

# Culture and the Climate Emergency - Audio

Misha, thank you, and welcome. And it's very, very good to be at Eden. And to seize Tim Schmidt, sitting here in the audience, the man who created Eden, I suppose, there's always a moment at which you, as an individual, suddenly recognise, the world has problems that are greater than your own. And I can remember, I'm old enough to remember that moment in the 60s, when Rachel Carson, marine biologist in America, published a book called A Silent Spring, which was about the impact of pesticides and man, man's intervention in the agriculture of Northwest Europe or North America in particular, but also the rest of the world. And it was a moment at which somehow I think Rachel Carson's book, Silent Spring really gave birth to the whole environmental movement. But in the last 20 years, I think we've seen something which is even larger than that, which is, of course, the impact of man, not just on agriculture in a given country, but actually, on the potential survival of the planet as a whole. And the climate emergency, which we are going to try and address today is, and the way in which artists and those involved in culture and creativity can make a contribution to addressing the issues of climate emergency has become in a way the paramount issue in our society today. We've got a very distinguished and very panel here to talk about these issues. I'm going to ask them each to introduce themselves briefly. And then we'll pick up I will pick up some of the bigger questions that we want to address. So faintly, why don't you begin with a few words about your own practice?

## **Fehinti Balogun**

I, my name is Fehinti Balogun. I am an actor and a writer and a theatre maker and a whole lot of other wishy washy things. And I recently made a film called Can I live with complicity talking about climate change from the perspective of peoples of colour, and I've been touring feels like the world trying to open this discussion up a little bit more.

Thank you, Daisy.

## **Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg**

Hi, I'm Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg. I'm an artist and my work looks at our relationship with nature and with technology, and in a way how we spend a lot of time thinking and focusing on innovation and thinking that's better rather than protecting or preserving or valuing what already exists. So I sort of work at this intersection this, this painful, tricky place.

## **Vanessa Kisuule**

I'm Vanessa Kisuule, and I'm a writer and performer and I live in Bristol. Yeah.

## **Emily Brown**

Yeah. That'd be

really thrilled. And we might say that she wrote a poem on after the fall of the Edward Colson statue in Bristol that actually went viral.

### **Vanessa Kisuule**

Yes. I didn't know how to shoehorn that into the climate change thing. I didn't say that, but that's true.

### **Matt Hocking**

I'm Matt Hocking, Cornwall based graphic designer, music power creativity to basically look at environmental and social issues as we're in this climate and social and ecological emergency and unlocking that creativity. So all from Cornwall and basically 20 years ago, 18 years ago, I started a new design journey from a corporate design journey here at Eden Project.

### **Emily Brown**

Hi, I'm Emily Brown. I'm the lead designer at ustwo games. And we most recently released Alba: A Wildlife Adventure where we really explored our love for nature and really wanted to share that and looking forward to talking more about that.

### **Mark Jenkin**

Hello, I'm Mark Jenkin. I'm a filmmaker from West Cornwall. And I've just completed my second feature film, which is called Enys Men, which on some level addresses, the issues that we're here to discuss today.

Thank you. I think we'd like to really address this big question about climate change and the climate emergency relief from three basic points of view. First of all, I think we'd like to talk a little bit about what is the narrative that we are trying to convey? What are we actually wanting to say about this? Policy? Second, I think, to who is our audience who we tried to reach, who we tried to influence who he tried to give agency to, within the community? Or is it something that we're simply talking to ourselves, frankly? And then thirdly, I think, as individuals, as creative practitioners, there are questions about how we conduct our own practice. Is it sustainable? Who do we work with? Are there people that we refuse to work with because of their own position? And I think it's these kinds of questions that we'd like to dig into. And perhaps I could begin by asking each of the panellists just to pick up one of the one aspect of one of those questions from their own point of view, and just say how they respond, you know, whether it's to the stories that they want to tell, or the audience's they want to address or the way in which they actually conduct their own business? Fehinti, why didn't you begin?

### **Fehinti Balogun**

I think I'll start with, what is the message what we try to try to say? So I wrote this film called Can I live and it's, it's sort of, generally my journey from not really knowing anything about the movement to suddenly being in the movement to suddenly wanting to do something about it. And and what I learned is that there are so many levels to the discussion. And even, you know, us being here, there is a deeper level still, because we understand that we're in a climate and ecological emergency. Yes, we understand that climate change is a big issue. Yes. But climate change is a symptom of a bigger issue, which is white supremacist capitalism, we understand that we're working with a system that wants

infinite growth with finite resources. And it will steal that from wherever it will take it from wherever they can get it from, that comes from a history of different things. One of those things being slavery, we know that in this in this country, a lot of money was taken from the West Indies, and that led to the Industrial Revolution, industrial revolution being part of the climate and ecological emergency, if we're not addressing the history, then we're not really addressing climate change. So understanding the levels of the argument is where I want to get to with the practice. Because even if a scientific thing came out today, that removes co2 from one area of the UK or somewhere, where would that go, we'll go to the richest communities, it most certainly would not go to the poorest areas, because we know those areas, the areas that are right next to the airports, and have most people of colour in this country, we know that there is a divide in that. So if we're talking about climate change, we have to talk about class, we have to talk about politics. And then we have to talk about history. And we have to talk about white supremacy, these things are all in the same basket. And so as a practitioner, and as someone who writes and talks about these things, I often talk about the history of them, were going through and anybody who comes in and talks with me and and has that discussion, it is my dream for them to understand the root of these issues, because then we can go to to rooting them out and talking about it. So that's kind of where I'm, I'm starting

Daisy.

