



4A Talks // Artist Talk James Jirat Patradoon
James Jirat Patradoon in conversation with Con Gerakaris
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TRANSCRIPT



CON GERAARIS So *ULTRA*, let's get it out of the way. Where did the title come from?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON So I have this thing where when I do titles for stuff, I have a separate notepad with just every title that I want to use for my work or my shows, and this was basically like next to the list. [Both laugh]

To put it simply. I remember we were talking about having titles, because it was like a very Lunar New Year specific show, we were kind of thinking of things more obviously Lunar New Year-ish. And then I kind of was thinking, no I want to do something that's very obviously not that because this is going on at the same time, people are going to already know that. So, yeah, *ULTRA* was just next on the list. The show before that was called *INFERNO*. My shows before that were called one-word things like *HYDRA*, *BODYACHE*. Yeah, I always have one-word names for

shows so this one fits really well.

CON GERAKARIS And so how did you start working on the show? How did you prepare? What were the kind of initial steps?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Um, well as you know, it was a really short turnaround show.

CON GERAKARIS So for reference, the show turnaround. We kind of got the space downstairs confirmed in late November and got it all built out just before Christmas. And so from basically the 28th of December through to the day, on the 11th hour before the opening, we were downstairs [referring to the gallery space] prepping and doing everything. That's kind of the timeline we're looking at for this project.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Yes, it was a really short turnaround show, and the way I work is, I have a kind of ongoing list of stuff I'm already drawing anyway. So regardless of whether there's a show on or any kind of project, it's kind of like there's always something already going. I do this thing where I just show off whatever is happening that I'm going into the project. So for *ULTRA* I think I had a couple of images that I hadn't used and then rest, I kind of just conscious stream started drawing. Then from there, I started collaging them into compositions, because I knew that in the end it would have to be - Because usually I'll go backwards based on what the work needs to be. So given the space that we have down there and the foot traffic and what we were kind of dealing with - you'll see there should be some images here [referring to slideshow on television] of what it looked like before and how much we had to transform.

I knew it had to be three murals and usually the way I'd been doing murals in the past is I wanted to start doing more abstract stuff that was really big. So, it was like really close ups of images and just blown up. But I knew that for this, because no one's going to really see it from that far away, I had a lot more detail in it. I started just drawing elements like the metal ox lady and the theatre face thing, and eventually it kind of all started coming together and I could do this thing where I would find a line through all the drawing that I was doing. I started thinking of it more as this kind of cosmic Chinese space opera thing. And so, from there things started to get a bit more momentum. I think the designs for the actual murals took - yeah 'cause we got the space like mid-December so I started on, what's the day before Christmas?

CON GERAKARIS Christmas Eve?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON So I did the first one on Christmas Eve. Then I did the second wall on Christmas and I did the third wall on Boxing Day? [Laughs]. And then after that I basically just came straight in and started sketching it all up. But there was a point during sketching it up and painting it where I thought to myself "I really probably should have spent more than like a day on each of them" because they were really complicated. And a lot of the stuff that I thought would just be really easy, for instance, putting just a white line around an element, on the computer it's super easy you can just expand selection and do that. But on a mural, it's so annoying. I had it on everything, so yeah, it was a process for sure, and we managed to turn it

around in like a month and a bit? We went right down to the line doing that, so it was pretty hectic.

