

Episode 1

The Beginning | Academic Feelings

Rosa Marie Frang:

Imagine the sun is shining with a deep yellow glow down on a university campus.
I have music in my earphones.
I'm riding my bike in between the big modern buildings.
We're in Copenhagen, Denmark.
My bike is a cheap Chinese model.
It's practical, then no one will bother stealing it.
The university buildings are covered with a beige colored limestone.
Someone once told me that the stones were shipped in from Greenland.
I don't know if it's true. Maybe they're from Italy.
But if you stand very close and put your nose up to the wall, you can see that every single plate has its own unique patterns.

The university recently had to move most of the department of art and culture, hundreds of people, because of an unhealthy mold feasting on the many books and the many small offices. Climate change manifested.

Cycling between mold infested and maybe Italian, maybe Greenlandic limestone covered buildings, I turn up the volume.
Riding slow, laid back and chill with only one hand on the bicycle's handlebar.
Passing students, trees, parked bicycles, grass and benches. The sky's blue.

I need to calm my nervousness.
And the strategy is riding slow, lean back.

I'm an artist, hired part-time to do a artwork about practice-based art studies.
It's a new center at the university who hired me.
It's called PASS.
It's a privilege to be hired.
You know, money and all that.
It's a privilege.
And I'm stressed out as fuck.

And now I'm cycling here because I've asked for a meeting.
I'm going to have to tell them at the center that I've decided to trash my previous podcast concept.
The concept I already finished the first episode of.

The project I said was ready to be published. And
now...
I have to tell them I changed my mind.
Again.
It's the third time I've developed a concept.
The third time I decide to trash it and throw it in the bin.

I have to tell them that it will take a bit longer before I can start publishing, but
that I have come up with something different.

So I prepared myself as if I was going to war.
I've made a new time plan, budget,
written arguments, exactly 10, filling a whole A4 page,
written my thoughts as a list, printed everything out, made
a whole fucking storyline for how to deliver the news.
First thing I'll say is,
“Don't worry, I have a plan...”.

Will they think that I can't make up my mind?
That I'm wasting their time and money?
And the concept?
Will they be offended?

Purposely, I'm cycling slow and laid back, trying
to calm myself with a chill energy.

Passing the lunch benches in front of one of the main entrances, I
realize, hey, I'm part of this place.
I'm one of these people.
I'm on the payroll.
I have access.
Maybe everything's going to be okay.
Maybe I will survive.
Hey, who knows, maybe the others think I'm smart too.
“No, that would be too good to be true”, I think to myself.

I turn up the volume a bit more.
I need it.
Remembering all the meetings and emails, all the bureaucracy,
all the different psychologies and social codes I'm confronted with in a workplace like a
university,
all my awkward attempts to explain myself at group meetings, where I'm often left with
a feeling of being extremely unclear ...or kind of off
...or kind of stupid.

And at the same time, I'm also really well aware that it's probably because I deliberately refuse to position myself with academic lingo.

Not that I don't like academic lingo. I really do.

I just don't like it when it's used as a power tool in creating hierarchies.

It should be used to make us more aware and intelligent, not afraid.

In an attempt to brush off the feeling of institutional claustrophobia, I pump the volume even more.

Fuck my ears.

I fucking need autonomy and self-confidence.

At the meetings.

One says, "It's as if you make a distinction between the art world and academic world. I think the art world is just as hardcore when it comes to competition, networking, and positioning oneself".

"Yeah, you're right", I answer, because the person's right.

And

I'm also just as fucked up as everyone else.

I'm no better.

I also network, instrumentalizing my emotions for career benefits. Hey, I'm instrumentalizing my emotions right now, reading these words into a microphone. I also need money, projects, being invited, being hired.

We're all caught up in this game.

We all have to save ourselves.

We all have to sell ourselves.

So how to be true, how to be free,

how to navigate between capitalism and love, how to navigate free will and systems and institutions.

I also care and worry deeply about my position in the social and professional hierarchies,

...and I fucking hate it.

