

DIGITAL **AGNES**

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Count + Care: Collections

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SPEAKERS

Alicia Boutilier, Anong Beam, Chaka Chikodzi, and Deirdre Logue and Allyson Mitchell

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TRANSCRIPT

Alicia Boutilier: I am absolutely thrilled to be in conversation for the next hour-and-a-half with Anong Migwans Beam beside me and Chaka Chikodzi and Deirdre Logue and Allyson Mitchell. And we are going to talk today about their works in the collection of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre. And we have a selection of those with us in person. So Chaka's piece is the sculpture at the back. And then we also have Deirdre and Allyson and Anong's pieces here. And I have -- my first question is actually about -- I also have them on slides. You know, so they're all over us here. And I wanted to begin -- I wonder, actually, if I could ask you, individually, the first question and then, in asking you that question, to introduce you at that moment. Is that okay? And Anong, I'd like to start with you, if that's okay. So I'll give an introduction here. So Anong Migwans Beam is a painter from M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island and is inspired by the physical history of place, the natural landscape, and the relationship between water and memory. Anong was born to artist parents, Carl Beam and Ann Beam, who encouraged her to develop as an artist. She was raised with a meaningful connection to both her artistic familial roots and rich ancestral heritage. Beam's large format oil paintings, which we don't have yet in the collection, incorporate a multitude of image making approaches, including photo transfer, printmaking, and collage. And I just want to mention, too, that Anong was just approved for a patent just last night for Plantcrylic, a new paint. Because not only is she an amazing artist, but she also runs a paint making company. So Anong, I'll ask you my first question. I have so many papers here. Can you tell us a bit about these works? And I'll point to the two of them here and the two on the screen. Maybe I'll mention how they came in the collection. They were -- so they're titled Summer Monarch and Honey Bee. And we were very lucky to receive them as part of a larger donation from Nicholas Diamant, who is a Queens University professor. And I should mention, too, that in accepting gifts of artworks and collections of artworks, we don't take them all in an unconsidered way. We consider the collection of its parts. And we were so pleased that he had, at one point, acquired your work and then gave them to us. And I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about them. Do you want this one?

Anong Beam: Sure. Am I supposed to -- it doesn't matter.

Alicia Boutilier: This one.

Anong Beam: Is it on? Okay. Hello. Thank you so much for coming out. It's a real pleasure to be here and to be with everyone on this panel. This is so -- it is really interesting. I've had such a unique viewpoint of collecting, as I'm a collector myself. And I have a wonderful collection of art from my favourite artists and people that I've met along the way and watching my parents as professional artists and being a child, seeing them navigate purchases and donations, acquisitions, art dealers, and then experiencing it myself as an artist, but also having worked in curatorial practice and as a director and on the other side of what it takes to acquire and accept donations. And it's really quite an interesting thing. There's so many facets to this, particularly in Canada, that makes it very unique compared to, say, the US. And a large part of that is due to donations and what she mentioned, the institutional attention to which donations are considered. Because donations aren't just accepted easily. And there's actually a cultural -- a group called CPERB that's the -- the acronym for it, but Canadian Cultural Property Review Board. And they oversee the relationship between institutions and the art that they accept as donation or are -- when they're moving, when art is moving around in the country. And a big part of what they have to do and what institutions have to do is to discuss the reasoning behind kind of the long history of the particular work of art and the artist making it and their relation to the cultural history of Canada, which is really asking quite a lot. It's almost like, you know, a university degree or writing a book about a person or an artist. And a lot of these documents are quite long. Anyway, it'll be interesting to see how much we get into all those things. But my particular works were purchased as part of a wedding registry. And it was through a small art gallery that my mom and dad and I had worked with called Art Interiors in Toronto. And they particularly focus on small works of art on paper. And they had supported my practice since I was a teenager and going to OCAD and also my dad and early times too. And these works had been there and were purchases as part of a bride's wish list for her new life with her partner. And then artworks go off on this mysterious journey. And it's so interesting to see them pop up later in different places. Sometimes they go to different countries. And they have amazing stories all their own. It's interesting to check in with them, kind of like long lost friends or neighbours. And you hear some of the things that they've survived or avoided or how they've come to be where they are. And it's really interesting and always surprising to me when I find pieces in places you didn't expect them. And I find that a lot with my parents' artworks. And sometimes people call to tell me that they have this piece or that piece or I'll see something unexpected. And it is always like running into relatives that have been off on this big journey. And you wondered, wow. And sometimes you hear the story of it and there's absolutely no putting it together, how it came from that point A to point B in quite a mysterious way. But I'm very pleased to be here and to be discussing all of this with you all.

Alicia Boutilier: Thank you so much, Anong. That kind of adds to our record of these works. I'm so glad to hear about a little bit more about the path that they had taken in their journey here. So I'll introduce Chaka Chikodzi next. Chaka is a Zimbabwean Canadian stone sculptor living, working, and raising a family in Katarokwi/Kingston. He works with volcanic rock from Zimbabwe, where he started sculpting as a teenager and has a studio here in Kingston and in Mvurwi, Zimbabwe, where he works with a team of assistants. Working with the stone here in Canada, where he has lived for the past 18 years, he has become increasingly interested in the Stone itself, in the story it tells about geological history and in the relationship that he has forged with it over many years living between two continents. His recent work is inspired by the beauty and simplicity of the natural rock formations that are unique to Zimbabwe's landscape. And I'd also like to mention too that we are currently working on a documentary on Chaka's work, which we hope to release in September. So

Chaka, in speaking about Munhu munhu nekuda kwe munhu/People are people because of people, which I believe is a Shona proverb, I wonder if you could talk a little bit about this work in the context of your own practice and its collection here.

