

## Is the future of public art online? Transcript

Jes Fernier 0:01

Hello everyone and it's a delight to be here and to welcome you all to today's event. As Lili says I'm an independent curator and writer based in Essex in the Southeast of England, and I'm really pleased to welcome you to our fourth and final *Assembly* event in which we pose the question: *Is the Future of Public Art Online?* By way of introduction, I am a middle-aged white woman with short grey hair, glasses and an unruly pile of books behind me. I've been working with Public Art Network and UP Projects on this programme of talks over the last six months. And for those who don't know about it, the Public Art Network is a relatively new entity developed by a group of curators working across the UK and our aim is to extend opportunities for conversation, collaboration, professional development and knowledge exchange amongst curators, artists and producers. And this is our first public programme. *Assembly* is a series of four free talks that explore issues in good practice in the expanded field of public art. And the programme invites you, the public art community, to consider the role public art can play in raising awareness and affecting change on issues around diversity, community cohesion and the digital realm as a public space. And across these four events we've put together, I think a really fantastic group of curators and artists and practitioners who have explored the following questions: Who has agency? What is collaboration? What is the role of curators and socially engaged practice? And the topic for today's event: *Is the Future of Public Art Online?* The speakers at each event have been invited to contribute a case study which will be published on our website and shared with all attendees via email so do look out for those in your inbox in the weeks ahead. We're really delighted with the reception of these talks, particularly the international reach and the incredibly useful and pertinent range of issues that every one of our speakers has raised as well as members of the audience and if you haven't been able to attend previous talks I really recommend you search them out on UP Projects' YouTube page, and I'll be bringing together all the issues that have been raised in the programme in a piece of writing over the coming months. So, on to today's discussion around digital spaces and public art which I should say is also informing UP Projects' current investigation into the online realm as a site for public art through it's *This Is Public Space* programme. We've spent the last year interacting with the world through our screens. Is this the point at which public art becomes something that is primarily experienced through the digital world rather than the physical world? Has the non-hierarchical expansive world of the internet overtaken the increasingly privatised and co-opted world of the public realm? Can public art commissioning build on this expanded form of public space? We've invited Siddharth Khajuria, senior producer at the

Barbican centre in London, to chair today's event, I'm delighted to welcome you Sidd and help us consider these really meaty issues. Before I hand over, I should add that the event will address specific topics that may not be familiar to everyone. And we've added definitions of blockchain, DAO, NFT, and SDGs on UP Projects' event page and I think Lili's put a link in the chat box. And we've also asked the speakers to spell out what these terms mean in the presentation. And as Lili said at the beginning, if you have any feedback on this event there will be an opportunity for you to voice this in the questionnaire available at the end. Sidd, over to you.

**Siddharth Khajuria 4:12**

Thanks, Jes, thanks everyone for joining from wherever you're joining from as well. Jes, I love to hear you talking about the genesis of the programme, I feel like those four questions you've enlightened on, they're almost too resonant for comfort in the context of some of the conversations I've found myself in, in the last year and I imagine that's true for a lot of the people here. Anyway, I'm Siddharth Khajuria, I'm an Indian man with shortish black hair, wearing a patterned red and brown shirt and my pronouns are he/him. I'm also a cultural programmer and producer and currently manage a public programme of socially focused exhibitions, events and research projects at the Barbican which is as Jes said in London. I'm not going to talk for too long because I'm so excited and I have just had a glimpse of some of the things that they're thinking about, to be joined by Soledad Gutiérrez and Penny Rafferty, but I'm just going to try and frame conversation and pick up on a couple of threads that Jes outlined. I've been chatting to the team at UP Projects over the last couple of weeks about this event in particular to get a sense of the kind of conversation they and Jes were hoping to convene and through that dialogue something that struck me was the extent to which they really think about what the public in public art means. And chatting to them it feels like they think about it in two ways. There's one, which is the public as a type of space, a shared open space. But, secondly also, as people. As groups of communities who participate in the creation and experience of cultural work. And in this event, we're going to focus on the latter those two and really get into the question of whether it's possible and if it is, how we talk about public art on the internet. Who are some of these communities, how are they constituted? And at its heart I think the conversation today is a space to explore what alternative structures and framings for artistic practice creative collaboration and public engagement the digital space allows. And I think taking a step back I imagine, sort of, there are many of us here aren't solely concerned with the construction of work or the co-creation of work for the digital space. What kind of alternative organisational structures might the digital space allow us to conceive of in the "real world"? And as public art commissioners I know the likes of UP Projects are always and rightly asked about the benefit and the impact of their work. How a specific project will be useful to either a specific public realm or specific communities. With this event, we're trying to explore how some of these ideas around community and social benefit play out online. And how social

and political agendas have advanced or in some cases compromised when embracing any number of online technologies. Right, I'm going to wrap up there. But just before I hand over to Penny and Soledad, I just wanted to give you a sense of how we're going to structure the event today. We're going to start with a couple of short talks, 10 minutes from Penny and then Penny's going to hand straight over to Soledad and then 10 minutes from Soledad. After that, the three of us are going to have a conversation. And I'll make sure we've got at least 10 maybe 15 minutes at the end for questions. You'll notice the Q&A. If you ask questions in there, please keep doing so through the conversation. I'll flag it again when we start talking but I'll make sure we've got time at the end to go through those. I dare try and sort anyone, well, I'll struggle to distil people as interesting as this one already one into a sentence or two, but I'll hand over to Penny Rafferty, ask her to introduce herself and talk to us for 10 minutes or so about her work.

