

Ayan Gorsline Interview

10/5/2021

Speaker 1 (00:00):

Enrolled in the program by my mother Donna chorus line, who has worked at Pratt now for 20 plus years at the time, she was the assistant to the Dean of Frank Linde of art and design. And she had been working for Pratt only a few years. So I was, I was very young. This was like 20 ish years ago. And they reached out to her basically, and I know they reached out to a lot of the staff to basically let them know that they were hosting a summer program to kind of have kids there. And they wanted kids of, you know, like different ages. And I also think it was kids from different economic backgrounds to try and give us access to the facilities and also have a bit of like a day camp situation. So I think that I went there the summer that I was turning seven and the summer that I was turning eight, which would have been about 2001. And in 2002, if I remember correctly. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (01:18):

And if you could just talk to us a little bit about, we know your mother enrolled you, but what you were interested in then, and if you were, you may not know, well, we know how you were recruited, right. But you know, your interest in art and design or anything else that was offered there and you know, what you've got from it, how it, if there were field trips that you went on.

Speaker 1 (01:50):

So it was basically very much mostly, I would say a summer camp experience. There were a few arts and craft classes that I guess you got to kind of participate in depending on what you liked. I did like to kind of draw and paint and they had a separate room for us with, I would say different counselors that separated us by what we wanted to do. Like if we wanted to read or if we wanted to paint and they would let us have a lot of the access to a lot of the supplies that they had there, the kid safe ones anyway. But it was predominantly pretty active, I think, in the day camp situation, especially because of my age. So they took us they took us on a couple trips. I think there was a time when they maybe took us to a science museum in the Bronx. I know they took us to the, I don't know if this was on campus. I don't remember as well, but I think you guys have like an Olympic sized pool or access to one. They took us there pretty often. They took us to the playground on Clinton, Washington, where I know they have a, what are the food markets that they do on Sundays?

Speaker 1 (03:09):

Yeah. yeah, so they took us over there fairly often. We went on a lot of casual day trips, I would say just around the neighborhood. There were times when they would kind of talk to us about the different things happening at the sculpture park on site, which was pretty cool. And I think in the second year that I went there, they also had a program where every now and again, we would go into a classroom with a professor, some of us, not all of us. And we would do, like, I think we were being kind of tutored in math. But I know that was optional and I'm pretty sure it was just to kind of keep us relatively educated throughout the period of the summer, you know?

Speaker 2 (04:13):

Could you say a little bit about who the other, you know, who, who the students were and also who the counselors were? Did you maybe, maybe don't know

Speaker 1 (04:26):

Honestly it was mostly kind of your run of the mill camp, teenage counselors. There were a few professors, I can't say. I really remember anyone's names that well, and the professors popped in, I would say for the more rigorous thing, we were definitely taught by a woman professor who was doing the math tutoring, I think in the building that used to have like a bank in it. I can't remember exactly. And we had, I think another, there was another young woman professor who would come into teach us kind of like the arts and crafts. And every now and again, we had access to pottery and like a basic kind of killing. And so those things like the day camp situation and going to the pool and going to the playground, that was all the, the kind of teenage camp counselors. But anything else that we did onsite where we use the facilities, like using the pool, doing any kind of pottery or painting or doing the math was a professor would come in and do that with us.

Speaker 2 (05:37):

And in terms of the counselors, did you get a sense that some of them might've been Pratt students?

Speaker 1 (05:45):

Yes. There were a few of them that I think were masters program students because it was kind of split between, like, it seemed like kind of teenagers that they'd hired and then the ones who got to make more formal decisions about what was going on on site were a handful of I think maybe like 25, 26 year old students who were there and were with us.

Speaker 2 (06:17):

And did, did you happen to go to Saturday art school at all?

Speaker 1 (06:24):

Oh yeah, I did. Okay.

Speaker 2 (06:28):

So before we switch gears to send me off to school I just want to, you know, stay on this for a few more minutes and then we like to ask you about that also. Okay. Did, did you pursue a career in art and design by any chance?

