

Time, Cold Pizza and the Apocalypse

Audio Transcript

Intro: Welcome to the James Castle House Community Chats. In this series of short recorded interviews, James Castle House residents engage in one-on-one conversations with members of our community.

Through our residency program, emerging and mid-career artists, scholars, and professionals are invited to live and work on site at the historic home of James Castle, taking inspiration from their experience to create a body of new works.

Our current resident, Eric Follett, is a writer and linguist who uses his work to explore the ways in which we, as communities and individuals, interact with our landscape. This week, Eric chats with Cultural Sites Education and Outreach Coordinator Makenzi Dunstan about time, cold pizza, and the apocalypse.

M: Hi Eric, how are you today?

E: Yeah, I'm doing good. Tuesday is my shopping day, so I just went out and did my shopping and got a pizza and so I'm sort of, sort of on top of the world right now.

M: Yeah, that was lunch?

E: Yeah. Lunch, dinner, and then lunch, dinner for the next probably day and a half also.

M: I like it. You really can't go wrong with pizza, right? It never gets old.

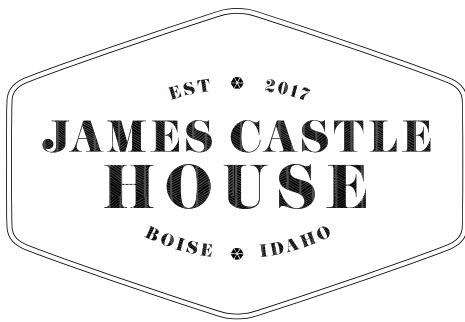
E: I like, yeah, I could literally eat pizza every meal every day and be happy.

M: Amen. I think it's like the best breakfast food. Personally.

E: Yeah, absolutely.

M: But, do you heat up your pizza or do you eat it cold?





E: I go through phases. Usually I'll just eat it cold. I do genuinely like cold pizza, but last week I heated up all my leftovers. So, I try to give myself the freedom to explore. But, yeah. Usually cold.

M: I mean I guess when it's heated up, I guess it's kind of like you're getting that warm meal. You know, something fresh, versus just like shoveling in cold pizza. But that's how I prefer to do it.

E: Yeah. The cold, you do?

M: Yeah. My husband thinks I'm disgusting because I love cold pizza, but whatever, it's delicious.

E: Yeah. It is delicious, and I've learned sort of over the years that that's like a pretty divisive topic. Some people really feel strongly against the cold pizza, which I don't get. It was always just how I did the leftover. I think we're in the right.

M: I just think those are not very open-minded people, right?

E: Yeah, they have a lot of growing to do still.

M: Definitely. Well, hey. I was thinking about one of like the first conversations that we had back when you arrived like 10 years ago. Whenever that was.

E: Yeah, right?

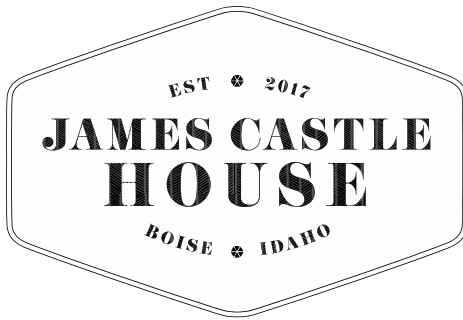
M: And we were just talking a lot about your travels and what you do for work and even I think one of our second or third conversations was about your interest in going to Alaska or doing some more traveling after your residency was completed.

E: Yeah.

M: So, I've been wondering, you live a pretty nomadic life. At least that's my view.

E: Yeah.





M: So, what is it like being kind of settled in one place for 10 weeks and counting, like what's been challenging, what's been really enjoyable, what's been in between?

E: Yeah, that's actually something I've been thinking about quite a bit lately. And you know, I sort of keep notebooks sort of things I'm reading and thinking about and little ideas, but not so good just like record keeping, you know like journal or diary type stuff. And I've been going through all my old notebooks and I've been wishing that I had kept a better record of kind of my day-to-day movements, because I'm pretty sure that this is the longest time I've ever stayed in one place. And early in my residency, I went up to Garden Valley a couple of times.

