

9 Words for Offsite 9

Bobby Tiwana interviews Daniella Turbin

Bobby: Hello I'm Bobby Tiwana, I'm a Creative Producer of Live Performance, the occasional short film and a hand full 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: Thank you for joining me. Daniella, Daniella Turbin. Thanks for inviting us today to your studio. Can I just start by asking, can you tell us a little about your practice?

Daniella: I'm an artist and normally a long-distance walker. Yeah, I'm based in Wolverhampton. So, I do like big scale drawings but also walks.

Bobby: So, would you say walking and drawing is 50/50 in your practice or is one more important than the other?

Daniella: Ideally it would have been 50/50 but I think now it's more walking and photography, less drawing. But ideally it would be 50/50.

Bobby: So, but what is the walking - photography? Is it, is that 50/50?

Daniella: Yeah, the photography goes hand-in-hand with the walks. Because erm, I've set myself like that challenge of walking to every square on the Ordnance survey map of Britain and taking one photograph for every kilometre. So, I've always got my camera with me when I'm walking. And then the drawing probably comes into it later when I'm in the studio and I'll be drawing like maps or doing something with the photographs.

Bobby: So, tell me the thinking behind setting yourself that challenge?

Daniella: How did I come to it?

Bobby: Yeah. Of you know, deciding I want to walk every square kilometre of Britain.

Daniella: Yeah, I've thought about that a lot. And I don't think it was like something that happened overnight. I just started to buy

Ordnance survey maps and I think I just started to want to take pictures of like everything but at the same time I got into like, long-distance walking as well. I just set myself, like this rule like, okay, you can only take one picture per square kilometre on the Ordnance survey map. Because I'm working with film as well, so I had to limit it, erm. I'm not sure that I woke up one day and was like I want to a walk, walk to every square. It just was something that kind of happened somewhere along the way but I'm not sure where. Does that make sense?

Bobby: And what are you taking a picture of?

Daniella: Like I might read something or like it might be something that I've been reading in a book or... Yeah, influenced or something I've read or a conversation that I've had in the lead-up to the walk. Or something that's happening at that time, and it will all be inspired by, or I might really want to learn something about like the landscape or it could be anything really.

Bobby: So as an example, photos might look like?

Daniella: Say if I was maybe like learning more about trees at that time, I might take more pictures of like trees or if I'd say I've been reading about like something to do with water it might be something to do water.

Bobby: And do buildings, people, what kind of things feature in your photographs? I'm familiar with some of them like, I think some of the ones I've seen. I mean do you, do you photograph the floor, is concrete? Does concrete? Do different textures feature?

Daniella: Yeah, there's probably a lack of people actually in my pictures but that's yeah. I try to take pictures where you can look for like a narrative in it. It's like, I want people to have to, like, look for the story of an empty landscape because, and look for clues of things that might have happened. If that makes sense? Like a story that's taken place. And that's kind of like this Offsite 9 project. I'm going to get people to go out and like look closely at the landscape and just look for those stories within what are seemingly, quite empty landscapes. But they are not.

Bobby: So, is there a sort of a convention where, are they generally photographing the floor?

Daniella: For this project I'm doing now, yeah. That's the rule for this project. But I've also given them notebooks so they can record sounds, they might overhear a conversation, or they might see something that's not on the floor. So, the rule for the project is just take a picture of the floor but there's all these other stories that are happening outside of that. So, with the map that I'm going to be doing it's incorporating all of that somehow.

Bobby: It makes me think of, like everyone probably, I see a lot of gloves on the floor.

Daniella: Yeah.

Bobby: Or on a rail, you know, or on a wall and I went through a period of photographing them because they just feel like, they look like, they have so much character, don't they?

Daniella: Yeah

Bobby: The pose of the glove and I remember one in Manchester it was a lady's glove and near it there was a brick and it just felt like it was calling for me to move the brick to the glove and I did and then I photographed it. And you know, and suddenly it's telling a story.

Daniella: Yeah

Bobby: So, when you say, you know, you're looking for the narrative I'm thinking, if there's a beetle or if maybe there's a spillage or just different shade of colour or different texture, you know, one floor surface is different to the next.

Daniella: Or like if there's different mosses and things and it's like maybe, like the moss, what does that say about like the area that it's in or like leaves or anything really?

Bobby: So, what are your narratives? You know when you frame something and you're thinking I'm looking for a narrative? What are your narratives like? Like the moss one you said just then.

