

**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: Create News 21
LYNNETTE MORAN AND SELINA THOMPSON
RESORT RESIDENCY ARTIST AS PART OF CAPP**

Hi Selina.

Hi.

LM: Right so, hello I'm Lynnette Moran, lead producer of CAPP, (the Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme) which is a trans-national programme involving 9 partners across 6 EU countries funded by the Creative Europe Programme. I am founder and festival director of Live Collision, which is both an annual festival and the first Irish year round Independent Creative Producing Organisation, working with live artists in a live context. I'm really happy to welcome Selina Thompson to speak with me today. Selina you are participating in the CAPP Residency Programme which we'll talk a little bit about later. And on your website you , Selina, in your own words... describe yourself as an artist and performer based in Leeds whose work is both playful, and intimate, focused on the politics of identity and how that defines our body's lives and environments. There is are a really beautiful quote on your site also from a review by Harold Offeh from 'This is Tomorrow' that describes your work as 'work that isn't about answering questions it's about igniting an internal discussion in each of us that allows for the possibility of self awareness analysis and reflection. Welcome Selina.

ST: That is a lot to put down!

Yes, would you find that an accurate description of your work - it's a beautiful way for someone to describe what you do..

Yea it is. It would be lovely if that was an accurate description of my work, I'm not sure if I'm allowed to say that because I guess I can never properly experience my work. But that is what it's aiming to do, yea it's aiming to stimulate a conversation about all of that stuff that is sort of bubbling underneath every day, specifically

around identity, and that for me means loads of things. It means like all of the things you'd expect it to mean - so race and gender, and sexuality and age and religion and mental health, physical health , where you live, for me I think in a way it's saying your work is about identity politics, it's like as broad as saying your work is about people. But that's what I'm interested in.

Ok. Your work is collaborative and socially and politically engaged, as you said, and the outcomes of your work are most often presented in a live context - in terms of you invite audiences to meet your work through live performances or events. What are the spaces between collaborative practice and live practice that excite you and where you feel there is potential for your work within those?

What do you mean when you say what other spaces?

Well ... if you look at live practice as an outcome for the dialogues and articulation of your work, why is that the [preferred] mode of practice in which you operate, and how do those two things speak to each other?

So we spoke a little bit before this conversation and I said that probably when you ask me questions like that I'll try and use a word to think it through, because if it's not pinned to something I get lost. So I have a piece called **Race Cards**, which you saw in Glasgow , and at that time the way that piece worked was that I was in a room for 12 hours, just writing loads and loads of questions about race. And then my producer , long suffering and very kind!, would take the questions I had written and stick them on the wall, and the contract for the audience that was written on the door , was that you could enter the space on the condition that you answered a question. And I don't do that work in that way anymore, because it took a lot out of me, but I bloody loved that work, I was really proud of it in a way that you rarely get to be, because it did exactly what I wanted it to do....

and what it enabled for me was two things, the first was that it allowed me to get a load of questions that I live with on a daily basis which I think often people who are

white and, as such not 'Other', on the base of their race, don't have to deal with, but I, as a black woman, [am] dealing with constantly, get those out of body and put those into a space, where people can see them and see them in an overwhelming way. But it also allows me to completely control the terms of that conversation because it's not a back-and-forth, so you can't answer a question, dismiss it and leave. You are left with all of that and it stops being my responsibility and I guess that work becomes like a series of provocations. And for me that's a work that's between a live performance and visual work, especially now because my body is not in it anymore which was terrifying for me. Now it's like this installation of 1000 questions and people go in and they read them and you are left with the residue of a 24 hour performance. But it reads like such a stream of consciousness and I love work like that....

So we spoke a bit earlier about one of the things that I love about live performance is that you have the potential to talk about something that's full of risk and hold the risk in your body. My first ***Chewing the Fat*** (performance 2014), I made because there was a huge issue with eating disorders in my year at uni, and something about it, something about the way that girls are socialised something about the university context, something about the fact that it was a very intense year of 30 quite highly strung women, just meant that we weren't able to have blunt conversations about eating disorder, about weight, about body image.

I wanted those conversations to happen, so I used my stories and my body to create a context ...I have taken the risk, I have been really honest and exposed and bare and it's there, it's abject. There was a lot about abjection in that work, so maybe hopefully, if I have done that, it makes it easier for you to then have the conversation, that's what I'm always hoping for. And in ***Race Cards*** there is that. So even though my body is out of it now, what started off as this 12 hour endurance thing, which is a combination of super academic stuff, probably bit annoying, but I read a lot.

