

DIGITAL AGNES

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Marking Time

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SPEAKERS

Nasrin Himada, Emelie Chhangur, Pamila Matharu, Maiko Tanaka, Bopha Chhay, Audience members

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TRANSCRIPT

Nasrin Himada: This panel's going to be full of jokes and laughter, so just get ready. Welcome everyone to this fourth day of the summer institute. I'm so excited to see a lot of faces here that I haven't seen in the last few days. And hi Michelle, hi Ellyn. So I'll get going. OK. So my name is Nasrin Himada, I'm the Associate Curator here at Agnes of Academic Outreach and Community Engagement. I'm also a curator of contemporary art outside this institution as well, especially my true love has always been cinema and new media. And I'm very much connected to thinking through that framework all the time. I also want to acknowledge that we are on the lands of the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee and I am of Palestinian origin. My ancestors come from Palestine. I'm always thinking about being in between worlds that of Palestine and that of being here on these lands. Thinking a lot about liberation, sovereignty, self-determination, through the ways in which I try to create space when it comes to exhibition making and programming and just in my life generally, and in the relations that I build. Oh hi Sebastian. So happy to see you. So yeah, thank you all for being here. I'm going to just kind of do -- because I know all these amazing people. And I just - - I'm going to in some ways the entire panel is going to be an introduction to their incredible work. But just to say a little bit about why I organized this and my intention. Emelie, Maiko, Bopha and Pamila have been these great inspiration to me, in regard to how we can think differently about conditioning spaces for gathering, and for being together. And for building trust and for thinking about -- we've been thinking a lot about care with Tian, and I feel like their practice really is such a good example of how we practice care, how we practice being with each other, how we practice, in some ways, trusting each other and thinking together about how to really conduct -- like how to transform the spaces that we're in. And also how to transform ourselves. And I think often we're thinking externally, but I also feel like the work that these incredible curators and artists do is about also internal transformation that, that also affects what goes on around. And so I want to -- yeah, everyone knows Emelie Chhangur, Who is the Director and Curator at Agnes who's my boss, but today, But today I'm not talking to you as my boss.

Emelie Chhangur: Right off the bat. OK. Got that out of the way.

Nasrin Himada: But who I feel like I've been watching and thinking about Emelie's work for years. And I'm just so excited that you said yes to this invitation to think also about in-reach, which is a methodology that you practice, and that you bring into the spaces where you work. And thinking

through the relationship between pedagogy and the civic and we're going to talk a little bit about that today. And then Maiko Tanaka, who is a close, dear friend of mine, who I feel like I became interested in curation because of the work that Maiko did in Toronto and in Buffalo and elsewhere, at TSV in Toronto. And one of the programs we're going to maybe hopefully talk about today are -- is extracurricular. That was the first time that I was really introduced to the idea of thinking about pedagogy and curation. And that that for me was such a -- an important event years ago, 2009, yeah. And then Bopha Chhay is -- was the curator and director of Artspeak for many years in Vancouver. And I have been in total admiration of the work that you do on the ground, in your neighbourhood, Artspeak's neighbourhood. And the way that you think about community relations and the art gallery as a space that opens up onto community and thinking through the different relationships that you've built in Gastown. And then Pamila Matharu, who has been -- who's been installing her incredible research project and exhibition space at Agnes. Please if you haven't yet checked it out to do that afterward. The show is up until December. It's called Where Were You in '92. And I feel like the ways in which you created that space was this really incredible way of thinking about counter archive, as you have brought to my attention your practice of counter archiving, and to thinking through mentorship and the ways in which to give space to someone that really inspired you, who's Winsom Winsom. To think about artists from programs like Fresh Arts back in the '90s, in terms of how they have impacted many generations, and continue to do so through your own mentorship, and the way that you are also a teacher. I think that's so incredible to think about artist as curator and also as mentor and teacher. So yeah, welcome. And I think I'll get going on our first question, and it's for you, Pamila. We're going to start there. OK. So since this panel's inspired by your research project, Where Were you in '92. And I wanted you to talk -- just talk, to us talk to this beautiful audience about your trajectory as an artist, your love for Winsom Winsom, and yeah why archives are important to you?

Pamila Matharu: Started from the margins now I'm here. That's a joke guys. Thank you so much for this invitation, Nasrin, Emelie, for inviting me to take up space here at Agnes. It's my first solo museum project in Ontario and Canada, and I, you know, I guess those things don't matter in the long run. But yeah, yeah, here I am. So I come from Treaty 13 Tkaronto, Toronto, that's where I live and work. And I was born in the West Midlands in the UK, aka Birmingham, which is second largest city to London. It's a beautiful city, you should definitely put it on your itinerary next time you're in the UK. And at two and a half, in May of 1976, my family arrived to Rexdale, Ontario, and then we moved to Concord, North York. And then I moved out on my own to Toronto around late '30s. So -- which was, you know, for a Gen X that wasn't very common, but now for millennials and xennials, sandwiching and whatnot is very common. So I did it first. No. So my roots are from Punjab, and I'm Punjabi Sikh. And this is all important in terms of how I got to Fresh Arts and Winsom, so I'm just going to give you some of that background. And West Punjab is now Pakistan, sorry, India. And East Punjab is now Pakistan. So Punjab was split in two and then Punjab and India was split five times, or a total of five times. And we just had the 75th anniversary of partition on Monday. So yeah, there's still like active wounds there. In around 1984, my family moved to Willowdale in North York, I was in grade six. But by the time I go through middle school -- junior high we called it in North York, and I got to A. Y. Jackson Secondary School, the William Clark and Roger Messenger were very much trailblazers in art education. And I say this because they were also some of my preliminary models, I would say. But unfortunately, five days before my 16th birthday, my father took his own life and I found him hanging. And that kind of froze

me, I would say. And one day I'm in class, I mean I'm just kind of playing class clown, as I do now too. But you know -- that we have learnt through people and humans that, you know, this is a mode of survival at times. And Mr. Clark saw through my depression I think and before I even recognized it and -- that what I was dealing with. And I disclosed -- he asked me to enter his office, he saw me drawing something and he asked me to enter his office. I was like OK. And his grandson was often around and he's like six or seven and I was like, why is this seven year old like here in high school? Like OK in the middle of the day. But what I found out was -- after I disclosed what had happened that summer, Mr. Clark told me that his daughter was suicidal. And so he has to take care of his grandson. So he immediately then transfers me from regular visual arts to the gifted art program in A. Y. Jackson and it was before we amalgamated our board. It was very much a -- we went head to head with like Earl Hague, you might have heard like Claude Watson and Earl Hague like -- I'm thinking of someone like Carmel Clark Davis went to Hague. So like, you know, there's -- and Sherry, went to Wexford. So there's like these five kind of arts schools in TDSB. But -- and then there's also enrichment programs, advanced programs and gifted programs. So I say this because -- yeah I mean I was learning art history and art -- western art history for Mr. Clark, but nothing was really reaching me. And then in 1992 my grades didn't really get me into York. But I got this Herbert H. Carnegie award, who is the first black hockey player in Canada. So something to note. And scholarship -- and then I went -- I bounced around. I wish I didn't pay to bounce around the way kids bends around high school these days. But I went to Ryerson, U of T Continuing Education, OCA, when it was known as OCA, and in spring of '94 I end up at York finally. And I kind of went through the backdoor through, you know, Atkinson College, which doesn't exist anymore. And then I have like two strikes that I endured over eight years, five failed courses, because I came out. It was beautiful. Which is like, a queer pedagogy in itself. And then I get into consecutive BEd, I don't know how but I -- they let me in. And I finished with this distinction BEd, but I failed five undergraduate courses. So I'm just shy of an honours. I'm just disclosing this publicly first time in my life. And then that summer of '94, I see an ad at the back of Now magazine, remember Now magazine? And remember how thick the sex ads were, oh my gosh. They had this little ad buried about, you know, a youth arts program. And it's Fresh Arts. I start calling the office because pre-internet, which some of you might, in the room, might remember. And I'm calling, calling, calling and they don't answer the phone. And it's like, they finally answer the phone. And I'm like, I need to be in the visual arts. And they're like, no, we're at capacity. We're full. But we'll ask the arts leader. And I'm like, OK. I eventually get on the phone with Winsom and she's like, why do you think you need to be here? And I'm like, because I'm like bored as fuck in North York and you got to let me in. And what happened was between the second time I called and the third time I called I'm listening to the Masterplan Show. Does anybody remember the Masterplan Show. It's still existing. Oh hey, how you doing? And Masterplan Show is the longest running Hip Hop show on CIUT radio, and it was cofounded by Motion, Wendy Brathwaite, who was one of the mentors in, you know, she was only a couple of years older than me. But she was mentoring the spoken word. And so when you'll see in my show, I speak of the Young Street Uprising and whatnot. I came in two years after right, so 1982. And that was because the government was, or the funding bodies were going to cut the funding if they didn't raise the buns in the seats. So I get in -- I get in as a racialized youth. That's the year they allowed -- so it was only specifically for Black and Indigenous youth. And I was the first cohort for the really racialized youth. And basically, Fresh Arts was a very groundbreaking multidisciplinary arts program funded by Jobs Ontario Youth, which was created by Bob Rae, after the report that Stephen Lewis wrote, which was called Report on Race Relations. So and this was a youth employment strategy, Jobs Ontario Youth,

