

Episode #021 (Transcript)

Charlie Sandlan (00:02):

My friends, it's just you and me today. We got a solo episode. I've got a few things on my desk that I'd like to share with you. So, put the phone back in your pocket. Creating Behavior starts now.

Charlie Sandlan (00:16):

(singing)

Charlie Sandlian (00:42):

Well, hello, my fellow daydreamers. Those of you that are avid listeners of this show know that when Trish and I were living down in Guatemala, March, April, May, that a hummingbird flew into her parents' house, knocked itself unconscious on a glass door, and I found it lying on the floor. I thought it was dead. I'm squealing for Trish to come out and she gets a towel and holds it there in the palm of her hand and we take it outside. We thought it, seriously, was dead. And then, I don't know, maybe... it took 15 minutes or so. It opened up its eyes and it flew off. It was beautiful. You don't get to see a hummingbird that close up.

Charlie Sandlan (01:35):

Tuesday, last Tuesday, I'm sitting in my office. I'm teaching. I'm in the middle of a Zoom class, my first year students. And Trish comes barreling into the office and her arms are waving. She looked like an airport worker, those guys that are waving their arms to guide the airplanes into the terminal. And I look up. She's like, "There's a bird in our apartment." I said, "What?" She's like, "I don't know what to do. There's a fucking bird in the apartment. It's pooping everywhere."

Charlie Sandlan (02:13):

I look out and there is a, what I now know to be, a Quaker parakeet in our apartment. Flew in through the balcony door and is bouncing its cute little self all over the apartment, shitting every, I don't know, 20 seconds, over the couch and the floor. It was the cutest little thing. It was bigger than the palm of my hand. It was a

good sized bird. It was beautiful. Also, I'll put a picture of it on our website, in the content section with the links to everything for the show and you can see it.

Charlie Sandlan (02:55):

What the fuck are we going to do with this thing? And it couldn't stay, I mean, Wally, he was freaking the fuck out. It was green and had some emerald to it, and it was just the cutest little pooper. I call him My Little Pooper, because he was pooping. We called downstairs, the super came up and one of the guys that work for the building was just in love with it. He's like, "Well, I'll take it home. I'll adopt it if nobody claims it." That's what we know right now. It's staying with George and we'll see if somebody claims a missing bird. I think its wings were clipped. I can't imagine this thing flying all over the place.

Charlie Sandlan (03:47):

But what we're finding out is that there are actually Quaker parakeets in the wild here in New Jersey that have over many years created this little colony where they're putting their nests on electrical wires and it's fucking with PS&G being able to do the maintenance they need to do, because I guess there's a law that if they build a nest and they've actually made a home that you can't fuck with them.

Charlie Sandlan (04:18):

I don't know what it is about birds and Trish and I. Although, everyone's telling me that it is a very positive omen and I will fucking take that, because I'll take any good luck I could get. That was the adventure that Trisha and I had last week.

Charlie Sandlan (04:35):

I'm always talking to you guys about the need for resilience, right? To forge for yourself an artistic backbone, an ability to adapt, because it's very easy in this life to feel hopeless. And you're dealing with rejection and it's a tough life being an artist.

Charlie Sandlan (04:59):

But I'll tell you, one thing we are is we are free. And that really hit me in the face when I saw the exhibit out at MoMA PS1 here in New York City. It's called Marking Time: Art in the Age of Incarceration. And it is a stunning exhibit. It's prison art, basically. Art made by convicted felons who are incarcerated. And what was so amazing about it was how personal, how raw, and how beautiful, how creative these men and women are to be able to find ways to express themselves artistically, in ways that give voice to what it's like to be locked up in America's prisons. We lock up more people per capita than any country in the world.

Charlie Sandlan (05:55):

And it's not like you have open access to shit, right? It's not like you can just walk in to an art store like we can and buy some canvases and paints and have the freedom to create. These guys have to sneak around. They have to get whatever they can to be able to create. I mean, they're making art out of hair products, candy, tea, shoe polish, Kool-Aid, popsicle sticks, cigarette pack foil, recycled tea bags. And the work is stunning.