And other stuff which is like, there are so many questions about sex in *Race Cards*, which I realised when I was typing it all back up There was loads of questions about porn and when I was at Uni and I was a bit more sexual adventurous and couldn't

bother to be now.., I can remember once being in the shower and coming out and hearing this guy on the phone being like, 'yea man I just fucked that black girl...' and I was like...it's such a weird head space and now I can go well ,I know it's not a compliment. But at the time ,I was like, is this a compliment, I don't think he's saying it like it's a bad thing, blah...So again it's like going into all of this stuff that is in my body and my autobiography and my memory. And all of this reading and learning and analysis that I have done. I'm putting it in a great big space, clearing it out of my body, in the hope that it then creates a launch pad for other people to have these conversations or to go away and think about it. Maybe if I'm really lucky, to pause for thought the next time before they try and touch somebody's afro! Or to know that they are not alone, if these are things that are in their autobiography and [that] they are not crazy. So, yea, I think that risk that you take into your body when you make a live performance is a really like fertile radical space, that potentially can make stuff happen can change the way that people think. But I think [that] is all art can ever do, is change the way people think and hopefully that changes other bigger things.

I suppose you are saying as well as an audience member of *Race Cards*, the thing that really struck me was exactly like you have explained in the sense that you had embodied this role or responsibility to begin the momentum of these questions, but actually you are imparting the responsibility and ownership of those questions to everyone. So. in a way, the communication of that through that live work in terms of, as you say, it wasn't an easy piece to do, it's quite arduous both on your body and mentality and all of the things that you need to be there. And in a way, it felt that you put something into the world in which the rest of us had to take responsibility for ,wasn't about someone else's opinion or a question posed by someone else but instead, they were fundamental to society in which we are in. And therefore we are complicit within and therefore we have a responsibility to find out how we arrive at an answer or how we even honour or value these questions.

So for me as an audience member that's what it felt like and I think it's really interesting to hear you talk about that kind of willingness to embody the risk and the arduous nature of some of the subject matter and the areas that you are

interested in, in a very personal way as a mode or as a vehicle to allow us in the most generous way an artist could, and allow us , the audience to begin having a conversation about the thing, we find it hard to have a conversation about, it seems like an ultimately generous act on your part to do.

Yea, sometimes there is also loads of anger in a lot of it though as well, ...and it's interesting because there is so much anger in *Race Cards*, but I don't feel that anger anymore. It's another part of why I couldn't have my body in it, because I was like, I don't have the same kind of fire ...because I think you do have to be pretty livid to sit down for 12 hours and write all those questions out. You have got to be pretty angry. And I'm not angry in that same way maybe because I have done *SALT* which is a project where I retraced the transatlantic slow triangle on a cargo ship, to sail from the UK to Ghana, then Jamaica and then back to the UK. And that was just really like, if *Race Cards* is full of anger then *SALT* is full of pain. But in the same way that *Race Cards* transformed the anger, I think *SALT* transformed the pain.

So that is always the way with art;[it] is definitely something I'm getting out of it that is cathartic. But I think that, hopefully touch wood, because of a subject matter that I choose, it's not cathartic in a way that an audience or participants or witnesses leave a work feeling that they have been w**ked all over. I hope that it's like something which is igniting more than that. ...I had a meeting with my producer a couple of months ago or maybe yesterday I don't know! time is all rushing into one, and we were talking about how do we R&D, socially engage the process. And there was an awkward pause where two people have a very close and have a very shared language, so it's very rare for us to not quite understand, and she was kind of like, so what's your socially engaged process? and I was like yea that's the question we have got to start with, isn't it? And I was like, I guess it's like a process where the way in which you make the work is aiming to be transformative as well as the final piece aiming to be transformative. And sometimes I feel like that my practice broadly has like two halves, I'm just talking out loud a bit - is this alright?

LM: Yea, perfect.

