

Juan Carlos Araujo interview March 12, 2024 in MLC 110 during classtime through Zoom
Owner of Empire Seven art studio in Japantown
De Anza College Winter 2024 quarter
Steve Nava and SOC 14 student interviewer: Audry Pham
Spaces of Belonging Project: Hidden in Plain Site/Sight
NEH Grant

Summary:

In this interview Juan Carlos Araujo reflects on growing up in the barrios of San Jose and finding his community through committing to the local culture he loved in his youth, wall at and skateboarding. He describes the struggle to maintain a community-based art studio with autonomy in the context of bureaucracy and the forces of capital as they shape who has access to public spaces, like his community art space. The struggle for a creative space of belonging in the face of economic disadvantage, high rent and lack of capital is the focus of tis oral history interview.

Link to video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_XnUobEJ7a4

1

00:00:03.725 --> 00:00:04.755

Steve Nava: We'll go ahead and start

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00:00:05.425 --> 00:00:15.485

Juan Carlos Araujo: cool. Well, thank you so much for the invitation, Steve. I really appreciate it. And I'm honored always to present to

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00:00:15.755 --> 00:00:22.624

Juan Carlos Araujo: the future generations. My name is Juan Carlos Araujo. He/ him.

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00:00:22.905 --> 00:00:24.844

Juan Carlos Araujo: I'm 42 years old.

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00:00:25.215 --> 00:00:31.095

Juan Carlos Araujo: I was born in 1981 at Alexian Brothers Hospital, on the east side of San Jose.

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00:00:31.485 --> 00:00:36.235

Juan Carlos Araujo: I was born and raised in the city, and have lived here the majority of my life.

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00:00:36.975 --> 00:00:41.585

Steve Nava: Can you tell me a little bit about your family background growing up.

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00:00:43.535 --> 00:00:48.875

Juan Carlos Araujo: Yeah. I come from a household of

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00:00:49.145 --> 00:00:54.545

Juan Carlos Araujo: 7 siblings. I am the youngest of the boys.

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00:00:55.065 --> 00:00:59.315

Juan Carlos Araujo: And

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00:00:59.395 --> 00:01:05.444

Juan Carlos Araujo: grew up in a single parent household. My mother raised all of us.

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00:01:05.865 --> 00:01:11.484

Juan Carlos Araujo: yeah, I think.

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00:01:13.365 --> 00:01:16.605

Juan Carlos Araujo: Yeah, I think that's kind of covers that I think.

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00:01:21.265 --> 00:01:28.554

Juan Carlos Araujo: What was it like growing up during the time and place of your childhood? What was it like growing up?

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00:01:30.685 --> 00:01:32.814

Juan Carlos Araujo: What was it like growing up.

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00:01:32.945 --> 00:01:37.124

Juan Carlos Araujo: Well, you know, I think

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00:01:37.445 --> 00:01:43.455

Juan Carlos Araujo: I always as a kid are. I do recall now 42 that I was a big daydreamer.

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00:01:43.745 --> 00:01:50.865

Juan Carlos Araujo: I think part of my my dreams were the fact that it felt like

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00:01:51.395 --> 00:01:53.784

Juan Carlos Araujo: Life was was difficult.

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00:01:54.065 --> 00:01:59.615

Juan Carlos Araujo: Obviously, as a kid, I think I had this perception of what challenging

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00:01:59.775 --> 00:02:01.544

a challenging life could be.

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00:02:02.085 --> 00:02:11.424

Juan Carlos Araujo: I think the difficultness really came from seeing my mom, who struggled a lot. So I would see Mom.

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00:02:11.865 --> 00:02:21.004

Juan Carlos Araujo: When I did see Mom, it was mainly either going or coming from one of her jobs. She worked several jobs to raise us.

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00:02:21.105 --> 00:02:31.294

Juan Carlos Araujo: I grew up in every low income barrio that you can think of in San Jose, from East Side to South San Jose

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00:02:31.704 --> 00:02:34.635

Juan Carlos Araujo: back and forth between those communities.

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00:02:35.235 --> 00:02:45.065

Juan Carlos Araujo: and growing up. It was it was different than what it is today. There was a lot more gang violence

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00:02:45.265 --> 00:02:55.685

Juan Carlos Araujo: in the city and the presence, although it still exists, it was just very obvious, and and present in several of the hubs that

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00:02:56.295 --> 00:03:00.995

Juan Carlos Araujo: I would either need to go to, or found myself approaching or or going to.

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00:03:03.475 --> 00:03:06.525

Juan Carlos Araujo: But I could say it was still fun.

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00:03:16.105 --> 00:03:17.565

Juan Carlos Araujo: Okay. It froze up

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00:03:23.175 --> 00:03:24.885

Steve Nava: one, Carlos. Can you hear us now?

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00:03:26.785 --> 00:03:28.695

Juan Carlos Araujo: Yeah. Did I freeze up there?

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00:03:29.115 --> 00:03:32.735

Steve Nava: Yeah. So so could you start over again on that last part? The

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00:03:32.825 --> 00:03:34.455

about

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00:03:34.625 --> 00:03:40.804

Steve Nava: you know, after you said you talked about growing up in the different barrios. And can you say a little bit more about that?

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00:03:41.775 --> 00:03:45.654

Steve Nava: It was a hard life, you mentioned...

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00:03:46.815 --> 00:03:53.014

Juan Carlos Araujo: Well, I think I might have expressed that. Just seeing my mom work several jobs.

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00:03:53.035 --> 00:03:59.515

Juan Carlos Araujo: my mom worked in the in the cannery industry.

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00:03:59.585 --> 00:04:09.305

Juan Carlos Araujo: I think I'm gonna back up. I'll think I recall the first question. And I should say that I'm first generation Mexican American in my household.

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00:04:09.445 --> 00:04:17.685

Juan Carlos Araujo: My mom migrated. Fun. Fact about me is, I was made in Mexico, but I was born in

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00:04:18.155 --> 00:04:22.035

Juan Carlos Araujo: so my mom migrated with me in her belly

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00:04:22.835 --> 00:04:37.344

Juan Carlos Araujo: which you can imagine was probably very hard to do. also. But yeah, you know, I grew up in a lot of the barrios, and

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00:04:38.495 --> 00:04:52.094

Juan Carlos Araujo: it was it was challenging times. I think I found outlets. It was difficult, because I tried to get my mom to involve me in karate and in football

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00:04:52.145 --> 00:04:55.445

Juan Carlos Araujo: and extracurricular activities that

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00:04:55.505 --> 00:04:59.815

Juan Carlos Araujo: obviously needed to be financially supported.

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00:05:00.415 --> 00:05:06.155

Juan Carlos Araujo: And my mom flattered me by trying to at least

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00:05:06.435 --> 00:05:08.815

Juan Carlos Araujo: go, see, and apply.

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00:05:08.865 --> 00:05:19.945

Juan Carlos Araujo: but it all resulted into the fact that [we couldn't afford it](#). So I guess you could say, as a youth I found ways to

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00:05:20.505 --> 00:05:23.195

Juan Carlos Araujo: stay productive and

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00:05:23.915 --> 00:05:30.094

Juan Carlos Araujo: not necessarily out of trouble. But you know, we might get into that in the in the next questions. Or so.

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00:05:32.535 --> 00:05:35.924

I think so, because it says, the next question is.