funded by the Ontario government. And then Fresh Arts came about because four women came together with Bob Rae. One of them was the advisor, a special adviser to the NDP government, Lillian Allen, Marie Mumford, who is based in Peterborough, Trent University. And she's like some special designated funded -- what is that call SSHRC, or no is Canada Research Chair, something, something. I don't know. Me and academia, I don't know. [Inaudible] and Winsom Winsom. So this artist led program was specifically for -- made for Black youth and Indigenous youth. And the Black Arts, I would say yeah, it's part of the Black Arts Movement in Canada, I'd like to say But it's not been recorded anywhere. So Emelie gave me an opportunity to record -- put on record, you know, this existence that I have been embodying for a long time and probably driving her crazy because I always come back to, well back in 1990s, and because, you know, she's done work in Jane and Finch, of course, with in-reach and Scarborough, and all these amazing things, and I always try to acknowledge the past, right. Because she's also worked with Mishime. And I'm like, you got to go before that. You know, so there is a trajectory there. For me just to answer your -- rest of your question. So one other thing, it's a multidisciplinary program, writing, theatre, spoken word, music, dance and visual arts. And I think visual arts has not gotten it's, you know, it's play from like the way Kardinal Offishall or July Black, or Saukrates, or all these people have gotten to be on press and on record. And then there'll be one line about Fresh Arts. And I'm always like, dang, like why can't you guys elaborate, you know. Like you're here now. Because, you know, like we're here but like Toni Morrison says, your job is to lift. You get here, now you lift, don't waste time. Close the gaps, right, So it's grounded me from then to now informed and influenced my teaching, my arts practice -- sorry, I need notes because I'm ADD, 100% community engagement and collaboration, arts advocacy, artists led facilitating coaching, teaching, mothering, caring, foster parenting, at times. And cultural production. And a Fresh Arts summer Winsom looks at me and says, I got something for you. And I was like, what's that? And she turns the corner on Sweet 906 at 96 Spadina, and she's like, you need to meet some folks. And I was like, who are they? It's Desh Pardesh. She saw me coming out before I saw my coming out, you know. So Desh Pardesh, and then, you know, from there the next summer Jobs Ontario Youth were like, you know what, we want you to get more exposure. I meet Dr. Amah Harris from Theatre in the Rough. From there I meet, in that cohort, I meet Db Young, Clair Yao, who's -- her mom was like a very amazing Asian social justice leader in the Chinese community. Tanisha Cherie Baghetta, who's Chris Chantiz' niece. He's a poet. And I forget the last person who's based in San Francisco, and now is like a council -- city councillor. But anyways, we're like these like young women. And we're -- our project was to make a guide for youth. How to deal with police. Right. So this trajectory for me, I've always been adjacent and in proximity to black thought, and black cultural production, black feminist cultural production. And I guess this is my way of not just like citing it, but saying it publicly that we all learn from black culture. Let -- you want to stop talking about white supremacy, talk about the other communities you learn from. Right. And share from. Like that's it. So then I go back to Winsom, and I'm like now what? And she's like, keep going, go now and penetrate the centre. And I was like what does that mean? Because, you know, when I hear penetration, I'm just like -- OK what are you saying to me, right? And then I was -- I meet Judith Tatar at Tatar Alexander, and the rest is history around my commercial kind of -- like I worked for dealers and private collectors and philanthropists after that. And I met the Greens and the Zeidlers and, you know, they were very, very influential around learning about in proximity to philanthropists too, you know, so I'm not going to discount that experience. Like rich white folks, oh my God, yes, in the arts, you know. And then 1997 out of Desh Pradesh, I was a co-founding steering committee member of South Asian Visual Arts Collective,

which is now called South Asian Visual Arts Centre. But it's a gallery less arts -- artist centre. And then from there, I went to PADC. And then around -- from PADC I got, like that time period which is Professional Art Dealers of Canada. And then I learnt about, oh my gosh, like, donations. You know, I had to write up donation reports. So I know the -- I know who, you know, there's probably like less than ten families in Canada that really contribute to the visual arts sector. OK, and Bader's. And my first curatorial experience was come out of SAVAC, it was called Dirty Laundry and Parting Thoughts. And I go back to one of the people that Winsome introduces to me, Zahoor ul Akhlaq, who had just come back representing Pakistan at the Venice biennial. And he gave me those paintings.

Nasrin Himada: Wow.

Pamila Matharu: Which for 25 -- shy of just -- shy of 25 curator, I was like what? You're going to do what? And he's like, try not to like, you know, just make sure like the shipping containers and like don't break it up and all that. And I was like, that's all you're going to say to me? And that's what he did. And then come 1998 -- I just asked Emelie. I'm like was Marilyn with me or did we meet on our own at the power plant? She was trying to sell me this multiple -- and I'm like, what? Power Plant handed a nonwhite brown woman. Like I got to meet you. And then I just did -- never stop bugging Emelie since. But yeah, we -- that's -- we've been jamming since then. Right Em? Yeah. Twenty years?

Nasrin Himada: More than.

Pamila Matharu: Like so the summer of '92, that's 30 year anniversary. So yeah, it's like between 25, 28 I don't know.

Nasrin Himada: Oh wow.

Pamila Matharu: Who knows numbers.

Nasrin Himada: Thank you.

Pamila Matharu: Let's decolonize that.

Nasrin Himada: Thanks, Pamila. There are so many things there. And you know, there are a lot of, I mean, there's SAVAC and there's so many organizations that are just so important in Toronto that have been such a space for many racialize artists and continue to be so important. And I feel like, yeah, it's so -- thank you for mentioning that.

Pamila Matharu: Yeah, for sure, for sure.

Nasrin Himada: OK, I'm going to actually read out this question, Maiko, because I don't want to mess it up. Since extracurricular had such an impact on me as a curator, but also paved the way for so much to happen in Toronto when it came to the relation between the curatorial and pedagogy practices based in research, how they were essential to creating the conditions for collectivity to

form, can you speak about this event, how it came about, what you recall, and what impact that had on your practice as a curator and writer?