So there is the half which is the work where I'm often aware of the fact that because my work is characterised as live art, it can potentially go out [to] like your standard white middle class very art literate audience. And then there is the half of it which is making it, which is almost always involved and deeply embedded with people whose identity aligns with mine. So, when I was making ***Chewing the Fat*** and I was like, again, I was really angry but I was going to Weight Watchers meetings and when I was little in the Vicar of Dibley, Dawn French had that coat and when she opened it, it had all the chocolates in it! and I remember when I was little and I was obsessed with it. So I had made this coat and I'd go to the Weight Watchers meetings and I'd be wearing a t-shirt that said, 'can I talk to you about fat'...I'd open the coat and all the chocolate bars would be there. And I'd do it in the middle of the meeting, and it use to...there were people that got really angry and there were people that really laughed about it. And it's like a dick thing to do with Weight Watchers , but also I was really angry. I kept going to these Weight Watchers meetings and interviewing sort of other fat , mainly women, often working class mums and nans, the main care givers in the home, who were often like super stressed and super angry. And eating was their coping mechanism.

Then making ***Dark and Lovely*** which was all about black women, working class women. And then this next project which is going to be working with black teenage girls and we'll always do work to try and get that audience in with the work as well, but you know you are going to get this other strata of society that's in as well. So I'm always trying to think about, what do I want to say to that audience, how do I want to challenge that audience as well as the sort of...as well as challenging the audience that's as well, we also have to be challenged but also like making sure that that audience feels seen in my work, because I don't always feel *seen* in the work I go to see , and sometimes that's a problem and sometimes it isn't.

So it's kind of like a collaborative strategy in a way?

Yea.

Because the groups of people that you have worked with, would you say for example , collaborative processes are formal or informal?

Informal they have to be. So *Dark and Lovely* is my show about black hair, Afro hair and it was based in hairdressers in an area of Leeds called Chapeltown for 6 to 9 months on and off. It was the most stressful time of my life, because I was working at Lush to pay my rent, and doing bits of pieces of art but I was in a weird place where people would be like, 'we'll give you 100 pounds for 2 weeks work...' but you need to do it for exposure. And then for my research for this project, I was working in shops and barber shops but for free , so I could talk to people. And when I first was doing it, I would go in with a Dictaphone and pen and paper but people didn't talk to me, ...because you become like this weird Louis Theroux character you become like a documentary film maker. And I'm not really making documentary work, because I'm too involved in what I'm making work about. I'm not someone from outside of a community going into it. So, Victoria Melody is a brilliant example of someone who does that work very well, but that's not what I'm doing.

So what I do instead is, I go and I try and set up context I don't know...where like I'm going to be able to speak to someone for a long time. So I'm not going to be able to speak to them for an hour or ask a certain amount of questions, I'm going to be with them all afternoon, I'm going to be with them all day, maybe we'll cook together, maybe we'll go for a walk, maybe there will be something that they show me, maybe I'll be in their home, maybe I'll see them 2 or 3 times. Because I want the opportunity for our dialogue to go somewhere that I couldn't possible plan for. And in my experience that happens with time and allowing spontaneity. And maybe this comes from the fact that I have two parents where to get them to talk, the moon has to be in the exact right position! Got to be in the right place and you have got to use the exact right language and you are just about breaking for my dads fortress ..And then he'll tell you everything but you got to get it right. So I kind of take that forward

when I'm in dialogue with people and also try to think of it of researching because I think one of the great privileges of being an artist is that you have a huge part of your job is to think. At the moment I'm aware of the fact that Greg Wohead is like trekking in a big American park, and I'm like, that's a really great hobby for an artist to have. To have this time where you are walking and walking and walking because there is so much space for you to think things out and to be popping in and withdrawing and I think that's good art to create that space. And I'm interested in how can you collaborate with people and create that space for someone that is a hairdresser and maybe doesn't very often get the space to sit down and step back and analyse so much of what funders and producers and programmers and all sorts of people do for art is create space to step back and think.... So I'm always trying to think about how do I extend the things that are in the artists toolbox that we take for granted almost to collaborators.

And even, in terms of going back, as well to a work like *Race Cards* where actually what you are looking at is the enormity of the question and similarly to the work in the hair salon where the question isn't a simple one, it's a very challenging one and as you say it's about understanding what the space around that, what's required around that. Because I'm sure all of the people you came into contact with had very in-depth and elaborate responses to the work, but in a way it's about how you actually get to the point where that become freely available for people to talk about and share their opinions on all of those things.