CON GERAKARIS In terms of looking at the space and the work that you made for it, did the aspect of how the gallery downstairs is set up influence the works that you were going to make? Did that influence the composition or anything like that? Were you conscious of that?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Yeah, for sure. The way the space is now, I'm not sure if you guys saw it before, it was a Lorna Jane. And so, the walls were actually the clothing racks and then they had all this stuff in the middle. And then it basically got gutted. There was this giant wooden structure in the middle as well, these waves and so we kind of knew that we had to get rid of it. But what we were playing with was just basically two walls. I always knew that there would have to be something in the middle. I was going to play around with the idea that the two walls were kind of in opposition to each other. Then there was the outside wall which was a little less related to what was going on inside. Yes, so there's definitely this thing of like when you do walk into a space, I was very conscious of the fact that it's like a clockwise thing because that's kind of the way, I guess we work. And so that's why on the left there's the King Yama that kind of takes you in that way and it goes around. And then it comes back around to being the leopard and the ox lady. So, yeah, I definitely wanted to have them kind of in opposition to each other because they are like protagonists, antagonists in the story in my mind. So that was really cool. We definitely needed something in the middle. I was always really worried about the space looking a bit too sparse and so we had this idea too - I always wanted to put a motorcycle on a show, but I've never done it because they're expensive. But we did it for this one and it was really cool. And I painted the floor and yeah, there were a bunch of other ideas floating around, like more stuff to add, but then I think once we got the lights in and the motorcycle and the walls and everything, we didn't really need to have all the rest of the stuff. Also, it would have been an insurance nightmare to have spike chains. Yeah. [Laughs].

CON GERAKARIS We can always dream big. Maybe next motorcycle show.

Looking at the mural and the story all together in your mind - did that sort of come out of the drawing process? You said that you had a kind of narrative to the show and the story of the made-up Chinese opera, did that come organically as you were illustrating it? Or did you think about it consciously before?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON It definitely came about in retrospect. Because I think whenever I do make stuff, I have an issue with... Because I do illustration work as well and with illustration work the creative process behind that is, it's kind of like they give you a brief and then you respond to the brief. And so, you come up with options and ideas for how to kind of solve that problem. So, in my personal work, I kind of don't really want to do that. The fun for me is kind of like just letting myself go really conscious stream about it. And then from making the world kind of piecing it together in retrospect and again finding that thread that ties everything together.

I think if I zoom out further and further with my work that I've done in the past. Like the last five years, if I were to zoom out, within each year it kind of might seem like

"oh this is one project and this is another project and they're really different". But if I zoom out, I can start seeing the thread that ties everything together. And so, I become a lot more confident, just letting myself do the work. If there's a meaning or an idea it can come later. Which isn't to say that I just add it on later. But it's kind of like I notice that... It's like people would interpret it differently if I didn't say that it was like a Chinese space opera thing. You know, had people come in and be like, "do you take a bunch of acid?", and all this stuff, and I'm like not for a while. Yeah, it wasn't about that, but it's like, everyone can take their own interpretation, but then I have my interpretation of what I intended with it.

CON GERAKARIS So is that kind of similar to your past shows do you think? And the effect of how this show came about as compared to, say, *INFERNO*? Which seemed very drilled in on a single concept kind of thing?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON I think, especially with *INFERNO*. So, *INFERNO* is the name of the show I did in L.A. in 2019. And so, I took a year off in Bangkok and I just wanted to work on something that wasn't commercial work for a while. I took a whole year off and just kind of stayed in an apartment and just started drawing. I set a deadline for myself to do this exhibition in L.A. because I knew that if I didn't do that, I'd end up just partying the whole time. Which I still did, but I also did an exhibition. And so, the way *INFERNO* worked was a similar process where it was like, I would just draw the stuff, not know where it was really going at the end. I think I gave myself maybe three months to just draw everything and then in the fourth month work backwards and turn them into something. There was a lot of stuff that obviously didn't make it. And then there's also like as we're building this stuff, you kind of go, "oh, that's a really good thing to add".

So, for instance downstairs, I was drawing all the stuff and I was putting it all into, you know, these really long mural compositions and I was like, you know, I need something to tie it all together compositionally, which is where I got the idea to do the skeleton dragon. I didn't want to draw like a traditional Chinese dragon because everyone was going to have one of those during Chinese New Year anyways. So, I was just like, I'll do my spin on it, which is a dead version of it, a skeleton one. And then I put in the photocopy distort stuff, which I had scanned in from a job four years ago and I always wanted to use it in my work. It kind of just popped up and I was like oh this is awesome I can finally use this for this. Yeah, I think after a while kind of doing this kind of thing, you do develop a bit more of a trust in the process that you have. It is stressful, but I kind of always know that it's going to be fine because of the way my head works. Yeah, I think there was a challenge at the beginning because it says specifically for Lunar New Year. I wasn't sure how Lunar New Year Chinese to make it, and I was saying some very problematic stuff. [Laughs].