### **Penny Rafferty 8:15**

Thank you, Sidd and thank you all for attending. I'm Penny Rafferty. I'm a white woman with freckles, green eyes, auburn hair and I'm sitting in front of a rather abstract painting. And I'm here today to talk about *Black Swan* which I'm just one part of. The other members and conspirators are Calum Bowden, Laura Lotti and in the past, we've had Maurin Dietrich, Cathrin Mayer, *Paul Seidler* and Max Hampshire. And so, I'm just going to begin by speaking a little bit about what is *Black Swan*. *Black Swan* started in 2017 and actually came out of many different people asking how we can make things better in Britain. And this was particularly about the issues of gentrification and how do we look after our art scene from the bottom-up? And over these various different conversations and panels and discussions, both private and public, it seemed that one key issue was always kind of rooted in these problems. And that was something that Kate Brown termed as "grooming". Grooming actually is when in this context when larger galleries, blue chip galleries, institutions and so forth, tend to often cherry pick off the top of smaller institutions and project spaces and artist-led projects and groups and collectives that have had little to no support from the wider schema of things but have allowed most artists writers, curators to really cut their teeth in the making and also the progressions of their careers. And, so, we tried to think about how to level the playing field in a way or at least how to create systems that could envisage a sort of payback schema. And this was where *Black Swan* came into things. So, *Black Swan* is a new decentralised approach to traditional art worlds templates for making. It really favours artist led peer-to-peer funding and community organising, to place resources really into the hands of the users rather than the gatekeepers of the arts. *Black Swan* was originally designed as an experiment to rethink the mechanisms that produce the current and next generation of creative practitioners. It was actually originally a paper prototype essay that then so many people around me actually believed could work that had then taken on a physical form. It is proposed as a collaboration institutional

formation to allow for the redefinition of what art can be on a local level but also aims to become a trans local mutable source for thinking about resources differently across the art world. We're often told there's no other way in culture. The resources are limited and that opportunities should be taken at all cost. Well, *Black Swan* refuses this notion, and we were inspired to deny this by a single observation of a *Black Swan* in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century which literally on first sight invalidated the fact that only white swans exist. In this framework we dare to think differently about alternatives and by deploying advanced technologies and organisational forms to enable a more inter-dependent art world that is held together by radical friendships over and above profits. So, the original idea of *Black Swan* was a kind of decentralised critical autonomous critical organisation, which means users are in charge of their assets and resources acquired from silent stakeholders. I'll come onto the silent stakeholders in a second. But these silent stakeholders proffer resources to the decentralised autonomous organisation - DAO - in order for them to be able to disseminate to the group of users. The DAO is located online. However, the dissemination and art objects can be produced on and offline. Our group of users are local to Berlin cultural workers right now and they often have quite radical practices that broker new space for the arts and new spaces for thinking about art. And typically, they're also from potentially marginalised voices in the art realm because of course *Black Swan* is also situated in and essentially by its system, whether that be classes, race, or gender based. And so, these are the people that we particularly wanted to work with at the beginning or at least the genesis of working with this DAO. The accesses can vary from monetary ones to also fundamental resources, so we also wanted to look at the environmental cost to which can affect an art community. Cathrin Mayer was one of the people who was heavily involved at the beginning this project, working in a large institution and spoke how much resources was thrown out at the end of each show. So, we got speaking with these institutions and they said, "well actually, if there was a way where we didn't have to throw them out and we could actually offer them to the community and they would be picked up, used in different projects then this was a much better solution." And so there lots of different elements to this funding model that not purely for currency, also unused space, studio residences et cetera et cetera. And, so, this point you may be wondering who these angelic stakeholders are. Well, they are in a sense blue chip galleries, institutions, collections and anyone who thinks it's important to support the emerging scene rather than letting it starve in hope of one day being able to gorge itself if it reaches the banquet at all. In a sense how we've created it, these stakeholders pledge support to *Black Swan* and they can decide freely how much they wish to support in each pledge which goes over a year. And each resource is given a kind of credit numeration which we then offer the silent stakeholder as certificate of support which is also a visible asset of their political and cultural opinions towards the emerging local scene. The silent stakeholders return on this support is actually a long-term investment. If the emerging arts scene has support