Dark and Lovely and *Race Cards* are really interesting because they are like sister works I guess and the strategies are really different. So with *Dark and Lovely* it's' I'm going to build this giant ball of hair and we'll fill it with rum punch and we'll make it look a bit like my nans house and it will smell nice. And someone is going to do my hair and we are all going to be gathered together, it's very, very intimate and in that intimacy is how I can ask these hard questions, because the questions are so in their way, so violent and that violence is located in a rose tinted domestic setting. So it has to be like that.

Whereas if it's *Race Cards* it's like black and white, it's cards, fountain pen, hard wooden desk, quite like big rooms because it also felt important to me that....so in *Dark and Lovely* you create a soft space so that you can analyse these questions without feeling attacked. In *Race Cards* you create a space that asserts these questions and doesn't step back from them and doesn't allow what often happens when you ask these questions which is the that you watch people do sort of debating linguistics to avoid them to avoid their complicity. But they are both seeking to do the same thing in a way. And I guess a lot of my work is like bodies of work. So there is *Chewing the Fat*, there is the Cake Dress piece [Pat It and Prick It and Mark It with a B, SPILL Festival which I think you saw and that was at Spill. There was another one where people could pick bits, they could commit their food sins to my body and all sorts of weird stuff in all of those pieces are like a dialogue with each other and *Race Cards* and *SALT* and *Dark and Lovely* and are all talking with each other.

So you are working in kind of processes of, you have this trajectory of your work in which there are a number of works that are following a thread of research or questions or...is that a fair way?

Yea I think I just keep making stuff until the anger subsides a bit.

Tell us about the work that you are here at the moment. So you are on a residency at the moment as part of the CAPP Programme.

Yea, that thing happens that always happens when you respond to an open call and I'm going to do this and when you get there, no actually no I'm not and also I was sick so it did scupper a bit. And what I'm currently doing is writing 10 Walks so it will be like a little booklet and they kind of I'm staying an area called Portrane which is by the sea, and quite small, Portrane is small, I always feel like I'm being like a really insulting city person when I say that, but it is small. When you walk people talk to you quite a lot and because I think I have seen two other black people in Portrane since I have been there. So the presence of my body elicits questions, so I find that if

someone says hello and I say hello back they'll stop and they'll talk. So I'm kind of writing these interactions into the walks I guess. So they are kind of like myths, they are kind of like instructions of how to walk along the beach, they are kind of like diary entries, they are a bit wibbly-wobbly. But it was so interesting to be back by the sea again because I spent such a long time at sea this year.

We were talking earlier about Beyonce's formation and a lot of that is about water and I think that there has been, I have noticed in a lot of work from black artists and creatives that there seems to be a returning to the sea and returning to water. Because it's this space between worlds and the ocean is such a grave for black bodies and in a way, it's sort of where blackness is born, sorry it's really depressing. So there is a writer Saidiya Hartman who is like an afro pessimist. She argues that enslaved people are picked up on the coast of Africa as African people and by the time they get off the ships in the Americas or the Caribbean, they are enslaved units of cargo and there is this transformation that takes place in the ocean, and it's in the middle of the ocean that blackness is born and created. And I was and still am obsessed with this theory and also because the pressure there was...I worked and a little bit of time in dialogue with, can't remember her proper title now, like a forensic chemist and she was saying that a body thrown under water in the Atlantic the pressure would...it was like would crush the bones within about a fortnight so you wouldn't find the bones, you would just find salt it would dissolve almost instantly. So water in its very core is full of black bodies and that's why I always find myself thinking about it. It's really depressing sorry.

It's not depressing at all, it's really interesting in terms of also contemporary society and a lot of the images that we are very aware of in the circumstances in terms of how the water has become this place of, as you describe, a space in between and holding so much hope for people in terms of transforming themselves in one place to another, travelling from one place to another and actually quite often that hope isn't fulfilled and that's also a relevant tragedy of our modern time as well. And I guess we still haven't come up with answers of how we should cope with that and how we should make that work out a bit better.

Yea sort of yea...it's a really deathly space so yea, I think I'm writing about death quite a lot. Sorry I have gone a bit weird because I'm still making it, so it's still really like fuzzy and cluttered in my head which is fine, I would expect it to be.

And has the proximity of being close to the water being a positive relationship?