And I think your kind of guidance was to just do what I would usually do anyway for a show. It just happens to be on Lunar New Year. Which was really good because it really opened up, I guess the freedom of ideas to put in all this kind of tangential stuff that I wouldn't usually put in if I felt the pressure to make something that was specifically like Lunar New Year. If I'd gotten a brief from a client or something like that and they are like; do this but it has to be all Chinese-y, it would have been a giant cartoon ox. Which is what's going on everywhere else.

CON GERAKARIS Yeah well, it's what's going on outside.



JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Yeah, which is cool, which is cool. I just knew that I didn't want to do that. Yeah.

CON GERAKARIS I know your artistic approach has a lot of concern about gesture and hand and translating digital work and digital processes into analogue sort of processes. Did this show and working on this show sort of change anything in your artistic process? Or did it kind of reaffirm your beliefs already?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Um, I've always kind of hated painting murals, but I just keep doing it. Um, I don't know why.

CON GERAKARIS Is it because people want you to do murals? Is it because people expect you too?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON I suggested it.

CON GERAKARIS You did suggest this.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Yes... So I don't know why I did that. [Laughs]. But for me it's just kind of like, I'm not necessarily trying to be the world's best mural painter or anything. I just know that the medium would work the best with the space. So once again, it's kind of this whole idea of working backwards from what it actually needs to be. So, if say, for instance, I was doing a really small, white walled gallery show. The point of this white walled gallery show would be to sell heaps of work. I would make little ballpoints or something that people can buy. But if it's a public thing

like this, then there isn't a pressure or there isn't an expectation to actually sell any work and so you kind of have to think about what the best thing that's going to be in there and kind of get back on that.

When I was working digitally and translating into mural, I think over the course of like doing this in such a condensed period of time, I do think I want to do more... I want it to be like looser. Because I think a big problem is, as we would transferring everything to the wall I was projecting it. So, the way I work is like, I'll draw it digital like that, I'll fix it up, make it as nice as possible and then project it onto a wall and then just trace it out. And that way when can trace it out, you're not making any decisions about what needs to go where or whatever, that's already done. So, you're literally just filling things in and then you can get people to help you do fills and things like that. But a big problem with the way I was working for a long time is I will have the digital version and that, to me, would be like the correct version. Then the mural version would kind of really annoy me because it would be so different, because the line work just wouldn't be the same. It's like if you are going to just try to draw the same image like four times, it always looks different anyway. And so, over the course of the past couple of years, I've gotten to be more OK with it. And now, yeah, when I was doing *ULTRA* downstairs, it got to points where I was like, oh, OK, that looks a bit wonky, that looks a bit weird. And I was just thinking to myself, I don't like having to always adhere to the digital thing?

I think if I do another mural, which I probably will, I'll try to incorporate a lot more looser stuff into it. Because I did one in Miami that was really easy. Well, it wasn't easy, it was still hard. But it was a bit messed up, it wasn't a big deal because I put so much distortion and texture and stuff through it. And it was noticeable as what it was like super far away. So, yeah, it's always like an ongoing thing. Like you worked at the best of your ability at the time, and your taste kind of ticks over and then you begin to notice what is bad about the work. And that makes you really cringe at your own stuff and usually that's when you kind of level up. I try to do that with every show. So, with this one as well, I'm like, OK, cool, I know I can do a mural in the style that I do, but I'm more interested in doing it in a way where the process isn't as stressful.

