

Interruptions – and Why Following the Plan Isn't the Best Plan There Is | Joen Vedel | Part One

Joen Vedel in his art studio:

Rosa in the art studio:

Voiceover by Rosa Marie Frang:

Rosa on video call:

Joen on video call:

Invite the interruption in and allow it to take space.

Welcome to Academic Feelings. This episode is with artist, organizer, and filmmaker, Joen Vedel.

Allow it to make you change your mind, allow it to change your plans, and say this is important, I'm affected, and because I'm affected the work should also be affected in a way.

Joen recently took his PhD from Trondheim Academy of Fine Arts in Norway, where he researched live video editing. And what you're about to hear is based on two different kinds of conversations I've had with him. The first one is the pre-interview, recorded over a video call.

Hi Joen.

Hey.

Hi.

Hi.

Hey. Thanks for taking time off.

Of course.

With Joen sitting in Oslo and me sitting at home in Copenhagen, and made at the same time as the episodes with art curator Ida Bencke were put out into the world.

I mean, I listened to the Ida's conversation and it was really nice. And it makes me feel, and I guess that's also the point, but it makes me feel less alone.

Later, I traveled to Oslo where I met Joen at his studio and we sat down in his sofa.

Is it comfortable?

Yeah. I'm wondering if the sound is okay.

My name is Rosa Marie Frang. I'm a Danish artist and documentarist. And what you're listening to right now, this Academic Feelings podcast, is one of my artworks.

It's afternoon in Oslo, Norway. We're sitting in your studio, Joen. The floors are painted yellow and the window frames are painted in a light yellow shade to make the light come in to the room in a different tone.

It's created for a center called PASS, Center for Practice-Based Art Studies at the University of Copenhagen. And it's an experiment in seeing what will surface if I put feelings in the forefront while I deep dive into the research and knowledge ocean of artists, curators, and academics. While at the same time experimenting from episode to episode with ways of recording, writing, and editing.

So, are you thinking maybe, should we just jump right out into it? And we...I've only been... we've only shared like the topics. I don't know, what's, what's the first thing you want to talk about?

From here on, I've edited myself out of the conversation in Joen's studio, letting this episode weave in and out of two different recording situations, but without rearranging neither the order or the context.

Sometimes it'll make sense, sometimes it might not. Sometimes Joen will interrupt himself, and sometimes I will.

So, I've been thinking a lot about this idea of interruption.

Interruption is, I think, a very, can be very annoying, it can be very disruptive, but it can also be extremely productive, I think.

But can I, can I ask you...I'm gonna both be interruptive, and I'm gonna ask stupid questions, okay?

Yes, yes, yes.

Bear over. But can you just tell me, like, can you tell me the title of your PhD?

Yeah, the title is In Search of Now Time, colon, Live Editing as a Mode of Research.

Okay, and live editing is video? Yeah? What do you call it, video film?

I call it video.

Video.

Video live editing, yeah.

Okay, and maybe can you just, like, break it down? What did you do? How long...it was in Trondheim, in the north of Norway?

Yes.

Yeah, what did you do?

Not all the way, not all the way to the north, but in the middle of Norway, but north enough. Maybe I should say that I, the reason I went there was because I was quite attracted to my, came to be my supervisor, and that was one of the reasons that I had applied specifically to Trondheim, because he was the head of department there, and...

Who's the guy?

Florian Schneider, his name is. Yeah, so I spent, I mean, the contract was four years, and I ended up spending five years doing the PhD, because I had a child on the way, so it was, there was some, my paternity leave along the way.

Congratulations.

Yes.

Again, that's pretty great.

No, I think it's the best part that came out of the PhD was definitely meeting my partner and giving birth to our son, I think that's definitely the high point of the PhD, and nothing, and that's not to be dismissed, and I think this is also something to speak about, it's like how life, how life interrupts the course of your research, and how you live life interrupt your plans, your research plans, and whatever, like, because I think it's,

but it's, we can come back to that, but
anyway, so the project...

*Because you think it is...? Just finish the
sentence, because you think it is what?*

Because I think there's a tendency to stick to
your plans too much, to be too, let's say,
professional, maybe, or to be too sure of what
you had in mind to begin with, and I think at
least something I tried to do in all my work
before and after the PhD is to really allow for
these interruptions to happen, and allow them
to actually really change your, to change your
life, and how you work, and how you position
yourself, how you imagine the work.