Speaker 1 (06:44):

I did not. But I was always very apt at it. And it was something that I did enjoy a lot. I really, I loved my time taking the back classes. I will say that honestly the Saturday art school, I went to different ones and I think I actually still have some pieces from that period in time. I wish I knew where they were. Probably somewhere in a box somewhere. One of the better ones that I took was we, I also went to to pre college there. I don't know if that's part of this at all, but I took Saturday art classes, I think for a couple of years. So it might all be blended into one, but definitely when I was over like 10 there was one pottery class that went on for quite a few weeks and that was taught by a very nice young woman.

Speaker 1 (07:43):

I wish I remembered her name. And I remember we made, what I thought at the time was pretty intricate stuff by the end of the class. We all had to make our own boxes, like functioning boxes that were then fired up in the kiln and made into practical tools that we used and each side it was kind of rectangular and wide. Each side had to have something that we were interested in. And I remember one side I put like a microphone because at the time I thought I wanted to be a singer that didn't last very long. One side I put like a little dress because I liked to sew with my grandmother one side, I think I put

my favorite cartoon character, which was like a hamster or something at the time. And I don't remember what the fourth side was.

Speaker 1 (08:37):

And it had like a little handle that you kind of opened and peeled up. And that was a, that was a great class. The other kids that I was, and it was a relatively small class, I think it was only like maybe 10 to 12 other kids. But everyone loved it. And we really got to use a lot of the facility at that time because I remember our professor taking us from the room that we were in, where we were using all the pottery equipment to actually seeing how the Kilmer worked and how they were going to fire everything up. And also letting us see little glimpses into things that a lot of the Pratt students were working on and kind of exhibits that they were having at the time. I remember she gave us a look into like a lot of what the architecture students were doing because they had you know, sometimes before their exhibits, the students put up their work, you know, in panels all over the campus and in certain areas. So she, she would take us there and just show us what these things look like and what they were doing.

Speaker 2 (09:37):

So actually that brings up for both programs, Saturday art school and the youth skills program. Did you participated in an end of summer show at all in the youth?

Speaker 1 (09:52):

I don't think that I did, but I do remember that happening. I think I was just in the summer youth program. I think I was just a little bit too young. Like I think they wanted kids because the age range of kids that they had was from like five to 12 and there weren't a ton of us, so they kind of just had us collectively doing very similar things, but it was the kids who were kind of like 10 and up who were doing more of the I think the things that they wanted to show off in, in like a group setting. Okay. So they were teaching us things, but as far as getting ready for the show, it wasn't the kids under 10.

Speaker 2 (10:31):

Right. So when you said relatively small group, how, how many just guessing off the top of your head?

Speaker 1 (10:39):

Probably like say maybe like 60 kids or something. 60 to 70, from what I remember which was definitely enough kids, but, you know in, in it's it's maybe like three classes worth of, of like children of all varying ages. So we were all kind of just together.

Speaker 2 (11:06):

So we saw in the, in the archives that at some point we want all the students, we found some photographs, but I think they were from before your time. I think we at least maybe in the eighties or nineties, but we saw that for some period of time, this program that students all wore, t-shirts like Pratt with the name Pratt on it and so forth. And then in the art, one of the archival sources said, well, we're, we're not going to do t-shirts anymore. We're switching to blouses and shirts or something. Did you have to wear some kind of a, a uniform at all?

Speaker 1 (11:43):

Yeah. Yeah. I don't think they were like that militant about it, but they did make sure to give us like these big, these bulky kind of Chucky Pratt t-shirts they were really kind of like oversized had like the, I would say the last of the nineties grunge to them, you know, they were like long and boxy and they just had, I think it was white and yellow and they just had like a big yellow Pratt kind of logo across the chest. And I'm pretty sure that they all gave us the same size. So the little kids were basically swimming in them. And like the older kids, they just kind of threw the, threw them on us. And I, I don't think we had to wear

them all the time, but they liked to keep us on them, you know, like if we were going somewhere so that they would know who the big yellow packets were right running around. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (12:34):

And do you have any photos of you in your big yellow t-shirt?