CON GERA KARIS One thing that you have said often to me is that you wish you could draw. Would you like to explain why you say that because you clearly can draw?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON I have this thing with drawing. There are artists who can, kind of just sit down and just straight up draw and they carry sketch books. I don't carry a sketchbook around. I don't like them. I have a notepad file with a bullet list of images that I want to be drawing, you know. It's just mentally I kind of work backwards from that. I do have a bit of fun when I'm drawing, but I also have this weird thing where I get nauseous. I get car sick when I'm drawing on paper and trying to figure out an image on paper. If you take an artist for instance, like Chris Yee, he'll be able to kind of just walk up to a wall and just draw the damn thing. Whereas I would never. Well, I could, but it wouldn't be very good. Well, I don't think it'd be very good.

CON GERA KARIS Is it just that you kind of can't manage the scale?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON The way I draw, because it's so specific, I have a really specific idea of what I want to render, and so I kind of work backwards from that. And I use a lot of photo references to build that up and I have to move things around. Traditionally in the past, you could do that on paper, you could just use different layers of tracing paper or something. But I also just don't like wasting time. If I can make something as close as possible to the initial spark of inspiration that I had for it, the warmer it feels. If it takes too long, and this is my frustration with doing commercial illustration, if it takes too long, because people just keep changing things and blah blah blah, then it's like you lose the momentum. The way I draw is like... It's kind of weird. I've kind of made it very not fun for myself in a way, but it's just efficient.

For instance, if I'm doing a digital drawing, I'll have a thing where I'll have a bracket around each section of the drawings. So, say for instance the fan or like this horn or that horn, and I'll have a time stamp. I'll know that you have half an hour to do this section, you have 15 minutes to do this section. I kind of like to keep myself accountable by working to that, so that it could just be done as soon as possible.

CON GERA KARIS So do you think if you didn't do that, you would kind of spend too long on something and it would kind of spiral out of control? Or do you think that you would just abandon?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON I would spiral out. I would get so frustrated. I just wouldn't finish it. Which is like the worst. I have a lot of unfinished stuff.

CON GERA KARIS I was just about to ask.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON That's the worst feeling. Because even if I do something and it's maybe started off as a really good idea and then I did it and it turned out it wasn't as good as it was, at least it was finished, you know, and it's done, and it's just resolved. Even if I don't know what to use it for, at least it's resolved. Another example of that is the leopard downstairs. So, the leopard downstairs, I can't even remember when I drew it, but I drew it, I posted it on Instagram, took it off Instagram. And then that was it. That was the life of the whole drawing. And I didn't really have a context to put that into anything, so it just sat for ages. And now, you know, it lives here. Yeah, I hate wasting time. If I'm going to sit down and draw something I want it to be - I want to nail it the first time.

CON GERA KARIS And so do you not sort of revisit unfinished things ever?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Yeah. I have a folder of all unfinished stuff.

CON GERA KARIS Do you ever look at it?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON I do. I have images that I may have started in like 2018 and then I'll look back through and think, that was a really good idea actually. And I can draw this thing now, you know, it's like oh now I can draw chains so I can finish that section of that thing.



CON GERAKARIS Right. Yeah.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON And they're all dated. I'm super organised in the sense that they're all dated by month, year and everything.

CON GERAKARIS Because I'm just picturing, browsing through that folder on your computer, you know, it would just be like an image of an arm.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON No no no no it's not like that. Well, I mean, there's a lot of hands. Yeah. [Laughs] 'Cause I draw hands a lot. Before *INFERNO* I was drawing all this stuff and being like oh this has to be its own image, that has its own image. But now I'm kind of like, yeah, you can just shove it all in. You can essentially make a collage out of your own.

CON GERAKARIS Right. In terms of talking about assemblage, how was it working with the found object of the motorbike?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON I've always wanted to do it but I never knew how to approach it. Because more often than not, what happens is if you put any kind of physical, sculptural thing into a gallery context, and you go, OK, here is the big sculptural thing. Here is an artist that draws little things. More often than not, what happens is the artist draws a little thing on the sculpture, you know. It's like a helmet show or a skateboard show or like whatever, like that, and I knew I 100% didn't want to do that. So, we were floating ideas of possibly painting pinstripes in the fuel tank. But that was kind of going to be a bit too hard with the time that we had to do it. Because the bike was done in about two days. So, we got the bike and it just sat

around.