Yea it has. Having said that, the sea makes me think of death which it does, I really love being by the sea and I love how the taxi will drop you at the top of Lynders (Mobile Home Park) and you have got to walk down to your caravan and it's proper darkness, so you get proper stars and you can sort of hear the wind, feel it moving through the mobile home, it's like a really quiet peaceful place, you sleep really deep. And I really appreciate all of that, and it's such a wild beach, when the tides go out, seaweed covers everything like it's hair. But strutting around like they own the place it's like unspoilt, untouched not a beach for swimming and sunbathing it's a bit of land that like the ocean shares with you sometimes when it feels like it, but it claims it back every night like this is mine!

So Lynders Mobile Home Park is the place where you are staying and it's in collaboration with Fingal County Council and Create and the CAPP Resort Residency, so they are the partners that have come around it. But this is a residency [that] for the first time this year has been opened to international artists but previously, it would be open to Irish based artists. And so the 10 scripts or the 10 texts are they a kind of a guide for future visitors, for future resident artists?

Yea, I hope so, I'd like...so what I'd like them to do is be like in a little box with like I don't know...some other stuff so that you could figure that out, so that you can open it and it's there as a welcome for you and really thinks there is big walks that you can do around the peninsula, where you have that really exciting [feeling] how far can I walk, follow this coast around, where will I get to? Yea I hope it's there for other artists that come.

And in terms of [what] you said earlier on the answer the open call for the CAPP Residency and later this year there is potential for you to present your work in Ireland, both finished works and the works that you are evolving. So does Ireland offer a kind of context that you are interested in or is it the same as presenting in any other place outside of Britain?

No, no I think it's really unique. I didn't realise how comparatively small the population of Ireland is, I was really surprised by that. It has a really unique history, a really specific context especially in terms of gender and a really specific relationship with colonialism. And I'm like that's the stuff I'm interested in. I know there is an art context in all of that stuff and that is important but I think the thing that I'm always interested in is what is the relationship between the experiences of the people seeing this work, and what this work is saying. And I think what's super interesting about Irish vs UK, is that there are these broad similarities and then massive size differences so I think for me it feels like a really exciting unpredictable context to show work in. So like *Race Cards* if I was to come here, for me there is a really interesting question of how it would be responded to and how it would be interacted with. Again which I think [this] is unique, unique within Europe, unique within the world, so yea.

Interesting because I think also as festival programmer, I feel like Irish audiences are ready for your work in a way that I think the invitations of provocations set through your work would only be a really brilliant emboldening of questions and provocations that currently sit within our society and within exactly the things that you have identified that mark kind of Irish apart in a way or Ireland that is apart from the rest of Europe and so on, but also very much the same but different. And I think there is something really interesting there to be explored.

Ok, so I have to go back to the questions, so how would you or would you contextualise your work both in terms of the historic and also in terms of the current live art performance practice in Britain or internationally?

Don't know, definitely like ...so my work goes out a lot in theatres, I'm in a theatre programme it's the weird stuff! But I'm alright with that because I don't care what you call it as long as you put it on and you let me do what I need to do to get the audience I want. And also I'm sometimes I feel it was more accessible...but it's a more it's a space for the more clear invitation than other spaces. So when we did ***Dark and Lovely*** it was on the Rep Theatre in Birmingham, which had the biggest theatre in the city. So that means that when I go on a community radio station once say it's there it's a really clear invitation for the audience of that radio station to come. Whereas if it's like in some of the places where theatres for example where it's like a warehouse, like my mum is not going to go, she doesn't care, she's not going to go because she doesn't understand the invitation.. And so often the work that goes on in theatres but also like I stay in close touch with LADA (Live Art Development Agency, UK) and go to things like IBT and Fierce and Spill[festivals] and show them my work in Fierce and Spill hope to show it in IBT one day.

Can I ask you a question about where for example earlier on when you spoke about your work being in two parts, you talked a little bit about within a live art context it being kind of white middle class audience which are readily available through the context of live art because obviously there is real convergence between visual art performance and so therefore there is a very particular as you have mentioned particularly within the UK context, there is a live art family , let's say for example, and that family is made up of academic institutions, arts agencies, festivals, programmes of events, venues and so on. But also the origins and the founding premise of live art being really about outsider art and about outsider art as an art form that allows risk and allows for those space or craves a space for those challenging questions that perhaps otherwise were not being asked to consider. And, do you feel that the art form offers that platform for deciding how we come around the questions or the provocations that you are setting through your work, or is it more of an infringement to have it within that context?

