

***One Voice, One Message: Black Lives Matter* Interview Transcript**

A conversation between Joshua Edmonds & Genevieve Wagner

October 2020

Genevieve Wagner

Hello everyone and welcome to a conversation on *One Voice, One Message: Black Lives Matter*, the new exhibition at Hybrid Arts Lab. This show is a part of the *Heart of Protest* series put on by King Art Complex in collaboration with local arts and cultural organizations in Columbus. This initiative will involve 46 straight days of artistic protest organized by these various organizations to honor the 46 years of George Floyd's life. Head to <https://uas.osu.edu/events> for more information.

My name is Genevieve Wagner. I am an Exhibitions Intern at Urban Art Space and I'm excited to be joined by Joshua Edmonds, the incredible artists behind this new show. Outside of being a photographer, Joshua also works in Ohio State's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Thank you for joining me today, Joshua.

Joshua Edmonds

Thank you, Genevieve.

Genevieve Wagner

And just to begin our conversation, can you give us an overview of your exhibition and its layout?

Joshua Edmonds

So, a brief overview the exhibition is ... And now, actually, I'll start with a brief kind of history of how it started. And that kind of carries the narrative of the exhibition and it is to kind of make things, you know, simple. It is photos of the protests that happened, following the viral video of George Floyd's murder. And protests, specifically in Columbus. It's a basically a chronological view of the protests and certain activities that happen for those next three weeks after that video went viral.

And the exhibit itself: the layout of the exhibit is set to somewhat chronological order displaying one day and then also various other different days, along with showcasing some of the art that was a that was starting to form around downtown Columbus at the time. And most of it, I would say most of the photography does stay within the downtown area within the State House area. So, it showcases protests, showcases posters, showcases marches, showcases art, showcases, you know, what I was seeing when I was down there every day.

Genevieve Wagner

Thank you, Josh, for the explanation. Um, and so, in regard to also what you are like feeling, along what you are seeing. So, while you were attending these protests. How were you feeling and what were you thinking throughout your documentation? So, in regard to when you decided to take a photograph, or just generally how you were feeling during this time.

Joshua Edmonds

So, to be honest, I was feeling sad, like that's the truth. I was feeling sad and upset that it come to that: it had come to the protests that have come to. It was sadness, because of this having happened before, you know, this is continuing to happen. But this was kind of a culmination of so many things, you know, boiling over and you know I'm speaking right now, just me being out there protesting. It was a sadness, and anger, and kind of a demand within myself, like, okay, I have to do something. I have to go out, you know, even just, you know, being with others who felt the same way I did.

And from a photographer's standpoint, I was feeling like I need to. I need to archive this -- this moment in time. It was two feelings: It was the feeling of archiving what was happening around me, and also the feeling of photography's kind of how I express myself a lot of the time as well. So, it was kind of my way of expressing how I was feeling and dealing with my own emotions about what was happening at the time. And those two kind of collided and created this exhibit, but overall I was, yeah, to be honest, I was sad.

Genevieve Wagner

Thank you, you know, for your honesty, of course, and for explaining more about what it was like for you to take pictures. Um, and thinking about you know how this show it captures Columbus and what Columbus looked like during these weeks. And your photographs do a beautiful job of putting these look familiar spaces in Columbus, such as the state house and high street, in a context of community, and protest, and resistance. So, as an artist, and a professional, and a resident of Columbus, did you feel that you were seeing Columbus thrust into a new light during these protests?

Joshua Edmonds

Oh yes, definitely, definitely. And I would say, I'll say I'm not natively from Columbus. I've been here on two and a half years now in Columbus and have the privilege to live close to these spaces to where I was able to, you know, go out and protest and march and be close to these spaces, but it was also kind of like, if you live downtown, it was, it was one of those things you couldn't ignore as well, like when things really started happening the protests started heating up and the police presence, you know, started, you know, forming as well in the National Guard. There were just things happening around my home that I couldn't ignore, you know.