### **Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg**

But in a way, my practice looks at all of those questions of message audience and methods. And the journey I've taken, it's from actually working deep in technology, working with scientists and technologists who are creating new technologies. So I spent 10 years working with genetic engineers in the field of synthetic biology. And for me coming in as an artist, it was an opportunity to see how those power structures are built, who gets to choose the features that we have, how new technologies are constructed, and the value systems that different futures sort of emerge with my practice, and really took a time where I was making work about extinction and biodiversity and the impacts of colonialism. And then I started what am I doing? What am I asking the audience in the gallery to do? And those words mean a lot to me to bringing back the smell of an extinct flower by collaborating with scientists and other artists. But is there this question of agency really sort of started to to kind of affect me and then working with the Eden projects, I've been working on a commission called Pollinator Path Maker here with the team at Eden. And it was this next step that they offer, which is saying, well, we can connect with the audience think about sort of awe and the sense of Jeopardy around the natural world, but also we want to instil hope and agency, and I found that really inspiring for my practice was like, what do we do? How can I deal with my own panic at climate emergency and justice and actually use the value of an artwork and use the the aesthetic joy of art as a way to actually get people excited? So the work that we're making Eden is is a work that we plant gardens for other species. Designing from different perspectives and then invite people to plant their own. And it's a way of giving us not a solution, not a technological solution, but a way to actually feel that we can look at nature from the perspective of other species. And in a way, that's, for me is a shift. And I hope that it works.

### **Vanessa Kisuule**

And that's why I have so many things I want to say. But only two minutes, so, okay, I will try my best. So I have a two pronged answer I want to give right now. One is about my own practices and artists, and one is just a broader notion of how I feel about the arts and access, you know, who's included in the conversation? and who isn't? I thought so often we problematize people, how do we reach such and such a community? Or, you know, like, what are we going to do? How, how do we engage, you know, how, what are the and it often feels so and we were talking about this last night at dinner, it feels so condescending, you know, how do we reach those people over yonder? What could they possibly, or we don't know, we'd love for them to come to our theatre, or our biome, or whatever it might be. And I just think, well, people are usually doing brilliant things in and of themselves, that we're not making a lot of effort to engage with, right, you know, the people that are privileged enough to come to these spaces or theatres or art galleries? Let's go see what they're up to. How can we support that? How can we fund that? You know, there is there is actually far more awareness, and productivity and agency going on than we think, in the so called hard to reach communities or impoverished communities like, what? What the fuck are we talking about? Frankly? Yeah, sorry, for my French. But um, I think there is a lot to be said about meeting people with what they're already doing. And then seeing how we can expand that aid that fund that. So people feel like they're not, they're not being brought along into a narrative or an agenda that they haven't set. Do you know what I'm saying? So, you know, when it comes to community arts and access, I think it's really important to, to think about how we could remove the power from institutions and buildings, and make it about those local community efforts. And things that are going on that are really exciting because they come from a real place. And they're not about the prestige of working with Bristol Old Vic with, you know, whatever. Whether about what people are genuinely interested in and have been compelled to make for themselves, you know, often with very little money, right. So that's one point. And then I was thinking about the importance of wonder, in getting people invested in wanting to preserve things or change things, right. And when I had a tour around the biome last year, because I wrote a commission for this space, the lady talked about the importance of not starting with the doom and the gloom. And I think Wonder is such a beautiful under appreciated feeling, when it comes to how we're going to actually maintain the motivation to make the changes we need to make when we really care about and are in awe of the natural environment, of course, we're going to want to do what we can to help it. And because so many people do not have access to the spaces that give you that feeling. What they're hearing is an abstraction, oh, we need to save the planet, or we need to care about nature, we need to care about animals, and they're looking around, they're like, what, what animals are you talking about, they might have watched a documentary, but again, that's over there in Antarctica, or Africa or South America, there's, there's, there's no sense of connect. So getting people to feel that sense of investment or care on a local level, you know, access to the, the nature around them, even if it's a little part, even if it's, you know, a little allotment. And so as an artist, I tried to think about that I try and think about the local in this specific. And try my best to get people to think on that level. Rather than think about these abstract notions of things that happen, miles away from them. I'll leave it there.