Maiko Tanaka: Hello. Hey first, thanks for having me. Nice to see everyone. So now I'm inspired by Pamila to like do a trajectory. But just for context, I guess I'm going to start from art school. So I went to OCAD. My fourth year, I was in the criticism curatorial practice. By fourth year, I was really dissatisfied and disillusioned because it felt like every classroom, every class was just not creatively taught. Like it was just, you know, I mean some teachers I had really incredible teachers. But the way it was structured felt like not breaking any boundaries around the -- how we learn. And learning as an artistic practice or teaching, you know. Or even like how those things can be breaking -- broken down too. So in my fourth year, I decided to create a -- for my thesis project an underground art school for one night. We called it a night school. After School Supplemental. And I became the director. And I like -- I had the director portrait and I had this whole outfit with like thick glasses. And it looked like Rosemary Donegan, I was trying to like -- I don't know if you remember Rosemary? Yeah. And then I had like a whole, you know, director's message for the night. And basically curated different artists and artists lectures, pretending this was like a real after, you know, night school. And, you know, installations and performances, like Luis Jacob's Anarchist School Minutes. And [inaudible] violin lessons that -- and the Amos Fletcher's lecture models, and Irene Moon on cockroaches. And the -- it just felt really like vivid and alive and fun. And I think at that time, I was like -- it was basically just imagining and making happen what I wanted to see more of, or like be involved in more of. And I didn't think at the time of things like I didn't -- wasn't exposed to pedagogy of the oppressed, Paulo Freire, which became really important for me later. And the idea of like, going against the banking model of education, where you're like depositing knowledge into a person -- a learner. But also like for the oppressed like, it's not about learning about the world but making the world. And so that, you know, when I was exposed to that, that's like start to get a language for it. So then what happened next. So but then I was in -- when I was doing that someone introduced -- one of, I think was [inaudible] who said, hey, you know, you should meet Janna Graham. She's like across the way at the AGO, and she's started -- she's working on this amazing Teen Council Program where she -- when I -- I don't remember when we spoke if she was articulating this way, but what I remember about it was, it's like an -- like again the education departments, like the underground school, they're always on the bottom floor. And not seen, you know, in the gallery. I mean yeah. And, of course, you know, Janna Graham too, yeah. And she was like -- it was like having students instead of taking these art classes, using the floors above as content and knowledge to -- and then expressing themselves down on the floor. It was having them infiltrate up into the galleries and like ask really good questions about boundaries, and who's allowed to be in the space and what objects are in the space, how they got there. And then I remember like a skateboarding project with -- where they were like looking at like barriers. But also, you know, this kind of activity that's seen as not high art or like it's appropriate. And like thinking about age in a completely different way. So that was very exciting to hear about. And I wasn't really connecting it to politics at the time. Like at OCAD I wasn't -- had the language for that. Like that it was about making your own space and finding a way to also find joy and fun and improvisations in learning together. So that was a great model. But she already had this like critical pedagogy language that I was starting to learn and start to read Henri Lefebvre -- or not -- no [inaudible] that she was reading in Kingston. She actually went to Kingston. So then I went to Justine M. Barnicke Gallery, which is now Art Museum Toronto. And I was working with Barbara Fischer as a technical

coordinator. And then eventually became -- we had a common interest in education and art like -- and like conceptual artists who were doing, you know, we did this program called Video -- Instructional Videos by Artists, and inspired by David [inaudible] Projects class at NSCAD, where he had different artists like even famous artists like John Baldessari give like assignments to students to like engage with space and their surroundings. So we did that. But then I started to like -- when I started my residency, I was like this feels limiting still. Like there's -- it's fun to see artists play with educational models and like break down some of the, you know, in ironic ways, like -- but it wasn't like participatory, or there was something about it still that felt like -- there was very few artists that was telling us this and making this commentary. But -- so then I -- around 2006 I think or '07, is when I started my research, it was a two year residency. And that time in Europe there was this whole thing called the Bologna Accord that was taking place. And it's basically this -- like European education is known to be so like back then free -- like for so long free and in art there was this apprentice master model or like studio model. And I mean there's problems with those too, but it was just this really different idea. And Bologna Accord was this thing across Europe that was going to mimic or model off of the American model, which is the neoliberal like model of having education be commercialized, and having it be -- getting people to be trained to become workers, and to become part of this -- these systems and be-- it's like STEM is maybe an outcome of that later. So -- and then tuitions were going -- like actually getting really high. And in the UK there were a lot of protests and organizing against that. And again Janna Graham pops up. She's part of many different collectives, Careworkers Collective, work with interns to politicize and having them fight for their rights to -- for their labour to be paid or to be acknowledged and be part of a system of making decisions together. And then -- but another one where she co-organized a summit for radical education collectives to come together in response to the Bologna Accord and everything that's happening. And that's when I learnt about these amazing radical collectives like La Illeca, Pinky Show, and Ultra-Red which she's part of. And so -- which is -- it started with Dont Rhine as a -- like AIDS campaign, I mean activism another sound collective. But anyways, so then -- and then in the Netherlands, I was visiting Netherlands a lot for research trips because my partner Chris was also there. So I was just visiting him. And I learnt -- I met -- there was like all these conferences about education and art, like the pedagogical term, the educational term. E-flux had this like really legendary issue about this. I read Rogoff on turning. I just remember all these -- do you remember those like -- and every article was like -- became a conference, you know, topic. And people talking about museum educators being sidelined in this conversation. All of a sudden artists were the ones who had this like expertise on how to like make more critical education. But like what about, again, the -- those workers in the basement below and like -- so who was that, those Nora Stansfield that wrote that one. There was like really good perspectives. And then so I went to this conference seeing all these people speak. And I was like it was really a thing. And then I was like I'm going to do a version of this in Toronto. And first it was like, OK let's do the thing about institutions and brought all these people from institutional position. And the second one was more like the summit. So like gathering all these radical collectives, including three from the many that were part of the summit. Because through, you know, like again this emergence like it turns out that like a friend and this local artist Rodrigo Hernandez was like in the collective of La Illeca is basically Mexico City, they were a group that was working with prisons. And instead of art in prisons, like could you imagine the more -- the container model, the banking model, like pacifying, you know. They were challenged -- they're co-creating and challenging ideas about masculinity and in the prisons and doing really trans -- there was a word transversal was going around then. Acts and together collective like they did like

a -- like what would a marriage be with all of us together? And they would like build like a huge pink spanner paper, like the certificate of the marriage. And then they would perform -- like they were like what would the ceremony look like? And they would do that. And they would do all their other things that were like -- there's some gender dynamics that were really challenging and -- but they were just going for it. And then Pinky Show is like a project in Hawaii that was challenging like the -- they were like an Indigenous -- like working with thinking about decolonization in Hawaii, and -- but through like a cartoon of these cute cats who are talking about this. And they even had apps on art museums. Anyway, they came to Hawaii, Mexico City, Ultra-Red with Janna Graham and Elliott Perkins was the people who came. And then a bunch of local, Toronto and Ontario collectives that were -- one, I can't remember the name but with Christine Shaw and Adrian Blackwell had a group that was part of post-Fordist something -- does anyone remember? Post-Fordist, but basically, they would work with --

>> Days of Action?

Maiko Tanaka: No. It's like -- they work with like janitorial staff with the cafeteria, like the food workers, the faculty, the students in these more collected -- or like unpack -- I don't know if they actually did, but that was this movement across those groups around the world that we're thinking about reoriented power relations within educational institutions. Anyway, so there was some interesting stuff. And people -- so what was exciting and like people just came -- like Nasrin you were there as a like whatever audience or whatever. But then this project -- because of the collectives and they were enthralled with each other. Like when they met and heard and saw what they were doing, there was this respect. Because they were all working in very specific contexts. And so it's like not something you would compete with, not something you would compare. It was like there are people just learning not to transfer those learning but to engage and be in solidarity, and also care for each other because it's hard, that work. So there was this like respect, love, care. We would spend time even just walking from location to location between workshops. Going to OISE on the top floor where no one has a legal meeting and then again the next day for a workshop about like --

Nasrin Himada: And always around each --

Maiko Tanaka: Yeah.

