

## **Elijah Maja, Ibrahim Cissé with Dominique White & Adam Farah – ‘Sanguine August’ - A Blue Skies Conversation**

Elijah Maja & Ibrahim Cissé are artists and curators based in the UK and France, respectively. This conversation invited guests Dominique White & Adam Farah - both artists - to participate in an open-ended conversation that threaded provocations and questions together to explore current mind-states, strategies and thoughts on care and collectivity, alongside their individual practices.

---

**Elijah Maja:** Happy we were able to set this up. It's a conversation between Adam Farah, Ibrahim Cissé, Dominique White and myself Elijah Maja. I guess we kind of outlined the conversation as thinking about mechanisms of care and connectivity and what shapes they take and the manner in which we can use and distribute resources and what that even looks and feels like to reimagine ideas of care and collectivity.

But again, it's going to open out some more and be a kind of general discussion about people's practice, what shapes that takes. I guess process and how that imposes itself on the material and the immaterial understanding of practice. But first of all, how is everyone?

**Dominique White:** Good.

**Adam Farah:** Decent. Decent.

**Ibrahim Cissé:** I love how Adam always says decent. I would say I'm a bit stressed because I'm moving house, but other than that, I feel good.

**Elijah Maja:** Yeah, we are at Ibrahim's house before he exits.

**Ibrahim Cissé:** Brexits.

**Dominique White:** Ibrahim, are you staying in the UK or are you moving somewhere else?

**Ibrahim Cissé:** I'm Brexiting but I'm coming back.

**Elijah Maja:** So yeah, we're in a room that's formerly a bedroom, but now it feels like a film set. But that's the initial starting point for the conversation, the manner in which certain materials and activities promote care. And I want to talk about what care is to people on some level. What shape that takes and what that is. Anyone can just jump in and say what you consider that to be.

**Dominique White:** I don't mind starting. Care for me is the pace of life. It's making a space to be allowed to reflect, I guess like tap out or unplug from the present. And I

think more so with what's happening right now, care has become more important and reaching out and making sure that others also feel safe and feel protected as opposed to just myself. For me, it's become more collective even more in the light of Covid and in light the of the protests and world politics now.

**Elijah Maja:** In what ways would you say it's become more collective for yourself at this point?

**Dominique White:** Well it felt like more, when I was in lockdown in the UK, that I was actually making new bonds with people that I didn't know very well and reaching out to new people and literally just being like, 'are you okay?'

Really small gestures like that, which I feel like before Covid and before the protests, that felt like quite an absurd thing to do, just like quite literally reach out to a stranger and be like, 'are you actually okay? Do you need space to talk?'

**Elijah Maja:** I guess it's not tangible in so far as you can't, there's not like a price that you can put on that idea of care. That's what I'm thinking about - the immaterial and what that looks and feels like when it comes to care. Feel free to jump in Adam or Ibrahim.

**Ibrahim Cissé:** I would like to say to me, it's a very abstract idea like you say, its intangible in a sense because care would mean that we can acknowledge the multiple dimensions of one's life. And sometimes, especially in London, I felt that it was incompatible with sustaining and working and thriving to make a living or a career here because of the pace of things, because of the price of living and access or not to work that will then impact your ability to actually sustain.

And then most of the time that creates a tension between what you would like to dedicate, in terms of social and mental and the health dimension of yourself. So yeah, it's a bit difficult but I guess it's like what Dominique said about the lockdown - at first, to me at least, it was very stressful and difficult because let's say that I'm dipping in and out of the art world as just like someone who's starting and so the pressure of sustaining one's life here makes it very hard. But then in the second sort of moment of the lockdown, as I sought out some solutions for myself, the lockdown became a moment of being able to reach out to friends or people that we don't necessarily have enough time or spend enough time with.

**Elijah Maja:** Did you want to add anything to that Adam?

**Adam Farah:** I was just thinking through things. I think, at the moment, maybe care for me, I'm thinking about care in relation to desires, and to linking desires to expectations as well. And I'm thinking about care in terms of what can I actually expect from someone and other people and what can they actually expect from me?

When it comes to expectations of people, I'm also thinking about how to be accepting of someone where they are at that given moment in time in terms of what they can give, considering that everyone's suffering or most people are suffering from some form of burnout. Because at the moment it's just the sustained burnout that I think a lot of us have at the moment.

But then kind of going off of something that Ibrahim was saying, about being honest around what I can give considering my resources. And for me, resources are on different levels. It's my actual energy that I have, but it's also my economical resources. So yeah, at the moment I'm really burnt out because I have actually been working, continuing my job as a lecturer. So, I might not be able to give so much of myself socially and mentally, but then I've actually for the first time in a long time, I'm in a much better economical situation. So, I think what can I give from that instead? So, it's kind of a weird thing to think about.

**Elijah Maja:** But that makes sense when you speak about one expectation, but also yourself and then your economic condition and how that links to the idea of distribution, whether it's like physical or if it's money that you're distributing and thinking about where you position that. But also, knowledge sharing because I feel like we go back and forth - yourself and myself we go back and forth - on books, for example, or things that are good to watch and look at. So, I think linking onto the idea of care, it's also that time that you spend on yourself, but also nurturing those around you. And allowing them to also develop, so even that as a mechanism of like, you might not be able to give the time in that way but it just translates in other ways in so far as, 'this is why I'm going to just distribute that care or that knowledge.

So, I think that's where, again, back to the material and the immaterial - what strategy is a good place to think from. What strategies do you employ as individuals and amongst the network or support system of people, to actualise that at a time like this when we speak about yes drastic change, but it's always been a contentious time anyway. It's never been 'alright cool, now it's a calm time' (*inaudible*). There is always a heightened sense of 'shit, something could go mad.' But now it's almost like there is respite within the entirety of it. It's like, 'okay,' like you said, everyone's in this shared state of burn out. So, where do you work from there?