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00:05:37.655 --> 00:05:42.145

Steve Nava: actually, we'll skip to the fourth one. So can you talk about your teenage years?

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00:05:43.885 --> 00:05:46.025

Steve Nava: and then we'll give Audrey the third one.

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00:05:47.745 --> 00:05:49.435

Juan Carlos Araujo: Yeah.

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00:05:49.535 --> 00:05:52.145

Juan Carlos Araujo: my teenage years.

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00:05:53.405 --> 00:05:59.544

Juan Carlos Araujo: I was back and forth between the East side and the south side at that time.

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00:06:00.005 --> 00:06:03.954

Juan Carlos Araujo: I went to Caroline Davis, Junior High

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00:06:04.245 --> 00:06:12.274

Juan Carlos Araujo: Middle School in the South Side. and then, you know, after I

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00:06:12.395 --> 00:06:18.215

Juan Carlos Araujo: moved on from Junior High, I was meant to go to Oak Grove High School. So I was there

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00:06:18.525 --> 00:06:21.674

Juan Carlos Araujo: for one year as a freshman

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00:06:22.455 --> 00:06:27.634

Juan Carlos Araujo: should be told. I dropped out my freshman year out of high school.

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00:06:28.335 --> 00:06:32.714

Juan Carlos Araujo: and so my teenage years became,

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00:06:33.535 --> 00:06:45.674

Juan Carlos Araujo: you know. From the age of 14 I left home. I left home at the age of 14 and couch surfed, whether it's at my brother's house. our friend's house.

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00:06:45.825 --> 00:06:49.685

Juan Carlos Araujo: and you can imagine a 14 year old not necessarily having

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00:06:50.005 --> 00:06:54.955

Juan Carlos Araujo: any rules or apparent, telling them what to do.

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00:06:55.265 --> 00:06:58.055

Juan Carlos Araujo: I sort of had the freedom to

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00:06:58.185 --> 00:07:02.655

Juan Carlos Araujo: hang out with older friends stay out past.

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00:07:02.785 --> 00:07:11.975

Juan Carlos Araujo: you know, curfew times and you know. Luckily there were. There were, I think.

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00:07:13.025 --> 00:07:19.555

Juan Carlos Araujo: good people. I surrounded myself with ultimately where I wasn't getting into real serious trouble.

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00:07:19.765 --> 00:07:32.274

Juan Carlos Araujo: although I did consistently get picked up by tabs at the time was a sort of like unit that would pick up underage

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00:07:32.715 --> 00:07:37.594

Juan Carlos Araujo: kids if they were past curfew

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00:07:37.905 --> 00:07:44.064

Juan Carlos Araujo: back in the nineties, and so I would spend some of my nights at TAP centers

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00:07:44.315 --> 00:07:45.854

Juan Carlos Araujo: waiting to get picked up

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00:07:45.885 --> 00:07:49.114

Juan Carlos Araujo: by my parents or my mom.

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00:07:50.145 --> 00:07:54.554

Juan Carlos Araujo: Which never happened, so I would be the last person

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00:07:54.575 --> 00:07:56.635

Juan Carlos Araujo: at TAPS watching

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00:07:56.735 --> 00:08:02.425

Juan Carlos Araujo: every kid get picked up by the parents, the guardians all resulting in

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00:08:02.615 --> 00:08:07.034

Juan Carlos Araujo: a police officer driving me to my my brother's house.

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00:08:07.265 --> 00:08:13.425

Juan Carlos Araujo: Essentially. So. Those are some of the things I remember as a youth

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00:08:14.655 --> 00:08:15.884

Juan Carlos Araujo: as a teenager.

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00:08:17.775 --> 00:08:21.995

Audrey: Did you have a firm community you felt well connected to?

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00:08:22.475 --> 00:08:25.515

Audrey: Where were the places that you felt? A sense of belonging?

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00:08:28.145 --> 00:08:30.834

Juan Carlos Araujo: That's a good one.

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00:08:32.265 --> 00:08:35.654

Juan Carlos Araujo: it's something that I've actually had some time to reflect.

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00:08:36.385 --> 00:08:42.825

Juan Carlos Araujo: The last couple of years. And realizing that I did find community through

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00:08:43.405 --> 00:08:48.445

Juan Carlos Araujo: a the graffiti community and the graffiti culture¹.

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00:08:48.985 --> 00:08:51.905

Juan Carlos Araujo: I started to

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00:08:52.905 --> 00:08:58.334

Juan Carlos Araujo: paint at a young age. A cousin of mine had introduced me to it.

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00:08:58.825 --> 00:09:07.594

Juan Carlos Araujo: And I need through friends and school, but I think once I got to

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00:09:08.625 --> 00:09:15.725

Juan Carlos Araujo: to feeling like I belong to something you know, something I didn't have to pay for like I said I tried to

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00:09:17.025 --> 00:09:22.975

¹ Comparing Lynne's interview to Carlos's, how does a generationally supported community influence sustained youth activities and skill building opportunities as belonging is developing simultaneously?

Juan Carlos Araujo: join certain things that I just didn't follow through on, and

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00:09:23.255 --> 00:09:25.944

Juan Carlos Araujo: graffiti sort of gave me an outlet to

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00:09:27.275 --> 00:09:32.314

Juan Carlos Araujo: to the path of what I truly believe has led me to where I'm at today.

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00:09:32.485 --> 00:09:34.155

Juan Carlos Araujo: I still very much

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00:09:34.405 --> 00:09:41.234

Juan Carlos Araujo: love the community of graffiti artists that I grew up with

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00:09:41.665 --> 00:09:49.944

Juan Carlos Araujo: But yeah, I think that that answers the at least that part. Let me double check.

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00:09:52.305 --> 00:09:57.195

Audrey: How did you? How did the transition from a young adult shape.

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00:09:57.455 --> 00:10:05.075

Audrey: young adulthood, shape your participation in the communities that matter to you? What changed and what stayed the same for you?

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00:10:08.325 --> 00:10:17.755

Juan Carlos Araujo: How did it shape my participation in the communities?

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00:10:18.265 --> 00:10:23.094
Juan Carlos Araujo: well in my early 20s.

101
00:10:23.155 --> 00:10:26.854
Juan Carlos Araujo: graffiti eventually had

102
00:10:27.125 --> 00:10:28.855
Juan Carlos Araujo: become a very

103
00:10:29.195 --> 00:10:35.984
Juan Carlos Araujo: frowned upon stigmatized culture. Here in San Jose. Specifically.

104
00:10:36.055 --> 00:10:38.254
Juan Carlos Araujo: there was a large

105
00:10:38.785 --> 00:10:44.244
Juan Carlos Araujo: hunt, if you will. There was

106
00:10:44.835 --> 00:10:58.094
Juan Carlos Araujo: literally graffiti task forces looking for graffiti writers to to, you know, be incarcerated, and so

107
00:10:58.365 --> 00:11:00.385
Juan Carlos Araujo: eventually.

108
00:11:00.495 --> 00:11:04.314
Juan Carlos Araujo: by painting enough times, I got myself in trouble.

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00:11:04.685 --> 00:11:11.364

Juan Carlos Araujo: I literally was incarcerated for it for a few, a few, few few months.

