

It Feels Like The Walls Are Caving In – A Behind-the-Scenes Episode | Academic Feelings

Multiple manipulated voices by Rosa:

Rosa Marie Frang:

Ida Bencke:

Voiceover Rosa:

It feels like the walls are caving in
Can the use of rhyming be a way to
begin?

Printed papers
Sprinted scrapers

A podcast intro seeking cracks in the
norms
That was expected in traditional
introduction form

Hi Ida, it's Rosa.

Hi Rosa.

Hi.

So I'm just going to switch to English.

Okay.

And say hi.

Okay.

*And if it's okay with you, I'm going to record this
conversation.*

Okay?

Usually the research pre-interviews
made before the official episodes are
kept behind the scene

Maybe sharing conditions and work
methods can break the surface screen?

So this episode will be a bit
different
Using a bad about telephone
connections as equipment

I'm calling PhD fellow and art curator
Ida Binke for the first time
Using curiosity as my main drive and
only prefixed storyline

*Everything that I might maybe use, I will of course
1000% clear with you.*

Okay...

Doing research interviews into what
the practice-based PhDs were working
on and what was close to the heart
That was where I decided I really had
to start

So I sent Ida an email
Inhale exhale inhale exhale
Neon orange poster
Bright pink roller coaster
Cloud computing Class warfare
Red plastic clap together chair
The earth is poisonous everywhere

Hey, can I give you a call?
I'm doing some research
Maybe I can talk to you and hear what
you're working on

Email is always giving me a feeling of
being off
Somewhat wrong

But hey, she replied back real quick
One, two, three, click, click, click,
click

It's totally fine!

*Okay. Okay. Okay. So I was just, I've been like
thinking so much, how can I do this beginning without
it being too, you know, going over your borders or
something. So yeah, but hey, good morning and thank
you for getting back to me so fast.*

Yeah. I was so happy when you wrote and I was
like, yay. So I've been following your work also
for a few years. So yeah. Excited to see you at
the university. Yeah.

*Yeah. It's kind of overwhelming. I'm still trying to
figure out like "What!?".*

And yes, Ida Bencke is already in
three other episodes
This podcast is not based on guest
quantity and checklist barcodes

But it's a low practical investigation
into if art and feelings
It can be a ways into breaking
compartmentalized knowledge ceilings

Knowledge

Feelings
Art
Knowledge
Feelings

Welcome to Academic Feelings.
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.
The podcast is created for a center called PASS,
Center for Practice-Based Art Studies at the University of Copenhagen.
This episode is a sneak peek into the pre-interview I did with Ida Bencke
way back in time.

I think a lot of us have this feeling that we end
up reproducing a lot of stuff that's not so good
in this world. And we know that we need to
change, but we don't really know how to.

Ida is a curator doing a practice-based PhD at the University of Copenhagen.
She's part of the Curator Collective Laboratory for Aesthetics,
part of the university research cluster called OIKOS,
and part of a larger group of people working on the project called Hosting Lands,
where they've been working on buying a piece of land.

Enjoy.

I'm thinking we have like an hour?

Yeah.

*So I have like four or five questions. So again, I know
you're not an educated artist, you're an educated
curator, but I still have like...
Oh, yeah. And so this is like with... I'm not directly
inviting you to be part of the podcast.
I'm still like trying to figure out how to make it, and
what do people talk about, and how do they talk, and
what's the whole game. But I might invite you. It's just
that I'm not promising anything.*

Yeah, yeah. All is good. Yeah. Of course, that's
totally fine.

Okay, so this is a kind of like a pilot interview
for you also, just to kind of understand how
people at the university talk about their
projects, and how to communicate those.

Yeah.

Like you're also now in a kind of a research
phase, I guess, where you're trying to figure out
how to do this.

Yes.

Okay, but that sounds great. Well, just one thing, because I did not know we would talk for this long, so I have like a really short phone call in half an hour.

Oh, okay.

So if it's okay with you, could I just get off, call that person, it's very quick, maybe five minutes, and then call you back. Is that okay?

Yeah. Totally. No, no, that's super fine.

Okay.