### **Matt Hocking**

I mean, for me, it's really interesting hearing Fehinti and Vanessa, and Daisy, because it's showing about the power of us as creators, we've all created what defines us, as humans is our creativity, in my opinion, and that catalytic sort of power of enabling and how we can potentially harness our power to connect so that's been the air I've been exploring for sort of 20 years through my own practice, from a

very small agency in Cornwall to now having a, you know, a global but micro reach and using that power to sort of, you know, work we've worked with the tribes people in the Sinai desert about how to reduce the ecotourism footsteps you still take or ecotourism, but as a creative challenge there to how you get people from one place to another to maybe see that and should they even go and meet the Bedouin Should the Bedouin come and come to the UK or another country and talk about what's happening firsthand in these areas that are being hit hardest by the onset of the long onset of the environmental catastrophe that we've got going on. The other side of things is just that stage where we're like rabbits in a headlight, where creativity, I think, has that potential to unlock at all different levels and be that catalyst. And it's finding those little nudges to the big stuff. I mean, I was with a friend who runs an agency called Don't Cry Wolf he goes Matt, it's just not possible for us to look at the 50 trillion tonnes of co2 that humans create on this planet. I said, John, we've got to still give the everyday person a little bit of hope. And once they got that little bit of hope, move on. And whichever word it is, you choose, for me, it's just harnessing the power of creativity, to make a difference to be that catalyst for change, and that we've all got it within us, and just unlocking a way that we can all address with our practices, and those we work with as well. So I'm in the B Corp community, it's a business for good community, four and a half thousand businesses globally that use our businesses as a force for good solving the environmental and social issues our times in that community, I found a richness that with my creative side, that I can unlock stories, actions with organisations I never would have dreamt of working with, because they are all here to unlock with us these these problems and these social issues and environmental issues. So for me, whether it's my practice or someone else's practice, it's what we can do to open up eyes, hearts, as you know, not move pixels, and pencils to open up hearts and minds to change.

It's really wonderful hearing everyone speaking Are these like, connecting themes like so without, but we really started with that joy, that wonder of nature. And we wanted to find a way to share it. So we sort of reached into our childhoods and shared histories of just spending days outdoors and coming across animals in different situations and following them and just to see what happens and we really wanted to create a world where you could get lost in and feel like you're just spending the summer exploring a magical place in the wild. And we wanted to capture those moments of like seeing a bird flip past and oh my god, what was that? And just getting lost in following it and grabbing a picture of it and going oh wow, it's it's a Hoopoe I've never seen a Hoopoe where would I see one of those. But also getting people involved not in like, like, I'm not going to see a Hoopoe in my garden here. But I see a sparrow and I'll see a blue tit. And in just playing and experiencing these things in this world, being able to then take that into the real world. And like look in your garden, and suddenly that brown bird isn't that brown bird anymore? It's, it's a sparrow and no, I know, that's a blue tit now and I wonder where it's going, it keeps coming back. And that engagement in taking something from this imaginary world, this game world into your real world and suddenly noticing and seeing what's happening and going, Oh, where is my local woodland? Like, oh, I'll go for a walk. And I'll see what I'll spot and suddenly you're aware of what's happening in that place and what the changes are. And I think it's really exciting those connections, like taking these special places and moments and being able to then find them in the real world.

I say I'll address the point about audience. You know, who, who am I making work for. And the thing with film is it's all filmmaking is all focused on audience because as Tarkowski said, it's an art form that's compromised by market forces effectively. And that's all linked to the audience, you know, the amount of money you spend, has to be sort of repaid by the amount that an audience will pay to come to your work. So you've always got to be thinking about the audience, which for me, is why quite a lot of film is, is pretty terrible in general, because there's too much thought about the audience. So for me, I never, never think about who I'm making it for. Never think about the audience, ever. It's all about me, because I'm an audience member. And so I'm and I'm the only audience member. That's real. Because when I'm making work, there is no audience, there'd be really arrogant of me to think, and I'm talking about me personally, personally, here working with in film, it'd be arrogant of me to think loads of people are gonna watch this film, because it might not ever get financed, it may never get finished. And then people may not even turn up to watch it. But I know I always see it. So I'm making work for me safe in the knowledge that I'm not so dissimilar to everybody else on the planet that that there won't be a connection with other people. And and I think the the reason I say that is because I'm I don't know what I'm saying. I don't know what I'm talking about. But I certainly haven't gotten the answers but what my what my filmmaking is doing is trying to make sense of the world. And quite often I don't know what questions I'm even asking and till people point out to me. So for example, with the film we've just done, and Enys Men, I didn't really address what I was investigating within the film until my producer read the script and told me what, what I was doing. And from there, it becomes a sort of an evolution and people can take what they want from it. But I haven't got any control over that. And it's much more about me trying to make sense of in this case, you know, the issues that we were discussing here. So, for me, it's about asking questions of myself. And hopefully those questions are relevant to, to an audience.