Nasrin Himada: Around food, we went out dancing --

Maiko Tanaka: Food, yeah.

Nasrin Himada: It was just like lots of hanging out.

Maiko Tanaka: Yeah, it was like this -- we couldn't not be in this -- you use the word orbit a lot, but it felt like that kind of thing. But not just the orbit but the asteroids in between and the, you know, anyways -- It was working on this, this meta -- anyways, blah, blah, blah, that's it, yeah.

Nasrin Himada: Thank you, Maiko. It was nice. I feel like I just have such a strong memory of that. I think I went to everything. And I remember being part of the Pinky Show program. And it was the first time that I was like, oh wow like workshops. You were breaking boundaries around, and so the structure of workshops, it was like a two day eight hour hangout, basically. And that's what we did. We were just together for two days straight. Yeah. OK, Emelie. Ah my hero. I know you talk about this often, and I was trying to figure out a way around in-reach, that would be also exciting for you to talk about it differently. Like whatever hasn't come up for you around in-reach and how you've been thinking about it since you've been in Kingston and at Agnes. And also just, I know I said, I had sent you the question and I said, why an emphasis --

[Laughter]

You're like a great orator, you don't need notes. Why an emphasis on the civic. And I asked that because I feel like space is very important to you. I feel like this, even the city scape, the space of Toronto was very important to you, and how this in-reach methodology was in practice for you. And now you're in Kingston. And I know Kingston has become a place that you also want to engage with and think about through this methodology. And so just yeah.

Emelie Chhangur: Thank you, thank you for inviting me on the panel to be with these amazing people. I guess, I mean place. So, you know, I've thought a lot about my work in Toronto since being here. And I think that it was all about navigating and negotiating a sense of belonging to a place. But with the condition that as a mixed race person, there was not a clear community with whom I belong to. So I think, I mean, in so many ways I became a curator by accident. Like a really different kind of path from art school, and sculpture and installation to theatre, to like sort of accruing a sense of the need to be in relation to people through collaborative frameworks. And the dramaturgy of that. So I think of my time in Toronto as like, especially my time at AGYU, is like a very long commitment to figuring out how to belong to a place over time. And this had bearing on the institutions of art. So I find myself in the institutions of art. Which, you know, arriving in them were obviously not built to support me. But, you know, and being at The Power Plant, since Pamila brought this up. And move to the AGYU was sort of the difference, or early -- like 24 year old realization that I wasn't interested -- if I was going to be a curator, and I entered the curatorial field because I thought it was open and free, and not disciplinary, and then like kind of like learn this otherwise, as it is. But you know, making this decision that what was important to me is I didn't want to be a curator defined by an institution or shape. That was not my desire, my desire was not to be like trained in a way that replicated sort of mainstream sensibility of what the curatorial was. But wanted to be someone who would change an institution. And moving to the AGYU was this moment, you know, where downtown art community is like why would you go all the way out there? And it was considered degraded, it was considered out of the centre, it was considered all the -- and you know, this feeling of like why would that be characterized that way. When I actually thought it was super liberating to not have to address the centre. Anyway, sorry this is a little bit of a path. But, you know, even being out of the centre and still thinking about what it means to belong to a place over time, you know, I realized that the framework of the institution itself didn't allow for a kind of participation in it. I mean I felt that myself earlier on, but working in collaboration with community in particular local communities, you know, I realized that the incommensurability of the institutions of art to practice and enact other kinds of cultural protocols,

social economies and ways of working, that were outside of the sort of temporality and conveyor belt of a kind of framework that we didn't really fit into. Yeah.

Nasrin Himada: What about Kingston?

Emelie Chhangur: I'm like I want to push this a little bit more because, you know, it's also -- I feel like I'm speaking abstractly, because it's not grounded in projects. But I would say, you know, there are some very definitive projects that I've learnt through -- over the years that have sort of eroded the lines of the institution's practice. And, you know, I think, you know, the first one I would name as the awakening, which is a collaboration with a Panamanian artist, Umberto Velez, that brought together young Parkour and the Mississaugas of the Credit, who I went on to have a like 12 year kind of ongoing collaboration with. And it's important to mention them because I think that's the origins of in-reach in so many ways. And then a project with a Trinidadian artist, Marlon Griffith, that was a 300 person street procession, that brought together the Mississaugas, Capoeira practitioners, disability dancers, and young spoken word poets and rappers from Jane Finch and Scarborough. And then a film Rise, which was a collaboration with spoken word poets and rappers and two artists from the Northeast of Brazil, Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca. And I'm saying these because I'm getting to Kingston, because I also think that, you know, this Transformations project and the graffiti is very much in that line. So I think I've rolled along with these projects and these collaborators because they were the only folks I could find to build a kind of collaborative network and be with them as we navigated the structures and adopt some of those methodologies, like Parkour of navigating structures in a way that doesn't follow the gridlines of a city. Or I, you know, I think I always identified as an outsider within the institution and always sought to align myself with other outsiders. But to work on the inside to change why we feel like outsiders. And it's not I -- I've been thinking a lot about this, because it's not about wanting to belong to a system of power. Like when I talk about like this sense of belonging over time. It really was to, you know, transform a social imaginary and mobilize structures toward transformational change. And, you know, I thought about these projects always kind of large scale, they're kind of over the top. But they always appropriate existing dramaturgical forms. Like the awakening civic ceremonial, ring of fire. I don't even think I mentioned the title of it, The Street Procession -- it was a street procession. They're all modes of public address, that recast the characters of these social dramas toward other ends. And they're temporary. I mean the projects making happens for like three years. But usually they're like a sort of 45 minute intervention in the public sphere. And so civically speaking I mean, they're the relationship of pedagogy and the civic to me has all kinds of bearing on how you transform those structures. Because it is modelling up and, like pedagogically speaking, modelling up other ways of learning and being and doing. But I've always -- and like this is like my mixing ness too, like my attraction to university galleries, which is also like where I think one can model this kind of like change because you are, you know, you have a pedagogical mandate. But it's a hybrid kind of institution. So it is funded by the government. And so I've always thought of the civic role of an institution, because it receives government money. And so I think it must serve the social function by distributing that government money to other people. And I think that that's distributed through these networks of like the government, the Canada Council, then the art galleries that get them. So I'm always, of course, interested in working with non-artists, or activists, or street artists, or Parkour, because I identify those practitioners as already participating in transforming how we learn and the civic sphere. But I always was interested to bring into relation,