CON GERAKARIS Yeah it was at the wrecker and then we got it the week after. And then everyone sat on it and took a photo.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Yeah, well yeah. It was just sitting in there for a bit. Yeah. If I was going to approach sculpture, I just don't want to approach it in a way where I'm just drawing images on a thing. I wanted to make the bike like something that would be in my drawings. So, in my drawing I decided to do, you know, like a skull headed bike, I wanted to actually make it real. But I think with the limitations we had, yeah, it's a found object thing, like if we had like a way bigger budget or something, we would have like a giant bat wings and glow and it'd sound like a guitar or something, you know, but there was no time.

CON GERAKARIS Did you have an idea of what you wanted it to look like before you started working on it or just kind of came out?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON No, definitely. I wanted it to be all chrome. And so, I spent a lot of late nights on YouTube trying to find out how to chrome something without having to electroplate and so all this other crap to it. So, I got really deep in a Doctor Who forum, for where they make the Cylons, the really shiny ones? And then I got really deep into a Mandalorian cosplay forum, and everyone was just like swapping ideas and all the best paint and stuff. And so, I got a bunch of that. I kind of always did have an idea of what it was going to look like. It looks a little bit different to how I had in my mind, but it's basically the same. The only thing I would have done is make it even shinier, you know, but it's pretty accurate. It's pretty accurate to how I wanted it.

CON GERAKARIS We can hear from the audience now if anyone's got any questions?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Yeah. I'm quite happy to answer anything.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: What's that TV show? Or whatever you were watching? There was a screenshot of a movie you were watching.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Oh that was the inauguration with Katy Perry. [Laughs]. She was singing Fireworks, and there were fireworks. I was watching that.

CON GERAKARIS What did you watch while making this show? Did it influence the work?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON So when I'm drawing, I watch a lot of Law and Order because it explains a lot to you, so you don't actually have to watch the thing. Yeah. It's the best show ever. And I think I watched, like, all six seasons of Criminal Intent like four times. That's a lot of TV. And, yeah, the original Law and Order and SVU (Special Victims Unit). But it's so good 'cause you just play it in the background, and they'll explain the body and be like "oh that's why you killed her". You know, it's so good. I watched, I guess, a lot of Law and Order over Christmas. Also, if I'm not watching Law and Order, if I run out, I'm listening to true crime podcasts and stuff all

the time. And it's like, I don't know, man, it kind of bums me out, but I keep doing it because it makes me really productive for some reason. I'm not crazy. There was a study of which podcasts were the most productive for people, and it was true crime ones. Because it piques your interest long enough to be interesting and the story kind of unfolds. And so that's why it's like the most popular genre, but yeah, it bums me out. I was independently researching the JonBenet Ramsey case at the same time as well, which is old. I was like, oh, I think I got a different perspective on it, but I didn't according to Reddit. Everyone's like the brother did it, and I'm like I thought that was just me that thought that. Oprah thinks it, no Dr. Phil thinks it too. He literally has a YouTube video, it's like "Dr. Phil says the brother did it". I thought I was being non-mainstream.

CON GERA KARIS Hearing you say that, that you listened to very, very serious stuff while you paint incredibly colourful and party-like visages. When we were painting downstairs, everything, all the music you played was extremely upbeat and popular. So why wasn't it serious music then? Why wasn't it a true crime podcast?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON I don't know man. The way I have my music set up is if I ever like a song, I give it five stars, my iTunes and so it goes into top rated and then I just play the top-rated things. I've given five stars to like most of Amity Affliction and Carly Rae Jepsen. To me, I'm like, that's great, these are my favourite songs. But then, yeah, I did notice that if another person is in the room, it's a bit schizophrenic to go from, you know, Pagan Poetry to Katy Perry then to Aphex Twin or something. But to me it makes sense because I like it all.

CON GERA KARIS Well, I can say that having seen you paint a wall, that kind of makes sense to me.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Yeah and also, I think it's the music that kind of motivates you to just be in a good mood. It puts you in a mindset where it's like, this is great and not bum you out.