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00:11:11.805 --> 00:11:15.325

Juan Carlos Araujo: Some of my friends for years

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00:11:16.205 --> 00:11:26.255

Juan Carlos Araujo: And that sort of led me to have to reevaluate. I started to date my former partner and girlfriend at the time.

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00:11:26.625 --> 00:11:36.434

Juan Carlos Araujo: who was very, very mature. Very smart, very inspirational to me.

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00:11:36.795 --> 00:11:40.325

Juan Carlos Araujo: applying that energy and sort of

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00:11:41.245 --> 00:11:46.575

Juan Carlos Araujo: kind of pushing me and and sharing that I should do art. And so

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00:11:47.075 --> 00:11:50.915

Juan Carlos Araujo: I started to paint canvas.

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00:11:51.375 --> 00:11:56.864

Juan Carlos Araujo: Eventually it led me to leasing a building so that I could

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00:11:57.035 --> 00:12:00.055

Juan Carlos Araujo: practice my artwork

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00:12:00.465 --> 00:12:11.524

Juan Carlos Araujo: which it did serve that purpose, but eventually evolved into actually the business that that I own, and have been operating for the last 15 years, which is [Empire 7 Studios](#).

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00:12:11.995 --> 00:12:20.785

Juan Carlos Araujo: So I could say that you know the graffiti and the troubles and the struggles essentially, and eventually led me to

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00:12:21.245 --> 00:12:30.814

Juan Carlos Araujo: wanting to champion the culture that I knew the most, which was not just graffiti. You know there was skate skateboarders, skate culture

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00:12:30.945 --> 00:12:38.325

Juan Carlos Araujo: skate skaters also were getting the wrath and continue to get the wrath of, you know, places that they're not permitted to skate.

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00:12:38.455 --> 00:12:45.215

Juan Carlos Araujo: They were kicked out. I truly remember skateboarders still being spat on at one point in high school.

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00:12:45.615 --> 00:12:49.944

Juan Carlos Araujo: Very different in contrast to them being in the

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00:12:50.105 --> 00:12:51.695

Juan Carlos Araujo: Olympics today.

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00:12:51.825 --> 00:13:02.874

Juan Carlos Araujo: so low rider culture, cruising, those were the the nights that I was getting picked up by [TABS](#), as I was literally in a car cruising

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00:13:02.925 --> 00:13:09.515

Juan Carlos Araujo: on the boulevard on Santa Clara Street at some point. So all these things that I

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00:13:09.875 --> 00:13:14.624

Juan Carlos Araujo: literally practice as a youth continued to inspire me today.

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00:13:18.755 --> 00:13:25.535

Audrey: Can you talk about a community? You were a part of most recently you felt a strong sense of belonging.

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00:13:27.035 --> 00:13:27.785

Okay.

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00:13:28.535 --> 00:13:30.524

Juan Carlos Araujo: that's a good one.

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00:13:32.045 --> 00:13:33.135

Juan Carlos Araujo: you know

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00:13:33.265 --> 00:13:39.775

Juan Carlos Araujo: I had my gallery since 2008 officially.

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00:13:40.015 --> 00:13:49.855

Juan Carlos Araujo: in 2016, I received the worst news ever that I was gonna lose my physical gallery space.

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00:13:50.465 --> 00:13:54.974

Juan Carlos Araujo: we built this really cool movement

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00:13:54.995 --> 00:14:03.725

Juan Carlos Araujo: for San Jose. I literally have people still coming into my new venue that I opened up in 2022

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00:14:04.275 --> 00:14:08.184

Juan Carlos Araujo: many past.

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00:14:08.775 --> 00:14:10.425

Juan Carlos Araujo: visitors that

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00:14:10.765 --> 00:14:14.185

Juan Carlos Araujo: experienced our first venue.

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00:14:14.605 --> 00:14:23.764

Juan Carlos Araujo: come to the new gallery to tell. You know we're just sharing our stories, our experiences, and we're all talking just how

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00:14:24.005 --> 00:14:30.034

Juan Carlos Araujo: impactful our old and original Empire 7 Studios building.

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00:14:30.735 --> 00:14:35.205

Juan Carlos Araujo: was part of so many people's lives

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00:14:35.555 --> 00:14:40.005

Juan Carlos Araujo: when we made the announcement that we were losing our space

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00:14:40.525 --> 00:14:49.224

Juan Carlos Araujo: our community was heartbroken. And I'll stop there, because up until that point

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00:14:49.525 --> 00:14:59.665

Juan Carlos Araujo: I actually didn't realize that I had a community. I think we were just actively doing things because it's truly who we are.

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00:15:00.065 --> 00:15:08.725

Juan Carlos Araujo: we had a sense of purpose. We were having fun. It's our lifestyles that essentially

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00:15:08.745 --> 00:15:10.395

Juan Carlos Araujo: brought us together.

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00:15:10.695 --> 00:15:17.805

Juan Carlos Araujo: but it was never sort of a mission for us that we were a community-based, oriented

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00:15:18.045 --> 00:15:19.415

Juan Carlos Araujo: movement.

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00:15:19.805 --> 00:15:25.634

Juan Carlos Araujo: But you know, 10 years of doing programming, curating art shows

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00:15:26.005 --> 00:15:27.714

Juan Carlos Araujo: and losing that

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00:15:28.025 --> 00:15:33.784

Juan Carlos Araujo: completely unveiled the fact that we had built a community

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00:15:34.105 --> 00:15:39.685

Juan Carlos Araujo: [with just being ourselves our true selves](#), and so

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00:15:40.795 --> 00:15:52.085

Juan Carlos Araujo: understanding. And and yes, I lost my gallery. but I feel like I gained a true value and a sense of understanding that

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00:15:52.125 --> 00:15:55.154

Juan Carlos Araujo: we had built a community and had their support.

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00:16:02.095 --> 00:16:11.354

Steve Nava: I was just sharing a little bit of the website. So that folks can see the image for to go along with. You know your narration of the

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00:16:12.045 --> 00:16:16.574

Steve Nava: the studio, but in terms of the space itself.

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00:16:17.965 --> 00:16:27.624

Steve Nava: you talked a bit about the change from one location to the next. Can you talk a little bit about how that took place? And then a little bit about how

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00:16:27.665 --> 00:16:37.005

Steve Nava: the vibe or the the energy has shifted or changed at all if it if it has. So, how has this changed in terms of the space itself and

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00:16:37.045 --> 00:16:39.795

Steve Nava: your your sort of involvement in the space?

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00:16:41.855 --> 00:16:46.224

Juan Carlos Araujo: Yeah, well, I'm I'm older now, so I've changed.

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00:16:47.775 --> 00:16:52.344

Juan Carlos Araujo: Age will do that to you in some way or another! Ha ha.

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00:16:52.695 --> 00:17:02.155

Juan Carlos Araujo: The venue was a very intentional space, you know I love brick coming from the graffiti culture.

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00:17:02.205 --> 00:17:08.275

Juan Carlos Araujo: There's one thing that we love to paint is fresh bricks. At least I do

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00:17:08.425 --> 00:17:13.195

Juan Carlos Araujo: anything that's industrial. Raw metals. Brick?

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00:17:13.855 --> 00:17:20.605

Juan Carlos Araujo: These are the things that stood out to me. From our original venue.

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00:17:20.775 --> 00:17:32.265

Juan Carlos Araujo: There was literally a billboard on the side of the building, I mean, that was to me so appealing. And so.