I want love, acceptance.

I want every day to feel like I'm a part of the world's greatest rock band, feeling that I'm needed and precisely okay in the way I play my tune in the band, feeling like what I come with is going into creating something great.

Who doesn't long for that,
to be seen, heard, respected, feeling safe?

Totally banal.

I know, but
it's true.

At the next meeting, another person says,
"To do academic work can be like being set free from the prison of emotions". And continues, "...there are so many feelings all the time, everywhere. Doing academic work can be a real relief from feeling".

Riding home in the afternoon,
I'm wondering, am I caught in "A prison of emotions"?
Is it a prison to feel all the time?
To have a million feelings in just one day?
Am I a prisoner?
Is there knowledge to be found in diving into one person's feelings?
Can it transcend the singular and particular?
Or is it just my private business?

And second thought, are artists more in touch with their feelings than academics? Because we more often work in and with the physical world, using our body's sensory system,
in contrast to working with the brain and words and text and books and talking and writing and reading

and talking of what the fuck is practice-based art studies? To be honest, and when it really gets down to it, I don't get it.

On the homepage of the Center, it says,
"We are building on the notion of epistemic equity".

I had to Google it, epistemic equity.

It says: *"Epistemic equity is the principle that knowledge should be produced, validated, and distributed fairly, ensuring that marginalized voices and diverse perspectives are included, valued, and have equal power to participate in knowledge creation and decision-making processes"*.

It's still a bit blurry for me,

so I asked the head of the Center, Mikkel Bogh,
“Can you in one minute explain what practice-based art studies is? And record it on your phone and send it to me?”

Mikkel Bogh:

Well, first of all, practice-based research is a form of scientific inquiry. It involves using creative or professional practice as a method of investigation and as a sign of knowledge production.

This is particularly true in the case of artistic production and curatorial work. It recognizes practice itself as a valid and contextual form of research. This results in creative outputs, such as artworks, exhibitions, or curatorial projects, accompanied by critical reflection on the research process and the theoretical framework, as well as contextual analysis.

It's also great to see how practice-based research, now in many higher education institutions, is considered a legitimate route to doctoral studies. PhD programs actively support candidates whose research culminates in both creative curatorial work and a written reflection. Such programs affirm that original contributions to knowledge can emerge through creative practice itself, not only through academic research and writing.

Dear you, what you just heard was the long intro to this podcast artwork. So finally, finally, after a great deal of deliberation with me, myself, and I, and after developing several concepts that I ended up dropping again, because they didn't really make me high, it feels like I've found a concept I really want to do. I'm going to have conversations with artists and academics about their feelings working with or around doing practice-based art studies.

Enthusiastically, I write to a person from the Department of Arts and Culture Studies. “Hi, I would really love to have you as the first person in the podcast. Can we record a conversation together?” And then I explain the concept.

I wasn't nervous asking specifically this person, because I was sure of getting a thumbsup reply and a yes to participate. After a couple of days, I get a reply. “Thank you, but sorry, I'm not really up for it”. My enthusiasm drops to the floor like a dead cat. I thought it was a no-brainer asking specifically this person,

and then I crash.

If I get a no from this person, how am I ever going to get anyone else to talk to me? Oh no, I will never manage to get this project up and running.

And then I meta-crash.
Crashing over crashing.

I am so fucking uncool.

Ashamed of being so easily knocked to the ground.
Meta-crashing.

But the more I thought of it, maybe it made sense.

Maybe it's because it's, if not taboo, then at least considered a very uncool thing to do.
To talk about what you're really feeling in the university world.

And a university is a competitive place where most people don't feel sure about their position.

Like in poker, you just don't show the cards on your hand.

In other words, don't show your doubt, insecurities, or weakness.

Why would anyone want to do that with me? In a recording, what would they get out of it?
Why should anyone say yes to participate?

So...
panic.

And the uncomfortable feeling of having nothing to hold on to. Free falling into nothingness.