Chaka Chikodzi: Thank you, Alicia. Oh, it's a privilege to be here today. I've been an artist all my life. But I have existed outside of the institutions of art, not by choice, but by circumstance. I've been sculpting since I was 13. Like, when I first came to Canada, I once lived in a homeless shelter. I really hate to tell these kind of, like, sob stories, sob self-pity African stories. But you know, it's true that my story is defined by struggle. So when I look at art, it's a -- to me, it's a hustle mentality. It's about survival. So when I first came to Canada, first of all, I come from like a, what do you call the -- my art background is the Zimbabwe Shona sculpture. So when I first came to Canada, I soon realized that there was -- there was sort of like pros and cons of being an African artist. So on the other hand, there's this sort of, like, recognizability to my work because we were a British colony for about 90, 90 something years. But when we became free, we had to fight for our freedom. The Chinese and the Russians gave us the weapons to fight back. So in 1980, we became free. But the independence kind of brought a lot of, like, publicity in the world. Because we had Prince Charles came down to bring the Union Jack down. And then we also had Bob Marley, who came and sang the song "Zimbabwe." So like, during that time, we got the publicity was, like, huge. So like, we got a huge influx of tourists. So my uncle was one of what you call, like, the first generation stone sculptors. Because he had gotten an opportunity. Because prior to that, because we were just like a new colony. So prior to that, there was no commercial art. So one of my uncles was one of the first who was encouraged by this British curator, Frank McEwen. So the first exhibition was at the Rodin Museum in Paris. So there was maybe 15, 16 Zimbabwean artists who were featured in that exhibit. So that exhibit was a huge success. And then, you know, like from there, it become an industry and then with the independence that we had with all this huge influx of, like, tourists and stuff. So we -- it was a good thing for the country. So like, when I came here and realizing the guys who have that sort of, like, experience of having travelled to Zimbabwe or would have been to Zimbabwe were familiar with the Shona sculpture. So I found, you know, that recognizability. And then there was also people who were trying to buy me or devalue my work. Because they would say, at that time, I think one Zimbabwean dollar was equivalent to -- oh, no. One US dollar was equivalent to a million Zimbabwe dollars. So everyone was a millionaire, pretty much, and billionaire in Zimbabwe. So when people viewed my work and see my prices here in Canada, they would say that -- or they would say to me, "Hey, your work is too expensive. I can buy the same piece in Zimbabwe for a price equivalent to a loaf of bread." Like, I've actually had several people say that to me. So like, the question would be, like, okay, how many loaves of bread did I eat to create this piece. You know, so like, when Allyson and Mark invited me to participate to be to the Stories To Tell exhibit and to create a piece sort of like connecting with the Lang collection -- for those of you who are not familiar with the Lang collection, it belong here at the Agnes. It's a collection of artifacts from western central African masks and artifacts. And most of these artifacts don't really have names to them. So like, when I started -- when I was asked, I started thinking more about my -- me being an African artist in Canada and then looking at this collection where it's like, you know, my viewers are also treating me as if everything is the same. They can get the same piece that I have produced in Zimbabwe for a loaf of bread. And then you have this collection here at Agnes where you have these masks and artifacts but you have no individuality. They are sort of like interchangeable. There's no, like, there was, -- like, there was only one artist who was kind of named in the whole collection. So

his name was Ogunwuyi. So when I was asked to participate, so I kind of created a piece that was sort of responding to Ogunwuyi because he was the only person who was named. So my piece was called Munhu munhu nekuda kwe munhu, a person is a person because of a person. Or if you -- like, you could say people are people because of people. So this was just a commentary on the, you know, like, on the interchangeable, you know, they think we're all the same. Yeah, it was just a commentary. Thank you.

Alicia Boutilier: So the next two artists -- are you okay if I give your biographies together?

Deirdre Logue: Yes, of course. It would be far too long if you did them separately.

Alicia Boutilier: So Deirdre Logue and Allyson Mitchell, I'll give a bit about each of you and then your conjoined practice because you work together so closely in your artistic practices. So Deirdre has been prolific and steadfast in her engagement with the moving image and has subsequently produced upward of 60 short films and videos. Her solo work and performance for the camera explores anxiety, the queer body, and the limits of ability through video installation and projection. Deirdre has contributed over 25 years to working with artist-run organizations dedicated to social justice media arts presentation and distribution and is currently the development director at Vtape in Toronto. Allyson Mitchell uses sculpture, performance, installation, and film to explore feminist and queer ideas in her individual and collaborative art practice. These articulations have resulted in a coven of lesbian feminist Sasquatch monsters and a room-sized Vagina Dentata. Allyson teaches in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at York University. And Allyson and Deirdre also direct the Feminist Art Gallery in Toronto and satellite spaces. And since 2010, FAG has enabled exhibitions for artists by collaborating with institutions like SFMOMA, Tate Modern, Whippersnapper in Toronto, Access Gallery and Independent Archive in Singapore. Recently, they presented KillJoy's Kastle, a Lesbian Feminist Haunted House. This project is an expansive and maximalist queer nightmare of epic proportions. Currently, Mitchell and Logue are developing Feminist Art Residency, FAR, on 64 acres of conservation-protected land, not far from here. We call them local artists now too. And the last day of the summer institute will take place at FAR. I'm very excited about that. So we have a selection of your works here that you've done jointly and that Allyson has done earlier in your career. We didn't bring up the lesbian -- the lesbian -- the Lady Sasquatches. We do have an image of them. And we have your two drawings. And these works have come to Agnes in different ways. So the two drawings were purchases that were made. And Rosie is a group -- from a group of three that were donated by the art dealer Paul Petro. And we're super excited and in the process of acquiring or receiving a very generous gift from Allyson of the Ladies Sasquatches. And do you mind just -- oh, we'll just scroll these other works. And then, in the last image please, Maddi. And here's an image of them. I hope that's okay I'm showing them out on -- out on the FAR farm. And I wonder if you would both just speak a bit about your representation in the Agnes collection.

Allyson Mitchell: Thank you. It's very wonderful to be here. And it feels absolutely freaky. This is the first time I've talked in front of people or even, like, -- I teach. But I haven't taught in front of students for a really long time. So I'm feeling a lot of anxiety. But I'm just going to push through it. But there's so much to tell about the history of these works. And it's kind of difficult to know where to begin. But I know that we have each other to lean on if I do say something weird or --

Deirdre Logue: I'm right here, babe.

Allyson Mitchell: Okay. Great.

Deirdre Logue: I'm right here.