because I'm not -- I know I haven't spoken about an object yet. Because I'm always sort of bringing people like individuals and groups who have no natural affinity together to work together over long periods of time. And that's the curatorial work. But that relationality as the curatorial, I'm also very interested to bring city structures and institutions into relation. So there's always, you know, within the curatorial set. And for instance like Ring of Fire, with all these collaborators alongside them it's also the Ontario Legislative Assembly, city hall, and 52 Division of the Toronto Police. So I'm interested in taking up these dramaturgical forums that are civic building, and create the social imaginaries of a place, and operating on them with these protagonists that I'm collaborating with to transform them. So in-reach like begins within an institution of art. And then it sort of moved out into the civic sphere. And, you know, inside the institution of art that in-reach was also like how one bends to meet the methodological demands of the communities with whom one is working. That has bearing on timelines. Like people don't just do things like on this, like three month rotation. That had everything to do with like payment of fees. And coming up with other sorts of forms of like other kinds of gift economies to be in relation with people. So people are feeling compensated, but not through a monetary situation. To then putting, for instance, Toronto City Hall into relation with the Mississaugas under the auspices of this procession, which was also organized around the seven grandfather teachings. So every time we were there, we were enacting these teachings with the city. And so in-reach started to have this kind of operative influence on the very structures that I was trying to navigate and belong to. So it was always about like transforming things around me. And now I'm a bit more cheeky because I'm like, there's -- I don't sort of practice a discourse of inclusion. I'm not interested in being part of your club. I -- I'm really always trying to eliminate assimilationist tactics of belonging, like so everything else needs to change around me. But, you know, when I was younger it was like really like how do you actually change these situations by putting pressure on them. But like not in a critique methodology. I've actually not been -- this is something else I've been thinking a lot about as I reflect. It hasn't been to critique, it's been to actually inhabit otherwise. And so I mean the critique is always there because we're doing it differently. But yeah, very true. Anyway, so sorry -- I went on a bit of a tangent, but I wanted to get back to Kingston. And so anyway so this, you know, in a way is a curatorial practice, or a practice that bears on institutional protocols. And sort of in a move to coming here I was, you know, I always wonder can in-reach become the institutional practice. And that's sort of how I arrived here. Thinking, you know, this is the opportunity to really apply an ethos and methodology is in-reach to the very system, structures, policies and practices of the institution. Not just have a bearing on it and how you can transform it from within. But actually just transform it. But now, you know, being here, I also think there's a limit to this. Because one is still always operating within a framework and a structure. And if I've been interested in dramaturgical structures for so long, I've become very interested in architectural structures. So I'm back to space. It's always like there in the background and occupying and taking up space and transforming space through alternative practices and world making. But now I'm like there's actually the very structures, atmospheres, altitudes. And the way in which we like walk in a front door. You could be a really rad museum, but if you still have a personae situation are you still like -- you start to recognize that actually the architecture itself is like deeply pedagogical. Especially at a university gallery. I mean this models up a form of behaviour for all students on this campus when they walk through the door. And there is an encounter that teaches about values and class. And so now I'm like -- the institution itself must become a practice. So it's not about bringing a practice to an institution to transform it from within, the institution itself must become a practice, an entirely different architecture must be built around that. So to move away

from it being a container toward a proposition which all of these projects and working collaboratively for three years, we never knew where we were going, we followed the projects with what I call eccentric curiosity, like with a dash eccentric. And recalibrated as the project took on its own life and shape. And I'm wondering here, what does that mean to do that architecturally? What does one -- where do we want to be? And what's the methodology to do that inside the institution based on the sort of methodologies that I've learnt from working from a practice. Like I've gained strength in being able to negotiate collaborative frameworks, because I was taught by all of the people that were operating in these projects, you know, and to model up a consensus way of thinking. And to -- so now it's like -- like last night with Stephanie, I said, I think that [inaudible] was an artist project, like it was like an art project of mine. But Agnes is a curatorial project, like a deeply curatorial project that actually is really thinking hardcore around relationality. And how things are brought together. And the institution itself is a material to be worked with curatorially.

Nasrin Himada: Thank you. Thank you so much. I'm like ready to work. Bopha, Bopha Chhay, thank you so much for being here all the way from Vancouver. I feel like we are -- although you're all being celebrated here right now, Bopha just ended her tenure at Artspeak. And I feel like this is a true celebration. I have been obsessed with reading this interview. I think I've read it twice. I can -- you told me when it was published and I totally -- I forgot.

Bopha Chhay: Contemporary Home, that one?

Nasrin Himada: Yeah. And I pulled out this quote, because I thought it would be such a good place for us to start in introducing your practice and talking a little bit about it. You said, I consider the surrounding context and the community as providing a really specific set of conditions and constraints. We are part of the neighbourhood, we have a responsibility to get to know our neighbours and understand the conditions in which local residents live under or are subjected to and the reasons why. How has this approach created the conditions for your curatorial work and the methodologies formulated throughout your tenure at Artspeak?

Bopha Chhay: Firstly, thank you so much to Nasrin and Agnes. This is like my heroes. So it feels really nice. So yeah, I just finished my tenure at Artspeak, and have only slowly over the past, I actually haven't quite finished out -- there are a few things that I need to do. But technically yes. So I haven't really had much time to reflect fully on what I've been doing. Yeah. So this is like a really wonderful opportunity to kind of think through a few of those things. And Nasrin, I know that we spoke a lot about like what a slow methodology means. And I think that's something I really tried to think very carefully about at Artspeak. Because, well firstly, I grew up in Altro, New Zealand and California. So I spent a lot of time travelling to be with my parents who lived on either side of the Pacific. And I think, Emelie, you mentioned this, like what does it mean to belong somewhere. And I feel like that's something I've been kind of contending with, you know, personally and professionally for a very long time. And in terms of Artspeak, part of Artspeak, you know, I've worked in several different artist run centres. And I really liked the freedom of artist run centres, but also there are a lot of constraints. Such as, you know, being as part of a staff of two you do all the jobs. And so something you're constantly contending with is burnout. So this method of slow, you know, I still don't really know what exactly I was thinking. But it was really important for me to state that at the beginning of my tenure there. Because I was really -- I really didn't want to kind of replicate the

systems where I really felt like I was alienated from, like very deeply alienated from. So in terms of slow, I really felt like --Artspeak has a mandate that is, you know, to create the conditions for a dialogue between visual arts and textual practices. So language. So I was really thinking about what it meant, what slowness meant, and how that was holding me accountable to not only myself to like slow things down, because I feel like in the systems that we work, we're required to produce and tick so many boxes, and just work at a pace that is like is not sustainable. So I was really trying to think about what is sustainable for myself and other staff member and a board of seven people. And so a lot of the projects that I was working on, I was thinking what have my favourite projects been. And all of them have been -- like all of them were my favourite projects. But there were like four kind of highlights. And they were incredibly slow and incredibly iterative and maybe like punishing for some people. Like it's just like the same thing. But I'm like no, it's different this time, How is it different? So I was really with this idea of slowness trying to build in time to reflect because I feel like often we don't actually build that into our curatorial process or our writing. Like I was speaking to a friend recently and we're always like one deadline behind. And so I was like why is that? Like we really need to not make that a thing that we're just carrying around constantly. It's like this burden. So the four projects that I was, you know, I'm really proud of, because of all the different people and different communities that were involved were a project called Artspeak Radio Digest. Which was a -- it was -- we were thinking about publishing, but in the form of an audio journal. Mainly because it's really hard to get money for publishing. So I was like, how do we do this. And then also it was part of this year long program that we're running about writing and process. And what it means to not just write an edit, but also write and perform and like more embodied forms of writing and speech. And that was kind of run in conjunction with another program called the Studio for Emerging Writers Program. Which was a ten -- again like a ten month program, where it was a cohort of eight to 12 younger -- young writers. Not just arts writers, but we did want to focus on that because we kind of identified a few issues with what we saw was going on and arts criticism and writing. And so this was like a ten month program where we invited artists every two weeks to come and give workshops on how they think about writing and language and text. And that was really incredible and we've run like ten, sorry, not ten -- two different -- two cohorts of that. And then different variations on that. So that was kind of tied into the radio show, which was with Vancouver Co Op Radio Station, which is this incredible, not for profit community radio station that has always been located like one block away from Artspeak. So we have this really long running relationship with this radio station. And their values are really similar to ours in terms of like how we think about the neighbourhood, how we think about workshops, like what's needed. And also just like making things accessible. So in terms of writing and language, and these kind of long term projects and queries that kind of spend, I guess several years actually, not just one year or two years, was thinking about language a lot in terms of -- because our neighbourhood is located in this - - the downtown -- I don't know if you know the Downtown Eastside Gastown. It experiences incredible, contradictory pressures and poverty and gentrification. And so that kind of -- that's what we're in the middle of and, you know, part of our responsibilities there that we need to know how to administer Naloxone, we need to know first aid. We're constantly --

[Inaudible Comment]

