

Narrator: Welcome to 'Featured Faculty,' a podcast series about Anderson University professors and their lives both in and out of the classroom.

Osborne: My name is Kylie Osborne. Today I'm in the studio and sharing the microphone with Tai Lipan, assistant professor of art at Anderson University. She also serves as director of galleries and permanent collections at AU.

Osborne: Professor Lipan, please begin by telling us a little bit about your personal background.

Tai Lipan: Hi, thank you so much for having me ... give me the opportunity to share a little bit with the students about who I am. I grew up in Indiana. I went to undergraduate at Anderson University and then found my way back here, which we can talk about in a little bit.

Tai Lipan: I have three little kids, and my husband is a Methodist pastor. We live in Indianapolis. And I'm happy to share with you more about what I did, how I got here, and how much I love the university.

Osborne: Awesome. Thank you. So what did you study while you were here at Anderson University, and how did you end up coming back here as professor?

Tai Lipan: I've had the luxury of always knowing what I wanted to do. Since I was very small, I knew I wanted to be a painter and go into the studio arts. So I looked around for programs. I was from a very small school growing up, and so I knew I wanted a small, liberal arts, Christian school. And so I looked at a lot of different ones and compared the types of programs they had that were important for me in the studio arts.

Tai Lipan: At the time, Anderson University had a really good studio arts program and had a lot of full-time faculty devoted to that. And so I took that as a good sign and ended up here to study studio art, and spent all four years learning about painting, and drawing, and ended up with that as my focus.

Osborne: What kind of things were you involved with while you were on campus?

Tai Lipan: I was quite busy in my major, and I have to say a little bit wrapped up in that. So while I did the basic sort of Bible studies and things that were happening on campus, I was mostly really just focused on my work. And the other thing that I was able to do that I would highly recommend students doing, apart from just a [inaudible 00:02:01] trip that I took to Peru while I was here, I also took a semester to study abroad through American Universities program in D.C..

Tai Lipan: So I went there and studied painting in Italy for a semester. It was obviously life changing, because Italy's amazing. But also I really got to capitalize on connections I made there in my particular field. I think that that was a really valuable thing that Anderson helped me and allowed me to do so that I could make connections.

Tai Lipan: And then the following summer, I did an intensive study program in New York called the Chautauqua Institute of Art. I got a full ride scholarship to that because of having gone to Italy and getting to know the people there through American's program and just leveraging my connections. So that was a really wise choice I made in my undergrad. That even though I had AU as a home base

and got a lot out of my experience here, they encouraged me to go outside, get other experiences so I could come back and be stronger for that.

Tai Lipan: As a consequence of all of the variety of education that I had while I was here that was actually outside of Anderson's department. I started teaching right away. I started adjudicating the first year that I got out of school, so it was very strange. I actually had a student in my class that had been in my Spanish class previously. So I had to explain that, no, in fact I was in the instructor and that was kind of fun and worked out just fine.

Tai Lipan: And I'd started teaching in the liberal arts program primarily for drawing and then in the studio program as well.

Osborne: Did you have a specific career path kind of planned out for you when you originally went to school? Or did you think you would end up doing something like teaching, or did that come as a surprise?

Tai Lipan: I kind of learned over my time ... in studio arts programs, a heavy focus is sort of learning what your voice is, and to help each other, and critique experiences. I found that I was actually quite good at that. Trying to look at other people's work and reflect maybe what they could do to make it better.

Tai Lipan: So I think that I learned that when I was here. But I think primarily ... just like any academic program or field, if you're going to teach something you have to really care about what you're teaching. And so equally important to me to my teaching was just my own studio practice, and so I've always maintained that. Over the six years I'm teaching, I'm also going to my own studio and making my own paintings because I don't believe you can teach what you don't know, and what you're not engaged in fully and practicing.

Tai Lipan: I knew I'd always be a painter. Don't know that I thought I would be a studio artist exclusively, and then I just learned how much I loved sharing all of this with everyone else. So I think that that just kind of naturally led into my teaching as well.

Osborne: So since you took the opportunities as a student to travel, you took a trip to Peru and then you studied abroad. Have you led any trips while you've been a professor at AU? Or been a part of anything like that?

Tai Lipan: No, I have not. I'm not super interested in being responsible for large groups of people in areas I don't know. So I'm going to leave that to other people, though I'd love to hop in on a trip.

Tai Lipan: I'm continuing to have experiences myself. I've taken student groups. But mostly I've encouraged my students to go to other schools and get other experiences as well. So most over my 16 years here, most of my students have been involved in the summer programs, study abroad, the same types of things that I found helpful.

Tai Lipan: I haven't led any groups but I also was doing graduate school for the first couple of years that I was teaching here. That kind of pulled me away for three summers to do graduate school at Western Carolina University where I got my graduate degree in painting. So I was kind of doing both in a strange, summer-

intensive master's program. So that kept me busy and unable to do other things for a little while.

Osborne: Like you said, you're not just a professor. You are an artist. You constantly are painting, I'm guessing. What kind of stuff do you do? And then what do you do with your work?

Tai Lipan: Yeah, I was trained as a studio painter with oil paint or traditional canvas material. Mostly still life. I'm really interested in sort of visual dynamics of just kind of pushing the two dimensional structures from representational to nonrepresentational.

