

Talk Art Podcast

Released 4 August 2020

- Russell Tovey is in red text
- Robert Diament is in blue text
- Jennifer Gilbert is in black text

Russell: How are you Rob?

Robert: I am feeling self-taught. And I know for those of you who are fact checkers that are out there, I did do a masters for a year in the history of art at christies, so I am not technically self-taught anymore, but for the predominate part of my life so from 11 until I think I was 29 when I did my masters, I was actually self-taught when it comes to you .. as are you right?

Ru: Yes big time. I didn't have christies and I didn't do a masters so I am a legit self-taught.

Robert: You are yes. You are 100% self-taught whereas I'm like 90%. But I think when I did my masters I took a lot from what I had learnt myself and that is where my passion lies. But today's guest is someone who has championed but also put on exhibitions, and done international art fairs of self-taught and overlooked artists and we are so excited to speak to her because Talk Art is not just about one type of art or one type of artist – we have always said it is art for everyone. And since we have been doing this show, one of the great things that has come out of it is how much we are learning all of the time and I know you went to the outsider art fair in new york this year didn't you which was in January wasn't it. And I have experienced working with an artist who is kind of on the outside of the mainstream art world in some way, but somehow they have adopted her, that was Stella Vine, do you remember years and years ago. I used to help her out a lot. She did actually do a show at Modern Art oxford so she kind of went mainstream in a way and I think the newspapers and the media used to write a lot about her. But she was pretty much self-taught and her whole perspective was pretty much on her own and her style was unique, but I haven't seen her in a long time. So yes I feel like you and I share something with today's guest, which is an interest in supporting overlooked artists. So we would like to welcome to Talk Art Jennifer Gilbert.

Jennifer: Hi guys

Ru: Hi Jen, how are you?

J: I'm all good thanks, how are you?

Ru: and where do we find you in the world?

J: You find me in a very rainy Manchester.

Ru: Oh it's raining in Manchester, what a surprise, ha.

J: It always rains in Manchester

Ru: So for our listeners you run a Gallery called the Jennifer Lauren Gallery and your name is Jennifer Gilbert. So what is the Lauren?

J: Well my middle name is Lauren and so I thought Jennifer Lauren had a bit more of a catchy sound to it.

Ru: More panash?

J: Yes

Ru: and when did you open your Gallery?

J: So it has been running for three years now, but I've been working with artists in this field for a very long time now.

Ru: And how did you get into working with these artists and this part of the art world?

J: I guess I am an artist by trade and I studied graphic design and illustration at Saint Martins in London. And when I was at University I found a book in the library about outsider art called Raw Creation by John Maizels who is the editor of Raw Vision magazine. And I think it grew from there so my dissertation stemmed from the place of outsider art in the 21st century and I started working with artists with schizophrenia in a local community centre doing classes with them and working with artists who are isolated in the community. And then I did a masters in art, health and wellbeing after doing a foundation in art therapy. So the place of art in people's health and wellbeing is really important to me and a real passion of mine.

Ru: So it feels like a real passion project for you and you were doing it as you had a real passion for how people were expressing themselves through disability and through mental illness. But then you've also been able to bring these artists into an art market arena.

J: Yes. I think what I say on my website is that I am a real champion for these artists and I really want to give them a voice and platform their work. And I think because so many of them are unable to do that themselves I really want to be that person to kind of put them out there. And I think that because my background is working with disabled people, that I do it in a really nurturing and sensitive way. But ultimately I want the artists voice to be heard and I want it in their own words so that it is their voice coming through, so that people are really listening to them and what they have to say with their work.

Rob: That's actually something that I really loved about being a gallerist before I was one, that you can be an intermediary between a museum or a collector and the artist, and somehow you can take the pressure off the artist because in a way they just want to be making art. And one of the reasons that we wanted to talk to you was the passion that you have in helping, facilitating and promoting artists works that we wouldn't necessarily have heard of in a mainstream context. It's like a lot of the artists you promote and show aren't necessarily household names, but they definitely deserve to be as they are incredible.