Yeah. So we're trying to do all of that just because that's our responsibility being in that neighbourhood. And I think that was really important for me, because it made me -- it made me

consider a wider -- well think about our responsibilities not just to our art peers, like I didn't really -- no longer felt like I was just speaking to the same kind of people about really particular niche interests. Like it really had to be quite different. And prior to that I worked at 221A which is an artist run Centre in Chinatown, which also has really similar kind of social conditions that you need to kind of think about. So yeah, those were like the two kind of main projects. What'd I talk about Artspeak Radio Digest, an expanded journal, the Studio for Emerging Writers Program. There was one more. The [inaudible] salon was something else that a project that I did pretty early on with Denise Ferreira da Silva and Valentina Desideri, which was thinking about healing and what healing meant for that particular community. And, you know, I'm still kind of thinking about that one, because it could be perceived as potentially pretty, wishy washy and airy fairy. But I think it really opened out to so many other ways of thinking. And what healing is, and just different methodologies and ways of thinking and knowledge and how to speak actually. So you know, there was like Reiki, and there were Tarot readings, and there are study groups. And these are kind of things that we continued throughout my tenure, whether informally or not informally. And I think, Maiko, I was thinking when you were speaking about how these students were in the basement. I kind of like -- sometimes I kind of like being in the basement. And sometimes a lot of our programs were not for everybody. Like we have done quite a lot of programs for really specific groups and communities that are -- we're not in the basement, but the doors are not open to everybody. And, you know, I've had to justify a lot of that to the arts community. Nobody else. And I have no problems justifying why we need to keep the doors closed to do certain things. And I'm not always in the room either, which is totally fine. So yeah, I think I'll end there for now.

Nasrin Himada: Yeah, yeah. Thank you. Thank you all so much. I feel like we're on the [inaudible], it's 11:06, so we've been going for an hour. I do have more questions, but I did want to just take a pause and open it up to the audience. Also, feel free to take a bathroom break or get a snack. But yeah, if the audience has any questions or thoughts, we can take some now. I'll give you a few seconds.

[Background Sounds]

Audience member: Let me see if I can formulate this in a meaningful way. I think what I'm thinking about and I admitted to Deirdre and Alison the other day that I'm having a crisis of faith about my long commitment to working in institutions. So my question is -- Are your various intersections with art and academic institutions necessary for your work, or is your work necessary for your survival, because you work in institutions? That's what I'm trying to figure out for myself. So I'd love to know what you think about that topic.

Nasrin Himada: Thank you. I'm always going to --

Emelie Chhangur: Do you mind.

Pamila Matharu: I just want to say one thing which is, elder Duke Ellington said, home is where the work is.

[Laughter]

Emelie Chhangur: I like this question, because I don't know -- I don't know -- I don't think I start -- I didn't start out very well with this sense of belonging. But for me the -- these projects that I mentioned, are about my own survival. And actually there is a reason that I continually go back to working with groups of folks who have no natural affinity, but certainly share a lot of structural inequities. Is I think a very autobiographical practice of mine, which is constantly repeating a sort of cultural negotiation as a mixed race person. And also I've gotten very good from my lived experience of negotiating in between cultures. And for me, it's less about -- even though in-reach has had this impact on institutional practice, for me, it is related to how a city looks, its aesthetics and I've always been like, sort of working toward what would a mixed race aesthetics be? But then I'm like, always more interested in the methodology? How does one do that? How can you bring together practices and cultural protocols and ways of working and different cultural frameworks to create something new at their convergence. And I think that's what's autobiographical about all these works. And while for sure, in a way there's a dependency on the institution in order to catalyze the resources to make those works. I think delinked from an institution, I would still gravitate toward these communities, as a way of belonging to wherever I am. And I think it's like, I love this like the neighbourhood is very important to me too. And for me, 17 years it was in the Jane Finch community. But the projects and the slowness of these projects were also about who I hung out with. Like I -- for three years and I still in total contact with everybody, but my whole life would change. I would be at like the Parkour meets and like, you know, poetry slams and three years or four years later we'd all be older. There was something about growing with all of these individuals that was very important to me. So I think it's deeply autobiographical.

[Background Sounds]

Bopha Chhay: Survival. We were speaking yesterday during Tian's reading, Manifesto for Radical Care, and I was mentioning -- sorry I can't quite remember what the question was. But we were talking about like what we do in small ways to kind of ensure the way we sustain ourselves, and --

Pamila Matharu: Micro and macro.

Bopha Chhay: Micro and macro, thanks, Pamila. And at one point, I think -- during at the beginning of the pandemic, I really felt like I was becoming a professional letter writer. I was just writing all these letters, mainly to city council. And with other artists run centres. So it's a kind of different type of organizing that I think sustains me. So something we do every October/November is write letters to the council to defund the police, and reallocate funds in a way that is much more community oriented. So I think things like that are really kind of crucial to me. And that's just like one example. Encouraging people to speak up at council, particularly in regards to new condos that are displacing people. I think things like that even though it's like kind of off the side of, you know, it's not part of my job definition, it's like for me I do those things, but not just for me, but for the communities that I'm around. So not really curatorial, but essential for me, yeah.

Maiko Tanaka: I think that for me, I rely on the pedagogical structures and vehicles. I need that to respond to like a framework for understanding institutions or other kinds of spaces. So not relying

on institution necessarily. Also because -- but then it's like all that educational turn stuff. Nothing changed after that, right. Like [inaudible] still happened. The -- and museums and institutions just became more about branding and fundraising even more. And becoming -- so it's like that whole democratization, it was a stage show, you know. Like what really -- so like then I'm like now less about thinking of the educational vehicle as something that's always good. It's actually can be captured and aestheticized. And so now I'm thinking more interiorly about deeper questions about [inaudible], yeah that's another story, I guess. But I just sort of -- it failed, right. Like and I don't have a lot of -- I think institutions are extremely fraught. And I think vehicles like pedagogy and education, I don't know, they're not innocent. And I'm not going to say that what I do -- like what I did was a good thing. I mean the gatherings were -- have changed my life and changed others. And I'm not saying I was -- it was because of the people that came, who also were working in survival modes, but also the common theme was they work with these educational vehicles, but really transgress them, or work -- it was always in reference to boundaries. So yeah, I don't need this -- but I do -- and the vehicles are extremely important. And I guess continue to be. Yeah, but not instant.

Nasrin Himada: Pamila, did you want to say anything?

Pamila Matharu: Oh yeah. I, you know, I wear the golden handcuffs. So as you know, Michelle, I work in public education. And what I mean by that is, you know, I'm banking a pension. And I'm fortunate to do that with my position as a high school teacher. But I also have benefits and stuff. But you know, I was saying to

Alize and SF yesterday in the car. You know, if I walked away from teaching, would I need \$2,000 worth of mental health support? Right? Because I wouldn't be so ill. I would not -- I wouldn't need the care I do. I see a chiropractor three times a week. I do a lot of somatic healing. I do a lot of work. I would like to call it my mental health breakthrough that I had five years ago. But it changed everything, everything shifted. And actually I'd like to mark that even further back, 2008 is when we started to see the pedagogical turn. But we were doing before social practice, it was socially engaged. And before socially engaged, it was relational. Thank you, Rirkrit. Right. And we weren't so much about object oriented ontology and whatnot. And it was more about the experiential. But, you know, for me as a K to 12 educator, we -- I do socially engaged work, social practice, relational work every day, for ten months of the year with other people's children. And my -- what I -- what really shifted for me is I started to see that oh my gosh look at this. So I work in the art community and I work in public education. Whoa, look at all these broken souls coming in and I can't patch them up in five months or ten months. I started to realize what artists needed and slow process, slow wave, you know, that fantastic model that

