

INTEL: PODCAST SERIES

Tune in to INTEL and meet art makers from around the world.

Elena Knox, Beholder, video façade, ICC Hong Kong, 2016



Speaker 1 ([00:12](#)):

You're listening to the Australia Council's INTEL Podcast Series. In this series, we speak to artists and arts organisations working across borders to discuss best practice, tips and their experiences navigating the impacts of COVID-19 on international mobility. We're broadcasting from Gadigal country in Sydney.

Speaker 2 ([00:42](#)):

Just like real hugs. Those are the things that just have to wait. My name is Judith Hamann and I'm an artist who works primarily with music and sound. I mostly perform as a cellist, but I also, um, work with other kinds of recording, fixed media work as well.

Speaker 3 ([01:04](#)):

So I'm James Batchelor and I'm a choreographer/performer. Um, so at the moment I am in Paris and I am based in the Cité Internationale, which is like a residency centre that the Australia Council also supports a position in throughout the year. So I'm lucky to be doing that residency at the moment or maybe unlucky. I'm not sure yet, but it's definitely been an interesting time to have this residency, uh, being in lockdown, but that's, uh, yet to be known yet what the outcome will be, I guess. For those who don't know, I guess, um, my practice is in dance and I'm working with my body and I perform in my own work um, mostly, and the kind of works that I have made are usually quite intimate, so no more than a hundred people and usually in not just theatres, but galleries, um, or alternative kind of spaces or outdoors, even in public space. So yeah, that's the kind of work that I have made. And I think that that's also why I'm in Europe somehow because I have made work that is very adaptable to different environments and because of it, yeah, the intimacy that it creates it's yeah easily, easily transportable as well. It's not, it's not heavy touring with lots of people. So it's a small group of people, usually that I'm touring with. That's the kind of the work that I have made and I'm making at the moment.

Speaker 2 ([02:47](#)):

Right now, I'm speaking to you from the island Suomenlinna in Finland, it's a actually a collection of small islands joined together by bridges about a 15 to 20 minute ferry ride from the city of Helsinki. I'm here doing a residency through the Helsinki International Artist Programme, also known as HIAP, uh, which are really a super interesting organisation that are mainly working with artists from the Baltic region, and Scandinavia. As the lone, um, non Baltic artist um, I'm here, um, through the Australia Council for the Arts. It's a pretty incredible, uh, strange place to be. When I first applied the aim for what I was hoping to do here was a sort of a deepening in terms of a creative and research period around an, uh, long-term ongoing, um, artistic research project of mine, which is about shaking. So my application, um, I've been doing a lot of performance based work around this, solo cello

work, also working around recordings that have a lot to do with a performance instrument dyad as being, you know, using different kinds of tremor in a musical sense.

Speaker 2 (04:18):

But here, I really wanted to research and work on some other kind of permutations of that, that stretch into inter-media spaces and also wanted to work on some recorded and fixed media pieces. Funnily, one of my aims with this residency was that I'd been thinking a lot about how I wanted to travel less. And I was interested in trying to find ways to make my work translate without having to be there in person, but I wasn't exactly expecting that learning curve to be quite so severe. I also, I had a couple of collaborations with other institutions. I was going to work at EMS Studios in Stockholm for a couple of weeks as a guest composer in residence, and then use that material as part of my project. And I was also going to work with a choir on some pieces.

[MUSIC] (05:38)

Speaker 3 (05:58):

So I started the residency at the beginning of March, and I had seen some shows and, uh, doing things in Paris. And then I think one week after arriving, things were starting to shut down and then it became, I guess, quite serious here, and everyone was ordered to stay at home and everything shuts. So that sort of became the reality after one week and has been like that the last two months. Well, originally I had come and I actually was hoping to have, um, quite a focused time in a way, and um use the time that I had to focus my ideas and work in the studio alone. Uh, so I was kind of expecting something like this in a way, but I had also anticipated, um, getting to know Paris more and seeing work here, meeting with artists, meeting with programmers and professionals, also doing residencies at other spaces and having access to other studios. So sort of building more relationships with other venues here and teaching as well. So I kind of had a range of things that would integrate me more in the environment rather than it being like an isolation experience.

Speaker 2 (07:20):

About one week after I arrived here, everything shut down first heralded by a kind of, you know, daily influx of emails that were like, this is cancelled and this is postponed and this institution is shutting down. And of course that affected the work that I was hoping to do with analog synthesis at EMS Studio in Stockholm, which was going to generate a lot of the sound material that I was going to be then working with in terms of the fixed media work. Also, one of my plans had been to work with a choir working on a collection of pieces that featured massed humming. And of course, you know, one of the first things to go of course is large groups of people in the same room. So the choir was, uh, off the cards. So trying to execute the same kind of like conceptual framework. But I found myself obviously with, you know, in this studio with just the tools that I had with me when I first arrived, which were a cello and myself and two microphones and a pair of monitors, uh, from HIAP. So it's actually been kind of interesting because a lot of the work that I've made has, in some ways now become sort of dominant, dominated by the potential instrumentation that I have and trying to work around that.

