

# Conversation with SEPAKE ANGIAMA, Iniva

I is for

Institute

What's in a name? This is the question underlying our investigation into ICA: how it came to be, what it means now, and how we might imagine it in the future.

In a field so often defined by precarity, this project is grounded in a spirit of collegiality, a looking outward that aims to facilitate self-reflection. As such, we have engaged colleagues primarily from small- and mid-scale contemporary arts organizations to discuss their institutional histories and how they understand the stakes of their work. The *I is for Institute* website acts as a repository for these ongoing conversations, as well as archival material relating to ICA's history. We thank our many colleagues for their generosity, enthusiasm, and frankness. Their thinking has in turn energized our own.

— Alex Klein,  
Dorothy & Stephen R. Weber  
(CHE'60) Curator, Institute  
of Contemporary Art,  
University of Pennsylvania

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Sepake Angiama is the Artistic Director of the Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) in London.

With Alex Klein and Gee Wesley

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ALEX KLEIN

Welcome to the *I is for Institute* podcast. My name is Alex Klein, the Dorothy and Stephen R. Weber (CHE'60) Curator at ICA, the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. In this series, you will hear from our colleagues working in contemporary arts organizations around the world about their individual perspectives on the work they are doing to shape and imagine different institutional models. At this critical moment when museums and their infrastructures are being re-evaluated, these dialogues highlight pressing concerns for artists, art workers, arts institutions, and their publics. We invite you to follow these ongoing conversations and to access the archive at our website [iisforinstitute.icaphila.org](http://iisforinstitute.icaphila.org).

In this episode, I am joined by Gee Wesley, former ICA Spiegel-Wilks Curatorial Fellow and *I is for Institute* collaborator for a conversation

with Sepake Angiama, Artistic Director of Iniva, the Institute of International Visual Arts in London. Angiama's background as a curator and educator, most recently as the Head of Education for documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel and as the initiator of *Under the Mango Tree—Sites of Learning* in Stuttgart, has informed her approach to the role that arts institutions can play in reorienting how knowledge is produced and where learning occurs.

#### SEPAKE ANGIAMA

My name is Sepake Angiama and I'm the Artistic Director of Iniva, which stands for the Institute for International Visual Arts. And I've been working there since January 2020.

#### AK

Thank you for sitting down with us Sepake. It's such a pleasure to be able to continue this dialogue with you. Can you introduce us to Iniva's mission and give us some background on the organization?

#### SA

Iniva was established over twenty-seven years ago in 1994. I actually joined just after it turned twenty-five years old. We describe it as an evolving radical visual arts organization with an artistic program that reflects on the social and political impact of globalization. We also host the Stuart Hall Library, which we see as a kind of critical and creative hub for our work. We collaborate with artists, curators, researchers, and cultural producers to challenge conventional notions and questions around diversity and difference.

And as a kind of anecdote, Iniva was actually initially called the "Institute for New International Visual Arts." It was really established through an ongoing insistence from artists and the British Arts Council to ask the question of how could we form a new model for an institution but also taking into consideration the kind of New Internationalism of Britain. And so the

institution was founded on research by an artist who was exiled from South Africa, Gavin Jantjes. He created something that we call the "Red Report" at Iniva (it's a red booklet). He brought together many artists and parties who were interested in making this institution, but also to really kind of tackle some of the fundamental questions of what kind of institution could support not only Black art, but also Black artists.

## GEE WESLEY

Maybe along the same lines, you reflected on this kind of founding mission of the organization, and I'm curious, either looking a generation later in twenty-five years, or in response to your directorship now, how has this guiding mission shifted or evolved during your tenure or prior?

## SA

Yes, so I think the important thing to say is that Iniva (I'm just trying to think about it in terms of its history, how many directors it's had, etc.) with each director, there is a kind of impulse, a change. And also in relation to the social-political conditions of what it means to run an institution in particular decades and also in relation to which government is in power. So Gilaine Towadros was the Founding Director, and Gilaine was there for ten years. And I think it was really important for Gilaine to establish Iniva initially as an agency that actually worked always in partnership with other galleries and museums and also within public space. They also did a number of international projects as well. And then part of her work was establishing a gallery space for Iniva. So that was towards the end of her directorship.

