

S1E12 - Connie Solera

Fri, Mar 10, 2023 2:10PM 44:07

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

paintings, trolls, art, elle, called, cardboard, love, care, practice, connie, paint, shakespeare, podcast, year, episode, studio, talking, feel, wonderment, moved

SPEAKERS

Connie Solera, Elle Billing

E Elle Billing 00:00

Hi, my name is Elle Billing. I am a chronically ill queer femme, and I'm tired. I'm here this episode and every episode to dig at the roots of our collective fatigue, explore ways to direct our care and compassionate and sustainable ways and harness creative expression to heal ourselves and our world. And welcome to Hoorf! Radical Care in a late capitalist heckscape. My guest on this episode is Connie Solera. Connie is an artist, writer, mentor and retreat guide who has dedicated her entire life and over 25 years of teaching to Living Courageously from her Artists Soul and helping others to do the same. Connie's workshops, retreats, and mentorship cohorts are designed for artists that are deep thinkers, soulful seekers, and brave misfits, ready to strengthen their connection to their intuition, trust the deep currents of their creative practice and make art that sizzles with confidence, depth, and meaning. This brave misfit is excited to have Connie on the podcast today to share her artists soul. Welcome. Hello, Connie.

C Connie Solera 01:36

Hi. Elle, my goodness.

E Elle Billing 01:38

Oh, goodness. I know. I'm excited. You're here and you're excited. You're here.

C Connie Solera 01:43

Yay. Okay.

E Elle Billing 01:45

Yeah. Before before we got going today, and before I sat down to get started, I was wondering,

I wonder which of her many, many pet names Connie is going to start with today? Because you know, all your emails always start that way. And I was like, if she didn't call me lovebug today, or, or sweetheart, like which one am I going to get? Well, I'm just, we were both just so excited we just went with HI!.

 Connie Solera 02:09

I'm trying I'm trying to be all professional. Oh, no, it's fine.

 Elle Billing 02:14

Professionalism as an ethic is. I have a lot of opinions about it. And I think that scrubbing our language from the affectations like that is unnecessary. And I think it's fine to call people lovebug and still be professional.

 Connie Solera 02:30

Yeah, yeah, I guess I do

 Elle Billing 02:31

in certain contexts.

 02:33

This I'm nervous is what it is. But I tend to do that all the time. Anyways, just because I'm not. I'm really good at remembering people's stories and details. But I'm not always that great with names. And so like I can, I'm always making up names, because for some reason I can remember those better than if it's like, oh, or Jan or something I can I can remember Elle Bell more than Elle

 Elle Billing 02:58

So my sister does that; she basically renames everybody. So you, you know you've been sort of accepted into the fold when you are no longer called by your given name.

 Connie Solera 03:09

Oh, I love that. Yeah. When I used to teach like, well, you know, like when I had like, 900 kids in public school. I named them all food. And I would still remember that their food names. You know, it'd be like shrimp, crab cake, burrito. Like, whatever. And I could remember that, but I

couldn't remember, you know, Tyler's Zack? No, but I don't know. It's just a brain thing. I think more than anything.

E Elle Billing 03:37

So the one time that's bothered me when someone did that, I had an orthodontist who used really sexist pet names for his staff and his patients. And I wanted to be called by my name, and I corrected him one time and he said, Oh, sweetheart, I didn't ask you for your name.

C Connie Solera 03:53

Oh, oh!

E Elle Billing 03:55

I was 14. It was 14 I thought it was super gross

i 03:58

Oh, yeah, I don't Yeah, no, I am not in that context. What I the most I ever do is that like a I might call someone kiddo. But that's I don't know. That's, that's the most

E Elle Billing 04:10

I had a student I called Bub or Bud. I use like pretty like generic, like buddy friend names with my students. One time. A kid misheard me because I worked with kids who are hard of hearing, and said, Why do you call him babe? That's weird. I said, that was BUD. Yeah, and it's time for me to change it.

C Connie Solera 04:31

Yeah. Yeah. It's it's tricky. That's why you stick with food. Who can go wrong with you know, ice cream?

E Elle Billing 04:40

Or I think my students probably would have been worried I'd eat them. Yeah, there were times where I'm like, if you don't stop, I'm going to eat you for breakfast. But you're vegetarian. I do make exceptions

C Connie Solera 04:52

I love it. So

E Elle Billing 04:53

English. Now I'm hungry. I know. We just I just had had lunch. But I'm like, Oh, I'm now I want ice cream.

