

9 words for Offsite 9

Bobby Tiwana interviews Sahjan Kooner

Bobby: Hello I'm Bobby Tiwana, I'm a Creative Producer of Live Performance, the occasional short film and a handful of podcasts about a thing or two. In this podcast I will be talking to contemporary artists commissioned as part of Offsite 9 to complement the touring British Art Show 9 in Wolverhampton. Welcome to 9 words.

Bobby: In this episode I meet artist Sahjan Kooner and we are using alive as the keyword for discussion. Can we start with. What is an artist?

Sahjan: It's quite an interesting question because I always think about this in relationship to the lineage of images and social histories that kind of populate, I guess what's considered art making. I guess what an artist is, I've always seen it, for I will talk about myself because I think it's the best position to come from and expand out to practices, I find quite interesting, but to me, an artist is an entity really, which augments, or uses, or builds tools to augment how people see reality and social structures. And those tools can then be relayed across systems which change things. So, I think a good example of this is like, erm, you know I guess, if I talk about myself, a good example of this is I try to imagine a future for everyone and see what that looks like for people, especially people who migrate, and then I think about these questions further and I take them, quite violently to their conclusions sometimes. I always try to think of what an artist is really doing is augmenting reality around different systems and structures, whether that be like visual, or social, or emotional but those are the things I do, I try not to see art as a self-expressive thing anymore, actually I am trying to move away from art which is self-expressive, cause I feel like it's kind of, we live in a moment now where people are self-expressing at quite a high volume. For me the role of the artist is always to find or to augment things in a, in a quite a radical new way every time.

Bobby: So, can you give an example of something?

Sahjan: A practice or like an object?

Bobby: Of augmenting, augmenting reality through an artwork.

Sahjan: I think like when you make something which erm is a tool, I think of this in my own work, a lot, is I think about things like for Offsite 9 which is called Frozen Archive for MOON/ish.exe and its kind a archival work more than anything, I don't see it as an art work in its own state for first time ever and it's kind of interesting to think about. It's actually an archival body of work which is for another show which I'm opening and that show actually is the thing that would answer your question quite succinctly I think, erm, its, the work I'm making for this other show called erm 'Astral Village Slow' which is a duo show, it's a kind of organising conversations, a family trip to the moon, and technology is a representation all collapsing in onto each other, through video, through installation and new media technologies. And all these works are kind of elasticating the viewers body into new worlds. I'm really fascinated by doing that, by actually stretching peoples like visual and social ideas to

kind of the nth degree more or less, I guess, kind of like what science fiction does a lot. That's kind of how I think that these practices which augment reality really do, they like, sometimes expands someone's potentiality in a moment. Either through something like, like what I do, which is I predominantly use video and video installation to kind of like keep on changing your position towards the work. Keep on inviting the viewer into like new worlds, into the moment. Because, in the work that I'm making for that show, there's a lot of sensual things taking place, and like scent is big part the show. And its recalling other worlds, other potential things, like there is a moment where the scent is actually mimicking the village I grew up in in India, it's the exact smell more or less that's pumping through into the space so it is eliciting some kind of demand on the viewer that there is something, than the world we live in, in this space. I think that is one of the reasons I like, the way how use exhibitions, I like upmaking as to invite the viewer into kind of a really celebratory invitation into another world for a moment to build something in that to house them in that potential which is really what I think great work does really, it's kind of like it stretches you away from this moment, into something, like there is a beautiful thing to think about with art, which is really great really interesting art, whether it is , music, visual art, anything. It, it theorises the gap between where we are now and where we could be and I think that's the kind of work I'm really interested in exploring as opposed to the work that is just self-expressive which is just like, this is how I feel or this is...I find that quite, it's a different stamp I just don't operate that way.

Bobby: Would another way of what you are describing, the last bit, be the work allows you to, to lose yourself in it?

Sahjan: I think you do get lost but erm... it's actually defying gravity, making you lose yourself. That's kind of the idea that you are, both physically, and cerebrally and emotionally being shape shifted around the work. And that's kind of the thing film does a lot. Marvel films do that a lot I think and like Alien, which is one of my favourite films. And like It keeps you on your toes, it, keeps letting you know there are a lot of things taking place in the moment, which you don't necessary experience every day. I don't think any of us ever experience, that kind of like, species, explosion out of our body. But there is something interesting what it does to your social framework, I think.

Bobby: I mean, going with the example with Alien and Sci-Fi, is that erm, is that different than to something that would be described as drama or you know romantic comedy, you know, something which is more, like real life to some degree?