And then over a course of different directors, you know, some people coming in for shorter periods, and then some for a little bit longer, but no one really has really made the impact that Gilaine had made in establishing that institution. When Melanie Keen came on board in 2015, I think it was quite clear that the institution needed to go in another direction again, and that was probably mostly because of economic factors. So the Arts Council funding that Iniva had was not the kind of substantial amount that they had previously. So it meant that certain decisions needed to be made in some ways to safeguard the institution. So the importance of that, and retaining the Stuart Hall Library as a kind of critical and creative hub, while maybe returning to this idea of an agency. So they moved from the space where they had a gallery space and moved into 16 John Islip Street, which is where we are now.

It is much more centrally located. We're next to Tate Britain. We're within a university complex, although we're street facing, and we're within the research centers of that university complex. So the Chelsea campus of the University of the Arts, London, has, I think, two or three other research institutes in the same building where Iniva is located. The Stuart Hall Library has a kind of bespoke architecture, the design space for those books, but also the archive of the institution. The offices are located on what you guys actually would call the second floor but we would call the first floor.

We're also in the same building as the Curatorial MA program. So we feel that we're in a good environment where we're placed so that it's accessible not only to students, but it's street facing. So it's quite incredible just to recognize the archives that are situated around us as well. And that's really important for also just understanding how researchers are able to look into the Black Arts Movement and histories of Black artists in Britain. For example, at Tate Britain, interestingly enough, you know, you'll find the archives of artists, but you'll also find in the University in their archives a special collection that was really started up through ephemeral material. So when there were Black art exhibitions that were starting to emerge in different parts of London, the librarian decided that she was going to start to collate this material until they felt they had a substantial amount of material that they could actually create a special collection. And actually, Melanie Keen, who's the previous director, was involved quite early on in a project of archiving and indexing that archive. And that was an archive of African, Asian and Caribbean artists showing in Britain. It's quite interesting because that archive predates something that we call the "People's Directory" at Iniva. And so any person that's ever worked with us, or, you know, curated an exhibition or an artist who has been in a show, or public program or a talk, they are kind of added to the People's Directory. To us now, maybe these seem like quite strange practices, because actually, what happens is that Iniva's archive becomes just as important as what it's actually producing now. I always find it quite startling when institutions don't actually have an archive, or they haven't really taken care of the archive of the institution. I mean, when I worked at Hayward Gallery, I remember that there was this wonderful woman who was actually you know, the archivist for the Hayward Gallery. She was in the basement—and I really mean in the basement, almost in a bunker—with the archive of the institution. And you know, it was almost like a secret to find her.

So I just think what's quite interesting about Iniva for me is that from its inception, there were ideas around recognizing how important the archive is not necessarily for the present moment, but for the future. So for future researchers, artists, curators, and people who were to follow. And not only that it also works quite early on in terms of the kind of internet age, in 1994, it

also started a digital commissioning program called X-Space. And publishing, I would say those were elements that I find quite unique to Iniva in terms of its insistence in not only supporting artists, but also articulating a kind of format, or articulating a language that could support the development of those artists' practices.

AK

I love that you place emphasis on the archives, because at ICA as a non-collecting institution, we often talk about our archive as our collection. And I think the importance of the archive can't be overstated for all the reasons that you outlined. But I wanted to pick up on the stated mission of Iniva to reflect on the social and political impact of globalization and this term, "New Internationalism." I'm really keen to hear how you think this idea of the global might have shifted in our post-Brexit moment, and indeed, in a different moment in the globalized art world, now that we're several decades into the real institutionalization and proliferation of biennials, seemingly everywhere. Do you think this has actually helped to destabilize the hegemonic Western perspective in the UK? Or in these efforts to work globally, do we at times risk reproducing colonial models?