Alize shared with me and SF, I got to know a little bit now with you, one on one. And these things started to matter more. Right. There's a reason why yoga and meditation are multimillion dollar industries. I know I bring this up Emelie in every talk we do, but yoga is a \$9 billion industry. It's not -- I'm not trying to be funny. It is a spiritual practice from where I come from and my roots. And when you take the spirit out of something, is it like, you know -- So I had to really reexamine through my breakthrough what is purpose, and what is passion? And we don't talk about that in workplace culture. What wakes you up in the morning besides your alarm clock, or maybe your six alarm clocks? But what gets you up and says, yeah, that's a good day. And I recently asked this to Emelie. What motivated you to do this graffiti project? Because I was like, you are non-stop blabbing about graffiti artists to me all the time. And then Brown Butter. I'm clearly like not even the, you

know -- like I'm the cold, you know, kale on the table right now. Move to the side. And I'm just going to listen to you go on about your love affair with graffiti artists right now. But at least I'm making the space and taking the space to do that for my friend, you know. And I say that with so much love and admiration for Emelie's practice. Because I know what she's doing with me, which is when she shares stories with me, I'm learning, I'm observing. When she asks me questions about my pedagogy, she's learning too. So we have that collegiality around pedagogy, because we've also been talking about the museum as, you know, as a school for a very, very long time. Whereas the other curators in Toronto would think I was "crazy" to work with my students and bring them into a gallery and not be at the bottom of the AGO with them. Right. Thank you to FAG, aka Deirdre Logan, Alison Mitchell, who allowed us Boner Kill to have its first public program because the TDSB decided to ban me, because I was teacher facilitating a young woman's group that was called Boner Kill. And they didn't want bad press after certain things that happened in the city. We don't want Joe Warmington on this. And I was like, who the hell's Joe Warmington? And then when I talked to Allison, she's like, oh the Toronto Sun. And I was like oh OK. Right. So that's the kind of risk I take as a public educator. But I know when to really go for that hard, you know, like when I want to show up for my youth and -- because just like myself, I didn't have, you know, my mom did the best she could with the means she had after my dad passed. And Emelie's always reminding me to love her heart. But it's difficult, right. So she was my formal training and whatnot. But then my art mom's Winsom, Lillian, Althea Prince, Makeda Silveira, like, you know, they're not in the cannon. I mean they're not really -- they're on the periphery. But I think now there is a concerted effort around making this knowledge available. And it's going -- what I'm trying to get at, Michelle, and you know this too, is the work that you've done. You know, like a lot of people were watching you. I was watching you. But I wasn't quite like in your orbit perhaps. But you were watching me. Like we were all observing and watching each other grow, right. And I'm not even talking about this loved one that's on my shirt right now. Because I needed to channel some love from Queen Street -- Queen Street West, you know. Where I have really benefited from that kind of activity. Marilyn, my partner -- my long term partner and I, we used to show up on Queen Street, and we stuck out in mainly white rooms. Because you wouldn't see -- there was this term called lesbian once. I think it still exists. Well you wouldn't see a brown lesbian couple show up at art events. We were the only ones that would show up, and we kept showing up. And people would notice like, oh shit you've come to three of my things. Well I haven't you come to anything. And I'm like, it's OK. But that's a form of love. That's a form of care. Right. Care -- what is care? The root of care is love.

Nasrin Himada: Oh yeah. I think Allyson had a question first, and then --

Pamila Matharu: Sorry, I'll stop talking.

Nasrin Himada: No, thank you.

Audience member: I hope you never stop talking. And this is my favourite panel. I love hearing all of you talk about these genealogies. And I could listen to it all day. It is so fascinating to me, I love it. And so often what came up was when you were talking were about like these connections, making connections with people, and you know, in the art world, I mourn the part of the pandemic that has kept us from being able to make those kinds of connections. And also the curation of the connections. Like a couple of you talked about when somebody said you have to meet ... and then

brought you together to meet. And how life changing or path changing that was for you. And I'm thinking a little bit about how, and I'm wondering -- my question is around happenstance and opening -- openness and wondering about, you know, in that moment when that happens, are you conscious of that at the time? Or does that only come to you in reflection afterwards of the impact of that connection? I mean I'm not sure I'm just kind of putting it out to you to think about.

[Inaudible Comment]

Maiko Tanaka: So I think like what Nasrin has done with this panel is like allowed the emergence to -- even if we've talked about for maybe we are conscious of the connections and how transformative it was, we have to keep -- because we change -- like I talked about something from 2007. Right. And like, yeah but we've changed. We're completely different people. And so when Nasrin asked this question, like it'll emerge in a completely different way. So like I'm thinking about like Feminist Art Gallery and the, you know, the people who've inspired you, the Hello stickers. Like the introduction stickers. And how those relationships would become -- they've transformed and changed. And like we have -- it's not like oh it's done, archived out of the way. This is like an archive that it continues to emerge through a question like this. So again another pedagogical structure, but it's not about the structure. It's about the intent and the transformative, you know, like possible -- like potential -- I don't know what the word is. But yeah, like I think that's extremely the intention that you brought here, I think allowed these things that were probably different for you ten years ago. So I think it's so important to emerge, have these connections reemerge and talk about they are different because we're different. So yeah. Thank you.

Nasrin Himada: Yeah. And I think it's because we've been talking also so much here. And I was at a conference in Ottawa too that was put on by all these national new media and film organizations Through The Storm. And I just didn't -- also don't want us to forget that a lot of what the questions that come up now have also come up earlier in like in the '70s and '80s and '90s. And when you look through the archives of these different organizations, artists run centres and different institutions, like there are a lot of racialized and queer staff who were trying to figure these things out back then too. And it's kind of incredible to think that the same questions keep emerging in these different forms. And to remember -- to have a memory that people came before us. And this is Pamila why your show is so important, and paved the way for so much to happen now. And then and that continues. And I think one of my questions was also like, what would you -- you're mentors now to and --

[Phone Ringing]

[Laughter]

I'll just wait for the ringer. Yeah.

Pamila Matharu: What was the question?

Nasrin Himada: Sorry, yes, my question. One of my questions, just to follow up Allison's was, what do you say to the next generations? Like how do you feel about being a mentor yourself?

Pamila Matharu: They're calling. Like get your ass over here. The next generation, what do I say? Well right now, you know, the youth that I work with there's a crisis, you know. We've had two years of a pandemic, very nervous, very, you know -- so I do a lot of like -- I don't really do direct healing or anything. But I use a lot of contemplative modalities in my classroom as inside and outside and with my youth that I work with in Boner Kill and either younger artists and whatnot. Sometimes they just, you know, like Maxine Bailey, I love Max. But you know, she always -- she used to say like, Pamila you pay the black tax and the black tax is like, you know, your white colleague can roll in late because they were at a work event last night and no questions asked. But the black tax is I roll in late and there's questions asked, you know. So I was like, oh my gosh, Maxine, that's brilliant. And my -- I still talk to my mentors, Maxine being one of them. She worked long time at TIFF. In fact, she was -- obviously with her team, her development team, they created the new TIFF Bell Lightbox. And she is also a sister to Cameron Bailey. But that doesn't, you know, Maxine was a trailblazer with like Afrocentric theatre and whatnot with Sharon Lewis and they had sistas, and they were doing amazing things. And I was watching all of this, not in high school, but in my early -- like the same time that the Asian Sister, Vision Press and Theatre in the Rough and Dr. Amah Harris was working. And I also had to do my work. Like I didn't expect people to teach me. So I don't -- I tell -- like if I talk about Young Street Uprising, I'm like it's on Google, go look at like, you know, do your work. I wasn't handed a reading list or a syllabus or any of these things that started to come about in the last generation. I was told to like, you know, it was like oh OK Malcolm X, I'll go to the library, you know. Marcus Garvey, you know, I write down these names. And we -- or we would give -- be given a reading. So in terms of -- I don't have that kind of stuff that I -- I don't give them anything really. I haven't like Sister Vision, sorry, Sister Coresistor, we don't even have a logo. I just bought one for \$26 recently, I was like, yes we have a logo now. It's on lavender. So, you know, I -- what do I tell them? They just call me up and they're like hey can we have a coffee or something, or can you make me dinner? I'm like OK. And I just listen, just what my mentors still do, you know, and -- but the generation has changed in which the internet really means a lot to them. They have a relationship with the internet, and they stopped having relationships with people. I think that that's what I avoided with Boner Kill, is like not having a social media presence that you had to actually show up to meetings and have dialogue and be relational. And it really freaked out the introverted members. That, what you're going to make me talk? And I was like yeah but not like school. It's going to be like, you know. And I didn't -- I also -- I don't like this -- like sure of course it's kinship and developing kinship. But I don't like this, you know, like sometimes when I have South Asian youth contact me and they're like auntie, and I'm like I'm not your auntie. Like you know, I'm not your -- like if you want to deal with me as a mentor -- because also I come from 5,000 years of culture where guru shisha is something that's very important. What I mean by that is like a guru and a shisha is a mentee, guru is your mentor. And a guru means teacher, and I come from the Sikh faith, and we have ten gurus, right. So they're not gods which everyone are like oh do you pray to your -- I'm like no, they're elders now. You know, they're spiritual elders, you know. So but then I also learnt how to adapt that to like movement elders. So I talked to my youth about that. OK like put down these lists, keep them in your notes, when you're feeling nervous or something, here's a quote, or what it, you know, what did Audrey say? What did Toni say? What did all these people -- I still use that stuff for myself when I'm feeling like, you know. And I really hate this idea of when friends -- younger friends, artists friends who are like what do they call it, faking it till you make it? And I'm like, no you're not faking it. Be real, be authentic. That's -- you don't need to be anything