I wake up in the middle of the night full of adrenaline, and there in the bed with my heart beating too fast, staring into the dark.

And then it hits me.

If no one wants to talk with me, I have to document the process of no one wanting to talk with me.

And if no one will talk about what they really feel, fuck it, then I'll do it.

The first thing I write is this: I have a lump in my stomach, a round knot of energy, tangled like a ball of red yarn made out of electric threads, quivering red threads of anxiety.

With intervals of a couple of seconds, they send small, unpleasant electric lightnings down my legs, into my arms.

This is what everyday anxiety feels like for me.

I have it every time I work on my projects.

I hate it.

Intensely hate it.

I'm afraid to sit down at the computer and start writing this.

Afraid that my idea is bad.

That I will fail.

Afraid of what you will think of me while you're listening.

Afraid that someone will suddenly and out of the blue yell at me, "You are so stupid!".

That's the psychology I carry with me.

My embarrassing, shameful luggage.

I think it's the psychology of growing up in an insecure and kind of crazy environment.

I learned that if I took space, someone would shout, "Shut the fuck up".

Maybe that's why I've spent my life doing artworks where I use my voice?

As a stubborn protest against this never-ending anxiety?

As a desperate gun battle showdown in my abandoned hometown with a past childhood trauma?

And now I'm sitting here,

pressing my fingers on the keyboard,

trying to figure out how to be in this world.

I wish it could be light and fun and joyful.

There's a lot of power to be gained in being light, fun, joyful and comfortable.

Or not to give a fuck.

And I'm provoked by the thought of how many opportunities I lose out on because I have this fucking anxiety.

And so often hide myself away, keep my mouth shut.

It pisses me off.

On the other hand, I don't really like people who don't care.

And I wonder,

when there is so much talk of diversity and inclusion, is there actually space for my anxiety? And there's a lot of talk about caring, but is there actually care and understanding?

And a lot of talk about equity between different kinds of knowledge fields.

So here I am.

Do I carry a valid knowledge to the surface?

Or am I playing my cards wrong?
By showing my weakness?

It's so embarrassing to admit openly, but projects often take much longer for me to do because I have to double check everything.
I don't have the privilege of a calm nervous system that permits me to go with the flow.

I need more confirmation than others.
And I get easily exhausted because I have a vacuum cleaner from hell sucking me empty for energy, telling me I'm hopeless and should just give up. It's so embarrassing.

Dear you,
this was the extended and extra-extra-extra-long introduction to the background of this project and who I am. Oh my god, this first episode kind of sounds like the exact opposite of a perfect job application.

But what the fuck?
As far as I know, we only live once. Maybe listening to this podcast artwork can create a tiny little space for another way of being in the world where it's also okay not to be okay and where not being okay also carries important knowledge.

And on that note,
and whether you feel a sudden urge to shout, "Shut the fuck up woman", or if you somehow recognize yourself in some of my experiences, I've made a telephone answering machine that you can give a call.

So, if you have a thought, comment, critique, or a suggestion, I would really appreciate you if you leave a message.
Can be big and small.
The number is 0045 35 32 02 47.

Yeah, you can also find the number in the podcast description.
And yes, don't worry, you don't have to leave your name.
And yes, I might use the messages in upcoming episodes.
Of course, this is a podcast.

Yours sincerely, Rosa.

The opposite of synonyms are antonyms. Here are a random mix of more or less nearby antonyms to the word feeling.

Dispassionate,
hard-edged,
hard-boiled,
inhumanity,
disinterest,
unconcerned,
cruelty, hatred,
hostility,
harshness, cold-heartedness,
animosity, unfeelingness,
constrained, silent, quiet,
modest, shy, bashful,
indifferent, cold, detached,
introverted, unconcerned,
unfeeling,
chilly,
emotionless,
icy, unfriendly,
frigid,
restrained,
inhibited,
reserved,
unemotional,
hard-hearted,
heartlessness,
unconcerned,
insensitivity, hostility,
harshness, inhumanity.

Thank you for listening.