**Ibrahim Cissé:** Did you answer the question, or do you want to answer it?

**Elijah Maja:** I think I'll leave that question to be fair because what people have said, it has assessed what I'm speaking about from an emotional, psychological perspective, but also as people meandering through the art world there are individual realms that we work and play and live in. So, it doesn't really need, but I'm interested in mechanisms and strategies that we are employing together and individually to promote that.

So even this ICF call out, the initial focus was on the two people to be in conversation with each other. But I tried to consider just imagining new ways in which resource, knowledge, money - how could that be distributed amongst people? So why not turn it from two to four? And like I said before, if it could be eight people that would have been calm. But also, that kind of liaising with eight people to get this to happen, it's long. So, I think that four people is enough, but just even that as an idea of like imagining a beyond for something like this - it doesn't just have to be straddled to one person, one person. How do you open things out?

So that's why I'm thinking about distribution and that for me, was an element of care just because I know that not everyone's going to be working now, so how can you use this position to open things out for others? You know? We can use that as a way to think about more strategy, if anyone wants to riff off of that.

**Ibrahim Cissé:** I have a question or comment, I don't know yet, but what you said and everyone said made me think about this almost like a challenge that we have to bear on our shoulders when we are given some kind of opportunities. Because a lot of the time - and I didn't want to jump on like straight up institutional critique - a lot of institutions somehow, or even let's say, I don't know if it's the government or society as everything is intertwined anyway, but when opportunities are given they tend to tokenise us like straight away. So, you are given something you and your heart and your spirit wants and wants to share that with others, but it will come at a cost. Like you said, the more you give, the less you have obviously. And the more inclined you are to go back to find more opportunities.

So, you are constantly in this run or this chase of the next thing. And once you do that, you burn out. So I guess my point was that as we would like to, and as we do care about people who we identify with or share any type of relationship with, this also puts us in a difficult position and people in institutions don't necessarily acknowledge or realise how far that goes. Like for you today to invite us, and like you said, even if you could you would have shared that with even more people. But what does that imply? And we know that these are brilliant people on top of that, and it's too many of us, not enough room. That's how I feel.

**Elijah Maja:** And that takes shape in a lot of people thinking that they have to hoard, that there needs to be like a one in one out policy type energy where it's like only one person is allowed into the thing. So that means that you have to like really keep things insularly and really and truly it doesn't have to be like that, but it gets pushed as like... So essentially, it's okay to share, you know what I mean? It's actually fine to share. And I don't have an issue with that obviously. There's a competitive energy within this, but it's not that deep. Like it's actually not that deep. Open things out, it's more useful. I'm not trying to be the only black person in a space, it's not healthy for people who pride themselves on like, 'I'm the only one that's been let in ha ha

ha.' It's like, that's not calm, you need to really look at what you're doing. If you're the only one somewhere you've got to question, why do you think that's ok? Why is one person being championed at the downfall of an idea that exists beyond yourself? Because once you're gone, then what? It will just continue to be like a round robin in that way.

I feel like Adam or Dominique that's something that you can expand upon also, just in so far as sharing but also occupying a space and not feeling claustrophobic.

**Dominique White:** Oh, is that specifically aimed at us?

**Elijah Maja:** No, it's calm, it's not specifically aimed at anyone.

**Adam Farah:** So, what do you say to people who say it's not their responsibility, people who say, 'well, I didn't have enough resources anyway. It's not my responsibility. It should be like the white people in these institutions responsibility' or whatever. What Ibrahim was saying is also reminding me of when you get a celebrity who says something problematic and they're like, 'well, I didn't sign up to be a role model' kind of thing. You know? I feel like you can parallel that with the way that some people might move within the art, it's like, 'well I didn't create capitalism and colonialism, so it's not my job to try and counteract it.' You do hear people say that. So, I'm curious what other people think about that?

**Dominique White:** Well, like as a means of countering it if someone says that?

**Adam Farah:** Yeah.

**Dominique White:** I really don't know. I mean, I leave those people behind. If you don't want to involve me in the picture, or someone in need, it's like, I would rather create that space myself. You know, it's that whole thing where people are like, 'white people won't save you ultimately.' And like you are as disposable so yeah...

**Elijah Maja:** Yeah, I think at that time that person, if it's an individual, the individuals that do hold themselves to kind of, 'I'm not a role model' distance - that is from the space of them just considering themselves within the thing, not that there's a lineage or there's a mode of organising that needs to be taken up in order to make it clear that 'look, there's a level of education; that you can develop a bond with a multitude of people in order to address that rather than being like, 'I'm not a role model.' But you can still start thinking about more foundational work and organising amongst people to encourage that. How do you begin to, maybe not counter it, but call it into question, more so than thinking about 'I'm taking this opportunity for myself and I'm just going to keep it moving.'

Sometimes – not sometimes - you do have to think beyond yourself within that kind of mechanism. So that's what I posit to someone who's pushing that, 'ah, it's not my

responsibility.' You really have to consider the position and the role you play in upholding those principles anyway. There are people that are creating a kind of work that seems to be like, "de-colonizing" the thing, or this and that. It's easy to throw up terms like that, and then what's happening in your day to day is not actually touching on any of that conversation. It's creating work but what you're doing isn't really... the math isn't mathing in a lot of ways. It's not making sense.

But what you said is right, still people do come at it from that perspective of like, basically 'I'm not involved.' And that's quite selfish. It comes back to that idea of it being okay to share, because easily someone could have been like, 'well that money's allocated to me. I'm not going to spread that out.' It's like use your imagination, try and think beyond your own self, for this instance anyway.