Sahjan: I would argue that Alien is actually closer to reality, I know this is gonna sound a bit more like science fiction-y but a lot things that take place in alien, this idea of the encounter with the other, this idea with the encounter of the body which can't be represented through the human lens of understanding things, of seeing things or registering the contours of what people see as human. I think that is actually kind of a very human experience. In the film this thing actually enters into the body to then contaminate a site on a space craft and both the human, and the alien have to sort of figure out what they are in order to survive in that state because of them are in alien environments. And I think that's a very human thing, I've always said that sometimes when you go out into these worlds which are different to the ones we

inhabit. We get very, we sometimes have to question our comfortability, our dependency of social structures we're familiar with. Whether those structures be economic, social, emotional again. Erm there's like there, probably does, there probably is a lot of literature on Alien itself as a film which explores like the encounter with the other which is historically a colonization encounter. The savage, or whatever the language the colonizers used to describe something different to us. So, I always thought that is what I always thought the film was an inspiration of, which is, that we are actually getting contaminated by something we are not familiar with, but it's actually changing us in the process. Because we have to reorient our understanding of humanity. And it comes back to your question of aliveness you know, or your prompt of aliveness. Where does it begin and where does it end, you know?

Bobby: Yep. And on that we have various things to talk about alive, is there anything else to say, your practice, what is your practice?

Sahjan: I work predominately with video and installation and I kind of explore how migration and technology and social tech social systems collapse into one another as people move. The stories of movements, the histories of movements but of future movements people are gonna take. My family like are, migrated from India to here, to Britain. And we have this incredible like tome or archive of imagery. And I was thinking quite a lot of this inheritance that I am gonna get, this visual imagery. Which I don't know is like thirty photo albums and there's video tapes, there's all this volume of data. Huh. And alongside that I was thinking of other forms of archive, I guess you call them, the social systems get brought over by somebody. The kinship systems that exist, the forms of longing that people have and the lineages that collapse as you move, so like I always say that it's interesting that we never frame the way that we create relationships as a long-term form of archive making, like the systems we do to keep a relationship going for as long as possible, that in itself is kind of like archive of material. There's something fascinating with the idea that sits very beautifully or elegantly next to the images that it inhabits. One of the great moments of this project was I was talking to my mom about like these images because I didn't understand any of them. I've been to India twice in my life and I really miss it, I got to meet family there, erm, it's to me it's a very interesting country, it's a very different country, it's gone through different transitions throughout its history. My interest was predominantly post-partition, especially the violence that took place post partition, but the work rarely ever focuses on just that minute, that moment sorry, it focuses more on that movements of my family to here and that inheritance that I get here specifically from the social systems that were brought over with them. Erm, so the thing that this like within my work I kind of sit along these different matrixes, I think I call them, the archive of the future of where we could go one day with my family. Or just me or whoever wants to be with me at that moment and this present and we sort of like house within. So that's kind of my practice, I'm not sure how I it evolves it'll keep on evolving, I don't try and erm bracket it, so I allow it to breathe on its own terms, erm, yeah that's the best way to kind of describe what I do.

Bobby: What is an archive?

Sahjan: What is an archive? I mean there's three different ways of looking at it: historically an archive is a kind of a dedication or space of erm I guess I will talk about through an institutional archive first. An institutional archive more or less is I guess a place where documents, data, information have been gathered to tell a specific narrative about, erm, anybody's world any structure any world that they want to talk about. So, you have erm, the national archives in Britain for example, which have a history of like essentially majority of things Britain have interacted with, you can go there to search there, even family history. People have gone there back and forth and trade that's taken place. Then you have somewhere like a family archive which is like photographic albums, videotapes and oral histories which get physically or through immaterial means stored somewhere, you know, and there are other archives. Our daily archives we keep, our journals, our reminders, our calendars all these things end up having some kind of archival behaviour in the them, which I guess is like a trace a record of something, quite simply to describe them as a record, I kind of think that is a kind of limited reading of its cos I, the more I spend time with an archive, the more I expand its definition. You know. One of the propositions I've had for the work is 'Can an archive be a future framework?', you know, erm, if that makes sense because I think it does. I'm thinking listing back to myself and I think it does because in order to build a future you have to understand the conditions of the past and the present which the futures being made within, so you need that, you know and historically seen within the lens of colonisation there is a destruction of archives you know, of nations essentially. And these things have created horrific conditions for people trying change the violent laws and structures in place in those colonised countries. There are these moments when these archives become political structures as. So, they have this really tentacular existence as an archive, the thing what I want to urge everyone listening to this is it's not just one thing it sits within multiple worlds you know.