J: yes and I think it's really important what you said about being that intermediary because I used to work for a national charity that supports artists that are kind of outside of the mainstream and I was that person inbetween them between the dealers and the buyers because so many dealers in this field, I won't name any names, are out there to exploit the artists and say oh I'll give you £10 for that work and put it into my museum show. And for an artist who doesn't understand these things and who is quite vulnerable, they get quite excited about that. But really that work is worth so much more than £10 and I think that's why I really wanted to be that driving force that stops these works being exploited and these people being exploited and to really take care of them and nurture them and take care of the ethics within this field.

Ru: Have you called anyone out in the past and stepped up and said something?

J: Oh yes. It happens all the time.

Ru: Really. So what does that involve?

J: Well a lot of time someone might go behind the back of a studio or someone that is supporting an artist and then go directly to the artist. So you know the artist gets excited about it and gives their work away for free or accepts that £10 for something that might have taken them 3 years of their life. And then afterwards when the studio has heard about it, it is horrendous as then they feel really guilty that they've done it but perhaps they didn't know any better because to them it felt like the right thing to do at the time. But it happens all the time.

Ru: Well thank god you are there, stepping in Jen. Good. Well we want to cover a lot today because there's so many artists that people might have heard on the periphery or that they don't know about, but there is so much exciting art in the outsider art movement. But I just want to start off with the term outsider art, because I have been reading a lot of the blogs on your website and everybody listening needs to go to jenniferlaurengallery.com to read these and Jen talks to collectors and talks to artists and you ask the same questions like we do and you actually do quote us at one point which I appreciate thank you very much. But you ask people about the term outsider art because it is a problematic term for many people and it is an umbrella for a lot, but can we actually break it down as to what it actually means so that people listening can understand what outsider and self-taught and folk art really mean.

J: Yes. So I've done a lot of reading around this art and I ask all the collectors of this art what they think about the term outsider art, but I think if we go back to where it came from. So outsider art was coined in 1972 but a guy called Roger Cardinal and he came up with this term to be the exact English equivalent of art brut, which was coined by a guy called Jean Dubuffet in the 1940s. And art brut itself, what that was said to mean was artwork executed by people who were untouched by artistic culture so that they create from their own depths and not from current trends or academic rules. So they are creating for themselves and not for other people or to gain public recognition.

Ru: So not for the art market?

J: Yes. So they didn't actually see themselves as artists these people that were really true to this label because lots of them were living in institutions or were living in their own little bubble. Whereas nowadays it has kind of become a catch all term, an umbrella term, meaning anyone who creates outside of the mainstream who might be untrained or with a disability or they might be socially excluded, they all just kind of getting chucked under this term now. So it doesn't actually mean what it was set out to mean in the first place. But it is still used for things like the outsider art fair and all of that and I think one of collectors Randall put it quite nicely as he said, you don't always go to a hardware store and buy it there, you can buy it anywhere so you don't have to go to the outsider art fair just to buy outsider art, you might be selling other things within that fair that aren't necessarily labeled outsider art.

So there's outsider art and then there's self taught art, so art produced by people who are just existing on the margins of art history and aren't taught through art school and a lot of American people use folk art and folk art dates back to lots of old traditions so it is things that might have been passed down over the years so it might be basket weaving or stone carving and that sort of thing.

Ru: So like working with wood and things like that, like a family trade?

J: Yes like a family trait.

Ru: So why is outsider art the term for art brut. Why has art brut not remained as a constant?

J: When Roger Cardinal wrote his book in 1972 he wanted to call it outsider art because his definition and his way of thinking is the same as that of art brut. But his publisher said you cannot call it that because in English it translates as brutal art and we can't put a book out there called brutal art so you need to think of something else. So he bandied about some different names and outsider art is the one that stuck.

Rob: Amazing, so he's the one that came up with that term?