**Dominique White:** But also, I think people neglect to think that it can actually be... there's not like one rule for all, if you know what I mean. As you were saying Adam about like maybe not having the resources, it doesn't have to mean that in order to share those with you have to donate a thousand pounds to whatever cause. It can also be a small gesture - mentoring younger people, creating space for them. I was even considering once I find my next stable studio, allowing young sculptors to actually take up space in my own studio and make if they need or give them a small stipend to make. So, I realize that's the position that I'm in and that I can perhaps allow... I can't maybe fund someone for a year, but if I could give them a temporary space, like that kind of thing.

**Ibrahim Cissé:** I have a question on that end. I think maybe it's repeating myself because there are let's say successful people or people who can consider having a career in the arts or creative industries, and as someone who's coming up it feels very alienating sometimes to realise the amount of - I don't even know if these are strategies - but behaviors that people display to keep their little, let's say position that is always reaffirmed by the art world who has this one figure and doesn't really want to take risks or allow other people to enter the conversation.

And the reason why I say it's alienating is because on one hand there is a society, a system, an industry that is, let's just say - what's the word now? – antagonistic. And then on the other hand, the people who are supposed to care for us are failing us. And sometimes also, because we don't have that voice, it's hard to call them out because we then have less and less perhaps chances to make it. And that's where a lot of the conflicts come to me at least. But I would like to hear if that's also the case or how do you deal with it actually?

**Adam Farah:** Well, in relation to that, I've been thinking about lately, how you could argue that the opposite is happening. That actually a few years ago, when you would call out institutions and stuff, there was a great risk of alienating you and your

career. But in our current climate it sometimes feels like... I think I said this on my Instagram, there's this weird kind of fetishistic relationship that's happening at the moment with institutions almost wanting to be called out. It's very sexy for them to be called out. And in that regard sometimes I think of some of the things that the White Pube do for instance, and I think how it's becoming popular in a weird way to be called out, but only to a certain extent. There's like a threshold of accountability, so it's the same thing - it's this performative thing which institutions have been doing for decades, there's a whole legacy of it.

**Dominique White:** Because things ultimately don't really change in the long term because it just feels like it's this constant cycle, you know, watching what's going on with Tate again, nothing's really changing, right?

**Ibrahim Cissé:** This is now another question because what you said, I also feel that way when it comes to almost like the monitoring of how far can you go and how much can you speak? And then how much we can move on to the next thing, because obviously you gave us a platform for your concerns and then on to the next thing. So, what would be then if you decide, because if you can't reconcile with institutions who come up with new strategies, who are actually getting better and better. For instance, today's conversation, and this is another sort of conflict that we have - we produce knowledge and they hear us and then they come up with better strategies almost, but we have to do it so we can also just talk about what concerns us. But if you can't reconcile with them, is there another way and what is this way?

I mean, I'm Brexiting but I'm coming back. Is there another way because not everyone has to leave? I'm leaving because I'm not originally born in the UK, so there's also this thing. But if you're born and grew up here and have all the rights and the determinacy to have a career here, stress-free somehow, what would you do? I know it's a work in progress and it's not like you have all these answers but maybe some clues.

**Elijah Maja:** Not so much on that front, but more so on the necessity of the root work, or the foundational work - even thinking about how Dominique speaks of a potential move to a new studio, how you bring people around you to encourage their burgeoning career or their engagement with the arts or creative work, really. So, it's about thinking about what things can you do away from these spaces that are very much built up upon again, policy and management, which they can maneuver through to hinder progress or hinder a kind of like, I don't know, organising a rebellion or whatever. Thinking away from that and using spaces like this, for example, obviously in examples where they're not being recorded, kind of thing, is having those spaces to reason and to speak with people and to just develop that conversation. And obviously thinking about like a book like *The Undercommons*, for example, where that's such a major part of it.

How do you, where is the space where you study and plan together? Developing more of those spaces, developing more of the things outside of the spaces that are considered the Vanguard for it or the essentials for it. Thinking away from that. So when I'm with Adam and we just walk around North, just chatting and going through stuff - that carries a lot more weight than a certain kind of round table, in which someone who you don't know is taking notes on what you're doing and will apply that and make money off of that and activate that in a way that works for them. And then bring you in on your own ideas.

So, the idea around decolonising the gallery, I think is just rubbish. It just doesn't hold true to anything. It's from a place of like hopefulness, what does that consist of? Can I see a couple notes on what de-colonising an archive or a gallery - what that looks like? So again, when you do the foundational work, I think that's more helpful, more useful, whether you're here or not. Because you can go to France and do a similar thing with emerging, young writers, young black artists, whatever. And it's still the same thing. And what happens is people then do to vote Trump thing - that it's linked together over time, but you have to pattern your own spaces, your own communities however splintered they might be, before trying to do the thing in the spaces that you already know are contentious and debilitating a lot of the time.

So that's why the idea that I was speaking about at first, when it comes to speculative strategies and imagining, because the manner in which I met everyone here is through that idea of a support system and a network where we did the thing together with Wysing, and how that materialized off the back of me not knowing people, but you come together. And Ibrahim yourself and Cedric were responsible for putting together that application, so I even want to ask you, where and how that even took shape? Also the role of that in your practice, for example, that was a mad happening and that's quite impactful in so far as bringing people together that are quite different in their disciplines and practices, but it allowed a relationship to be sustained regardless of people's locations because everyone's doing their thing wherever now. So, I'm interested in that and what kind of spurred that on? Obviously, Cedric would have something to say on it as well, but you're here as well.