Charlie Sandlan (06:33):

It's curated by a woman Dr. Nicole Fleetwood. And I would recommend if you've got the ability to do it, to get the book. Just go online and you can buy the book for the show. It's called Marking Time: Art in the Age of Incarceration. This work is beautiful.

Charlie Sandlan(06:52):

There's one prisoner, Dean Gillispie is his name. He made these beautiful little miniature Airstream trailers, little miniature gas stations, with such attention to detail, made out of the foil from cigarette boxes, from popsicle sticks, recycled tea bags that they sneak into their room. They have to avoid getting caught. A lot of their stuff can just get pitched and thrown out in a heartbeat if they're thrown into a lockdown. And then they have to sneak it out, they mail it out bit by bit.

Charlie Sandlan (07:34):

There's a beautiful piece called Pyrrhic Defeat by a man named Mark Loughney. Now, I don't know what these guys are in prison for, but he's got a piece called Pyrrhic Defeat. And it is a collection of over 500 sketches of fellow prisoners. It fills an entire room, floor to ceiling. And this is a quote that he had about finding out that his work made it into an exhibit. He said, "I feel like the prison experience of art making and the hurdles that come with it, my fears and hopes and goals, all of me, finally, I'm not alone in it and can see that there are many others like me. It feels like a huge weight has been lifted, like I don't have to keep trying to convince people what this experience is."

Charlie Sandlan (08:34):

There's another piece that just made my jaw drop by a man named Jesse Krimes. K-R-I-M-E-S. And he titled this piece, I'm going to try to pronounce this right, Apokaluptein 16389067. Now, the word Apokaluptein, A-P-O-K-A-L-U-P-T-E-I-N, is Greek. And it means to reveal. And the numbers are his prison number. And what this guy did in prison, and it took him a couple of years to do it took 39 bedsheets, right. We're talking one at a time, right. You're stealing a bid sheet from the laundry room. And he used these bedsheets as canvases, and over the course of three years, he would mail out one at a time to friend on the outside. When they finally been put together in this exhibit, it's, I don't know, it's gargantuan. It's beautiful. These visions of heaven, of earth, of hell. And all of it, it was inspired by him reading Dante's Inferno. I mean, it's a Magnum Opus, really. And these sheets are... they're 15 feet tall, 40 feet wide.

Charlie Sandlan (10:06):

And I'm sharing this with you because it just made me grateful and appreciative of what it means to be free. And I look at this art that took an incredible amount of risk, so it's not just the fact that they were able to create, but it was the risk involved, the danger involved in trying to express themselves artistically. Oftentimes, these guys would... they get caught. All their shit gets thrown

away. They get thrown in the hole. They're in solitary. And then they've got to start all over again. And it's this need to express themselves, the need to create.

Charlie Sandlan (11:00):

And I know that you guys know what that feels like, the need to create, the need to want to put something into the world that expresses your personal experience. And this is an important exhibit. And whether you live in New York and can get to it, you can still go online, you can still get this book, you can still take in this art and taking in is what it's all about.

Charlie Sandlan (11:29):

And on that note, I would now like to talk about the work of Brandon Stanton. Now, you might not recognize that name, but you certainly are going to know his work. He is the photographer, the creator behind Humans of New York, which he started back in 2010 as this idea of trying to catalog 10,000 New Yorkers. And his books that he's put out are just collections of photographs, random New Yorkers and snippets on their life.

Charlie Sandlan (12:02):

As actors, it is incredible source material. And when you're talking about stepping into the shoes of another human being, or trying to bring herself to the human experience, it is just chock full of rich, interesting and diverse human experiences.

Charlie Sandlan (12:22):

Well, on his Instagram page, Humans of New York, he has laid out over the last two, three months, the life of Stephanie Johnson, AKA Tanqueray. Now, Tanqueray is a black woman, now in her mid 70s. And he lays out in posts her life story. Now, he originally wanted to do that as a podcast, but she's gotten sick. She's confined right now to a wheelchair. She had a bad fall about a year ago. But he transcribed a couple of hours worth of conversation with her. She's one of the best storytellers I've ever read. And every day he posted a very long piece about her life, along with photographs.