I think working artistically, we have to, we
have to be able to do that, and luckily, I think,
artistic research is, can do that, you are
allowed to do that. It's my experience, it might
be different for other people, but my
experience is that you're actually allowed to
change your plans along the way, and I think
this is quite beautiful in that sense that, yeah,
that you, but anyway, yeah.

*So what did you do? Yes. What is very,
like, low practical, like what did you do?*

Low practical, I did like a series of
experiments with using this live editing
methodology that I have been developing. I
had started developing it even beforehand,
before the PhD...

...and I think,

I think we live in a world in a time where there's a lot of interruptions.
I think you can say something like the climate crisis is a major, major interruption of
our being on earth, on how we consume, and how we relate to waste, and
and how we are affected by kind of climate change.

So I think that's probably one of the, if not the biggest interruption of our reality, but I
also think something like the ongoing genocide in Palestine is a major, or should be a
major interruption into everything we do, basically. I

don't think it's possible to continue as planned, as if nothing is going on, as if
everything is just going according to plan, because at least from in my eyes, I think
that the interruption of a genocide must and should halt us, or should pause us, or
should make us reflect on what we do, and what makes sense to do.

So I think interruption is often sometimes, it's often something that comes from the
outside, and it can be quite violent, but it can also be slow,

slow moving,

and sometimes we can also interrupt ourselves, interrupt our own thoughts, our own
line, lines of thoughts, and maybe,

yeah,
so there's something about interruption as, as a break with, with the linear, a break
with the kind of a progression,
like,
so this,
to get away from this, I think, very modernist idea of progression as something that,
then this happens, and then this happens, and then this happens, as almost like a kind
of causality, kind of a linear line of of events, and I think interruptions are able to kind
of make holes in that linearity, and kind of disrupt that linearity, and I think that's,
as I said,
it can be very violent, and it can be very destructive, but I think it's also a moment,
or when those disruptions happens,
when those holes appears in the line, I think there's an opportunity to,
to,
to rethink, and to recalibrate, and to reflect on,
on,
on it,
what it is we're doing.

What, what is it? What is live editing?

Live editing is what we know from television,
it's like a kind of a way of doing montage, or
editing, it's, it's an editing technology that
comes from live television production.

*Yeah, so you have lots of different
cameras, and then you can switch
between close-up, panorama, that
person, that person.*

Yes, archival material, yeah, so it's, it's really
like taking, taking a technique from, a very
known technique from mainstream media, and
create art with it, in a way, to, to, to, to see
what it can do, so the idea is to, to see what
happens when I put this image next to this
image.

Okay

To say it in a very basic way.

*But what, what is the, what is the
difference? I mean, then, okay, so you,
so you do live editing, you use that as a
method to research, but then to make it
live, you have to broadcast it somewhere
live, right?*

Yes, yes.

*And how do you, so now, I'm just going
for the low practical setup right now,
where do you broadcast? How do you
broadcast? How do you do it?*

I, I broadcast in many different settings, and
occasions, like, so I've done, like, what is

actually called narrowcast, I learned, which just means that it's just this, perhaps, broadcast it in this very same space that I, that I edit in.

Okay.

Or it can be on the internet, or it can be in the case of, I work in for Documenta 15, where I work with a local television station, where the, the work was produced for, and with a broadcast, but like an actual TV station, where, like, it came out to, like, the whole kind of castle region, like.

And then how do you, how do you, how do you, like, if it's, if that's the method, how do you choose? I mean, I know that you're, like, taking, I guess, decisions live, like, where to go between this and that, but where do you get the, like, how do you decide what material should be filmed, or be in the archive?

It's like, so it's, the archive is my own archive that I've been building up over the last 10, 15 years, so it's, I kind of make it a point out of, that it has to be material that I have filmed, because, I mean, these days we have access to everything, every material, so it's, it's kind of important that it's material that I have filmed, and kind of been, that I've been in those situations where the, where the, where the film material is from, and it has somehow affected me in different ways.

Okay.

I also do use other people's material, but then it's always me filming it from a screen, or, so it's also how I experience the viewing, the viewing situation of other people's material, so.

Yeah.

Yeah, a lot of my PhD work has been trying to think with, and about, like, the revolt as this figure of uprising, or political uprising,
when,
when,
when some anger, or frustration, or bursts into, like, a revolt that often takes place in the, in the streets,
and,
and kind of aims at disrupting the, the status quo, or disrupting the kind of progression of,
of,
of
history.

So revolt also has this idea, it's also, it's also about interrupting, about kind of creating holes in, in history, or, and, and it's a little bit like, maybe you can say sabotage, or blockage, or strike, all these ideas are kind of related to,

to a,
a need for,
to stop,
to stop this mad world, basically, to kind of, to create holes in it.