**Ibrahim Cissé:** Yeah well Cedric we love you. And I will say, all the credit really goes to Cedric. I studied at and graduated from the RCA and before actually starting the course, I went to the RCA to meet with the students and ask them questions because at the time I didn't have the funds or the money to afford the course. And I was very doubtful, like, 'how am I going to do it? Is it worth it?' - so, let me go and talk to students. And Cedric straight away he came to me and talked to me and said, 'man, we need black people here. Come, come, come, come.' And throughout my time there, he was mentoring me really.

He was always there to answer my questions and showing me places and bringing me on. Because my background is not in the art world and I was in the UK. So, I was really so ignorant on many things. Applying for funding open calls, all of that literally I found out on the go. So, Cedric sent me the link, I think, at the time and we said, 'okay, let's go forward and let's bring people together and just spend time.' And during the two years I was here, I was just doing this - I was running everywhere and trying to meet people and connect and I was dumbfounded to see that there was so much and so many great people doing great stuff. But it's hard to find if you are totally an outsider, because you would just go to the main museums and galleries and you don't know that there are small things, entities that do amazing work, but it's such a different world. And I was even scared sometimes to go enter these spaces. I initially wasn't feeling like I can go there and be normal.

And so yeah, we had this appointee and then we invited people in, and it was just amazing to spend time and not have to produce and perform, but just being together. So, for the listener, we had this one year of residency and I think we went four times to Wysing Art Center in Cambridge. And every time it was between a weekend and three days, I would say, where we just ate, chatted, and did other activities like that.

And it was very poignant. From that I met you, and although the past few years were a bit difficult, so I didn't spend as much time as I wished I did with everyone but like you said earlier, it's like a lifelong process. And I know these people, I can count on... and like you said earlier, in a way we do it's naturally.

But I will just shut my mouth very quickly after that but what that created in me - but I think I already had it because the reason why I came to London and left Paris was because of this individualistic mindset that the city and just the way we live pushes onto people and I was not into that mindset. I wanted to have this sort of collective movement and have also an educational aspect to into it because I was working in a different industry and that wasn't the case. And from that moment onwards up until now I'm trying to, in every project I have, work with people I love and whose spirits are aligned with what I believe, and not even necessarily from a similar practice or what not. But very much from that place and see what can occur in sharing these moments. So, this is the way I'm am right now, but I'm curious about you as well because you all do a lot of different things and I would like to speak about everyone's practice.

**Elijah Maja:** I think that kind of collectivity and in fact what you said about not having to produce work was interesting, but also how that links to Adam - what you do for *free.yard*, for example. And how that is also a space that produces again, ecologies of care, yes. But ways in which to distribute resource, distribute knowledge

and just create a plane where it's not just about yourselves as individuals. So, it would be good to hear more about *free.yard* as a concept, as a project.

**Adam Farah:** Talking of *free.yard*, it makes me think of a question that came up in my head earlier, when you were saying something and I was thinking about, where does it come from when someone has a desire to have a more collective, compassionate, empathetic kind of practice?

And for me, that comes from my context of growing up on estates in London. And I think that is a big driving force as to my understanding of what care and community is. And that's something that led to me creating the *free.yard* project, if you want to call it that. *free.yard*, even just the actual saying, it invokes a kind of welcoming, like 'I've got a *free.yard*.' It already invokes a kind of collective coming together on different levels.

It was just something that I created in reaction to me and my friends having these disparate conversations, similar to this one, about our grievances with the art world and these things that weren't fair. And thinking about what responsibility we have as individuals, not just the institutions. So, it was first activated of course, through that South London Gallery residency, which was the first kind of more distinct occurrence of me thinking about sharing the resources because obviously the residency gave me quite a bit of resources. I mean, more than I'd ever got before.

And I was just thinking that it doesn't make sense for me to suddenly do a kind of solo presentation or something like was expected, because that's not how I'd been thinking creatively since then. All of my best creative moments come from collective experiences together. I'm going off on tangents here, but I always say that the most radical creative experiences I've ever had in my life were in secondary school. And so that's another kind of desiring thing that drives *free.yard* as well, because the art world and all of that stuff can sometimes put a downer and quell those forms of creativity.

So, I sometimes think about how that can be reactivated as well. Even if it isn't with my original school friends. I haven't exactly explained *free.yard* well but that takes another podcast or conversation. Blue Skies can pay me for that one.

**Elijah Maja:** Yeah, you can pattern that one yourself, that's all you. I think that was just like a healthy mode in which things get shared, yes the idea of *free.yard*, but also the idea that even those couple of days we spent together in Cambridge that was in a house (*inaudible*) and then most of the time was we spent like cooking, watching stuff, logs by the fire, walking around. And that's where the work got done. That was the work I feel, the rest of it was, 'are you going to make something or not?' 'No, I'm not going to make anything.'

But obviously saying that, Dom you expanded on some initial thoughts you had there because the project you did recently that... I guess like not off the back but in conjunction down the line with what we did in Cambridge, you produced work there... do you want to talk a little bit about that if you feel?

**Dominique White:** I mean, yeah, because it definitely does feel related. That project with Wysing, with Taylor, obviously it didn't really sit in the normal institutional like criteria or rules. It was more free flowing.

**Elijah Maja:** In what way?

**Dominique White:** As in it felt more like a collaboration between myself and Taylor as opposed to you know... you don't really get a brief, but it feels really rigid usually. Whereas that Taylor was walking a lot and I was walking with Taylor and hearing their reflections on I guess just being at Wysing and being black in that super odd space. It became more of a reflection of that as opposed to an abstract work (*inaudible*). It was very much like of the moment that kind of reaction happened.

Yeah, it was a special project for that reason. Taylor was very much like, 'I trust you. And I trust what you do.' That's how it manifested. I would love to do more things like that. Also, an institution like that, grants so much more freedom than the (*inaudible*) institution.

