



Facebook's Graffiti Artist David Choe Says Life Unchanged by \$200 Million



Graffiti Artist Took Facebook Stock instead of Cash

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Feb. 9, 2012

David Choe, the 35-year-old muralist who made an estimated \$200 million in the Facebook IPO, is bothered by the hype surrounding his newfound money.

You can't buy your privacy back," Choe told Barbara Walters. "Because I was already doing OK, and to have this abstract amount of money now, I cannot buy my privacy back. I was like: What the hell's happening? Every news-- Al Jazeera, every news organization in the world is beating down the door, trying to get a, you know, interview. And I'm like, 'Oh, my God.'"

Although he considers himself homeless, living in casinos and hotels, Choe is a very well-known artist whose works are featured in private collections and museums.

"It's gonna sound horrible for me to say money is meaningless," he said. "But everyone's like: What are you gonna do now, now that you have all this money and freedom? I did everything I wanted to when I had nothing. Everyone's like: Well, what are you gonna do now? I'm like, I'm still gonna do whatever I want except more people are just gonna bother me now."

In 2005, Facebook, a start-up social networking site Choe once called "ridiculous," approached him with a proposition. Sean Parker, president of Facebook at the time, asked Choe to paint his famous murals on the office walls for \$60,000 or company stock.

Choe chose the stock, and when Facebook, started by Mark Zuckerberg in his Harvard dorm room, announced its IPO this month, or initial public offerings of stock, to raise \$5 billion, Choe made an estimated \$200 million.

The murals are still in the Facebook offices today. "They carved the walls out and they shipped them to every single Facebook office in the world -- so they're everywhere now," Choe said.

The work was not initially well-received by Parker, who called it "schizophrenically distracting." In Choe's Dirty Hands Movie, Parker asked him flatly, "There's nothing more for you to add to it?"

The murals were varied, with different kinds of objects, Choe told Walters. "There was lots of women, cityscapes, just abstract forms," he said. "I paint very quickly. And it just, it almost comes out of me like it's almost my therapy."

In 2003, before being commissioned by Facebook, Choe led a difficult life, doing jail time for cashing forged checks, stealing, and hitting a security guard.

However, he still managed to paint with whatever he could find.

"I would use the soy sauce," he said. "And I don't want to be gross, but I would use urine and blood and all these things, and anything that would create any kind of pigment. ... It was the only thing that let me keep my sanity."

Although Choe sold some of the stock a while ago, he said, "I just sold a couple ... to just secure that I would have something out of this in case anything changed."

Choe still has an estimated couple hundred million dollars after the exchange. "Don't feel sorry for me," he told Walters. "This is like a godlike amount of money, where I could actually change the world and do things to help humanity and do good things.

"As an artist, I often wonder what my purpose is or why I do what I do," he said. "So those things will hopefully come into more clarity, or maybe not. I don't know."

For more information on David Choe's work and movie, go to <http://dirtyhandsmovie.com/>