It's interesting the way in which we're talking both about ourselves as individuals, but then also how we connect with others in our community, and then take that into a larger arena. Vanessa, I was interested by what you were saying about how you need to look at those things that are very close to you in a community, rather than necessarily actually bringing it to people in the sense of making them aware that they themselves have a responsibility that they themselves have some agency to talk a little bit more about what you've been doing in that respect.

### **Vanessa Kisuule**

We've been having a little bit of banter about influencer, culture and Instagram, and you know, it's, you know, all the obvious slights, but one can make about that culture. But actually, as I sit here, and you mentioned Silent Spring, which is, you know, a really pivotal book for me as well when I read it. But it strikes me and I had a conversation with James reed bank, who's a brilliant writer, Farmer up in the Lake District, who's written beautiful books about, you know, agriculture in this country, and the changes that needs to be made. And we were talking about how nature writing has a marketing issue in that it is, it is aimed at a very particular demographic of, you know, just sort of, well heeled white to middle class reader, even though the things within it are everybody's business. And that's starting to shift slowly, but you know, probably needs to be shifting a lot quicker. But the one thing about social media, and the poem that I wrote that then sort of, you know, flew off into the stratosphere a bit is a perfect example, for all of its perils, you know, the internet is of is a mostly, you know, very democratic thing, you know, most of us have access to it. And our ability to engage with art on these platforms is,

you know, is just incredible in terms of its potential, right, and seeing things like urban young black birders, you know, sharing the things that they're up to showing young people that you know, what, you don't have to be near a national park or, you know, have a membership to the National Trust, to just, you know, go out and sport, what you can even if you live, you know, in Peckham on an estate, there's still things to see, there's still a way to engage with nature that works with where you are, nature isn't something that a person over there who is the opposite to you is entitled to and you're not. And the Internet is a way that you find these people, right. So if it's not going to be a book in a book in Waterstones, then it's great to see that it could be on Instagram, or it could be on Twitter. And so I have seen firsthand as an artist that uses social media, to put my work out there, how quickly and how, you know how profusely your work can go out into, into the public, and then how people engage with it. And, you know, it kind of it runs away from you sometimes in quite a quite a daunting way. You think, oh, you know, look at how my work could just be carried beyond what I ever conceived it to be, which is quite scary in a way. But it does mean that people are riffing off what you do. And it's ultimately what we would really like, ultimately, I think, as artists is that we, we are creating other artists, because they're thinking, oh, like, she just put a camera in front of herself and did a poem and you know, and now look, I could do that, that doesn't seem especially daunting, I don't need to go to school to learn to do that. I don't need to have a PhD to do that. So I think the internet has, you know, an amazing capacity to get people to see how they can contribute to these things, and see more examples of people who are like them doing things in this arena. So yeah, I think I think there's there's there's so much that people already have in their hands already. That we don't need to tell them too much about I think people are very responsive to the the potential of those avenues

Vanessa you've been talking away about equity and an opportunity, giving opportunity to people and Fehinti you've been travelling a bit around doing your show. And you've now put it effectively into or are putting it effectively into a larger domain with Complicite. Do you want to talk a little bit about how you've done that and what motivated you to do that in that way?

### **Fehinti Balogun**

COVID COVID was was a big force. Originally we we we plan to do the show with plans right the show is This is a show is the show you come in and you've experienced and then we were going to turn it into a sort of like community Town Hall thing. There's I thought it was a as practitioners or people that are have spaces, whether you're in a theatre on a cinema or whatever. And I think I think we often forget that we, we have a physical space, like, it doesn't have to be just a performance space, it can literally be a community space be, right, it's a physical space you can bring people into, so we can do whatever we want with it. So the plan was to make this incredible, sort of, like, incredible, it was gonna be relevant thing in this space, but then COVID hit, and we really had to rethink our plan. And one of the things we did at the beginning of the show, a beginning of workshopping, even, we had this big sheet, and we put in a sheet things that we wanted to achieve with it. And one of the things was for it to become more than my own for it to be more than me, and for it to be accessible. And the thing about access is not just about like how people get to it, it's the spaces in which people get to it, there is an inherent deterrent for for certain spaces, because they have historically had only one type of person in it. And we were aiming to reach the minority of this country, black and brown people with mediums that historically they've not been welcoming. So to assume that we could go to a theatre and be like, Yo,

you've never heard of activism. antlia. But like, come on down. We've kind of wild. And so like there was real inspiration, this sort of desperation, to get this thing out here, to put it online to make this film out of this show, and to use this incredibly creative way and get it out to people in their own homes. That's what we want to do. We partnered with different websites and theatre websites and outreach programmes to put this thing on and to allow people to take it and make it their own. So we're encouraging home screenings, community screenings for you to take this piece and have a discussion around it for me to talk when every week we would have a an overarching discussion about themes and how to go forward. So you never left someone, I think it's really easy to come in with doom and gloom go like this is awful. Good luck. And we just we never ever wanted to do that. So there was this constant hand holding. And even now as we're going forward, we still have those connections. And it was really important for us even online. And this is something we really struggle with, especially with theatre and exclusive arts, to make a decolonised space, inherently the space you have is colonised like, bringing it up in conversation trying to make it so we had pay what you can as well. So you paid wherever you could, whether that be a pound or 100 pounds, and once a month, 100 pounds and one pound but so that space could be yours. And I think the next step this year, is bringing less space physically, having community centres having meetups so that people can own the space, make it their own and move forward in the kind of activism. We want to say. Um, just a little bit on what you're saying about like, we don't always have to create shit. Sorry, I'm allowed swear.