else but you, right. And that's what I was taught and modelled, you know. So I just really don't like the faking it till you make it. And that was like probably the generation -- millennials who started to really use that terminology. And I didn't like it at all. So I was like, no figure out who you are. And that's what Winsom said. The first questions are like who are you? And I'm like, oh my God. You can spend entire practice figuring out who you are, like till I'm 101.

Nasrin Himada: Totally.

Pamila Matharu: I can just figure out who I am. And there's an audience or maybe there isn't an audience around that. Where are you from? Right. And Fred Moten says, you know, how'd you get here? I love that strategy. How'd you get here? With the -- with a class or a group, you know. What's your story?

Nasrin Himada: Yeah.

Pamila Matharu: How'd you get here? And there's many, many social justice practitioners use the river model, or whatever model or like, you know, how -- you were a star in the universe. How did you, you know --

Nasrin Himada: Yeah.

Pamila Matharu: That's it.

Nasrin Himada: Yeah. Thank you, Pamila. I -- we are at 11:30, but I wanted to give someone else a chance to --

Pamila Matharu: [Inaudible] or anything or you want to --

[Inaudible Comment]

Any other questions out there? Yeah.

Nasrin Himada: I did. Yes, sorry. I just wanted to give others wanted to answer that question.

Pamila Matharu: Oh, yeah.

Nasrin Himada: Did you? You guys are good? Oh yeah go head.

Pamila Matharu: Come on back, please come back, no, no, please come back.

Audience member: I just wanted to add to the kind of temporal continuum here. And first of all congratulate all of you for showing us what a vibrant ecosystem that you partake in and foster. It's so important -- I trained in the arts in my 20's that was 40 years ago and then some. And everything has changed. When I started the institutional requirement to choose a specific area which would be a territory for you to protect against others. The system of entering into institutions where you

started at the lowest rung, and if you hung in there long enough, like decades, you would go from the assistant to the research assistant, all the way up to being a full curator. The only options were to be in deep institutions or in academia. And to see how these modalities have proliferated and grown, is so encouraging to me. I, myself, broke away quite a long time ago from the rigidity of those structures. But I do feel dipping back into academic practice and museum practice is a great way to get new fuel to get projects going that are more local, and personal. I just wanted to congratulate.

Nasrin Hamada: Thank you.

Emelie Chhangur: I'm happy to answer the last question about mentoring and stuff, because --

Nasrin Hamada: Yes, thank you, go for it.

Emelie Chhangur: I think is important. Like for me, I'm always like believe in your lived experience, bring that to what you do, and there will be resisters, change will always -- you'll -- there will always be resisters. But in enough time, if you stick to your guns, everything will change around you, and the discourse will change. And you will find yourself in a situation where that's valued. So like, yeah I mean I think it's about like valuing your contribution and not getting hung up on other people's expectations of what your contribution or your value is. Because it will change. I mean I know I'm like got the projects I was doing, they were like it's community arts. And like, no one gave a shit about Jane Finch. No one came. And like people would have the audacity to say to me, oh I love your work. I just never see it because it's like so far away. And I'm like well it's not far away if you're -- for someone in Jane Finch it ain't far away. So like maybe I'm not doing it for you. And I think that that is always what I'm like trying to articulate to practitioners today, to just keep doing it.

Nasrin Himada: Yeah.

Emelie Chhangur: And don't assimilate.

Nasrin Himada: I think that's crucial, like the don't assimilate and trust your lived experience and believe in what comes from that.

Maiko Tanaka: And maybe to add to the change that you're doing, and when you're talking about stories like keeping that -- keeping the stories alive, to keep in mind that -- and what you mentioned about the people been working in the arts before. Like in the decades before. Is that we're not just changing the future but it changes the past. Because when you do that, you're like activating something, this -- oh this precedent, or this story, or this perspective, just like we're changing. So I think this nonlinear way -- perspective, as you move into -- as you transform the world, in like a non, one direction, helps you be more expansive and more open and more grounded, rather than it being this trajectory of progress. Because that can be -- that's the institutional trajectory. So like this like -- remembering that we're changing the past as we go, the archive being alive. Yeah. Right. Like?

Pamila Matharu: Yeah, I strongly suggest you Google Generative Somatics. And they have this graph where you're in the middle, and it's actually like layers, right. You're in the middle. And then it's your

immediate family, then your institute -- your community, your institutions. So these are all layers that you exist in, right. And it all comes falling down when you're not doing -- taking care of the heart, right? So you're constantly returning to yourself, constantly returning to yourself, right. You can spend \$5,000 at a Chopra retreat or just listen to what I just said. Because I did spend that five grand, and I was like shit I already knew all this. So coming back to yourself is the most beautiful action you can take. That is a practice in itself. Right. So contemplative practice is a real real thing. And also Google Tree of Contemplative Practices.

Nasrin Himada: Bopha, did you have any last words?

Bopha Chhay: I was just thinking as we were speaking, like I was thinking a lot about Laiwan, an artist in Vancouver. And just the way she kind of embodies every -- everything that you've just mentioned. And I kind of see her as an informal mentor. But she -- there's definitely nothing linear about the way Laiwan does things. And I think one of the things that she has taught me in working with her, and like a recent -- some recent mentorship projects and work that I've done is, just to really be as expansive -- like I think we're always like, we're in a deficit, we're in a time deficit of space, money, etcetera, whatever, emotions, feelings. And to actually realize that we're not in a deficit. Like to kind of really switch that and be like actually, we have a lot of room, we have a lot of time. We make it, we take it, we give it and just this -- I was reading this interview with this poet -- oh I'm blanking now, but it's called Generosity as Method. And I think, you know, generosity to yourself, but to the people you're working with, and your friends and peers too. I was doing this Centre A arts writing mentorship, and, you know, I really went into it with a syllabus thinking that we're going to be looking at each -- like paragraph structure. And I was like, no, no, that's not what they want at all. It's like they actually just wanted to hang out and read together and speak and it was really great. Like I felt like I -- I always learnt just as much from the people I'm supposedly meant to be mentoring, it's like very reciprocal. So, yeah, I think I just wanted to add that it's reciprocal.

Nasrin Himada: Yeah. Thank you. I also want to just do a shout out to Michelle Jacques who's been my mentor, and -- learning a lot from you so much, yeah. And thank you all. I think that's it. And thank you so much to our panellists. Thank you all for your questions and comments. And yeah, we'll see you now at lunch.

[Applause]