SA

Yeah. So maybe, first, let's start off with New Internationalism. Because I think it's important to say that it's a contested term. And it was a contested term from the very beginning of Iniva. There was a conference in 1994, an inaugural kind of conference for Iniva that took place at Tate. The conference was titled "Towards a New Internationalism," so there was also this sense that it wasn't necessarily there yet. It's this sense of moving towards an idea

of New Internationalism. And I think that that conference had a number of papers that were kind of responses to the idea of an institution that was really grounding itself in an idea of New Internationalism. So it's really grounding itself in an idea of an internationalism as being something that's embodied through a kind of a heritage of global movement, recognizing that the kind of imperial expansion, slavery, colonialism, etc. had created global dynamics, that had actually shifted the global dynamics. Therefore, there was this kind of relationship of a kind of Global North and Global South. But not only that actually, I think there's a sense of the political and social relationship between Europe and its others.

I think what's interesting today, when we think of the word "international," you might think of someone moving, being able to operate and move between locales seamlessly, right? That you have in your diary, potentially, Gwangju Biennial, Istanbul Biennial, I'm going to pop and go and see an exhibition at Tate Modern, oh, there's a show opening up at MoMA I must go and see, there's something happening at LA MOCA... This sort of sense of being able to kind of traverse the world and be attuned to what's happening on a kind of global front. Now, I think the issues that we immediately see there, and you see this actually much more in terms of the museum. And specifically with museums that are, let's say, within the kind of capital of certain countries as needing to have a certain kind of narrative that dictates some things as being contemporary, some things to be modern, some things to be considered to be either primitive or this notion of like a folk arts. Like having these kinds of different kinds of categorizations for practices that still renders certain kinds of subjectivities or continues to re-instill certain kinds of subjectivities, that pretty much is still the same narrative of Europe and its others. I guess this idea of New Internationalism was a kind of provocation to disturb these notions of Europe being the kind of center of power even in relation to culture, and to consider that the kind of dynamism of an international that may not even necessarily have a direct relation to Europe so that there could be conversations that are going on that are not in London, and not in Berlin, or not in Paris. You know, they're not in those Euro-centers. But they might be taking place elsewhere that are just as important and have certain pertinence for the sort of forward thinking of contemporary practice. If contemporary is the word that we want to kind of stick to for meaning practice of our time.

AK

Maybe we can dive into that question of globalization in a post-Brexit Britain. How does it affect that question of the international or globalized since

it seems like a core part of the mission?

SA

Yeah. I mean, I think it's interesting that you define this time as a post-Brexit time, because I think there are so many different other posts, right? Like we're not actually in "posts" but continuities. Because, you know the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of the murder of George Floyd...I don't know if they're necessarily "post moments," I think we're much more about continuities. But I think what was quite interesting in this moment, was recognizing whether globalization was necessarily able to describe the set of conditions that we were undergoing. Or are there notions of maybe the universal or the planetary that could better describe, not only a kind of set of human relations, but also a set of human and nonhuman relations? Right? So I think that where the shift is coming in our thinking—and recognizing what's happening at the moment, at least in the UK, and I know for sure in the US—is that there's a lot of thinking within museums around the decolonial. So all of a sudden, needing to first of all understand well, what are your colonial relationships to these other places in the world? Because how do you embark on a process of decolonized thinking unless you understand what is it that has been colonized?

So that's I think one aspect that has this kind of geographic relation. I think the other aspect of what I was talking about in terms of the planetary I was thinking actually about a work that the Otolith Group made recently for the Sharjah Architecture Triennial that sort of takes up the writings of Kathryn Yusoff. Within it, I think, what I find really interesting is Kathryn uses really a kind of Black poethics to talk about forms of extraction, not only land extraction, but also human extraction. That severing of knowledge from land, and the importance of a connection to place or to land that allows for certain kinds of knowledges to be sustained, and then to recognize that the severing of people from their land creates this disruption. So I guess what I was also just pointing to, is this thinking through the diaspora. Like what does it mean to also be then a diaspora of a place, and not only once removed, but twice removed such as in the case of the Caribbean? I mean, you can think of other examples of that as well. So the question of, I think globalization is, as you said, in the wake of post-Brexit, well, I still feel if I'm honest, we haven't really come to terms with what it means to have severed ourselves from the European Union. But also, what I find so interesting is I think the day after the votes came in for Britain wanting to isolate itself from the European Union it then wanted to create a meeting with the Commonwealth (and this meeting hadn't been called for you know, 50 years or something). So to me, it's like, I can't imagine someone who is sleeping or slumped at a desk all of a sudden

