



PIPER MARSHALL
25 Questions for

**BAILEY
SCIESZKA**

(1) WHAT DID YOU READ AS A TEEN?

One of my favorite books is still *Behind the Paint* by Violent J from Insane Clown Posse. ICP are hometown heroes for me. They are campy and outspoken and live life with no apologies. I emulate them because they go out and live their dreams regardless of the haters. Go to any Juggalo Championship Wrestling show and tell me that Violent J and Shaggy 2 Dope aren't little boys living their childhood dreams. It's actually very heartwarming and sweet. Most childhood dreams burn you alive, and this is a theme in my work. But it's nice to know there are those who are successful. This book really showed me that if you have the guts to follow your passions, it doesn't matter where you come from.

(2) FICTION OR BIOGRAPHY?

Old Put is a demonic-alien-clown who lives inside of me. She is too ingrained in my life and work to be an alter ego. I believe all fiction comes from some other tangible dimension like "Imaginationland" in South Park. Stephen King is the only artist I know who so clearly explains that his fiction comes from a separate universe and he is just reporting what comes to him. When I'm Old Put, I wet my lips on a salty pool that's a more truthful fiction than any biography.

(3) WHAT IS TRUTHFUL FICTION?

Comedy is a painful mask those who can see the truth must wear. My favorite joke goes like this: a man goes to the doctor and he says, "I'm so depressed it's wreaking havoc on my life. I can't eat. I can't sleep. I'm physically in pain and can't get out of bed." The doctor gets a twinkle in his eye and says, "I know just the cure! The famous Krusty the Clown is in town. Go! See his show! It will rid you of your incurable blues." And the man responds, "But Doc, I am Krusty the Clown!" Truthful fiction is the stories we tell ourselves to try and take this mask off.

(4) WHAT IS BENEATH THE MASK?

I'm not sure what is beneath the mask. I've devoted my life artifice to avoid the existential threat that maybe there's just a dark meaningless void underneath.

(5) DO YOU CRIB OR INVENT?

Everything I make is from the Wild World of Old Put. My whole life is my obsessions. One month I'm watching WWE documentaries for six hours a day and reading wrestler's autobiographies all night. And then the next month I'm studying Medieval cooking nonstop. There's stories and languages that come from all these different sources that inspire my drive to live. I take this mélange of manias and digest it through Old Put, because all thoughtful artists have to keep tossin' up the culture.

(6) RAGS TO RICHES?

Old Put is the rags to dirtier rags story. But she loves the filth more than diamonds anyways. I'm fascinated by those who never make "it," but instead hide in the sewer finding their own spotlight from the sun shining down through the empty manhole cover.

(7) EMBELLISHMENT?

I'm haunted by Venturi's "ducks" vs "decorated" sheds in *Learning from Las Vegas*. Basically a building is either a decorated shed or shaped like a duck. I want to make ducks. I want to be bad like that. But the crafter inside me, the crafter named Old Put, loves to embellish. I've lost so much of my life hot-fixing rhinestones. I will paint berets and various costumes worn by Old Put. But most of the time I sew her glorious capes and costumes from scratch creating embellished ducks.

(8) CAN THE RING CRITIQUE THE INSTITUTION?

Critiquing "the establishment" is now the norm. Only rebel freaks would be attracted to the carnny lifestyle of the square ring. A good wrestler champions the common man. They blow up everyday stories into violent soap operatic proportions. A great example of this is Daniel Bryan's Wrestlemania 30 journey. Over and over again his boss Triple H (the evil WWE authority) would stack all odds against him. Wrestling gives me life because, just like the real world, things happens that are not right, not fair, and not just. But Daniel Bryan never gave up. His arm might have been in a sling, but he got off that god-damn gurney, ran out of the ambulance that Triple H sent him to, and won the world champion belt against all odds. Critiquing a fucked up system and sticking up for what you believe is right is what makes a great babyface.

(9) ART CHANNELS VIOLENCE? OR VICE VERSA?

I kiss my fists before I use them to make any craft or artwork. I take all my hate, and instead of becoming embittered, I become inspired. How can we tell a great story just through fighting? I wouldn't like to think senseless violence in the news is art. But bad things happen and I want to explore these dark and messy stories in my artwork.

(10) WHAT IS REAL?

We're obviously living in a time where it's tricky to talk about facts and what is understood to be real. I'm intrigued that there are people who come up with phrases like "alternative facts" but their boring and dirty intentions with this kind of drugie mind-bending slang misses the point. Instead of Jack Smith dressed as Maria Montez building an alternative reality in his apartment, we're stuck with the haggard blonde Kellyanne trying to Matrix the mainstream with a blue pill. Reality can only be understood by the stories and objects left to history. Facts are only what you're open enough to believe.

(11) WHAT IS PLAY?

I never want to lose the power of play. There's something important that I still don't understand about playing with my puppets and creating stories. I can live any reality in this timeless place of my imagination. It's about losing your consciousness in an inconsequential universe.

(12) CRAFT IS NOT THE SAME AS PROP?

