Interview of Mireille Delisme by Nicolas Andre

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| Nik: Bonswa, Mireille.  Mireille Delisme: Bonswa, Msye.  Nik: Mwen se Nik.  Mireille: Bonswa, Nik.  Nik: Epi se Liesl. Mireille, èske ou ka di m  tout non w?  Mireille: Delisme, Mireille.    Nik: Se Delisme, Mireille. Oke Mireille, travay sa yo, se ou ki fè yo, pa vre? Travay sa yo, kijan w rele yo?  Mireille: Drapo Vodou.  Nik: Drapo Vodou. Lè w fè drapo Vodou,  pou kisa? Kisa w fè avè l?  Mireille: Mwen fè drapo Vodou pou moun ki enterese de li, gen moun ki achte l. Gen moun ki achte l pou sèvi, kòm si moun ki sèvi yo a. Konsa gen moun ki achte l pou bèlte l, pou yo mete l  lakay yo.  Nik: Ou fè drapo, men m wè ou fè lòt bagay tou, sanble ki pa drapo.  Mireille: Wi, m fè pòt monnen, m fè valiz. M fè boutèy.  Nik: Gen anpil moun ki achte sa?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Drapo yo, gen anpil moun ki achte  yo?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Ki kote, an jeneral, ki kote ou vann  drapo yo?  Mireille: M vann drapo yo tout kote. M vann nan galri Petion-ville, m vann lakay mwen, m vann Nouyòk, m vann Miami. M fè machann entènasyonal.  Nik: Men, ki kliyan ki plis achte yo?  Mireille: Entènasyonal.    Nik: Entènasyonal. Drapo Vodou se bagay ki ta ka enterese anpil moun ki ap sèvi nan peristil  pa egzanp, ou pa gen anpil kontak ak  peristil?  Mireille: Peristil yo p ap achte l paske yo p ap depanse pou sa. Paske si w fè yon travay, yo p ap regle l ba w dis kòb pou li. Travay la gen dwa koute w de, twa mil dola pou li, yo menm, yo p ap regle l ba w yon kat, senk san dola pou li. Se pa tout gangan ki sèvi avèk yo paske se pa tout gangan k ap envèsti kòb yo ladan l. Konsa, gen gangan k ap achte l. E pa tout.    Nik: Lè w ap fè drapo Vodou, kisa w fè  ladan l ki fè w rele l drapo Vodou?  Mireille: Men senbòl. Desen m fè yo, se senbòl Vodou l ye. Paske tout sa yo, tankou tout desen sa yo, tout se desen vèvè. Tout sa w wè sou kad la, tout se pati vèvè yo ye.  Nik: Sa se vèvè?  Mireille: Sa se vèvè.  Nik: Ki vèvè sa ye la?  Mireille: Sa se vèvè Kafou egzak.  Nik: Oke, men, kijan ou fè travay sa? Ou ka esplike nou kijan l kòmanse, kijan l fini yon vèvè konsa w ap fè?  Mireille: Ou trase, ou mete twal la sou kad, ou trase desen an anvan paske yon lwa gen vent e en vèvè, ou gen dwa deside di nan vent e en vèvè, se vèvè Kafou a m ap fè. Kounya ou mete twal la sou kad, ou trase vèvè a, lèfini, tankou bidz sa m montre w la, w achte l tou grennen, fòk ou file l anvan pou w mete l sou twal la. Ou file grenn nan lan fil, lèfini pou w file l pou w travay nan kad la.  Nik: Ou di yon lwa gen vent e en vèvè?  Mireille: Wi, yon lwa gen vent e en vèvè, ou gen dwa chwazi fè yon vèvè.    Nik: Pou yon sèl lwa, gen vent e en?    Mireille: Wi.    Nik: Sa enteresan. Konbyen lwa ki genyen konsa?  Mireille: Gen san en lwa.  Nik: Avèk chak lwa gen vent e en vèvè?  Mireille: Vent e en vèvè.  Nik: San en fwa vent e en vève ki genyen. Oke, men gen yon bagay mwen remake lè w ekri non w, anba yon travay, yon drapo w fè, kijan ou siyen egzakteman? Kijan w siyen non w lè w ekri li?  Mireille: Pandan travay la sou kad la, ou ekri non w a lanvè konsa.  Nik: Men, ou menm, ki non ou mete?  Mireille: M mete non pa m paske m pa mete non vèvè a. Sa k fè m siyen non m, gen anpil moun ki fè travay la,si w pa siyen non w sou travay la,  ou gen dwa gen yon kliyan ki bezwen w ki pa ka jwenn ou. Men, si kliyan jwenn travay la, li achte l, li jwenn non w, li gen dwa al nan nenpòt galri,  li mande pou non atis la, epitou y ap ba nimero atis la, y ap rele l. Men, si non w pa sou  travay la…  Nik: Gen kote ou mete “M.D.,” gen kote ou mete “M Delisme”.  Mireille: Non, gen kote m mete “M.D” sa vle di  Mireille Delisme. Men m pa siyen travay pou  “Delisme”, m siyen yo “Delice” paske “Delice” la se non vanyan atis la.  