



"ALL OUR SERIOUS CONVERSATIONS
WERE OVER PING PONG.
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT IT."

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JG. Did you bring me a shirt?

CPP. WAS THAT ON YOUR RIDER?

This is my fifth shirt of the day. It's hot. Outdoor play is tough. I think I'm going to be the worst player you've ever interviewed.

I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE.

Can we get an extra heavy ball? With the wind?

JOSH, YOU'RE GOOD. YOU'VE GOT SKILLS.

The wind is making me look like I have spin. You don't get much bounce off that metal net though. This is my cousin. It's his first time in the US. He just got here on a Chinatown bus from Indiana. This is the first thing he's done. He's going to think this is what people do. Go play ping pong in a park. This is normal.

AND DO A PHOTO SHOOT AND INTERVIEW. THAT'S HOW WE ROLL!

HOW FAR IS INDIANA?

It's 12 hours. He caught it last night at Midnight. They set out at 10pm there's tumbleweed. There's no fucking way any bus is coming through here in the next 20 years. But it was there and 12 hours later he's in Chinatown.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN PLAYING PING PONG?

I think we got a table when I was 10. In the basement. Every suburban American home has one. Was it like that in the UK?

NOT SO MUCH. WE DON'T REALLY HAVE BASEMENTS

No tornados?

WE HAVE COAL CELLARS BUT THEY ARE KIND OF NARROW.

Go and play in the coal cellar! It's funny you do these interviews. Me and friends, there is this one guy, Trace, we would call them ping pong talks. All our serious conversations were over ping pong. There's something about it.

YOU HAVE A VERY EFFERVESCENT BACKHAND!

I'm a tennis player. You can only get so good at table tennis if you are a tennis player. You got these tennis strokes.

YOU CAN TELL ALL THE TENNISPLAYERS. BIG BACKHANDS.

The real players are very jerky.

YEAH IT'S MINIMAL MOVEMENT. SHORT, SHARP.

But I don't think that makes as good a photo shoot. I played tennis. I was alright. I was into it until my little brother beat me. Then I gave up.

ARE YOU NEW YORK BORN AND BRED?

No, Indiana. But I came here right after college. It was a foregone conclusion. I was always gonna come here. My Grandmother was here but to me it was Mecca. So I came a lot. My daughter goes to Indiana, she loves it, for her it's freedom. But for me New York was freedom. Get off the bus, go to Chinatown.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN DOING ART IN NEW YORK?

Architecture is my main thing.

AH OK. YOU'RE DOING THAT NOW?

Trying to. It's a really hard time for it. The stuff I do when I'm working is residential, night clubs, lounges and medical stuff. I've done houses for my in-laws.

SOMETIMES BUSINESS AND FAMILY DON'T MIX. HOW WAS IT?

Can we turn off the tape recorder!? No, it was great. I did a house in Maine and Mexico.



"I HAVE THESE FRIENDS WHO ARE A HIP HOP LATINO BAND. ACTUALLY IT'S A HIP HOP JEWISH LATINO BAND. I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE IN THE GROUP."

"WE GOT RID OF A FEW WORDS HERE AND THERE THAT I DIDN'T REALIZE WOULD HAVE GOT TARGET INTO A BILLION DOLLAR LAW SUIT."

THERE IS SOME AMAZING ARCHITECTURE IN MEXICO.

Well that's what I have been telling Armando, my cousin, but he's saying it's much better in New York. In his hometown it never gets below 105. And I say well at least it's dry. And he's like, no it's 100% humidity. And I'm like, oh well at least it's cold at night. And he's like, no. It's the worst weather on the planet.

Do you favour your forehand or backhand?

I'M KINDA HAPPY ON BOTH. I PROBABLY HAVE A BETTER KILL ON MY FOREHAND.

I always favoured my backhand. Then sometime in college I tried to switch to a forehand dominated game. It put my game back a decade. I still haven't really recovered from it.

IF YOU HAVE A LESSON. THEY JUST SAY, 'STOP. EVERYTHING YOU ARE DOING IS WRONG'. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FOOTWORK.

Where do you play in the city?

MOSTLY SPIN. IT'S A NEW CLUB IN MANHATTAN. THEY ARE THE ONES WHO PUT THESE TABLES IN THE PARK.

Oh shit. Really? That's great. Is it serious?