Yeah, yeah. Okay, no, it's because you said between 9 and 10, so I thought you had an hour.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay.

Yeah. Yeah, but that's super fine.

But it's fine? I don't have any other things. It's just one little phone call I have to do.

Yeah. Yeah, no problems. And yeah, and again, thank you for taking time off for me and for this.

Yeah. So I was thinking like, just maybe talking a little bit about like, what it is you're doing and then end off with talking a little bit about, that'll be like in the end of our conversation, like asking, like talking a little bit about like, if you should put on a podcast with interviews with practice-based artists, like what would make you listen to it? And what would make you not want to listen to it?

Like, how would it be made interesting for you? But first of all, I just have to ask. So because this is a whole new world, this whole PhD and university, so correct me, have I understood it right that there's a project about climate and the climate crisis and caring crisis, and looking at that by analyzing cultural products.

There's this project that has gotten a whole bunch of money, two people have applied, and then these two people invite PhD researchers to come and research underneath this topic. And this is where you come into the picture. Is that correct? Understood?

Yes, but with a few adjustments, because we were kind of a group of people who were already at the university, and then me, who was, I've been working as a freelance curator and publisher for the past 10 years. But we were kind of a group of people that came up that were conceptualizing this idea of doing a research project on the intersections of care crisis and climate crisis.

And then it was funded. And then after that, so I was a kind of part of, I was a major part, but I was part of the whole conceptualizing work. And then after the project was funded by VELUX, then a few other people joined.

Yeah. So that was, yeah, but my case is a little special, like living this, you know, probably know exactly what it's like living that kind of precarious life as a cultural worker and self-organized skills, you're kind of just used to putting a lot of stuff out there. And then, you know, if you're lucky, then some of it might actually be realized.

And a lot of stuff are just like applications that are never funded. So at the same time, I was also pitching an exhibition project with my own collective called the Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology. And then we won a really huge exhibition award.

So that all happened at the same time. So what I had to do was I had to merge those things. So in a way, I have merged my PhD from this research project with an exhibition that I'm currently working on.

That's kind of how it all came about. It's a little complicated.

Okay.

Yeah. That's how it happened.

Okay. Yeah. Okay. Yeah.

Because I've been trying to figure out, like Googling you and so on, and it's been a little bit difficult to understand, like who, what, where, how!?

Okay. Yeah. I understand.

Okay.

I also don't really know how much information there is on me at the university, actually. Because you said you wrote yesterday that you had read about the project. And I was like, hmm, I wonder what you can actually read about this.

Yeah. And you know what? I tried to find it again this morning, and I couldn't find it. The place where, but I... It's kind of... But somewhere I read like just an overall title of something to do with like...

Ah, the Oikos project, maybe.

Yeah, maybe. I don't think so. It was like something to do with like looking at institutions and how institutions could be remodeled in the sense of like caring and instrumentalized...I don't know. I don't know. It's like, yeah.

Okay. Interesting.

Yes. Interesting.

Yeah, well, I'm very into that also. But I don't...

I'm not sure about my PhD project.

Yeah, maybe my PhD project is also about that, actually. I'm not totally sure yet.

So can you tell me what your PhD project is about then?

Yeah. Let's get to that. Okay.

So as I said, we... And I always say we. It's so weird for me to be I at the university, because I always, always work with directors.

Yeah. So we won an exhibition award from something called... Velux Foundation... It's called... It's like this super generous, so much money, like five million. And for us who have always just worked with tiny little budgets, we're like, what?

Now we can do stuff in the world. So the idea is to work with an exhibition, an exhibition form that is connecting to other self-organized initiatives in Denmark, but also beyond, that work in kind of these intersections between the contemporary art practice, very often collective contemporary art practices, and climate activism. And so we've kind of like come up with this exhibition design where we are engaging with a lot, a lot of collectors that are really into questions of land, land care, and community care also.

And we're kind of trying to see how much we can help, actually assist, whatever it is that they're doing with the money that we got from this foundation. So we have this super weird exhibition project that doesn't even have one site, but it has at least five sites and then also other sites because some sites connect to new sites. So it's kind of like this sprouting project that is a four year long process.