I think I'm sure Yeah, I think I think we've already passed that through. Yeah.

### **Fehinti Balogun**

Really been holding back? Yeah, we don't, we don't have to, we don't have to create a lot of the battle that we're fighting from is this like idea of individualism. The idea that we singularly will save the planet, one recycling bin at a time. And that just isn't true because it's about communities about coming together. And more now than ever, we really have to fight against the idea of individualism. So having spaces having spaces that can reach people that people feel comfortable in all different types of people, but especially platforming those that have been historically ignored, women of colour, people of colour in those spaces, making it a space where they feel comfortable, filters out to everybody else, and then we can reach and therefore connect to those grassroots activists and organisations. And that's kind of how we are approaching it and have approached it.

Daisy, you talked about working at Eden, you know, earlier in your career, you were working largely in galleries. How does that change come about? And why?

### **Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg**

Well, actually, I was working with scientists in labs, spending my time presenting science conferences, being the weird outsider and somehow representing society, and I'm obviously very unrepresentative of society. And that's what was so strange about those spaces but huge amounts of funding going into fund new technologies. And where were the other voices in that mix. So then to the move into the gallery space, again, it's a really privileged space. But there are things that are very special about it. So I think they should remain because they are spaces that are earmarked for contemplation in the same



way that the cinema is a place we know it's probably not going to be real. But we can go in and enter a story. And we've been given some signifiers or the theatre, that this is a place that something is going to happen that will transform us. But there's something really exciting for me here about suddenly moving outside into a space where there's not your typical gallery goers who have come into Eden, as a mixture of people, people, families coming for a day out, lots of different reasons. And to be confronted with an artwork, here means something completely different in this context, and then to be confronted with an artwork that's not even for you, because it's for other species, it sort of adds to this, this question of why are we even creating things? And who are we creating things for? And how do we actually get into the worlds of other organisms. And that, to me, is what's so important is in the way, you're talking about the lack of empathy, and lack of understanding that people who have all this knowledge and the people who we live with and work with, and we assume that we need to impart, but in the same way, by finding a way to kind of shift that perspective, that's what I'm really interested in doing with my own set of skills, which are a particular a particular way around the problem. And the idea of creating this artwork here, then sort of extending it, putting it online, and then asking the world how do we make this into a bigger thing? How do we make the world's largest climate positive artwork? What does it mean, to do that? Is that even beneficial? In a way? These are open ended questions, and I don't have the answers. That's the point. We're not going to solve it. We can solve this as citizens. And as consumers and as activists, we're not going to solve it as artists. That's our climate crisis. But it is really about how do you create that moment of transformation, which is what I think art and culture does, it puts us into a different world, and in a way to stepping out into the mud is that shift for me. And hopefully, it sort of sets off as a chain of questions about who gets to see this stuff. And who's not humans who gets to

see who gets to see this stuff, but also, where we sit in the hierarchy of the world as a whole. Yes,

### **Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg**

making a garden not a garden Coulee it's an artwork for pollinators, it means the visitors are actually pollinators, the interactions of pollinators interacting with plants, pollinators are going to another artwork somewhere else, bringing bits back taking bits of this, the success of this will be the fact that there is other forage for them, otherwise, the artwork here will die. And that's a totally different way of thinking about for me about why we've we've sort of what we call culture, or what the point of it is,

as I say, I mean, the way you are talking, again, about power structures to some degree, and also about where we ourselves sit within the universe as a whole. And, Emily, I mean, you were talking about as we're opening people's eyes are aligned, allowing them to experience what Vanessa was talking about wonder. And I just wonder, in that sense how you, as a maker, interact with those who are using the products you're making, and how you see that relationship, because obviously, Daisy's is very much more direct. I mean, the three of them at the end the influences as they are in a privileged position, because they're very much in direct contact with many of the people that they're addressing, how does how's your things work for you in that respect?