needing to, like wake up, and say, "Oh! There's gonna be a meeting in London." So this kind of recognition, I think of how Britain for me operates and moves between these different ideologies of geographies that it attaches, and also unattaches itself from. And also just the recognition of what hold that has on the mind through pedagogy and education. So the fact that Britain is saying, "We don't need to be part of the European Union" also brings into question, you know, what does it mean to be European now anyway? What is that Europeaness? I think there are a set of values and concerns, and also a set of politics really, which carries itself through culture, that carries itself through language, and that carries itself through policy.

I'm interested to see if the cultural institutions still find ways to kind of, you know, connect themselves to Europe, through program and through projects, as opposed to being dominated by this political idea of Brexit. That severing being also one that maybe renders us as a kind of island or a set of islands. One of the things I've been thinking about is the archipelagic way of thinking as opposed to the Eurocentric way of thinking. So if we think of ourselves as a set of islands or a microcosm of the world, I mean, I probably wouldn't go as far to say, a kind of a creolité, but much more a kind of microcosm of the world or microclimate of the world. What kind of behaviors, what kind of attitudes, what kind of gestures does it develop? What kind of language does it develop? I don't know if that comes close to what you were asking?

AK

Totally. And I noticed that our former colleague Daniella Rose King is actually working on a project with you along those lines?

SA

Yes.

AK

So that was a really wonderful response. And I certainly didn't mean to be reductive with this observation of a kind of post-Brexit moment--it's perhaps a US projection on my part. But I think on this same wavelength we are very interested in how those same questions or terms

are impacted by these ongoing crises that we're all living through. And to echo your point, not seeing them so much as a break, but as a continual crisis that maybe certain people are waking up to in a way because of the urgencies that have kind of come to the fore. So I'm very interested to not just center the US in the conversation. I also want to understand how these kind of long-term crises that have perhaps consolidated themselves in particular ways in the last year, have maybe affected the conversation and the well-being within your community, and how that's impacted the work of your organization.

SA

I think one of the things I've recognized is that basically there is a sense sometimes of words being used like "care" or "well-being," or at the moment, I think, you know, mental health. People are sort of talking about them in a way that I don't think we've really privileged before. I've been reminded by some of my colleagues like Priya Jay, who co-runs a network for Iniva of how, I don't want to say a disembodied sense of care, because I think that's... I think the sense of when an institution uses a term like care or well-being, that it's not necessarily attached to a body, to a physical body. So just trying to maybe make a distinction, or at least to try and define a set of terms that could show us or define what institutional care actually looks like. Or if an institution is well, what does that look like? While I think we've all been dealing with individual crisis in some ways, whether that's trying to kind of manage our domestic life next to our professional life, next to your personal life, you know, all of those things. I mean, there's been a complete crash of those lines that you usually are able to kind of make divisions between in terms of saying work is what happens in that location over there. And even care is what happens in these spaces here and here, you know?

So I guess I'm really interested to see what we've learned through this time and what actually gets carried forward. But also those practices of care that have a human relation, that we don't necessarily forego that again for our

busy lives. Because that's what happens. Institutions are just busy spaces. Just forget about yourself, you forget about others, and it's like something else is more important. And that's what you're all working towards. Right? You just you forget about, in some ways, a lot of the things that we've learned to take care of now, because we've had to.