So, and I think maybe it's not so far away from maybe,
I'm,
I'm assuming also now
your,
your project, in a way, of bringing in emotions in, in, when we speak about academia,
it's,
it's also a way of kind of sabotaging, maybe, this kind of, I mean, because in,
in academia, and perhaps in artistic research,
in PhD,
PhD projects, it's, things are planned, and you have a,
you,
you apply with a project, and there's, and you have a certain time, you have a contract, and you're supposed to fulfill certain obligations along the way, and kind of end up with some kind of end result.

So, why I bring in interruption is, I think, as a way to kind of, to disrupt the plan, and also, maybe more importantly, to allow this interruption, instead of staying with the plan, then staying with the,

I mean,
as Donna Haraway would say, staying with the trouble,
no, like,
you're staying with the,
staying with the,
staying with the interruption, like,
let,
let,
invite the interruption in, and allow it to take space, allow it to,
to,
to make you,
yeah,
change your mind, allow it to, you change your plans, and instead of just ignoring it, and pretend that it's not happening, then to, to give it some space, and say,
this is,
this is important, I'm affected, and because I'm affected, the, the work should also be affected, in a way.

So, I, I, I did a tiny little cheating, and I looked a little, tiny little bit of something from your Instagram the other day. What I saw there was some footage of a choir of elderly people, and mixed together with footage of, I don't know what it was, maybe some performance or something,

and then footage of some demonstrations. Can you tell me the title again?

In Search of Now-Time.

Yes, Now-Time. So, so, so I know that you're into, like, the question of demonstrations and protests...

Yes.

...and then what, what, what is this Now-Time in, in context to filming protests? Can you say that in a, in an understandable way?

I can try. I, I, I think of my work dealing exactly with this kind of meeting point between politics or, and aesthetics, and I think, rather than demonstrations and protests, I mean, protests, yes, but I've been more interested in what I, revolts, like, so what I call revolts. So, a revolt is something that is, can take the form of a demonstration, but it can also take the form of, I mean, I'd like to expand the idea of the revolts, but it also means, like, something, yes, revolt is something different from revolution.

Okay, now I'm going a little bit off tangent here. So, your low practical question is?

What is the, what is nowness, and why, and why the red, Now-Time, why the red thread of a footage from revolt, revolts? Yeah. What's the, what's the connection between, I mean, maybe I am asking a very abstract question.

It's just because I keep seeing these pictures and images from revolts in your work.

Yeah.

Is that an important theme?

Yes, yes.

An ongoing theme in your work?

Yes, yes. That, that requires that I go a little bit further back in time, actually, because for more, for a period of 10, like 10 years back in time, starting around 2010, 11, 12, I finished art academy at the same time as there was, like, a financial crisis, and at the same time as there was, like, this huge wave of revolts that had kind of started popping up all over the

world. There's different narratives of this, but some people argue that it started with the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt and spread to Syria to, to become part of the Occupy movement.

And you saw these kind of manifestations of revolts really happening on a daily or weekly basis everywhere in the world. There's never been as many revolts as today, and it's ongoing until today in history. And I think this is fascinating as a kind of a discontent to the world we live in.

And it's a phenomenon that I have been part of in many occasions, like physically on the streets, and have many good and bad experiences from taking part in those revolts. So for a period of eight, 10 years, I traveled to a lot of these revolts, like, kind of to take part in them and to kind of learn from them, and try to understand and try to make sense of them as kind of gesture as political gestures and to take them serious in a way, because I do think that the revolts are saying they are saying something about our society. There's a reason why they happen.

There's also a reason why they don't happen. And during those years, I would often have a camera with me or sometimes I would write, I had different kind of methods. And I ended up having a rather large archive of moving images kind of depicting these revolts.

And it just felt really wrong to then having all this material then to go back and do like a classic documentary film.

I mean, I think I mean, personally, in my case, I think I did the PhD, I had a four year contract. And it was those four years were very dramatic for me.

It was, it was like from one interruption to another. So the first year, I fell in love, which was completely overwhelming and just whatever like a carpet taken away under my feet and which meant that I basically could not focus on my PhD work.

Her name is?

Yaniya Mikhalina. She's an amazing, my favorite artist and thinker and partner and everything.

So yes, we met at the same PhD program.

And within a few months of having started, we fell in love and the rest is history. But so that was like a major interruption into my planned PhD work. And I think we allowed ourselves that to,

to,

yeah,

to be in love and to whatever, like, go on romantic trips and do all the things you do when you're in love and, and not only be concerned about our PhD and our project.