And mostly it's about building relations, actually. And then we kind of invite artists, but not just artists, also a lot of community organizers and activists who have a lot, a lot of experience in how to facilitate community and how to consolidate community and also how to navigate in the conflicts that are inherently within communities and kind of how to then create and sustain networks of people who work very hands on actually with kind of figuring out how to build new worlds in the ruins of this fucked up kind of capitalist and yeah, in the ruins of capitalism. We often say this is a project that's about how to live in the ruins of capitalism. And so one of the kind of larger gestures of the project is to buy land.

So we also spent some of the money that we got from the foundation to actually purchase conventional farmland. And then we common it, we come up with collective ownership models. And we try to figure out how to share land and what to do with that land, how to kind of restore that land, how to restore biodiversity, but also how to make land hold communities in ways that are both attentive to the kind of local needs, but also in ways that create networks that are founded, solidarity networks between different sides.

Where have you bought land?

We're now, we actually haven't bought that land yet because it's kind of difficult. It's quite complicated actually to buy land, especially if you want to come up with like collective ownership models.

So we're not, we haven't bought it yet, but hopefully we'll buy 1.3 hectares of conventional farmland on Møen, where I also live. Along with the local artists collective called På Den Anden Side. And for that, we've been like kind of engaging in this, we call it a commoning committee.

So we created a committee of artists and curators and local people in the village. And then we meet a few times a month and we discuss like, what is a commons for us and

who should be kind of invited into this commons? And how do we negotiate the politics of the commons?

What are the hospitality practices that we want to cultivate here, et cetera, et cetera. So, yeah. Then the exhibition project.

And then, so my PhD is practice-based, so it's all about...

...

Oh, hello? Hello?

...

You were cut off.

Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

It's a very bad phone connection here in the countryside also.

Okay. Yeah.

Nobody wants to know about your PhD project.

It's just kind of like, it's going to be kept secret. No, I think I was saying something about that.

Because now I'm into the second year of my PhD. I'm actually almost done with my second year. And I think more and more, I've come to realize that the PhD is not going to be about like, oh, here's an artwork, and this is what this artwork says or does.

But it will be much more about maybe mapping and archiving a lot of the really interesting and sometimes also very difficult conversations that we're having in the curatorial team. We are a curatorial team of four people who come from different places in the world. So a lot of the time, it's also negotiating, what does it mean to do an exhibition in Denmark?

And Denmark's role as a nation state. And what happens when we invite artists that live in totally different parts of the world and kind of live under completely different conditions that we do here in the global north? Where do the three others come from?

So Dea is my kind of partner in crime. Dea and I, we are situated in Denmark. Then we also collaborate with Aziza Hamal, who is situated in Tunisia, and Poojita Guha, who is situated in India.

And so Poojita and Aziza have kind of been bringing their artists from their communities and people that they have worked with before into hosting LEMS, which is the name of the exhibition. And so what is really interesting about this process is that it's become a lot about negotiating how to collaborate across global south, global north, kind of different positions within the global south and the global north. And also it has become very much a question of what happens when the art world kind of engages with or collaborates with local community initiatives and what happens when those two worlds meet each other.

Because that can be super exciting and interesting. It can also be really difficult and kind of problematic, because I also think we tend to instrumentalize a lot of community work and activism in the art world. And we also create an economy for ourselves and a cultural capital around these things.

So in a way, we're also now just thinking a lot about how to give back when we take things from people who are already struggling, because most of the people we work with have practices that are founded very much within activism and social justice movements. And I don't think it's always easy to transport that into an exhibition project or the kind of economy of the art world. So those are the negotiations that I'm trying to figure out.

I'm trying to figure out how to document them and how to bring that into the PhDs, how to kind of communicate them.

Yeah.

Well, that's big topics.

I don't even know what to ask about, because there's a lot of big topics at the same time. So you're saying in the PhD you want to document and archive it, but

are you also trying to find methods or solutions to how to, as in the PhD, how to navigate these issues?

Yeah, I think that's something that I'm trying or we're trying to figure out how to navigate in the exhibition project.