Nik: Aha! Ou pito non vanyan an?  Mireille: Wi, sa se non vanyan atis la, e Delice.  Nik: Men si moun rele w Mireille Delice, sa pa fè anyen?  Mireille: Wi, pa gen pwoblèm.  Nik: Depi ki lè ou kòmanse ap fè drapo? Drapo Vodou?  Mireille: M kòmanse fè drapo Vodou lan ‘90.  Nik: Depi an ‘90?  Mireille: Men, m kòmanse, mwen te aprann travay la depi an ‘86.  Nik: Kijan w te fè aprann li?  Mireille: Yon kouzin mwen ki te montre m fè l. Li t ap travay nan faktori. li montre m fè l.  Nik: Oke. Men kisa… se travay sa w fè oubyen ou gen lòt bagay ou fè aprè sa?  Mireille: Sa sèlman m fè.  Nik: Sa sèlman?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: E se yon bagay ki byen mache paske ou di mwen sou plan entènasyonal moun plis achte li nan men w toujou.  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Ni drapo, ni bous, ni pòt monnen?  Mireille: Ni bous, wi.  Nik: Oke, mwen wè boutèy ou gen boutèy sa yo.  Kisa yo itil, yo menm?  Mireille: Boutèy la ou ka sèvi l, ou mete nenpòt bwason ladan n. Ou ka mete nenpòt bwason ladan n ou bwè.  Nik: Ou mete nenpòt bagay ladan n?  Mireille: Wi, paske boutèy la anvan nou fè l, nou lave l, lèfini nou chode l.  Nik: Sa se…?  Mireille: Boutèy Wonm.  Nik: Boutèy Babancourt?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Si m achte Babancourt, m bezwen mete l lan bèl boutèy…?  Mireille: W ap debouche l ou vide l ladan n.  Nik: Gen anpil moun ki achte sa tou?  Mireille: Wi, sa anpil moun achte l.  Nik: Men, se plis moun ki gen rapò avèk Vodou ki achte l?  Mireille: Non, boutèy la, nenpòt moun achte l. Paske boutèy la pa gen rapò ak Vodou. Paske ou wè nou pa met vèvè sou li, nou mete jisman  desen. Sa vle di nenpòt moun ka sèvi ak li.  Nik: Oke, an n retounen sou lè w konmanse fè bagay sa yo. Se lakay ou ou te toujou travay?  Mireille: Lè m te aprann, m te travay nan  faktori nan ’86. Kounya, an ’90 faktori vin fèmen, kounya lè faktori fèmen…  Nik: Lè w t ap travay nan faktori, ou te konn fè travay sa yo pou faktori?  Mireille: Pou faktori, men nou pa t konn fè drapo, nou te konn pele rad maryaj.  Nik: Sa vle di nou pa t konn fè drapo Vodou…?  Mireille: Non, nou te konn pele rad maryaj. Tankou aletranje voye pou n fini, nou menm nou pele yo, nou voye yo ale.  Nik: Men, kounya se sa sèlman w fè?  Mireille: Sa sèlman m fè paske faktori te vin fèmen. Lè fakori vin fèmenm m di m  p ap chita m pa fè anyen, m […],  m fè drapo.  Nik: Epi, nou fè li, nou jwenn kontak, nou vann yo?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Bagay m t ap mande w ankò, anvan tranbleman tè a, avèk apre tranbleman tè a vin pase, ki chanjman ki vin genyen nan travay ou fè oubyen nan ekonomi ou genyen?  Mireille: Vin gen yon chanjman paske apre tranbleman tè a vin gen anpil moun ki enterese…  Nik: Se vre?  Mireille: …paske gen plis moun ki vin enterese sou pwodwi atizana ke anvan tranbleman tè a.  Nik: Sa se yon travay atizana men ki gen yon pati atistik ladann tou paske fòk ou fè desen an anvan ou pele li men, desen yo. Ou se desinatè  tou, pa vre?  Mireille: Pa tèlman, men vèvè sèlman, m ka fè vèvè.  Nik: Ou ka fè vèvè, men si pou w fè pa egzanp, desen yon lwa?  Mireille: Si pou m fè desen yon lwa konsa, m pa kapab.  Nik: Men, ou gen atis ki fè li?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Epi, ou menm ou pele?  Mireille: mwen menm, mwen pele  Nik: Men, lè w fè li konsa avèk atis la, èske travay ki fèt la li pou nou de, oubyen travay ki fèt la li pou ou epi ou paye atis la?  Mireille: M paye atis la pou trase l pou mwen.  Nik: Sa vle di ou toujou kenbe zèv ou kòm  zèv pa w?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Men kijan ou… paske ou fè desen vèvè,  pa vre, avèk tout bagay ki gen avèk rapò Vodou, men nan kad bagay atis, atizana, atis fòm, atistik, kijan ou konprann moun ayisyen, an jeneral? Kisa w panse yo konprann nan travay atis? Fòm, tout fòm trase, èske se yon bagay ki matche avèk fason moun yo menm, yo wè travay sa yo rele atizana, atis, travay atistik?  