The next thing that happened was the year after was that my father died quite suddenly, which was a major interruption again, I mean, we were very close and, but something that really shook, you say that I was very shaken by,

by,

by this loss.

And,

and I spent more or less a year kind of mourning and kind of dwelling on,

on,

on,

on,

on my loss and, and trying to make sense of,

of,

of who he was and our relationship and what he meant to me and what he left and what I want to pass on and, and so on and so on. I made several kind of works and exhibitions related to that, which had nothing to do with my PhD, which was again,

allowing myself to,

to,

to,

to,

to dwell on this interruption in a way.

A lot of films these days are made from like, because of like budget and constraints and production formats that you, you write like a manuscript, you research for money, you film, you edit, and then you show it. So there's this very kind of linear, progressive production chain. And it just felt really wrong that I should go back in kind of my safe, safe editing suite and, and do like a film, a documentary film about this 10 years of revolts.

Why would that seem wrong to you?

Because I didn't, because in many ways, they are not done. These revolts are still ongoing. Even if they look like they're done, they are still very present, I would argue.

*So you would feel like you were like
putting things to the grave and saying
that was it cut?*

In that in a way, in a way, because I do think
that there's a certain determination.

And it's also, I mean, there's many ethical kind
of considerations of why I did not want to do
it. But one of them is definitely that there's a
certain determination in like saying, this
history is over. And I'm now presenting it in
some kind of coherent way.

What does determination mean?

Determination, that it's that it's, yeah, that it's
finished, that it's kind of like, it's like, final, it's
final. Yeah, it's something that you can, you
can grasp in its wholeness. And it's something
that you can have a say on you, I mean, you
can, you can, you can portray it, you can
historicize it.

And I think my experience is, was that, that
these revolts were very much ongoing. And, in
fact, these revolts had opened up a new space
that had not been closed. So and I think that's,
that's, that's, that's what revolts can do is that
they can, they can kind of open up spaces that
are, and I think it's, that's what revolts is
ultimately about is like, it's keeping those
spaces open and keeping history open in a way
that so that was my problem in a way.

It's like, how do I, in a documentary format, in
working with moving images, how do I not put
a closure to this history? How do I keep the
history open in a way while it happens? So the
method of live editing was like an answer to
that problem when I was younger.

*I'm lost in the question of determination.
I'm sorry, I was thinking about that one.*

*Can you just, can you say the last, did
you, so did you, did you already, when
you applied for the PhD, was your, had
you already with the application decided
that you were going to do this now time?*

*Was that, was that something that you
applied was in the PhD or something
you made up came along during the
PhD?*

The title changed once or twice, but the method stayed the same. So I was really interested in, in, in, in dwelling on this method and refining it and, and kind of experimenting with this method of live editing.

Yeah. Okay. So you were basically researching what can this method of now time slash live transmission, yeah, what can that actually create or not create?

*What can it do? And what...what is its limits and what is its possibilities?
Yeah?*

Yeah. Yeah.

In a, in a setting of looking at, and now you have to correct me, looking at the revolt and the revolt's possibilities of creating other kinds of spaces.

Yeah.

That's what you were looking at? Yeah?

Yeah. To, to, to treat them as unfinished histories in a way, to, to not treat them as something that belongs to the past, but something that very much is part of our present. And so, to think of how are, how are these revolts part of our present?

And this is, and this is, of course, not only, it led me to realize that it was not only about the revolts that I had been engaged with, the ones that I had taken part in, it was also about all the revolts from the past that kept on resurfacing, that kept, that kept coming back to the present. So, May 68. Anti...

What was the May 68? What is that?

So, 1968, May uprising or the May revolts, perhaps starting in France and kind of spreading to, to, to larger parts of the world in, over the summer period, but also ongoing. And I think that's, again, like it's, it's, it's very misleading that we call it May 68, because it makes it sound like it started and stopped in May 68. But, but of course it had a long prehistory and, and I would argue that we are still living in the aftermath of May 68.

So, May 68 is not finished. It's not a finished event.

What did people do? What do they, what did they revolt against and for?

It was very much like a workers slash student uprising that, that wanted to create better working conditions. And so there was, you saw major general strikes and factory occupations and university occupations, but also kind of led to a more kind of cultural revolution where it was about gender equality and feminism and decolonial struggles, anti-colonial struggles. Some people call it a revolution because it had so many, it touches on so many aspects in society and so many struggles at the same time.

