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00:00:04

Sands Murray-Wassink: Okay, so you see on this first page of this document I wrote, they were joking with me that it was a midlife or mid-career retrospective. But I kept saying it is a midlife retrospective because I haven't really had a career in public. And my question to you, one question to you would be, can you have a career if it's not in public? Is a career public always?

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Amal Alhaag: I think that's such an interesting question. I do feel you've had a very public career, but maybe not in the way as we generally understand 'public'... I feel instead it may be an 'intimate public' career?

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SMW: Yeah.

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AA: So, intimate in the sense that it was more like people that got to know you, got to know your practice and got to follow your career. And I feel in that sense, it's maybe more of a non-quantifiable type of career. In a way it's just not a capitalist career, right? It did not produce capital in that sense. [laughs]

00:01:22

SMW: [laughs] Unfortunately no, in a way, in terms of daily life. But that is the funny thing, as for me, career implies money somehow.

00:01:37

AA: Ah, that's interesting...

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SMW: The title of the exhibition, as I told you, I think will be 'Socio-Economic Sands' and then in parentheses '(Love Company)'. And that's kind of what I wanted to talk about: that every position these days is a socio-economic position that we exist in. This is why I want to think through the word career, because what does that mean? Can I call it a midlife retrospective or something?

00:02:10

AA: I actually like the mention of 'midlife' because it's like a moment, a punctuation. I also feel mid-career is very weird because how or who determines where mid-career takes place? I actually just looked up the meaning of career as mentioned by the dictionary...

00:02:32

SMW: Yeah, and what is it?

00:02:32

AA: It says the noun is an occupation undertaken for a significant period of a person's life and with opportunities for progress. But then I thought, what might be more interesting is the verb. The definition for the verb is 'move swiftly and in an uncontrolled way'.

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SMW: [laughs]

00:02:52

AA: That is your career! In an uncontrollable and ungraspable way.

00:02:58

SMW: Yeah. [laughs]

00:03:01

SMW: But not unhinged. [laughs]

00:03:02

AA: No, hopefully not unhinged. [laughs]

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AA: But uncontrollable / controllable is also quite a nice way of... It's like this thing that I often tell young artists or students: that hopefully they are artists for life.

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SMW: Yeah.

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AA: And then it means that one maybe has to nurture different types of relationships with the

hype or with the market trends. 'Market' in the broadest sense of the word, including institutions, you know, like the whole ecosystem of the arts. And I feel sometimes people want to peak so soon that, you know, peaking soon often means that or at least in my definition, it means that you will make the same work for life because that's what sells.

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SMW: Yeah.

00:03:56

AA: Or you don't shift, you don't get into the discomfort or the uncomfortableness of the unknown.

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SMW: No.

00:04:07

AA: I guess the dark side or the unfortunate side might be that you will also be a poor artist. I would like to ask you why you chose the title but also how you look back on the process, the time you've had to spend with your work?

00:04:32

SMW: Yeah.

00:04:32

AA: Out of the spotlight... Now the spotlight is slowly glowing up...

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SMW: The pink, or purple, spotlight is slowly shifting this direction....Well, the 'socio-economic' and where it comes from... What I realized, because I'm 48 now and so nearing 50, and I don't really put so much stock in these milestone words that people say like 50 is the cutoff point or something like that or a beginning. It could be, but for me, it's always been one long trajectory of persistence and keeping going. But it wasn't fully my decision to be out of the spotlight. That's the unfortunate part. I didn't want all of the attention or anything, but Robin could have used more financial help, you know, in terms of money. I think it marks me, because these years I'd say about 15 years or something, I did things consistently. I've always done things consistently since I was 22. You know, there's never been a year when there hasn't been something significant somehow. But like you said, it hasn't always been an institutional thing, which I like. But it also meant that in many cases I saw people, and that can be painful, that I saw and saw people who I think I am on the same level with, who are earning buckets with money. And you know, we virtually at points, had nothing. So I think this 'Socio-Economic Sands' is kind of tongue in cheek. It's a bit of a joke. But it's also something that I think about consistently: the

position that I'm in, or the position that anyone finds themselves in as they're developing, as they're growing. You know, similar to what you said you tell the young students. I also talk a lot about this and say things like "if I can do it, anyone can do it". It's the persistence of keeping going and thinking that what you have to offer is significant. For many years I also thought that this may not happen till after my death, that the work becomes more significant or taken up in the culture or something like that, and that I have to have peace with that somehow. I mean, now it's turning a bit, because I'm showing old work, 20 years old as if it was new. That will also happen in *Le Confort Moderne* in this show. But it's been a bit tricky to continue, or not to continue because I'm very driven and I knew that I had to continue and make whatever I could, you know, along the way. But what interests me is that I could have chosen, as I see it, two paths. I could have become bitter, due to the lack of attention... People have even said that it's down to living in the Netherlands as well, that maybe there is a kind of... Well, there have been various theories. One person even said that they thought there was an aversion to people from the United States, which I found very interesting somehow, because I don't know if that's true and I don't know if you can categorize why someone doesn't get attention. I think it's a whole web of factors.

00:08:50

AA: I think so, too.

00:08:57

SMW: My husband Robin, also says that perhaps my gender is maybe getting in the way of the reception of my work. Possibly because my influence comes from feminist artists and from this group of artists who were working with the same art materials that I often name, because I don't like the word visual artist....

00:09:26

AA: Really. Why?

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SMW: Because I think my art materials are five things. Actually six, and I'll name them: thoughts, feelings, emotions, relationships and behavior. And the sixth one is sharing information as if it was a brushstroke or a mark made on a surface, as if you're making a drawing or a painting. Because I do still see myself as a painter. I want that. I took that from Carolee Schneemann because she always said that she was moving visual principles off the canvas into real time and real space. And I've kind of, I guess, brought that to a kind of psychological position of thinking of what happens inside the body internally and what comes out of that. So everything visual for

me is like an energy trace, you know, and it's often more important what something... I use a lot of text in my work, as you know, and it's often more important what something says rather than how it looks. If I have to choose between form and content, I think content is really the main thing. For many years I got the idea that this is not the way that most artists see it. Or maybe the dominant, the mainstream, in a way was focused more on aesthetics.

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AA: Yeah.

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SMW: You know, that you can say things, but it has to look good somehow in a certain way. And who determines that?

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AA: Yeah, I think that's indeed true. But I also think the work is text-as-material based, as a materialization, as something that could be, you know, vibrant and alive.

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SMW: Language, right?