Mireille: Wi, li matche avè l paske yo enterese de yo. Depi se yon moun ki nan domenn lan, yo tout toujou apresye tout travay moun fè. M pa konn pou lòt atizan, men, tout travay mwen…  Nik: Ou menm, ou te di mwen, gen moun yo pa vle achte tankou nan peristil yo, se paske yo pa gen lajan se pa paske yo pa…  Mireille: Lajan, yo p ap achte l chè, tankou si w di yo w ap fè yo kado, y ap pran n, y ap kontan pran n. Men yo p ap achte l, paske m gen plizyè k ap mande m, sa tankou m rekonèt k ap di m “Mireille, ou ta fè yon drapo fè m kado, m ta met nan peristil la” men yo p ap depanse.  Nik: Ou konn fè yo kado?  Mireille: Genyen m fè yo kado, genyen m fè yo kado.  Nik: Ou vle di mwen apre tranbleman tè a, travay la vin pi enteresan?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Ou vann plis, ni bous, ni drapo?  Mireille: Ni bous, wi.  Nik: Men, kisa, dapre ou, ki esplike  sa?  Mireille: Sa k esplike sa… mwen menm, mwen panse paske tout dega sa yo fèt nan peyi a, lèfini yo vin wè tou, atizana kapab rekonstwi peyi a, rebati peyi a. Paske lè w ap gade nan atizana, li gen anpil bagay dèyè l si yo te ankadre atizan ki te ka fè l. Se paske nou pa ankadre atizan se sa k fè gen anpil bagay ki pa fèt nan atizana. Men se yon gwo pwojè pou atizana ki kapab ede peyi a.  Nik: Ou konn anpil lòt moun ki travay nan menm domenn sa?  Mireille: Anpil, anpil.  Nik: Yo fè drapo vèvè, tou?  Mireille: Tout kalite.  Nik: Men, yo fè lòt bagay tou apre  drapo a?  Mireille: Apre drapo a? Wi, yo fè bous tou, se pa tout ki fè boutèy, sèlman.  Nik: Oke, men bous ou yo, èske se bous pou moun ki enterese nan Vodou, oubyen se bous jeneral?  Mireille: Non, non. Nenpòt moun sèvi ak yo, nenpòt moun sevi ak yo.  Nik: Men, desen sa, se yon vèvè?  Mireille: Wi, li yon vèvè pou moun ki konnen l, men pou moun ki pa konnen l, li pa vèvè. E pa vre?  Msye: Genyen m fè senp ladan yo.    Mireille: Genyen ki senp, men si moun nan konnen, se vèvè, men si yo pa konnen…  Msye: Gen moun tou ki senpleman pa konnen l, li achte l pou design la.  Nik: Yo renmen desen an?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Men ou pa fè ki pa, fè lòt ki pa gen  vèvè?  Mireille: Ou pa gen san vèvè la?  Nik: Men, ou konn fè lòt ki pa gen vèvè?  Mireille: Wi, san vèvè  Msye:M genyen k pa gen vèvè, yon papiyon. Apre sa m pa gen sa ki pa gen vèvè.  Nik: Men, ou di m yo achte yo?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Men, ou fè yon bous konsa, konbyen kòb ou panse ou ka depanse, pou fè yon bous konsa?  Mireille: […] Pou konbyen ou fè bous sa?  Msye:Pou fè yon bous konsa, m ka depanse  45 dola ak 50 dola. Yon grenn, wi.  Nik: Ou ka repete li?  Mireille: 45 dola ak 50 dola, ayisyen. Pou fè yon grenn.  Nik: Pou fè youn konsa?  Mireille: Wi, pou fè youn.  Nik: Si yon moun ap achte sa, pou yo oblije depanse plis pase sa pou w k ab… ?  Msye:Wi, paske lè w fin achte l w ap peye… lè w fin achte materyèl la, fò w peye fè l.  Alò nou pa met men ouvriye a ladan l.  Nik: E drapo a?  Mireille: Tankou…?  Nik: Tankou yon drapo konsa?  Mireille: Tankou m gen yon drapo konsa, m ap depanse 400 dola pou m fè l.  Nik: Ou konn fè drapo ki pi gwo pase  sa?  Mireille: Wi. M fè 60 pa 40. M  fè gwo drapo ki longè bò kay sa.  Sa se de li ye, m konn fè sa  yon sèl.  Nik: Pale nou de ekspozisyon ou pral fè  Santa Fe.  Mireille: M pral nan ekspozisyon Santa Fe a. Kòm se premye fwa m ap patisipe. M konn patisipe Wachintonn, men pou Santa Fe, se premye fwa m ap patisipe. M pa konn kijan sa ap vini pou mwen, paske m voye 125 pyès.  Nik: 125 pyès. Drapo?  Mireille: Drapo sèlman m voye m poko…  Nik: Drapo sèlman?  Mireille: Drapo sèlman.  Nik: Ou gen lòt bagay ou prale…?  Mireille: Lè mwen menm m prale, m pral avèk bous avèk valiz. Men, pou drapo, m voye 125 pyès.  