I mean, what they struggled against is still very much part of our struggles today. And I think it's, and that's why I think it, what May, let's call it now, May 68 opened up for is a space that has not, has not been closed. It's, it's, it's a struggle that is very present today as well and very relevant today.

So, so part of my research was also to look back at, at historical revolts and many, many people would call May 68 alongside so many other revolts as defeats, like political defeats. So also to think like, how, how are these, how are these political defeats part of our, part of our life today? So to treat, to basically, again, to treat them as, as unfinished struggles.

And, and, and then I think the live editing methodology came a solution, became a solution for me to, to speak about these unfinished histories.

The third major thing that happened was that I became a father, which was another groundbreaking change in my life. And still is, obviously.

And of course, I could not continue my work, even like, I mean, normally I work a lot in front of the computer and so on. And suddenly I had to, I had to accommodate for, for, for having a new roomie, basically of,

of like,
of,
of,
of,
of,

I mean, it changed everything as it should when you have a kid, how I work, how I think. And, and of course it's changing all the time depending on his needs.

And yeah,

I don't think interruption is good or bad. I think it's just,

it's,
it's just is. So I don't want to kind of qualify them.
But it was probably one of the best interruptions that ever happened in my life
alongside meeting,
meeting my partner. And the fourth, I guess, big interruption, I would say it was, is the
ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people. I cannot,
I cannot not see it.
I cannot not deal with it.
It,
it has to,
it has, and it does on a daily level affect me.
The,
the kind of the,
the,
the vastness of,
of this fascist violence, the kind of the cruelty and the exposure is something I cannot,
I cannot not include, I cannot not be affected by it in my work.
It will be just, it would be extremely difficult for me to,
to just turn my eye to that and say, this is not going on. I have to continue with my
PhD project. This is very important, blah, blah, blah, blah.
Of course I have to be affected. And of course I have to change my, the course of,
of the work.

I mean, the other thing that happens, okay, this
is another off tangent, but I think I really,
when I was younger, I was really into like the
documentary genre, like I, whatever, I love to
go to Copenhagen docks and, and all of this.

*That's a big documentary film festival in
Copenhagen.*

Yes. But something happened to that format,
that medium, the genre of the documentary
that makes me, that just makes it basically, I
cannot watch it today. There's so much, there's
so much manipulation.
There's so much...

Extractivism?

Also that, I mean, yes, definitely the kind of
the whole ethical aspect of, of, of, of filming
and leaving the context behind to, to show it
elsewhere. I mean, there's all these kinds of,
but I do think it's, it's, it's really, it's really a
problematic genre for me today.

*When did that shift happen for you? Like
how many years back are we going
approximately, do you think? I'm asking
because I also had a shift and I used to
go to that festival, like it was a music
festival.*

I made like a pre-planned, like whole days of doing nothing else. I mean, that was my super once a year go-to and then slowly, but in a way also fast, kind of shifted. And now I almost can't stand anything from there anymore.

But I think that exactly, but I do think it has a lot to do with, with, with how those productions are taking place and, and, and, and the amount of, of, of manipulation that goes into them. So I think, but I still want to, I don't want to abandon the documentary kind of approach. So for me, it became like really a struggle, like how can I work in a documentary format, let's say.

So, so basically I wanted to find a method where I could translate that energy that I had experienced in the street into a filmic format, into moving images that, that somehow preserved some of that energy, some of that kind of like, that was kind of more true to the, to the kind of political and ethical dimensions of the revolts in a way. And live editing became one, one kind of solution for me. So, so in many ways I could say that the PhD is kind of comes from a frustration with, and a kind of a disappointment with the documentary format and how, how, how much of what I've seen and still see is, is, is kind of oftentimes works against the very political ideas that they want to portray due to their production methods.

I agree with you, I think. But I also do think that it's also a perfect storm because you have so many different systems, cultures, people, psychologies, all, everything in today is like all squeezing everybody in that direction of what you're talking. Subconsciously or consciously or whatever, or make it impossible to, I mean, if you do, it's also difficult to find a space to do experimentations.

And it's so hardcore to make a living as an artist, so you don't have the privilege of taking risks. And, you know, you need a career. There's so many things going on, right?

*I mean, then there's the institutional
anxieties, not daring to take chances or,*

Oh yeah.

All that.

I mean, again, I don't want to say that this live editing is without its flaws. And it's also, it's also reproducing a lot of like, a lot of mainstream tropes and manipulation and so on. But it's basically what I'm interested in with this, what I was interested in, I'm still interested in the project is like, how are moving images done?