Daniella: Yeah, cuz like certain moss would grow like in certain places but then I'll bring that back to the studio and try and read more about

that kind of moss. And it's like what does that say about, like, the site that you found it on? Because it might say something about like the history of the place? Maybe it was like an old mine or something and just like reading more about like the plants will give a clue as to what was happening in that space beforehand. But my work's really like fragmented. It's like their loads of fragments of like stuff.

Bobby: How are you finding the people, you know, you take on tour? And are these one-to-one tours?

Daniella: Yeah

Bobby: How are they getting on with photographing and finding something with a narrative? How's that going?

Daniella: They get...Yeah, it's going really well, like, people just get into it quite easily and they get really excited. Yeah, they just start to like notice things on the ground and just get into it.

Bobby: I'm imagining you know at the end of it you know people are very enthused about their experience. How are people at the end of it?

Daniella: Yeah, like people they've got like, a lot of stories to share about Wolverhampton. So, the people that I've walked with so far are quite, are from round here and so they're quite enthusiastic. But they're just more observant of the floor, I think. And just like the little things in the landscape that people normally just walk by.

Bobby: Yeah, can I ask you some of the stories that you hear from people when you saying they've got many stories to share.

Daniella: Yeah

Bobby: So, what kind of things are they sharing?

Daniella: So, like a lot, on Saturday I was talking with this group that were talking more about like the nightlife in Wolverhampton in the 90s. And I was surprised about this because, I was just like young in the 90s. But apparently Wolverhampton was the place to come, rather than Birmingham.

Bobby: Apparently so. I was at university then and I remember getting a taxi here when I got back for something and the taxi driver saying,

“you get people getting the train over from Birmingham now.”
You know that's how good it was. Apparently, it did exist and happen.

Daniella: Yeah, coz we were walking around here on the Saturday and like even in the past I thought like Saturdays would be a busy day in the town, but they don't really seem that busy around here anymore except like if it's like a match day. People talk about how quiet it is now. There is like the worry about like the High Street and things.

Bobby: So, what are you trying to achieve with this work? And what is the work called?

Daniella: At the end of the project, I want to have made a map on a scale of like 1 to 100 of Wolverhampton in 2022 but I want to make it with the public. So, at the moment we're just like collecting like the photographs and like words and stories and the work's called S09198. And that's the grid reference for the centre of Wolverhampton. So, I spoke earlier about like taking one photograph for every square kilometre. I couldn't like drag the public on such like long-distance walks so we've really like started to focus really locally and create like so I guess this map will essentially be like one photograph of this kilometre square, but like looking at it really intimately.

Bobby: So how big is a kilometre square when you put it over a town centre? Can you just talk me through it? Roughly speaking? I know the town centre well.

Daniella: Okay, so like what would be at one end? So basically, the one-kilometre square, it fit's quite nice because it's like pretty much like the whole of Wolverhampton Ring Road pretty much. I think it's like quite comfortably inside of it so that's probably about how big a kilometre square is. On the public walks I don't really walk that far, I guess. But we were just like really looking closely at one or two streets and that'll take us an hour and a half and it just, the time just flies by, and we've only walked like two streets.

Bobby: Do you see different things in different weather?

Daniella: Probably less birds in like the rain and the wind and then more towards the summer you'll see like more plants and things like coming up through the cracks in the pavements.

Bobby: Also, I guess on a rainy day, you know, you're going see...

Daniella: Less people

Bobby: But also, darker looking floor. More puddles. You know pattern of...I don't know how much you walk in the rain but the pattern of you know, the rhythm.

Daniella: Footprints as well

Bobby: Of raindrops you know that sort of movement

Daniella: Yeah. I don't know. We haven't done it in the rain yet but

Bobby: I wouldn't encourage it either, I'm not a huge fan.

Daniella: Well, I was thinking coz I've still got a walk tomorrow maybe I need to get umbrellas for people. Yeah, walking in the rain's fun though. I've done it on my own.

Bobby: I'm not I'm not poo-pooing that because so many people of course walk in the rain and embrace it. And enjoy it. Erm, in the right frame of mind.

Daniella: Yeah. without like heavy equipment or something?

Bobby: I mean you lived in Cumbria. So, you know...

Daniella: Yeah so, you've got to enjoy haven't ya? Yeah...

Bobby: So, do you want to tell me a bit about Cumbria, a bit about Aberdeenshire? You know your time in those places.