Bobby: Is there a relationship between archives and story?

Sahjan: Absolutely, literature being written right now about, with a beautiful title, Critical Fabulations, fabulation is like the idea of making fantasy and making some type of interjection within the the world, you know. And critical fabulation is the moments when the archive broke and it picked up somewhere else. So, then you can have ten-year periods when there is no record of anything taking place and this is true of like in the US predominately, a lot of the time there is renderings of slavery, so DI Hackman is a scholar in the US who really writes beautifully I recommend everyone check her out. Ahem, who writes really beautifully about how she interjects in moments that a voice or a story kind of ended and then begins again thirty, forty years later with a different person and she creates a whole narrative which sits within that. So, for me an archive, you create narratives over them, you overlay them, these things are tools, like we were saying before to be used to change things. I think they have this thing that intimate proximity to storytelling, hence how, when I use in my own practice is a way to sort of, create a kind of a foundation to then build worlds upon them, I'm sorry I mean works upon them because I don't think I know how to right now, I'm trying to figure out how erm, what a future archive looks like, that's a big proposition of my work. And it's hard to imagine that for anybody listening to this but it's something that's in my head right now.

Bobby: So, I'm thinking of ephemera, bus tickets, receipts they in themselves are a trace, they tell a story of action, of journeys, of you know, how someone spent their time. Erm, so I suppose thinking about your work there's the sort of you know, oral testimonies, let's say which are very narrative based, then you might have just information and statistics: door opened, door closed or weather pattern changes. Do you lean more towards certain types of archives?

Sahjan: No. I think I have a very democratic approach to my work; I like use the word flirtatious approach to archives because I don't see them as something historical, I see them as something very contemporary. Even things that trace back to maybe 1800s, 1400s, something, there are social systems in place at the moment which are very reflective of the time we are living in now, but you have to tease out these things. But I have a very democratic relationship to an archive. I try not to hierarchize one thing over the other, I try to keep things on a similar level playing field, a lateral field, so I can have a, a sideways view of it. There was a historical way of looking at an archive which was erm, above so the position of power creates the story, whereas I'm actually, more interested in the stories of people, which has always been like a thing I gravitate towards naturally. People felt in the moment, you know.

Bobby: Because you value archives, I wonder, does that make you a hoarder? Just out of curiosity.

Sahjan: Absolutely, I don't know, I don't know if I would consider myself a, because I think I, it's an interesting question to pose to a, to any individual, in this moment to their data and their life is hoarded somewhere else, in a different land. So, most of the information we use, most the digital data that exists these days online will end up in a data service centre which is being hoarded anyway. To me we are all complicit in being hoarders essentially, which is another question about what that looks like, the aesthetics of that.

Bobby: So, what I'm asking is if you are a proactive collector then, with tangible things, do you consciously collect things?

Sahjan: I'd say no. Usually, all the stuff everything ends up in my loft which is something that's given to me. Or sometimes I hear a story and I couldn't believe I'd heard it; you know. A lot of the times recently, specifically, in my work, I see an image and the image I realise sits within a matrix of images or framework of other images and I begin to think about these portals between these images. So, the image which opens this work for the show is an image of a family photograph on the moon surface by an Apollo 16 astronaut. And that's just became a lens to see my whole family's movement through. Like this person left a trace of their social architecture, their unit, you know. Then I began to think about contamination and traces, like, other world spaces and I began to think about that with my family. Open up the conversation, so rarely do I actually, like I don't actually see myself as anywhere near a collector because I don't physically keep anything. Like if that makes sense.

Bobby: Your family feature often in your work. Tell me more.

Sahjan: Erm I think, they are amazing people, they've kept me alive for so long which I think is really powerful because I don't think we think about that, you know, like how a

collective keeps another body alive. I think that's a very important way to frame a unit. Not all units are healthy, my family are, the reason I work with them a lot is that I think, they have, they have an incredible visual history, they are creative in ways I will never understand because they do things that are far more radical than what I do, you know, they augment realities, through challenging bureaucracies, like challenging states of play, for, evil states of play. And all these things, and they create mythologies of their existence you know. Which is so important for any person who's living in the moment deep utilitarianism, like ours now. So, I think the reason I work with them lots is, is because I think they are radical people who do extraordinary things. I used to ages ago think we do so little, we actually create so much, we just didn't realise what we had. Even though it might look like, like financially we didn't have a lot or economically we didn't have a lot. They all did a lot with what they had, which is a creative act or creative intervention in a system they found themselves in, that's why I work with them.