Speaker 1 (12:38):

I wish that I did. I was looking for things and I don't, I don't have a lot of stuff from, from that, from those two summers. And I wish I had more things to show you. If I find something though, I will like take pictures of it and email it to you. If you have any interest in that.

Speaker 2 (12:55):

Oh, and we were going to ask you if there, if you had any friends or people that you went with, who you are still in contact with or anyone, you know, that might have been in the program.

Speaker 1 (13:07):

I went with someone I was another kid who, whose mother worked with my mother, Luke Clum. His mother was Cindy Klum. So we, we were together at that time. But he's the only person that I can think of that I like knew before I went in. And I don't keep strict contact with him anymore, but I, like, I know what he's up to. And, you know, basically I know through what, you know, social media, whatever stuff like that. So

Speaker 2 (13:44):

What is he up to

Speaker 1 (13:46):

Kentucky now? So he kind of dipped and I think he works as a mechanic. I don't think he ever pursued the arts, you know, of it. So yeah, and his mother retired a couple of years ago.

Speaker 2 (14:01):

Okay. Okay. Great. Is it C L U M

Speaker 1 (14:07):

A? Yes. Okay,

Speaker 2 (14:08):

Great. Okay. So if you could just tell us a bit about Saturday art school, a little more aside from the ceramics class that you remember, did you participate in the open studios? At the end of Saturday art school? Anytime,

Speaker 1 (14:29):

I don't think that I did. I have, of course, because it's a lot more recent than I was much older. I have better memories of, of, of pre college. But again, I don't know if that has anything to do with

Speaker 2 (14:46):

Oh, no, no, that'd be great. Let's let, we'd love to hear that. Yep.

Speaker 1 (14:50):

Okay. So I went pre college for loss and I was in a, I went for, I don't know what the program was called, but we were making like movies. So I was in the film part of it and pre college was a lot of fun. Pre college was really great. So they, I would say most days started off with us in the film department. And we had two professors at the time. We had one professor who was an older woman. Who's also retired now. And they, they taught us basically how to make little movies. I remember our first assignment was

to make a 32nd clip of something with no editing or anything just so we could bring them in. And we would like splice them all together. They taught us how to sit in a room and stage kind of like the lighting and the sound and everything.

Speaker 1 (15:51):

And we had assignments where we had to take a lot of recording from something outside and not use any of the noise, but kind of take a separate microphone and learn how to take sound bites that we could filter over and plug it in to the, the video. We had a professor who I think made a documentary called, like we are wizards or something. It was about people who are very invested in Harry Potter, who used to be a student there. So he came in and he showed us his film. And he was the one who helped us when we used the, the things on site, like the editing room and the computers the labs he always oversaw that. And we definitely went on quite a few trips at pre college. We went to, we went to the MoMA. We went to this massive kind of like private exhibit in the Bronx that was about, it was about recycling.

Speaker 1 (16:58):

Like they had made all these, the, the man who was hosting, it had made all these huge, really cool art pieces with recycled materials. And we had, for that one, we did have studio classes. So we had the main film class. We had one studio kind of like basic fine arts and painting class. And we had an art history class. And I remember one professor at the time, his name was Greg Linquist and he taught the painting and kind of like fine arts class. Then that was a mix of different things. Some days we just kind of sketched objects. Some days we worked with like negative space. Some days we had live models that we were sketching and kind of figuring that out. And I know that his work was mainly in landscapes, but that was a bit above our pay grade. I know one of our assignments was to draw one of the rooms in the library of the library on the campus. And that one, there was an end of summer exposition and I participated in that.

Speaker 2 (18:10):

Oh, so when you, so this would have been, I'm just trying to piece together how old you would have been then you would have been, maybe that would have been maybe

Speaker 1 (18:20):

16, 20 16. I was 16. So this would have been in 2000. And how, how old am I? I'm 28 now. So this would've been in like 2009.

Speaker 2 (18:36):

Okay. Okay. And then do you mind telling us like a little bit about your your, your life outside of Pratt? Like you're educated, you know, like where you went to high school and then where you ultimately went to college as a result of, you know, like how you made choices about your next.