Well, crafts and craft are very different to me. Crafts are the kitschy lowly pursuit of weekend hobbyists. Craft is somehow revered in art because it shows accomplishment in how artists handle their materials. Hobby Lobby crafts are genuine hand-





made fun. There is nothing phony about them. But craft in art is very much a prop because it's a tool to create an effect.

(13) WHO DO YOU IMAGINE YOUR AUDIENCE TO BE?

I imagine my audience to be teenage boys, to be honest. But, what I love about “promo videos” and puppet shows as Old Put is knowing that there is someone who is going to understand what I’m saying. I want my audience to be someone who gets hooked into my drama and can feel less lonely because of it.

(14) ARE AUDIENCES SCARED OR INSPIRED?

My whole drive as an artist, just like a clown, is to lift the viewer up from the monotony of their lives. I’m inspired to ignite passion in others, just like the wrestlers and artists I love. If that passion is fear, it’s at least a deep emotion I wouldn’t want my audience to shy away from.

(15) STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN OR BONE STEW?

Stone Cold is the Bone Stew of Sports Entertainment.

(16) WHAT IS THE FINAL INGREDIENT?

Love.

(17) DADDY WARBUCKS OR ED MCMAHON?

Mr. McMahon is a dirty, suit-wearing, cappuccino-drinking, no-good CEO billionaire who doesn’t give a damn about his employees. I guess Daddy Warbucks starts out that way. But that little ginger orphan with a heart of gold somehow redeems the filthy rich coot. So, Daddy Warbucks because his character has an arc.

(18) CRAYOLA CLASSPACK OR FINELINE?

I’d have to say both. But Crayola is actually garbage to try and use. I cheat the Crayola look with oil pastels. I did a whole series of drawings of little blue alien men mutilating sexy blonde women in garbage cans spewing trash with these glitter fineline pens that were scented. I really want to return to that medium someday.

(19) DOES OLD PUT BELIEVE IN GOD?

Old Put is a spiritual beast who talks to all idols. She questions existence, but without God she wouldn’t have anyone to talk to on her lonely nights in her hay-filled cell called the big top.

(20) DO YOU AGONIZE OVER VOICES?

From the very beginning the first thing Old Put ever said to me was, “Is this the end of Goopy Dog?” I have no damn clue what this means. Maybe its meaning will be revealed to me someday. But her voice has always been this low southern lisp. I achieve this by slowing my own voice down. It’s hard to make all the different character voices for my puppet shows. Sometimes my friends help. But lately I like to control everything because I live as these puppets for weeks when I get ready for a performance.

(21) ARE THERE EDITIONS OF CRAFTS?

Old Put’s Crafts are supposed to be a therapeutic return to the handmade. The happiest place I’ve ever been to is Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan. I’m a proud card-carrying member. It’s Henry Ford’s atonement for igniting the American industrial revolution. He wanted to keep the down-home traditions of handmade objects alive by presenting glass blowing, printmaking, tin punching, and corn husk dolls as educational entertainment. I thought the allure of getting lost in this simple world of crafts would be good for my soul. But unfortunately, my manic energy and addictive personality makes myself over-craft. I can’t have one pinecone doll. I have to make over thirty of them. I just can’t paint one beret. So, yes crafts are easy to edition because they’re formulaic.

(22) WHAT IS THE FORMULA?

I’ve learned how to tell stories through episodic television shows and their subsequent toy merchandising. The formula is I take a character or theme (for me pleather puppies, dolphins, brown butterflies, and Old Put) and create as many variations as I can with them.

(23) WHAT IS APPEALING ABOUT THE INVERSION OF ENTERTAINMENT AND SCULPTURE?

I would like to think I’m making Arts Entertainment in the same way WWE has been forced to change its identity from Professional Wrestling to Sports Entertainment. I’d prefer sculpture to be entertainment. I’d prefer so much of life to be entertainment. I present my stage props as sculpture because they are Old Put’s relics. They can tell their own entertaining stories because they hold the power of performance.

(24) YOU CAN’T DO IT ON GUTS ALONE!

Guts is just a part of making it. Talent it’s the smallest part (maybe not even necessary at all). Heart and grit are the keys to success.

(25) CLOWNS / JESTERS / WRESTLERS.

Wrestling started as a side-show attraction in the circus. These are the glory days of the sport when “Kayfabe” had to be used and the audience believed the fighting and stories were real. Clowns just lived alongside their wrestler brethren. Sometimes fighting themselves like Doink—a clown themed wrestler from the ‘80s—later in the WWE. Jesters were also the entertainers, but I want to believe they wanted to fight the Monarchy just like the new hot-shop crop of female wrestlers today will burn down the patriarchy. I’ve always championed those who live in the shadows like sideshow freaks and painted people. I’ve said it once and I’ll say it again: someday the pornstar clowns dressed as wrestlers will own a piece of the pie!

Harvestime Dismemberies, 2017 (p. 188) Crowning Glory, 2017 (p. 192) The Soft Side of Hardcore Portrait, 2017 (p. 193) Rivella Ghoul, 2017 (p. 194) Circus Circus, 2017 (p. 195) All images Photo collaboration with Nicholas Calcott Courtesy: the artist