Allyson Mitchell: So this one, this Rosie is interesting. It's the first piece that, like, in terms of time, when I made it, it's in the collection. It's very early. I think I made this in 1999 or 1998. And these three pieces were donated by my ex-art gallerist, Paul Petro. And I'm so happy that they're in the collection. But I feel very distanced from the work because, well, this piece showed in my second ever commercial gallery exhibition at Catherine Mulherin's space in Toronto with my ex-collaborator Lex Vaughn. And I remember Paul purchasing this piece. And it was so exciting. And it was priced at, I think, something like \$375. But he also did barter for the price to come down for a family discount, I guess because we're both gay. And I also acquiesced, even though I would never do that now. But - especially from a white, gay male gallerist with money. But at that point, I was, like, he had a lot of power. And I didn't have formal representation. And I was really hoping to be represented in his gallery. So I said yes. And I was also very glad for it to -- I mean, at the time, three hundred and something dollars was significant as a graduate student and needed the money too. And so this starts the -- but this also triggers, for an artist, to have your work in a collection, even though, I mean, I don't -- I didn't financially gain from a sale to a museum or even a donation, which would receive a tax receipt for that donation. Paul Petro would have benefitted from that, financially. However, for a Canadian artist, it's important to have a foot in the door in institutions like that. Because it begets -- it's like getting your first grant from an arts council. It begets other grants and other funding and things like that. And it also means you're counted as an artist. And I was, you know, I've always been fair -- like, not so much recently, but insecure about my identity as an artist. I'm not trained. I work a full-time job in a kind of not arts based profession as a professor in a non-art department. And so it has huge weight to know that the work is in the collection and especially at an institution like Agnes Etherington that I very much respect and love more and more every day. So that's, I think, enough to say about that earlier, earlier work, unless you think I'm not hitting it an important point.

Deirdre Logue: No comment. I think you've done a great job.

Allyson Mitchell: Okay, great. And then to -- so let's talk about, then, the drawings, which are part of an exhibition that Deirdre and I had together, collaboratively, here at Agnes a few years ago. And the exhibition was called I'm Not Myself At All. And it was happening at the same time as an exhibition that was curated by Alicia and Tobi -- I'm forgetting her last name.

Alicia Boutilier: Bruce.

Allyson Mitchell: Bruce called the Artist Herself, which was a historical exhibition of women's artists, women artists. And there was one daguerreotype photograph of a woman with a kind of dour expression. And on the back of the photograph was written, "She's not herself at all." So we named our exhibition as a kind of echo around self, around identity, and around kind of like the idea

of a woman even. And so these two drawings are pencil drawings that we made in honour of the two cultural queer feminist theorists that the ideas in our exhibition orbited around. So the one on the -- your left is José Muñoz, queer theorist. And the one on the right is Monique Wittig, who was a lesbian feminist theorist in the 1980s. And their ideas were very revolutionary and still are. Wittig talked about how lesbian as an -- or was thinking through this idea that lesbians are outside of the category of women, if women are defined in relation to men. So it's almost like an idea of being freed from that social construction. It's flawed and problematic. But it's like there's something really interesting in there. And José Muñoz is well known for his work around theorizing how queerness is not here yet, but something that we strive for on a horizon as a kind of potential utopia. So the work in the show was around trying to think -- explain, just like I did in an awkward way to you, what these theorists were thinking about but using film, paper mache, drawings, and sculpture. And during the exhibition, Jan Allen, the previous director, proposed that the gallery is -- the museum is interested in purchasing these two drawings. And we were talking about what -- you know, how do you value that. How do you price that? So Deirdre said --

Deirdre Logue: Are you sure you want to say this out loud?

Allyson Mitchell: Yes! Yes!

Deirdre Logue: It was about -- I think it's also important to know that these were made during -- while we watched the Katy Perry documentary.

Allyson Mitchell: It's true.

Deirdre Logue: So I just wanted to point that out.

Allyson Mitchell: But yeah. So we were talking about, like, how do you price, like, a drawing. We're not quite sure. And so Deirdre said, "Well, what did you pay the last white male artist for a drawing? Because we want twice that."

[Applause]

Deirdre Logue: Which still wasn't a lot. Okay. Just like, [crosstalk] your expectations.

Allyson Mitchell: People got to know that story.

Deirdre Logue: Okay. Because -- and here's why. Because no one tells you how to do this, right. No one tells you how to negotiate with a museum or a collector.

Allyson Mitchell: Or an art dealer.

Deirdre Logue: Which goes back to the, I think, a very difficult tale around Paul Petro. But it's also you know in your gut that, when you approach these systems, that there are inherent in them these discriminations, these discrepancies, these slippery slopes, these lacks of clarity. So you know, art school or no art school, you often find yourself in a position of not knowing what to say or how to

value your work. And we often, I think, also try to diminish it, undervalue it. It's like just please take them. Just please take them, you know. So you know, it's a cheeky monkey way. But it's a good way to say, "Well, how does it normally work? We would like it to work that way too." So it's a good illustration of using the way the system already doesn't work for you to your advantage or to your, at least, to your knowledge base. So you just say, "Okay. well, these are the systems that seem to work well for these people. We'd like -- we'll mimic that. We will ask for that." I also think it's important to note, too, that these drawings are not the kind of drawings that you would, I don't know, we call them sort of like masterpieces, like, it's like things that are part of the ephemera and the production of something else. So they're not meant to be works that exist, in some ways, outside of the production of the work that we did for our show here at the Agnes. But they are foundational in our thinking, along with Katy Perry documentaries. And it's really important to note that they are -- that they're small and in some ways, unassuming. And they come with a kind of, I guess, they bring a theory along with them that we hope people will become curious about. When seeing the work, they also became -- they're formative in a larger video art installation piece. So you know, in theory, these drawings should also have the other -- some of the other key elements of the exhibition in order to contextualize them. So two more quick thoughts. One is is that how does an institution collect work without collecting all of it or at least a bunch of it or some of it. How do you contextualize these drawings in your collection without all the rest of the work that was made alongside it? So how do installations complicate this question of collecting? I think the other elements that these drawings bring up for me is just how, in fact, once these drawings are unmoored, how are they affected as the theories around them change. So the Wittig and the Muñoz theories occupy a very particular time in queer theory history. How do they change? How do those theories get troubled and change over time? And what does that do to either recontextualize the work or make it problematic or make it more interesting? We don't know. So how do you -- how do you take something out of all that history and all that context and expect it to have it when you show it? Do you bring the artist back to speak to it every time, to tell your stories? Or do we -- do you have to read the Wittig book to be able to talk about it? I would say yes. But it's a question I would have. And lastly, I think media, the video work that we made called Hers is Still a Dank Cave, which is still available for purchase, it has this in it in ways that I think it's lonely without. So these guys being here on their own are just -- the video work that embodied their energies is also like where did everybody go. So you know, can you really parcel things out? Can you really pick and choose how to collect an artist's work? Or do you just have to be all in? I would say you just got to be all in. I also think in collaborations, like it's never going to happen. But what if we broke up? Like, you know, you really -- like, life and things change. Your relationship with Paul Petro changed. Who's laughing? We're not breaking up. But you know, it's a strange thing to come back to the history of how something was acquired, knowing that so much preceded it and so much followed it. And so those would be my only additions, however brief.