Charlie Sandlan (13:20):

Extraordinary. You would pass her on the street and not think twice. She was a nude dancer, a go-go dancer, a burlesque dancer, back in the 60s and 70s, all across the city. She was in every major club that you could get into. If you were in that world, you knew who she was. She was a star, a local star. And her life is just one of just grit and determination and survival.

Charlie Sandlan (13:50):

Had an incredibly painful relationship with her mom. She had a baby. She got pregnant when she was 17, 18 years old. And she decided she was going to move out. She tried to sneak back into her home and get her things. Her mom found her in her bedroom, called the cops on her daughter, had her arrested for burglary. She ends up spending a couple of years in prison for that. She gave birth to her baby while incarcerated, gave it up for adoption. And then got out of prison and tried to carve out a life for herself.

Charlie Sandlan (14:33):

And these stories took me on an emotional roller coaster. I mean, I laughed out loud, cried, came to life, just reading these Instagram posts. And I don't know about you, but it's not often that I'm actually really moved emotionally, taken for a ride while strolling through Instagram. It's something you've got to read. You got to take it in if you haven't yet.

Charlie Sandlan (15:05):

And The New York Times just dropped a story a couple of weeks ago. Brandon has been trying to raise money for her health, for her medical bills. And they've raised, just in the last couple of weeks, \$2.6 million. She's going to be okay for however much more time she has. And then she's created a trust and she's giving that money to an organization that helps troubled youth, which is just an extraordinary story. It made me happy. And so hopefully, it will do the same for you.

Charlie Sandlan (15:50):

I would like to say a few words on the death of Eddie Van Halen. Now, I'm 50 years old, so I grew up listening to his music and appreciating the virtuosity of what he did. He's one of the greatest guitar players that ever lived. He just died last week from cancer. He could shred on a guitar like nobody's business. Explosive, operatic, violent. He was a virtuoso. And when I talk about the need to master your instrument, he did. He was a master. And that's something that as actors, you can look to, to say, "Wow, you know what? I want to be able to have that kind of control over my physical instrument. My emotion, my temperament, my voice, my body." He was incredible.

Charlie Sandlan (16:49):

And okay, his music, Van Halen, might not be your cup of tea. And I get that. But if I could give you one song, just one little two minute snippet to just really appreciate how great he was, listened to Eruption off of Van Halen. It's about two minutes. It's a solo. And it's an extraordinary piece of artistry. Rest in peace, Eddie Van Halen.

Charlie Sandlan (17:20):

Now, I have something here that I'd like to share with you because I'm interested in what you have to say about it. There's an artist, his name's Maurizio Cattelan, and he created a piece called The Comedian. And all it is, is that banana taped to the wall with duct tape. Now, you guys might've seen that on the news, because it was purchased for \$150,000. A banana taped to the wall with duct tape.

Charlie Sandlan (17:54):

Now, I'm all for artistic expression. But I'm just wondering is that art really? It's just fruit taped to a wall and somebody actually bought it for \$150,000 and then donated it to the Guggenheim, who accepted it. And what I found interesting is you're not actually purchasing the banana and the tape, right, because I mean, the banana has got a rot. What you're getting is a certificate of authenticity in a detailed letter that lays out exactly how to present

this work of art, right. You need to change the bananas every seven days. It needs to hang or not hang, it needs to be taped 178 centimeters above the floor. And there's details about the angle and how long the tape needs to be.

Charlie Sandlan (18:54):

And I don't know. I find it bullshit personally. I don't know why that's art, but it made me start to investigate other artworks that use food. There's this piece by Janine Antoni, it's called Lick and Lather. She made it back in 1993. The Hirshhorn Museum actually owns it and featured it. It is two separate busts of her self portraits. One is made with chocolate. One is made with soap. And she used her tongue to shape both, which I found interesting.