Bobby: Can you tell me something more? Like you said family members had been very radical. Is there anything you can share?

Sahjan: Yeah, like, I don't know if I'm comfortable sharing some of these things.

Bobby: Sure, sure.

Sahjan: But I will just say that they do things which that I'm learning to do now.

Bobby: Okay.

Sahjan: Which I think is a, by working with them now I'm beginning to learn how I can shape shift worlds, and my existence within those worlds. Because man we live in a hostile place. And they do things which are really quite lax. They do things which are more alternative than any alternative person I know. If that makes sense.

Bobby: And how do they. What do you mean to them Sahjan?

Sahjan: Hmm. I don't know. I don't use them as...the way I work with them is, it's interesting that its family art or anything. I think of them as actual, like collab..., no not like collaborators but actual, like we are materially producing something together. So, I don't know how they see me, they might just see me as a glitch. A way to create an archive of us, in many ways. I think it's a question you have to ask them, maybe I will ask them after this interview. But hm I hope they see me in the light of somebody who wants to craft, erm, a kind of an image of something that doesn't get spoken about a lot, and I think that is really important sometimes. But they're all just cool people, that's what it is, I think there's I just want to work with cool people. If it comes down to base level.

Bobby: So that's maybe what they think of your practice but what about you. Personally. You've talked about what family means to you, what do you mean to them, do you think? How might they describe you?

Sahjan: I think, I think they would use the word glitchy, you know because erm I like, I think I like to think, I guess I can't describe this but I've, I don't, I can't see myself from their position, but I think, really don't... they are ridiculously supportive of what I do and they have been and I think, that's what I mean, I don't know how to answer that

question because I don't know what it would look like. Erm, maybe they see me as person who's trying their hardest alongside them as comradery I guess and that's the respect I've always sought and got, gained from them, I think.

Bobby: Okay. What does community mean to you?

Sahjan: I always use that word in relation to being tethered to something or structured around something. So, when I hear, when I use the word community, I think about people who come together and congregate together or gather together, usually resist something, to change something in a given moment. I think of people... and then I think about the invisible communities that take place. Like people who shape you as well, shape the people who surround, then I think about who you're in a community with. When I think of community, I am thinking about all these, I'm not trying to erm, be difficult, but I don't want to give that rendering to community which is me, like as community maker. What I'm more interested in is like community, in an inverted state thinking about other things that make community possible like congregation, like resistance, like gathering, erm like love. All these materials which we don't like using through the lens of community which are actual communities, you know, erm I think might sound abstract or theoretical so. To me it's like a new way of framing it sometimes because I think my family is a community you know, my friends are a community you know, the political structures I organise myself within are communities, the radical histories I've been shown and given stories about, they're all my communities and histories.

Bobby: Your response is absolutely fine by the way. Earlier you talked about, erm, you know your family enabling your survival and how it takes you know more than just us, you know, more than one to live and to survive and thrive, erm. What makes you feel most alive?

Sahjan: I mean recently the way I would answer that question like, erm, erm the idea of elevation. Like elevating people out the conditions of the world. What else makes me feel alive is like I've just been really fortunate with having the friends I have in my life, they're just all amazing people. Some of them are artists, some of them aren't, listening to them and seeing what they do, makes me like it just makes me feel like really rewarded. In the moment we find ourselves in I just see these people doing really cool stuff. But they make me feel alive, they make me feel like there's potentiality in this world still, as opposed to, sometimes not feeling that they erm, that's what they like having all these people, there's something quite cool happening at the moment in terms of, for me anyway. More what's becoming visible is actually we are moving away from a world where it's the solo individual, erm, like you know, a person who's just fighting for, by themselves, upwardly mobile; like trying to get everything in life, you know, more and more to me it's happening, people are developing these really intricate and beautiful webs of connection which are collective again. Imagine things together. Coming together to imagine something, and I think that's what's going to be, what true life is in many ways. Working with others to do something and I'm really glad that people are seeing that in the world again in some shape or form. Some kind of like reduction in the hyper individualism that we found ourselves in that doesn't really feel like being alive it feels like you're suffering within systems, you know. So actively trying to like mame your or dismantle your life, you know, and I think that is the two-fold lens that I see

myself within. The intimacy of friendships like and family and members of a community I organise myself within and those people that I talk about some of those people are three hundred years past because those people I read about three hundred years ago, who I'm really interested in, there part of my community now. And then those the way I'm framing it which is also the slow dissolving of the individual a bit more and welcoming a new chapter of collective thinking again. That's what makes me feel some form of aliveness.