J: Yes he came up with the term and unfortunately he has passed away now, but before he passed away even he was saying this term no longer means what I

want it to mean. There have been so many new terms that have been flying around and one that came out in the last couple of years was 'outliers' which was the name of a show in America but that doesn't really seem to have stuck.

Ru: What do you think would be a more inclusive term, because as a term it feels like you're saying you're outside so you're not included?

J: Well that's why people don't like it. People feel that they're on the outside of society anyway and so you're saying they're outsiders. And also with the term outsider art it sounds like you're grouping the people rather than the art, whereas with the term art brut you are describing the art and not the artists. So it just feels very wrong that we are labeling people that way. And with the artists on my website I would never describe any of them outsider artists unless they directly said to me I want you to call me an outsider artist. I work with a lot of artists in Japan who are working out of studios and in Japan it is seen as a really great thing to be known and classed as an outsider artist, so they want this label. They feel it puts them up on a shelf where they have this privileged position as an outsider rather than just being seen as a disabled artist.

Rob: Wow, interesting. And actually some of the artists that you work with from Japan are some of the artists that we first discovered maybe like four months ago, around the beginning of this year. So can you speak a bit about the people you've been working with recently, so we really love Shinichi Sawada.

Ru: Yes and we came to his work through Kaws as Kaws collects him. And we posted a photo there and you contacted us Jen saying that's Shinichi Sawada. And that's when we started our conversations. And Kaws said you were amazing and that you'd been to his studio and sat on that couch where we sat.

J: Yes I've sat on that couch. I'm a minor celebrity!

Ru: He is just such a generous man and a massive champion of outsider art.

J: Yes he is a massive fan and it is really wonderful to see that. And it is wonderful that he posts it for his audiences, and his contemporary art audiences and for them to see this work. And actually lots of contemporary artists collect Sawada now and his work is all over the world in museums and people's personal collections. I think his work came into the fore as it was included in the Venice Biennale in 2013 in the Encyclopedic Palace and that's when the art world suddenly woke up to this autistic Japanese artist that creates these mysterious ceramic sculptures of these weird mythical animal creature type forms. He attends a studio in Japan for people with disabilities 3 or 4 times a week and in the morning he bakes bread because in Japan to get your money from the Government for having a disability you have to have some form of core skill that you do. So some people pack boxes, but he bakes bread and other people from the studio go out into the local community in the afternoon to sell it. But in the afternoons he gets taken in a car up into the mountains to this hut that was built for him. It is literally a shack in the middle of the mountains, surrounded by rice fields. It has no real doors and so is open around the edges, so he can only go in

there when it is better weather otherwise it can get quite cold. And he sits in their in near silence as he is mostly non-verbal and he just sits and makes these creatures silently or sometimes with the radio on. They take him around 4 days to make and they are left to dry out for 6 months in this shack. And the guy that works with him has built 2 wood-fired kilns there and one goes up to 800 degrees, which gives the work a black colour, which is not often used for Sawada. The other goes up to 1200 degrees and it has to go in there for 3 days and 3 nights, so this little old man stays away for 3 days and 3 nights feeding in wood to keep it at that temperature. And then it takes a week to cool down. And because he is a self-taught artist he doesn't attach things properly. So some of them explode in the kiln and others the legs come off or something and he makes so many of them that I don't think he understands if something breaks. He doesn't really seem that bothered about it whereas the studio are always a little shocked. He is just quite happy to continue making the next one and is fine and content to carry on.

Ru: And does anyone know where these creatures come from? Because a lot of the artists create these things but no one can track how they conceived these ideas because they are not looking at other artists and not looking at art history and not looking at movements. These things are coming from their inside from their insular minds where they are not connecting to anyone and that's what is so fascinating. So you have no idea where he has conceived these things from?

J: That's right, no idea. And because he is almost non-verbal and so doesn't talk about them. And the guy that works with him everyday says that he never gets any information from him as he's not really able to speak. But you can go around this little hut with him and he might point to something and say oh that's a sea creature or he will say something is something else. When he was first making them he had around 15 different motifs he was creating of these animal creature type things that he would make over and over again. Since another artist joined his studio 3 years ago, his work has kind of changed over these last 3 years and I think he has been influenced by this guy called Kontani – he focuses more on the faces like Kontani makes. So Sawada was known to cover his work in these tiny thorns, like these tiny spikes and his newer works are no longer covered in these spikes and are more focused on these faces of these creatures.