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AA: In a way, exactly. Language is something living. But I was also thinking about that it is also text as form, or form as text. Because sometimes I feel I'd rather not give away form to practices that focus on aesthetics, because I feel form is so much the space where so many of us can untangle or reshape. Form is also a language, but not merely an aesthetic language. And I feel this is something we sometimes need to de-center.

00:11:49

SMW: De-center, yeah...

00:11:56

AA: Speaking about de-centering, and centralizing in the margin, I feel this also connects to the words 'Socio-Economic Sands'. I think I saw those words, but I was also thinking about the idea of how this art world deprives people of their space between the living, you know, to be able to sustain themselves and to stay alive.

00:12:16

SMW: Survival...

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AA: I remember you used to use the word 'survival' in many of your works...

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SMW: Well, I use it within a term: I call it 'SURVIVAL ACCEPTANCE ART'. And this goes for everything I do.

00:12:32

AA: And you still call it this way? But how do you now think about that in relation to this pink/purple spotlight that is moving slowly in your direction? Do you still feel because of the type of artist you are, or not artist but painter...

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SMW: Yes, let's say painter.

00:13:00

AA: I would just maybe want to return a little bit to the formative part, because I feel so much of who we are is formed by how we were raised and how we came up. And I always sense with you that the imagination pushes how you use language. And I feel as much as you are a painter, you're also a writer and a thinker.

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SMW: Yeah, I want to be.

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AA: I thought it would be interesting to talk a little bit about the upbringing and how you came up. I learned so much from you about this part of the US.

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SMW: The Midwest.

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AA: The Midwest, and the Midwest in many of our imaginations. Also in Hollywood, imagination is always performed as the white normative space in which the homogenous America is the Midwest in a way. Like when you close your eyes, the United States of America is the Midwest which brings up images of the heteronormative family, who are likely Christian... With this image in mind you already go off center. [laughs]

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SMW: [laughs] But you know I am Jewish?

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AA: Exactly, so then you already don't fit into that. But I just wanted to ask you if you could speak a bit more about this upbringing.

00:14:24

SMW: Yeah, sure. A few significant things happened during my upbringing that I don't know that we've really talked about in depth.

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AA: Your upbringing, the horses...

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SMW: The horses...

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AA: Yes, I did hear that story! [laughs]

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SMW: [laughs] Not the horses, but rather where my influences came from. And how I learned what being an artist was. So, my dad is an artist and a poet, but he never had any kind of show. Literally, never had any kind of show. He works for himself, and there's a kind of shed out behind the house, and that was his workshop. And he'd work on metal sculptures, welding, that kind of thing, and kind of configurations, like three dimensional collages and paintings and things. And this is part of how I learned how to be an artist or know what an artist was. So it wasn't connected to money, it was connected to self expression, and it was connected to gifting also, which has become a very important you know. The word generosity is thrown around a lot, but I think a lot about this, the gift economy as well, you know, that I want to exist in. And sometimes I think I want to be paid to give work away. This is kind of a dream of mine in a way. Or maybe not always, but sometimes... But there was another influence, on my mother's side, the Jewish side. My dad was Irish Catholic, he's still alive, and he converted to Judaism because he felt that he wanted to, but my mother was born Jewish. Her grandmother, so my great grandmother was an abstract expressionist painter in New York City and lived to the age of, I think, 95 or 96. And she was living alone up until the age of 90, I think down downtown New York, 111/3rd Avenue. It was like 13th Street and Third Avenue, something down there. And when I was at Pratt for two years, I used to go visit her every week. We'd have dinner and talk about art and things. But also she only had one show in her life.

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AA: Wow.

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SMW: The show was at the very end of her life, which was organized by her grandson, one of her grandsons. And she actually used to come visit Kansas when I was growing up, when I was very, very young. And we'd sit out on the back porch of my grandparents house and my mother's side, and she talked to me about color theory and Marcus Aurelius and all these sorts of philosophers and things. And I was very, very young. So this sense that I got was that she was very glamorous, I thought. She was living in New York City. And, you know, that was glamorous for me. And then there's the legacy of abstract expressionism, which she kind of participated in, but she didn't start painting till she was 45.

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AA: Wow.

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SMW: She had three daughters and her husband left her. He ran off with somebody else when

she was 45. And somehow in this confluence of events, someone maybe suggested that she go take a drawing or painting class, and then she really took it up and she made beautiful work. But again, it wasn't connected to the market at all. So when growing up in Kansas my dad was very present because he was around all the time.... But then I had this pull towards the East Coast and New York City because of my mother's family. There were a lot of them that lived there. And this great grandmother, her name was Norma, and my dad's name is Ragen. These are the two people that really kind of influenced how I learned to see art. And I think that's always been my resistance because I hated money for many years. I used to tell people that I hated money. It's a double-edged sword in a way, because you hate money, but you need it as well. You have to pay the rent. You have to eat. And for many years, Robin has been, you know, just let's put that on the table: Robin has been the breadwinner, in a way. Robin, my partner, he has a steady job and so there was always an income. And to jump back and forth a bit, I worked very, very hard in high school to get out of Kansas because I didn't like living in the Midwest. It was very traumatic for me, actually. I was constantly told that I wasn't good enough, that I wasn't smart enough, that I wasn't good looking enough, that I had no talent. My high school art teacher thought I was colorblind, and I'm not, you know, this kind of thing. And I worked really, really hard, like, constantly. I didn't go out. Often I had to go to Temple on Friday nights. So, you know, during my teenage years, instead of going out, I would be in Temple with my parents. It was a fairly religious upbringing in a way, and the Jewish community was, because it was small, it was very..

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AA: Tight knit?

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SMW: Tight knit. Yes, that's a good word. And I learned a little bit about community from living in this tight knit group of people. But I also had a lot of issues with Judaism and the whole idea of Zionism. And you know, the whole thing about Israel and settler colonialism. I found it very complicated to figure out. And also because my mother's brother is orthodox and he has lived in downtown New York for many years. He's her younger brother. And when we went to visit him in New York – we didn't go that many times – when I was 16, I had hairspray in my hair... I was a bit gothic, or rather I tried to be a bit gothic. It failed miserably, but I was into, you know, The Swans and all this heavy kind of gothic music. I don't know. Those were the friends I was hanging around with. So I had this hairspray in my hair. And my hair was kind of like Robert Smith of the Cure, you know, kind of teased up in a big way