My space changed and everyone else's space changed, and it was something that you couldn't ignore, and it was something that, you know, this change, it had to be documented. It had to be... it was something that, you know, I've seen before. And, you know, I'd been a part of protests in different states before, but not to this scale, and not to the size. And even the scale on a worldwide view, like Columbus was just a small part, you know, everything was having protests and even, you know, different countries were having protests. This, this was global. This was, you know, this was big, and I didn't hadn't seen anything that size before. When it comes to these protests, I just knew I personally had to be a part of it. And I was wanting to showcase what was happening in specifically in Columbus at that time.

Genevieve Wagner

Right. Thank you. Yeah, and thinking about all of the sights and sounds, you know, day and night, that went on like during the protest, I feel like your images do a really wonderful job of, you know, capturing just everything that was going on because it is difficult to capture in a photograph, but your work is really poignant in doing that.

Um, and a question about narrative. Um, how did you choose to add the narrative element of your exhibition. Um, and how does this element like enrich the stories that are told, in each of your photographs?

Joshua Edmonds

So, choosing the narrative element wasn't too difficult because of the way I shoot photography and the way my own, I guess, my own schedule of being a part of the protests as well. You know, it usually come out in the evening where you know the bulk of the people will be protesting, you know, after five people got off work. And I kind of did every other day, like, there would be days I'll be down there just a protest kind of separating from photography, then the next day are come down and you know just shoot photography and try to archive and document as much as I could.

And so that narrative kinda came organically that way, showcasing from day-to-day how things were changing and progressing. And in the exhibit, there's eight photos that kind of chronologically showcase one day, and then the other eight showcase, you know, sporadically other days after that, and events, and certain events that happened and I found unique.

And choosing that wasn't too hard. Just because like I said, it happened organically. But, uh, the other day, since they were so sporadic, and you know, when you're doing exhibit you can't – I have a lot of photos! [Laughter from both Genevieve and Joshua] You gotta pick and choose which ones are going, yeah.

So for the other ones that I did sporadically, it was more just like, okay, what didn't I showcase in that one day set of photos and what other things happened that I can you know showcase and show people, that was happening as well. And that kind of drove the narrative of the exhibit.

Genevieve Wagner

Great. Yeah. Yeah. So, there's inherent like narrative quality to your work as an artist like you're always like want to tell a story right, but then also this narrative of, like, yeah, picking and choosing which photographs. So, um, a bit more on that: how did, how exactly did you choose which photographs to show at Hopkins Hall?

Joshua Edmonds

A lot, of a lot of back and forth decisions on my part. It came down to which images like, you know, fit the narrative I was going for and which ones showed something unique. So, you know,

I would go through and say like, “okay, I have these set photos, are there any repeats, or any things that are already kind of conveyed what I'm trying to convey.”

And then I would go back, take things out. And then there have been times I put things back in and, you know, back and forth, you know, talk to friends and family. “What do you think of this piece?” and things like that. But ultimately, it came down to, you know, which ones shared a piece of in the narrative and, you know, there’s photos that, um, showed other parts of the narrative that I had to leave out. You know, I couldn’t showcase everything. But that was kind of the decision making. It is one of those things, where it was probably the hardest part of the exhibit to decide which photos to use. I am satisfied with the ones I chose.

Genevieve Wagner

Wonderful. Great, thank you. Um, those are all the questions I prepared today. Um, but thank you so much, Joshua, for you know, talking today and also for putting together such a wonderful, and poignant, and great show.

For all those interested in checking out the show, it is on view today through October 20 at Hopkins Hall Gallery on campus. And if you'd like to check out more about the *Heart of Protest* series, you can go to <https://uas.osu.edu/events> and check out Joshua's show and find out more information about that series. So, thank you so much again, Joshua. It was wonderful to talk to you today.

Joshua Edmonds

Thank you, Genevieve

Genevieve Wagner

Thank you. Alright. Have a great day.

Joshua Edmonds

Alright, see you.