Daniella: Yeah. So, Cumbria. I moved there after I was studying in Glasgow. I studied like the Glasgow School of Art. I'll start with that and then how I got to Cumbria. I used to have like a good, just drawing practice and I'd just draw for about like 12 hours stints a day in my studio and just do that every day. And then like at the end of studying I kind of just didn't want to spend any more time in the studio and then that kind of started to transfer into walking and I got more interested in researching where the materials come

from for a drawing. So, I started going off like exploring the landscape and then I started buying more maps. And then I just made a decision to move to the Lake District because they had a graphite mine there. So, after studying I moved to the Lake District just to go to this graphite mine, but I ended up just like long distance walking instead and buying maps and then that was how I got into walking. So yeah, I lived in the Lake District for six months and then I moved back to the West Midlands. And then yeah so, I've done a few residences since I've been back in the West Midlands and one of them was up in Aberdeen at the Devron Projects. It's called The Walking Institute. Yes, I was there only for a month, but it was during like the time when Imran Tajik, I think his name is, yeah, he did the 'Under One Sky' project where he was erm, it was during the July the summer of 2020. Erm, he got the public involved in like walking projects and his idea was to get as a group, like everyone to have walked around the world and to take pictures of the sky. Losing my train of thought. Sorry.

Bobby: You were talking about Devron

Daniella: Devron Projects? Yeah

Bobby: It was around that time. How did you spend the month?

Daniella: I spent the month in erm Huntley just like walking their Ordnance survey map and taking pictures. Yeah, just walking really. And just kind of yeah, just there when that project was happening, but I was there as the Thinker in Resident, so I was doing my other walking project alongside of it.

Bobby: What did you think of that project? What do you think of that project?

Daniella: The 'Under One Sky' project? I found it really like inspiring and it inspired this project that I'm working on in Wolverhampton now of like getting like people involved with the walking and...

Bobby: You were saying how you spent your month up there and the work, you know 'Under One Sky', inspired your own project of getting people involved. And you're doing that aren't you through your shared walks with people and then you know then

documenting? What happens to you when you walk? What are you thinking about? Where's your mind? Where isn't your mind?

Daniella: I find it easier to speak to people when I'm walking but I just feel like you get to actually know a place when you're walking. I kind of just felt like an observer like looking in on the world. It's hard to explain and but I feel like I can get to know a person as well. Not get to know a person, but like, kind of build a connection easier with a person just by taking them for a walk.

Bobby: Do you think spending time somewhere? You know you're walking; you say you get to know a place better by walking? Do you think spending time somewhere, walking, is part of that?

Daniella: Yeah, like working site specific always been something really important to my work and like just reacting to a place or like responding to a site, even like with my drawing it's always been like site responsive. It's like, about the feeling of being somewhere and the feeling of a place but it's hard to put it into words. It's just because it is a lot about feeling and like feeling that feeling that you get in a certain place.

Bobby: So, you're trying to capture the essence of that?

Daniella: Yeah, I think so.

Bobby: I did see your drawings on your website. I don't know if these are the works after 12 hours, in the studio but I would say there's a lot of movement in your drawing. You know through the mark making.

Daniella: Yeah

Bobby: So, does this mean, was there a lot of movement in your drawing before you started walking?

Daniella: Yeah, even if it's just moving around the studio a certain way. It's always been about like moving. Yeah. I can't seem to draw like a flat image of something like no matter how, I always wanted to draw a really nice representational image, but I just can't seem... I get a bit bored.

Bobby: And are you actually moving when you're mark making?

Daniella: Erm for my drawings that I did before I started yeah, they were really physical like, and it was all about like the movement through space.

Bobby: Can you describe, when you said really physical, what does that mean?

Daniella: So it'd be like...so an example might be actually like I'd respond to maybe like sounds that were happening outside the studio and I say you have to like stand on certain points to make the drawing at certain points in like the room to make the drawing and then I think there were about time as well. So, like at certain time I'd have to move and go on to different type of mark-making. Yeah, my work's all about rules.

Bobby: Rules?

Daniella: Yeah. Well, it was all about rules. Yeah, like setting myself certain rules with my work. So, like I'd have to draw for a set amount of time or only be allowed to use like certain medium or yeah.

Bobby: So where did those rules come from? You know, did you read them in the book? Were you inspired by someone else, or you know where, where, where did they come?

Daniella: I think it was because when I used to work with like limited material, so I would only work like pencil and paper. I think it was just more to like interrogate the medium itself. So, I just started to record everything in a logbook, that was where the rules started. So, I could do with pencil and paper and then that real kind of fed into I guess into the taking one photograph for every square. Yeah.