Ru: and softer edged yes?

J: Yes softer lines, and less spikes so they are taking a completely different look.

Rob: It's so interesting isn't it, the power of the influence of that new artist joining the studio, but before that also just this idea of the imagination really. And probably the creative freedom that I think we all have as human beings. You know the potential to imagine things, and maybe it is stuff from our past maybe even before we were alive, maybe it's something that is within us somehow.

Ru: Yes and they're unedited. I mean if you are an artist working within the art world I guess you edit yourself and you look at art history. But if you're not doing any of that then what you are creating is so authentic, and honest and raw, and

that is what is so exciting about these artists. And the fact that they now have a platform and they are seen with this sort of bit of magic about them. Do you feel that from the collectors and curators and audiences?

J: oh completely. And it is just the fact he has no books or anything in this hut and he is literally in the middle of nowhere. It is literally coming from inside him and you can just sit and watch him work and it is so peaceful as I have been to see him.

Ru: Have you met him a few times then?

J: I've only met him once a couple of years ago and I spent the day with him in the studio. I mean obviously he didn't really talk to me, I mean he said hello but I just sat and watched him work and walked around this little hut and then went back to the studio where the rest of the artists were working. And it just felt really peaceful. And the great thing with him is that although he is seen as this great outsider artist so to speak, his work is now in a museum in Germany, which is a contemporary sculpture museum and they have just made a book about him and a Professor has written about him in this book describing him as this contemporary artist. I think that for the artists that I work with I really love that they are being seen now as contemporary artists and being accepted more into the mainstream for their work.

Ru: And how do you manages as his gallerist now, I mean what does money mean to him? And what does his family think and is he from a wealthy background as he's quite expensive now. Does he get the money or does it go back into his work or to the family or the community?

J: I don't think he is aware of it given the nature of his disability and that he doesn't really write anything or speak. So I don't think he is fully aware of the popularity of his work but his studio does certainly. And you walk into the studio and there is just a wall of his artwork as the thing you see when you walk in, so they're a really big champion of his work and where he is positioned in the world now. But Sawada doesn't really travel to any of the exhibitions he does and doesn't really travel on a plane or anything so he doesn't fully understand it. But his family are really proud of him and so his family receive some of the money and support him with this money. But he will never not want to go to the studio, so even if he had loads of money, the fact is that he loves going there almost everyday to create these works. It is like a real drive for him to do it.

Ru: It's amazing.

Rob: Actually going back to New York at the Outsider Art Fair – didn't they have an exhibition that was bringing together collectors, kind of well-known contemporary artists from the mainstream art world, because it was fascinating to see the kind of names because I know someone like Kaws has joined the board at the American Folk Art Museum, so he is really committing on that level as well. But the list of names was really impressive. It was Cindy Sherman, Chris Martin, Kiki Smith, Nicole Eisenman, Julian Schnabel, the list goes on and on. And I find it

kind of interesting that they're all successful artists in the mainstream art world, but how important that this work by self-taught and overlooked artists is to them and inspires them.

Ru: I mean if you look at folk art or tribal art through the ages...tribal art inspired the whole cubist movement, I mean look at Picasso – that was in itself self-taught crafting and that can be classed as self-taught right?

J: Yes, and even if you look at Grayson Perry's art programme on the tv recently, he talked about outsider art on that and how much it has inspired and influenced him so mainstream people are talking a lot more about this work now.

Ru: Great, well let's talk about some of the big names that people might have heard of. So for me I'd say some of the biggest names are Henry Darger, who I first saw his work and I think you saw it too Rob at the Museum of Everything in London in 2009.

Rob: Yes I was quite disturbed by it. But amazing.