Alicia Boutilier: So I almost want to run with your set of questions instead, Deirdre, the ones I have scripted. So I'm going to try to weave in one of the questions and jump ahead of the questions to take that up. I would like nothing more to reinstall the artist herself as well, for you to be alongside I'm Not Myself At All. And full disclosure to Allyson, I was very excited but also very nervous about talking to you all, even though I love you all. And all of you have been a part of a film that we did in association with another historical exhibition, Finding Authenticity, talking with Tyler Tekatch. Although, all of you are just a kind of being in the same space with each other for the first time,

having this other conversation that feels like an extension. And that you can find online, too, through our website. But full disclosure, I am a historical curator. And so often, I -- it's like I'm the angel of death. Often, I am working with artworks in the collection quite a ways down the road. So I really appreciate hearing about what is it that your works need in their life in this collection. Because they're going to be in it for a long time. We don't call them permanent for nothing. And once that -- once your works enter a collection and in a way, become physically separated from you, even if there is an in-between sale or an art dealer that is that interface, what do you hope for your work, for its long-term care, for its exhibition, for its publication, for its digitization? What would you like for them? And I don't know who wants to go first. Should we go back to you, Anong? Do you want to?

Anong Beam: Okay. Okay. Well, it's so interesting hearing this because this is exactly the kind of conversation that, you know, you don't really hear. I didn't -- I don't remember hearing this in art school. And I went to four of them. And yeah, it's something that really needs to be talked about a lot. I guess I have a couple of interesting anecdotes that maybe kind of show some of this. So my dad was a really well-known artist, Carl Beam. And when I was a little kid, I would go with him to these pretty landmark exhibitions like Land, Spirit, Power and Indigena and big things in the '90s and the late '80s. And I remember, there was a big exhibition in Ottawa. And he was so proud to be in the shows. I'm pretty sure it was Land, Spirit, Power. And it was at the Museum of Civilization. I think it was an exhibit there. And he is dressed up in a suit jacket. And we're going in. And it's a big deal. And as soon as we walk in the building, he's just stopped in his tracks. And there's a vitrine, like a standing case with a piece in it. And it's my great aunt's basket. And nobody knows that. So the people who run that institution had no idea that she was related to him, that they were related. And I don't think that she knew that that piece was there in Ottawa. It had been collected by a collector, like who was buying things from -- as a tourist on Manitoulin, where we lived. And then it travelled through a doctor's collection and was donated to the Museum of Civilization, or back then, I think, the Museum of Man. It's had so many name changes. And now it's just the history. And but that's what he saw as soon as he walked in. And he was just really struck that she had -- she had beat him there to this like big venue, this big showcase. She was already there. And nobody knew it. And she didn't know it. And it just kind of -- I think it was like a sobering kind of a moment and funny when you think about it. But also, years later, I had an experience being a curator and then director at Ojibwe Cultural Foundation. And I had this experience of my dad searching for Ojibwe or Anishinaabe ceramics. And being that we all made ceramics and dug clay and had a ceramic history in our family, he was always looking for it in museums. And it was never shown. And museum places would always say, "No, Anishinaabe people don't have ceramic history. The Mohawks do. It's a Haudenosaunee thing." And it was always really kind of, you know, there was no physical indication otherwise. And you'd go to the Gardner Ceramic Museum or any ceramic museum with cultural ceramic pieces and you would not see that. It didn't exist anywhere. And in the '80s, my cousin was on an archeological dig on the island where we live, like just a few minutes away. And he dug up a pot. And he came back, told my dad about it. He was part of a high school group helping archeologists. And there was no picture or there was no discussion to our communities about what they had found there. It was actually just observed, collected, numbered, marked, put in a box, and like gone. And then there was only this memory of what this high school age kid, my cousin, remembered he'd seen. And my dad was trying to figure out what he saw. And he said, "Well, it looked like yours." And then that was all we ever heard of it. And years go by. And my father passes

away. And I have a job. And I move. And I come back. And then I'm at this institution. And one of the jobs that they get is that an archeological department closes down due to lack of funding. And these archeological pieces are rehomed and repatriated back to Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, who's supposed to, then, repatriate them back to the communities they came from. So then they sit there for years in this back room. And I inherit a long, overdue project for FedNor or something. It has to do with going through the actual -- I started reading this book that's the archeological side of what my parents had seen. And in it, there's all these listings of ceramic pieces that were found, like, you know, 10 minutes from where I grew up. And they list the amount of them. There was 123 vessels, like a significant portion. And I'm like over the moon. They're supposed to be there. But they aren't. And this is the first time that -- it was this whole like unfolding of the accidental nature of collections and care and the viewpoint of who's looking at it as far as what is important to talk about or show. And the thing was that Indigenous Anishinaabe ceramics weren't even called that because the guy who dug them up called them Algoma ware. And then they just went into a box as Algoma ware. But what was that? It just happened to be the name of what he said that that was. It didn't attach it to the community or the people or the actual practising ceramic artists right there who kind of had to work in their whole adult lives doing something that they felt in their bodies and that they learnt from their families but that they were consistently told wasn't really authentic to their group, which is so bizarre. And many years later, to come back to that and find that out, it was a real cautionary tale to me about the power and the nature of collecting and collecting and removal. And I think Indigenous communities and also what you spoke to about the pieces that you're reacting to, how they can be collected and taken out of context out of countries and displayed as groupings when they are made by individuals. And the people of that community would know those individuals or their relationships that can be supported or harmed very -- in powerful ways through the act of curatorial collecting, removal, and display and deciding what's displayed and what's not and who gets to explain what it is and who gets to name it. That was, you know, it's really quite interesting to me. And so I'm really glad that we're here having this conversation.