around my head. And her brother, Robert, told me that I had to comb all of that out of my hair before we would enter the synagogue. This was a very weird kind of control mechanism or something. And my mother had to go sit behind a screen. That's the Orthodox tradition, that women are not allowed to sit with the male congregation. So there were lots of things that happened growing up like that that are small in a way, but did cause deep wounds. And I think the Midwest... Yeah, I like growing up there in a way because it romanticizes... Carolee Schneemann used to say to me "no one comes from Kansas, nobody comes from Topeka of all places". You know, where I was born and lived for 18 years. And this was a very weird situation. But it taught me a lot through adversity. I used to say "adversity breeds work", and it caused me to become more driven to get out. What was interesting, and what I liked, is that I didn't grow up — in relation to what you said about a white heteronormative place like the Midwest — our city was actually quite racially mixed and culturally mixed. There were a lot of people who came up from Mexico. My dad had many Hispanic friends and Spanish was spoken quite freely around me. So all of my schools were quite mixed. And that was a blessing there, because it's not always the case. So I actually think that coming to the Netherlands — that might be another subject for another time — but I actually think that coming to the Netherlands has made me more aware. Because where I grew up the discussion around race and ethnicity is more sophisticated in a way. So when I came here, I almost thought I had to watch it so that I don't slip into this white bubble, that seems to develop when you're seeing a certain type of person over and over again. Which really annoys me, actually. It's a discussion for another time, but the Netherlands is super problematic in many ways... Also the way I've been treated here in the art world, but also just in general, like the, the interpersonal dynamics of how people exist here is complex for me.

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AA: Yeah, but in a way, you have now lived longer in the Netherlands than you lived in the US....

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SMW: Yes, and the funny thing is that I like it better here because of the base in Europe. Whenever I get critical of the Netherlands I think 'okay', I'm in proximity to many, many different countries and cultures. It's a good base to kind of travel from as well. And the standard of living is good and I'm in love as well. And that always kind of trumps everything. That horrible word 'Trump'... [laughs]

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AA: [laughs] Yes, that has a bit of a double

meaning.

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SMW: Love conquers all, I would say. So I'm here because Robin is my other half, we've been together 26 years. And you know that he's the first person that I take work to when I don't know if I like it. And also, just by the way, when I don't know if I like someone else's work, I also take the work to Robin to show him and ask "what do you think?" And because he's a computer programmer in a hospital, you know, he has such a fresh perspective on things and he cuts through all of the gobbledegook and all the terminology and...

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AA: All the art nonsense.

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SMW: Exactly. He just says what he thinks. And I almost always agree with him in one way or another. It's very, very helpful.

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AA: So it keeps you grounded? I feel like whenever I think about Robin, I always think about how grounded and open he is. And I think, speaking about this idea of midlife — because I'm not there yet — you never know how long you live, so maybe this is my midlife.... Turning 40 [laughs]

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SMW: [laughs] If we'd get hit by a tram tomorrow...

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AA: Tomorrow or whatever. You never know. That's why I, since the pandemic, I make sure that I always use 'Inshallah' somehow, some way.

00:26:12

SMW: Right. Right.

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AA: As a way of negotiating with the time and space we're in. And the precarity of this ongoing life and the privileges that on one hand are a blessing, and at the same time, it's a struggle. To be a killjoy... [laughs]

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SMW: [laughs] To be a killjoy, yeah...

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AA: I actually was thinking about this idea of 'SURVIVAL ACCEPTANCE ART' that you... Because I always love how you combine these concepts that also connect. So I think about it as a flower, and then I was thinking about the words, you combine it with 'trust', 'love', 'life' and 'death', and this idea of showing a lot of your earlier work...

00:27:07

SMW: Yeah, very early work

00:27:08

AA: And these works are also very much grounded in this survival mode of being. And it made me think of this genealogy of the feminist artist, and how there's now almost a blueprint when an artist of a particular era comes up, then there is always first interest in their early work...

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SMW: With feminist artists you mean?

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AA: Yeah, with feminist artists. Let me be more precise in this. A lot of people know Adrian Piper's older work, but when you talk to people like okay but what do you know about Adrian Piper's newer work? A lot of people might think Adrian Piper might no longer even make work, you know what I mean? I just wanted to talk to you about this. How do you feel about the focus on your earlier work, is this a choice by you or is there now more interest for your earlier work? Because I feel you've also been insistent on showing the horses.,

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SMW: Right, and the horses I've been only making since I'm 40.

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AA: Exactly!

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SMW: Well, with Adrian Piper in particular, the reason why she's so important to me is mainly because of her morals and ethics, and the way that she takes people to task for what they say they're doing and what they say they're going to do. You know, this is really inspiring to me because it's about the way that she lives. She has a philosophical way of approaching the world, which inspires me endlessly. Adrian Piper's early work was known when she was making it. And the trouble with my work, the earlier work from all those years, everything since 22 or before, no one has hardly ever seen it. So it hasn't entered the kind of – the word is troublesome – discourse, like the kind of normal discourse of things. And I think a lot of these feminist artists who were known already when they were coming up, they may not have had money, they may not have always had the financial rewards that they should have had, I don't think they did, actually, but the work entered the culture somehow.

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AA: Yeah, early on.

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SMW: Because you can't imagine when I first came here, when I would say what I was

interested in – I didn't even know the word intersectional – but that's what it was, you know, in feminist art. And people would tell me I was crazy. They would say "this is passé, this is the seventies". And I always use the bizarre example of Michelangelo, because I think that's 500 years ago and people are still going on about the Sistine Chapel ceiling. I think this time element is ridiculous, this argument of something being passé. I'm jumping around a little bit, if you look at time in a non-linear sense, you know, it just doesn't matter. So for me with Adrian Piper, and with others like with Carolee Schneemann and with Hannah Wilke, a lot of their earlier work was entering the culture as they were making it. Even though it was part of a community based thing, it wasn't so much a gallery or institutional way of entering culture, but culture was forming itself somehow.

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AA: I agree. Why I wanted to bring that up was because I feel your work is doing the same. It's just that they were in the US and you were here. And in a way we do not have that type of media power or that level of documentation. You know what I mean? Because I do feel that your work has been surrounded by community.

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SMW: Yeah.

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AA: It's just that it has not been historicized the way their work has been historicized from early on. I'm thinking about, Adrian Piper in the eighties, for example, in the shadows of when she moved to Berlin and then in 2010 ish, that's when the interest in her work started picking up again, simultaneously with the global arrival or return of feminism in the arts and more generally in the western world at large. But then with an intersectional dash. And maybe you might not be able to see it yet, but I do see a lot of similarities there. Also when thinking about how marginal Adrian Piper was made, or even other women artists in the conceptual art movement, right? Although they were quite formative!

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SMW: Right. They were totally formative, they were actually central to it.

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AA: And then the way like when the big exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum was happening of... what's his name again?

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SMW: Seth... Let's not name him...