CON GERA KARIS Did you need that sort of motivation when you were doing this show?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Absolutely. Yeah. I was on a lot of vitamin B and a lot of 80s music doing this show.

CON GERA KARIS Yeah, do you want to sort of give a glimpse to the audience kind of what it was like painting downstairs?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON OK, they didn't turn the aircon on until the opening. Despite us complaining about it the whole time. It was over summer as well, and it's like all the windows, so you can imagine it was just like a greenhouse in there. It was really messed up. The lights weren't working. We accidentally built the wall over the light switch. [All laugh].

It was really funny because we were like "how do we turn the damn lights on?" And we'd just built these walls and so we had to go where Lorna Jane had moved to and ask where the light switch to turn everything on downstairs was. They said it's hidden

in the wall and we're just like, "oh f***". Well, I guess we built a wall over it. So we're painting in the dark and it was really hot. And no, it was really messed up, the whole process of painting. But I mean, it was cool. It was good, but it could have been a lot easier I think, if the aircon was on.

CON GERAKARIS The Boxing Day holiday is when we painted it all white.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Yeah. And then a couple of days later, we needed to start sketching everything. Yeah, painting murals is always really physically hard. I talk about this with a lot of other mural painters and there is a point where it gets physically too much for you. By the end of it I got tendonitis, and I couldn't bend my finger. And it's kind of getting OK now. But mural painters who've had way worse issues, like I think Georgia Hill has got carpal tunnel in both arms. There is a thing where you kind of go OK, cool, I have until I'm maybe about like 45 to do murals and I kind of don't really want to do that anymore. But yeah, it is really physically demanding, and I think I lost like 3 kilos doing this show. So that was pretty cool. [Both Laugh]. I'm really stoked on that, that was a freebee. [Laughs].

CON GERAKARIS It was like the sweatiest any of us have ever been.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Yeah, yeah. I remember, yeah. Eventually we got to the point of having to bring a change of clothes. Felt like I was having a sleepover here. But it was mostly because it was so disgusting in there. But no, it's good now.

But going back to not liking painting murals, a lot of it has to do with the physicality of having to paint because you get really sore, your back hurts. But like, I mean, sometimes you just got to do the damn thing. It's tough. It was worse when I was spraying down there. It was really sh*t. I'm really glad I don't use spray cans or anything like that. At the beginning of doing murals, I cop so much sh*t for not using spray cans. It was like "ah you don't graf, you're not a real graffer". I'm like I never said I was. I did like three-unit maths in school; I'm a nerd dude. I was never into that. In a space that small, it was really handy to at least not have the fume aspect of it, because I think if we were fuming and then painting at the same time, like, you know, fifteen hours a day, whatever we were doing, we'd be dead. We would be dead. Yeah.

CON GERAKARIS We'd definitely have fewer brain cells.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON I think I might. [Both laugh] I wouldn't know. Yeah, I was literally chroming. Yeah.

CON GERAKARIS Yeah, it was pretty hectic in there.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON What do they say in Mad Max? When they do the thing? I don't no man, just lost it.

CON GERAKARIS Any other questions from anyone?

AUDIENCE QUESTION Downstairs you've got a lot of books of your work. You do a lot of different illustrations and a lot of tattoos and other work. Do you see all your

different illustrations being specific things? Like a tattoo or a digital drawing or a mural?



JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Yes, it's like the process that I'm kind of going through now is that I don't want to waste anything. Getting into the tattoo thing is more because I would maybe want to draw a certain imagery, but then it would have nowhere to live after. You know, like it wouldn't live - like an Instagram post is just not really satisfying. I'm trying to find ways where each drawing or each anything I spend time on, gets to kind of live somewhere else other than just like literally on the internet or something. That's kind of where I'm at now with a lot of that stuff. But, yeah, a lot of the work I do is kind of working in reverse, rather than going I want to do a series of this. I want to do this to a space. Like one time I did like a whole series of just linework. Linework drawings, like really, really sketchy basic ones on black tarp, because I knew I wanted to just, I like really, really big drawings, it was at Goodspace. Yeah it was the *BODYACHE* show. And it wasn't really, didn't look like any of my, you could tell I drew it, but it wasn't colourful like my work had been up until that point. But I mostly made that show because I wanted to make it like an installation. So I put two smoke machines in there. I made this really hectic industrial soundtrack, blared up really, really loud. And the strobe.