GW

Yeah, there's this risk that I think that happens where care becomes reduced to this sign, or that stands in for this ethos of conviviality. Maybe there's an assumption that we're talking about the same thing, but we're not necessarily. And it also connects maybe to this idea to that, like, no kind of ethos, however vaunted, functions uniformly in every condition, right? Like, you can think about toxicity, there are times where toxicity is healing, and there are times where it's profoundly destructive. Or intimacy, there are times where an intimacy is affirming, and there are times when intimacy is the flashpoint of violence. So kind of looking under the hood and seeing what's what in that box of care when handed to you.

You also brought up a few things that I thought were really fascinating. I think maybe before my time, there was a lot of focus on the difference between internationalism and globalism. And maybe you could think of the World Bank or the WHO that are international organizations where it's a consortium of nations that have historically specific

legacies and functions. And globalism, like you said, is this kind of everywhere and nowhere like Exxon Mobil or something as a global organization where it's doesn't necessarily interface in the same ways. I was really interested in these multiple posts that we experienced as so shaped by these questions of globalization, like anti-immigrant sentiments in the US, that sort of dovetailed with anti-Blackness, anti-Asian actions. And policy and trade anxieties that sort of connect to this kind of Trump and post-Trump experience that we are living through and post-Brexit experience. But you offered the planetary as this way of kind of framing an understanding of our earthly experience in ways that don't bracket off our experiences in these kind of fixed ways, which I thought was really helpful. You know, not so much of an end connected to the kind of network relations that define our experience, which is something I see in the work of Inivia, as you described it, like the People's Directory. And not necessarily functioning in the ways that traditional models of institution do, but really utilizing these horizontal transmissions and partnerships. What are some kind of the key partnerships that define your work, or more specifically peer institutions that you're in dialogue with. How does Iniva function within the local ecology?

So we have this thing called the Research Network endeavor. And the Research Network is deeply connected to the Stuart Hall Library. We also do a residency program. There's a number of things that are basically about continuity and thinking and practice, and also an investment in research rigor. And I guess for us, we see this as a really rich resource. I think it's the only resource in the world that brings these—to borrow from your word Alex—"collection" of entities together. We wanted as much as possible to be able to radically redistribute our resources so that we can privilege people's time in the library. In thinking of that hub as the kind of, let's say, the lifeblood of our work, we partner then with organizations who, firstly have an affinity with our work. That's I have to say something important. So affinities for me is also about certain kinds of alignments in values, ethics and practice, but also that seek to better or go further or go beyond institutional boundaries.

The Research Network really comes out of the work of the artist Roshini Kempadoo who was one of the first animators of the Stuart Hall Library. She brought together researchers to share their research and thinking in relation to topics or themes that arise from the publications and material that we have in the library. And then I think as it's developed over the years, we used to do an open call based on a specific theme or topic and people would respond to that open call with things that they were busy with, and then we would put them in dialogue with a speaking partner... I just felt that while it was really fantastic to hear about this kind of research and thinking, it wasn't giving people enough time to spend in the library. So this year, we partnered with institutions that already have a researcher or who have someone who is doing a research project within their institution to kind of share their research so that we could also kind of develop some of their ideas and thinking through what we have in the library. And also to connect them with other researchers and thinkers.

Strangely this year there was this kind of, I don't know if it's something that we that we conjured or whether it was just it's just like about that this was a specific interest in the moment, but there were a number of people who were very interested in Caribbean thoughts (writers and thinkers like C.L.R. James and Derek Walcott). And also in the air was a very strong impetus around Black feminisms. So the six researchers that we have are all in some ways thinking around the meanwhile or the elsewhere, I'm going to call it. What I mean by the meanwhile and the elsewhere is that they're maybe looking sideways to narratives, which potentially have not necessarily had academic feet, but are much more about embodied forms of practice. So our partnerships have come up through this sort of searching for affinities in interest in practice. We now have six researchers.

Another partnership that we have is with the Stuart Hall Foundation. We have an artist residency with them. It allows, I think, for three to four months in the Stuart Hall Library space for an artist not to produce, but literally just to be able to spend time in the library. You know, if you just want to spend three to four months, just reading, that's totally fine. It almost feels like a luxury sometimes to be in the library. I feel that sometimes people feel as if they're hiding away in there. But it's great to be able to support someone to be able to take that time and space for their practice.