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AA: The unnamed organizer. [laughs] For me

these moments, these big exhibitions are always a way of cementing a particular single reading of history. And in a very linear way. And by doing so it only reproduces the margins. You know, those who were not at the margins, they're being marginalized because someone else is centralized. And not even the maker...

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SMW: No, no, the organizer. Exactly.

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AA: I'm fascinated by how history is made and who is included and who's excluded. And then what happens over time when we start troubling that and then we have to work very, very hard to kind of dismantle that one reading of history. And then how do you avoid that, in the moment of history's making, including many different voices? Which means it's almost the unmaking of histories, you know? Because it doesn't work with the amount of people that you want to include. People are like, "Aah, I don't know where to look" but it means you just have to listen.

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SMW: And look in many places, multidirectional..

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AA: That's why I said yes, they were. But you were equally as much coming up in a small community, maybe smaller than they were. But their historicization happened earlier because they were US based. This is what I meant with that interest is also produced by reproducing value, and I think we used to talk about that with Maria... Who I also want to acknowledge, Maria Guggenbichler, which is how I got to know your work almost a decade ago. I knew your work a bit, but I did not know you as a person. And then a decade ago, we met, and I... So I think back at this time when all this interest in your work was not there.

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SMW: Yeah. Yeah.

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AA: I would like to talk about this a little bit. Because I feel this exhibition is also about how to ensure multidirectional history making. Could that also be the space for you in this exhibition? Because I feel this huge exhibition, this wonderful solo that's coming up, is also a moment where there is a reading going to happen, right?

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SMW: Right. There will be a reading.

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AA: And I think it's already wonderful that you're bringing together multiple types of works, because I feel that is already troubling a particular

reading or a particular, you know, notion of 'who's the artist?' Yes. I just thought to bring that up in a more rambling thinking out loud way.

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SMW: Yeah.

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AA: I also have to think about the feelings that were so present in the work in those years. You know that you were very outspoken and how your Facebook was very outspoken...

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SMW: Right. Right.

00:36:34

AA: And addressing things. And it's like this emotional space the way you used it. And a lot of people did not know what to do with that. [laughs]

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SMW: [laughs] No, they didn't, because it's destabilizing. It's a form of destabilization. And I think that terrifies people.

00:36:52

AA: It really does terrify people.

00:36:52

SMW: And also, if you're very open and honest... I had this thing with Carolee, someone called her fierce recently, and I actually got a bit annoyed. Maybe you saw that I posted about it on Facebook. I don't use Facebook a lot anymore. I mainly use other forms like Instagram and things, but I actually thought Carolee was not trying... Or I don't see her as fierce. I mean, she is, but actually she's just speaking the truth. And when did speaking the truth become fierce? All of a sudden it has to be fierce. I once gave a lecture in Norway about my work, and I included a piece of Carolee's work, like a film clip or something. And this woman came to me afterwards who was about my age, maybe five or ten years older, somewhere around my age. And she said she disliked Carolee Schneemann's work intensely because she was told when she was in art school that that was the kind of person and artist that she should be. And I said, Carolee herself would have hated that because she was the opposite. She wanted people to be the best version of themselves that they could possibly be. She would never want to be some kind of cookie cutter, you know, idea of an artist that people should follow or whatever. That wasn't why she was making work. And there's all these misconceptions around, you know, people build up all these ideas when you speak. And the reason I'm saying this is because 'fierce'... It's actually when you speak the truth, people are so unused to hearing genuine things, it shocks them. I wrote down a few words, also modest

and humble. If you are modest, humble and truthful, people are so somehow not used to it in the mainstream art world that they distrust it. And I think that's what happened with me. And what happened with Adrian, and many of the feminist artists that inspired me were not trusted for many years because they were speaking the truth and speaking about real life as well. They spoke up about daily life, like the conditions of daily life and the conditions of being an artist, not some glamorized ideal of a jet setting, you know, multimillionaire or whatever. But just what do you do when you get up in the morning? How do you pay the bills? What, who are you in love with? Who are you connected to? And that's why I wanted to have this conversation as well, because I realized recently that oral history and orality, like the spoken, is actually more important for me than what ends up codified or written about rigidly somehow. Because this is how history happens, what we're doing now. That's what I think, just the conversation and the thinking and everything. It's not edited. I don't believe in editing for myself, I would not make that as a proclamation for everyone. There's of course many reasons why editing can be useful, but like just editing in general, I think there's a lot of that in the art world and people are only showing their newest work and also the work that they feel is most aesthetically successful or whatever it is. You know, their choices are a form of editing somehow. And my theory and philosophy has been to use desperation as methodology. Which I'm very happy about. I just show literally everything that is made, don't destroy anything and see it all in a non hierarchical sense, in a horizontal sense, that it's all part of the same thing. And this is kind of answering, not going into the questions that you just asked and things you brought up, it's about that kind of wholeness. Like, another phrase that I use sometimes is 'whole person art' because I feel like the holistic view of a person is what we're missing somehow.

00:41:15

AA: Agree. I always love the 'whole person art', because I feel it really resonates. I agree with you because people started calling what I write on Instagram rants. But for me, they're political statements.

00:41:40

SMW: Right.

00:41:41

AA: And then I had to tell someone. I'm like, No, this is not like a rant or a cool thing. And then people come up and say, "oh, it's so wonderful how you put it into words". And I'm like, "no, you need to put it into words too, because I'm not the only one who thinks about the art world in this

way". And I feel it's some sort of weird recognition which I don't care for. It's recognition by the people that you do not want recognition from.

00:42:06

SMW: Right, right, right. Which is hilarious.

00:42:08

AA: Which is hilarious. We all know that the spotlight is temporary, until they find the next queer person or the next black person that is more comfortable. Because you show up with your discomfort and then they throw glamor and glitter at you. But when you remain the same, they're often like, 'Fuck, we did not want this person to be still the same. We wanted them to come to our side' (whatever that might be). And then it's like 'let's remove them'. Right? Or quickly take the spotlight away. And I was thinking about the concept of the spotlight you know, if you smash it... The light can become stars.

00:42:58

SMW: Yes, the light can become diffused. What I make my work about is creating space. Painting for me in whatever sense and whatever form is about creating space in the world, but not only physical space, but psychic space as well. And not only for me, but for people that I care about and people that care about me, and people that may think like me. You know, marginalized people who haven't gotten the attention and who deserve it. Because if you speak from multiple positions at the same time, that also freaks people out. They can't compute with that. They want it simplified. The mainstream anyway, they want it simplified and prefer buzzwords, you know. Give it to me quick. Give me it in one sentence or something....