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00:17:33.195 --> 00:17:38.035

Juan Carlos Araujo: you know, it was 3,300 square feet. 3,300 square feet of

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00:17:38.535 --> 00:17:41.205

Juan Carlos Araujo: really neglected warehouse.

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00:17:41.655 --> 00:17:54.905

Juan Carlos Araujo: I had a pretty understanding landlord in the sense that he was supportive in allowing me to do what I wanted to do with my space that I leased.

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00:17:55.105 --> 00:17:58.275

Juan Carlos Araujo: However, he was not

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00:17:58.645 --> 00:18:03.915

Juan Carlos Araujo: willing to contribute. You know he did the most minimal

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00:18:04.235 --> 00:18:09.245

Juan Carlos Araujo: that he needed to, but it was very challenging

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00:18:09.685 --> 00:18:18.844

Juan Carlos Araujo: but we ran with it, and you know he had given us his word of a ten-year lease at the building.

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00:18:18.915 --> 00:18:23.204

Juan Carlos Araujo: so we had ten years of nothing but good times in the space

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00:18:23.555 --> 00:18:36.285

Juan Carlos Araujo: in terms of programming that you know internally, there is a lot there that I struggled with. I had a my 9 to 5 or more. So, like day job that I work from like 5 to 3.

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00:18:36.795 --> 00:18:37.744

Juan Carlos Araujo: But

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00:18:38.415 --> 00:18:43.845

Juan Carlos Araujo: You know, I sustained a job while I built this gallery in this venue.

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00:18:43.915 --> 00:18:50.005

Juan Carlos Araujo: and poured all my earnings into the space. And so

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00:18:50.295 --> 00:18:57.255

Juan Carlos Araujo: It was very different, and by 2016. I had already

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00:18:57.455 --> 00:19:02.515

Juan Carlos Araujo: started to get a lot more commission-based work. I started to sell a lot more artwork.

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00:19:02.725 --> 00:19:07.235

Juan Carlos Araujo: and I felt very proud that I was cutting checks for artists and paying them

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00:19:07.525 --> 00:19:12.294

Juan Carlos Araujo: just for them, being themselves and hanging their work in our venue

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00:19:12.905 --> 00:19:17.515

Juan Carlos Araujo: And when it was gone, you know, I just had to.

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00:19:18.275 --> 00:19:27.365

Juan Carlos Araujo: I had to heal it was. It was it was painful! It was! It really just

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00:19:28.005 --> 00:19:35.265

Juan Carlos Araujo: crushed me, you know, in every sense of the word and coming out of that to

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00:19:35.455 --> 00:19:39.675

Juan Carlos Araujo: to be resilient and understanding resiliency

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00:19:40.005 --> 00:19:47.695

Juan Carlos Araujo: motivated me to collaborate with the same people that knocked down my building, which was a developer group

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00:19:47.935 --> 00:19:52.015

Juan Carlos Araujo: that purchase the parcel where my building was

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00:19:52.545 --> 00:20:04.795

Juan Carlos Araujo: and it took me 6 years to build a relationship with the developers one relationship that was very inclusive and understanding of our vision, of our

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00:20:05.085 --> 00:20:07.725

Juan Carlos Araujo: of our standards, of our values.

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00:20:08.155 --> 00:20:16.545

Juan Carlos Araujo: That's important in this, in this industry in any industry, for especially as artists, we want to be

192

00:20:17.145 --> 00:20:20.444

Juan Carlos Araujo: respected, we want to be heard, we want to be valued.

193

00:20:20.865 --> 00:20:38.935

Juan Carlos Araujo: And uh, this group did that ironically. There's not from what I understand. [There's not one development project in the city of San Jose that has literally kicked out a gallery or arts-centric business and brought them back to be integral in their development project.](#)

194

00:20:39.075 --> 00:20:47.855

Juan Carlos Araujo: and I feel very proud that I hung in there for six years to build a relationship with something I was completely foreign to you.

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00:20:48.645 --> 00:20:51.255

Juan Carlos Araujo: working with developers and

196

00:20:51.305 --> 00:20:57.005

Juan Carlos Araujo: trusting and being vulnerable. All these things that I had to overcome

197

00:20:57.105 --> 00:21:02.635

Juan Carlos Araujo: and understand and learn to have a brand new retail space

198

00:21:02.685 --> 00:21:03.845

Juan Carlos Araujo: underneath

199

00:21:03.915 --> 00:21:07.455

Juan Carlos Araujo: the apartment complex. So

200

00:21:07.605 --> 00:21:15.554

Juan Carlos Araujo: our space now is very cute. It's very small. It's a lot smaller. It's 1,000 square feet compared to 3,300 square feet of warehouse.

201

00:21:15.875 --> 00:21:22.505

Juan Carlos Araujo: But [Steve](#) here has come by to visit, and knows that I work extremely hard to curate.

202

00:21:22.665 --> 00:21:28.615

Juan Carlos Araujo: you know things that speak to us, to speak to our demographics.

203

00:21:28.745 --> 00:21:40.064

Juan Carlos Araujo: And beyond. We have a lot of artwork still on the walls a lot of art books printed matter. It's important zine-making. And all these other things that

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00:21:40.445 --> 00:21:44.535

Juan Carlos Araujo: we're very much part of my childhood and upbringing.

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00:21:47.205 --> 00:21:48.535

Steve Nava: and I should.

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00:21:48.625 --> 00:21:53.965

Juan Carlos Araujo: I should add, I should add, that we're still on Empire and Seventh Street. So

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00:21:54.475 --> 00:22:00.685

Juan Carlos Araujo: thus the name Empire, 7 studios organically, was conceptualized with a group of friends.

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00:22:01.105 --> 00:22:03.735

Juan Carlos Araujo: While we were just hanging out.

209

00:22:03.875 --> 00:22:11.125

Juan Carlos Araujo: having a good time and trying to figure out a name for the venue, and we landed on the on the street names.

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00:22:12.995 --> 00:22:17.394

Steve Nava: Thank you for sharing about the move. And did you get?

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00:22:17.555 --> 00:22:27.384

Steve Nava: Did the community around the studio feel critical about the whole move, or were they accepting of it as well, like the people in your circle?

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00:22:29.565 --> 00:22:34.824

Juan Carlos Araujo: you know, when I see folks that I haven't seen, and

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00:22:34.895 --> 00:22:39.064

Juan Carlos Araujo: in some time, and I know that they would come to the old venu.

214

00:22:39.295 --> 00:22:43.204

Juan Carlos Araujo: I think it's a mix. It's a mixed bucket, you know.

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00:22:44.255 --> 00:22:52.104

Juan Carlos Araujo: should be told. I think sometimes people don't want you to change. You know. They think you're gonna be the same person, the same thing.

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00:22:52.525 --> 00:23:00.745

Juan Carlos Araujo: and personally for me. That means I would still be drinking. That means I would still be going out doing

217

00:23:00.985 --> 00:23:09.345

Juan Carlos Araujo: certain things that I just don't have fun doing anymore, you know. And so for those things I personally feel I've changed

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00:23:09.685 --> 00:23:14.155

Juan Carlos Araujo: for a positive note. You know, I like that I've been sober, for

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00:23:14.345 --> 00:23:16.574

Juan Carlos Araujo: I can't remember. It's been.