### **Emily Brown**

I think it is very similar. I think the game creation process with the film process takes a long time. And with games, we spend a lot of time like, on our own making things but we have to take it out. And very early on, we take it out and we get people to play it. And we get try and get a sense like, Are we are we getting the feeling we want are people experiencing? Or can you see that spark of joy that's happening or not. So we do lots of play tests, essentially, throughout the process. But then once it's out in the world, it's a whole other it's a whole other thing. And I think it's been really interesting as games as the way games are distributed has changed quite a lot there. It's opening up so much in the platforms you can be on and where you can find things has changed the way you can make things and and place them for people to find. So the way people respond. It's not just the magazines and then the journalists and the official sort of reviewers now you can go on to your you know your Steam platform and people just review your game. They'll tell you how they experienced it. You'll have a nine year old child say oh my god, I love this game. I loved wandering around the woods and now I've got My garden and I learned this bird and you're like, oh, wow, like, you can kind of see that individual impacts a lot more because of the way these things are spread out now. And having reviewers, so they're young game reviewers, 10 year olds doing their reviews of the game showing a play through and talking through their favourite bits and just getting, you get so much more from understanding those personal impacts, and where you're succeeding and where you're failing.

Mark, you talked slightly disingenuously about the fact that you make work for yourself. I was just wondering, really how you begin to address those big issues? I mean, this is you addressing and bait to do with the changing of the way in which the fishing industry works in Cornwall, the economy of Cornwall with so many incomers, and so on? I mean, these are not issues that you're alone in, in addressing. But once your film is out there, how do you how have you found found yourself engaging in those a season and with the reactions that people have to your film?

### **Mark Jenkin**

It's, it's been really interesting in when I'm questioned about it, and about me bringing up these issues. And I have a real problem with that, because I didn't, I don't, they're not my issue, I haven't created these issues. All I'm doing is reflecting back what what I see very local level. And the revelation for me is, and it's been brilliant, in terms of my career in the commercial life of the film, is that the problems that I was holding a mirror up to actually turn out to be universal and a lot more serious and destructive in other parts of the world than they are in Cornwall, and I said it a lot of times before I started out making a film that I that was set in a specific part of Cornwall, that I thought there was a risk that other people in other parts of Cornwall might not even understand. And then what actually happened was I took the film around the world, and everywhere I went, there was the same, it was the same feeling it was the same issues that people were facing. And there was a real anger. And, and, and a recognition of the people in my film in those communities, which are people who were who were largely forgotten and overlooked. Who would become alienated. Not recently, you know, for for generations. And then that alienation that frustration, it's manifested itself in, in self destructive ways, I would say, which is where we are today. I genuinely was trying to make sense of the situation on a very personal level, in my own community, it just so happened that it was, it was recognised elsewhere, and it was it was relevant elsewhere. And this is then it's quite confusing when you then get some feedback, you know, same going online, and I'm making the mistake of watching a video that somebody's done on YouTube

about. And it's really glowing review and again on this and it's not sticking up for this person, that person then you and then about 10 minutes and think, hold on, this is the world's most right wing man, who's now championing what I was saying in this film, and, you know, fine, he wants to take that message from it, you don't have any control over that. Luckily, there was a lot more people who maybe were coming from my point of view, but you don't have any control over that. And that's, that's the danger with this work. Once you go out. And you don't have that, you know, I can't sort of track everybody who's watching the film, and then make sure I'm, I can get there at their house for the end of the film or knock on the door and interact with them and sort of have a discussion. So that's, that's been quite, that's been quite enlightening. The the fact that you let this thing go out, and people can Can, can misinterpret it just as easily as they can endorse what you were trying to shine a light on.

On, I suppose one of the reasons why people respond to the issues that you're raising is you're giving them a chance to think about the ethics of the way in which society has created is constructed and is actually carrying on its business. It's something that Fehinti, touched on in his opening statement, but I just come to you, Matt for a moment. You've been working as a creative and thinking about sustainability and good practice for 20 years. How has how things changed in that time?

### **Matt Hocking**

Great question too slowly. That would be the first thing I'd say is, for us. It's kind of in our DNA. So it's quite natural to address whether it's a you know, a low carbon footprint or how we're getting something to an audience. And interestingly, there's been a lot of talk about wonder, and like self owning, putting things content out there for others to own and I think, you know, with the times we're going through, and we'll continue to go through this tumultuous decade, we need to give more tools, wonder creative to allow self expression that will open people up and with their positions and where they sit in society and where they feel they might be a leader or a follower, whatever that might be. So I've seen this slow, progressive change in way, if you look at it on a client level, we just been doing it per client per client, which is quite slow. But we've been changing hearts and minds. And then we've always had a lot of interest people in the early days of Leep, we'd get phone calls and get a nice USP. And I didn't, I didn't understand what USP meant. Back then, I had to Google and a unique selling point. And I was like, the environment isn't a unique selling point. And why is and I've always questioned why is the environment a bolt on? It's like, we've got a policy in Leep that you can buy any vegan or vegetarian food. But that's on the company. But if your meat, you pay for it yourself, kind of just a switch, because we didn't want to say you can't eat in this way. It's just those subtle shifts around exploration of, you know, food and doing it differently, while looking after the way we do business. And I think people will go to us, that's brilliant, again, is it not natural just to think this way. And that's the problem is we've got these very linear ways of thinking think, Oh, I think this way, so everybody should potentially think this way. And we're all these different life standings, these different areas and societal sort of forces as well as what we the way we brought up. I mean, I come from the Clays real rural area of Cornwall, and except for Campbell, and Paul, and it's funny in the early days, you know, everyone would go well, you from that era, you're not gonna amount to much that would be it, you know, you'd be going, you know, you're caught, you know, they're just laugh your camera on pan with a camera, okay? And then it's the same when I said leap up and said, I'm only going to work in this way after leaving Eden, people said, that would fail there wasn't anybody going brilliant, well done, they will just go that can't work. How can you