CON GERAkaris It was pretty brutal.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Yeah. Yeah. A lot of people didn't like it. A lot of people were like "I can't see the work, turn the smoke machine down". Like never I'll turn it up. But the whole point of that show was that I wanted to create something like an installation thing where if you did go to it, you'd remember it. And I think that's

something I haven't spoken about yet.

Where it's like I have this whole idea with - because I don't like going to an art show and literally just like looking at the art on the wall and that's kind of about it, because I think you can do that on Instagram. Can you do that on the internet? And no one remembers anything if you do that. Like I don't remember the things I like this morning I liked on Instagram, you know. But if you go to an art show, you're physically there. It's kind of like it moved you in a way or even if you hated it, you know what I mean? You remember it better. So, for a long time I wanted to just make art shows that were more memorable. And so, yeah *BODYACHE* was a really good one because a lot of people remembered that because all the smoke was going down to the bottom of the Gladys. And no one could take a decent photo of it except for me because I could turn the smoke machine down. And yeah, a lot of people just felt really sick. And I was like this is awesome, you know, like that kind of did what I wanted it to do. It was like a club.

And so downstairs, I knew I wanted to create a space that - I didn't want it to be like a bunch of - first off, we didn't have time. Secondly, I didn't think it would be very interesting for the public to kind of come in and just look at a bunch of, like, paintings, like eight paintings or something that I've done. So, it was very specific to create a space that was more like an installation kind of like would envelop you completely, you know. So, I think when I do stuff, I do kind of work backwards from that. I'll work backwards and then I just let myself start in a really kind of like innocent kind of let's just see what ideas come kind of way. But I kind of know where it's supposed to end up. Yeah, I just don't like wasting time, I don't like drawing something that I'm not going to use.

CON GERAARIS Thanks for your question. Anyone else?

AUDIENCE QUESTION Do you always work with images and symbolism from Asian culture?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Not always. I'm Thai Chinese, so a large part of the reason why I started to do it is because I wanted to see more of it out there. And I knew that if I didn't do it then, you know, it's kind of like a representation thing for me. I kind of always shove it in there. Another aspect of it, I think when I was doing *INFERNO* - the book's downstairs if you want to have a look - the reason I did it for that show is because I was really inspired by Chinese medicine packets. Because I grew up here, so to me, they were kind of like I have you in my house and stuff. I didn't know what they did, my parents would just lie and say they did everything. But I don't know, I still don't know to this day. I like this aspect of being foreign, but also kind of familiar. Putting the Chinese stuff and the Asian stuff in the work, works in the West, but if I were to do the same thing, put all the Thai, Chinese stuff in Thailand, I don't think it would work the same way to have that sense of - It's meant to be familiar enough, it's meant to be familiar, but then like a bit novel and strange at the same time. It kind of really depends on the context that it's in. Yeah, like a lot of other esoteric stuff that I put in there as well as like, for that purpose as well. I always want to kind of have a contrast with my work, where I make something familiar enough as a Trojan horse and then have something really kind of the opposite of it on the other side. And then hopefully that creates something that hasn't really been seen. Many

of those.



AUDIENCE QUESTION How did you get into illustration and what were you doing before that?