220

00:23:16.675 --> 00:23:22.014

Juan Carlos Araujo: I'm going on ten years, I think, being sober. And and

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00:23:22.325 --> 00:23:26.845

Juan Carlos Araujo: I love it, cause it allows me to focus. And truly a

222

00:23:27.185 --> 00:23:40.995

Juan Carlos Araujo: just dig into the core of what I love to do. I love what I do every day I wake up, and I. It's my job to to curate art and to work with artists and produce art myself. So

223

00:23:41.245 --> 00:23:51.934

Juan Carlos Araujo: you know, I think it's always gonna be a mixed bag. You know, of people that truly champion you and others that might think you sold out.

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00:23:52.105 --> 00:23:59.465

Juan Carlos Araujo: you know. But it's very easy to judge someone without knowing their trials, tribulations, their struggles.

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00:23:59.765 --> 00:24:06.835

Juan Carlos Araujo: And and I'm okay with that, you can't please everybody. And more. So I rather focus on the people that are

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00:24:07.145 --> 00:24:15.384

Juan Carlos Araujo: are advocating for you that believe in you that appreciate you. You know. I think I think the energy

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00:24:15.435 --> 00:24:21.824

Juan Carlos Araujo: needs to go towards people that that do that versus caring about someone, not

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00:24:22.195 --> 00:24:26.695

Juan Carlos Araujo: co-signing what you want to do and what you're passionate about.

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00:24:29.985 --> 00:24:45.304

Steve Nava: Yeah, after you know, learning about L.A.'s little Tokyo, because it. You know, the location is really close. You're like in Japantown pretty much. And one of the criticisms of the Japantown in a little Tokyo in LA. Was that they

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00:24:45.635 --> 00:24:55.425

Steve Nava: they brand themselves almost kind of sort of a corporate branding, you know. And and you know that community in Japantown in in LA is trying to stay

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00:24:55.505 --> 00:25:07.214

Steve Nava: stay generationally present. They don't want to get sort of pushed out by, you know, big corporations, etc., and the word gentrification has been, you know, used to describe

232

00:25:07.325 --> 00:25:11.815

Steve Nava: what's happening in in LA. And

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00:25:11.925 --> 00:25:13.204

Juan Carlos Araujo: Do you feel like

234

00:25:13.725 --> 00:25:26.514

Steve Nava: in order to stay viable? You have to market yourself. Well. and do people criticize the way that you might, you know, promote your artist and your

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00:25:26.645 --> 00:25:27.595

Steve Nava: studio?

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00:25:30.565 --> 00:25:31.515

Juan Carlos Araujo: Huh?

237

00:25:31.665 --> 00:25:37.724

Juan Carlos Araujo: yeah, I just. I just went to little Tokyo, actually. And

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00:25:38.425 --> 00:25:44.265

Juan Carlos Araujo: and and I guess, just from experience again working with developers.

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00:25:44.665 --> 00:25:46.445

Juan Carlos Araujo: And even prior to that

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00:25:47.075 --> 00:25:52.764

Juan Carlos Araujo: I had stumbled upon a document through a mural project

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00:25:53.365 --> 00:25:56.525

Juan Carlos Araujo: that had explained to me

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00:25:56.635 --> 00:25:58.855

Juan Carlos Araujo: an 80-page document

243

00:25:59.025 --> 00:26:03.274

Juan Carlos Araujo: that explained to me the general plan of San Jose.

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00:26:04.165 --> 00:26:15.865

Juan Carlos Araujo: and what I was able to be exposed to through learning and and reading. That document was that this was [far beyond my control](#).

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00:26:16.535 --> 00:26:19.744

Juan Carlos Araujo: The only way I could control buying land

246

00:26:20.085 --> 00:26:21.985

Juan Carlos Araujo: is being

247

00:26:22.055 --> 00:26:29.545

Juan Carlos Araujo: rich and having the resources to buy it. and

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00:26:30.935 --> 00:26:39.745

Juan Carlos Araujo: if you follow the money, if you follow the politics in any neighborhood in any realm of industry.

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00:26:40.195 --> 00:26:46.385

Juan Carlos Araujo: Certain things will come to become exposed to you, to understand

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00:26:47.055 --> 00:26:59.525

Juan Carlos Araujo: the gravity of where things are getting pulled, in what direction you know I do understand. Here in San Jose. A lot of the property is

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00:26:59.695 --> 00:27:05.644

Juan Carlos Araujo: is through generational. And so the generations here

252

00:27:06.245 --> 00:27:10.854

Juan Carlos Araujo: have been supportive to keep the neighborhood.

253

00:27:11.175 --> 00:27:17.385

Juan Carlos Araujo: a for I guess less commercialized

254

00:27:17.455 --> 00:27:28.595

Juan Carlos Araujo: right? That's why Japantown San Jose has a very townlike feel in the in the central part of it. But you know, when you look at 6th and Jackson now.

255

00:27:29.065 --> 00:27:31.405

Juan Carlos Araujo: and Empire and Seventh Street.

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00:27:31.425 --> 00:27:34.974

Juan Carlos Araujo: those are parcels that were up for grabs.

257

00:27:35.085 --> 00:27:38.025

Juan Carlos Araujo: and we're rezoned

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00:27:39.055 --> 00:27:40.265

Juan Carlos Araujo: by

259

00:27:40.975 --> 00:27:46.545

Juan Carlos Araujo: our civic, our government, our city government, to become residential.

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00:27:47.665 --> 00:27:56.655

Juan Carlos Araujo: The only way I was able to actually get a venue under in the same project at this site

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00:27:56.785 --> 00:28:10.085

Juan Carlos Araujo: was by going to City Hall and asking our Council members to rezone a thousand square feet of retail space within this project development.

262

00:28:10.155 --> 00:28:11.815

Juan Carlos Araujo: and in order to do that

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00:28:11.835 --> 00:28:15.315

Juan Carlos Araujo: I had to get the support of the community

264

00:28:15.575 --> 00:28:17.734

Juan Carlos Araujo: to come with me to City Hall

265

00:28:18.465 --> 00:28:23.474

Juan Carlos Araujo: to ask that we get this rezoning

266

00:28:23.655 --> 00:28:32.104

Juan Carlos Araujo: accomplished not one council member at the time of Liccardo's tenure there.

267

00:28:32.135 --> 00:28:34.235

Juan Carlos Araujo: in 2000 and

268

00:28:36.365 --> 00:28:40.445

Juan Carlos Araujo: 18 or so. 18 or 19,

269

00:28:41.155 --> 00:28:46.614

Juan Carlos Araujo: went against it. It you know, everyone's like wanted Empire 7 Studios just to have a home.

270

00:28:47.244 --> 00:28:51.235

Juan Carlos Araujo: And so so yeah, you know, I mean.

271

00:28:51.835 --> 00:28:54.705

Juan Carlos Araujo: that's the politics in in

272

00:28:54.805 --> 00:28:59.345

Juan Carlos Araujo: our infrastructure and city policy. If you want to understand

273

00:29:00.945 --> 00:29:06.535

Juan Carlos Araujo: politics, you have to get involved with policy and policy is not something that

274

00:29:06.575 --> 00:29:12.644

Juan Carlos Araujo: it's done overnight. That's why you have people picketing. That's why you have people

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00:29:12.775 --> 00:29:17.105

Juan Carlos Araujo: working for years to change a policy.