it will inevitably produce better, more radical artists and thinkers, which will cement Berlin's position in the contemporary art world and in turn, the silent stakeholders will turn profitable numbers on its cultural capture. The way we typically have been working is working through working groups. Which then run for a number of weeks or shorter, long or short hackathon styles. And we create reports after this and then from those reports we create technological tools. One such one is 'Signet' which is a quadratic voting application that actually works in a lunar cycle because inside *Black Swan* we actually need to use decision creating mechanisms. So, our DAO using quadratic voting for decision making. Quadratic voting means that each user has multiple votes that can allocate to various positions or abstain from their voting - until the next round without omitting these votes. This offers collective decisions to be made without the tyranny of the majority and also allows people to get to know each other's projects. So, in essence you have a hundred votes, and you can put them on different projects. And we've also decided to use the lunar cycles because in a way we wanted to create alternative methods of distributing funding that are more outside of the schematic and more into the physical realm. I just want to finish up by quickly saying that what's really been important for us, in relation to using decentralised autonomous organisations and these technologies and hopefully adding to this conversation today, is that it's super important for art to be part of these technological conversations. The art world provides one of the strongest societal and social test beds for the digital native generation. Artists also bring value to technological development of these spaces. Technology in a sense should be about aiding our socio evolution rather than the human being, being modelled or moulded to technology. I also really believe that these types of engagement with more democratic forms of decision making and resource distribution will open up both artistic and technological development on funding, prioritisation, decision making and really deep down using decentralised autonomous organisations in the art world, will demonstrate the importance of the users role in shaping their own technological tools for themselves as a counterbalance to systems designed from the centre that may not have the best interests at heart. I hope that makes sense. 10 minutes is very quick to talk about these things.

### **Siddharth Khajuria 19:04**

Thanks Penny, it did and also, we've got time to unpack so many of the things that you've talked about there. But I'm going to very swiftly hand over to Soledad before we get into a conversation.

### **Soledad Gutiérrez 19:18**

Hello everyone, I'm Soledad Gutiérrez and I'm a white woman. With a high kind of bob, dark hair, over 40, with the pronouns she/her and I'm based in Madrid. So even though I'm going to talk to you about a digital space called *st\_age*. It's a digital platform we have created throughout the last year, in response to the

COVID-19 pandemic, very much rooted and working from the place of Madrid. So basically, and to start with the project, if that's okay, and how we have been working. It responds and it's really interesting, thank you Penny and thank you Sid for the introduction, thank you Jes and the whole team because I think one of the many of the questions that Penny has raised are also part of the conversations coming from a different, totally different perspective and a totally different ground. At this stage the project I'm presenting, and I'll share the screen with you so we're going to go to the page for a second. And then maybe I'll return to my face. It's an online production platform driven by the desire for change, and it was initiated by TBA21. TBA21 is a private foundation that was created by Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza 20 years ago. A foundation that has been working with artists and with the aim of commissioning and giving artists the possibility for those ideas, those projects that were not possible to fall within the art market, facilitating and are making dreams true. When the pandemic started, suddenly we found ourselves that we had like a few projects' performances, conversations, commissions, committed to the artist and there was no space any more for those pieces to be seen or those performances to happen. And we felt the urgency of supporting the cultural life and supporting projects by artists, so we decided to create this platform and to recruit, when we started this conversation and this links quite with Penny, we didn't know what to do or how to do it. We just wanted to support people. There were like wild conversations like let's throw out money to the cultural sector, whatever. But then we decided okay, let's work on commissioning, on commissioning that that's what TBA21 has been doing for the last 20 years, but let's change the way of operating. Let's provide funding to the artist to produce projects that are not going to be part of a collection, they are just going to be belong to the artist. And let's go a step further - let's create this space for presenting the projects that they can speak to a community; they can create a community itself and they help us to relate or sense realities throughout the globe. We were in lockdown; we were isolated, and we were learning that we were able to communicate and that we were able to create space to include and to connect with different people. So, we've reached out to a network of independent organisations like José Roca, FLORA Columbia; *Pooja Sood in New Delhi, artist in residency*; *Ute Meta Bauer in the University of Singapore, NTU Contemporary Art Centre*. And we asked them, why don't we build a network of institutions and through this network we connect with artists that can bring them their realities and that can help us to sense what are the urgencies of our time by producing a piece that doesn't have to be finished, produce a material that could be the beginning of a project, could be the closing edition of a project. Could be a conference like a lecture performance that represents a mid-term. And how we can bring that artistic production into a wider picture. We were very much interested in the public potential of the technology of the internet of being here together, of being coming from different places in the world, coming from different and getting together in this digital space. So, this idea that Sidd has mentioned before, the idea of the public space as