M: Uh-huh.

E: And then I drove up to Placerville just before the stay at home order. But, besides that, you know I haven't left the Boise area since February 5th. And I want to say that that's the longest time I've spent in such a small area in at least a decade, probably. Basically since, you know, high school in the early 2000's.

M: Wow.

E: So, it's basically been really bizarre and especially passing through this time, where you know, sort of time is extending and compressing. You know, March felt like it took forever and we're almost through April already, and that feeling of kind of weirdness of time.

M: Yeah.

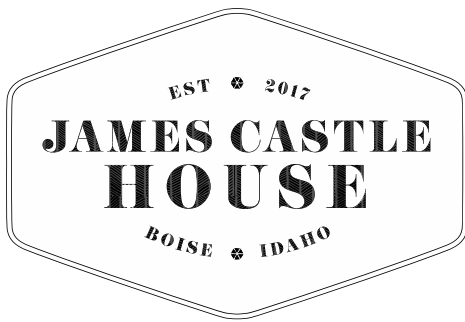
E: But overall, it's been nice. Yeah, I have sort of leaned into the restlessness and moving around and ended up working a job where I'm on the road all the time and it works for me and I like it. I like to see new things, and I really like just being on the highway and kind of watching the land go by.

M: Uh-huh.

E: But that also gets very tiring, you know?

M: Yeah.





E: And so, I was sort of due for a little rest period. And so this has kind of turned into...um...

M: A nice retreat?

E: Yeah, absolutely a nice retreat, and just sort of a retreat to a scale that I had not envisioned. You know, because I did have during my time here a couple of other things, like I wanted to drive down through the Owyhee Country a little bit, and I was going to spend, you know, maybe like a day every week up in Garden Valley, and I sort of had this plan for moving around within the southwestern Idaho region. And even that, you know, sort of screeched to a halt. And so it went from, you know, traveling across most of the country for most of the last eight or nine years to, you know, almost this kind of two block radius.

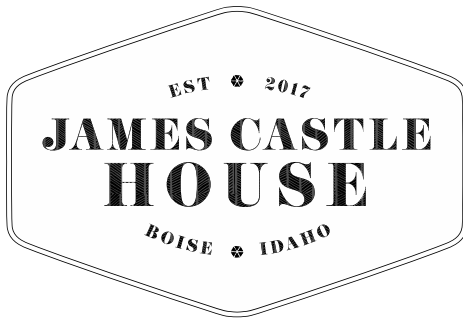
M: Uh-huh.

E: So yeah, overall it's been, it's been really good. There's been like some strains about it I guess. I sort of start dreaming about traveling and, and not knowing, you know, when to make plans to go and what to look forward to and that kind of thing. So yeah, it's been sort of a whole new opposite, and for many people. I think this is true even if, you know, they weren't on the road all the time. Even just running their errands or two errands everyday, you know, we're kind of all trying to navigate this new sort of smaller space that we're inhabiting.

M: Yeah. So, you were talking about time, how time is feeling right now. That was actually one of my questions is like, how are you experiencing time right now, or has it shifted? Has it kind of remained the same? Do you feel like you're in a black hole? What's happening with your experience with time?

E: Yeah, there's definitely a black hole aspect to it. At the same time, you know, early on here I noticed out on Elmer Street and Pierce Park, there's this house with a very beautiful garden. There's a European Weeping Larch planted there. You know, larches are these conifers that are also deciduous, so it was bare at the time. And so every day I've been going to kind of watch the progression of the growth, and curiously, the needles actually sprouted on Saint Patrick's Day. But so yeah, whereas like the days have sort of become all blended together, you know from very early on here I was sort of in the habit, I had these kind of landmarks of growth and





development that I was going to see and I still go to see. So, the days all blend together, but at the same time I feel like I'm experiencing pretty strongly sort of the progression of the season.

M: Yeah.

E: You know, watching the trees bloom and the flowers bloom, and kind of staking my claim on certain trees and like checking up on them every day. And I think that's been, you know, I didn't plan on that being sort of an anchor in terms of my experience of time, I had sort of just latched onto them anyways. But they've become very important in that sense of kind of experiencing the flow of time where maybe other landmarks of weekends and workdays and all of that stuff is sort of gone.