Charlie Sandlan (19:38):

Ann Hamilton back in 1989, made a piece titled Palimpsest. And all that was, was a glass box filled with snails and a head of cabbage. And you were watching the snails eat the cabbage. That was the exhibit.

Charlie Sandlan (19:59):

And then The Whitney just recently took a piece by an artist named Darren Bader, and basically it's 40 pedestals, 40 wooden pedestals. On each pedestal is a piece of fruit. That's it. A squash, a pumpkin, an avocado, a bushel of spinach, a head of broccoli. That's it. He had something else that he made. It was called Lasagna on Heroin. This was back in 2015. It's a piece of lasagna that he injected with heroin. That's it? That's the piece.

Charlie Sandlan (20:39):

I just find it fascinating that, I guess, you can take fruit and vegetables and explore how they function as sculptures. I'm curious what you think. Is it art? Is it worthy of consideration and exploration? Is it something to take in and consider? What I'd love for you to do is go to my website, [https://](https://www.creatingbehaviorpodcast.com)

www.creatingbehaviorpodcast.com, go to leave a comment page. I use SpeakPipe, which is a very easy thing to do. There's a red button. You just press it and you can just leave a voicemail. I'll get

it. It'll get sent to me. Because I'd love to hear what you have to say about that. I just think it's crazy. I don't think that that is something that has artistic value. I can appreciate the beauty of a good head of cabbage or a bushel of spinach. I just don't necessarily know that there's a monetary value that's placed on that as art. Food for thought.

Charlie Sandlan (21:47):

Now, I'm not going to go too long today. The last thing I want to talk about, I'm going to bring it right down here to acting and empathy. Acting and empathy. Now, my students who train with me, who spend two years in my classroom, who are immersing themselves in the Meisner technique, much of it has to do with getting your instrument more open and more available so that your empathy and your humanity can come to the surface. And I think that empathy is a necessary, necessary part of not just an actor's craft, but any artist, your ability to be able to understand in a personal way, another human beings experience.

Charlie Sandlan (22:51):

And as an actor, I mean, that's really what you're trying to do. You're trying to step into the shoes of another human being. And we are all limited by our own life experience. And it requires imagination. It requires insight, because how can I be empathetic with someone who has experienced something that I've never experienced, right. I don't have children, but what if I'm playing the part of a father who has five children and what that experience is and what it means to be a parent, even though I've never had that.

Charlie Sandlan (23:33):

And it brought me back to Brené Brown, who has talked a lot on this issue of empathy and creativity and sensitivity. And when she is in a lecture situation and she looks out into an audience, she'll ask this question. How many of you have experienced despair? Many, many people raise their hand. Hopelessness? More hands go up. How many of you experienced joy, love, grief, humiliation,

embarrassment? And by the time she has kind of scrolled through the pallet of human experience, every hand is raised.

Charlie Sandlan (24:20):

And the point she's making there, that it is not about sharing an event, right, it's not about, I need to have had children to understand what it means to be a parent. It's not about that. It's about understanding the shared experience of an emotion. I might not know what it's like to be separated at the border, right, to have my child stripped away from me when I enter the United States. But I certainly know what powerlessness feels like, what grief feels like, what rage feels like, what despair feels like.

Charlie Sandlan (25:03):

And when you consider your approach to a piece of material and to the experience of that character that you're trying to live through on the pages of those sides or that script, it's about understanding and identifying the emotional relation between you and that character's experience. And if you can find a way to, through your imagination, through your insight into the human experience, you can bring yourself fully to a character.

Charlie Sandlan (25:53):

And one of the first things that will help you is to not judge. Don't judge the character. Don't judge what is going on with them. It will distance you. It will keep you from being able to really identify in a personal way. You have to be able to take the perspective of another human being and whether that's in life or you're approaching your art, you have to be able to do that. You have to be able to put yourself in someone else's shoes and to be able to communicate that understanding, right, because your job is to do justice to the character. Your job is to advocate for them, to defend them, to champion them. You can work on empathy. You can. You can work on it.