Speaker 1 (18:55):

So I went to high school at a public school called Edward R Murrow. And I was also kind of an art student there. I was in the acting program which was very new when I got on, we were like the second onboarded class that was technically there for acting. They had just made like a Joe Papp theater like the year that I got there and they had just hired a bunch of new, like professors who had really come specifically to teach us that. And we put, we put on a couple of really great plays. We did the elephant man. It was really cool for our graduating class. We did, what was the last play that we did? I think we did to kill a Mockingbird. Yeah. And there were pretty big events at the time. I think the school is even bigger now, but it was like a 4,000 plus kid kind of school. And the arts program was, was excellent at Morrow. It was a little bit crowded, but it was really great. It was a lot of fun. So

Speaker 2 (20:07):

You took the art classes there to visualize

Speaker 1 (20:10):

When you, so when you took, when you were in like an arts track even though they focused mainly on the acting and reacting exercises, they still wanted you to, we had to take dance and we had to take some level of like painting, you know, skills and we had to take at least one music elective. So I kind of stuck with guitar and we did ballet and modern dance which I committed to, but I was terrible at to be Frank. And usually you just kept getting bumped up on the, on the fine arts and painting classes, which I did pretty well with.

Speaker 2 (21:01):

Who, who, who was your pin? Do you remember your painting teacher? Do you remember any of your teachers? Because we work closely with Morel and we've had, we have a couple of people who went through our program and are teaching at Morrow,

Speaker 1 (21:15):

Honestly,

Speaker 2 (21:16):

Spy woman called spy.

Speaker 1 (21:18):

No, I didn't. But we also kind of like, because we were we, most Mo my teacher was he was for out at least three years. Was this very kind, middle-aged black man. I cannot remember his last name for the life of me, which is terrible because he was such a nice person. And I don't think he was really affiliated with Pratt. But also because I wasn't on the fine arts track, I don't think we got the main upset of teachers. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (21:58):

And did you continue in theater when you went to college?

Speaker 1 (22:02):

A little bit? But I, I didn't love it the way that a lot of the people that I went to school with really, really loved it. I think that's one of those things that you have to be so hopefully committed to especially because, you know, it's so hard out here. I mean, New York city, they're actors everywhere, and they're all really competing and going for it. And I have a couple friends that I did go to school with who did pretty. Okay. As far as like the acting track is concerned. I have a friend who was his name is Avery witted. He was in, I think, a Stephen King movie on Netflix, like two years ago in the tall grass or something. And he adores it. He went to Rutgers for it, you know, he absolutely loves it. So I have a few friends who like totally committed to it and they're doing pretty okay. But I recognize that I did not have the same drive for that. So I ended up getting into, into healthcare because I, it wasn't gonna be my whole life really.

Speaker 2 (23:05):

Okay. Well, I'm just going to backtrack for a second, because as you talked about all this, I wondered, I know there was a theater program as part of the at least at some point in the youth skills program. There was even a theater program at Pratt in the set. I didn't know that they, they closed it, but there was performing a performance and theater program. Did you, did you remember that any of that was part of the the youth skills when you were there in the,

Speaker 1 (23:40):

I don't particularly remember. But at the same time, I was a very dramatic theatrical little kid. So I don't know if they brought the show to me or if I brought the show to them, it really depended. So I kind of just all blended into one on that one, but I don't remember that. I do though. Remember because at the time that I was there for, for summer camp, the film department was a lot smaller. It's much bigger now. This was like, you know, 20 years ago. And I, I do remember that they did a lot of the students there were very excited about being able to do a lot of film work at Pratt. And they did let us every now and again, kind of like sneak us in to see what the students were doing. And they were always really happy to like, let us be in the film department and see the kind of cameras that they had, which, you know, this was before a lot of the swing and digital media came in.

Speaker 1 (24:38):

So they showed us how you would splice together film and how they would make their own cassette tapes and, you know things like that. And they also showed us some movies that we probably otherwise would not have had access to. I remember that being, having a couple of the students like sit us down and showing us my neighbor toe-to-toe which a lot of kids had never, you know, even heard of. And they were kind of telling us how these movies were made and, and showing us just like on the Pratt computers, how to break down certain levels of animation. And that was really cool, but I don't necessarily know if it was like a part of the program or just something that they thought would be a nice experience for us to have. And the students were very excited to show off.