Nik: Nan ekspozisyon ou patisipe deja, ou konn… ou prezante tout kalite pyès?  Mireille: Tout kalite, m vann.  Nik: Men, an jeneral ladan yo, ou toujou siyen non vanyan w?  Mireille: Wi. Wi, m toujou siyen non  vanyan m.  Nik: E lè w mete “M.D.”, nan ki kad ou mete “M.D.”?  Mireille: “M.D.”, M pwen D, sa vle di Mireille Delis.  Nik: Èske w pa chwazi se tèl zèv paske sa m pa pral vann li?  Mireille: Non, m pa mete non travay la sou li, paske se pa tout kliyan ki renmen lè w siyen non travay la sou li…sa se pa pou mwen, sa pou yon lòt, “Lafontant”.  Nik: Yon lòt moun ki fè li.  Mireille: Sa se yon lòt atis.  Nik: Dènye bagay m ap mande w, pou m pa kenbe twòp tan w nèt, ou gen… nan travay sa, ou gen anpil moun ki ede w avèk li?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Travay atizana w ap fè?  Mireille: Wi. E nou 7 moun k ap travay la. Se atelye a ki gentan lage.  Nik: Atelye a, o. Moun yo gentan ale?  Mireille: Moun yo gentan ale.  Nik: Men, an jeneral se nou 7 moun k ap fè travay konsa?  Mireille: 7 moun k ap fè travay.  Nik: Anvan sa, ou te toujou gen tout  moun sa yo?  Mireille: Non.  Nik: Kijan w te kòmanse, pou kont ou?  Mireille: M te kòmanse pou kont mwen. Lè...m kòmanse pou kont mwen, aprè sa, mwen pran yon moun, m pran de moun, m pran twa moun, aprè douz janvye m pran rès moun yo.  Nik: Moun ou pran yo, se ou k fòme yo, oubyen ou jwenn moun ki deja  konnen?  Mireille: Non, yo deja konnen.  Nik: Yo deja konnen li, epi yo jis vin travay avèk ou?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Men, ou pa fòme nouvo moun nan domenn nan?  Mireille: Yo pa vle. Tout moun m ta vle fòme, yo pa vle. Yo di yo p ap chita fè travay sa,  se travay ti granmoun, se travay… yo pa ka chita.  Nik: Li mande anpil pasyans?  Mireille: Li mande pasyans vre. Li mande anpil pasyans.  Nik: Men, ou pa gen okènn pwojè fòme, menm si se pa… ou pa ta rele l lekòl, ou ta gen yon ti sant kote w fòme moun?  Mireille: Se yon pwojè n ap travay la, epitou m rele li. Li pa t la, non, li t al travay sou pwojè a.  Kounya m rele l, li kouri vini. Se yon pwojè n ap travay.  Msye:Nou ta vle montre enpe timoun, fòme enpe timoun nan domenn nan.  Nik: Nou ta eseye jwenn anpil timoun, timoun nou vle fòme?  Mireille: Wi.  Nik: Oke.  Msye:N ap mete pwojè a devan yo, men gen timoun ki vle.  Nik: Oke, mèsi anpil, Mireille.  Mireille: Mwen menm ki pou di w mèsi.  Nik: M swete w travay la kontinye, epi m swete w bonn chans tou pou ekspozisyon w k ap kòmanse 2 Jiyè, se sa?  Mireille: Mèsi. 2 Jiyè.  Nik: Santa Fe.  Mireille: L ap fini 11 Jiyè.  Nik: M ta swete tou ou fòme nouvo moun, pou w pran elèv.  Mireille: N ap travay pou sa. | Nick: Good afternoon, Mireille  Mireille Delisme: Good afternoon, sir.  Nick: My name is Nick.  Mireille: Good afternoon, Nick.  Nick: And this is Liesl. Mireille, can you tell me your full name?  Mireille: Delisme, Mireille.  Nick: It’s Delisme, Mireille. Okay Mireille, these works, you’re the one who made them, right? These works, what do you call them?  Mireille: Vodou flags.  Nick: Vodou flags. Why do you make them? What do you do with them?  Mireille: I make Vodou flags for those who are interested in them; there are people who buy them. There are people who buy them to serve the spirits; [they are] for the people who serve. Then there are people who buy them for their beauty, so they can hang them in their homes.    Nick: You make flags, but I see you make other things, too, that appear not to be flags.  Mireille: Yes, I make purses, I make handbags. I make bottles.  Nick: Are there a lot of people who buy these?  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: The flags, there are a lot of people who buy them?    Mireille: Yes.  Nick: Where, in general, where do you sell the flags?  