C Connie Solera 05:05

that's Okay, let's get through this and we'll get ice cream together. Yeah.

E Elle Billing 05:08

So speaking of, you know, ways we take care of ourselves with food and pet names, how have you received care this week?

C Connie Solera 05:17

That was such a great, you know, that is such a question of endearment. I was thinking that's a question to ask a loved one, isn't it? And like, how do you receive care? And how did you not receive care? Like, I thought, wow, that is a powerful question. When I read it in the questions you shared. I received care by having a dear friend of mine this past week, offered to help me with something with-- I didn't even ask for help. Right. So that was kind of fun. And it was about actually talking about my art and my practice. And I had some ideas around something, I was just sharing the ideas just to kind of bounce off, you know, ideas. And I left with someone saying, I can help with this. And we could blah, blah, blah. And I was like, Oh my gosh, it's so amazing. And I'm not always the quickest to ask for help. So when I have somebody enthusiastically come up, and want to give help, and it have amazing, like, just bring this really amazing energy to it. That was such a great way of receiving care. That kind of surprised me. And always does. I think I was also asking myself, How did I receive care from myself. And I, this past week, notice that my energy was shifting from the last month or two. And so I changed up my morning routine, which always involves being in the studio, but I changed it so that I would feel more grounded. And I've been doing that in the last four or five days. And that has been a really great way of caring for myself. And a lot of times I can be like, well, this is all working and I'm on a routine. And I just shifted the way I do things in the studio a little different, and they've made a big, a big but subtle difference, if that makes sense?

E Elle Billing 07:23

Yes. Okay. Yeah, no, I get it. Sometimes the little things are the big things. And the big things are little things. Yeah. Paradox. Yeah,

C Connie Solera 07:33

instead of just jumping right in and start painting, which is my normal routine, I decided to really slow down and sit for a few minutes. And just kind of not just like, I can just start going at it. And I did it purposely to just ground myself and kind of do like a body scan. And it's not something I always want to do. But I was like I need I'm feeling not as grounded. And so that's, I've seen the difference. Actually, I've been able to focus a bit more during the day. So I don't know if the two are I know, I don't know if they're directly correlated, but I'm going to go with that. So

E

Elle Billing 08:14

my mom popped in on me in the studio the other day, and I was just sitting on the floor staring at the two secret paintings, that I hadn't shared with the group. Yeah. And I was just staring at them. And she's like, are they talking to you? And I was like, not yet. Yeah, she's like, you've been sitting there a while because she had been kind of cleaning and futzing around upstairs. And every time she walked back, I was doing the exact same thing. She's like, how do you know when to do something? I'm like, I don't know. I'm still figuring this out. Yeah. Like it's different every time. Like, I'm really kind of stuck on these. I said, I know I need to do something. I said, I've already rotated them 90 degrees and retaped them to the wall. It's-- but I'm just gonna sit here a little while. She said, Oh, okay. She just kind of walked away. But like, I've been also doing just a lot more sitting.

C

Connie Solera 09:05

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Less doing. That's kind of what I needed. Just a little less doing at the beginning of the day.

E

Elle Billing 09:14

Yeah, it's interesting, because my face-- I was going through my Facebook memories today and what the first one said, sometimes it's a day for doing and sometimes it's just a day for being, and it just it's really felt like that, right? I just need to sit and be with things and hold them more than I need to like do the things. that's really been this season of life anyway. Just a lot more being. less Doing.

C

Connie Solera 09:39

Yeah, but isn't it such a great thing to check in with yourself and ask yourself is it a being or doing kind of day? And that's where I can get caught up in and having a routine you know, like, like, I still have the same routine but just twitching it was just that little bit of time. I'm talking 10 minutes, you know instead of just jumping in, 10 minutes of sitting has shifted a lot, which is kind of,

E

Elle Billing 10:06

you know what I'm reading this book right now. Rest is Resistance: a manifesto by Trisha

ersey,

C Connie Solera 10:12

I love that book, I've read it, I sat down outside and read that thing, like, in a weekend, it was so delicious.

E Elle Billing 10:19

And she talks about, like, the importance of having those 10 minutes to do some kind of rest, or daydreaming, or scheming or shut-eye or napping, you know, those 10 minutes really do make a difference of

C Connie Solera 10:37

totally

E Elle Billing 10:38

... not needing to do something all the time, like pushing back against the need to be constantly doing. So I'm glad that changing that up in your routine is making a difference for you. And that you were able to, like hear what your soul or your body needed.