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00:29:17.385 --> 00:29:19.495

Juan Carlos Araujo: So that alone is

277

00:29:19.655 --> 00:29:30.185

Juan Carlos Araujo: could be a life investing mission to try to change our demographics to change the way our city officials think

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00:29:31.045 --> 00:29:32.275

Juan Carlos Araujo: no one.

279

00:29:32.695 --> 00:29:36.225

Juan Carlos Araujo: Things don't change if people don't get involved.

280

00:29:36.585 --> 00:29:45.684

Juan Carlos Araujo: So it's it's a hard work, it's hard work. So anyone out there changing policy for the for the greater good my hats off to them

281

00:29:45.785 --> 00:29:49.695

Juan Carlos Araujo: cause I understand the type of dedication it takes

282

00:29:50.075 --> 00:29:56.865

Juan Carlos Araujo: how I promote business and the artists that I do. I learned this

283

00:29:57.365 --> 00:29:58.425

Juan Carlos Araujo: through

284

00:29:58.805 --> 00:30:03.014

Juan Carlos Araujo: the way I was able to bring a mural festival

285

00:30:03.115 --> 00:30:10.444

Juan Carlos Araujo: that has a global connection and formerly known as [Powwow San Jose](#)

286

00:30:10.955 --> 00:30:13.315

Juan Carlos Araujo: and Powwow worldwide.

287

00:30:13.965 --> 00:30:19.935

Juan Carlos Araujo: was an international. It. It is an international mural festival.

288

00:30:20.105 --> 00:30:24.695

Juan Carlos Araujo: We rebranded during the pandemic to worldwide walls.

289

00:30:25.005 --> 00:30:30.135

Juan Carlos Araujo: and every city underneath the worldwide walls branch

290

00:30:30.485 --> 00:30:35.054

Juan Carlos Araujo: has their own festival. So we are now San Jose walls

291

00:30:35.495 --> 00:30:44.545

Juan Carlos Araujo: and the reason for me bringing this festival to San Jose was because

292

00:30:45.245 --> 00:30:56.514

Juan Carlos Araujo: I had knocked on every door. I had asked every arts organization that you can think of. You name it. I went there.

293

00:30:56.925 --> 00:31:00.755

Juan Carlos Araujo: If they were around in 2016 and 2017.

294

00:31:01.005 --> 00:31:09.914

Juan Carlos Araujo: The biggest question is, is, did you go to so and so did you go to this organization? Did you talk to the city? Yes, yes, yes.

295

00:31:10.025 --> 00:31:12.564

Juan Carlos Araujo: and the answer was, No.

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00:31:13.225 --> 00:31:18.655

Juan Carlos Araujo: no, we don't have resources. No, we don't have it

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00:31:18.775 --> 00:31:22.435

Juan Carlos Araujo: on honestly, the time for you and

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00:31:24.105 --> 00:31:28.294

Juan Carlos Araujo: and that motivated me that pushed me to say, Okay, well.

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00:31:28.995 --> 00:31:39.035

Juan Carlos Araujo: I'm in this alone, with just a small core team of people that I have with the worldwide resources from our partners in Hawaii.

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00:31:39.905 --> 00:31:47.485

Juan Carlos Araujo: To tap into our relationships, to our sponsors to the people who support us.

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00:31:47.635 --> 00:31:57.554

Juan Carlos Araujo: Remember what I said and just you have to remember the people that [truly believe in you](#). and those were the people that stepped up and helped us produce a mural festival.

302

00:31:57.765 --> 00:32:04.445

Juan Carlos Araujo: It's a much larger picture, but I think one of the things that I we had to do

303

00:32:04.775 --> 00:32:06.004

Juan Carlos Araujo: as we

304

00:32:06.125 --> 00:32:11.075

Juan Carlos Araujo: scraped by. And and we piece together. We Frankensteined

305

00:32:11.665 --> 00:32:18.004

Juan Carlos Araujo: a massive global mural festival that has international

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00:32:19.075 --> 00:32:23.965

Juan Carlos Araujo: views, you know, into San Jose culture

307

00:32:24.595 --> 00:32:28.875

Juan Carlos Araujo: was that even though we didn't have

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00:32:29.155 --> 00:32:35.095

Juan Carlos Araujo: the resources we wished we we would, and the support we wish we would financially support.

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00:32:35.935 --> 00:32:50.275

Juan Carlos Araujo: We piece together something with marketing a vision of how to market ourselves to the best of our ability. So we made a product that was made with peanuts and pennies.

310

00:32:51.215 --> 00:32:53.824

Juan Carlos Araujo: and we made it look like a million dollars.

311

00:32:55.025 --> 00:33:04.535

Juan Carlos Araujo: and it was very much not the case. but it was our strategic ways and our influence, our passion

312

00:33:04.825 --> 00:33:09.494

Juan Carlos Araujo: of taking a product that we put together with real love

313

00:33:09.905 --> 00:33:11.855

Juan Carlos Araujo: for our cities

314

00:33:12.535 --> 00:33:15.634

Juan Carlos Araujo: and make it look like it was

315

00:33:15.665 --> 00:33:18.445

Juan Carlos Araujo: again really expensive.

316

00:33:19.025 --> 00:33:21.745

Juan Carlos Araujo: And I so explain this, because

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00:33:21.865 --> 00:33:29.324

Juan Carlos Araujo: as a small business, I'm not a museum. I'm not an institution. I'm not a nonprofit.

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00:33:29.345 --> 00:33:32.894

Juan Carlos Araujo: I'm a for-profit small business owner.

319

00:33:33.285 --> 00:33:37.955

Juan Carlos Araujo: and I stay that way, because it gives me the ultimate freedom

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00:33:38.245 --> 00:33:39.975

Juan Carlos Araujo: to be who I am

321

00:33:40.525 --> 00:33:50.604

Juan Carlos Araujo: and champion the artists and the voices the way they would like to. And so for us it's important to present ourselves

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00:33:50.625 --> 00:33:58.005

Juan Carlos Araujo: as if we were being funded millions of dollars to present ourselves as if we were, as

323

00:33:58.025 --> 00:34:05.144

Juan Carlos Araujo: in the hierarchy of other institutions. But we're very much. Not that.

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00:34:05.365 --> 00:34:11.965

Juan Carlos Araujo: But it's important for us to create that element and presence, because when we believe in it.

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00:34:12.045 --> 00:34:16.065

Juan Carlos Araujo: but also because we value it. And we want

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00:34:16.075 --> 00:34:21.485

Juan Carlos Araujo: patrons and people to support artists and buy artwork

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00:34:22.365 --> 00:34:26.254

Juan Carlos Araujo: because it's important for the artist ecosystem.

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00:34:27.035 --> 00:34:33.165

Juan Carlos Araujo: So so for me, it's important to to champion and present ourselves in a way

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00:34:33.275 --> 00:34:38.475

Juan Carlos Araujo: where our audience will value the work that we present as much as we do.

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00:34:40.015 --> 00:34:42.404

Thank you for sharing that and

331

00:34:42.585 --> 00:34:50.315

Steve Nava: sounds like you have a pretty firm community of supporters and during Covid, did that affect

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00:34:50.325 --> 00:34:52.354

Steve Nava: your sense of community?