And how can we undo them? So to think of like, how can you think of a production differently than the classic linear progressive kind of from filming, editing and showing like, how can we collapse those temporalities and then do the editing and the filming at the same time as the viewing in a way. And I think this is this, for me at least, that became an answer to some of my problems.

It opened up to another set of problems. But it was definitely closer to some of the kind of, again, coming back to the figure of the revolt, which was the kind of main motif, maybe, if you want to say, throughout, it felt closer to the kind of openness and potentialities that the revolt is producing in a way.

Okay, yeah.

I'm a political person in the world.

I'm affected by what goes on around me to larger and lesser degrees. But I guess a lot of my art deals with trying to understand the contemporary condition we're in. And I think when all my antennas are kind of tuned into trying to understand the contemporary condition, I'm also very affected by what happens in the world.

But I don't think, I think everyone is. I don't think there's anything in my practice or in my personality that is different in that sense. And I think everyone is or should be affected by the ongoing genocide.

And I think it's just about how you relate to it. Again, like with death, when you lose a family member, how do you give that space? Do you allow yourself to dwell on it?

Do you invite it in to your work? Or do you keep it out? And I think this is a personal choice.

And I'm not saying anything is better or worse. This is just how I deal with things. I have to make sense of that.

I have to try and understand and make sense of how they affect me. And I guess that's what I use partly my art practice to do this. I mean, this is a kind of a method or an instrument or a tool to kind of make sense of the world around me and what I go through.

And I think not, for example, with the genocide, not giving it space is what fuels genocide. It's part of a denial of a very real materialist condition that affects thousands and thousands of people. And I think by going into a denial mode of that genocide, it's what fuels a genocide.

It's what genocide kind of, not only this genocide, but historical genocides. You can name the Armenian, you can name the whatever Holocaust, you can name all the genocides that has taken place and are taking place in our world. They can only happen through denial.

And so the moment we go into denial mode is actually what gives genocide its possibility, its future. But again, I'm also aware that it's also a privilege to let ourselves be affected and let the interruption in. It can be, for example, in the case of the death of my father, it was a privilege that I had the time because I had an income, I had a contract, so on.

I had the time to actually not do anything but being in grief.

So how come, now I might sound like a devil's advocate or something, but I actually do mean it from a curious point of view, but how come you didn't, or did you do that? Have like a live, how come you don't use live cameras outside filming? Because all your footage is either from the studio or archive, right?

First of all, I've done many different versions. I wouldn't say I have one. And that's, I think, again, coming back to the PhD, I think that's the beauty of that I had these four years and a stable income that allowed me to try everything out in a way.

So I would say I did as much with the kind of format that I wanted to, and I could easily continue. So it's not like I feel that I've done everything. So I tried to do versions where it's only live cameras in the space.

I've tried to have live cameras outside that were then sending me their signals to the live

editing station. I also worked solely with archival images, so no live cameras at all.

And what setting do you find worked the best? I'm not talking about the big conclusion of your PhD. I'm just sort of like, what?

I'm never very satisfied with what I do. I'm always very, I'm a harsh critic on my own work. And I also am very good at censoring many things and maybe not realizing them.

And I'm not, and I'm very, oftentimes not very, I don't feel very confident in many things, either before or after. So it's really big questions, question marks, like whenever I've done something, it's like, what is this? Like, what have I actually done?

What does it mean? And so on. But that's part of the search, in a way, is to try and understand it.

But I never understand it while I do it, or definitely not before. It always comes, of course, at a later point. But so I, yeah, I just, yeah.

What did you like doing the best? What was the most fun, maybe, while you were doing it?

I liked, I very much liked to work with the, for what I did for Documenta 15, because it was an actual TV station. It was, it had like, a potential, whatever, X amount of millions of people who could access it on local, on the local television network. It was kind of bypassing the kind of Documenta 15 ticketing system, in the sense that you could actually see my contribution in your hotel room.

You didn't have to leave your hotel to go to Documenta to see the exhibition. You could follow it from your hotel room or from your castle home. So there's, I mean, that's maybe, I think, something that also relates to your work.

I think there's kind of other distribution channels than the, than the, let's say, Y-Cube or the gallery space or the museum. But, and so what I loved about it was that people were sending me camera feeds from different parts

of the castle. And I had, prior to the broadcast, I had spent a lot of time in the official Documenta archives, accumulating historical material from the last, from the first Documenta in 56 until today.