C Connie Solera 10:55

Yeah, and I think...

E Elle Billing 10:56

...and then do something different?

C Connie Solera 10:58

Yeah, I think too. It's like, I started to feel a bit ungrounded and like, too much in my head. And so believe it or not, I needed to slow down and just do nothing to get out of my head. Like, just really feel into my body. And but the thing I know that it's like, that's, that's what's working now. And maybe next week, it'll shift but that's okay. But that felt like a real I love framing it now as an act of care. Instead of thinking it's the answer. It's an act of care right now. Yeah.

E Elle Billing 11:35

So it sounds like your creative practice is providing that, that care that self care right now?

C Connie Solera 11:41

Yeah, I think so. Always. That's always part of it.

E Elle Billing 11:45

Yeah. So how does your creative practice sort of facilitate the ability to care for others in your life?

C Connie Solera 11:52

Well, you ask such good questions Elle, they really are like, damn, I gotta think about this stuff. I love it. I mean, on the surface, to be honest, like, I think this is kind of a common thing. Creatives in general, say, like, if I'm not attending to my creative practice, I become grouchy, I become all of that, you know, like, I think that is a very kind of surface. And it's a very honest thing. I know, for myself, that if I'm not attending to my own creative practice, consistently, which happens sometimes, then I am not the nicest person to be around. If I don't give myself times where I can really dig into my art, by myself, like, once or twice a year, I try to go away for just a couple of days to Sedona, which is only an hour away, and just being with my art and being by myself, like, that resets everything for me. But I think also, I feel that it cares for other people, because it fills me up, which gives me the energy to then give to others, to give to my students, and be inspired by giving to my students, instead of feeling like maybe it's overwhelming or drudgery. Like, for example, when I used to teach in a public school, and I just, there's no room for care in there, and you're just, I always said they would put an IV in to you and suck you dry. But to find, you know, now that it's my creative practice fuels me and able to give more to others from a place of love, if that makes sense.

E Elle Billing 13:41

It does. Yeah, yeah. I, the public school, where I live now is it's a small school. And so the art teacher, I think, has a lot more time to spend with the students and I, I always felt like when I took art, I had time, a little bit like, time to talk to the teacher and stuff. But I did a practicum at a very large public school. Well, large for here. Yeah, probably larger where you are. And it really was like, conveyor belt assembly line.

C Connie Solera 14:14

Yeah.

E Elle Billing 14:15

...for that teacher to just like churn 100 Like you said, 900 Kids 500 Kids through a week and try and teach them something about art and hope it sticks, you know, that the kids who are going to like who need the art are going to like, have it separate with them, and every kid needs art

to, like who need the art are going to like, have it resonate with them, and every kid needs art, but there are some kids who just like really need it.

C Connie Solera 14:34
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 14:35
And it's, it can be disheartening to work in that environment. And then to still try and maintain your own creative practice after

C Connie Solera 14:42
Yeah, that's exactly yeah, yeah. You know, and if you're, you can't even take time to go to the bathroom. Yeah, so like, how much are you

E Elle Billing 14:54
a little TMI, I have IBS and I worked in a in a school and like, you can't time your bathroom breaks

C Connie Solera 15:00
Yeah, like, yeah.

E Elle Billing 15:02
It's like I need someone now I'm going.

C Connie Solera 15:06
Yeah. So the system is what I'm trying to say is not even

E Elle Billing 15:09
Oh, right? It's dehumanizing

C Connie Solera 15:11
It's there's no, right. Yeah. But we're past that now. I mean, like for me right now so that I but

still, I think some of that is gets ingrained in us and we have to read it. Well, you know, more than that's what I admire about you is that you've been able to craft a life to support your own needs and to providing that care to yourself. So you can care for others. That's, that's the heart of who I see. Your gift is with your practice as well. I think that's what we're connecting on. And I'm the systems we come from didn't provide that. And Tricia Hershey, Hersey, and the rest is resistance. Gosh, she just, she does such an amazing job of putting it out there and saying it, you know,

E Elle Billing 15:57

yep. But yeah, the capitalism and white supremacy chew us up and spit us out and eat us all alive. Yeah.

C Connie Solera 16:04

Again, and again and again. And I love that she's asking us and inviting us to be subversive about it. And like, and I felt when I was in that system, when I knew I wasn't going to last any more that I was going to leave, I started to become subversive about it myself.