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00:34:54.245 --> 00:34:54.935

I don't.

334

00:34:55.165 --> 00:35:01.934

Juan Carlos Araujo: yeah, I mean, Covid changed everything for for everyone.

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00:35:04.255 --> 00:35:05.975

Juan Carlos Araujo: I think.

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00:35:07.445 --> 00:35:20.565

Juan Carlos Araujo: maybe the arts. Ill think it was very opposite for us versus some of our our neighborhood friends, our members of the community who

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00:35:21.125 --> 00:35:22.674

Juan Carlos Araujo: are in the arts.

338

00:35:23.215 --> 00:35:27.785

Juan Carlos Araujo: Truth be told, I actually had

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00:35:28.055 --> 00:35:31.785

Juan Carlos Araujo: one of the best years, and

340

00:35:32.045 --> 00:35:36.475

Juan Carlos Araujo: during the pandemic, I think a lot of companies were trying to figure out what to do.

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00:35:36.675 --> 00:35:37.865

Juan Carlos Araujo: We were

342

00:35:38.005 --> 00:35:40.395

Juan Carlos Araujo: a company

343

00:35:40.425 --> 00:35:49.105

Juan Carlos Araujo: that was already established. We had already produced about a hundred murals throughout the city.

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00:35:49.325 --> 00:36:02.154

Juan Carlos Araujo: and we were able to bring on a lot of the muralists that participated and contributed to those festivals into the corporate space and give them paid commission work

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00:36:02.695 --> 00:36:04.605

Juan Carlos Araujo: during the pandemic

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00:36:04.715 --> 00:36:14.815

Juan Carlos Araujo: so during the pandemic, I think, while everyone was trying to rally up and figure out where to go and what to do next, how to bring people back into the workspace.

347

00:36:15.095 --> 00:36:16.835

Juan Carlos Araujo: We

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00:36:17.515 --> 00:36:22.174

Juan Carlos Araujo: We were fortunate enough to be selected to

349

00:36:22.405 --> 00:36:36.424

Juan Carlos Araujo: to hire artists to do some some large scale projects. and that all sort of also, you know, it's a roller coaster in terms of just business.

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00:36:36.835 --> 00:36:41.445

Juan Carlos Araujo: I, you know. But I think

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00:36:42.765 --> 00:36:50.405

Juan Carlos Araujo: it sort of allowed us to have an opportunity to focus and really

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00:36:51.825 --> 00:36:55.025

Juan Carlos Araujo: see who really has.

353

00:36:55.485 --> 00:37:01.234

Il think that I don't know. I think Covid, just also it also just open, opened up the

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00:37:01.505 --> 00:37:04.774

Juan Carlos Araujo: the gateways to so many people who

355

00:37:04.825 --> 00:37:09.834

Juan Carlos Araujo: we're probably working a regular job and a corporate job, and and said, You know.

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00:37:09.885 --> 00:37:15.395

Juan Carlos Araujo: I have much more fun doing my art. So so.

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00:37:15.915 --> 00:37:19.984

Juan Carlos Araujo: But I think you know our community was resilient.

358

00:37:20.145 --> 00:37:23.285

Juan Carlos Araujo: I mean my hat's off just to everybody who was out there

359

00:37:23.535 --> 00:37:31.924

Juan Carlos Araujo: giving people food and and essential essential needs. Right during this during this Covid time

360

00:37:37.665 --> 00:37:46.834

Audrey: since you are located in Japantown, what places or spaces do you find yourself going to these days. Do you spend time in the Japantown neighborhood?

361

00:37:48.355 --> 00:37:53.714

Juan Carlos Araujo: Yeah, I lived in Japantown for almost twenty years.

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00:37:54.225 --> 00:37:57.165

Juan Carlos Araujo: So I've gotten really.

363

00:37:57.285 --> 00:37:58.914

Juan Carlos Araujo: you know

364

00:37:59.835 --> 00:38:09.614

Juan Carlos Araujo: if you look at some of our walls in the neighborhood. We used to have a called *Guadalajara* on Tenth and Empire.

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00:38:09.925 --> 00:38:14.964

Juan Carlos Araujo: where I would go buy \$3 burritos. and we ended up

366

00:38:15.245 --> 00:38:20.255

Juan Carlos Araujo: convincing that that business owner to to let us paint their walls.

367

00:38:20.705 --> 00:38:24.674

Juan Carlos Araujo: We painted [Nichi Bei Bussan](#).

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00:38:24.835 --> 00:38:28.594

Juan Carlos Araujo: which is a Japanese gift shop.

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00:38:28.885 --> 00:38:36.854

Juan Carlos Araujo: I think third generation Japanese American gift shop run by Arlene.

370

00:38:37.225 --> 00:38:48.335

Juan Carlos Araujo: another wall that we were able to paint. I mean, I'm up and down Japan all the time, and frequent. You know whether it's Roy stations coffee.

371

00:38:48.575 --> 00:38:52.795

Juan Carlos Araujo: whether it's Ken Matsumoto's rarely open

372

00:38:52.885 --> 00:38:57.144

Juan Carlos Araujo: Gallery, which is called Art object gallery

373

00:38:57.255 --> 00:39:01.454

Juan Carlos Araujo: on Fifth Street. These are all

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00:39:01.465 --> 00:39:10.664

Juan Carlos Araujo: more so. Businesses of my time when I first moved into the neighborhood. But You have Santo Market, which is on

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00:39:11.265 --> 00:39:15.625

Juan Carlos Araujo: Taylor and Sixth Street, and that's another

376

00:39:15.885 --> 00:39:17.785

Juan Carlos Araujo: another

377

00:39:18.025 --> 00:39:24.755

Juan Carlos Araujo: small business that we a family owned business that's been around for 60 years.

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00:39:24.815 --> 00:39:32.575

Juan Carlos Araujo: that we were able to to convince on allowing them to to let us paint on their wall.

379

00:39:33.465 --> 00:39:40.094

Juan Carlos Araujo: And they're known now, you know, so many influencers and social media people that do the

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00:39:40.375 --> 00:39:50.474

Juan Carlos Araujo: the food influencing and things like that. Highlight Santo market for the best poke and a lot of a lot of them recognize it because of the mural

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00:39:50.735 --> 00:39:53.825

Juan Carlos Araujo: but yeah, I would say that.

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00:39:54.115 --> 00:39:58.495

Juan Carlos Araujo: I love all the food and the restaurants in Japantown.

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00:39:58.815 --> 00:40:07.075

Juan Carlos Araujo: that have been here for a long time. So I frequent Japantown pretty often cause it's my neighborhood.

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00:40:09.435 --> 00:40:15.035

Juan Carlos Araujo: That's it. Yeah. that one took 6 years for them to

385

00:40:15.105 --> 00:40:18.475

Juan Carlos Araujo: convinced. So a lot of roast beef sandwiches and

386

00:40:19.165 --> 00:40:27.945

Juan Carlos Araujo: and small talk with Mark Santo. But there's you know, there's a Youtube KQED

387

00:40:28.675 --> 00:40:37.905

Juan Carlos Araujo: art video. It's like [KQED arts on Youtube](#) review, Youtube, like KQED Empire 7 Studios. There's a

388

00:40:38.405 --> 00:40:45.824

Juan Carlos Araujo: there's actually a a really great documentation of some of the small businesses that we

389

00:40:46.455 --> 00:40:50.215

Juan Carlos Araujo: collaborate it with in our earlier years in the neighborhood.