Tai Lipan: And so my work right now lies somewhere in the middle. You could look at the paintings I'm making and kind of ... they reference fireworks, and things that basically impinge on darkness. So there's a couple different styles, qualities happening in them. Some have to do with events in the weather that happen with the landscape. And then also the fireworks are kind of the new thing that I'm working on as a kind of metaphor for events of celebration. Right?

Tai Lipan: But then also they're kind of hearkening back to war, and so I like that sort of dual reading. So I work on those kinds of things in my studio. The physical work is layered wood that's then painted. Part of being a studio artist is you have to maintain a body of work in your own studio, and kind of clarity of your own ideas. And then you also have to propose shows, so you wear a lot of different hats. You have to really be able to write, put together show proposals.

Tai Lipan: I have a couple of solo shows coming up over the next year. My show ... wherever, all over. Yeah. You propose for shows. Solos are great because then you can see the whole body of work together and you can get a better sense for what an artist is doing. But then it's also important to do some group shows that are kind of more high-cut caliber. My last one was at the Trestle Gallery in Brooklyn this last semester.

Osborne: So when you say a show, you mean like ... you have all your pieces in a gallery?

Tai Lipan: Mm-hmm (affirmative). A gallery exhibition of the work. And that can be all over. My upcoming shows are ... one will be in Indianapolis, which I rarely show in any. So that's kind of exciting. People could actually come at Mary University.

Tai Lipan: And then in the summer, I'm going to have a solo show in Wisconsin. Madison, Wisconsin at a gallery there.

Osborne: So do you travel to all the places?

Tai Lipan: I bring the work, install the work sometimes, or just go in participate in the openings. If it's a group show, I don't always go. Like the Trestle Gallery show was overlapping with the solo I had, so I wasn't able to do that.

Osborne: Awesome. So then that kind of overlaps into your position as the director of galleries here. What does that position kind of entail for you?

Tai Lipan: As director of galleries, I've sort of phased that in. At first I was responsible for overseeing the Wilson Gallery which houses about six shows a semester. Each show is distinctive and different, typically including two student shows that are

senior shows a year. One juried show which is another way for us to get outside professionals to work with our students and display student work.

Tai Lipan: And then the other shows are professionals that I bring in to give the students an experience with professionals in the field. So that is what I started doing first. I honestly can't remember how long I've been doing that. Maybe six years or so? It's been a little while.

Tai Lipan: And then I took over the responsibilities of overseeing the Sallman Gallery which is a permanent installation of the Protestant artist named Warner Sallman. Primarily our collection, which is quite large ... over 150 pieces, is from around the 1940s for the most part is what's represented in our collection.

Tai Lipan: So I oversee tours, care taking of that. I've had all of the work cleaned and cared for by a restoration artist since I've taken over that. So there's that gallery.

Tai Lipan: And then downstairs the gallery in York is new, and it's for the last three years housed the Gaither Exhibition ... which is showcasing Gaither's life works and events. I'm really excited that there's an upcoming project in there that's not really been announced yet. But it's going to be really exciting. So I'm hard at work with that.

Tai Lipan: So I oversee all three galleries which is a bit of a juggling act. But it's nice because they all have slightly different audiences, so not just students, but general public and also just people that come to view the work because they love it. So I'm always talking to different people, and I really enjoy that part of my job.

Osborne: Even beyond the students that are in the arts major, you get to be a part of sharing art through galleries and stuff like that. And then other students have to take your classes for liberal arts requirements.

Tai Lipan: ... get to. But yes.

Osborne: Get to take ... other students get to take your classes. Your liberal arts requirements.

Osborne: So what do you think the importance that is of everyone, you know, experiencing or appreciating and learning about art?

Tai Lipan: Yeah. My position here over the 16 years has shifted significantly with the last of our studio program. Which was hard for about a minute, but then as soon as I get students in the door ... they're just students to me and it doesn't really matter to me what their intention is. It's just a joy to get to share with them some of what I love.

Tai Lipan: So in some ways, my job is quite similar but the demographic is ... there's a lot of different people in a lot of different fields in my classes. Which I think is great, because art is made out of a reflection on a lot of different things. So sometimes it's actually better that they're fully engaged in these other areas of their world, and then they can make art based on their experience in what they're doing.

- Tai Lipan: That's not really a loss for me. Artists have to be just deeply interested in all the things, which is quite a liberal arts thing to do so it works well here. I think for me, I just ... I know that I can't make these students into artists. That's not my goal.
- Tai Lipan: So respecting who they are and where they're coming from, I just want to share a little bit of the richness of it ... historically how it's been something that we can kind of track, and understand more about overall culture at the times that those things were made, and reflections from artists about how they felt about things that were going on at certain times, and try to show them how art can be a tool for that.
- Tai Lipan: Yeah. I guess overall, it's just great. It's really fun. I love my non-major courses, and I love how perfectly set up it is to tie into what we care about as a liberal arts institution. I think it usually ... they usually get to kind of bring some of all that together. What they love in what they're doing, and how it could maybe be used through art as well.
- Osborne: Okay, well thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us today and share a little bit about yourself.
- Tai Lipan: Thank you, Kylie.
- Narrator: This podcast is a production of the Andersonian, the student newspaper of Anderson University. For more in this series of faculty interviews, please visit andersonian.com.