Speaker 2 (25:31):

So I'm going to see if anybody have additional questions for ion that I haven't raised. Anybody that I raised, everything that you wanted to hear about, if you want more details on something.

Speaker 3 (25:48):

I have one quick clarifying question. What year was it when they were showing you how to use the film equipment?

Speaker 1 (25:57):

I think it was 2001, I think. Yeah,

Speaker 3 (26:03):

We do have some, I I've seen a photographs in the archives about children with film equipment. So I'm going to check to see if that's the same year, maybe you're in them.

Speaker 1 (26:15):

That would be funny. Yeah.

Speaker 2 (26:20):

So ion, is there anything else you want to share with us that, you know, anything that

Speaker 1 (26:31):

I would say for the most part, it, it was a really great experience. You know, it was a lot of fun, it was nice to be in that environment. So young, you know, I think when you're a kid, you can just be surrounded by other little kid things. Whereas like, it was nice to a, you know, half in an environment where we were having a really good time going to the playground, but having an environment where we had access to, like I said, the film department and seeing the ceramics and the killings and just seeing things that adults were doing. So I think that was an important part of it, even if I don't know if that was the intention or not, but it was cool to have kind of like a glimpse ahead of like, these are, these are things that this is how certain things work, you know, and this is what it looks like.

Speaker 2 (27:24):

And this question, you may not know cause you were seven years old. Right. But did, did you get a sense that most of the kids attending were from the general area of prep or, yeah.

Speaker 1 (27:37):

Yeah. I would say a good amount of the kids. Like it was a, an even split between kids whose parents worked there in some capacity or who were from the neighborhood. And it was also, I would say for the most part, a certain kind of kid, you know, most of the kids there were not in a bad way, but I would say like relatively nerdy and like genuinely wanted to know, you know, like what was going on in the Pratt campus. Like they already kind of came with a preconceived interest of, of wanting to find out what the school was like. And I think that takes maybe a specific kind of under ten-year-old.

Speaker 2 (28:29):

Okay, well if you have anybody, no other questions here, Christina, any questions that you want to, okay. Well, I just want to thank you so much. We were so excited to talk to somebody who actually went through this program. Great. Imagine we've just been looking at documents on paper closest we've come, or the amazing photographs in this earlier period where we're trying to track down photos. So if you have, if you find any boxes or if you know anything from that period, or maybe your mom has something yeah. We'd love whatever artifacts we could get just to, just to actually make it come alive. Okay. And also invite you, we, you know, to look at our website when we get, let me get to a certain point w it's going to be public. The whole goal is to make this public publicly available the history of this program from its beginnings in the early seventies, all the way through to when I think it might've closed right after you attended. I think

Speaker 1 (29:41):

It did. I think it closed in the early two thousands.

Speaker 2 (29:44):

Right. We're still trying to figure out exactly what year it was because we can't,

Speaker 1 (29:48):

I also think they only ran the program exactly the way that they did for like a couple of years that I was there, you know as far as incorporating so much of the, trying to make it a real like day camp situation. I think I, if I remember correctly, my mom telling me something like that was a new part of it

Speaker 2 (30:11):

Versus what, what would it have been, I think

Speaker 1 (30:14):

Before it had mostly been like older kids and kind of more educational, but that this had also like this had been when I was in it, it was an outreach to get that early education kind of like children into the fold and then it had shut down.

Speaker 2 (30:29):

Right. So interesting. This is so valuable, everything that you've shared with us, I just want to thank you so much. You're welcome. And really nice meeting you because I've worked with your mom for many years now. Yeah. Okay. Well, thank you. And

Speaker 1 (30:47):

Thank you. Thanks

Speaker 2 (30:47):

For having me.

Speaker 1 (30:49):

Okay.

Speaker 2 (30:50):

All right,

Speaker 1 (30:50):

Bye.