**Ibrahim Cissé:** Can you re-contextualise for me, because I am not aware of the project that you're talking about.

**Dominique White:** So back in, I think it was October, Taylor curated a group show of three artists and also like themselves and PSS and also just some publications to run alongside it. And the show was called *Boundary and Gesture*. And it was very much to do with the immediate area of Wysing and its history, and also the positioning of our bodies in that space at that moment. That's pretty much the show.

**Elijah Maja:** I want to talk about the materials you employed, going onto the conversation about ritual and process, and obviously the intentionality of the materials that go into your work, and obviously the references to water, to the nautical as a space. Could you talk more about the materials and how even the utilisation of those materials speaks to ritual and process, just the repetition, and how that activated via... the material carries its own weight, but also material in the hands of the author or the creative or the creator then activating another realm or giving it a new space in which to inhabit. So, I kind of want to talk a bit about that or for you to expand on that when it comes to your work and ideas of like wreckage.

**Dominique White:** Yeah. I mean, it's funny because I actually see so much care in the materials and the way that the materials, well, I guess the works exist. Because they

hold their own autonomy because they are so fragile and they kind of react to the space as they wish, or they destroy themselves as they wish - which is always a great conversation to have. But it means anyone that comes into contact, whether that's behind the themes of the show or as a viewer, there's always that element of care that you have to do - or not actually, not care for the materials or the work.

I see myself as a mediator between the materials and the research that I do, because there's only so much that I can really control the materials. I don't know how obvious it is, but they really do their own thing, which I find is therapeutic and quite magical at the same time doing the work that I do. And I found when I didn't have access to those materials during lockdown it actually became really hard. It was kind of weird, not in the way that I'm a workaholic but in the way that actually praying those forms or like spending time doing that is like a different form of care for me. Which is why it's something that I want to open up to others. I'm hesitant to...

**Elijah Maja:** What's the hesitation that you feel to do that?

**Dominique White:** Because I feel like it has to be a very special person.

**Elijah Maja:** A very specific person?

**Dominique White:** Yeah, you know when I did a brief call out for an assistant, people were just like, 'Oh yeah, I'm an assistant for this person and this person.' And I'm not really looking for that. I'm looking for someone that actually will have the same element of care and the same - I don't even know what the word is that I'm looking for - but it has to be a very intimate, almost ritual between that person and what we're doing. I don't want someone who's just like, 'Oh, I can replicate what you do.' I want there to be that connection as well.

**Elijah Maja:** To be almost like a reverence for the material?

**Dominique White:** Yeah.

**Elijah Maja:** Okay. That's interesting because it takes the work from just being about the work to the intentions of what goes into the making, so you're dedicating the time to finding someone who's basically spiritually in tune with what you're doing essentially.

**Dominique White:** Yeah. And understand, because there's so many elements that can go wrong in the making of the work, like at every step. So, I don't want someone that can do it quickly or just mimic. I want there to be like an understanding of, 'the rope is going to snap and it doesn't mean that I've destroyed the work. It means actually like, yeah...' It's very weird, it's very hard to explain.

**Elijah Maja:** But that's the relationship between the material and immaterial again, when it comes to care. It is the things that you physically could do to care for something, but also an intimacy with the material to understand that it's going to take the shape that you've intended to take without any... because it's not just about replication because anyone just doing the ritual doesn't give it the power. It's like an intention needs to go into those processes in order to activate the realms that you're trying to talk to or the energy you're trying to impart. It's beyond one plus one is two and that's that, it's about 'where are we going from here?'

**Adam Farah:** It's not like a backpacker going to take some ayahuasca or something on a gap year. That's not how it works.

**Dominique White:** I want to be working with someone that kind of... not like - this isn't the right phrasing - not like understands the vision but understanding the steps that I take in order to make these forms manifest or like the collaboration between myself and the materials. And I know it's going to be super hard to find this person, but this is what I have in mind. I don't want someone that can just help me produce faster, it's not what I'm looking for.

**Elijah Maja:** There's a lot in what you just said. Even the manner in which the materials or the work does decay over time - there is an active refusal there for it to be owned and placed through the means in which over time stuff will come apart as a part of the process. So, I guess it's refusing ownership from parties that may have unseen amounts of wealth to be able to purchase and place their things and be like 'that's the thing I own now.' I feel like there's certain modes of your work that encourage that like, 'no, you can't hold this. It's not to be held. It's like water. It's going to move in whatever shape or form. And it can't be gripped.' That's one thing I find quite interesting about the decaying process when it comes to your work and how that speaks to ritual. Especially if you think about the delicacy of the conversation you're having around the Atlantic and the enslaved. And the fact that at that point your work is irreparable.

Like a lot of what's going on in conversations around reparations and that, they're just unrealistic because of the manner in which they all dismantle the entire capitalist structure. So, linking that back to the work decaying, it's like 'the things already broken, so where do you want to go from here with that?' But I don't know if I'm just placing stuff on your work.

**Dominique White:** No, no, you're not. You are understanding it. I'm really into this idea that if someone "owned the work," like they will never fully own it and for me there's so much power in that. 'You will never fully own this ever.' Because I refuse to also, as you said, repair it or add anything to it or stop the process. And there has to be an understanding here, or even when I go do shows, and I'm like, 'actually, you

know what, that work doesn't even exist anymore. That work destroyed itself a long time ago.'

It's this constant flux. It's interesting because myself and Ima actually had a really long chat about this back in January - this idea of navigating the art world and contracts of sale and contracts of ownership. We both had a similar understanding of this idea of 'you can never fully own this object.' Is it owned if it disappears or destroys itself or falls off the wall or whatever? That's it, that's the end, goodbye.