space but how we can connect with those public. So, we decided that we didn't want just to broadcast, we wanted to have a side relationship with the artist. And in the beginning with our communities, because that's what we had. So, therefore, we invited them to produce a series of materials that are like different podcasts, for example, then we invited them to start a research cluster and start the research process that has a comparing production with that piece with a research cluster also we invited, we had a conversation between the producer curator and the artist and also something that we thought was really important a call to action. A call to action that basically invites all the people that visit this space, the digital space, that sees the work, listens to the work or reads the work because there are like many different ways of connecting with the pieces and their different formats. They go from the video game to virtual reality presentation that runs on Twitch, and it's connected to the platform to a digital publication to a video. Like to connect with a wider topic and with the communities that support that. So, for example, there is a very specific case, *Patricia Dominguez* who was working from Chile and she was dealing with an organisation that fights for the rights to the water of the people in certain areas of Chile because it's one of the countries that has already privatised the water. Then she asked to support that organisation to give water to the people around which in COVID became a great disaster because if you have to wash your hands and you're going to have access to the water then privatisation is not possible. So, we tried to create that engagement with the communities. We sustained those relationships and we carried on the conversations with them in different formats and ways. But, also, we wanted to invite people to visit this space to engage with these projects, with these situations and with these contrasts that the artists were in. One of the things that we acknowledge is that we sometimes as an institution, as a private foundation we have certain kinds of privileges so we wanted to inform and to influence on the political agendas, that's a huge ambition because we acknowledge that something we all wanted to do and sometimes we don't know how so one of the things we tried to do is to connect. And I'm going to share the screen because sometimes that's more complicated in terms of -This is for example one of the last pieces we have had presented is a collaboration with Ashkal Alwan and it's a piece that deals with the, it's a very touching and moving story of Abou Farid - he is a conservator of one of the main museums in Syria. And he preserves the mosaics, so this piece brings us to the daily survival rituals of many people living under conflict and what we have then is connected with the SDGs. For those of you who don't know, the SDGs are the Sustainable Development Goals that are created by the UN for the 2030 agenda and what they want to do is to create a lead for politicians, policy makers, for people that are connected with the structures of policy creation to create like frameworks for the different projects so they can understand how these connect to that. What we were trying to create here is a communication tool. It's a bridge between policy making and art. Between changing in the level, the structural level and art and that's something that we have been really dealing with

throughout the stage. How we can create bridges with different communities in different levels in terms of, from the policy makers to the grass roots activists in different countries, from the users of the platform through the people that it helps and how we can, throughout that, sustain community that stays in the long run and grows with us and through the lenses of that or through the creative project of art we can transform and challenge over the world. And that's something that we started in urgency, a response to COVID. And now that we want to sustain in time because we see there is much potential to produce and to explore it still. And I think my 10 minutes are up, I very much hope we can carry on the conversation. Thank you very much.

### **Siddharth Khajuria 29:19**

Thank you, Soledad. Yes, we can continue the conversation too. That's what I'll try and do now. Thank you. I'm going to dive in with a handful of questions. But I'm just going to remind everyone listening, watching, reading, that please, please, if you do have a question, type it into the Q&A. Also, if someone has asked a question, and I can see this happens already, if someone's asked a question that you're keen on - do vote for it because it will give me a sense of where the interest lies in the room. I'll dive in to start with. This is a question to both of you but to you, first, Penny. There's a thread running through both these presentations about community, but I sent it's conceived of differently by each of you. So, Penny, how do you conceive of community in the context of the work that you've been doing with *Black Swan*?

### **Penny Rafferty 30:30**

I mean, in a sense, there's many communities that are actually active around *Black Swan*. The first one being in 2017. Like there's actually a quite fragmented community that really requires this research to be done or a proposition to come into like the forefront of the discussion. So, I would say in a sense *Black Swan* actually emerged out of a community need. Rather than - which is a bit different to I think most ways of understanding technology which is typically like from inspiration of what mechanism could be created. And then you decide if there's a need or not. So, I would say that first of all there was this fragmentation of the community. Then, I'm very lucky that I actually also have a very big trans local community that sits at the crossroads of technology and art which actually includes a few nodes in the UK context. Which is Further Field Gallery, particularly with Ruth Catlow, Serpentine's research and development lab and the Goeth Institute in London and from those nodes we then created two different think tanks which also ran at a global community which were completely offline, private spaces for 48 hours, where we unpacked lot of these ideas about decentralised technology in the arts. And we were very lucky that those institutions actually allowed us to do that research without having to have public presentations. And that's been going on for two years. And then all of that amalgamated research then actually went into creating like five different decentralised autonomous organisations that sit



around the world now. So, we have one in Hong Kong, one in Johannesburg, one in Berlin and one in Minsk and these are also part of these communities. So, by me explaining very quickly the history of this project, *Black Swan*, you can sort of maybe understand where I think, and I think this is actually traditional to most activist formations is that you have connections. And that's really where the community becomes precise. And where you grow. Because, also, what you're finding out from like one community, it's something that you can either add on or check out to your own and vice versa. I think about a little bit just this beautiful line from Tarquin's book *The Cybernetic Hypothesis* and it says: "we say that autonomy is everyone's to claim and that the struggle for autonomy must intensify" and I think that's what community is.