We also do a partnership with museums. And this is much more in relation to us interrogating the question of whose heritage is collected within museums and galleries. So we have a project called Future Collect that we've been running, and we're now in our second year. It's really to think about models of practice. So it's really intended to disrupt our thinking of why we collect and who we collect, and who does it represent. I think that's definitely one aspect of it. Also, how do we care for those narratives? How do we care for the people whose narratives are being told? And I think that, through that project, Future Collect, I've learned an awful lot not only from the artists themselves, but more also from understanding a kind of invisible network of how artworks are accessioned into collections.

And then next year we're hoping to have a kind of experimental year of connecting with practitioners who really put the environmental crisis at the center of their thinking and their being. That it's not an adjunct or you know a topic for this moment, but a way of shifting the institution so that we can embed practices that don't continue to contribute basically to environmental collapse. I mean, I think, beyond you know, like reusing the paper from the photocopier, it's how do we really shift our thinking? We just felt that we needed to connect with practices locally, but also internationally, that are really seeing the radical impact and shift that's happening in the world. And that's really because I think as an institution I'd like to work in relation because it's only when you work in relation that you can also start to feel the impact of somebody else, right? Or to ask what it really means to care? Is that when you're really feeling the pain of the other, right? That this hyper-empathy is beyond just you know, "we're trying to be more environmentally friendly." I guess it's more than being friendly, it's more like being an advocate not only in our speaking, but in our doing. So for me that work is also tied up with thinking through ethical politics as well. Because I think again, you know something that's been coming up in our thinking is that institutions' ethics policies are often preserving the institution, but what else should it really be preserving? Those are our thinking partners for the moment.

AK

That idea of, or the practice of “in relation” feels so central to so much of your work Sepake. And I want to make sure that we have a chance to acknowledge your own trajectory, and that it doesn’t just begin and end with Iniva. I would love to hear a little bit more about your work leading up to the work you’re doing now and how so much of it has really been embedded in reorienting the way that we understand knowledge production. Or the idea of production itself being kind of taken into question about skills and affinities. And you talked about embodied practices and the planetary as a way to look outside of the rigid confines of what we consider to be learning. That feels so central to the work that you do, and also to the larger project of destabilizing power structures and decolonization. So I would love to hear a little bit about your personal rootedness in these questions, because it’s been a longterm investigation for you. And not just an investigation, but a lived ethos.

SA

Well, so I think that’s the thing that’s quite interesting is that we’re always in a process of learning all the time, even if we haven’t signed up for something. Experience really shapes us, doesn’t it? And I think experience shapes us, but also encounters with others really shape us. I think, for me that first education in a way comes from my my family. I would say that growing up, I had a really expanded idea of culture. I was lucky enough to have a brother who was really into music, another brother who was really into theater, that my sister was really into art. It’s really funny, because when I look to my parents, it’s

not that they are exceptionally musically or artistically gifted. I think it's just that they were both coming from very small rural communities and really saw the kind of expansive cultural offer that London had. So just the opportunity of learning and education being at the heart of everything. That was definitely my experience growing up. And then I think, also, within my own education, I just had really supportive art teachers. I cannot say enough about the importance of that. It's like just having creative and open-minded teachers who really encourage you and support you to also go on your own journey. From quite a young age of about fifteen I started to visit museums and galleries just simply because my teacher said, "Why don't you go and get on a train, go up to London and see what's on." So that's something I think that's important to say. I've been lucky enough to have a kind of quiet to be creative myself, but also to kind of participate in culture.