Bobby: Tell me about someone who's three hundred years old you know, maybe that you've discovered in your lifetime and they're an important part of making you feel alive today.

Sahjan: I guess a lot of the people living in colonial conditions in India they don't have like direct names, you know, but they were resisting, organising together, same in most places in the world where there were some types of extraordinary power dynamic at play to extract and terraform places. All those individuals who were living in those conditions were actively imagining something else and all those people who were 300 to 400 years old, they may not be recorded with a noun, a name in history, but they are ultimately architects of the future you know. So, I think that those people have, I'm in a community with, you know, cause I'm still trying to do that work because I still believe in that work you know of trying to resist something. All these people I think about are connected to the act of trying to imagine something other than the world they find themselves in. I just think about what happened in a place like Algiers you know, like the French colonisation there and a film I recommend to everyone right now listening to this is 'The Battle of Algiers'. Me and my mom watched it at Christmas two years ago and it was just the day before Christmas actually, Christmas Eve and it's an extraordinary film about how the Algerian resistance, overcame the French and it doesn't offer it from a neutral position, you actually see who, how the decisions were made and what actions are taken. You actually see the, that these people who were not connected to/by time or space, but the gestures they were making of imagining something other than their life that they were in is what I'm connected to.

Bobby: What is your emotional state when you feel alive?

Sahjan: I guess I am trying to think of the emotional textures because that's a big question. I don't know how to answer that question because I don't know how to describe because I'm struggling to figure out what alive means because when you sent me the prompt, I am like I don't know how to work with this as a material because it's a very, it's a very big thing you know. Firstly, who is alive and who is dead and when did when did we make the living dead or the dead living possible as these concepts along, orbiting around aliveness, So I'm still trying to think about that. I don't know if I can answer that question directly because it's a...erm, yeah, I don't know how to answer that question frankly. It's a very broad question.

Bobby: We've talked quite a bit about and you know we get a sense of what makes you feel alive. In sensory terms, is there, how do you feel alive?

Sahjan: I guess like of course there's these sensual worlds that you construct as a person which elicit some, elicit some demand on you as a body to be in relationship to

something like when you see something extraordinarily beautiful and it moves you away from the thing you were prior to that movement so it moves you away from this state to another state. That that that transition, that segway into something else is a form of, I guess aliveness, if that's the word we're gonna use. Actually, I'd argue it's something more complex than that but if you want to use aliveness then that's true that things which are constantly shifting upon you to ask something else of you when you're walking and you suddenly think about something else or you're caught off guard by an image. You know. I guess those things are forms of aliveness. I guess the reason I'm so hesitant is because I'm actually trying to steer the conversation a bit to more figure like what do we mean by alive, you know? But I guess I know what you're saying which is that there are these emotional textures which exist in the world, which make you feel, elicit responses to make you feel bigger than the moment you're in you know and you can see that when people come together and resist like in the US with indigenous resistance right now and in South America it produces both hope and aliveness in many ways but I guess I'm trying to figure out, it's a hard thing to talk about because every time I say something I am realising there is a comma, but then there's an and or but after it you know because it's so subjective. Maybe too subjective.

Bobby: So, what is, what is being alive then.

Sahjan: It's a good question, that's where we should start. It's a thing we potentially, work together to negotiate to figure out what the definition is. In many ways, biologically right now there is some definition of aliveness in me. I am responding to your questions and talking and thinking with you. So, there is life, some form of life in a biological sense. And then I think about it in a political sense which is that we in a western liberal world we actually produce forms of death upon bodies which we don't see, we create sacrificial zones of destruction and then we've ended those populations to death. And I think this is maybe more of an interesting space to think about, if we want to go down that route of the conversation. We may just want to talk about the psychological notion of aliveness. There are these prompts we can think about in many ways, we had the, before the pandemic, I will put this out there, because it feels like every time you mention this now it's going to be associated with the pandemic. Talking about viruses, I was doing research into viruses in 2016 and people are still uncertain about how to define if it's life or not life, you know. If it's just information which changes the structure and other people argue it's a form of life because it does these other things And I was really interested in this because I was like oh, it's interesting when something's state can't be defined, you know. If it behaves like in a very complex way, we can't actually give it a rendering or a reading. And so yeah, and so for me the question is what is alive, I'm still, I'm still confused by it and will be for the rest of my life because I think that whenever you say, whenever you try to define it like I said before you will always put a but in it. Well actually I'm saying this, if I'm saying this is life, I'm negating the whole of...firstly I'm producing life here and I'm trading death somewhere else. Which is, you know what US foreign policy is and I don't know if I can do that. If we want to talk about the psychological states of aliveness, yes, it's this complex world we live in right now, this deeply [inaudible] strange having curiosities that we encounter every day right now which causes to shapeshift and adapt to them...you know adapt to the thing we live on this planet and that's very like poetic way of describing it. I think that that's what the