YEAH, PRETTY SERIOUS. THE CLUB IS UNDERNEATH THE TIME WARNER BUILDING ON 23RD. ONE OF THE WALLS LOOKS ONTO THE SUBWAY BUT IT HAS BULLETPROOF GLASS SO WHEN PEOPLE COME UP FROM THE SUBWAY THEY SEE THE CLUB.

Ping pong theatre.

YEAH, IT'S THE BEST AD THEY COULD EVER HAVE.

I would have had that one without the wind! I used to play at Flatbush. It's such a diverse thing. But you have to be really into it. No one is getting any girls through ping pong.

WELL, I THINK MAYBE THE SPIN GUYS ARE TRYING TO CHANGE THAT.

So this is the time for Ping pong. We're on the cusp of it!

TELL ME ABOUT THE BODEGA PROJECT IN TIMES SQUARE?

It's right down the block on Times Square and sixth. The size of it is amazing. It's three billboards for Target. Three ads up to something like 100 feet wide and 75 feet high.

WOW.

It's nuts.

AND IT'S THE SAME STYLE AS YOUR PREVIOUS WORK?

Yeah they were very open to my ideas. I gave them some concepts and they picked one. And we just did it. We got rid of a few words here and there – some religious ones that were in another language that I didn't realize would have got Target into a billion dollar law suit.

LIKE WHAT?

It was in Yiddish. So I got a friend who is a rabbi to translate. "This is fine. This is fine, it's about a bus upstate. This is about a rabbi's anniversary. But this one is a problem. This one is talking about waging a holy war on those who don't keep the Sabbath. That one had to come out.

I ASSUME THEY ARE ALL TARGET RED AND WHITE.

Originally it was. It was 95% but they wanted a bit more color so I added some yellow and blue. It's a bit more lively.

HOW DID THE PROJECT COME ABOUT? DID YOU CONTACT THEM?

No, they contacted me out of the blue.

THAT'S GREAT. WHO, TARGET?

It was through an ad agency. I never talked to Target. They called me up. I think they just got Target as a client. They wanted three proposals in 24 hours. I was leaving for Indiana for a week. I didn't have a good laptop. I had to rent a laptop but it was great. My mom gave me 48 hour service. My mum took care of the kids and gave me whatever I needed.

LIKE CRAMMING FOR AN EXAM.

Yeah, perfect.

WHAT ELSE YOU GOT COMING UP?

I have these friends who are in a hip hop latino band. Actually it's a Hip Hop Jewish Latino band. I've always wanted to be in the group. What do I need to get into that group? So I thought I'd do them a t-shirt in my bodega style. I've always been a hanger on. But then one of the guys who wrote a verse didn't want to be in their video and so I got the nod. It's called TJ 1989. We shot the whole thing here in Times Square. It's a great video and I'm the third rapper.

YOU'RE A RENAISSANCE MAN!

Well you know you gotta be in this day and age. How else are you going to survive?

TRUE.

So that's part two of taking over Times Square. There will be something else I haven't thought what it is yet.

THE TRILOGY?

Yeah but I can't go public with it yet.

WELL WE ARE IN BRYANT PARK, WHICH IS ALMOST TIMES SQUARE?

Yeah.

YOU ALSO TEACH THOUGH?

Yeah we do that in the fall. It started with my daughters' class and her school. But now we have done a few projects in Queens with 7th and 8th grades which are really crazy. Pretty hard actually. Especially the girls. The boys were into the project but the girls wanted to kill me and all their friends. It was intense but they ended up doing really great work.

I LIKE THE INTERACTIVITY OF YOUR WORK. I CAN SEE THE KIDS PLAYING WITH THAT. IT'S VERY TACTILE.

Right. We also did self portraits where we took pictures of the kids and they chopped the images and glued them onto wood, collaged it and put it back together. That was a mess of a project. I mean every day these kids had a nice clean project and I'm asking them to cut it up into 1000 pieces and it's chaos. I can only handle one kid at a time. I'm not a very good teacher. I don't have the skills to bring the class together. I was just putting out fires. So I'd be praying the kid I was with would get it. Meanwhile there are 15 others causing havoc. But again, they did it, they brought it together into an amazing project.

11-15

JOSH MADE A RATHER UNCONVENTIONAL CALL FOR NO SPIN ON THE SERVE, 'I DON'T CARE HOW SLIGHT IT IS, I CAN'T HAVE IT!' A TIGHT GAME ENSUED WITH SOME EPIC RALLIES. JOSH NEVER REALLY GOT TO GRIP WITH THE FLOATERS - OR WAS IT THE WIND?