Bobby: And what is it about taking one and not many?

Daniella: Because it's not, well kind of because it's film camera so I can't really afford to take loads but there's so much so much going on like in the landscape. I'd probably want to take a picture of everything. So yeah, I just set myself that limit of being like you can only take one photograph.

Bobby: And when you say that output then is you know, trying to represent that moment or the essence of the experience. Is that

your experience? What is it, you know, what is the? Let's say it's the photo, what is the photo? What are you trying to encapsulate in? So, one photo in one square kilometre, your, what is it representing?

Daniella: I think it's just like a document, form of documentation the photo because that's just like the one little element of what I do. So, like or maybe it's just like something to trigger my memory of what happened in that space because even like outside of that photograph I write as well for my walk. So, I have all that writing, so I guess I think it is probably about my experience of like walking through the landscape.

Bobby: And I suppose what I'm getting at is, how does an audience member? How does a viewer? What are you sharing with them? You know, what's the artwork?

Daniella: That's like that's why I wanted to bring the public in. I wanted to get their experience of like the landscape and so for this project it's not me taking the photographs. It's the public and that, I'm interested in seeing like the kind of stories that they pick up when we're moving through a place. And like that's why I wanted to work more with the public so I can get other people involved and other people walking. I don't want it to be just about my experience.

Bobby: Is what they're photographing and maybe what they're noting. Is that taking you back to the experience you've had with them.

Daniella: Yeah

Bobby: Is it triggering that?

Daniella: Yeah so, they'll write down like words and it'll remind me of like ahh, okay that was where that happened. Yeah. But they'll have like a different perspective. Like they'll pick up different things up, won't they?

Bobby: I'll just ask this last question. Has anything surprised you about the project so far? And any, and you know, and anything you weren't expecting happened so far? Or has it all gone to plan the way you expected it to?

Daniella: Oh well it hasn't gone to plan. I think I tried to over plan it at first. So, a lot of like my original plan kind of went out the window. I gave everyone maps and I tried to get everyone to map read but we've simplified it. It's just going really well.

Bobby: After the studio recording, we ventured out to see what would happen.

Daniella: And the Man on the Horse used to be a meeting place, didn't it?

Bobby: Yeah

Daniella: I remember on Saturdays. There always used to be, when I was growing up, erm they were called like greebos. And they used to hang out around that area.

Bobby: What were they called?

Daniella: Greebos

Bobby: So, this is post goth. Post emo, emos?

Daniella: Maybe it was before emos? Maybe it was that bit in-between

Bobby: What were they called?

Daniella: Greebos

Bobby: What were greebos?

Daniella: So, they were like goths. I think.

Bobby: But were you one?

Daniella: I wasn't one. No. Yeah

Bobby: What did they look like?

Daniella: Gothic I suppose.

Bobby: But not quite goth-y enough to be to be proper goths. Or they were evolving into emos.

Daniella: Maybe that was a transition in-between.

Daniella: And the market, that used to be down there didn't it.

Bobby: Do you remember the indoor market?

Daniella: No

Bobby: Oh, we might see a sculpture at the library if we carry on here.

Daniella: Oh yeah. I feel like it's not there anymore.

Bobby: Really?

Daniella: I think so.

Bobby: A lot of change.

Here it is. Marsh Opticians still here, I was about 12 when I came here for my first eye test, 11 maybe. Some businesses stay. Somehow

Daniella: I like the change of sound and when you walk through the city.

Bobby: Oh yeah

Daniella: It's actually when you go to the Mander Centre as well.

Bobby: That used to be Wilko and it was massive. What's it called Retail Plus now?

Daniella: It's quite a grand building, isn't it?

Bobby: This is another one you know. There are some iconic buildings isn't there?

Daniella: Has anyone ever been on one of these bikes?

Bobby: No. It's happened in my absence. How are they going? Do you know?

Daniella: I'm not sure. I've never been on one, but they look quite heavy. That's why I was going to ask, if you have you tried them.

Daniella: Do you ever just look up when you're walking down the high street?

Bobby: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Daniella: And I like these bits. These stained-glass bits around here.

I was thinking about this doughnut stand earlier and I think that's been there as long as I can remember.

Bobby: Yeah, the smell as well.

Ahh. Well, here we are. Well thank you Daniella.

Daniella: Thank you.

Bobby: Thank you for talking to me Daniella Turbin, it's been a pleasure.

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