Chaka Chikodzi: Thank you. Yeah, for me, I don't have that many, I guess, expectations. But I just hope that I won't be in the same position as the artists who are in the Lang collection. Because they ended up with no names and they are just, like, a grouping of, you know, they are all the same, interchangeable. So I hope I won't end up in the same situation as them. Thank you.

Allyson Mitchell: And part of the question you asked was how do you hope the institution will care for your work in a collection. Well, and I have no doubt that pretty much any institution would probably take better care of my art than I have had the capacity to, just materiality, the stuff of it, the time. I have no doubt that the materiality will be really well cared for. And something -- I mean, if you can go ahead to the slide with the big sculptural work, the Ladies Sasquatch. I mean, to have this work collected is beyond exciting because it means -- it's a very large installation of unwieldy shapes that don't fit into boxes, that are, you know, would probably take a million years to rot in a landfill because they're Styrofoam and acrylic material. But they need to be cared for or they had to go somewhere. We could not really sustain the stewardship of the work any longer for the cost of storage lockers for a material art practice. I was talking to a couple artists outside earlier around just like how unsustainable it is when you do have a material practice of where that work gets stored and you depend on the kindness of family, friends, and relations, damp basements and barns and things like that to take care of the work. So that piece is really important. But also, to know that the

work and the hope is that the work is cared for in a way that allows for accessibility to the public and conversations that need to happen around work that was made that came out of a particular politic in a moment that will not, like you were saying earlier, that won't mean the same thing in 25 years or 50 years or 100 years and to become an archive in a way of an ideology or a way of living or a way of thinking. And so that's an important piece to be cared for, is providing people the context. But also, an important piece for me and that was reassured for me when you came to our place to pack up and talk about these sculptural works was that you said that I could always, while I'm still alive, access them, that my family could access them, that you know, we could -- they would be available. They wouldn't be in a vault where people wouldn't be able to show them or touch them ever again. Because one big part of these giant monsters that are made out of a tactile fabric that's meant to be touched, part of what makes the work come alive is that it's not behind some heavy museum glass. It's not behind a plexiglass whatever you call it that you put over sculptures, that it's like touchable. And that's a really important part for the politics around queer community and culture making, is that it requires the activation of a public for it to be alive. Or else, it doesn't matter.

Deirdre Logue: Yeah. It's true. I mean, when you look at galleries and museums, you're like look at the size of those doors. You could really make something big to put through those doors. So yes, I mean, if museums and art galleries are publicly funded and privately funded to make art available, I think there is a very important question as to how do, then, collections become reanimated. And to what extent can that recontextualize the work? But what is the institution's responsibility to making sure that the artist is participating in that recontextualization. So yeah, I do think that there are important questions for future museums and future publicly funded art galleries. To what extent are you obligated to collect? I would say that you are obligated to collect as part of your core function. And of course, there's always the, you know, the donations are so important. But the fees are also important because there is this notion, again, that art is just somehow made. But it's not. It's not just made. It's paid for all the time, over and over and over again through those studio, you know, rent checks and those storage lockers and those materialists. So it's a, I think, a question moving forward. And I think we should open it up to the audience to participate in, as many of them are artists and curators and have been collected. However, all it takes is one. But it's, yeah, it's like what do future museums have to do with this notion of collecting as a form of curation and care to bring it back to the general theme and to what extent does that care involve the artist as part of what's getting cared for along the way. So is it enough to have the work? Or is there a pact there, that as long as the artist is alive, they get to touch it. They get to talk about it. And they get to benefit from its exhibition. So the exhibition right is another piece. You know, when you put this on display, institutions are obligated to -- this is the part of my CV that gets a little boring. People are like, "Oh, no. She was on the CARFAC board. I forgot. We should have not let her, you know, not invited her." But you know, these institutions are obligated to pay an exhibition rate to the artist every time. And in that is another kind of economy for the artist that's important. But it's also, it can deter collection. And it can discourage exhibition. So we need to think about how the artist and the institution and the works themselves can work in collaboration to make visibility possible. Yeah.

Allyson Mitchell: One more piece on what you just said, which is that, you know, that exhibition right is something that was hard won by artists, by CARFAC fighting for something that the National

Gallery fought against and took CARFAC to Supreme Court of Canada to fight having artists be paid the right to exhibition.

Deirdre Logue: Yes. CARFAC National took the National Gallery to court. It was many years, almost nine years. It cost a fortune. CARFAC almost went bankrupt. Anybody from CARFAC in the audience? Okay. There's some -- thank you for your service. But the National Gallery felt that they were the best entity in the narrative around collecting an artist's work to choose or exhibiting an artist's work to choose what they would pay that artist. And CARFAC's argument was that CARFAC had a fee schedule and the National Gallery was obligated to pay it. When they lost, which they did, I was in the room. It was fantastic. The Supreme Court took about 30 seconds to decide. And now CARFAC basically gets to choose what the National Gallery will pay, instead of them just picking up the old fee schedule easy way. But yes, I guess, that's an important part, that these are not closed door conversations between curators and artists. These are public debates. These are questions for audience, as well as artist, as well as curator, as well as museum director, benefactor, patron, technician, and everyone involved in making this machine go. And how the works are art -- how works are acquired is a collaboration between these institutions and these people. And I think the more we treat it like a relationship of care, one of mutual benefit, the richer the context for the work and the institution.

Alicia Boutilier: On the subject of display -- oh, no. I'll mention to you that Kim Ondaatje, who was one of the early -- one of the founders, the only woman founder of CARFAC, lives not too far from here, won a Governor General's Award, along with Tony Urquhart, who's no longer with us. But we've got that good feel, that good vibe happening here. And but on the topic display, I wondered, Chaka, I would love to pull this out of you just a little bit more. Because you supplied us with -- we've had this work in the collection since 2016. And you recently supplied us with a display case or plinth for this work. And I wonder if that goes along with the degree to which an artist desires and should inform the display of their work, the framing of it. And so I wanted to ask a little bit more about your intention in supplying that plinth.