Mireille: I sell the flags everywhere. I sell in art galleries in Petion-ville, I sell them at my house, I sell in New York, I sell in Miami. I sell them internationally.    Nick: But, which clients buy them the most?  Mireille: International ones.  Nick: International. Vodou flags are something that may interest many people who serve the spirits in peristyles [Vodou temples], for example. Do you have a lot of contact with peristyles?    Mireille: Peristyles [Vodou temples] won’t buy them because they won’t spend the money. Because if you do the work, they won’t arrange to have the money [available] for [the purchase]. The job may have cost you two, three thousand [Haitian] dollars to make but they won’t even arrange to give you four, five hundred [Haitian] dollars for it. Not every *gangan* [Vodou priest] uses them because not every *gangan* [Vodou priest] will invest their money in it. There are *gangan* [Vodou priests] who will buy them. [But] not all.  Nick: When you make a Vodou flag, what is it exactly that makes it a Vodou flag?  Mireille: There are symbols. The designs I make  are Vodou symbols. Because all these, all these designs, all of them of are *vèvè* designs. All the ones you see on the roof, all of them are parts of *vèvè*.  Nick: This is a *vèvè*?  Mireille: That is a *vèvè*.    Nick: Which *vèvè* is this?  Mireille: That is [the spirit] *Kafou’s* *vèvè* to be exact.  Nick: Okay, but how do you make these works? Can you explain to us how you start, how you finish making a *vèvè* like this?  Mireille: You trace; you put the fabric on a frame, you trace the design first because a *lwa* [spirit] has  twenty one *vèvè*, you can decide, from the twenty one *vèvè*, that it’s the Kafou’s *vèvè* I’m going to make. Now you put the fabric on a frame, you trace the *vèvè*, then, like these beads I’m showing you, you buy them as individual beads, you have to string them beforehand so you can put them on the fabric. You string the beads on a thread; you string them together so you can work in the frame.  Nick: You said one *lwa* has twenty one *vèvè*?  Mireille: Yes, a *lwa* has twenty one *vèvè*, you can choose a *vèvè* to make.  Nick: For a single *lwa*, there’s twenty one?  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: That’s interesting. How many *lwa* are there?  Mireille: There are a hundred and one *lwa*.  Nick: And each *lwa* has twenty one *vèvè*?  Mireille: Twenty one *vèvè*.  Nick: There are one hundred and one times twenty one *vèvè*. Okay. But something I noticed when you write your name under a piece of work, a flag that you made, how do you sign exactly? How do you sign your name when you write it?  Mireille: During the work on the frame, you write your name inside out like this.  Nick: But, what about you, what name do you put?  Mireille: I put my name because I don’t put the name of the *vèvè*. The reason I sign my name is because there are a lot of people who do this work here, if you don’t sign your name on the work,  you might have a client who needs you, who can’t find you. But if the client finds the work, they buy it, they find your name, they can go to any gallery, ask for the artist’s name and they’ll give them the artist’s number, they’ll call you. But, if your name isn’t on the work…  Nick: On some you put “M.D.,” and on some you put “M Delisme.”  Mireille: No, there are places I put “M.D.” that stands for Mireille Delisme. But I don’t sign works with “Delisme,” I sign them “Delice” because “Delice” is my commercial artist nickname.  Nick: Aha! You prefer your commercial name?  Mireille: Yes, it’s the commercial nickname of me as an artist, it’s Delice.  Nick: But if people call you Mireille Delice, it doesn’t matter?  Mireille: Yes, it’s not a problem.  Nick: When did you start making flags? Vodou flags?  Mireille: I started making Vodou flags in ’90.  Nick: Since ’90?  Mireille: But I started, I learned to do the work  beginning in ’86.  