And then while working, I think I've always had this impetus to ensure that culture isn't for a limited few, but has the potential to be the thing that brings us together. However utopic that might be I initially trained as a teacher, and I used to bring artists into the school because I just believed that artists brought another way of seeing the world and it expanded the classroom. So it's always this idea I think of expanding or thinking beyond the space that you're within. And not only that, but not to think within disciplines. But it probably wasn't until I came to documenta that I started to think much more around this idea of unlearning, which is when I met you both. Alex, I've known you for a lot longer, but I think in the institutions I was working in before I was very much involved in the reproduction of knowledge. So not just the idea of sharing knowledge, but really just reproducing the same knowledge. What happened for me in documenta, and also maybe sometime before that, was this idea of circulatory knowledge, or knowledge as forms of exchange that also are not just someone filling you up, but actually trying to draw out and lead forth. Which is actually what education is in the etymology of the word. It has this notion of drawing out or leading forth or going forth with what you have inside you. And so there is this sense of like nurturing and supporting that.

What I also equally recognized is that when you are dealing with embodied forms of knowledge that you might also be dealing with trauma, you might also be dealing with experiences that are actually inherited. So that's also something just to recognize is what is carried within our DNA, what's carried within our experiences. And to kind of really unpack this you also need to sometimes think through what are the kind of structures that have maybe created those forms of trauma? What are the ways of thinking that have potentially oppressed your voice? Like, have you worked out what your voice actually is? Which is what I'm always saying to my students, that your role

here, while you're here as a student, is to work out what your voice is, to draw it out, and to lead forth with it. That for me is the process of unlearning: recognizing that you have your own voice and that you have the potential to be able to use it. But you also have to recognize that within its power that it also might be silencing others.

So it's really not just about taking up space, because I think that is a kind of narrative that's talked about a lot. It's very much about being in dialogue with. It is about something which is about being in relation to. It's about community. It's about ancestral voices. It's about trusting a feeling, and just recognizing that feeling is just as important as thinking. And I think that as a woman, and as a Black woman, you're often controlled through different forms of language, right? That either tell you, "you're too this or you're too that." You have to question why those forms or controls are in place, right? It's really to work out what your voice is and what you want to say in the world.

I have to say that with each institution I've worked in I've maybe seen little glimmers of what that is. When you do feel that your programs and your conversations with other team members are going in the direction in which you imagined you also recognize that it's important for everybody to have agency. Do you know what I mean? Because I think you might say, "Oh, yeah, I think this is going really well, this is exactly how I imagined it." Well, that doesn't necessarily mean it's going really well. It might just mean that you've also worked out a way to suppress other people's voices. So I think that element of surprise—or, you know, not necessarily surprised, but much more like the element of trusting the process of communication, of thinking collectively, or transdisciplinarity, of reading together, of actually trying to practice what it means to be together—I think really allows for these kinds of processes to unfold. But also maybe, you know, in our practice being trauma-informed so that we are not replicating the same violences that we're trying to avoid.

GW

Thank you for that response. One thing I often think is that an institution, any given institution, is profoundly heterogeneous, right? Often when we criticize or celebrate, it's mostly when we criticize them, we figure them as these homogenous units that move in uniform ways. But there

are lots of these kind of porous spaces that can be opened up as mechanisms for sort of changing the ways that they function internally and externally. Maybe one question I have for you is I associate so much of the strategies of your work with this aspect of embeddedness as someone who's thinking about building and shifting institutions. Embeddedness in thinking about, for example, Under the Mango Tree as this kind of project housed within documents. Or projects that are kind of hosted by another institution, a larger institution, and sort of germinate or change the way that they function. I'm kind of curious how your philosophy or working strategies have changed becoming the director of an institution from someone who is in a kind of curatorial capacity or an education capacity. How do you look at any of these questions differently in a position of "institutional leadership?" Or do you see them differently?

SA

Oh, that's a hard question. I think really early on after I finished my MA in curating at RCA, we did this project called "Office of Real Time". We described it as a kind of "parasitical institution" that sat within, and benefited from the electricity and water being paid by somebody else. We were covered by somebody else's shelter, and that we could attach ourselves as an entity. Actually, what I realized is that at the moment in Iniva I'm working with Rose Nordin, who made a proposal for a publishing platform. And you might think of it as a project or you might see it as a kind of parasitical entity that sits under the umbrella of Iniva. I think Iniva has that a lot. It has that potential to shelter projects. It acts as, I don't want to say an incubator, but really much more like an umbrella. And that within that umbrella there's lots of

different entities that basically make up the institution, as opposed to having a publishing department, which is maybe a different model. And maybe that, in some ways, I've often thought of education as parasitical to other elements within the institution, but also that it has its own distinct nature and ways of doing something.