E Elle Billing 16:20

Yeah, I know that feeling.

C Connie Solera 16:22

Yeah, I know. singing to the choir,

E Elle Billing 16:25

you can see you can see it, but you can tell.

C Connie Solera 16:27

I mean, that's, that's one of the things I admire so much about you and your work, that I've been able to witness so intimately, and that you're even doing what this podcast is really showing it can be different. And I think that's what we do as artists, that's what we do. And we attend to a creative practice that our life doesn't have to be about producing just to make it a commodity. It can be about something different and more about caring for ourselves. It's what I love about ya.

E Elle Billing 17:00

That's so kind.

C Connie Solera 17:03
Well, just just telling you how it is

E Elle Billing 17:06
I think really brings me brings us to like the third thing that I had kind of made a note about about your practice is very human. Your workshops, your retreats, the mentorship cohorts, and your artistic practice, like that of the art that you make is just, it's deeply human.

C Connie Solera 17:29
Thank you, Elle,

E Elle Billing 17:30
not all art does that. I mean, we could probably do a whole episode on NFT's. But I'm not going to.

C Connie Solera 17:41
There's enough of those out there.

E Elle Billing 17:42
Well, right. I mean, but because of that, art that is so deeply human feels ever more important to me. What is it about your teaching that you feel speaks the most to our need to connect to our own humanity or to like the humaneness and humanity of others? How do you make that work? Like? I mean, it's clear that it's working like what is it that? What's your secret ingredient? Your magic? What's your secret sauce? That's the secret sauce.

C Connie Solera 18:17
I have no idea. You could give me a clue. I know, I think. I think it's what your what you so kindly said about me like that. That, to me is the biggest compliment anybody could say about my work? So I'm like, really moved by it. I mean, years ago? Well, let me if you don't mind if I just rewind a little like, pardon me if you've heard if you've personally heard this story before, because I've told it a few times. But

E Elle Billing 18:44

I hope you do tell stories I've heard before because most of them I think I love probably.

C

Connie Solera 18:52

So I have this in my retreats. Right? So in my retreats, I have this little game I would do sometimes where I have this huge stack of calendar pictures. They're like of art. They're like those, you know, those calendars where every day you pick off a new little piece of paper,

E

Elle Billing 19:09

Yeah, the page a day calendar.

⦿

19:10

Yeah, so this this calendar was like a two year calendar and it had art on each side, like the masters are from all different museums. And I would bring this big thing with me and I would do this little game or I would put all the art on the table. And I would say to my painters, okay, the museum is on fire. You can only grab four paintings go, you got three seconds, you know, like and everybody's like vultures running around and looking looking looking grabbing stuff. And at the end of this little exercise in it, always, always, always, every time I've done it, it's amazing. They'll take their they'll take the pieces they grabbed, and they'll put it next to the art they've been working on. And they're like absolutely the same. They're similar, right? And it's, it's the whole lesson I'm trying to share with them is that we have aesthetic that is naturally ours that we're going to choose it. And the art we like we choose it in, you know, the, the way we go through the world, it's just who we are as artists that it doesn't fail. It never fails that exercise. And I always would ask myself, what would I save if the museum was on fire. And it's not the art pieces, it's the remembrance, that we have this ability to create something from our hands, that communicates what's inside us. And it could, and that, to me is the most important thing I tried to teach my students. And I tried to show them that and that exercise is showing them like you cannot get rid of this, this is so a part of you. And it doesn't matter if you paint, like a master like a quote unquote, master or if you paint, if your neighbors tell you, it looks like a three year old, it doesn't matter. Like you have this incredible gift. That is to create something and receive insight into who you are on a deeper level. And I don't care how clever you can get using AI, it will never ever give you that same experience of, of just making something with our hands. And so that's the thing that I feel I always come back to. And that's what fuels my whole art practice. I've been making art my entire life, I never stopped and I followed paths that were told what I should do as an artist when I was younger, I gained a lot from it. But I also knew when I was in those kind of like we were talking systems that I was like, this, isn't it. This is not this is not what I believe, is art, even though I didn't know what it was. And I'm always seeking that I'm always curious, like, and now I feel more than ever, when I see things that we can't lose our humanity. Like, I can go on I can I can go really Doomsday, or sometimes I get doomsday about it. Now I understand what I mean, I get that way too. Yeah, and I don't want to rest in that area. But I think, you know, it's important to remember humanity. And like you were saying, and rest is resistance book points us so perfectly as we have a lot of conditioning to believe we're machines. And that's not the point of being an artist, in my humble opinion and in my path. And if I guess there was a secret sauce, it's that I keep coming back to that I keep trying to stay true, that I'm human, I'm only here for such a short time. And this is my