Chaka Chikodzi: Oh, right. Yeah. Like, yeah, the stand, yeah, when it comes to sculpture, it's like, yeah, it's always about the aesthetics of you know, displaying it. Or I guess, you could call it the politics of display. But so I created this stainless steel base. At first, I kind of thought it was too shiny because it's stainless steel and it's kind of got this made kind of look to it. But then, when I put the sculpture on, it wasn't actually taking away. It was actually elevating the sculpture and bringing out all the, I guess, beauty from the sculpture. So yeah, I like the fact that, you know, this is like a continuation, like you said. The piece has been here since 2016. It was kind of a surprise for me. I was -- it was actually Canada Day when I was in the park not too far from here, at City Park doing the Artfest craft show. So I got a call about, you know, inquiring about the piece and the price. So like you said, like, you don't know how to kind of like come up with the price. And especially if you haven't sold any piece, too, like an institution. And a big art institution like Agnes, it's kind of like, you know, experience only comes from actually being able to do it. So in the park, they ask me, "Oh, how much is that piece?" I was like -- so with most artists, I think it depends on how broke you are or if you have any money that's saved up in the bank account. So like, it was what it was. It was a very good experience. I felt very honoured that my piece was going to come and be part of a public institution. Whereas like, you know, my whole -- throughout my whole career, I think I had reached

a point where I sort of, like, gave up to the point where I was like, "Well, you know what? I don't think that's going to be, like, the root to my success. I think I can still get there with other means." Because you know, I'm from the streets in, like, Zimbabwe and South Africa. So I knew that, you know, whether I'm in the art institution or I'm not, I'm still going to be able to meet the people. Because you know, we had that whole experience of when we became independent and the tourists coming to Zimbabwe. We realized that we had, I guess, in English, you could call it cultural capital. So yeah, it's something that we have at our disposal. So either way, you know, I thought, you know, I had given up or I had given up on that feeling of being an outsider. So I mean, I'm here now. I'm very, you know, I feel honoured that my piece is part of the Agnes. And you know, I feel like, since I came here to Kingston, I've been here 10 years now. And the first exhibit that I was involved in here was that Stories to Tell. And then, soon after, I got invited by Sunny for his curated show called Dig. So since then, that's been since 2016. And then now, 2022, I'm kind of pleased with the change, you know. I know there's more change, you know. I was involved in that Lang collection. And then I saw the exhibit that was here not too long ago, Opened Mouths. So I feel like, you know, that is kind of given me a sense of, like, you know, belonging, a sense of home and you know, watching all these changes and stuff. And you know, it's a good feeling to see that or to think that my work has been part of that sort of like Agnes transformation. You know, and I feel that my work is part of that or connected to that change over the last six years. Thank you.

Alicia Boutilier: Anong, I wonder if we -- if you would mind sort of extending that a little bit to talk about what you think the role a collecting institution has for your work. And I know you are very much involved, also, since you mentioned your father and your father's estate and you had talked about CCPERB early on in this discussion. So -- and have been an executive director yourself of cultural institution.

Anong Beam: Okay. Thank you. I think it's a really -- it's a really great question. And it goes so deeply to the role of art in society. And that's such a personal question. For me, I view that as that art has to do with the expression of the culture and the society that we're living in. So the responsibility, I think, of an institution is to observe and react to that as closely as they can to help reflect back to society, who they are, the different parts. Because it's so important for different groups to be able to see themselves there and for youth to see themselves there and not just to see one segment of society and their values reflected back at everyone, but for us to all gain a deeper understanding of each other. And obviously, that's really hard to do in an underfunded way. And I think that, in case any larger governmental institutions listen to this, I think that the Canadian art institutions are really underfunded as far as their collections and care. And I think that that leads to a dependence on donations. The acquisitions are not really considered very highly on operating budgets as necessities for art institutions. It's more about other -- other priorities, depending on who is in government and which province, etc., etc. But I think that, if we were to look at the over larger scheme in Canada, which is unique to Canada. I don't think it's not like this in so much in other countries. But in Canada, where we depend on donations and then we establish a broader governing group called CCPERB and have them and the people -- the extra work that that creates for people at collecting institutions to dedicate to writing these novelesque reports on the work that they want to accept as donations and then the government giving a tax receipt to the donor, who, you know, may or may not have paid, you know, however that goes, which oftentimes is quite minimal to the artist, if all of

that was, instead, given to art institutions directly and then maybe we could kind of break a cycle of donations and really recreate a more equitable relationship between art institutions who represent the Canadian public and the artists who represent Canadian psyche in society. That would be really healthy. I would really like to see that in some form or another. I've kind of been a different -- I was a member of OAAG briefly. And I've heard from a lot of different art institutions in Ontario and beyond about their woes and their budgets and balances and everything. And I think that, in general, most institutions with a collecting mandate want to be actively pursuing their own curatorial collections and not having to work -- donations can be challenging. I think there is probably a lot of horror stories from anybody who has been in arts long enough to have interacted with art dealers. And not that they're the bad guys. I have an art dealer I'm really happy to be with now. But I remember a lot, coming and going, and seeing my dad and the things that he had to work with. And back in the '90s, he produced quite a lot of beautiful artwork that was acquired specifically for the purpose of giving as a donation. And a lot of people refer to that as -- it was something that was exploited in the late '90s -- as a tax donation scheme or shelter. And a lot of people who weren't actually artists were propped up by middlemen who pushed their artwork into collecting institutions in Canada. So it became this way for art institutions and COPERB to kind of cast a bit of a shadow on anybody whose work was donated. And this really involved a lot of unknown people who didn't have artistic background and Indigenous artists. And I think that, when you are an artist who's working from your -- to support yourself and your family, like my dad was, like a lot of art Canadian artists, really struggle to support themselves. And that can put people, gallerists or donors in a very powerful position. And I don't feel that it's -- it can be really, really unfair in the end. In the end, the artwork exists and continues. And it isn't the donor or other people who are celebrated along the way, you know. But for all the artists who are living a hard life out there, it would be really great, as Canadians, for us to trust our cultural institutions a bit more and to trust their education and judgement and curatorial direction that -- to ask for them to be funded better so that they can make choices and choose artworks and support actually purchasing from artists and their agents, rather than a circuitous route through donors.

Alicia Boutilier: I thank you, Anong. And I'm also mindful of time. And so maybe we will open it up. I know that Deirdre has been wanting to for a while now.

Deirdre Logue: Open it. Open it. Open it.

Alicia Boutilier: To ask if there are any questions or any points that all of you would like to bring up. And I will run towards you with this chorded microphone so you can talk into it. Great. Heather.