**Siddharth Khajuria 34:15**

Thank you. Soledad how do you reflect on the same question?

**Soledad Gutiérrez 34:20**

I think one of the things that are completely different because we're not a grassroots organisation and we don't come from this activist background but there's very much the desire of supporting, first of all, a cultural community. A cultural community that comes from independent organisations based in different places of the world that really engage with our own communities. Then an artistic community that we want really to carry on working and then the fact of it's creating a space of potentiality for producing or carrying on producing works that reflect their own communities. So, in that sense it's really a model where we establish relationships in different levels and those relationships on different levels sustain a group of people that relate to each other. Establish a conversation between each other. But, at the same time, establish a conversation with places and people they work with, live with, produce with. So that was the idea. Like kind of to create a structure that's porous that can affect because in that sense we learn from those people, from those communities, from those projects but also in a way we infiltrate the possibility or the potential of doing things through that practice. And, at the same time, there is a return because those - in a series, from time to time we discuss what we are doing, what we are creating, so there's a kind of come-back and then we're aiming to create another community that's also wider. That we don't know yet and we're in the process of knowing and process of establishing this both-ways relationships that it's grounded on the interest for the project we produce that follows the stages, that follows the conversations, the questions so we're challenging also that sort of people you know you have worked with, that have an interest and try to create a conversation with the public in the sense of visitors, audience, internet and exploring the potential of the digital tools that we were very much - I mean, I was thinking like, I should -- there's much potential on that. We're still exploring.

**Siddharth Khajuria 37:00**

Thanks, Soledad. Hearing both of you talk there's a couple of threads coming through around relationships, in particular. And I'm just looking at the questions coming in and I want to ask a couple now because I think they relate to the conversation we're having so I'm going to save these until the end. Soledad, while you were talking someone's asked how stages, artist commissioning process identifies communities to work with. Is it artists interests, community need for something else? Can you say a little bit about how that's working?

**Soledad Gutiérrez 37:35**

I mean that's one of the big questions. Is like how we identify in the moment that there are so many things clashing and so many issues coming up and so many urgencies, how we've identified those people and how we've reach out it them. That's why we decided to go first to our community of independent organisations to those people we knew we had worked with, and we had collaborated with, and we asked them, what do you think is more relevant now? Where are the artists that you think that are - or what are the projects that you think need to have the civility at this stage? And then out of that we started conversations with many different artists, projects, people. Some of them were in the moment; others were not. And that's kind of -- it was really organic, but it started from that community of institutions or that network of people we had been working with throughout the years and of course very much based on the interest and also that we were really trying to raise awareness of many situations that were not so visible and that we felt like COVID as a topic was overlapping and not let us space to go. So that's what we had as a criteria. And as I said it was really organic and very much based on that trust that builds a community of that people that can highlight or can suggest like different people. So, it was a from mouth to mouth.

**Siddharth Khajuria 39:09**

Do you think there are any gaps in the way you think about or identify the partners, either institutional or individual? Like, after the period of time you've been working on it, reflecting on it, do you think there are any gaps in the way you're thinking about who you work with?

**Soledad Gutiérrez 39:26**

I mean for sure! That's one of the biggest challenges. Also, when you think about an institution, how you programme and how you choose, how you create an exhibition, there's always - you try to cover as much as possible but it's like capacity, human from human capacity, to budget, to unknown! Because you cannot know everything and sometimes it happens that you open up a conversation and you are you say, "how didn't I know that?" And that's one of the things that I think, of course and that's something we're trying to solve but it's - I think it's one of those things that happens in all projects to everyone.

**Siddharth Khajuria 40:10**

Okay, thank you. Penny, I think this is the question winning most popular question and ears pricked when you used the phrase “radical friendship”. Think, I’d definitely love to and lots of people would love to hear a little more about what you meant by that? How you define the idea of radical friendship?