experience with being able to be gifted to make art. And to be called to do this, and I want nothing more than to support other artists to that feel that same way that that get that there's something more and all of the things like my livelihood, and security and all of that stuff. The more I follow that truth of my own, the more I got in alignment with my livelihood with providing provisions, all of those things, it became less of a machine and more of the wonder, believe it or not, that the more I get in alignment, the more I'm always amazed that I'm able to keep things afloat. You know, like, Wow, that's amazing that it works this way. And I don't think it's me. I don't think it's just me, I think it's that connection we have to creativity to something larger than ourselves and into our creative practice.

E

Elle Billing 23:56

Yeah, when you said the word wonder it like ping in my head so loud. In addition to like the humaneness and humanity of your art does wonder and wonderment are things that I also associate with you and your artistic practice. For two really big reasons. One is the story of like all your green paintings when you were in college, how you like, you bet you bet you painted a bunch of green paintings, and then you would like surround yourself with them and just like soak yourself in green, which I think is just the coolest. It's like such a like, I am obsessed with this color. I'm gonna do everything possible I can with it. It's just a curiosity and wonderment and it's it's a very human thing. Yeah. And very connected to that when you did the mono palette series last year. Prussian blue, like dark blue. Payne's gray are two of my favorite colors. And when mono palette moved on to other colors, I stayed with Prussian blue



25:00

I'm still in prussian blue.

E

Elle Billing 25:02

And I ended up making 37 Prussian blue paintings for my 37th birthday last year. Yes, I just kept going with it. And because of that, like that wonderment and just the geeking out about a particular pigment, and the history of it, and I remember you had talked about Picasso's blue period and the old guitarist. And that's a painting that I really am fascinated with, because of the the painting in the background of it. Like if you look at it from a certain angle, there's the hidden painting and like all of that wonderment and curiosity and the way that we can go down all these rabbit holes when we like, latch on to one little thing. Yeah, in the whole world of art. There's so many things we could pick. But we have this, I think both you and I have this tendency to like pick a thing.

C

Connie Solera 25:57

It scratches.

E

Elle Billing 25:59

It does. Like the body of work that the wedding on right now is something that has been like

it does. Like the body of work that I'm working on right now is something that has been like scratching my head, like the back of my head for five years. I'm like, Okay, fine, I'll do it.

C

Connie Solera 26:09

I know that completely. Oh, and it goes back to Elle, you and I are saying the same. It's like, this is the thing I say everything I do. Love what you love. Like as artists, we're just here to love what we love. And there's like the wall they come up against when I'm working with a lot of my students, not you. But like, a lot of times, I'm sure others will, is like, Oh, I gotta be really good at doing this. And I'm like, Oh, it's so boring. Like, who just wants it? Like, it's already been done? Like, just show me what you love. And that's what I love about like your work is because you get caught in those little loops of like,

E

Elle Billing 26:51

I'm gonna paint troll dolls for a month.

C

Connie Solera 26:54

And I'm like, YES! because that's what we do. When we're at our best as humans. We're loving what we love. You know, we're and then other people that's like to go back to the green paintings. If I may, like,

E

Elle Billing 27:07

oh, please do!

C

Connie Solera 27:08

that was the first. That was a huge lesson I was. I was 19 I think I wasn't even 20 yet. I went to a concert. And I don't even remember the concert. I keep trying to remember but the turned the whole stadium green. And I was like, oh my god, that was the thing. I remember I loved it. And I came home I scraped I put my hand and people's like couches to find whatever change I could like I scraped as much money as possible. And I went to like, it wasn't called Home Depot then but like the hardware store and bought as much green paint. And I made these huge canvases. And I just paint try to recreate these abstract paintings. So I could sit inside it and be in love with the green. And at the time I was going to school. And I remember, like having to do all the things that the art school to be really good at drawing and that and I told my professor I said I am you know, I like it was a side note. And he said bring these in. And I said but if I bring them in, we have to have a room so you can lay down, you know, and he's like, okay, and he did you know, I did that. And he humored me, he was a very serious guy. And he laid down and I was like, do get it. It's an amazing, you know, and you know what, I don't share that much. But I had the sticks, you know, like that you find on the ground. And I even wrap the sticks with all this green fabric. And I was like wearing green and I was like ringing I was like, I don't know what I was doing with the sticks. But I even green stuff has something to