[MUSIC] (09:13)

Speaker 3 (09:18):

Yeah. In France, um, it's been probably stricter than it was in Australia, um, in the sense that it's really like staying inside and when you leave the house, you have to have a form filled out that's signed and you can only leave for a specific, like a very few number of reasons,

including like getting groceries, or you can only exercise like after 7:00 PM, for example. So you can't just go and have a walk. So it's quite limiting in the sense of like, if you want to just go outside, there's a lot of, um, restrictions around that kind of movement. That that's, that's definitely been the reality for me here. It's just like going outside very rarely.

Speaker 2 (10:02):

Um, I actually have not had a home for two years. I've just been moving from show to show, to project, to project, which has been pretty wild. It didn't really happen on purpose. It's sort of became the most practical way to be a full time experimental musician. It has been really hard at times, very unstable, very scary at times. Like if something goes wrong or falls through and you get stuck somewhere.

Speaker 3 (10:43):

Yeah. Wondering about, yeah, stay at, the order stay at home. And, um, how do I feel about not being at home or where would I define home as being at this time is something I think about often. Uh, and also I guess my family being in Australia and I definitely have a lot of connection to Australia and, you know, being born there and starting my career there as well. And I think people think of me as, from Australia, even though I've been in Europe a lot lately. This, I guess, practice of working internationally requires for me anyway, it has required sacrificing that, um, security or comfort in being at home and being prepared to move to where the opportunities are. And that's what has been, that's what, uh, I guess drew me to Europe. And what has been exciting about Europe is there were just so many more contexts for my work than there are in Australia.

Speaker 3 (11:47):

And it's allowed me to really grow and expand my tools and, uh, experiences as a performer and being able to work across these different contexts and learn from what is lost and what is gained from moving from one context to another. Um, and what is also taking place in that translation, which, you know, that's what I find, um, maybe not so difficult with dance is that already, it's very translatable in Europe, people speaking so many different languages, um, dance kind of is able to bridge all of them in a way that I've experienced so far. Yeah. So I think in thinking about what would be home right now, I'm happy to like consider this residency as like a sense of home. Even though I still like miss Australia, I miss my family and miss, um, the comfort that I had felt in places that maybe I was able to stay longer. I think in order to like stay healthy in this lifestyle, I really have to quickly feel at home in a lot of different circumstances like this one.

Speaker 2 (13:04):

The amount of flying I was doing was just gross and being Australian it's particularly difficult I think. There's a real conundrum for an international artist if you're Australian where you want to have a life and a community and a creative practice that's bound to your home. And this is one of the difficulties of being a musician, a performing musician, predominantly as well, a collaborative artist. How do we convey some of these ideas or experiences without other bodies in a room? I think this time period raises a lot of questions around it. And also it exposes certain things that we thought were not possible that could sort of be possible, but then in other ways it also exposes what really just is not possible and what will have to wait.

[MUSIC] (14:26)

Speaker 3 (14:27):

For the last two years I've really been committing to working in Europe, which means, has meant, coming backwards and forwards from Australia a lot as well and traveling constantly

between temporary housing situations, um, and residencies like this one. So I guess this has become part of my life anyway, to be feeling a bit stranded sometimes. And not really like having the usual like home comforts in a way. So I'm kind of used to that, but, um, I think, yeah, my mood goes up and down and feelings of like optimism maybe about what's going to happen next and am I going to be able to cope with it and am I able to, uh, continue practicing or what will my practice look like in the next years? Yeah, it's a bit overwhelming to think about. But then at other moments, I feel like quite interested and inspired by the, the roadblocks in a way, like really having to stop and connect with what I'm trying to do and not think about what I'm going to do. Like, what am I doing now kind of has also been inspiring sometimes. So it's a bit up and down.

Speaker 2 (15:43):

Uh, alone at a residency during a global, global shutdown has really, I dunno for me, it's cracked open some really interesting spaces in terms of what kind of artist I am and what kind of artist I would like to be. There's been like so many beautiful things and changes and ideas that have sort of happened here. It's like a headlong collision with the reality and practicalities. That's great that you've had all these realisations and that you've made, made all this weird work that you would have never made had it not been for this situation and so much that's been even despite all the circumstances kind of joyous. At the same time as the reality is if I cannot play a show for two years, can I still be an artist? Do I need to retrain? Is being a full time artist, something that certain people without security, how do I continue? And, but it's sort of, I've sort of wanted to ignore those questions while I'm here, because I didn't want to poison this residency either with those questions because it sort of feels like this might be one of the last moments for a long time where I just get to, to be like this.

Speaker 1 (17:20):

You've been listening to INTEL Podcast Series produced by the Australia Council for the Arts, May 2020.

[MUSIC] (17:28)

Speaker 1 (17:29):

On the next Australia Council INTEL podcast, Audiences Won't Forget Us with Singaporean storyteller, Kamini Ramachandran. Kamini's tools of trade are her voice, her body and her vast knowledge of oral traditions from Southeast Asia. In the strange new normal, she shares ways in which she's adapting her practice and how she seeks solidarity and solace in her global network of artist friendships.

[MUSIC] (17:54)