M: Yeah, the normal things that used to keep the pace of our life don't really exist in the same form anymore.

E: Right? Yeah.

M: I would think your hair is getting pretty long too, if that's the measurement of time, length of hair.

E: Absolutely. Yeah, I came in buzzed. So, this is like my little own personal dendrochronology here.

M: Yeah. Soon you'll be ponytail status.

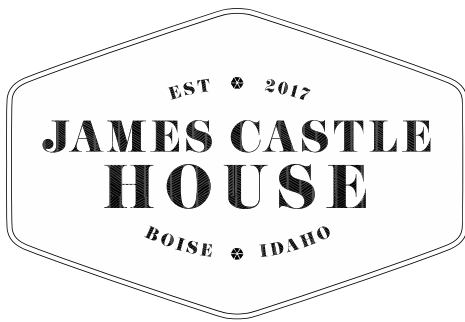
E: Yeah, seriously.

M: That's how you'll leave the Castle House, just with two Willie Nelson braids. That's the goal.

E: That would be lovely, yeah.

M: So, I'm wondering—because you're largely, I mean, you're doing some visual work. You're also writing a lot of different kind of stuff while you've been here at the house. Do you listen to anything when you're working, or do you prefer silence, or what do you like?





E: Yeah, I do silence, I have found. And this is something that I've sort of changed over the years. I used to, you know, listen to any kind of music while I was reading or studying or working, and I sort of lost the ability to like maintain that dual track in my mind.

M: Uh-huh.

E: So, to the point of it I'm listening to something, then I'm listening to something. And if I'm working, I'm working, you know? And they both kind of become distractions for each other, and so...there are certain mechanical tasks, when I was working on the series of erasure poems and I just had a lot of cutting and gluing to do, you know, I could put something on. You know, I've been listening to a lot of Shostakovich, a lot of Bob Dylan.

M: Nice.

E: I could do something like that, but if it's any sort of creative or anything that involves me focusing or thinking, yeah, it's silence.

M: Yeah, awesome. I just have one more question right now.

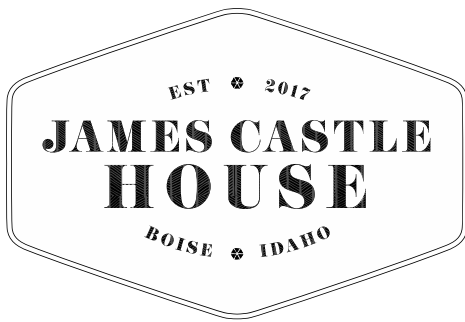
E: Okay.

M: So, the last time I saw you in person, you had a bunch of different folders our that had your kind of different ideas and curiosities in them. And I'm wondering, have those folders minimized, expanded, like what's happening with all the ideas that you started with?

E: Yeah. So, some of them have definitely just been kind of put aside. You know, one thing that the folders were doing was also keeping track of my different versions of Woodsmoke, which was the collection that I was using to make erasure poems from, and I've stepped away from the erasure poems. Kind of finished this bigger project that I started there. So, those have all been put aside. Some of the linguistics ideas have sort of been put aside, but some of the earliest ones that I started have come back, you know, and those are the ones that I'm cycling through. So, there's kind of been like a weird rhythm established between, you know, working with a handful of them and not touching others, and then those get pushed aside and I move through to the ones that had been on the back burner.

M: Yeah.





E: So, yeah, it's been uh...I'm never necessarily all that organized, but for some reason, here, I just got myself really well-organized right at the beginning.

M: Yeah, you had a great folder system.

E: Yeah, yeah, and I've kind of been riding that up until now. So, yeah, grateful for accidentally having done the right thing.

M: Yeah. Well, thank you for your time today, and for recording this call. So nice to see you.

E: Yeah, good to see you as well.

M: Sad we didn't get to cross paths more regularly before the apocalypse.

E: Yeah, who knew? We should have made more of an effort, but...

M: Who knew. It's okay. We'll party when it's all over.

E: Yeah. And that will be a lovely party.

M: It will.