**Elijah Maja:** But there's a lot of agency in that. There's a lot of agency within that idea of - it kind of owns itself, so you can't put yourself on top of it and say, 'this is mine now.' So, there's something about that speaks to agency that I'm into basically.

**Dominique White:** It's kind of funny as well. I just have these visions of some rich white guy trying to own it and it just like smashes in his house.

**Elijah Maja:** Yeah, there's no refund so it's yours now, that's your work, do with it what you want.

**Dominique White:** Yeah if you want to care for it, properly care for it - that's on you. And if it destroys itself and you're not giving a shit, then that's also on you, that's your decision that you made.

**Elijah Maja:** That's really quite an insightful look into your practice and I guess linking us to the conversation of ritual and process. I want to talk to Adam about ideas around momentations - I want to know more about that because that speaks to a ritual energy to me. But obviously you'd be able to give me more to work with on that. Between that and endz theory are two ideas of yours that I want to know more, I guess within reason. You don't want to give up all the things but I guess go as far as you want.

**Adam Farah:** Maybe a momentation parallels with some of what Dom was saying, because it's a word I came up with inspired by Mariah Carey's theorisations around the moment, which I won't really go into. But for me a momentation is kind of a pronounced ephemeral moment in a way, that sits somewhere between the completely ephemeral as the completely permanent artwork.

And I think it's a way to kind of liberate myself from those pressures, of what it means to offer an artwork. And saying it's not always really concrete what an artwork is for me, and so I might see something which is a moment for me, which I might record and then I've recorded it into this short video clip, which isn't like a completely authored artist moving image work, but it's a clip of a moment which I want to play around with how I use it. So, for me, that's a momentation. And that's

been a liberating thing for me as an actual artist or when I do artisty things. Which has been an exciting part of my practice.

A momentation exists in lots of different realms and it does link to endz theory, and there's different levels to endz theory. That's the social level, and then there's the kind of aesthetic level as well, which I interchange with the phrase endz poetics as well. It was just me thinking about these kinds of artistic moments that occur within endz anyway, and wanting to place a certain amount of attention on them as really important things that if you dwell on them for a bit more, could open up your vision.

I'm talking about it in a very abstract way, but then you have endz theory on the social and communal level, which I guess you can talk about more concretely, which leads to what I was saying about the aesthetic for instance. There's very specific sociality that happens on my estate, for instance, which very much talks about care, it talks about the kind of anti-capitalist notion of care, where you have people trading in different things which aren't money. You have someone saying that, 'if you babysit my child, I can give you all of these meals' or something. People often come to me asking me to write them letters on my estate or to print things out for them because they're like, 'yeah, you're the one with the degree, the art degree.' So, I could write some letters and stuff and things like that. So, you might call it bartering, but it normally extends to more complicated things like that.

So, for me, certain things that you see on the estate are like a different form of theory because a theory for me is kind of like dwelling on different ways of living and experiencing each other if that makes sense. It's also a way to place an importance on it that certain other kinds of institutional structures don't place an importance on. And it's not so much that I wanted to do that to be like, 'yeah, we're here.' I wanted to do that because at the end of the day, we still engage with those. Institutions. To give context, I'm a lecturer and the fact is that there are students there who come from endz who aren't being catered for. So, it's important to expand these levels of knowledge that are seen as being worthy of teaching in those places, so that they can then expand on what they're working on.

**Elijah Maja:** Again that knowledge distribution is a thing that's quite active in that idea of monetary distribution - how do you share things that you have with people who aren't really considering that to be a thing that was "worthwhile" in those spaces? Sometimes you reach those spaces and think, 'what? Why are you considering that?' But it's healthy to just open out your palette in that way. And Ibrahim, as someone who's curatorially inclined, I'm interested in how you relate to those ideas - yes ritual but also that idea of that theory as dwelling on a different way of living is quite interesting. I quite like that as a notion, I don't know if you want to add anything.

**Ibrahim Cissé:** I'd like to just on from what Adam said even earlier. There are two parts to my answer - First, before I forget, I find what you said to be brilliant because definitely, higher education has costs. And the cost means a monitored access and this constant battle that even if you manage to step in, part of your identity you have to leave at the door. And for you to be there and allow these kids to be themselves and be understood and keep dwelling on what they know and transform that into to something it's what we need really and truly. Because growing up I always heard from friends, and up until now - and I don't position myself in any camp - but people saying, 'fuck school,' and neglecting everything. Because of course, there is no space for them.

In France, we had this sort of phenomenon for a couple of years going on, let's say the equivalent of the endz in France. The government was building libraries in the middle of these places. Most of the time you will find like a football pitch, which has built on cement so if you fall, you basically break yourself and not much trees, but then libraries. But obviously the content of the library will be pushing a certain agenda and the people of the estates would burn, these libraries, and countless libraries burned like that. And it's very interesting to see because there is a complete denial of a certain knowledge because the knowledge doesn't serve us or the people living in this environment. So, I think it's very crucial that we enter either more educational spaces or, like Dom was saying earlier and everyone here, that we create these spaces outside, no matter how.

And you both touched on something that will lead me to ask a question to Elijah, which is the, I wouldn't say need, but the intuition of making a work that is free and not so heavy in a sense, be it because it's momentarily limited or even physically porous. And I've been struggling the past few months, even the past few years, because initially I was writing and now my writing... yeah, I struggle a bit because of that weight that comes with words and writing on top of that and literature. And then it goes back to what I said earlier with people burning libraries because I questioned myself a lot and because every day I come to a conclusion that cancels my previous thoughts or whatnot. And that's a question for you Elijah, because I know that you also have a musical practice and music is this not so cognitive and intuition-based ways of expression - and I'd like to hear how you approach your music. Because you do also a lot of things - you used to work for South London Gallery so I want to question you about that type of work you were doing there. But then perhaps just start with the music aspect of what you are doing, how you approach it in what you said earlier, with the ritualistic aspect and all of that.