only work a business that is going to address environmental and social issues? And I don't know, I can't address them by myself. What I was trying to say is, this is the way business should be. And from there, let's see who else can do it. And we just share the ways we do it. So I guess going back to your question, what I found is, everybody wants to talk to me now in the creative business. So weekly, it'll be agencies have hundreds of thousands of staff saying, how do we do this? We want to be a purpose driven agency, which I have a bit of an issue with as well with everybody repurposing sells is purpose driven. Surely we had a purpose at the start anyway, when we did our business. So yeah, it's changing, but it's not fast enough. And I think, you know, whichever aspect of the creative sector, we're the true catalyst of this time. And we know we've got more power than governments, politicians, environmentalists might not like me saying this, education, if we can harness the power of creativity, which everything we're in today, in some shape, or form, what we wear, the space we're in has been created.

Vanessa, how do you having hasn't we're excited the interest of the people that you're in contact with? How does one take that forward? How do you how do you how do you? I don't know. I don't think that's a fair answer.

### **Vanessa Kisuule**

I don't know. And I, you know, the older I get, the more comfortable I am with saying that rather than trying to bullshit my way through an answer. What I will say is that, I think certainly, it's something to think about as individuals and as artists, is to go to our long term intention, and then then go back. I think it's very easy to create something, though, I've made a thing, put it out there. And then people go, Oh, amazing. What are the links to what I can do next, you know, what are the places and spaces I can, I can enter to take this further and you're thinking, I don't know. So I guess having that responsibility as citizens that want to make change, and, you know, do our bit to start thinking a little bit more about what the what the, the potential repercussions of what we make are, and you know, how we're gonna make it something beyond just making a cool thing that people like, and might, you know, like, on social media, and share, but then they carry on with their lives as they were. And also you as in as an artist, you know, I was thinking just then when you're talking about purpose driven, and just like all the words mean things in it, but we just be just, we just be talking, we're just like, ah, sustainable. Our community driven, like, you know, a lot of the time we're just, we're just talking to talk because it sounds good. And then we feel righteous, but we're not, we're not actioning anything. And, you know, as someone who's made language in my life, you know, I like to believe that words matter, and that we should speak with intention. And meanwhile, try and you know, say what we mean and mean what we say. So, I think, yeah, as artists, we have to really try and walk that walk and try and model what we're talking about. So that you know, as well as encouraging creative response. We're actually thinking about how that works in tandem with, you know, how you actually showing up to local activism? And, yeah, I think I think it's hard though because I think, as an artist, I'm often so just trying to keep my head above the parapet, you know, trying to make ends meet in a white supremacist capitalist world, that it's so hard to think about what I'm trying to do ideologically on a on a bigger scale. But, you know, I think you have to sit with yourself and be like, you know, do I really, am I really about this beyond just the language and the words? Oh, my God, I hate it so much the AC language, you know, the the funding bid language, god, we're all chatting shit. You know, and you know, we're doing it, because, you know,

we usually have good intentions. But, you know, I think we should all have a sit with ourselves. Sometimes it'd be like, I see these words all day, every day that, you know, they've kind of lost their meaning let me actually sit and remind myself, what does it actually mean to be purpose driven to be, you know, community focused, to be sustainable? You know, just be about greenwashing. Right? How corporations are using the language of climate justice to sell us more shit, right? So when I talk about, you know, people misusing language, you know, that has genuine repercussions in terms of us being sold liberation, that's actually just more capitalism under a different guise. So like, you know, please, let's, let's, let's make language great again. And use it with precision, and, and integrity. Because it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what we say, and that we've got the action to back it up,

Fehinti, how do you at a personal level, fund, the activity you do beyond being an actor. I mean, what, how do you make that happen for yourself?

### **Fehinti Balogun**

I'm very successful. No, we've, we've,

I don't doubt that.