So we work with a lot of people that have, as I also said, that just know a lot about this. Because we're also really trying to not act like we're coming up with a lot of stuff, because most of the stuff exists already. And there are so many people that know so much about how to navigate these kinds of conflicts and how to kind of practice intersectional, also community activism and things like this.

So I think mostly, now at least, it's about inviting those people in, inviting them to the table and listening to them and to their methodologies and experiences. And then I think for the PhD and the question of methodology, well, first of all, I've just been thinking recently a lot about questions of resource redistribution, just because maybe you also have this feeling that when we're at the university, we sit in an institution that just is so rich. There are just so many resources, right?

Compared to what it's like to be in the more, again, self-organized scene.

Oh, yeah.

There's an inside and outside.

Exactly. So recently, I've been really interested in learning from artists, but also others who have developed really kind of smart and strategic resource redistribution schemes and protocols. And that's actually something that I think will maybe also somehow play a part in the PhD.

What do you mean by redistribution? Like what's that real low practical? What could that be? Like how? What do you mean?

Well, first of all, this idea of taking ad funding money and, for example, buy land in order to come and that.

I think that that's a kind of a redistributed strategy. But also, lately, we've been talking to artists, collectors, such as Skyra, who is a

Palestinian-based group of artists who have developed these really interesting kind of guidelines and protocols for how to distribute resources within communities that may be lacking resources. And how to also share resources if you have some to share.

We're also working with a designer and artist called Yin Ai Wen, who has also developed these quite detailed plans for how communities can share resources, for example, like care work, care labor, beyond a kind of like capitalist or monetary economy. So what we're trying to do now is that we're trying to implement them in the exhibition in different ways. And that's a little bit of an ongoing project that hasn't really landed yet.

But it's something that we have kind of come to understand. But actually, these questions of resources are really, really important. And also, I've been thinking a lot about how to make my PhD a resource to my community.

Because often I have the kind of, I'm sitting with a kind of guilt for being the one who is hired by the university and receives like good PhD wage compared to my collaborators and friends in the project that don't have this kind of institutional affiliation. So I've been lately just thinking a lot about how my PhD could become a resource to them also. So it's not just me who's, you know, making my own career, but to also kind of offer something back.

But I think also I'm a little early in those thoughts. Like I haven't really come up with a master plan for doing that yet. But that's something that I'm really thinking a lot about.

Yeah.

Yeah.

It really sounds like you know a lot about all these things. So from my perspective, I walk around and I've had that feeling for quite many years now that I have a feeling that the space I can be in, like not both the physical space but also like a mental space or like an energy space or whatever you want to call it.

Like my space of existence around me has just become like so small. It feels like there's all these walls that are just all the way up into my face now.

You mean at the university?

No, just in general in the world. Life in general. In life of existence, it's like so difficult to find space to exist.

Like with my soul and my body and my thoughts and my voice and everything. Like it's on all parameters at the same time. And I'm thinking that what you are trying to do is trying to make these give space, find like make room for being able to exist like in this world of like non-space.

Am I understanding this right? Because like capitalism, climate crisis, caring crisis, everything like the political, I would call crisis, institutional crisis, global crisis. It's like in my world, I have a feeling of no space and I'm thinking you're trying to make space.

It sounds kind of banal, but some kind of where you can somehow find, maybe I don't know if I should use this. Okay, I'll just use the word freedom in all this banality. And what the fuck is that?

So I'm just wondering, is it working what you're doing? I understand that because you mentioned that it's very important to create relations between people. And that's always when you feel that you're bonding with somebody no matter where and how and who, then you always get a high, like you get happy, right?

And that's a sense of freedom. So I'm wondering, do you feel like you're creating these? Is it working basically?

That's my question.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's a really good question.

Well, first of all, I want to say, I don't think it's a banal question. I think that it's a very kind of a shared experience and maybe shared frustration also that a lot of us carry right now, that we don't really know just where to go in this world. I feel like that's something that just comes up in so many conversations that I'm having with people in my life and students at the university and also the artists and activists

with whom I'm in conversation right now, that there is this need for new or other kinds of spaces where we can, in a quite radical and very quite fundamental way, practice a different kind of life maybe.