00:43:50

AA: Or as we say in Dutch, Keep it simple.

00:43:51

SMW: Yes, simplified.

00:44:03

AA: And for whom are we simplifying would be the question, right? Like, I just wanted to ask you what you were just saying about... I was thinking about how to be in the margins, but also to be eccentric or non conformative. And I wanted to talk a bit about your perfume archive. As for me it really sits in this space of who we are, vanity in the sense of who we would want to be and scent in terms of the space that we share with others. I just wanted to talk a little bit also about this collection you've been working with. I feel the painting a lot of people in some way can understand as it is part of art history right?

00:45:01

SMW: Right, right, right.

00:45:05

AA: But with the perfume collection, I feel that's very much about relationality and about being in relationship with others. Whereas it is also about archiving and collecting and specifically collecting your own work and...

00:45:21

SMW: Other people's work.

00:45:22

AA: Other people's work, Yes. I wanted to talk a bit about this in a very humble way, because I once made a joke, I was like 'Oh my God, I visited Sands, I couldn't believe Sands lives in a museum.' [laughs]

00:45:40

SMW: [laughs] A museum of perfumes and other bits and pieces.

00:45:44

AA: Gifting economy of artworks. You know, you're like: 'is this for real?' 'Is this what I'm seeing?' Yes, this is real... And outside of the economy of the arts, you know what I mean?

00:45:55

SMW: Right. Well, you know, I spent all of my – just to pick up at the end of what you said – I spent all of my first grants from the Mondrian Foundation on buying other people's artwork. You know, the Adrian Piper that we have. We bought an Adrian Piper self-portrait from when she was 19, in 1968 or 67, and we bought a Hannah Wilke multiple. I had to buy that from a gallery. I bought the drawing from Adrian herself. This was in 2000. So, 22 years ago I was investing in this, and Adrian, I was very excited because she made me sign a six-page contract in order to buy the work that it would always be able to be shown. Even that was an artistic experience, you know, having this wonderful contract to look through and, you know, in her words and everything. But we bought from three people in particular. We bought from Adrian, Carolee Schneemann we bought multiple things from and also Hannah Wilke, from whom we bought one particular piece which had been a multiple which had to be bought through a gallery. But I wanted to say just one thing before I got into the perfume collection. 'Simply', if you say something 'simply', it's very double edged again. Because I think often a lot of people that I feel close to are speaking in very plain terms like straightforward language. This is also not what people mean in the mainstream when they say 'simply'. They don't want it like that, they don't want it as it comes out of the mouth. They want it glorified or glamorized or whatever. So speaking simply is actually also threatening to people in a certain way.

00:47:46

AA: Yeah, but do you not feel... I sometimes feel when people say that something doesn't mirror their positionality. So your 'simply' needs to mirror their simply. Which can never happen because your whole existence is too complex.

00:48:07

SMW: It doesn't compute somehow. So it's very frustrating, actually. And I think the 'desperation is methodology' comes back into it. You know, you become like a bull in a china shop, as they say. You just sort of run around and do your thing. And if something gets broken from their side, then c'est la vie or something like that. But the perfume collection – speaking of a bull in a china shop – that started in 2004. Someone asked me – actually I'm a bit annoyed with her – another artist, who I have tried to identify with and look up to asked me why I was so interested in perfume. And I'm not going to name her, but I'll say that she's British. She's based in London and she's quite well known for talking about herself in a way. So, she asked me why I was interested in perfume, and I actually came up with the answer. I couldn't answer her directly, but I think part of it, interestingly to me, what comes up in my mind is that part of it is an extreme form of all things, femininity. I don't know if you were expecting that answer, but I said to Robin as well, I said, if I was female, perhaps I would not feel that I needed to collect perfume because I feel that I... Two things: first of all, I think that if you generalize between the binary men and women, I think that men are less in general. And I want to admit that. I want to live in that way, that I see myself as, maybe not less, but just... I don't even know what the word is... Maybe you have thoughts on this as well. But it's the idea of dominance and the inequality that exists in the world. I feel like if people admit that they don't know things... I think it's all about this, all knowing becomes knowledge, whatever that is, becomes a kind of form of dominance. So the perfume collection for me is all personalities. I have 600 bottles now and they are all little personalities. And I see it as a world, actually. But again, it comes back to this lack of... Hannah Wilke, used to call it Venus envy instead of penis envy. And I love this. Hannah was also amazing with words. I mean, she was a poet, really. And I feel like that is what I have. I have a bit of Venus envy actually because I feel like I lack femininity. So I'm constantly trying to address that somehow. And it's become a bit of an obsession, a bit more than an obsession.

00:51:17

AA: And then symbolized by the perfume.

00:51:19

SMW: Symbolized by the entire perfume

collection and also a kind of fuck you to capitalism that comes with that, because it's fabulously expensive. And I once showed it in Munich and this heterosexual white dude artist was so angry that he got two of his friends together and they were plotting to bomb the collection. So it was obviously very threatening somehow, in a way. And again, I think it's because of this femininity that exists in a male body that is seen as threatening somehow, because I identify with women in general with an asterisk at the end, you know, women in general, and I have sex with men. So it's a bit of a complicated situation somehow.

00:52:15

AA: So what did you call it again, a 'whole person'?

00:52:19

SMW: 'Whole person art'.

00:52:20

AA: Whole person art 'being' I would add.

00:52:24

SMW: Exactly.

00:52:24

[Someone enters the room]

00:52:25

AA: Hey, Thierno, Sorry I'm sitting on your chair because me and Sands are having a conversation and we're recording it. You can sit over there if you want. Yeah, I feel there's so many things to talk about. [laughs]

00:52:48

SMW: About the perfume or....?

00:52:50

AA: The perfume and what you said about, you know, identifying. I guess, you know, maybe if you were from a different generation, maybe you would have been more this kind of artist unpacking the binaries. Also doing this through your work, because also the materiality is what could be considered as femme material. Like of course textile in art histories is often associated with women. Then also immediately it's less valuable, although we all know that, you know, quilting, some of the most revolutionary coding was done through quilting.

00:53:37

SMW: Right, Right.

00:53:42

AA: That is at the margin of the materiality that is kind of valued within the arts. But at the same time, it's not within the art ecosystem, but it's not necessarily the materiality that's of value to

communities. You know, they don't match, value cannot live amongst people the way textile can live amongst people.

00:54:04

SMW: Right, Yeah.

00:54:05

AA: And the robustness. I was thinking about your textile paintings, but one of them could have been hanging here in this space, with the cold and, you know... That it can weather.