closest psychological rendering of aliveness I can have is something which is. We're all world building together.

Bobby: If you had a magic wand what is the biggest problem today that you would fix?

Sahjan: Man, I need like I need a few. I need a few ones.

Bobby: You've got one. And one wish.

Sahjan: It's hard for me to answer that and I'll tell you why because I think that the things, I want I want to see changed require a complex and nuanced reading of the world. To say I just want to get rid of climate change or to say I want to eradicate racism means I'm being oblivious to the fact that these things are connected. So, to me I would love to get rid of this, this rendering of the world as something which is just binary, this or that you know. I'd love to see us. I'd love to, yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I'd love to get rid of these systems which are highly oppressive to us and actually are dismantling and potentially lethally getting us as a species off the earth I'd love to see that gone, but that in order to do that you have to think about all the other complex systems. It's just that thing, which is like, you can't really, it's really hard to isolate things, like when you talk about aliveness or being alive it's hard to isolate that from the systems of death we produce so yeah, if that helps. I'm not trying to purposely be difficult, it's just that I think that there is something interesting about when you think about if there was one thing I would get rid of I realise the list will be quite like endless because there is...

Bobby: Name a few.

Sahjan: Name a few. I just did, I mean the things I just said are so interconnected and kind of spatially together if that makes sense, to say like for example I'd love to get rid of colonialism which never ended you know, while you're actually arguing for your, to say that means you're creating systems which don't have solidarity with anti racism and like anti-sexism work and like anti homophobia work. All this actually feeds into this practice. I don't know what if I wanted to. Yeah, I think that if anything, if I had the wand, I'd ask for more wands so everyone can have a wand. So, we can all democratically come together to make a decision about what we want to get rid of together.

Bobby: Do you think everyone would make good use of their wand, if everyone had a wand?

Sahjan: Absolutely not. We are a complex species. We have such different demands on our day-to-day existence, you know my life compared to somebody's other life is very different you know and each of us have these interior landscapes textures of ourselves which shape how we see the world, you know. We have different sets of love, capacities for love you know, different sets of emotions, different sets of psychologies, some people can easily become full of rage you know, other people can become withdrawn, does that mean that we can't come together to make decisions together, absolutely not, it just means that will have very different responses. You know. I'm an anarchist so I always believe that there's potential.

Bobby: So, you know, you talk about wanting to get rid of binaries, stop seeing that way, so let's talk about interconnections. You know, so yes, can you say anything about

interconnections, you know, how things are interrelated in your, in the world, in life, in your work.

Sahjan: Oh, that's a good question because it's more fruitful, I think. So let's start with, maybe one of the things I want to talk about is climate change which is interesting in that we are creating quite a rigid viewpoint of what climate change is, we rarely mention that policy planning and previous decision-making have actually lead to marrying to the destruction of lands you can see that with like dam production, water shortages, these are all previous policy decisions that took place and now they're married to more extreme weather events, this is interconnection. We're inches to frame something from a specific point of view when actually the more interesting thing is to actually make a more nuanced reading of something. So, and you might say that we haven't got the time to do that but firstly that's not true, you might as well give up on any activity because it's just not true. The ability to create a nuanced rendering or a reading of something is what interconnectedness really is, it's the expansion of scope of seeing, another form of...in my own work what is interconnectedness, is the fact that I can show, I think my work is very ambitious, in its ability to create a really strong sense of gravity for some, a viewer like I have a lot of density in my work. So, I'll create these extraordinary, not just visual but social and historical and future links between like, an image from on the moon all the way through my family. You know then us using technologies of surveillance to go to the moon, it creates this tapestry of reading which elicit some type of, I guess hopefully in the viewer some type of thinking that there is something else or some other way of seeing something. If you want to about interconnectedness in the most basic level, it's just the fact that the thing you're looking at is actually made up of more than one thing, what's actually more interesting is happening this moment is actually moving towards the other direction which is that we are trying to create more binary structures in the world, it's either this or that which I think is a very dangerous route to go down because the other route is about realising that actually chaos rules in a very strange way and that's the way it is you know.