So I think it gives me great pleasure to be able to kind of offer those kind of ways of working to others. Because I think, at the core, what Iniva has to try to retain, is that it was always intended as an alternative to other forms of institutions. It's not meant to replicate them. This idea of using the model or experimental models within the practice that have their own autonomy, I think is also important. That it is in dialogue with, but it has its own autonomy. I think that that's how I would like to see Iniva develop, is to continue to have relations with different entities. And that through those relationships, that kind of builds a model of practice, which is hopefully sustainable and relevant.

AK

I've heard you talk previously about the idea of paying forward as an institution. I find that to be inspiring to think about how an institution can really also be looking to the future and not just invested in the kind of capitalistic presentism, which I think is often a default mode for institutions. Earlier you talked about the archive as having an importance for the future. And you also mentioned you've seen these glimmers of hope. I think we're in a moment where there is this kind of urgency to tear these things down, to get rid of it all. I am so interested to hear you talk about the possibility of the organization or the institution laying the groundwork for a future, and that idea of paying forward.

SA

That's a great question. Thanks, Alex. I think, you know, there's an aspect of our work that is very much about futurity. I almost pretend it's a science

fiction sometimes. I mean, there is this element of hope in everything that we do. We put these ideas into the ether and we hope that we kind of work towards them to realize them in the way that we imagine, right? But as I said, if something happens exactly in the way that you imagine it I question how much of that is a collective entity in terms of what it looks like. I think that our mandate to create a space for the future definitely comes from Stuart Hall, who basically really could see the urgency and the need for an institution that recognized that through the new new formulations of subjectivity. So thinking about African and Asian diaspora in Britain that there would be new forms of language, new forms of culture, new ways of doing things. And that he wanted to protect that space for those new forms. So that's, I guess, when I think about this new element in the Institute for the new internationalism, that newness is also about emergency as well about emergent forms of practice. Sewn into our business plans and our policies and our forward programming and future programming, and, you know, I guess there is a lot of futurity.

There's always this aspiration for a kind of alterity. For something to even be outside of the kind of capitalistic conditions that we find ourselves in. And I actually think that we did see a lot of interesting solidarities that happened across the last year, right? Where people really extended this arm of care beyond even the people that they live with or their family. It was actually quite incredible to see that we had that capacity and that capability. I suppose in some ways, when you're investing in something that you cannot see yet, but you somehow feel it in some moments, you're also kind of hedging your bets against your inability to be able to see something. I don't know if that makes sense? But it's like, you might not necessarily have that vision yet, but you might see glimmers of it. And it's maybe about expanding those glimmers and trying to find out ways to sustain them; and to recognize that there will continue to be generations of people that will challenge who that future is for.

AK

Please join us for our next episode with Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy, Director of the Kuntinstituut Melly in Rotterdam. We will revisit the external pressures and the internal decision process that led to the renaming of the organization formerly known as the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art to the Kunstinstiuit Melly and discuss the importance of

language for inclusivity.

In the meantime, we look forward to welcoming you in person at ICA. Please visit our website, [www.icaphila.org](http://www.icaphila.org) for more information about our upcoming exhibitions and programs. I'd like to thank Jason Moran for the original music, and my colleagues at ICA who helped make this podcast possible. James R. Britt Jr, former DAJ Director of Public Engagement; Derek Rigby, Audio Visual Coordinator; Natalie Sandstrom, Program Coordinator; Jill Katz, Director of Marketing and Communications, Ali Mohsen, Digital Content Editor, as well as collaborators former Spiegel-Wilks Curatorial Fellows Tausif Noor and Gee Wesley. Thank you for listening.

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