### **Fehinti Balogun**

No funding, funding for projects comes from the team. So sort of, I feel like I have to explain how I got into it. Just before it was like a complete accident. I was just trying to recycle some cans. I didn't play ages and ages ago, it was about climate. Climate change. Didn't really know anything about it. Start reading this text, everything by Naomi Klein. ruined my life, ruined my life. Because then you can't begin you can't unsee once you know you can't unknown you're looking everybody's like, how you just go into the shops and not like freaking out. So like, internalise that. And then I thought, Oh, I'll give up meat and I'll stop buying plastic and then I've done my bit. Fast forward to 2018 do like a big show think got a lead on the West End. Like I'm the shit. And I notice that they they have plastic bottles, and some other players have just gone from plastic bottles, aluminium cans. So I was like, Oh, I'll try and do this here. thinking I'm leaving, the West End people will listen to me, knock on the door doon doon doon. Oh, yeah. Like, I'd love to talk about this. And it's very cute, and completely ignored onto the next job trying to do the same thing completely ignored, then found out about climate activism, in a sense, extinction rebellion. First time I've ever heard about any sort of real activism. And I was like, driven to the point of being so pissed off, that I'll do anything. So then I'm organising. I'm on I'm on it. And then I go away, come back, and argue with my mom, because she doesn't understand what I'm doing. Very brief. Four years of my life, I'll give mom doesn't know what I'm doing and then I write a climate lecture. And so interestingly, I very, very luckily, just gotten this job on this start big feature ever. And I've had a couple of weeks between the two two jobs. I was like, I am in a very interesting position where I am from this type of background, from very working class slash lower class feels like a sweeping chimneys. But when you're in the acting world, you're sort of jettisoned into all types of rooms, all types of different people. And you know, one minute you're you trying to work in a bar and the next minute, you're on someone's yacht, and it's just like, what? And so I thought, like, Okay, I'm in a position of privilege and privilege, not just incentive, monetary privilege, but privilege in the sense of connection spaces. Who

am I talking to? The way I speak the way I'm received? I thought, wow, I can do the work of an activist within these spaces. I have that privilege, that safety net of being in these spaces. So I did that started talking more to people than I got back from filming. You following? I hope so I got back from filming, I got into an argument with my mother. And my mother was like, why are you sacrificing your career for these crazy activists. And I thought, well, you just don't understand Mum, you've never understood me, blah, blah, blah, argue for a month, we don't talk. And we talk quite often don't talk. And then our last argument, I put my phone underneath the pillow. And I record a whole argument. And I go back and listen to it. I was like, fuck, she's got a point. And I turned those, those recordings into a climate lecture. So I've taken whatever I've made, and I'm, I'm going around with, like, no funding no anything, and trying to act on like the kindness of strangers, using different rooms, booking theatre venues through friends, like trying to get people to come in to view this lecture. And then the more I did it, the more people wanted to see it. But the people that wanted to see it, were not the people that I was trying to reach. And we were in this sort of like, weird, strange family wobbliness. And then I run into someone at Complicite completely accidentally. And I've been asked to do this, like speech thing. So I speak, duh duh duh, go backstage. And she's like, Oh, really well done. Like, that's amazing. So ah, thanks, man, really appreciate that. It's like we think you're dealing with next and I was like, Ah, I don't know, set it into a play. It's just that I really I work for Complicite come in for a meeting. And I went, Okay, went away, Googled how to write play. That's not a joke. But then somehow, through like grit and luck, they came see the talk. And we started developing this thing. And then it was there, I stopped learning about funding. And I started learning about the language of funding and how you go about applying for these different things. And I'm so lucky, because at Complicite, we had a whole team to kind of teach me about this. And like, every other minute, I felt like I was talking about coming from where I come from, and trying to achieve literally anything. And it's a really funny thing when you learn the dance of key words. Actually, what you really want to say is like, bro, Listen, give me the money.

### **Fehinti Balogun**

I'm doing for you. So a lot of a lot of the funding for the show came from that process of applying for for different funding grants, and luckily, a really amazing team at Complicite teaching me and helping me and guiding us and how to do that. And then we had like independent funders who wanted to give in and then you know, to make a thing that really you have no intention of making. Sorry. I didn't realise I was getting paid for any of it. And when I got paid, I was like, no, no, it's halfway because I hadn't got paid for ages. And I was like, I someone said to me, Oh, if you got paid? Yeah. And I was like, Are you getting paid? And they're like, Yeah, haven't you been? I was like, No. So then that all happened. But But we made a thing that was pay what you can, there was no intention of making any money whatsoever. So it's really interesting, because the financially and this is something I won't know too much about. But like, when you're applying for these things, it's like, it's funny learning how to say, listen, we're not looking to make money, but go with me, we're trying to change the world. So like, I in an ideal world, you I mean, my experience is something I really hope a lot of other people and especially hyper localised people, people in very particular areas get to experience because we're really not as most people in the arts, we're not doing it for the money, we're actually doing it to change, for lack of a better phrase of the world, but like, very specifically, how we see things, how we talk about things or language around things. So that's my very roundabout way of saying I had a lot of help.

Well, like Mark, you're basically expressing something that comes out of your own experience. And it's your perception of the world and the way in which you convey that, that has us all listening to every word that you've been saying. So thank you. Thank you all. I think I'd like to ask those in the audience here to thank all our participants, all our panellists.

Don't be afraid of acting at a micro level because from that you might have a base to deal with in macro. Thank you very much. Thank you