Nick: How did you learn it?  Mireille: One of my cousins showed me how to do it. She was working in a factory; she showed me how to do it.  Nick: Okay, but, this is the [only] work you do or do you have other things you do?  Mireille: This is the only thing I do.  Nick: Only this.  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: This is something that is going well for you; you tell me that the clients that buy most from you are international.  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: Including flags, wallets, and purses?  Mireille: Even wallets, yes.  Nick: Okay, I see bottles, you have these bottles.  What purpose do they serve?  Mireille: The bottle, you can use to put any beverage in it. You can put any beverage in it that you drink.  Nick: You can put anything in it?  Mireille: Yes, because the bottle, before we make it, we wash it, then we steam it.  Nick: This is a…?  Mireille: A rum bottle.  Nick: A Babancourt bottle?  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: If I buy some Babancourt, I need to put it in a pretty bottle…?  Mireille: You’ll open it and pour it into the bottle.  Nick: There are a lot of people who buy this too?  Mireille: Yes, a lot of people buy this.  Nick: But, is it mostly people who have an affiliation with Vodou who buy them?  Mireille: No, everyone buys the bottles. Because the bottles don’t have an affiliation with Vodou. You see, we don’t put *vèvè* on them, we simply put designs. This means anyone can use them.  Nick: Okay, let’s return to when you started this work. Did you always work at your house?  Mireille: When I learned, I was working in a factory in ’86, then in ’90 the factory closed, when the factory closed…  Nick: When you were working in a factory, you used to do this work for the factory?  Mireille: For the factory, we didn’t used to make flags, we used to make wedding dresses.  Nick: That means you didn’t used to make Vodou flags…?  Mireille: No, we used to make wedding dresses. People from abroad sent them to us to finish. We assembled them, we sent them back.  Nick: But now this is the only work you do?  Mireille: This is the only work I do because the factory closed. When the factory closed I said I wasn’t going to sit around doing nothing […], I made flags.  Nick: And you make them, you get contacts, you sell them?  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: Something else I was going to ask you was about before the earthquake and after the earthquake…what changes occurred with regards to the work you do or with regards to your financial situation?  Mireille: There has been a change because after the earthquake, many people have become interested…  Nick: Really?  Mireille: …because more people have become interested in handicrafts than before the earthquake.  Nick: This is a piece of craftsmanship but it has an artistic component to it too because you have to make the design before you assemble it. You’re a designer too, right?  Mireille: Not really, but *vèvè*, I can make *vèvè*.  Nick: You can make *vèvè*, but if you need to draw, for example, a design of a *lwa*?  Mireille: If I have to draw a design of a *lwa* like this, I can’t.  Nick: But you have another artist who draws it?  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: And you assemble?  Mireille: Me, I assemble.  Nick: But, when you do it like this, with [another] artist, is the work that’s done for you both or is the work that’s done for you and you pay the artist?  Mireille: I pay the artist to trace it for me.  Nick: That means you always keep your work of art as your work?  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: But how do you…you make *vèvè* designs, right, and things that are affiliated with Vodou, but in the context of artworks, crafts, artforms, the artistic, how do you understand the people of Haiti, in general? What do you think they see in the artwork? The form, all the traced forms, is it something that matches the way people view crafts, art, artistic work?  