And so I was kind of trying to treat Documenta as a form of revolt. It sounds a little bit, I don't know, too much maybe, but I knew that because of the nature of the curating approach, that it would be a kind of a chaotic iteration of Documenta. I didn't know it would be so chaotic and so polemic as it turned out to be.

But I think, again, the live editing method allowed me to kind of trying to grasp it while it happened, in a way. I think that's what, I mean, we can speak about liveness also. I mean, there's something about the nature of the live format where you kind of, you're trying to grasp history as it happened, in a way.

I think there's definitely a question of that you are tapping into....

There's somebody coming in. Hi!

Yes.

You're tapping into an energy that's existing right now.

Yeah.

You can feel what's going on over there. You're tapping into that energy when you're sending it down. There's a total different tapping into people's energy fields when doing live, I think.

I just want to say, talking of interruption and live and so on. We're talking over signal right now, so we can see each other. I just saw a person walking into the space you're sitting in.

You're sitting in your studio.

Yes.

When people can hear maybe something moving around and so on, it's another person taking a jacket on a hook and doing something out of the picture right now.

Yes. It's my partner and studio mate.

Doing live recording.

Yes.

Yeah. Okay. But did you have the cameras there? They were filming and sending you direct?

Yes.

Okay.

Then I had cameras in the studio as well, so it was a kind of...

Then you definitely did live. I did not know. It was very live!

With all the flaws and technical flaws, that's part of that, and all the glitches and delays and all of that.

It's part of the charm, but also of the manipulation of the idea of liveness. It's very much placed on the possibility of failure, or the possibility of a technical follow-up. There's that suspense that is built into the medium and into the...

Which again, I think goes well with the notion of revolt in a way, that it is something... There's a certain risk in a way. There's a certain possibility to be whatever, arrested or whatever, or who knows what.

But this kind of decision-making that happens during a revolt is very, I found, close to the decision-making that happens during a live editing. It's like, should I run to this? Should I run to the left or to the right here?

Or should I protect myself? Should I charge? I mean, all these kind of...

...But I also want to say that...

I also want to interrupt.

And I think maybe art has that possibility of interrupt.

At least I want to believe that, in the best case scenario, that art can interrupt, even if it's a split second of introducing some awkwardness or something that changes a person's line of thought.

So I think, I guess, all artists in some ways are working or dealing with a certain form of interruption or a desire to interrupt. In academia, I think perhaps less so.

I mean, I try not to make this...

To distinguish too much between whatever academia and art, blah, blah, about creating new forms of knowledge and make links between different knowledges. And so there is, I guess, also an ongoing interest in trying to disrupt what we assume we know.

So perhaps it's not that different.

Yeah.

Okay...So what would you say was the biggest downer during the PhD? What was the biggest theme of what you found problematic?

Hmm. I think one thing was the loneliness, the isolation of...

Yeah?

...the loneliness that you enter into doing this project.

I mean, I come from a very connective and collaborative background, so I'm very used to do work with other people and I've done that for most part of my kind of artistic life, whatever you call it. So it's very new for me to kind of be just focusing on my own work and do that for five or four years. And I found it difficult to share my work with others.

Partly, I mean, for example, with my partner, we do a lot of work together. But because of the nature of the PhD with the salary and like kind of a supervisor and like we were kind of kept apart in a way, like artistically in a way for quite a while. Even if we helped each other out in different projects, it was hard to kind of to maintain a truly, as I would say, truly collaborative practice.

I mean, of course, I could share with peers and there was a lot of opportunities for like seminars and so on where you do that and discuss each other's work and so on. But it was still somehow the nature of the of the funding was also part of separating us in a way. It created a kind of...

And I think, I mean, just the pure fact that I received a salary made it difficult for me to invite other people into some of my projects

and work in a very collaborative, in a truly collaborative manner, because it was always, I was always the one who received a full time salary. And I was the one who didn't have to worry about, there was like some structural inequality when working with people who were not perhaps in a PhD program.

Yeah.

Because I was employed and they were not basically, most times they were not.

Yeah.

There's also other aspects. I mean, there's also other aspects of why it created a loneliness. But I think, I do think that was the main, the main crack, the main issue for me in a way during those years.

There's definitely many mechanisms in society that tries to keep society as it is and keep and preserving status quo.
There's definitely a lot of forces that are put into place just to keep things as they are and have a lot of tools in their toolbox to prevent any form of disruption.
And whenever an interruption or a disruption happens to repress it and to silence it and to censor it and to not give it any space.

So it's hard work
to maintain the interruption and to let it take space and let it linger.
But I think that's, I really do think a lot of good things can come out.
And I think we should not be afraid of interruptions, even in our personal lives.