**Elijah Maja:** I guess thinking about oneself or us as human beings or individuals, as inevitably fractured or fractal beings that operate out of different spaces and obviously identity gets quite tied as a term to define oneself. But beyond identity -

well not beyond identity as such - but we've got to think about things beyond being like, 'that's about identity.' But just not allowing one thing to essentially define what I'm interested in doing, because of the fractures in my experiences, the people that I've encountered, where I've lived, where I've been about even - those kinds of things directly and indirectly influenced the type of work I'm interested in making.

So, from growing up in very specific Nigerian churches, to also living in Pimlico for a large period of my life, to going to school far off ends because I wanted to not be on ends. So, all these pockets then influence what I can see myself doing. So, it's not a thing of like, I'm just going to make a tune, if I want to make a tune that day, that's just what I'm going to do. And there's, 'oh what kind of music do you make' - there's not really a direct hard and fast line that I'm trying to follow because of the notions of like... The talk I was watching recently with Manthia Diawara, where he talks about David Hammons' practice, and just dumb it down essentially, don't try and overdo it and over complicate it because if you're over complicating the thing you want to be loved.

And I think that's quite an interesting notion, when you try to make things this kind of way with this amount of artifice or contrived energy on it, it's like, 'who are you really doing this for?' And a lot of the stuff that I'm interested in doing first of all is for me, but I know with the ideas of like existing as a rhizomorphic creature - you're not just one thing anyway. So, someone else is going to catch on to what I'm doing and interpret it in their own way, and I can't tell them, 'no that's wrong.' It's like, 'alright, cool. You do your thing with that explanation of the work and you don't need me to over-explain or overstate.' So, linking back to process and ritual when it comes to my stuff, it's just really how I'm feeling on the day and there's probably a lot more unconscious elements that influence / impact the direction I go in. But it's not a hard and fast set of rules that I go in with.

I grew up in music, on music, with drums and playing drum kits and stuff like. And I grew up around singers and stuff, so that's had this impact on where I position myself. It's a slightly a Leo energy - 'I can do that, I can do that, I can do that, I can do that.' It's like, 'you can, but you need to do them all.' But I'm still obviously reconciling a lot of that one thing at a time energy anyways. Like you can do it, but you need to careful yourself because if you're splitting yourself off too much sometimes, you don't really get any of it done.

So, this past year I've spent more time focused on music and the output of that, because that's where my spirit's telling me that I need to focus on more. But it's difficult to really place what I'm interested in; I'm interested in the sparse and how things live beyond yourself. And the realms that influence that, because this is one realm that we're occupying, but the dream is also another realm that we're occupying but that's unconsciously. But we do need to take that into account when

we're thinking about yes care, but how that material becomes immaterial, how you manifest things. But I feel like I'm not really answering the question but that's basically musically that's the direction I'm interested in going in, the sparse, the ephemeral. It's like, 'what were you trying to do there? How are we feeling at the time?' Also, the fact that stuff is blurry is a nice space to occupy, an opaque space where you're like, 'I don't know fully what's going on, but that's also fine' - it's not that deep where you need to know everything start to finish. There's not a press release that I can give you that speaks to all the things I'm inspired by, because it will range from Brandy to some other shit, who knows. So, that's as much as I can answer that question. But I am interested in the opaque quite a lot, as it relates to a human being. Almost like, 'what are you? What are we seeing here?' Because I feel that there's a pressure to define yourself as this thing or that thing, but I'm over that basically.

**Ibrahim Cissé:** It just got me thinking that everyone present here - Dom is in the South of France, wears different hats but in a very organic way. And when I entered the art world, I thought that I would find something very open and people would be freed in that way, but sometimes to enter the space you are required to choose, and you don't want to be reduced.

**Elijah Maja:** But that speaks to what an ecology is thought isn't it? If you think about an ecology as a coming together, different things, in a similar way to a "culture." If you think about a Petri dish and what culture is in relation to a Petri dish, it's different elements that have come together. So that influences yes you as a creative person, but also you as a human. You're coming together with lot of different ideas, principles, energy, so it's just not worth boxing yourself in.

I'm not sure if Adam or Dom are interested in picking up on that as a conversation, and what you have to say when it comes to that.

**Adam Farah:** Um Dom?

**Dominique White:** I don't really know how to answer that or what I think.

**Adam Farah:** What was the question again?

**Elijah Maja:** It went from splintering yourself between different interests and ideas to that being okay, because you're not just one thing anyway. And that blurriness being a necessity or helpful or useful in developing. Because Adam, your stuff ranges from collective projects to even archiving. We were speaking the other day about the archiving that goes within your work and giving a new lease of energy to something through the preservation of it.

**Adam Farah:** I remember now, my reaction was that it takes a certain level of confidence as well. I think that's something that is worth mentioning. It takes time to build up confidence in order to be able to practice in a certain way, and that's something that I like to acknowledge and say to my students as well, because you can put so much pressure on yourself from the start. Also, it's important to acknowledge that confidence is built up through a lot of struggle and strife and mental kind of anguish and questioning, which I wouldn't be able to get through if it wasn't for the care of other people in my life. And even more specifically those working relationships which blur the boundary between that and care, and even desire some sometimes and friendship. Those are really amazing and radical to me. I think of you lot and Cedric and Taylor as angels to be honest. Because you came into my life for this purpose, which has been so helpful, but there's a mutual kind of thing there that really does challenge those kinds of pressures of work and stuff and professionalism and all of that. So, it's exciting.