Mireille: Yes, it matches because they’re interested in it. Whenever it’s someone who’s in the field, they always appreciate all the work people do. I don’t know for other artisans, but all of my work…  Nick: You told me there are people who don’t want to buy, such as those from *peristyles*. It’s because they don’t have money, it’s not because they don’t…  Mireille: Money. They won’t buy it if it’s expensive, but if you tell them you’ll give it to them as a gift, they’ll take it, they’ll happily take it.  But they won’t buy it, I have many people who ask me “Mireille, would you make a flag as a gift for me, I’d put it in the peristyle,” but they won’t spend money.  Nick: Do you give them as gifts to some of them?  Mireille: I give gifts to some of them; I give gifts to some of them.  Nick: You say after the earthquake, the work became more interesting?  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: You sell more, including wallets and flags?  Mireille: Even flags, yes.  Nik: But what, according to you, is the reason for this?  Mireille: What explains this…I think because of all the damage to the country. Also, they’ve come to realize that handicrafts can [help] reconstruct the country, rebuild the country. Because when you look at a handicraft, there are a lot of things behind it [the work]. If they valued handicrafts, a lot could be done. Because we don’t invest in crafts, not much is done to develop artisanal work. However, supporting that can help save the country.  Nick: Do you know a lot of people who work in this field?  Mireille: A lot, a lot.  Nick: They make *vèvè* flags too?  Mirelle: All types.  Nick: But they make other things too other than the flags?  Mireille: Other than the flags? Yes, they make wallets too; not all of them make bottles, only.  Nick: Okay, but the wallets, are they wallets for people interested in Vodou or are they just wallets?  Mireille: No, no. Anyone can use them, anyone can use them.  Nick: But this design, it’s a *vèvè*?  Mireille: Yes, it’s a *vèvè* to the people who recognize it, but for people who don’t know what it is, it’s not a *vèvè*. Isn’t this true?  Man: Some of the ones that I make are simple.  Mireille: Some are simple, but if the person knows, it’s a *vèvè*, but if they don’t know…  Man: There are people who simply don’t know, who buy them for the design.  Nick: They like the design?  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: But you don’t make ones that don’t have *vèvè*?  Mireille: You don’t have any without *vèvè* here?  Nick: But you do make ones that don’t have *vèvè*?  Mireille: Yes, without *vèvè*.  Man:I have one without *vèvè*; a butterfly. Other than this, I don’t have any without *vèvè*.  Nick: But you tell me they buy them?  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: But when you make a wallet like this, how much money do you think it costs you, to make a wallet like this?  Mireille: To make a wallet like this?  Man: To make a wallet like this, I can spend 45 dollars to 50 dollars. For one, yes.  Nick: Can you repeat that?  Mireille: 45 dollars and 50 dollars,  Nick: To make one like this?  Mireille: Yes, to make one.  Nik: If someone buys one, they have to spend more than this so you can…?  Man: Yes, because after you buy one, you have to pay…when you finish buying the material you have to pay to have it made. Thus, we don’t count the labor cost [to make it].  Nick: What about the flag?  Mireille: Like…?  Nick: Like a flag like this?  Mireille: Like a flag like this, I spend 400 dollars to make it.  Nick: Do you make flags that are bigger than this one?  