00:54:19

SMW: It's a tactile kind of warmth or something, it's like a body, in a way. It's a presence I would say, or a spirit even.

00:54:28

AA: And I wanted to ask you if you could speak a little bit about the horses because I feel the horses are what so many people can connect to; to humor, to joy. And there's something about it that recalls childlike imagination. But at the same time there is such a rich foundation for it, as for example, Bilan-Noni {Amal's young child} still has a little horse as a button on her jacket, and people always ask "where did she get this?" She loves it a lot. And now she is also into unicorns, and you were wearing the unicorn jacket and then she was like 'oh maybe Sands will also make buttons that say 'I'm a unicorn'.

00:55:24

SMW: Okay, that's good. Okay, we'll do that.

00:55:31

AA: I told her that I would tell you that. But to me it speaks to how many people the horses speak to and feel connected to. It's intergenerational.

00:55:41

SMW: The funny thing about the horse... And one question before I answer or before I respond to that, when you said from a different generation, were you implying or saying like from a younger generation or an older generation about unpacking the binary?

00:55:57

AA: Oh, no, I meant from a younger generation. You know, I feel like if you were maybe now in the art school, you would have been this eccentric, non binary person. Or that like the unpacking the binary would have been more accepted than maybe when you were in art school.

00:56:14

SMW: I'm a gender dinosaur. [laughs]

00:56:16

AA: In a way. Yeah. [laughs] But the difference now is that maybe people would not be as

dedicated to feminism, right? I don't know. Maybe they are. Maybe they are. But I feel it's quite unique that you have this very, very rich and very invested practice for a long time and you don't necessarily speak up about being a feminist but you are doing the work.

00:56:54

SMW: Right. Which is not something you need credit for or thanks for. You just do it because it has to be done. You feel it has to be done. So, I have been thinking recently about what I would term myself gender wise, and I think the closest I can come to feeling comfortable and truthful is gender fluid. Which is out of necessity somehow. Like just this 'whole person art', again. I felt like what I lacked, I had to build or create or research even, you know, kind of gravitate towards somehow. So, gosh, there was so much in what you just said that I almost don't remember it all. Can you just help me with where we were?

00:57:59

AA: Yeah. I almost forgot myself. So we were talking about the horses and about how it is intergenerational but that it also speaks of the remarkable acts of refusal to conform to these gender binaries. And then the other thing we spoke about is the textile, the materiality of your work and this is often gendered in a particular way and has for a long time also moved in the margins. Textile work is still predominantly done by femme women. Femme people [queer person whose gender expression is considered to be feminine] and women.

00:58:54

SMW: True.

00:58:54

AA: I'm interested in that as you've been working with textile for a long time as well.

00:58:59

SMW: With the textile, yeah. So the horses actually come from a form of trauma in a way. It's a heavy word, but it really applies here actually. When I was, I think you know this story, but I'll tell it for the recording. When I was three I went to my parents and I said I wanted to be a girl. I didn't want to be a little boy because all of my friends growing up were girls. And there was actually a house across from the street from where I grew up when I was very, very young, before the age of three, which was what they used to call a kind of halfway house. A place where girls who had been sex workers or didn't have financial means to continue living were taken in. And these were my friends. These were who I hung around with when I was that age. So I identified with them, they were teenagers, but I was three. So, you know, I identified with these older women. And my

grandfather, on my mother's side, was a Freudian psychoanalyst, and he demanded that I be put into therapy to 'learn how to be a boy' whatever that amounts to. And they told me this as well. And there are other parts to the story which are a bit more private but are really even worse. I had a lot of trouble with my grandfather, who died recently. He was a very tyrannical person and very patriarchal. And it probably drove me even more to do what I do. You know, the passion that I have come from this, this pressure from him and the psychological pressure of having to account for all my actions growing up. And if I dyed my hair red when I was a teenager, why did I dye my hair red or why was I wearing a ring? Why did I constantly have to answer these questions, you know? So when I was very young and supposedly learning how to be a boy, I was told that horses and unicorns were for little girls. Those were symbols for little girls. So I actually was kind of almost brainwashed or I listened to this, to try and to be a good student and said, "I'm going to stay away from these symbols". But in 1996, when I was 20. In 1995, 1996, I first made a series of works which will be in the exhibition in Poitiers, which are of me trying to embody the spirit of Hannah Wilke when I had quite long hair down to my shoulders. We used one on Side Room the publication [Side Room is a community art space in the South of Amsterdam run by Amal Alhaag and Maria Guggenbichler that focused on togetherness and sharing]. I took a series of 60 [photographic] self-portraits, and in that same period I drew two horses and two flowers on a piece of brown packing paper with a black marker. And I gave it to someone who unfortunately lost it, that just happens sometimes. But that was 1996. And in 1998, I drew another horse which had blinders on. You know, these things where the horse can't look, except straight forward, or whatever. And with a rainbow over its head, which I still have, that's a quite big drawing. But I left it alone till after the age of 40. And my grandfather was getting older and I was getting more powerful mentally, I suppose. And all of a sudden the horse just popped up in my head as a symbol of wildness and freedom, but also a corrective to that early period of gender nonconformity in a way. And also, what we were talking about before, language and thought and emotion and feeling, because I started to paint the horses with whatever was in my head at the time. I don't edit. I don't censor, whatever comes into my consciousness as a phrase, I paint and then the horse. And so you never know if it's the horse talking or if it's the phrase talking. I want it to be as if people can project themselves into the picture somehow and see themselves as the horse, or see themselves as speaking what I wrote down. So the work is actually not, yet it is, coming from me. But I think that's been a

misconception as well, is that my work would be narcissistic or self involved when actually I'm constantly referring to other artists. If you listen to how I speak about my work and my influences... And also I don't want to own anything, everything that I make is a gift to the world. And I don't need to have any ownership over it. I want to put it out into the world as a hypothesis, as an idea of what could be like almost thinking the future or something like that. If that makes some sense...

01:04:21

AA: Yeah, I think that that comes back also to your idea of gifting and to be in that type of gifting relation with people. Gifting can also be a matter of... I felt for example that 'Blacklist' [an exhibition and performance by Sands Murray-Wassick that took place at Side Room] was also a type of gifting...

01:04:49

SMW: [Laughs] It was, telling people where they were going wrong.

01:04:51

AA: ...and humor I also want to acknowledge, because there's so much that we talk about so seriously, I just want to also acknowledge the humor in the horses.

01:05:02

SMW: And in everything!

01:05:03

AA: Everything!