390

00:40:50.505 --> 00:41:02.725

Juan Carlos Araujo: And, Mark, I will quote Mark on this because I try not to down to egotistic here, or you know, but

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00:41:02.745 --> 00:41:13.254

Juan Carlos Araujo: I am proud. I am very proud of of our accomplishments, of our, of what we've been able to to build with our our neighbors, our neighbors really

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00:41:13.425 --> 00:41:22.134

Juan Carlos Araujo: but Mark said it himself that we changed their entire business, that we changed the entire community, because

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00:41:22.705 --> 00:41:29.834

Juan Carlos Araujo: before we started painting murals all over the neighborhood, it was not as vibrant as it is today, and

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00:41:30.005 --> 00:41:32.285

Juan Carlos Araujo: Japantown in 2020,

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00:41:32.345 --> 00:41:38.074

Juan Carlos Araujo: too, was voted like the most vibrant fun neighborhood in San Jose.

396

00:41:38.545 --> 00:41:44.334

Juan Carlos Araujo: And since you're recording this, and this is going in the history books hopefully

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00:41:46.145 --> 00:41:47.604

Juan Carlos Araujo: that could be remembered.

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00:41:48.535 --> 00:41:53.244

Steve Nava: So what do you think the future of? The last question, what do you think the future of Japan is

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00:41:54.295 --> 00:41:58.095

Steve Nava: the the way it's going in terms like mom and pop places staying open.

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00:42:00.715 --> 00:42:03.795

Juan Carlos Araujo: It's it's hard to say.

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00:42:04.555 --> 00:42:11.755

Juan Carlos Araujo: you know, we just had a really great event over the weekend, a photon night in Japan.

402

00:42:12.185 --> 00:42:13.955

Juan Carlos Araujo: collective of

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00:42:13.995 --> 00:42:17.764

Juan Carlos Araujo: photographers, rallied up the neighborhood to

404

00:42:18.095 --> 00:42:23.835

Juan Carlos Araujo: open up their small businesses. Street wear boutiques. All that

405

00:42:24.125 --> 00:42:27.075

Juan Carlos Araujo: to feature photography.

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00:42:28.045 --> 00:42:31.305

Juan Carlos Araujo: Then, just from the attendance I could say, it's

407

00:42:33.515 --> 00:42:37.055

Juan Carlos Araujo: arts is is certainly

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00:42:37.065 --> 00:42:40.025

Juan Carlos Araujo: thriving in Japantown.

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00:42:40.515 --> 00:42:47.364

Juan Carlos Araujo: But to contrast to that, you know, we have [6th and Jackson](#), which is

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00:42:47.885 --> 00:42:53.494

Juan Carlos Araujo: a new complex that has about 300 plus units.

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00:42:54.235 --> 00:42:57.775

Juan Carlos Araujo: But we can't seem to

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00:42:57.985 --> 00:43:00.675

Juan Carlos Araujo: find small businesses to

413

00:43:00.865 --> 00:43:10.334

Juan Carlos Araujo: lease and occupy the vacant spaces, the retail spaces underneath this development project, and

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00:43:10.945 --> 00:43:16.245

Juan Carlos Araujo: from my understanding is they want something like \$20 a square foot.

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00:43:17.445 --> 00:43:23.065

Juan Carlos Araujo: I mean. mind you, the my old building, I was paying

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00:43:24.125 --> 00:43:26.424

Juan Carlos Araujo: 89 cents a square foot.

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00:43:27.055 --> 00:43:30.014

Juan Carlos Araujo: So 89 cents and \$20 a square foot.

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00:43:31.195 --> 00:43:33.395

Juan Carlos Araujo: I mean, you do the math?

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00:43:34.065 --> 00:43:37.945

Juan Carlos Araujo: So in terms of what corporate

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00:43:38.045 --> 00:43:39.964

Juan Carlos Araujo: shops come to

421

00:43:40.335 --> 00:43:42.035

Juan Carlos Araujo: the neighborhood.

422

00:43:43.285 --> 00:43:50.574

Juan Carlos Araujo: it's it's a balance, right? And it and it's hard cause like. unless a small business could

423

00:43:50.765 --> 00:43:53.545

Juan Carlos Araujo: really rally up that type of money.

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00:43:53.815 --> 00:44:01.925

Juan Carlos Araujo: then we'll have small mom and pop businesses. But as long as policy allows landlords to charge

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00:44:02.065 --> 00:44:03.855

Juan Carlos Araujo: whatever they want to charge.

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00:44:04.195 --> 00:44:09.495

Juan Carlos Araujo: and I get it. You know it costs a lot to build these brand new spaces.

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00:44:09.855 --> 00:44:14.604

Juan Carlos Araujo: I almost did not sign up. I almost didn't have a space here.

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00:44:14.955 --> 00:44:17.764

Juan Carlos Araujo: It wasn't until I literally put my.

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00:44:18.505 --> 00:44:25.065

Juan Carlos Araujo: I guess you could say I put my foot down and I said, it's gonna be a no for me, because I was

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00:44:25.935 --> 00:44:26.945

Juan Carlos Araujo: a

431

00:44:26.955 --> 00:44:36.095

Juan Carlos Araujo: being asked to pay market value rent for my space and I can I just can't do that. I can't afford that. I can't sustain that way.

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00:44:36.565 --> 00:44:41.694

Juan Carlos Araujo: So my landlords decided to give me affordable rent.

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00:44:42.135 --> 00:44:46.515

Juan Carlos Araujo: One that would work for them and work for us. So

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00:44:47.115 --> 00:44:57.494

Juan Carlos Araujo: all I could say is, I think the arts will thrive no matter where we get pushed out or into whether it's in Japantown or somewhere else.

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00:44:57.795 --> 00:45:03.695

Juan Carlos Araujo: Unfortunately, [gentrification development follows the arts](#). History has proven that

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00:45:04.265 --> 00:45:06.605

Juan Carlos Araujo: you know lower Eastside of New York.

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00:45:06.625 --> 00:45:18.955

Juan Carlos Araujo: so many places. But yeah, you know, I think it's always gonna be an uphill with with real estate here in San Jose.

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00:45:19.485 --> 00:45:22.515

Juan Carlos Araujo: But you might see corporate.

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00:45:22.645 --> 00:45:28.134

Juan Carlos Araujo: I really hope there's not a Starbucks coming, nothing against Starbucks. But I'm just saying I

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00:45:28.415 --> 00:45:32.695

Juan Carlos Araujo: I prefer a small mom and pop coffee shop.

441

00:45:33.725 --> 00:45:34.725

Juan Carlos Araujo: you know.

442

00:45:34.915 --> 00:45:37.424

Juan Carlos Araujo: In the neighborhood.

443

00:45:38.075 --> 00:45:38.835

Juan Carlos Araujo: yeah.

444

00:45:39.225 --> 00:45:49.935

Steve Nava: Alright. Well, thank you so much. For your time on the interview. I know you have to go to your next thing. But thank you so much, and let's hear it, for Juan Carlos and the work he does.

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00:45:50.235 --> 00:45:54.182

Steve Nava: And yeah, I'll share this with the video with you soon. Thank you so much.