Good question. It depends, it really depends and I think that I have got to put my words carefully here, what do I want to say? So, performance live art are definitely outsider art, but an outsider art that now has institutions and from the moment that

you have institutions you to have the capacity to exclude whether you intend to or not. And it also can sometimes create a sort of hierarchy of live art. Where usually sort of body based work is at the top, and everything else is kind of a bit softer and fully and because there is....

...There is also the radical wing though, the radical extension/ wing /conservatory whatever you want to call it!

And so there are times when...because it's weird, but when I'm making work, my mum, my dad, my little sister and me when I was 16 have always in my head, because my dad is like, so what's her name that mermaid woman Ann Liv Young, so when she was at Fierce my dad came with me to see that! which he's a good man and he was just sat there like why is she doing this, and there was a bit when she was coming towards us and I was like please go away, please go away! And I think she seen in my eyes that I was like please don't go after my dad! But even though it was weird every now and again you are really quietly going, do you remember when we saw that fish woman and I'd be like yea ,and he'd be like wow! I think that there was like a part of him that ...talks about it similar to the way that he talks about when he went to see Prince. So he went to see Prince and every now and again he's like it was something and so I'm always a bit like those 4 people are my primary in my head, they are the ones that I'm making work for and I'm kind of a bit like 'would you feel comfortable here', and if the answer is no. then I'm never 100% sure that my work should be there. And sometimes when I'm in those environments I think no, they wouldn't feel comfortable here. So for example the Cake Dress work [Pat It and Prick it and Mark It with a B] that I did at Spill the only other time I did it was in a shopping centre on a Saturday in Leeds and it was like for me it was like this is what I want, there is nothing wrong with that context, it's important and I get why it's there, and I'm not dismissive of it, because I also think it's a great context to have writing about your work it's a good context to experiment widely. It's a good context to fail but already for me that means it's a working progress base for me, it's not the final form of where I want my practice to be, it's just because I'm not interested in

my work being in an ivory tower even if the ivory tower is quite grungy and I wanted to be...if I couldn't have found it when I was a teenager.

So it's kind of like, there is a dexterity there as well, isn't there, because not everybody can make work across varying contexts, so as far as I'm aware, obviously you have presented work on public bus service, that brings you to your local job centre, you present work in shopping centres as we have said, where else have you presented your work?

Bars, cafes, but that for me it's really important thing that I forget all the time. When I was starting out the reason why I said that I was a live artist not a theatre maker, was because to me saying I was a live artist meant I could do anything and that was what I wanted. And I think that came from what my mum use to call 'drama club' but was the University Theatre Society, where what you could do was actually quite rigorously control we had 9 slots in the university theatre space you could play around with the seats if you wanted, but it was always a play it was never devised. I was the only black person, which limited my roles, because no one ever did colour blind casting and I couldn't be a sister or a mother or an aunt and so many English plays are about families, kitchen sink drama. The wildest anyone ever got was physical theatre. But we didn't have the resources to train people to be able to do something really exciting with that. So why not make a theatre festival so that weird stuff could happen all over the city. And for me, it's always been about and I had a chat about this with Jamila and Alex from Project O, I feel like an artist should be a thing that's always growing, every context should always feel too small, I want to do more, I want to stretch out of this and grow out of this. ...I went to a grammar school in Birmingham. So it was like home was like a council estate and you go to school and it was like King Edwards and we had a school anthem and we wore a kilt. So it was very code switchy and I have always been code switchy. I have always been moving between spaces and thinking about what do I think from middle class school, what do I think from working class home, I'm of both of those spaces always. So I think it makes sense that my practice is one that's kind of like fluid and it's like ok this is where it needs to be and this is a festival like Spill gives me a space to make

something that could be anything, but a space like a shopping centre, means I have to think a bit more about what is communicating and why.

Perfect. Tell us a little bit about the new project on the horizon and we spoke a little bit earlier in the week about you kind of building partners around that project but obviously the partners that you are building are not just programming partners. They are partners who bring you to the route of the communities you want to work with. So could you tell us a little bit about that.