01:05:04

SMW: Actually, humor for me is... You know, what people often say, like Robin and I are together 26 years and then people ask "how did it last so long?" You hear it over and over again, if you can make someone else laugh, your partner, that is the most seductive thing in the world, I think. And humor, every good artist, I think has to have, and I will say has in that way, has to have a good sense of humor just to get through life, really. So humor is the basis of everything, but it's also very serious. It's serious and funny at the same time.

01:05:41

AA: It's a craft, to be dabbling in humor. yeah. There's so many things I wrote down for myself, like the horses also referring to other artists. And on the list you also wrote down this idea of the 'white bubble'...

01:06:08

SMW: Yeah.

01:06:09

SMW: And I was thinking about the intersectionality in your work or the notion of intersectionality. You are also one of the few

people that also really critically engages with these concepts and really does this kind of self analytical work where you say, "okay, now I'm too much in this white bubble". So I would like to ask you about that and somehow also touch a little bit on the Netherlands, because I feel you've been here for 20 years which is also where a very difficult art world exists.

01:06:28

SMW: Rigid..

01:06:50

AA: Yeah, rigid and also toxic, to my understanding.

01:06:51

SMW: Very toxic, yeah.

01:06:53

AA: Because it's so small and exclusionary.

01:06:58

SMW: And judgmental. It's like gatekeepers all over the place. What you can do and what you can't do to enter their world somehow.

01:07:08

AA: Yeah. And how has it been for you the past few years now that these gatekeepers can no longer keep the gates closed?

01:07:15

SMW: Well, they still try. I mean, there's still. I'll name a name, for instance, you know, Mirjam Westen, who worked in Arnhem and considers herself the most feminist curator in the Netherlands or whatever. She never once did a studio visit. We had no exchange. She never reached out to me in all the 26 years I've been here, and when Cokkie Snoei, my former gallerist, tried to sell her some of my work, she said that the aesthetics were horrible. And they were fabric paintings actually, of all things. She tried to sell her some fabric paintings, and she thought they were so ugly that she would not buy them for her collection in Arnhem. She thought they were just disastrous. And this is quite funny. [laughs]

01:08:02

AA: It is but it's also heartbreaking... [laughs]

01:08:04

SMW: I know, but it's quite funny because a lot of this work, which was... Robin and I also did a performance once at de Ateliers [prestigious artist residency program in Amsterdam], and I hung up like 50 paintings on paper. And each painting had text on it and they were like 150 centimeters by 80 centimeters, quite big and present. Marlene Dumas was there, Marijke van Warmerdam was there...

01:08:26

AA: [Laughs]

01:08:27

SMW: All sorts of people were in this room. No one mentioned the paintings although they were everywhere, like wallpaper. It was absolutely insane. And now these same paintings that no one would acknowledge are going to be one of the center points of the show in France. That's what the director / curator wants. But those were made in 2009 and I showed them in 2010. And that just shows you what the timeline is like as well. Sometimes time is necessary, but you know, these people are trying to keep the door shut on me still.

01:09:05

AA: You missed out on my [Stedelijk Museum symposium] blacklist version on the painting of Mohammed B by the artist Marlene Dumas...

01:09:18

SMW: Oh, because I would never, let's just put that out there, I would never build a symposium around Marlene Dumas's work. My main problem was that she was constantly referring to men among other things.

AA: The Moroccan-Dutch Mohammed B. (who killed the well-known Dutch filmmaker, Theo van Gogh) was one of these men she painted. Whiteness and privilege allows for some people to reproduce colonial violence in multiple ways. I think we can agree that something can be beautiful but painful at the same time because it lacks political grounding. It has no politics, because when you make this painting and then what you say in De Balie [a place in Amsterdam where cultural debates are held], which is an Islamophobic space, you say the most nonsensical thing, then I wonder Who is afforded to paint Mohammed B. without context? Dutch history, migratory histories...Hello? Have you been reading?

01:15:52

SMW: Or feeling

01:15:53

AA: And reading also in terms of oral histories, have you ever talked to someone that relates?

01:16:05

SMW: I know what you mean. And I think it's a very important discussion because Marlene Dumas is considered a very financially successful painter. There was something about maybe being the most well-paid painter in the world.

01:16:17

AA: Oh, really?

01:16:18

SMW: Female painter, perhaps. They're very expensive paintings. And I just feel that, I don't know if I should call them real politics, but I feel like the reward normally comes financially when you are reflecting the dominant culture.

01:16:39

AA: Yeah, no, I agree.

01:16:40

SMW: I mean, that's what happens. And the opposite has happened for me. And I don't mind because I care more about integrity and justice, in my understanding of those two words, than anything else. That's all I focus on. And if that comes at a financial loss, so be it. And it has come at a financial loss.

01:17:06

AA: I know. [laughs] So speaking about this moment of the purple spotlight. I wanted to ask you how you feel about this upcoming show, and the way you want it to be seen and remembered into the future.

01:17:50

SMW: Yeah, that's a real good one. I mean, I'm finding it rather daunting because it's 1000 square meters and...

01:17:59

AA: You have enough works Sands!

01:18:01

SMW: Yeah, I have enough work. It's funny. There was something very practical for the insurance. Blandine who's doing the production is amazing. And she wrote to me and said, we need titles, dimensions, materials, years, insurance, value for each piece that will be in the show. And I wrote back and I said, that is literally impossible. There are over 1000 horse drawings. It would take me years to catalog this kind of thing. And so what we ended up coming to agreement about is that I will send groups of works like horse drawings, rolled paintings, textile paintings, and these groups of works will have a value in themselves. The thing with my work is that it always ends up looking very trashy. I mean, most of my work is stored in garbage bags because I have no other option. There is no space. This has been the easiest way to do it. So what they're doing is they're sending a van. Just to answer your question, in a bit of a circuitous way, they're sending a van from France, and I'm just supposed to load it with as much work as possible, in whatever way I can get it in there. And then we're going to bring it all there, lay it out on the floor, and take about a week or two to install and make careful decisions. And they're being really, really generous with me about time and, you know,

being there for two weeks or whatever. And I probably also, which I'm very excited about, I'll probably also make a wall painting. And I'm even thinking of, probably horses and flowers and shooting stars and things, but I'm thinking even of going around this space and punctuating the whole exhibition with little wall paintings or like taking pencil and making little notes to the audience, like, look here or wherever, you know, like, like a real personal touch, because I like this trace.

01:20:13

SMW: How many works are you showing?