I think it's,
but again, I'm speaking from a very privileged position. I mean, there are people whose lives are interrupted on a daily level, on a daily basis. And of course, they would love to live in a world with less interruptions.

They would love to live in a kind of, in a reality with a little bit more stability perhaps.
So it also comes from an extremely privileged position in this kind of welfare...

What about that thing that you, I met you, I met you coincidentally in Copenhagen outside at a cafe bar thing, where you just really said hi very briefly. And then like in a fast sentence, you said something like, yeah, I kind of feel embarrassed to tell people that I did a PhD. And now I can't remember if it was the word embarrassed or ashamed, or I can't remember, but something in that direction.

I mean, first of all, I don't think I would have used the word either embarrassment or shame, because that doesn't really resonate with me. But I do think I might have said that I was not always happy to say it, or like I was not. And I think that came as a surprise.

I realized during the process of doing the PhD and also afterwards that it was oftentimes actually a disadvantage to have the PhD or to do a PhD, because I think it puts you in a box.

I think artistic research should,
I mean,
because you do certain experiments, I guess you move forward. So there is some kind of progression or linearity in a way.

But I also think there's a lot of twists and turns.

And at least in my experience, and also my partners and many other of my colleagues, I mean, what I witnessed is that we don't end up where we thought we would end up for sure.

I mean, we took many detours, and we were wilding out.

We were like completely insecure most times about the direction we were going in. So it's this constant doubt and constant kind of readjustment, recalibration, rethinking of what it is we're doing over those four, three or four years.

So I think interruption is,
again, it's an integral part in that process in a way, because you don't know, at least maybe some people know, but I think most people, they don't know what the end result will be.

Especially with artistic research, I would say, it's kind of constantly undoing, redoing, returning, a lot of re-words, re-words.

Yeah, again, this figure of interruption or, and again, also in my work, revolt.

I mean, this idea of returning and undoing, and it's part of artistic research.

There's so much skepticism and so much kind of pre-defined ideas of what a PhD artist looks like, how they work.

Yeah.

I mean, there's many people who wrote critically of the kind of research turn in art, and the kind of text-heavy exhibitions and whatnot...

Yeah.

...like all these kind of tropes that are definitely, I think, valid critique for some artists, but I also think in my experience...

What is a trope? Sorry.

Or like a kind of a cliché, or like a certain pre-existing idea of what artistic research looks like, and how people doing artistic research, how they work. And I just experienced that I saw a drastic, I saw a lot less invitations to do exhibitions after I started my PhD, as if I had abandoned that kind of exhibition-making world, and now I ventured into the kind of institutional world, into the kind of academia, where I was no longer interested in aesthetics and exhibition-making and so on. I felt very boxed in a way.

Even if people had never seen my work, just for the fact that I was enrolled in a PhD program.

Okay.

So, I think when we met, what I meant was that I realized that it's not always strategically smart to say that I have a PhD. It's not like it opens doors.

I mean, it may open some doors. I'm not like... Definitely, it also gave me some opportunities that I didn't have before.

So, it definitely opened some doors, but it's also closed some other doors. So, I kind of... Yeah, it's not the first thing I say when I introduce myself.

Do you regret that you did it?

No. No.

No?

No.

Okay.

I just wanted to make one shout out to Jimmie Durham, who was my kind of soulmate, and who unfortunately also died during my PhD process.
But he was an American Cherokee artist and poet and writer and activist.
One of the best of their kinds.

And he taught me to take parenthesis seriously. And I think this is...

What? Take what seriously?

Parenthesis.

What does that mean?

A parenthesis is something in a text that normally,
when I read a text with parenthesis before Jimmy,
before I was introduced to Jimmy's universe,
I would just read very fast through the parenthesis.
I would kind of skip it almost unconsciously in order to get back to the real text,
which was the important part.

But Jimmy taught me to take the parenthesis seriously, to read them and spend time
with the parenthesis, so actually to interrupt or to halt my reading.

And he worked a lot in his writing with parenthesis and parenthesis to parenthesis,
and so constantly interrupting himself in his thoughts.

And I think,
yeah,
so I just wanted to mention Jimmy and,
yeah,
that he taught me to take parenthesis seriously.

*That's really beautiful.
There's like big,
big interruptions and small...*

Is brackets the same?

Brackets, yeah.

*Yeah.
Okay, yeah.
And there's small interruptions also.*

Yeah.

Nice. Okay, cool.

Jeg gør lige sådan her...