Mireille: Yes. I make ones that are 60 by 40. I make big flags that are the length of the side of this house. These are two; I make single ones that are this size.  Nick: Tell us about the exposition you’re going to have in Santa Fe.  Mireille: I’m going to the Santa Fe exposition. This is the first time I’m participating. I’ve participated in the Washington one, but for Santa Fe, it’s the first time I’m going to participate. I don’t know how this will go for me, but I sent 125 pieces.  Nick: 125 pieces. Flags?  Mireille: I only sent flags, I haven’t sent…  Nick: Only flags?  Mireille: Only flags.  Nick: Do you have other things you’re going to…?  Mireille: When I go myself, I’m going with wallets and purses, but as for flags, I sent 125 pieces.  Nick: In expositions that you’ve participated in already, do you usually present all kinds of pieces?  Mireille: I sell all kinds.  Nick: But, in general, you always sign your commercial name?  Mireille: Yes, yes, I always sign with my commercial nickname.  Nick: when you put “M.D.”, in what frame of your work do you put “M.D.”?  Mireille: “M.D.”, M dot D, that means Mireille Delice.  Nick: Did you not choose [to add your artist name/signature to] this work because you’re not going to sell it?  Mireille: No, I don’t put my [artist] name on the work, because not all clients like when you put your name on it…this one isn’t by me, it’s by someone else, “Lafontant.”  Nick: Someone else made it.  Mireille: This is another artist’s.  Nick: The last thing I’m going to ask you, so I don’t take too much of your time…do you have a lot of people that help you with this work?  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: With the artisanal work that you do?  Mireille: Yes. We have 7 people that work here. The workshop has already closed.  Nick: The workshop. The people left already?  Mirelle: The people left already.  Nick: But, in general it’s the 7 of you who are working like this?  Mireille: 7 people that do this work.  Nick: Before this, did you always have  these people?  Mireille: No.  Nick: How did you start, by yourself?  Mireille: I started by myself. When…I started by myself, after that, I took on one person, I took on two people, I took on three people, after January 12, I took on the rest of the people.  Nick: The people you take on, you’re the one who trains them, or do you take on people who already know [the trade]?  Mireille: No, they already know.  Nick: They already know it and they just come work with you?  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: But you don’t train new people in the field?  Mireille: They don’t want to. All the people I would like to train, they don’t want to. They say they won’t sit and do this work, it’s little old lady work… they can’t sit.  Nick: It requires a lot of patience?  Mireille: It really requires patience. It requires a lot of patience.  Nick: But do you kave any training projects, even if it’s not… you wouldn’t call it school, but you could have a little center where you train people?  Mireille: There’s a project we’re working on here, and I called [a worker]. He wasn’t here, he went to go work on the project. Then I called him, he ran over. It’s a project that we’re working on.  Man: We would like to teach some children, train some children in this field.  Nick: You would try to find a lot of children, children to train?  Mireille: Yes.  Nick: Okay.  Man: We’re going to present the project to them, but there are some children that want to learn.  Nick: Okay, thanks so much Mireille.  Mireille: It’s me who should thank you.  Nick: I hope the work continues, and I wish you good luck also for your exposition that’s starting on July 2, alright?  Mireille: Thank you, July 2.  Nick: Santa Fe.  Mireille: It ends on July 11.  Nick: I hope also that you train new people, and find students.  Mireille: We’ll work towards that. |  |