01:20:15

AA: A lot. Yeah, a lot. And like I said, they want all the horse drawings, so they'll be over 1000 horse drawings. And then the rolled paintings, which were shown at de Ateliers where no one talked about the things on the walls. There are 200 of those. And fabric paintings. There are another 80 or 100 or something which will be hung from the ceiling and there will be perfume. We're choosing one perfume which will be sprayed in the space every other day just to have a bit of a scent memory. It's a white flower perfume with a bit of citrus. I read somewhere that citrus also is very good for concentration. Like sometimes they pump citrus into office buildings to increase productivity. So I thought this was an interesting choice of perfume. It was very intuitive, but it matches in that way. And you asked what I wanted to achieve with it?

01:21:11

AA: I asked how you would like the show to be remembered?

01:21:15

SMW: I want it to be remembered as a statement, again, about creating space where I feel space does not exist for people in the world who have multiple positionalities, multiple perspectives, all existing, coexisting at the same time. I want this show to, it feels rather ambitious, but I want it to be a statement about breathing somehow. About a lack of space, and actually just being able to intake oxygen, you know, like I want to oxygenate.

01:21:56

AA: We had a whole weekend called Breathing in Babylon!

01:21:59

SMW: My friend Frederikke said that Robbie Shilliam said if I'm getting the name right, said something about oxygenating the soil, something about oxygenation. So this is very much in my head anyway, about breathing. I just want it to be like a breath of fresh air in a way. Or a breath of air at all. Just nourishing, life affirming air.

01:22:35

AA: Yeah, that's so beautiful also because it's, I think it's something we here have been thinking a lot about breathing as a methodology, and how to keep breath in our own bodies and in a collective body.

01:22:54

SMW: And share it! Because we all share the air. We all share the oxygen, we all share, we have to live..

01:22:59

AA: Although sometimes we don't want to share with some people...[laughs]

01:23:02

AA: But that's when you call things toxic. What could we say? Perfumed fragrant air. . I don't know. Some form of beauty through just the way things are. Looking at the way things are not trying to glamorize, not trying to do what you said, throw glitter or whatever. Just, uh, a diffused soft purple light. That's what I want.

01:23:33

AA: To live in the glow.

01:23:34

SMW: Live in the glow. And I want there to be a kind of aftertaste, you know, like or an afterglow. You could say. Just that it creates a warm feeling of new ways of looking at things which come from what's been done before, built on what's done before. You know, I think this is all we can ever hope for.

01:24:00

AA: That's really beautiful. That's a nice way to end. Thank you so much, Sands.

01:24:07

SMW: Thank you.

Sands Murray-Wassink

Personnalité queer culte de la scène artistique d'Amsterdam depuis bientôt vingt ans, Sands Murray-Wassink (Né en 1974 à Topeka, Kansas, USA. Vit à Amsterdam) est un peintre, body artist et écrivain bipolaire, collectionneur de parfums, fortement influencé par les multiples manifestations et évolutions de l'art queer féministe intersectionnel dont les artistes Carolee Schneemann, Hannah Wilke et Adrian Piper sont les références essentielles.

Après avoir étudié au Pratt Institute (de 1992 à 1994) à Brooklyn où il a travaillé avec Carolee Schneemann, alors sa professeure, Murray-Wassink s'est installé aux Pays-Bas en 1994 à l'occasion d'un programme d'échange à la Gerrit Rietveld Academie d'Amsterdam. Il a ensuite étudié à Amsterdam (à De Ateliers en 1995 et 1996), où il vit et travaille depuis, avec son mari Robin et leurs chats Betsie et Duman.

Collectionner et archiver ont toujours été des éléments clefs de sa pratique, comme ils le sont pour les artistes qui l'ont le plus influencé.

Selon Murray-Wassink : « Puiser dans le travail passé pour créer du nouveau, tel que je le fais, est un processus, une action, comparables au serpent se mordant la queue. C'est, il me semble, une façon très saine de gérer les facettes multiples que l'on incarne en étant à la fois un artiste et une personne. Je qualifie l'ensemble de mon travail quel qu'en soit le médium de SURVIVAL ACCEPTANCE ART (un art de l'acceptation - de la vie, de soi - comme moteur de survie), ce qui signifie que je tâche d'éviter toute hiérarchisation ou retouche. Une façon brute de présenter et

donc partager ma créativité afin, je l'espère sincèrement, de toucher les autres/spectateur.ices/publics (présent.e.s et/ou futur.e.s) et de devenir encore plus légendaire – non pas célèbre à proprement parler, mais participant activement à l'évolution de notre monde et des mondes à venir. L'humour (un agréable mécanisme de survie), élément essentiel des messages importants que je tâche de transmettre – en peinture, mes talking horses («chevaux parlants», qui représentent selon moi la liberté et la sauvagerie) – mais aussi le glamour (les différentes formes que revêt la féminité) sous ces formes variées, font tous deux partie de cette exploration. »
(...)

Ma première grande exposition en solo à Amsterdam eut lieu en 2021, alors que j'habite et travaille ici depuis 1994.
Qu'est-ce que cela signifie ? Cela veut dire que je suis une sorte d'ermite, et que mon positionnement artistique est résolument indépendant. Carolee m'a appris le courage, Hannah la spontanéité, Adrian la rigueur. J'adore Eva Hesse, Antonin Artaud, et Forrest Bess. Il est important pour moi d'exister au sein d'un contexte historique. Comme toute grande oeuvre. Pendant de nombreuses années, être brouillon servait mon propos politique et artistique, car je sentais que les hommes gay de ma génération étaient / sont encore trop souvent aseptisés et déssexualisés, ils sont sensés être soigneux et organisés. Et bien moi j'en mets partout (physiquement, humainement) comme tout le monde, et comme Carolee, lorsque je n'avais ni historien.e, ni archiviste, ni curateur.ice, ni agent.e, ni directeur.ice de musée, ni collectionneur.se... j'ai TOUT fait moi-même et je m'en suis plutôt bien sorti qui plus est. »

Amal Alhaag

Amal Alhaag est curatrice et chercheuse à Amsterdam, où elle réside. Elle est de nationalité Néerlandaise et Somalienne. Elle développe des pratiques de recherche expérimentales et collectives, des rencontres culturelles et des projets autour de la géopolitique des espaces, de l'archive, du colonialisme, de la contre-culture, des histoires orales et de la culture populaire. Depuis vingt ans, que ce soit en collaboration avec des personnes, des initiatives, des communautés ou des institutions, ses projets invitent, mettent en scène, questionnent et jouent avec des problématiques « inconfortables », lesquelles décortiquent, interrogent, réécrivent, remixent, partagent et composent des narrations au sein de cadres impermanents.

Elle a notamment créé avec Maria Guggenbichler un centre culturel nommé Side Room dans le sud d'Amsterdam, engagé autour des notions de partage et d'intimité.

JE
SUIS
OKAY