**Penny Rafferty 40:33**

The term radical friendship originates from this collection of people that I spoke about earlier. And it's a term that we hold quite dearly and closely to our collaboration. And, really, it's sort of fundamentally what it says to the tin. But it's very much about having allies and like caring about the pacts that you make with them. About getting the right people in the room. About using potentially, let's call it intersectional feminist strategies of the economics of work and labour. Which like might mean checking in on a person, on an emotional level, while you are in the meeting or at the start of the meeting. Of like having physical and intuitive bodily experiences not only typing onto your laptop, we often utilise role playing techniquing in order to have a wide diverse possibility of answers and strategies in our working groups which of course also have to be performed through a certain vulnerability. And I think when you bring in these human physicians and don't see that person as a colleague, but you see them as a friend, I think that these kinds of enunciations really, potentially have a possibility to like recode the ways in which we collectivify and the ways in which we work together and collaborate. Because I think also what's come very close to me personally, is also we often work very consistently to like the neoliberal structures that we're trying to dismantle. And so, in a sense we know these structures don't work for us, but we still recreate them. And I think it might sound a little bit boring but unless we also revolutionise our working practice with each other and our strategies of participation it feels like we're in this strange snow globe effect of practicing. So, I would say that yeh, in order to have a different perspective we also need to think differently. And I think through the lens of radical friends it has certainly given me a methodology to practice with others.

**Siddharth Khajuria 43:41**

Thank you for that answer. How intertwined or co-dependent do you think -- having that approach and philosophy to friendship is with the kind of organisational structure from that decentralised approach that *Black Swan* has? Do they go hand-in-hand? Or do you think radical friendship can exist in more traditional organisational spaces as well?

**Penny Rafferty 44:10**

Hmm. I mean in a sense, I would really, really hope it can. And sit in this more traditional spectrum. I think the real difficulty or something that I've personally experienced is that, quite a lot of institutions, companies, let's say, will frequently

culturally wash these strategies. But at the at the end of the day there is this hierarchy that has moulded certain positions inside those institutions. And when it comes down to the real horizontality of power and decision making, it's very infrequently that we would go to a space of radical friendship because at the end of the day I think what I have heard in my community is that a lot of traditional models are very interested to keep this on a kind of fundamental speculative place base of organising differently. But when it actually fundamentally comes down to real decisions that will really affect then they're not so keen on taking those tactics. But I also just want to say that I think that changing structures is extremely slow. I don't believe there's ever a thing of an overnight revolution. I do believe in the necropolitical idea that people do have to pass a way in order for ideas to crumble. And so, I think that in my life I will probably not see huge dramatic revolutionary changes. But I do know that unless I start in my lifespan then we will never see them.

### **Siddharth Khajuria 46:26**

Thank you. I feel like we could spend the rest of this session talking about radical friendship and organisational structure but one thing that you said that really - I mean all of it struck me but that idea about what kind of mode do we go to in a crisis or challenge or when a difficult decision need making and what we lean into. And in organisations who would have to go to as well and quite often you find certain characteristics in certain places and they're less likely in others. And I feel like there's a totally adjacent about power radical friendship and the different amounts of power that people possess. Sorry, I've monologued there for, and I shouldn't do that. I wanted to move on and I was going to ask a question about - I mean both of you, and Soledad to give you some warning I'm going to come to you first - both of your projects and ways of kind of working and being are so clearly underpinned by clear social and political agendas and Penny you spoke really clearly about kind of *Black Swan* emerging from the context you found yourself in, in Berlin and Soledad you were talking about the moment of the pandemic and that loss of space. I wanted to ask generally how integral the technologies you work with are to the way you advance your agendas but actually I wanted to fold that in with a question from someone. Which was: I'm interested in hearing about whether and how the digital has addressed access and issues around inclusion. And what have been the challenges and the way through them? So, Soledad, can I come to you first? I think almost specifically with that question, and then that can open up into sort of broader way in which you reason the agendas that you are trying to.

### **Soledad Gutiérrez 48:18**

That's a very interesting question. And that's something we are really trying to cope with. Because I mean the different levels of inclusion. We have been working - and we have challenging within the project that we're trying to address. And we discussed a lot internally. I mean first of all, because we are addressing a project

that aims to sense different realities but it's a very global and international project, it's based in an organisation, with one in Spain and another one in Vienna. But our working language is English. So, for example that's the first challenge in inclusion. How come we are producing most of the materials in English and how we address that in relation to many of the subjects. Sometimes, and this is something that's interesting and in terms of one of the things you mentioned at the very beginning that its impact how you measure how you reach out to a wider audience. At the same time, you respect and include the people you work with. That's our daily conversation and in the beginning, we thought we're going to, I was really heavily defending the idea of we're going to be inclusive with all the languages, every single language going to be addressed. And nowadays, and this is my personal but it's something we feel. We have failed on that. Because there is an issue of translation, there's an issue of many things but we're still in the process of addressing that correctly. Because we're not doing it. And I expect because, to me, that's something we have to challenge. First of all, that. And then of course it's accessibility towards a certain content. We're trying to work in inclusive language, that's something also that is one of the things that because we want it to be open. We really want to work on that possibility of internet, digital space, being a public space. That we have to leave sometimes our zones of comfort so we're trying to work on a more accessible language. But again, we have our fights internally because it's how would we present ourselves? How would we present our works in a way that's read in the other context? And also, now we're working on how we integrate things that real and opposite from this conversation. How we integrate sign language, how we integrate other ways of, other languages. It comes to the beginning. We're not able to integrate diversity in the language yet and that's something we really have to access.