Bobby: What is the most precious thing to you in the world?

Sahjan: Oh, my mom, I think my mom. I think erm, I'm not gonna share my mom, actually I love my mom but actually the thing I was gonna say was the capacity of love is the most amazing thing I've got in the world right now? Just realising you can expand your heart to house multiple people. I think that's one of the things that I carry a lot with me in that question about what I value most in the world. It's just the capacity to love and just to change people through that, you know, as opposed to dismantle people through hatred. But I hope that answers the question. And that ties into my mum, you know.

Bobby: I was reading, so is it Sophie Xeon

Sahjan: Yeah, Sophie's just her name, Xeon was her full name.

Bobby: So yes, I was reading about Sophie Xeon, and you use her track is it a called Pretender?

Sahjan: 'Pretending'

Bobby: 'Pretending', yes, so tell me, tell me more about Sophie Xeon, what's erm...in relation to your work. The work, you know that you're, as part of this commission for the moon.

Sahjan: Absolutely. I think you revealed your age by not knowing...do you know her?

Bobby: No, I don't.

Sahjan: You revealed your age. Sophie was like a music producer an electronic music producer but also like a musician. She died last year, during the pandemic in 2021 she was on the roof of a house in Athens, and she was taking a photo of the moon and she fell off the roof. And all her friends said that's such Sophie thing to do to take a photo of the moon at night. It's a really sad story because she was a, I mean she was an extraordinary person and she changed, she created a tool for people who don't fit within societal expectations of bodies or gender identities or sexualities. She created a really powerful tool for people to imagine and create hope for something else, something coming. I get quite sad when I think about her because I had a lot of grief because she just did extraordinary things and the reason, I think a lot about her is because I always think about how these people don't get remembered or don't get thought about within the master narrative. Like I said to a friend recently, isn't it strange how she'll just get forgotten. Whilst somebody else will be like highly prized and remembered but she created a world for everyone, well sorry she didn't create a world she created a tool for everyone to use, to create other worlds, other places sorry.

Bobby: What is the tool?

Sahjan: Because like in your head you're imagining something physical, and tactile and useable. But I'm trying to say something else, it's this ability for us to see, keep imagining, keep shapeshifting, keep being something other. I mean she augmented herself so much, her voice, the vocals everything it was constantly changing. When you see the visuals of it you begin to realise that there is actually the thing that we had defined as being a person is actually far more liquidy than we thought it was. She operated within like a music genre called hyper-pop, so it was all about like the exaggerated nature of the body and the voice everything it's very sharp highly polished music and it's requires extraordinary amounts of talent to produce it. Not many people like this music because it's too, it's like pop to the extreme, but I absolutely loved what she did and the reason she factors so much in my work recently is because, because she made tools, literally she made stuff for other people to use you know. She was like, it was almost like here's a wrench, here's a bolt you know figure it out, she created a laboratory for herself to operate within. The song 'Pretending', the reason I use that is because 'Pretending' is, is what we were doing as a family you know it's what we do, we create fictions, she created a fiction for herself as well, I create fictions. One of the biggest things that people forget is we create mythologies and fictions of ourselves every day. Which imagines something else, that's why I really liked her and I get really sad when I think of her because people seem to think that a musician's passing like that, shouldn't be, it's just a cultural moment not a social moment actually it's all these moments you know she's just houses a big part of my life because she made me really...and I don't

know if any of you have listened to her albums, but she, they're just really special things. Just very liquidy.

Bobby: Recommend one to listen to.

Sahjan: Erm...

Bobby: For a novice.

Sahjan: Anyone who's a novice won't like her first EP which is called 'Product', but her album called 'Oil of every Pearls' and 'Insides'. And the remix album version of that, they are just probably the greatest things you can possibly listen to from the last decade and they're very hard I think to listen to. I remember hearing it one time and I had to...my friend is a music producer, and I was like "just play it again because I just don't understand it." And I just love stuff like that because its density requires multiple like, you have to go back to it. There's a constant invitation to go back. I love stuff like that because the difference between just seeing an image and just walking away from it. Her work, her music, her sound, her idea of the world constantly required to go back and relive something you know, and I think that's something really powerful.