Ru: I remember seeing these panels, very disturbing, but he was untrained, undiscovered guy who was a janitor and a bit of a hermit and he created these worlds and on his death they were all discovered and now he's like the granddaddy of outsider art right?

J: Well yes his work recently sold at Chrities in New York for nearly \$750,000, which for an outsider artist is a lot of money, probably, well it could be the most for these artists, but one of his works has never sold for that much before. So it is highly sought after work now that comes with a hefty price tag on it. But he was this secluded man in Chicago and then rented this really cheap room and worked in hospital as a porter who created this massive body of work behind closed doors that was found just before he passed away and he had written this massive 15 volume epic story which was known as the story of the Vivian girls which was called In the Realms of the Unreal. It featured lots of young girls and I think what you're saying is disturbing about it as that lots of the young girls often had male genitalia on them on were often being attacked or abused. He often drew himself into the pictures as someone that was trying to protect the children. There's lots of stories of his life that are floating around and whether or not bad things happened to him throughout his life and wehther ... well there's all these horrible things that you read about him.

Ru: Like that was his therapy when creating these drawings for his own sort of exorcism of what happened to him?

J: Well yes but we don't know whether these things are true or not and whether they are things that are just bandied about. But he used to collect magazines and newspapers and he would trace the images of girls or people from them and then use the traces to do the pictures. They were sort of like 10m long double sided in watercolour. And all hand bound down the side.

Ru: A huge huge body of work. Incredible. So say his auction prices now go for that who now has his estate?

J: Well yes he has an estate now, which would be a lovely thing to have!

Ru: Great so he's a big one. Grandma Moses – is she in there?

J: Well I wouldn't say she's as well known, I'd say less people know about her. What do you know about Grandma Moses?

Ru: They make me think of like lowry-esque images of quite naïve people, but people from her community. They are kind of landscape and you see all the characters dotted around and there's no sort of hierarchy with sizing or no sort of perspective on it. Everyone is sort of the same whether they are at the back of the field or next to the house at the front or whatever.

J: Well I wouldn't say she was as well known as some but she would be classed as a folk artist rather than an outsider artist. So they're quite naïve paintings that she did of like local rural life potentially based on where she was living. There are quite a few artists that do that sort of painting, almost like European naïve painters would fall under the same bracket as Grandma Moses I guess.

Ru: Bill Traylor is someone who has really blown up as well. He's been an incredible influence for so many contemporary artists, and he didn't start making work until he was in his 80s right – what's the story behind him?

J: Well funnily enough there was an article in the Guardian last week in England saying that there are so many forged works in his style now, which is terrible. So there is a guy going around trying to verify them all and in this Guardian article there was an example of a forged Bill Traylor painting.

Ru: could you have told the difference Jen?

J: I mean I think when I looked at this on online, I mean had I seen it and no one had told me then no, ha. But because I was reading this article and then looked at it, I could totally see it.

Ru: ha, yes it is a bit of a help when they say this is a forged one.

J: Yes, but I think it was the dog. I thought that doesn't look like a Bill Traylor dog. So I think that was a bit of a giveaway. But if you didn't know much about Bill Traylor someone would be buying that work for a hell of a lot of money and that person who painted it would but laughing! But anyway Bill Traylor. He's one of the biggest known outsiders. So he was born into slavery back in 1853 and he dies when he was in his 90s. He didn't actually start creating until he was 84. He used to work on a plantation until he was 84 in Alabama and then moved to Montgomery and for some reason started painting. He used to live sometimes on the streets and sometimes in a storage room of a little local shop and then he sat out all day in the African American community in Montgomery and just sat and

drew. The main body of work that survives is from a 4 year period of his life from 1939, so there's 1500 drawings. And David Zwirner in New York just had an exhibition of them, which is mind blowing really. It was great.

Ru: Yes I saw that it was beautiful.

Rob: And actually I've just seen a series of them here in Margate at the Turner contemporary as there's an exhibition that will reopen on 22 July called 'We Will Walk' and all that story that you just said, I learnt about in February time when the show opened. It's really great to see it and great that there is a chance for you to see his work here in the UK at the moment.