do with it, you know, and I gave him one of the sticks. And I was like, Ah, it's all about the green. And he was so like, moved by my I love the green. He got me a show. I had my very first show by myself before I was even 20 in a gallery. And I went to that gallery open and all they did was like I love the green and then all the paintings sold. And they were all \$800 Do you know how amazing that was? To be that age and to have this money and for my art for why? I just love green? Like it you love I loved what I loved I was inspired by a band that I don't remember that loved what they loved it you know, I mean like, and that has been my-- that has., That has been my whole career path is when I fall out of love with things. There's usually that breaking up point, it's a struggle, and I might be trying to get back and then eventually it's like, fuck it. You know, I found something else. And I and I fall in love with that. And then I just started to learn, especially the last 10 years, it's loving what I love is what has brought me into alignment, brought me success, brought me care, has brought me the most amazing people into my path. And that's what I try to teach and that's that's The human part, right? The human part is always going to be like, we don't understand why Elle specifically loved trolls at that time, you know, like, it's just her thing. But other people can get behind it because there's something infectious about when we talk about it, we can all go Oh, yeah, I remember being at a concert or, yeah, I had trolls, I had a troll on the back of my pencil and 'member you would like, do this with your hands. And I

E

Elle Billing 30:28

can tell you why I was painting trolls. I moved in with my parents two years ago, and I've been helping my mom sort through the hoards, like, there's like all of this stuff. Some of it's mine, a lot of it's my mom's, but it's stuff that goes back 40 years or more in the house, and I opened up a box that had my troll collection from when I was a kid. And I didn't know it was still here. I didn't know I still had. And it was like this rush of memories from the mid 90s. And I was like, Oh my gosh, it's my troll collection. This is so cool. And then I found some of my, there was some old Barbies, and it was, and I was my studio was my old bedroom, from when I was growing up, and it was just all of this stuff, all the stuff. Moving back with your parents, my parents and all this stuff from my childhood and I live really close to a ghost town called buttsVille.

C

Connie Solera 31:23

Oh, my God. No. No,

E

Elle Billing 31:26

and like, when I first got here, my my partner and I went out and took a picture by the Buttzville sign, because you have to take a picture to send all your friends. And I also have two young nieces who think butts are hilarious. So why wouldn't I paint troll dolls?

C

Connie Solera 31:41

Oh, my gosh.

E Elle Billing 31:42

I mean, it was this combination of like, deep nostalgia and like figuring out who am I now that I've come back?

C Connie Solera 31:50

Yeah.

E Elle Billing 31:50

And butts are funny.

C Connie Solera 31:52

Yeah. And this was two years ago? and butts are cute.

E Elle Billing 31:57

I know, and especially trolls, like they're adorable. And I was just trying to, I'm not usually a figurative painter, I'm very abstract. But like, I want to work on my skill of drawing and painting things that are recognizable to other people, because it's nice. And I'm I was really into neon colors for a while, like, let's paint some trolls. And I really loved them.

C Connie Solera 32:19

And I get it, you know? Yeah, gonna share a little this is totally off topic. But it made me think of it is that when I was in school, to get my art education thing I had take like a biology class for some reason, you know, like, in the university, and the teacher put that mannequin on the table. And I was sitting behind it. And you know, they pull out like all these organs and stuff. And they were showing it. And I just couldn't help it, Elle. I just reached over the table. And I grabbed the Butt because it was so juicy looking like that.

E Elle Billing 32:48

Yeah.

C Connie Solera 32:50

And the professor had on like a microphone, and she just stopped. She's like, did you just reach over and grab the butt? And I was like, yeah. the whole class burst out laughing and she was so upset about it. And I said to her, like, she had to talk to her after class. And I was like, it's just it

was right there! It was so juicy! Just a mannequin, you know,

E Elle Billing 33:15
amazing.

C Connie Solera 33:16
Again, I'm always like, I was in so much trouble. Anyways, that's, yeah, yeah.

E Elle Billing 33:23
My sister went to massage school. And

C Connie Solera 33:28
she had a lot of butts.

E Elle Billing 33:29
Well, yes. But she had like a scale size skeleton that she had for learning, like connection points for like muscles and tendons and stuff. And she used to drive a drive around with it in her car into the passenger seat. That's great. My family has a great appreciation for mannequins and skeletons

C Connie Solera 33:55
and trolls!