I mean, that also maybe sounds a little banal, but I think we're kind of living through such an intense crisis right now that probably also not going to be a whole lot better in the future. But I think that this question of how and where to go with these feelings, but also how to organize around them is something that is just so kind of present right now, everywhere I go at least and with the people whom I speak. And I think, I mean, it's interesting that you bring up this question of space because what has also happened in this project is that we started to think of art and the art projects and the artworks that we're kind of commissioning and working with and trying to understand as infrastructures for creating new kinds of spaces.

And sometimes we're also thinking about them as like creating rehearsal spaces for life beyond capitalism, right? Like creating spaces, either physical or temporary or just like mental spaces where we can practice what a different life could look like and how we would organize within it. And so I think in many ways, like this exhibition project has been about putting artworks to work in that sense and actually really thinking a lot about them as tools, very concrete tools for doing things differently together.

And I'm totally obsessed with the idea of artworks as facilitators of different kinds of spaces, like alternative spaces, experimental spaces. It's been like a thread in the curatorial work that I've been doing for many years, but I think that this whole space project, we were like actually also buying land and really like in a very physical and concrete way creating new spaces. I think that that's in a way, yeah, I think that that's exactly what it's about actually.

So it's kind of like a prepping? A prepping project. I mean, in a way, I think, you know, I mean, I think for whatever will come, you know, I'm not sure that it's like knowing how to be super smart at the university or knowing how to be, you know, a very good green consumer or whatever.

I'm not sure that that's what's going to help us at the end of the day. I think what will help us is that we know how to collaborate with each other. And I think that it's those kind of methodologies and capabilities that will be very, very important.

Yeah.

And then I think that that's what we're trying to kind of rehearse.

Yeah.

I can hear something is beeping. Do you need to do your phone call?

Yeah, exactly.

Yeah, I think this is my phone call, exactly.

Great, great, great. Talk to you.

Okay. Talk to you. Bye.

...

Hi, Ida.

Hi.

Hi.

Good, good, good.

Yeah.

Okay.

So, question. What, like, this might be a difficult question to answer, but what, if you should like in, or I can ask like this, what in the PhD project that you've been working on, what, in what situations or when do you get like really high on like, this is so fucking cool. This is so interesting.

This is so fun. This is so exciting. When do you get the most like high?

What do you say?

That's such a good question, Rosa. I, when do I get most excited?

I think I get most excited when I sometimes have this experience that we are many who are struggling with the same kinds of questions of, again, kind of following what you

said earlier, where to go in this world. And when I feel a sense of community and kind of collective excitement about teaming up and creating these spaces for each other. And I think what is just so interesting about doing this kind of work is that it's kind of always, I mean, it's this kind of weird organic process where what we thought we would do is not really what we end up doing, right?

Because we kind of learn along the way and then we kind of rethink our own strategies and what it is that we actually want to achieve with each other. But I think...

Can I just add?

Yeah.

That's also my experience. There's like the idea in your, like the thought, the word, the writing.

Yeah.

And when you do things, it's like then so many other things all of a sudden reveal itself and happens that you could not in any way predict that are so much more relevant or interesting to follow.

Exactly.

And I think it's that when we share that experience and we're like, oh, right, this is actually what we're going to do. This is what we're supposed to do with each other. And then in those little moments where it feels kind of possible, you know, in spite of everything, I think that that is kind of like the beauty of the work.

And that's also when things seem meaningful. Also, when I have a feeling that what we do is actually also meaningful to other people, right? Because a lot of the time I feel like, oh, we're just here, you know, doing our own like weird little thing and who cares?

But then sometimes actually people do care. And it seems like there is also forming a kind of larger conversation around some of the projects that we're doing in Hosting Lands and some of the work. And when we do workshops, for example, or facilitate conversations, where it actually feels like it means something to someone and that someone and people have been longing for

these spaces, then I feel that that's when I get most excited and energized.

Yeah, makes sense. Okay, and then I'm going to jump a little bit. So like if you should spend your time listening to a podcast with me talking to artists and curators about their practice-based PhDs, that could be either people are still in the making of it or who have finished their PhD project.