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON So I went to COFA, a college of fine art which is not called college of fine art. It's called UNSW Art and Design. Right after high school because I didn't know what I was doing with my life. I did like a massive body of work for my honour's thesis, which looked really illustrative. I didn't know illustration was job, because I was really dumb. I was just going to do like art stuff to some capacity. But then I knew that even doing art stuff it wasn't like abstract landscapes, so I wasn't really going to do very well here. I did that and then I started literally just getting emails from people to draw stuff, other stuff. And at the time, I didn't really understand what that meant. I would kind of go ahead and draw it, but I would change the style or something like that. I would be like "this really suits this better". And they'll be like, "why are you changing your style?" like "we didn't ask for this we wanted you to do it like that" and I'd be like, "oh, no, this is better". I just didn't get what the job was, and I kept just getting work that way somehow. Not from changing my style a lot, but people just being like, "can you do this?", "can you do that?".

I've had a lot of really random jobs. I've worked as a barista, I worked at a DVD store -which was awesome. I worked as a tech officer at an art school and all the while I was doing this kind of illustration stuff in the background. There was a point where I was like semi made redundant at the tech officer job, like they kept firing me but the next day I had to reapply for my job, and they'd hire me again. It was this weird loophole that they were using. There was a time when they finally did it and then I just didn't apply for my job again. Which was the song and dance that we'd been

doing for like three years, and I was just like, "I'm not coming back". And then they were like, "what do you mean?", they really expected me to come back. That's when I started doing this kind of stuff like just full time. But it wasn't necessarily because I decided to dive into it, it was more because I just couldn't be bothered going back to work.

I was doing this work instead, which is way more annoying if I think about it, because it never stops, you can't turn it off. It's like you work 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But if you're talking about trying to get work or trying to break into that kind of industry, I think the best way to do it is you have to show examples that you can do it on your own, without anyone telling you that you're doing it anyway. The way it usually works is if you have what I always recommend people is if you're at uni, you don't show your folio from uni, 'cause your folio from uni is all the projects you did during the year to answer certain briefs or like whatever. What you want to be doing is taking about like two or three months or whatever of afterwards and coming up with like a body of work of say, for instance, six or seven or nine pieces that are under one umbrella or theme. And that's your thing. Because no one really wants to see someone who can do everything. Everyone can do everything, but they want to hire you for something really specific. Yeah, that's just the way people's heads work. For instance, if you follow an Instagram that is all different stuff you don't really know how to pinpoint it. Whereas if you follow an Instagram, where one person does one kind of thing, the person will remember OK, that's the guy that does like I don't know, blue stuff or whatever. And also, when I came up it was a really different time and I was like, no social media. Like right now I think it's a really especially hard time to break into these kinds of things because the market is so flooded and because the algorithm suppresses everything. I think there is a temptation often to imitate what's really popular, but the best thing that anyone can be doing now is making more and more niche weird stuff. If you have like really niche, weird ideas, if your friends are ever like, "oh, why are you into that thing that's super weird?" put that into your work because that would be far more interesting than seeing someone who can make work that is not as good as the person that they copied.

CON GERAKARIS OK. We might wrap it up. Yeah, well, thanks a lot for coming out.

JAMES JIRAT PATRADOON Thank you. Thanks for listening to me talk. [Applause].

@4A_aus
#4AAustralia

Images (top to bottom):

- 1) James Jirat Patradoon, *ULTRA* (installation view), 2021, mural, Hyosung Aquila GV700, ox skull, chrome paint, chains, commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, 4A @World Square, January 2021; photo: Kai Wasikowski for 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, courtesy the artist.

- 2) James Jirat Patradoon, *ULTRA* (exterior view), 2021, mural, commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, 4A @World Square, January 2021; photo: Kai Wasikowski for 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, courtesy the artist.
- 3) James Jirat Patradoon, *ULTRA* (installation view), 2021, mural, Hyosung Aquila GV700, ox skull, chrome paint, chains, commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, 4A @World Square, January 2021; photo: Kai Wasikowski for 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, courtesy the artist.
- 4) James Jirat Patradoon, *ULTRA* (installation view), 2021, mural, commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, 4A @World Square, January 2021; photo: Kai Wasikowski for 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, courtesy the artist.
- 5) James Jirat Patradoon, *ULTRA*, 4A @World Square, January 2021; photo: Kai Wasikowski for 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, courtesy the artist.