I don't know if that answers the question but again it's that level of confidence when it comes to realising that you can do all these different things and they each have a particular importance of their own. They don't have to come together in a really succinct press release, because that's not always reality. And you have to interrogate what your desires are, in contrast to the desires that other things are placing on you, the desires of the institutions, what they're placing on you when they ask you to write in a particular way about your work, for instance. You know, it takes practice.

**Elijah Maja:** I'm not sure if there's any more that people want to add or to share on that level.

**Dominique White:** I feel like I'm good.

**Elijah Maja:** Great.

**Adam Farah:** There's so much more we could talk about obviously, but we already do talk about them when it's not being recorded, like you mentioned. And I think that's really important as well. Because I'm having this conversation for you lot, I'm not having it for those sly little curators who are going to be listening to it.

**Elijah Maja:** Thank you everybody. I wish there was... no no there is space for more of this to occur. I think everyone's got that intention from what it sounds like. How we produce yes ecologies but also space for people to just be, and not feel any pressure to be a certain way. So, I think the support systems are healthy. I think we're good on that front.

**Adam Farah:** I wanted to ask when was the last time you felt cared for?

**Elijah Maja:** Frequently, to be honest, I'm not going to lie. Like it's such a healthy relationship I have with yourself, with Ibrahim. We chat maybe every day on text and that. But just those things are useful. Like you said, the checking in when you wouldn't really check in a lot of the time, it's kind of like, that's healthy when there isn't any extra thing attached to it. Or any ulterior... So, it's just that weeding out of intention from people. I think that's what this time has done. I see that it's not about somebody trying to get something out of you. It's more about trying to clock how you're doing, because it's delicate because I'm feeling equally as burned out, equally as tired, equally as confined.

So, I think it's a lot more frequent now, as a result of this, so it's kind of mad that it has taken (*inaudible*) ... That's just me personally, I'm not sure how everyone else feels, when was the last time you were cared for?

**Ibrahim Cissé:** I would say the same, daily weirdly enough. There's also now - at least from my position, but this is just because I have issues - less tendency to confront and accept that sometimes things don't make sense to me, but it's fine. I would question things forever and just be burned out on my own and I don't do it. At least I'm aware that I was doing it so much. So, it also allows for other people to care for me in ways that I don't understand.

**Elijah Maja:** How about you, Dom?

**Dominique White:** (*inaudible*) I feel like there's elements of care all the time. I feel, like I said earlier, new - I don't know what to call it - new manifestations of care throughout lockdown from almost like strangers and how I formed new bonds with people through practicing care was really, that kind of really carried me through. And even now, with a relapse potentially happening and borders closing, it's important that these new connections keep happening. It's nice broadening my immediate community.

**Adam Farah:** I've been thinking about what I do to care for myself and what that actually means. As a Capricorn there's a line between caring for myself and actually just being really harsh to myself, you know? So, I've been thinking about building a healthier relationship to that. And obviously thinking about how caring for myself and being able to care for others and being able to receive care from others all goes hand in hand.

**Elijah Maja:** Thank you everybody.

Disclaimer: Due to disruptions in the audio recording of the conversation there may be slight discrepancies in this transcription.

---

**Ibrahim Cissé** is a creative whose work revolves mainly around questions of social welfare. Cissé's thinking is informed by his own living experience in Europe and his relation to the African Diaspora. It helps him to articulate and negotiate the intersectional narratives through filmmaking and creative writing. Cissé's focus is geared towards education and publishing. These tools or practices are central to understanding Cissé's intentions and methodologies. In 2020, Cissé works on the development of *Lost in Time Publishing* a platform to experiment on the potential for publishing and archiving processes to address the effects of colonisation in contemporary colonial contexts.

**Elijah Maja** is an artist and researcher from London. Working across methods of practice that actively engage audio-visual provocations into notions of ritual, process and their lineage as intangible spaces for activation.

**Adam Farah** is an artist and composer born-n-raised in London and is a Capricorn Sun, Cancer Rising, Leo Moon. They also practise under and within the name *free.yard* – an ongoing situational and unstable project set up to engage with and merge curatorial, research, artistic and equitable communal practices; with a focus on the ever-expansive and nuanced creative endeavours and potentials that emerge from *endz*. *free.yard* casts a side-eye onto the oppressive and supremacist structures upheld within the complacent and performative liberal bubbles of the artworld/s, and in the long term desires to create collaborative moments for artists to connect, manifest and exhale under such weight.

**Dominique White** weaves together the theories of Black Subjectivity, Afro-pessimism and Hydrarchy with the nautical myths of Black Diaspora into a term she defines as the *Shipwreck(ed)*; a reflexive verb and state of being. Her sculptures demonstrate how Black life could extend beyond its own subjective limits and act as beacons or vessels of an ignored civilisation defined as the *Stateless*; a realm in which the past, present and future have converged into a *Black Future*. Recent and upcoming exhibitions include *Ubuntu*, a *Lucid Dream* at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2021); the *Mediterranea 19 Young Artists Biennale* in San Marino (2021); *Possédé·e·s* at Montpellier Contemporain, Montpellier (2020); *Fugitive of the State(less)* at VEDA Firenze (2019); *Abandon(ed) Vessel* at KevinSpace, Vienna (2019); and *Boundary + Gesture* at Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge (2019). White was awarded the Roger Pailhas Prize (FR) in 2019 in conjunction with her solo presentation with VEDA Firenze and has received awards from *artangel* (UK) and the *Henry Moore Foundation* (UK) in 2020. White was in residency at *Sagrada Mercancía* (CL) and at *Triangle France* (FR) in 2020.

The **Blue Skies Conversation Series** is presented by **International Curators Forum** and made possible with support from **Art Fund**.