What would make you press play and listen, if you would at all?

Well, I think I would. I think what would make me listen, and this is also following what I was talking about earlier.

I'm just really interested in the question of what are we going to do with this institution? Why are we here and what do we do when we're here? I just feel like the university is such a strange place.

It has so many resources and I'm not just thinking about money. I'm also just thinking about all the knowledge and all the amazing people that hold so much knowledge. But I'm also thinking a lot about the anxieties at the university, the precarities that I think are shared among students and teaching staff and PhD students and postdocs and the strange relationships and also really cool and really beautiful relationships sometimes that are sprouting in this institution.

And I really wonder what to do with them. I think I'm also, well, I'm going to get a little personal. But for me, coming back to the university, I was away for 10 years almost, since I was a student and then I came back as a PhD student now.

And it was so overwhelming to be back there. Because I think I just forgot a lot about what it was like to be at the university, both for better and for worse. But what really struck me was that kind of like student anxiety about not being smart enough or not being good enough, how that kind of just like was reactivated immediately when I was back there and how I just could sense that it was something that was so shared among so many

of my colleagues, but that it doesn't really have, there's not really a conversation around it.

You know, it's like I feel like so many people are just struggling by themselves. And I see that in the students as well. And I see that they're also in many ways like longing for a different kind of maybe atmosphere or teaching kind of environment, pedagogical environment.

And I just like really wonder what we're going to do about it and what we're going to do about it together. And maybe that's also a question to the practice-based PhDs, because I feel like there's so much amazing like experimental work being done in between, you know, academia and practice. And I just wonder how we're going to change things.

And so maybe that would make me really want to listen. It's like, what are we, what are we going to do with this institution? What does it mean to do this kind of work within the university?

And how could we also maybe come together in changing stuff?

Yeah. So it's very much a matter of people having a feeling of being lonely and isolated with their emotional life, or what do you want to call it, like mental, yeah, what do you say, like your thoughts and your problems and your insecurities?

Well, I mean, of course, I can just speak for myself. But I just think that the university kind of breeds, at least for some people, it kind of breeds this hierarchy, right, between thinking and doing and between mind and body and all of these things. We know that, but I just feel like we don't really know what to do about it.

And I was in a workshop the day before yesterday with some students. We had invited this amazing artist called Cassie Thornton, who's a community organizer and activist and an artist, into kind of facilitating a space where we could talk about these things. And it's just like, it just really struck me that there's so, there's a kind of a sense, I think, I think

there's a shared sense that we kind of have to do things differently because this is not really working, you know?

Yeah, what is it that's needed? What do you think?

I mean, when I say this is not really working, I also just like mean that this world that we live in, it's not really, you know, it's not really working out for us.

You know, it's like we're kind of, we, I think a lot of us have this feeling that we end up reproducing a lot of stuff that's not so good in this world. And we know that we need to change, but we don't really know how to. And so I think that there's also this feeling at university that maybe it would be good to think more about how to connect the university to the real world, how to kind of gather the resources that we have here in order to demand change.

But I also just think that there's such a heavy tradition around what kinds of knowledges are appreciated and legitimized in the university that it can be like a really, it can be a really hard struggle to do if you do it on your own. So I think that this question of how to organize also around that maybe could be interesting.

Yeah.

Okay. Yeah. So again, I could say a whole bunch of things I'm not going to do because then we're going to end up talking for like six hours.

So I'm just going to say, okay. But I really get you. I really know what you're talking about.

Yeah.

I agree.

So that's just why I'm saying like, okay. I think that's also why I'm sharing this with you because I have a feeling that you know what I mean. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely.

Yeah.

Absolutely. Yeah. Okay.

So if I was to invite you to do an episode together with me, what would you find the most interesting to talk about? Because now in our conversation, you mentioned so many big topics. So you have like, I

don't know, maybe at least five big, big topics that one could talk a long time about.

So what would you find most fun, interesting, relevant to talk about if you should decide?

Kind of depends a little bit because I think if I were to talk more like in depth about my PhD, then probably it would be good to have more of like a more concrete starting point because now I also feel like I just like put a whole lot of very abstract stuff in there. So maybe it would be good to like start to talk from one project or like one component or something like that.