Bobby: I couldn't agree more. Music where you have to listen to it more in order to start to appreciate it and then of course you start seeing different layers and experiencing more out it. Whereas the opposite of something really catchy and enjoyable normally for me, you know it does peak and then it does come down as well, because it's lived its lifecycle. It's kind of worn off, the magic has.

Sahjan: The strangest thing about her music was that it produced in...that's why I always think pop is truly extraordinary because it's not, it's like not catchy. When you actually listen to a pop song you think it's catchy, but it isn't. What it's doing to you is actually forcing you to listen to other textures and I think that's extraordinary like oh my god. Like one of the songs that I couldn't stop listening to hers is called 'Bip' which is a product and all the sound she created herself and you'd think when you listen to them it's all digital sound actually, she actually uses the machine to create the sounds. And when you listen to that song, the amount of textural work that takes place you won't get on the first reading, I have such an affinity with that because that's what kind of what I do with my work quite a lot. Require the viewer to spend, sit with the gravity of the work for a while. I just like work like that, it's like I've always been like because I like being with something for a while.

Bobby: Tell me about video, what is it about video that you know obsesses you, interests you, that is a media that you have to work with?

Sahjan: I never worked with it when I was doing my degree and I really am glad I didn't work with it when I was doing my degree. It is like the opposite of film. I always think of film as building a skyscraper, or growing a tree or something, so it's a very lateral activity making a film. Whereas a video is kind of like creating a fungal network, operating like a yeah like a flora which exist around, mushrooms around the tree and I always think of it like that. It's actually a very science fiction way of viewing video. But the reason I think of video like that is because it's the, I show stuff on my website there's stuff in exhibitions you know that sort of stuff it doesn't sit with this

idea it has been shown on a cinematic screen, it's not designed for like a, excessive need for a cinematic viewing quality you know. It's very efficient it moves across systems really quickly. I just come from a, I guess I come from a thought process which is like it's weird how we, it's quite democratic, like everyone makes videos you know all the time. And there's something quite beautiful about that, like we are all trying to like capture something and a lot of it is just sad poor stuff you know. But for me I try to figure out there's something very beautiful at the materiality of it, where it changes you, as you watch it you know. Different to a film because you spend a lot of time in the film comprehending the film, you follow its journey. Whereas in video the materials are kind of, especially in my videos the materials are constantly bubbling and changing. So, they're always changing the the viewers position in relationship to the images they are being shown which is when suddenly an eruption will happen and images will come up and your position changes to them, so similar to basically sculpt in time is why I like video a lot you know. It's a material that's just so liquidy you can do what you want to it. That's why I like it.

Bobby: Do you ever see yourself getting tired of video?

Sahjan: Not, not yet. If that happens, I might just have to re-question things. But not yet because I don't use video, it's not my sole... like all the videos I make sit within another infrastructure. So, I rarely ever just go this is a video that gets shown, which is on a TV screen. Usually, the TV screen will have to set within something else. So, the video is always married to some sort of installation or some kind of, it's always tethered to something else so I can rarely get bored by that, I think it's a really interesting thing.

Bobby: One day when you are no more, what trace would you like to leave? What will you be known for?

Sahjan: I am not particularly interested in myself.

Bobby: So, let's move away from the ego, not sort of who will remember you but even if one person you know, what will, what will your trace be to the world?

Sahjan: This is a really interesting question though because this is more about the fact that, I think the potentiality of us, the traces of us are actually the emotional structures and social systems we create with other people so like how we bond, how we tell stories to one another, those are the things I'd like to, that's the reproduction I'm interested in basically. The way I work with somebody, the way I think with somebody, the way I love with somebody those are the system I really want to reproduce and leave traces of myself as. I'm not interested in image of myself, or statues, they don't interest me, or the nouns or whatever you want to ascribe to that. I am far more interested in the way I operate, I don't know what the word for this is but the way I operate in life, in terms of the way I engage in relationships, the way I make friends, the way I talk with people, the way I think with people, those are the things I want to be and they change other people and then a bit of me is put into another person you know. It's kind of like this super lineage we all make networks and those are the things I would love to keep traces of me as. Like because I'm a, we're just a body of flesh, this is gonna end. Whereas the other thing is harder to eradicate you know. That's something which we keep within almost archive of

ourselves as we move through life, you know. And other people absorb the bits of ourselves.

Bobby: I've been talking to Artist Sahjan Kooner.

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