Charlie Sandlan (26:51):

And it's difficult right now, because social media or politics is just filled with polarization. It's filled with narcissism. But as actors,

work on your empathy, work on empathetic listening. And those of you that have studied with me, that have done this Meisner work. That's where we start, the ability to empathetically listen, to be able to just take in and hear what someone is saying to you, to take it personally. And it's an essential component to being able to do interesting work. Take in more, listen more and see if you can identify emotionally with others, as opposed to trying to relate to their specific experience. I think it will help you not just as a person, but as an actor.

Charlie Sandlan (28:01):

And on that note, I'm going to leave you with a recommendation. Every once in a while, I watch something, I see an actor that just jacks me up, where I go, "God damn, man. That is some seriously good work you're doing." And right now the actor that I'm just kind of... I got a crush on is Cole Hauser. And if you don't know Cole Hauser, he plays Rip in the show Yellowstone. And if you have not started to watch Yellowstone, put it in your queue, move it up to the top of the list.

Charlie Sandlan (28:38):

Now, I came to this show very late. It's already got three seasons in the book. And once I knew that Kevin Costner was the star of the show, he's the patriarch of this family, I thought, "Eh, fuck it. I'm going to watch it." I've never been a big fan of Kevin Costner. I never thought that he was that good really. But I had three or four people that I respect say, "Charlie, you got to watch Yellowstone. It's great." The first recommendation, the second time, ah, okay, maybe. But when someone says something to you three, four times... I mean, four different people, then you've got to investigate it.

Charlie Sandlan (29:23):

So I started watching Yellowstone, Trish and I both. We'd been bingeing this motherfucker for going on five or six days now. And first off I will say, it's the best work I've ever seen Kevin Costner do. He's not a transformational actor. This is a part that just fits

him perfectly. He's the patriarch of a ranching family in Montana. He's got a multi-million dollar ranch, 100,000 acres. And it is the saga of the Dalton Ranch and his family, his children, the people that work on the ranch and the Indian reservation that rests up against his property and all of the drama that ensues out of those relationships.

Charlie Sandlan (30:12):

Cole Hauser plays the part of Rip, who is basically Kevin Costner's surrogate son, right-hand enforcer. And the work that Cole Hauser is doing is phenomenal. It is a complicated part. This is a kid who watched his mother murdered by his father, killed his father with a frying pan. He's got deep, deep pain and scars. And he's got violence. He's got tenderness. He has compassion. He understands what actions are. I'll tell you that. He is doing in every single moment. It's a great, great character and he's crushing it. And so he's worthy of your time.

Charlie Sandlan (31:11):

Watch Yellowstone and let me know what you think of Cole Hauser. You've seen him at a lot of things. This is a guy that's been carving out a career for 15, 20 years. The guy's 45 years old. I mean, he's been in School Ties, Dazed and Confused Good Will Hunting, Tigerland. I mean, films I've never even heard of, Tears of the Sun, 2 Fast, 2 Furious, The Cave. I mean, you name it, he's been working. But this is the part that he was born to play. And every once in a while you see an actor and a character come together and you say, "There's nobody else that could do this. He was born to play this part."

Charlie Sandlan (31:54):

And I can imagine when he read that script, walked into that room to audition, that it just came together seamlessly. It's an incredible performance. I'm going to leave you with that, Cole Hauser, creating behavior like nobody's business. Good for him.

Charlie Sandlan (32:14):

Well, my fellow daydreamers, I told you I was going to get you out of here quick. Thank you for sticking around and keeping that phone in your pocket. I hope really, truly, that you learned something that you didn't know before you pressed play. You can follow this show wherever you get your podcasts, subscribe to it. Please review it on iTunes. It would help a lot. If you want to see a picture of the pooper, you can go to the website, <https://www.creatingbehaviorpodcast.com>. All of the content to every episode, you'll find on that site. You can follow me on Instagram @creatingbehavior. You can follow my studio @MaggieFlaniganStudio. Lawrence Trailer, thank you for the music. My friends, be disruptive, be resilient, play full out with yourself and don't ever settle for your second best. My name is Charlie Sandlan. Peace.