And maybe that's something that we could come up with together, you know, like identify one or two things about the project that would be good to start from. Because I think that's also what sometimes makes it a little bit difficult to talk about the things that I do with these that it kind of touches upon so much that it can get a little overwhelming.

What are you most interested in talking about at the moment?

Like what would be most relevant for you, do you think?

I think it would be something about how to negotiate difference within maybe an exhibition project that calls upon these, you know, kind of hybrid practices between art and activism. And I'm just like really interested in, again, like all of the amazing stuff that we can do when we kind of connect those practices, but also all of the problems that come because I feel like the art world can be a really tricky place to work from.

And I think that that could be interesting to talk maybe also just more with you about, like, I would also be interested in having that conversation with you.

What do you mean by activism and tricky in the art world? How do you mean it? Like very concrete?

I think what I mean concretely is that, you know, you have all these amazing people that are really kind of struggling to change things, right? And then someone like me, I come from the art world, or at least that's where I work from because that's what I know.

And I also know how to like find resources and make things happen from within that world. But then I feel like it gets so tricky because there are all these economies that are about how to create cultural capital for the...

...

...I don't know why we cut off all the time....

It's all the important stuff. You were just saying it's tricky because then there's the question of how to create cultural capital inside the arts world or the arts scene.

I think what I mean is that, you know, you see all these art institutions and all these curators and I'm kind of like including myself and artists as well.

That are working with these trending topics, you know, topics that are trending for good reasons. Like, for example, questions of care or decolonial practices or ecology. All those things are like very important and they are trending, I think, for very good reasons.

But something strange happens sometimes when then I feel like there's always a risk of appropriating these kinds of, you know, these activist practices in order to accumulate cultural capital in the art world. And I think that's like a... Do you know what I mean?

Yeah, so it kind of becomes like a political washing or something.

Yeah, exactly. Thinking very concretely, a good example could be that there are so many art institutions that are like really happy to curate exhibitions around decoloniality, but no one wants to take a stand for a Palestine, for example.

Like that could just be like a very concrete example. And so, I think I'm interested in those frictions between art and activism. And I'm interested in being...

Yeah, I think we could maybe talk about that.

Yeah.

Yeah. I'm thinking a lot about, I think, a kind of mistake that we have done in our... Well, in

general, I'm so happy to talk about mistakes and failures.

In a way, I think my PhD project will be all about that. And that's also because I feel like we always read these success stories, curatorial success stories when we read about an exhibition. It's like this amazing exhibition that's doing this and this and this, and it talks about this and this.

But I'm much more interested in all the tricky stuff behind the scenes. And so, I think a mistake that I have made and we have made is that we started with these very ideological ideas of what the project would be. But we didn't check in with the people we were working with before we kind of made those grand statements.

And so, I think that also there is a kind of a friction between ideology and practice, maybe. That could also be something to talk a little bit more about. Like, for example, how when we talk about communities and collaborations and connectivity, I think a lot of the time, again, in the art world, we tend to start with an idea instead of, you know, actually a lived practice.

And I think that can be a problem, you know, because I think community is something that just takes a lot of maintenance work, like everyday kind of boring-ass work, you know. But that's part of it. And I'm really interested in how to bring that kind of work into an exhibition or the art world or whatever.

That's like how to kind of give that space, that kind of everyday work of being in community.

Yeah. I've been thinking about diversity in institutions, because it's been such a big thing.

Like everybody should write in their, like have a seminar about diversity and they should write in their homepage that they work actively for bringing in diverse people and so on. And I've been thinking about like every time I've heard in many different spaces, like panel talks and all this discussion that's been going on. When they talk about diversity and

inclusion, it's always portrayed as this beautiful, peaceful thing where it's just wonderful to bring in people with different life experiences.

It's always just like in this rainbow harmony, that's kind of like shown in this picture or in this frame. Whereas reality is actually that it's like really fucking hardcore to have diversity, because it is as my experience is that if you really have diversity, then you will be starting out with like a bomb of, like you will be sitting on a bomb of misunderstanding, miscommunication, conflicts. You know, it's like because you do not have the same codes, you do not speak the same language, you do not understand each other from the starting point.