Yea, so my next project is called the 'Missy Elliott' project, we are going to be working with teenage girls in the UK and teenage girls in estates, black teenage girls looking at what it is to be a black teenage girl right here right now. And using Missy Elliott as our artistic starting point, because she is great, and she's weird! And I think that that's really important and I want to plan with those women young women I want to work with them as fellow live artists. So to say to them we have a room in transform festival we have got this room for 24 hours, here's a Missy Elliott album that's all we have got, what we do from there. And eventually the plan is to work with those girls to make a sort of musical and I think that the musical is going to be like...so we talked again before we started recording about that article about how Beyonce uses social media, I have got such trash references ! And what that article /reference is a little bit, is how on the one hand social media can be the space of over share, but on the other hand it can be this space where you create yourself then you destroy that version of yourself that you have created and you create another self and you build world in a whole other language out of means and images and . it's very reflexive; break it down, build it back up, turn it around on itself a bit like in the Lego movie..... And I'm interested in so much work that we see about teenage girls is kind of like that woman out of the Simpsons , like 'please think of the children' and I'm like on the one hand, yea, but on the other hand, teenage girls are like powerful mavericks who navigate this world that seeks to control them and then come out the other side.

So I'm interested in looking at something like that. I don't know how that's going to manifest, that's why I'm giving myself a long time to make it. So at the moment what we ...got our partners who are our theatres but also in every city we have got a small pot of money for someone who we are loosely calling an engagement and education officer. What we are looking for is somebody who maybe was involved in like a youth theatre scheme and came out of the other end, enjoyed it so much that they now are like working with other young women. So Leeds for example has this great thing called the 'Leeds Young Poets' organisation and every kid in Chapeltown there is something there and it's really positive and they love it and they feel complete ownership of it. And a lot of the young men and women that come out of that go on to work for the Black Health Initiative or they go into social work. It just seems to really ground people in the community. So, we want to work with someone like that, who's going to work with us on putting together the workshops..., thinking about where the best places to place them in the city, how it can be fun and exciting. But also we want to try and connect them with like...so there is a young woman called June Erika Dorry who does Teen Activism which I didn't even know was a thing. But she goes to loads [of things], she organises a summer school for teenage girls, looking at how young black teenage girls can have sort of networks of contacts for when they graduate, [also] thinking about how girls in sort of private schools or boarding schools who may be the only black person in their year can connect to other girls of colour..... And so we are trying to put something together for them where even if after we have made this thing for transform, they then exit the project or whatever that there is...something useful in it, something interesting in it and not in a way, where it's like, 'this is us telling you stuff' but in a way that's like the thing that should exist within feminism, anti racism, politics all of that, is the ability to argue with it, is the ability to go 'I know Audrey Lorde said that in 1984 but it's 2016 now'! And I think she was wrong and trying to work with people in that way. And it sort of double up as well because I don't want to speak for teenage girls on behalf of teenage girls ...like I hate words like empowering, because I'm like where are you getting this power from and how come you get to give it away? But I want to make sure that I have worked with young women and seen how they work and how they make, so that what we make at the end, (a) we have made a genuine actual

collaboration and I need time to learn how to collaborate with them, but (b) also say that what's made feels like something that came out of a teenage girls' head and that sort of really loopy, gorgeous way of thinking that teenagers have which you sort of lose and for a while you are embarrassed by and then you fall back in love with it. So, yea it's really like exciting, weird scary place, but I like that it's a project that feels really like, quenchy is the word I'll go for, I don't know if that's a real word. But you know when you open an orange and it's like zest and juice and bright orange, that's how that project feels in my head, which after **SALT** it was like...it was a really nice thing. And also it's this thing of, and I think about this a lot, and I think we were sort of touching on this earlier, you can't just critique the way things are, you also have to imagine what they could be. Like there is this vegan- I'm not a vegan but when I watch her videos I wish I was- and she always says how if we don't have a blueprint for what happens after the revolution, then the next day when we are most vulnerable, everything will fall apart because we wouldn't have thought about it. So I guess in its way the Missy Elliott musical is me thinking of a blueprint like making something that is just free and joyous.

Well that's a beautiful way to end our interview, I have to say I wish you all the best of luck in developing that blueprint, starting the revolution and waking up the next day! Selina Thompson thank you so much for talking to us at Create today, it's been an absolute pleasure to hang out with you for the afternoon and have all sorts of wonderful conversations. And I look forward to welcoming you back to Dublin, and Ireland very soon I hope.

Yea me to, thank you.

End.