Audience member: Hi, everyone. I'm an archivist. This has been like, I could talk COPERB, CARFAC, everything for days. This has been very exciting little roundtable. I didn't know with your involvement with CARFAC and with some of the things that have come up around the resale, the artist resale right that is currently sort of ongoing, if you wanted to speak to that a little bit. Is it something that people should be sort of supporting and that sort of thing?

Deirdre Logue: The resale right is a really great thing that you raise. And I think, again, it illustrates the complexity of acquisition. So institutions, the resale right doesn't happen in the same way, even though they can often be part of a resale issue or a resale exchange. But the resale right is -- we

don't have it here. But it exists in other parts of the world. So if Allyson bought one of my works and she sold it to Pamela, I would get a cut of the resale value as the artist who produced the work. Because over time, as we know how cultural capital works, it has its pros and cons. It has those who benefit from it and those who don't. But when works are acquired, I mean, I'm sure it happened to your father's work many times, where it gained cultural capital and value. But when the collector sells that work to another collector or it goes back to auction, the artist is cut out of any profit. So the resale right lobby has been struggling for years, decades in Canada. They have it in other places. But the fact is collectors don't like to return the benefit of their collecting capital to the artist. And that, if they do, then well it's one of those things it's like, well, if I gave it to you, then everybody is going to want it. But the truth is these works were made by the individual artist. And it is their cultural capital, initially, that made them valuable to the collector. So it's one of the great things about the Canadian cultural landscape is we have public funders. But we do not have sufficient patronage at all. And we fail to manifest the resale right here, as well as other rights and freedoms of artists in Canada that are long overdue. I'm not very good at explaining things in more complicated terms than that. But I know if you wanted to contact CARFAC National, they could probably explain it with math. But thanks for bringing it up.

Audience member: Hi Deirdre. So I worked for CARFAC National at the same time --

Deirdre Logue: Hi. I hope I didn't say anything wrong.

Audience member: Well, no but --

Deirdre Logue: But if I did, correct me.

Audience member: I wanted to share some happy news that was recently in the news.

Deirdre Logue: How recent?

Audience member: Very recent. I'm just looking at the article right now.

Deirdre Logue: Just say it was from today. Okay. Just say it was from today. Okay.

Audience member: No, no. August 6, but there are some happy developments happening with the Canadian copyright law --

Deirdre Logue: Okay.

Audience member: -- around artist resale rights.

Deirdre Logue: Let's hear it.

Audience member: So I can share the article with you. And I'm surprised it didn't make more news. But under reforms of copyright law being drafted by Innovation Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne and Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez, artists would get a resale right giving them a

royalty during the term of copyright. So it's not yet law. But there's some happy developments happening. And hopefully they come into effect very soon. So I just wanted to share that.

[Applause]

Deirdre Logue: Thanks. That's great. Good work.

Anong Beam: Actually, yeah, actually, I just had a quick two cents about the CARFAC. And that, interestingly, there's a part related to CARFAC, which I don't really -- I belong to what was CRC, Canadian Copyright Collective. And I think that that's changed names too. Although I still deal with amazing people. And it's been ongoing. But there's a really, really great thing to support if you are an artist or if you work with artists is Canadian Copyright Collective. Because I was able to sign over my whole family, all of our copyrights now have belonged to CRC. And it's really great to have that third party in between. Because oftentimes you can discuss reproductions and different groups or people will try to pressure you to donate those. And it's really handy to be able to say, "No, I don't manage my copyright. I don't own -- I have another group that does that." And they do it so excellently and professionally and it's amazing to have a group like that in Canada. Yeah.

Alicia Boutilier: I really -- I just gave up. I pass it on. Is there anybody else who has any questions.

[Inaudible Speaker]

Lisa Myers: I have a question. Hello. It's -- the question is a little bit more around the collection. The question is around the collection. The -- like I was just -- because I was able to look at some of the items in the collection and some of the finding aids were shared with me. And there's lots of baskets that -- and so there's a very vague -- there's vague provenance for like a lot of the times, which you know, and that's kind of what you were talking about in terms of the masks and things, that there's not that. And I was thinking about the baskets and your anecdote around basket at the Museum of Civilization, not having its, you know, the maker's name and things like that. And I now that's a process because those big collections get donated. I don't even know the history of like how come you have -- like the Agnes has a lot of baskets. But it's interesting just like just seeing the, like, looking at it and seeing Anishinaabe question mark, Anishinaabe question mark, Anishinaabe question mark, like, as the maker or the origin or the nation of its origin, I suppose, those items. And I know that, probably, it's a process that maybe, you know, the museum is going through. But I guess I'm thinking about just approaches or ways of changing the question marks or maybe like all that ceramic -- all those ceramics in so many museums, yeah, have been called -- have been, you know, maybe designated as not Anishinaabe. And but maybe there's -- maybe they were, right, like the taxonomy or the ways of categorizing and things like that. So anyway, I just thought maybe would you be able to speak to that? Is that a process that Agnes is going through? And I figure it probably is. And I'll say one more thing. Something that was really inspiring to me was a couple summers ago, well, it was before the pandemic. But it was in Parry Sound, there's a small museum. And again, it's probably called the Parry Sound Museum. And I went -- there was a Potawatomi gathering at Wasauksing, the reserve there, the reserve right near there. And Maria Hupfield did a show where she got -- took all the baskets that were in their collection. And then a bunch of baskets, I think, I might be -- this is how I understand it anyway. So if I'm wrong, whatever. But this

is my impression of what happened. And she displayed them throughout the museum. So the museum had like little like diorama type things, spots, you know, like this was the country kitchen. And this was this or that. And so they were just covered in baskets and also lots of baskets from the community. Because lots of basket makers in Wasauksing. Anyway, I just thought it was, like, this really, really kind of intimate and special kind of visiting, in a way, that she encouraged by bringing all these baskets together and anyway. There's my basket story. I just wanted to, like, ask that question and offer that. So thanks.