You have totally different...

...And you might also not want the same things, you know. Yeah, so it's like...

I think that's also just so important to note that inviting diversity should also mean being open to rethinking structure, you know. But so often diversity just becomes a question of actually strengthening the structure that you're already in or the system that you're already in.

Yeah, and it does not work.

It does not work, not at all. And there's like nobody talks about conflict, nobody talks about problems, and nobody like in this institution when they talk about it.

And I think it's like, as I'm not a very conflict happy person, I get like very anxious if there's conflict.

I'm not like a hero in this sense, but I just think it's like as long as there is no conflict, then you kind of like you failed. If you don't have conflicts in your institution, then you failed in having real diversity because that comes with conflict.

Exactly.

And then you just know that you have a lot of people who are super unhappy but also don't feel comfortable and like expressing their discomfort or their discontent.

And yeah, no, I totally agree with you. And then it becomes like, then it just becomes like a superficial, oh, here we have a person with brown skin, check. Oh, here we have somebody with a bad teeth, check, you know.

Yeah.

And then we can carry on in the same conservative, like conserving everything the same.

Exactly. So that's what I've been wondering about. Yeah.

Yeah.

There could also be something to talk about because I think that we have encountered also a lot of these issues. And I think there's been a lot of hesitation and rightfully so among some of our collaborators and the artists that we work with who are, for example, racialized.

That are very, very aware of exactly, you know, this that you talk about, that in the institution, you know, we'd love to invite them in just to kind of make the institution look better. And I think that that's, you know, that those kinds of conversations we have had so many of in our project also. And those are also some of the conversations that I've really been trying to be in and stay with.

And it has also meant that some people just have said, no, thank you. We don't want to work with you, you know. And I think that that is so important also to kind of think more about refusal.

Okay, what does it mean that this person actually is not interested in working with me? You know, like, what is the problem here? And kind of trying to identify that and understand the kind of the structures behind.

Because we're also, and this is like a huge conversation, but I can just like try and really briefly kind of diagnose the problem. Is that when we have a Danish exhibition project, because this exhibition kind of takes place in Denmark. But then we invite a lot of people who live, for example, in the Global South to kind of contribute with artwork to our Danish exhibition.

Then in a way, we really risk reproducing this kind of very extractivist model, right? Where in the Global North, we take a lot of stuff from the Global South and we kind of use it. We take it

for ourselves, you know, in order to create our own either cultural or economic or financial economies or capitals.

And so I think that that's really something that I've kind of, we have been in those negotiations and really understanding what it means. Also to be a white curator who then invites a racialized access into very white spaces. Because we do work in the Danish countryside, also super white spaces, you know.

And then we say, oh, but this is for everyone. But that doesn't mean that everyone feels invited or they feel, you know, safe or feel like this is a context that makes sense for them to work in at all. So, yeah, conflict and friction.

Absolutely.

Yeah.

And then that comes back to the question of how to find, how to make or build or create a space for oneself and others together with oneself. Where you can kind of, not kind of, but where there is a freedom. It's very difficult.

Very difficult. Because you also have to kind of accept that sometimes people just don't want to be in your space, you know. They're just like not really interested in it for whatever reason.

Good reason also. And some of the artists that we work with, they're much more interested in separatist practices. They want to do their own thing with their own communities.

And they're not into, you know, creating a common space with us. So the question of how to kind of continue being in relation and being in conversation beyond that refusal or that hesitation, I find super interesting. And sometimes also the artists that we work with, they say, well, actually, we just want your money.

You know, that's what we want. And I think that's so fair. You know, it's not like that.

That I think is also so extremely fair because a lot of the people we work with have these weird or not weird, but they have these practices that are not very easily sellable or

fundable in the kind of the normative art world. So sometimes it's always just a question of figuring out how to support people with money. Yeah.

So they're really interesting conversations to have around that. Because sometimes it becomes even a question of you as a curator not really asking for a whole lot in return. So that, of course, creates also some problems because at the end of the day, you have to kind of show the product, right?

Like there needs to be something to show.