E Elle Billing 33:56
and trolls and just doing weird things with them.

C Connie Solera 33:58
But so I want to ask you so like, when you painted the trolls, was that two years ago? Like now?

E Elle Billing 34:05
No, it was like, oh, gosh, has it been two years?

C Connie Solera 34:09
Like what year was it?

E Elle Billing 34:11
It might have just been last year. Oh, like I had the-- is that right. Time is weird. I have a really porous relationship with time.

C Connie Solera 34:19
Yeah. Well, because I find it interesting because I think like, you know, nostalgic is a healing thing, too, is little bit, you know, and it's like, there you are caring for others by giving us nostalgia. Do you know what I mean?

E Elle Billing 34:33
It had to have been last year because I moved home June of 2021. And I didn't even have my studio setup till like January.


C Connie Solera 34:40
Oh, so was last year. Yeah, I'm little loopy with time too. Yeah, that's funny. I feel like you've been in my life for a long time. And it's only been like a year. So like, I'm confused with time as well. But there's just an act of care right there. Just to kind of whip it back. Like I'm thinking how sweet That is the trolls.


E Elle Billing 35:02
I have a next stage of the troll paintings planned.


C Connie Solera 35:05
Oh, and you're not gonna tell me you're just gonna tease me with?


E Elle Billing 35:08
No, I'll tell you. Okay, that's fine. We have a few minutes. And we've already kind of covered. The other thing I wanted to talk about, which was love what you love. So we're here. I really like juxtaposition which, like is such an overused word in the art world like don't ever I've been told don't ever put that in your artist statement. Like, I like smashing things together that don't go


together. Yeah, especially. Yeah, because it creates humor. It creates interest. It just it's like alchemy, you get to create something new. I especially like doing it with collage, and zines you remember zines?


 Connie Solera 35:46
Yeah, yeah.

 Elle Billing 35:47
So I have the I really want to add my mom gets People Magazine, and I cut them up when she's done reading them. And I like the idea of making little troll zines, but just as prints. Not not not a wholezine, zine style. But prints. Yes. But like business advice, trolls.

 36:05
Oh my god. Yes. Oh,

 Elle Billing 36:07
like, especially like, now because Millennials are struggling financially in ways that like our parents and grandparents didn't have to contend with. And trolls are like a very millennial Gen X icon. So just the humor of like trolls giving business advice to me is very funny, and very weird. And because they're naked, it's extra. I don't know. Yeah. Well, like I did one mock up. And it was I painted the troll from the back, of course, and it has big juicy butt and then the caption says maximize your bottom line.

 Connie Solera 36:44
Yes, that's great.

 Elle Billing 36:46
So then did some baby trolls. And then I had cut out something from a financial magazine that was talking about retirement, but it's like a baby, talking about your retirement fund and like, don't, don't run out of money. And it's like, but it's, uh, maybe just goofy, just goofy stuff like that.

 Connie Solera 37:02
Yeah, but that's the thing that I this is the thing I love to about your work, Elle, is like, you find it funny, you find it humorous, you find it like cute and sweet. And, and it's that lightness that you love, and you have that amazing humor that I love. But then the reality of it too, is like you just

made a huge heavy duty statement. You know, and that's, you did it in a way without it have to be serious and, you know, high brow and all kinds of you did it in a way that's just human and real. And that's what I love about it. Especially, Yeah, you're good at that. You do that. Like I was just when you were talking I was thinking about your whole combining Shakespeare like you know, you're talking about Shakespeare in our mentorship right next to Disney, you know, soundtracks, like so like there's you're always combining things like that.

E

Elle Billing 37:59

Shakespeare himself was very highbrow lowbrow at the same time. And my best friend talks about how professional wrestling is like modern, modern day Shakespeare. And there's like a bunch of parallels between professional wrestling and Shakespeare. It's like entertainment for the masses. The audience's seated on three sides of the stage. The costumes are really flamboyant. It's staged fighting. that gets rehearsal, the fight the fights are rehearsed in professional wrestling. And in Shakespeare. There's usually a jester or a fool. In the comedies. It's just there's like a lot of a lot of parallels to it. Because in Shak--, like, yes, the Queen went to Shakespeare's plays. But there were also people right at the stage level paid like a penny to get in. And just the Groundlings they just stood and watch the show. And if you didn't entertain them, they would throw rotten food at you. So a lot of Shakespeare's plays had a lot of heightened language but also very bawdy lowbrow humor. So it's that combination that I really appreciate of being highbrow lowbrow at the same time.