Alicia Boutilier: Thank you for that question, Lisa. And I will try to speak to it. And I also open it up to my colleagues to speak to that responsibility and care that we hold here at Agnes. And I know that is a conversation that will continue through the summer institute. And it connects to those baskets that you were visiting here and the Lang Collection to which Chaka spoke. To speak to those baskets, a lot of -- most of the cultural belongings, the Indigenous cultural belongings that reside here that may be also considered to be a living ancestors, were brought here before Agnes was founded in 1957. I don't say this to alleviate our responsibility to them. They came to Queen's as part of that university enterprise of collecting: must represent all cultures in this way. And they became dislocated from their communities of origin, from their makers who would have been known as Anong said and brought here. When Agnes was founded in 1957, a lot of these ancestors were moved to this location in storage here. Recently and in working with fantastic colleagues that I do work with here, I'm like the longest -- I've been here for the longest now. It's hard to believe, as a curator. And I work with many wonderful curators and director. And we, I can say, do not consider them to be part of the collection, but take to heart our responsibility to care for them and to find those reconnections with communities of origin so that we can change those question marks and even change those records to be different kinds of records. I can't really say what they would be. But that to move them away from traditional museological practice and to think of other ways of documentation, but also to reach agreements with those communities of origin. A lot of them become so disassociated that we don't know the provenance to have an agreement of care. Should they continue to stay here or be repatriated. I don't know if anybody else would like to speak to that. But that -- Lisa's installation, Lisa Myers and Laura Pitkanen have an installation in the house. I won't go off on a tangent here. But and there is a basket. There is a place for a basket to be held. Oh, there's a basket there now. Oh, maybe I should go up there.

[Laughter]

Lisa, do you want to speak to that inclusion of the basket in your installation? Maybe not now. Okay.

Allyson Mitchell: I think this is really interesting because like you're even trying to find language for it. But you don't have the word that fits the action or the intention. And so I mean, it's part of a bigger question too around, like, is it -- is collecting inherently and always going to be a colonial practice. Is it possible to collect in a way that is not? And when Deirdre and I were running the Feminist Art Gallery in Toronto, we tried to think through a way of starting a feminist art collection that was decentralized, that was anti-capitalism, and that would be a decolonizing gesture. And we couldn't figure it out. With even with a brain trust of many people trying to think around -- think through it. And we kind of gave up after a certain point. We came up with all kinds of schemes and talked about having, like, a collection spree where people held their collections. And this would be

like ephemeral, feminist, queer art that people could visit in each other's homes as a way of also trying to like break down a binary between private and public. Like we were trying to really think through some radical ways of doing that. But in the end, we gave up.

Deirdre Logue: I haven't given up.

Allyson Mitchell: I do not want to do it.

Deirdre Logue: I could do it.

Allyson Mitchell: Go for it.

[Laughter]

Audience member: Is augmented reality the solution?

Deirdre Logue: Augmented reality, what was the -- does it mean something? Solutions. Okay. You bring up a good point. And there's, I guess, the question is how do we, especially with moving image culture, generally speaking in the Canadian cultural landscape, there's lots of distributors. There's nine, in fact, in Canada that are all funded by the Canada Council that all have large collections of moving image. And educational institutions also collect moving image. So if you're taking a film studies master's degree at York, you know, there's a -- or if you're here at Queen's, there's a, you know, there's a collection of Canadian and Indigenous film and video probably here somewhere. And so as an example, when that technology, say, it used to be films and then it was 3/4 inch video and then it became a DVD and then, you know. Now we've got virtual reality. We have augmented reality. How do institutions not only collect things that are available in multiple iterations, right, like a five-year streaming license but you want hundreds of universities to have them. Don't you? But you know, do museums -- why do museums and galleries not participate in that kind of -- in the licensing of works, which I think would actually broaden the footprint of your collection substantially without the pain of having to store it. But also, as those technologies advance, how do we continue to advance our thinking about how something is collected or how museums are responsible for their public engagement. Because they come with all these technologies. And when you say augmented reality, I'm like, "I don't know what that is." But I do know that it's one of those things, when artists are out on the avant garde edge of something, people are like, "We can't collect that because we don't really have that in-house expertise." So you know, perhaps it's really about the collaboration between the artist and the institution and them not losing that connect over the advancement of these technologies, forms, theories, philosophies, or cultural practices. Because I think you'll find that most institutions are not quite ready. They're still tooling up from 10 years ago or 15 years ago with video art installations, right. Like, SD cards or you know, all these things come and go really quickly and you don't have the technologies anymore. So augmented reality is proving to be a challenge, I would think for museums.

Audience member: Less than what you think.

Deirdre Logue: Pardon?

Audience member: Less than what you think.

Deirdre Logue: Less than what you think. Have they collected your work yet in augmented reality?

Audience member: Well, there is one example, you know, that the, you know, we put the system collective in Vienna. They created a platform called artificial museum.

Deirdre Logue: Yes.

Audience member: And it's actually already here in Kingston. You don't see it. It's there. It's in a map. You can actually access it. And it's work by artists. The artists have been paid. So it is a layer. It's a layer that is part of a cultural fabric that is now kind of in a realm.

Alicia Boutilier: Chaka, I saw you pick up your microphone. And I wondered if I -- if you can close us off with your comment.

Chaka Chikodzi: I was just going to add one like, I guess, the role of a collecting art or collecting institution, going back to what you were saying, like you know, the institution does -- I understand that sometimes the institution doesn't have control of what work is acquired into the institution because it's coming from donations, right. And then maybe the institution has some money to also decide which, I guess, artwork to be acquired that represents the public interest. And you know, like looking at the Agnes as an example. I see that there's been -- he who decides or who decides what that public value is has changed and is changing. So it's a good system that already exists. I think it's all about how you use that institution to actually acquire the works, you know, the fact that who decides. That public value has changed. So it's all about -- it's all up to the collecting institution to, you know, change the narrative and maybe find that value or that public value or -- and you know, kind of like, you know, push it through and you know, I think, you know, my whole point is already existing structure works very well. It's just a matter of like how it's implemented and who is in charge. You know, and that has been changing and it will continue to change. And I think it's a really good system. That's all I wanted to say for it. Thank you.

Alicia Boutilier: Thank you. Thank all of you for -- I feel like we just -- it's just the tip of the iceberg that we touched on here. And I wish we could stay here forever and talk about this. But I know Anong has a workshop that she's going to be leading in half an hour. And so please -- I think it's full. So I hope that you've been able to sign up. And we're going to have a brief break and there will be the workshop and then also, Tian Zhang will be leading the first iteration of her Manifesto for Radical Care and we'll maybe just meet in the atrium and follow you, Tian. But first of all, please join me in thanking everyone up here.

[Applause]