J: Yes which is a first actually. It is the first exhibition of it's kind in the UK. I was due to come down to Margate to see it actually but naturally lockdown has stopped me.

Rob: oh well you'll have to come down and see it. I think they are extending it until 6 September now. I can meet you and take you around.

J: Yes that would be great. But like Bill Traylor's in that, William Hawkins, Mary Smith, Lonnie Holley. So if you're in the UK and you want to see this work I would recommend that. So back to Bill Traylor he was creating this work on the streets and this guy called Charles Shannon came across his work and loved it so he bought a few of them and then wanted to kind of promote him. So when Bill Traylor was alive he saw his work exhibited twice and then Charles Shannon didn't show it again until the 80s. So it was kept until the 80s when he was back in New York and Charles did a show of them. The funny thing is that when Bill Traylor was alive they sold for like a dime or a quarter, and now they sell for \$500,000. Ha. So I do wonder how he would feel if he knew they were selling for that much money now in comparison.

Ru: Did he have kids or family and stuff?

J: Well I am not totally sure but I don't think they would have profited from it, which is a shame.

Ru: Well this is what you're talking about when you say people are taking advantage, so people getting in there and building these people up but taking it all for themselves?

J: I mean at the time maybe a dime or a quarter was seen as a good thing back in the 40s, I don't know, but now they sell for so much money. But I think what I liked about Charles Shannon was on the back of Bill Traylor's work, if Bill told him something in particular about that work like you know who might be in the picture or what it was a scene on, Charles would write in Bill Traylor's dialect what was in that picture. So some of the pieces today have got that text on the back of them which I think is a really lovely remembrance of his work because he didn't title any of the work. So it kinds of reminds people what was in it. And I guess when I keep interviewing all these collectors they all keep talking about

this one show in America so I had to buy this catalogue online which cost me a small fortune as it is completely out of print.

Ru: The folk art show right?

J: Yes the black folk art in America show, which was in 1982. People rave about this show because it was the first time that African American work had been bought together as a whole in America. I think it was quite strange as I read something in the catalogue saying, people are going to be really disturbed by this exhibition because you will have never have seen any art like this in you life. Bill Traylor had 36 works in that show and so that was one of the things that put him out there onto this platform alongside around 20 other artists I think in this show. So it sounded like an amazing show from reading the catalogue and listening to people that went.

Ru: Is the catalogue good?

J: Yes and it's got some amazing artists in it like Bill Traylor and like William Edmonson.

Ru: Yes let's talk about William Edmonson. Love, love the work.

J: Yes, well he was a labourer and a farm hand and he used to carve limestone. Again he is from the same era as Bill Traylor so born in the 1870s who carved these beautiful limestone sculptures. But he is someone that said he was walking around one day and he saw a tombstone appear in the sky and then the voice of God commanded him that he had to carve and so from that day onwards he started to carve things. He carved a lot of angels and a lot of religious symbolism. And when you got to MOMA in New York at the moment one of his sculptures is on display there in a room that is dedicated to self-taught art alongside Bill Traylor's work which is amazing.

Ru: I mean but they are beautiful sculptures.

J: Yes they are beautiful. They are very simple carvings and they are quite simple shapes of the angels but they are very beautiful to look at definitely.

Ru: One more, Madge Gill – she seems to be the grandmother of it all.