C

Connie Solera 39:08

i You do it and it was a very modern and very, like, I want to say intelligent but that's not the word I'm exactly looking for. Even though it is intelligent, but like, I don't know what the word just you see it through a very, like your lens is astute. You know, you know? I can't I'm gonna struggle with trying to explain it.

E

Elle Billing 39:34

I'm weird. Well, it's cool.

C

Connie Solera 39:37

I mean, that's wonderfully weird. I wouldn't label it weird. There's something. It's like kind of like you understand kitsch you understand the power of kitsch. That would put it you know,

E

Elle Billing 39:51

cool. Well, thank you.

C

Connie Solera 39:52

Yeah. I adore ya, thank you. I could, we could go for another hour and I'll just tell everybody how much I appreciate and love Elle i Um,

E Elle Billing 40:01

I could say how much I love and appreciate Connie. Oh, I'm so glad you're here. Thank you. Are we done? We're done. We're pretty close. Yeah. So before we go, is there anything else? Anything else you're loving right now since we talked so much about love what you love? Is there anything else that you're really loving right now?

C Connie Solera 40:16

Oh my gosh, I just did my own check in in B.O.W.. And I shared that I am loving cardboard.

E Elle Billing 40:25

RIGHT?

C Connie Solera 40:25

Yeah, yes. Oh,

E Elle Billing 40:27

I got rid of so much cardboard when I moved because I had been like storing it up. I'm like, I'm gonna use this for something. And I'm like, I'm not gonna just haul a stash of cardboard across the country. Yeah, there's more where this came from. So now I'm building up my my stash again.

C Connie Solera 40:45

Oh my gosh, well, I last year, I thought I was in love with cardboard and it didn't last. And then it came back. So those are the best kind of loves too when it's like we tried it earlier. But now it's really the fires are burning. So

E Elle Billing 40:59

didn't you and Phoenix do a huge mural on a big piece of cardboard or a refrigerator box

C Connie Solera 41:05

Yes. We had well, I put the I would have in my old studio was in an apartment. And I would I like

to paint on the wall. And so I would cardboard the entire wall so that I could just tack things on the wall and not worry about getting the wall messed up because it was in an apartment. Yeah. And so then it was during COVID lockdowns, me and Phoenix I've said let's paint it because I hadn't used that wall in forever. And so me and him made a huge mural on that. And then when we moved into where I live, now we took it apart. And so there's parts of it in my studio on different walls. It's not all one wall. Yeah. Yeah, I forgot about that. Thank you for reminding me. So that cardboard and I go back and we're like, you know, we fall in love. We fall out we fall in love or not work now we're on again. So well. Yeah.

E Elle Billing 41:58

I'm excited to read what you wrote about cardboard. I'm excited to read what you wrote this week to what did you share? Did you share your paintings? I shared my secret paintings.

C Connie Solera 42:07

Okay, good. That's another thing Elle does. She leaves you hanging for a long time?

E Elle Billing 42:15

Like, oh, I'm not done yet. They're still percolating.

C Connie Solera 42:17

Yeah, that's good. That's what we're supposed to do. Sweet. Oh, yeah.

E Elle Billing 42:21

All right. Well, thank you for being here. I really appreciated the conversation. You're great.

 42:25

You're great, too. I love it. Thank you. Have a great week. You too. Bye, everyone. Thank you.

E Elle Billing 42:36

Thank you for joining us on this episode of Hoorf. To view the complete show notes and all the links mentioned in today's episode, or to get a full transcript of the episode, visit hoorf.com. That's H O O R F [podcast.com](https://hoorf.com). Before you go, make sure you subscribe to the podcast so you can receive new episodes right when they're released. And if you're enjoying our podcast, I'd love to have you leave us a review in Apple podcasts. Reviews are one of the major ways that Apple ranks their podcasts. So even though it only takes you a few seconds, it really does make a difference for us. Become a patron for \$3 a month you can support the

creation of this podcast, pay my editor and join a community of fellow caregivers out here just doing our best. Thank you again for joining me Elle Billing in this episode of Hoorf. Until next time, be excellent to each other. Hoorf is hosted by Elle Billing at elle and wink audio editing by Ricki Cummings at rickip00h music composed by Ricki Cummings Hoorf is a production of Elle & Wink Art Studio all rights reserved. Hoorf podcast can be found on social media channels at Hoorf podcast at H O O R F podcast.