's just like, "Oh, let's just go to the art store and buy a couple cans."

- Mingo Palacios: [18:53](#) It's easy how subliminal your past pays into what comes out of your expression wise. There's no way you can dodge that. That just is like one of those creepy God things. Now let's, if you don't mind me asking the question to like add on top of that, like what does that do for us then like you're talking about creating a lifestyle out of it and staying true to the reason why you got into it. Despite how easy it is to do now. We're battling the social pressure of Instagram, Facebook, blah, blah, blah. We always hear from the local church, we want a place for you. And yet when you show up, milk crate full of cans, like they go, "We need you like parking ministry, children's ministry, hospitality." What has been that journey just so that our audience for the sake of understanding that they're not alone, right?
- Cameron: [19:55](#) Yeah. I mean also, so Greg is not only an artist, but he is a pastor and a teacher at Azusa. He's a professor and I think that could be cool. But yeah, Richie-
- Mingo Palacios: [20:08](#) Pave the way. I just, I'm asking the question. I would appreciate a round robin of at least how you've navigated it either from the staffing pastor position or as the person coming to hopefully use their gifts in a traditional space. Let's call it that.
- Richie: [20:27](#) I really think is this finding that person or that group that really believes in you? So for me to get into like a ministry where it's not necessarily dedicated in art but kind of convincing them that this is something that we need. Having that person along the sides of you just kind of through that journey and you know, being that a leadership within that church has helped me a lot. So some of the jobs I've actually done with Saddleback, actually with Jim Dobbs-
- Mingo Palacios: [20:58](#) Get outta here! Saddleback on blast! In the best way. In the best way.
- Richie: [21:04](#) So you know who Jim Dobbs is?
- Mingo Palacios: [21:06](#) I do know Jim Dobbs and the whole family.

Richie: [21:10](#) Yeah. Yeah. So one time he hired me because I've done stuff with Saint City and Urban Arts Outreach, and he had me paint the entrance of their church all graffiti'd up, before they put the new sign up. And it was so funny because Lakewood, you know, I mean Lakewood. Lake Forest. Sorry about that.

Mingo Palacios: [21:29](#) Seemingly it's so conservative, right? Or it's not the right culture or whatever.

Richie: [21:34](#) Honestly, it's predominantly white, you know?

Mingo Palacios: [21:36](#) That's 100 percent fair.

Richie: [21:38](#) It's not urban. They're very suburban. And as I was painting, there were people honking, they're like, "What is going on?" And the cops came by twice. They got my id. They were like, "Hey, are you supposed to paint here?" And literally I thought I was going to get arrested. And I was like, "No, like Jim Dobbs from Saddleback hired me."

Mingo Palacios: [21:59](#) I know somebody. His name is Jim Dobbs.

[22:03](#) [laughing]

Richie: [22:04](#) Just imagine this like ghetto Asian guy.

Mingo Palacios: [22:08](#) Well you know, there's not like just one inch of graffiti in all of Lake Forest. We moved from San Diego and I go looking for it in that community. I'm like, "Yo, show me a piece of art somewhere." I see it as art. Somebody else sees it as like total property destruction.

Richie: [22:24](#) So it's funny, I'm actually part of the Saddleback SVA. Some of the guys there, they call me The Saddleback-

[22:37](#) [laughing]

Mingo Palacios: [22:37](#) You have arrived.

Greg: [22:38](#) Exit through the Christian bookstore.

Mingo Palacios: [22:41](#) Exactly, please don't steal our bibles.

Richie: [22:43](#) But I think it's really fine those who understand the art and who's willing to just go alongside with you through your journey.

Mingo Palacios: [22:50](#) It is funny because I don't think that if I was going to speak to a seasoned leader who's like, "Yo, I'm listening to this conversation, a bunch of artists and the most artistic thing we have is like our logo."

Richie: [23:03](#) Our friend designed, which is part of our crew, Dan Emory, shout out. He actually designed the logo.

Mingo Palacios: [23:12](#) Get out of here!

Richie: [23:13](#) Yeah.

Mingo Palacios: [23:13](#) Bro. No wonder we're having such a great conversation. I think for seasoned leaders, the problem is that they oftentimes feel like they have to understand it before they condone it. Right? Isn't that like the problem? We feel like we have to have a full scoping understanding of what it is that you are passionate about. I have to get it before I permit it to exist.

Cameron: [23:39](#) But what's unfortunate is they have to understand it or they only learn to understand it when it's popular in pop culture, when the church should be understanding it first and setting the trend for it. So like as a creator.

Richie: [23:54](#) You are ahead of our time.

Mingo Palacios: [23:58](#) We've got a lot of people in the air stream just waiting to like jump in. just say approach the microphone and get in there. John's like chomping at the bit right now.

Cameron: [24:06](#) If you're a creative and your listening, and you're in the church, don't wait for the church. Like Gospel Graffiti, if we would've waited for the church, we would never be as influential as we are. Gospel graffiti is like the stuff that our crews doing, in ISI, another crew, iron sharpens iron, like we are being used throughout the entire world and it's crazy. We're just like a couple of knuckleheads like doing graffiti and the amount of

emails we get of graffiti writers in South America, Netherlands.

Richie: [24:41](#)

Hawaii.

Mingo Palacios: [24:44](#)

You're going, "Jesus plus my craft have significance."

Cameron: [24:48](#)

So yeah, if you're waiting for the traditional American style church to come alongside you, like, no, you be the trendsetter and let them catch up.

Mingo Palacios: [24:57](#)

We hope today's insights left you feeling inspired and propelled towards your greatest potential. Thanks again for joining us for another episode of the PD Podcast. Until next time.

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