**Siddharth Khajuria 51:17**

Can I ask a very quick question? I think quiet often when organisations present something publicly the fights have happened and talked about, we have our fights internally, how do you resolve them?

**Soledad Gutiérrez 51:26**

I mean, it's funny because I have written in capital letters this idea of "radical friendship" because now we're working on the next year programme and that's what we're trying to do. Also, you have to think that this is, as I said at the beginning, this is a very organic process because it was born out of need. And we really wanted to do something, and we wanted to support, and we wanted to create something new that responded to the moment. So, we were producing this side, we were producing the programme at the same time, we were thinking about it and still I think we're in a learning moment of what we are doing, and we are relating to that. So, we are in an error/trial mode. And I want to address that, and we always

want to work on this scope of vulnerability. Assuming that we're not perfect and that we want to challenge that.

### **Siddharth Khajuria 52:27**

Thanks Soledad. And Penny I'm give you two questions in one and then go to try and get through some of the questions that we haven't already answered from the Q&A. I think the first is, it's so clear hearing you talk about *Black Swan* that you really are quite intertwined with some emergent technologies, quadratic voting. How possible would *Black Swan* be without those? Or could *Black Swan* only exist in the context of those technologies? And then, secondly, do you think some of the approaches that you found yourself taking in terms of organisational structure, how might they be reflected back onto organisations that don't exist on the internet? I leave you those two questions to sort of take in whichever direction you want.

### **Penny Rafferty 53:19**

Sure. So first of all, I just maybe want to say a little bit about how I understand technology. You know, this pen is also technology to me. This book is also technology to me in a sense. And really, I think that what is important about seeing *Black Swan* through the lens of technology is that a lot of theory and ideas that have come up around decentralisation, around autonomy, around capacity or transparency. These are models that do have code attached to them. But they can also be models that don't. Like for example, at the moment, *Black Swan* actually works off the blockchain and the reason why we decided to do it like that is because huge dynamic changes to the blockchain are being made presently and we understood that. For web.3 there will be change on our code and won't actually be sufficient to be able to probably be active next year. So, we actually held off even putting anything on the blockchain. But that doesn't mean that you can't utilise that idea of how these things work and how they map out. Quadratic voting, similarly, thing. You can actually place it onto the blockchain, or you can also in a sense use quadratic voting strategies which utilise more clear dynamics for democracy than a one-vote, one-choice original voting format but you can do that on a excel sheet, you could do that on a piece of paper if you really wanted to. And I think that this is sort of what's important, is about really thinking about technology as a new sort of theory in a way. I mean the digital world has completely provided us with new ways of living and speaking. And like this license that digitality has given us, also this kind of absence of self-ownership and license to self-sculpt and that has had a huge effect on our freedom of being. One thing that I sort of pulled out of your question was how inclusive is that? But in a way this scaled up inclusivity is also maybe a little bit of a problem of the left wing. That I think we cannot aim to be perfect. I think that in a way I think also particularly when we're talking about new modes of organisations through technologies like DAO's, like blockchain and quadratic voting we can like certainly scare people off

or turn them off, for sure. So that's definitely like not part of the inclusivity. But I think it's also about demystifying these technologies. Also, as I spoke before it's really about the next generation. I actually really love this like - it was a questionnaire that came out in 2019 from Tinder, the dating app where they found out that 75% of gen-z users, which are digital natives disclosed they came out online before any physical realm and I think this is the sort of the inclusivity that we're working towards. And where I'm specifically coming from is technology is an intersectional space. In a way similar to I guess Legacy Russel who wrote the Glitch Feminist Manifesto about like really understanding how bodies that do not have space inside the traditional framing of the art world are actually able to create new communities and of course unfortunately, we will miss some people. I feel like I've maybe forgotten the second...

### **Siddharth Khajuria 57:58**

No, all of these topics open up into 17 different streams that we can't follow them all. So, we have about 5 or 6 minutes left. And I'm going to be a little bit unfair and ask if just with these questions we try and be quite brief and this is going to be hard with this one, but I think it's important to ask this one. Could each of you give us an example of the actual art that's produced through the structures of your organisations and one thought I've got is, if you've got a link to it, or a sort of way someone can find out more maybe putting that go into the chat as well might be quite helpful if people want to know more. Penny, I can still see you on my screen so I'm going to ask you first then go to Soledad.

### **Penny Rafferty 58:46**

Sure. So, for us the actual art that has been created through the voting system mechanism, distributing resources. So far there was biotechnology of algae making machine that created alternatives for ecological use. And, also, there was a role play radio play which is actually conducted by the whole group of artists participated in it and they disseminated the resource money. And the other thing is quite an interesting project by Billy Blusel who wanted to create a multisig which is like basically a percentage-driven allocation for collective working. So, he's a performer and works with a group of performers and he wanted to create a legacy contract that formatted different percentages for long term allocation of funds based on inspiration to actual performance. And we did that for a project that he ran from Folia which was actually a FT project. Just couple of months ago.