J: Well Madge Gill is the most famous artist in the UK. So for us she is a major person to be focusing on and she did last year have a big show in Walthamstow at the art gallery there, the William Morris Gallery, which was a show dedicated to her work. It was incredible to see so much of her work bought together. But she was someone who lived in London and she believed she was guided by a spirit called Myrnerest. And a series of sad events in her life like some of her children dying very young compelled her to want to start doing séances and to reach out to people. And then obviously this spirit guide came about and she was compelled to produce and just didn't stop until she passed away. She was a very, very prolific artist. Like would work at night time drawing by candlelight and

drawing on postcards over and over again and also worked on massive calico rolls – like 35 foot long rolls of calico. And her son made her this little device that he attached the calico into, so she could only see a small bit of it at once and so she would roll it up and roll the next bit out. And she wouldn't ever see the whole thing until it was out in her garden for her to see. And yet it flowed all the way along like just a really beautiful drawing. And almost all of her work featured a woman's face with a hat on but no one ever knows who this person was – was it the same person over and over again, was it her, was it her children, nobody knows, it is a complete mystery.

Ru: So it could have been a daughter or something?! Did she do this under a trance like state yes?

J: Oh completely. I mean her work was exhibited at what was then known as the east end academy and is now known as the Whitechapel. So when she was alive she would often be part of their annual shows and often her long calico pieces were shown. But she wouldn't ever sell them as she said they weren't hers to sell, meaning they belonged to her spirit Myrninerest.

Rob: And people actually use the term visionary for her and I think it's such a perfect description because it really is visionary and she sort of saw these visions in a way. And there's an amazing photo linked to the William Morris gallery that we will post on our instagram with one of these giant calico artworks. Just so incredible.

J: She is classed as mediumistic as well, and that's seen as a very big movement coming through at the moment, which is being linked to outsider. So she kind of falls underneath that.

Ru: But this is when they think they are making work through a higher being, like transferring it through them.

Rob: Yes like she described it as a spirit guide?

J: Yes she did.

Ru: Mediumistic, would that ever involve schizophrenic artists that are hearing voices and creating work like that that they think involves someone else.

J: It includes people like Georgiana Houghton, who would be described like that and she had a show at the Courtauld Gallery in London a few years ago. It is people that are being guided by others really and it is becoming very popular at the moment, it is a very hot topic. At the Outsider Art Fair last year there were lots of dealers that had mediumistic art on their stands that they were selling, so it is kind of the hot thing to buy at the moment.

Ru: Well that's an outsider insider tip you've given us there. Thanks Jen. Well let's talk about artists that are on your roster. So we have talked about Shinichi Sawada from Japan. There's an amazing artist whose work I look at and I think it

gives me a migraine. Pradeep Kumar. If I had to concentrate like he has to concentrate I would have a migraine. His skill is amazing, so let's talk about him.

Rob: He is so meticulous it kind of takes it to a whole other level.

J: They are so meticulous and they are so delicate in the flesh. Like when he carves the legs onto the matchstick of the birds, they are so thin, I almost don't want to pick them up as I feel like they are going to snap off. His father has just sent me some pictures of some new ones he has just done. So he carves toothpicks and matchsticks and he carves the very tips of them and it's normally people and birds or animals. And his father has just sent me two of people in yoga positions upside down on their hands, which I love!

Ru: Out of the toothpick?

J: Yes out of the toothpick. And the bit he actually carves is about a cm long and the detail in them when he paints them afterwards with like a necklace, or a chain around their waist, or buttons down their top. It is just insane, it is amazing.

Ru: How did you find him and how did you discover his work?

J: So Raw Vision normally shows his work at art fairs so I have seen it there and I've seen it in lots of exhibitions about outsider art and so Raw Vision put me in touch with him

Ru: What is Raw Vision – is that a gallery right?

J: No Raw Vision is the only outsider art magazine that exists in the world so I recommend that everyone should buy this magazine. It comes out 4 times a year and it has articles about different artists in it, so Sawada has had an article about him and I imagine Pradeep has too. Lots of these people have had articles about them written in Raw Vision magazine – so Bill Traylor too.

Ru: So you can discover new artists in this magazine if you are looking for new talent?

J: I don't think I could find new artists in there. People who discover new artists will want to have an article about that artist in there to get them known wider.

Rob: So that's a kind of go-to magazine then.

J: Yes so if you wanted to learn more about this I would definitely recommend that. The way I find artists is that some people approach me, or I approach studios. I might see some artists that I like online or if I visit different exhibitions or studios around the world I will pop in and see the artists. Or some people recommend artists to me. So there's lots of different ways I can find artists and that different artists would come around.