### **Siddharth Khajuria 1:00:13**

Thank you and sorry that was my mum phoning my mobile which was not on silent.

### **Penny Rafferty 1:00:20**

[Laughter] Mums should never be silent.

**Siddharth Khajuria 1:00:24**

This is true - Soledad, could you give us an example of a project too?

**Soledad Gutiérrez 1:00:28**

Yes, I mean yes, I'm going to share website because it's everything that's available. So, you can check the links and as I mentioned before it has been mainly different forms and mix that feed into digital realm easy so that means video, sound pieces, we have also produced like virtual reality so we could screen it through with Twitch and trying to use that technology on the focus of art. But what I would like to take advantage of at this moment is to get one of the questions that was in the chat about the language and how relevant languages were when you were talking about different communities that were not -- they are not western or European or in the Anglo-Saxon context. I totally agree. In the case of the artworks, even though I have said it's a challenge, I mean it's a challenge for some of the materials we produce for the building of the text, the artworks are always respected. And if the artist is not able to host it or hold a conversation in English, then it happens in Spanish, it happens in the language that it's required in order to give that space of possibility, that for sure. Because that would be totally unfair and would produce a lot and reduce a lot of the possibilities. But still what I said before we have a long way to go.

**Siddharth Khajuria 1:01:59**

Thank you, Soledad. We've got one minute left before I need to hand over to Jes so I'm going to ask a couple of questions for Penny. There's one from Judith Fieldhouse which I don't think we have time for but if you are up for answering it in the chat that would be really kind but a question for you, I'm just going to go by the votes, this is last question. Has *Black Swan* noticed or become aware of how your working methods are affecting and changing how larger institutions make decisions and operate internally?

**Penny Rafferty 1:02:37**

Thank you for the question. Yeh, definitely. I can say there is an interest from these larger institutions. We will actually do a piece that's in situ in Kunst-Werke Institution in September in Berlin and also the Van Arbu in the Netherlands who've both actually asked for us to create role played kind of cosmologies of how these can be implemented. And the other thing is that we're often asked into advice on how DAO structures or how quadratic voting or how do you still enable professionalisation but also have horizontal power structures active in your institution. So, I would say there has been a really positive interest in these institutions that are particularly asking for advice and space to be able to talk through these components which is really positive.



**Siddharth Khajuria 1:03:52**

Thank you. I feel like I might join the list of people coming to ask you for advice. Okay, I just want to thank both of you on behalf of everyone here. And also thank everyone who's been listening and asking the questions you have been asking, it has made it a joy to chair because the Q&A's been so rich. I'm really mindful, I'll say just one last thing and then handover to Jes. This panel was called *Is the future of public art online?* and when Lili and Elizabeth first mailed me, I was like: "I don't think we can answer that question", and just to say I think we've thought of it as a mountain that's not possible to get to the top of, but we can try a few different routes around it. And I feel listening to both of you that we've sort of done that and hopefully shone a little bit of light on the question. Whilst also acknowledging that it's a provocation as much as it is a question that can ever be answered with a yes or a no. So, with that I'm going to handover to Jes.

**Jes Fernie 1:05:01**

Thanks so much, Sidd and Soledad and Penny. That was fantastic and incredibly useful and a really fascinating discussion which I'm sure will develop rapidly over the coming year, not just years. There was so much in there - I was particularly interested in the idea of the digital realm as a site of activism and the new possibilities that its presence to create a democratic process, come on the revolution! That's what I say. Thanks so much to our audience you've been absolutely brilliant, I loved your questions. And please do share with us any further feedback that you may have. You'll see in the Slido bar a questionnaire which would be really great to get your feedback before you leave. And we will be uploading a recording of today's event on the UP Projects' YouTube channel which will include captions and a BSL interpreter. Please do sign up for our mailing list for more information about UP Projects' programme and future plans for the Public Art Network. And I have to thank The Art Fund and the Arts Council for funding this series of events and, also, the very brilliant Theresa Bergne from Public Art Network as well as Emma Underhill and Elisabeth Del Prete from UP Projects for putting together such a fantastic programme. It's been so good working with you all. And lastly, I want to thank Sam Tucker our BSL sign interpreter who has done an amazing job and we understand how hard it is and Katy Ryder who provided closed captions. Chloe Hodge who has done a great job of writing up the case studies. [inaudible background noise] I think that's an ambulance in Berlin maybe. And also, Lili Hager, Jack Newbury, and Tamsin Arrowsmith-Brown who all work at UP Projects and have worked really hard behind the scenes to make this whole programme happen. Thanks so much. Over and out!