Rob: and actually you yourself are introducing us and so many people across the world to so many different artists and the show that you did in January or earlier this year in London 'Monochromatic Minds' – can you talk a bit about that as I know you're about to start a new series of zoom talks with the artists in July, so I thought it would be interesting for people to hear about the original premise of the show.

J: So through my Gallery I like to do pop up shows and normally they are quite small as I have a limited budget, so I managed to get some funding from the Arts Council. It was not enough to cover the exhibition but enough to help me to put it on.

J: And I decided that I only ever buy black and white artwork myself and so I really love intricate black and white artwork. So i wanted to put on a show of monochrome work from around the world and it was 61 artists working black and white that are self-taught, disabled or classed as outsider artist. It was people working out of studios and people that just exist and are isolated in the communities and work by themselves. Some of them i knew, some people were suggested to me and I then pulled together this exhibition and held it at Candid Arts Trust in London. It was only on for a very short time as it is so expensive to hire spaces out in London so it was only on for 10 days.

Rob: Did you have work by the Japanese artist Hakunogawa because I love that artist so much. Is that a he or a she?

J: Yes I did and it is a she. She has quite severe mental health issues but she draws on postcard sized white paper with a black pen and draws whatever pops into her head. I mean I have a drawing of hers of a face with 4 eyes and snakes coming out of the eyes - quite weird. Sometimes they look like quite friendly characters, sometimes disturbing. There is one of a character riding a bike waving but they are just pen and ink drawings, really small, quite detailed drawings. So there were pieces like that in there and then pieces by a british artist called Nick Blinks who is very well known artist for having schizophrenia but also for being the lead singer of a punk band called Rudimentary Peni. So he has this massive cult following that follows him and he always draws his album covers. i had a magnifying glass next to his work in the exhibition as they are so incredibly detailed. so some of the people who came to see his work are super fans and they came just to see his work and they would look at just one piece of his work for over an hour because there is so much detail in it. So much detail. so I had people like him then on the flip side I had someone like Donald Mitchell who works out of Creative growth in California who draws these people with a black body and a circular head all stacked on top of each other. It is a very simple, playful image but they are just beautiful. he doesn't need to do anything else. So there are complete opposites in this exhibition and it eas artists from all over the world.

Ru: What is Creative Growth?

J: Creative Growth is an art centre in California and in America I think it is the one that has been going the longest working with artists with developmental disabilities. So you should google them as they have some incredible artists coming out of there. So Judith Scott used to go there and Judith Scott is now celebrated across the world for her fibre sculptures and had a solo show at Brooklyn Museum and was shown in the Venice Biennale. They also have Dan Miller who works out of there and he is very famous within the outsider art field. His work was shown at the Andrew Edlin Gallery in New York in their booth at Frieze last year and I think they sold out on the first day. And this is someone with a developmental disability. He does these massive works of overlapped texts. Again he is someone who is quite non-verbal but he builds up text one on top of the other in pen and paint. Some are huge and some are small. At Frieze they looked beautiful and they flew out. And his work is with lots of contemporary artists in their homes around the world now.

Ru: Wow

Rob: Actually Frieze did a whole installation within the fair last year didn't they called the doors of perception.

J: Yes and Sawada was part of that.

Rob: I was going to say Sawada was in that. Really exciting.

J: It was really exciting as I got to go to Frieze in New York too.

Rob: Yes and actually in your show in Monochromatic minds one of the favourite artists for me was Davood Koochaki who has sadly recently passed away but you actually said on your Instagram he was the smilest artist ever as he was always smiling. I love his work and I love him, what an amazing energy.

J: He was always so happy and again someone who didn't start drawing until his 60s so later in life. And he was known as the pencil man who created these incredible creatures. I had this one in my exhibition and it was like a large kind of mound of a creature in the middle and four smaller ones either side and he said they are all huddling around the big middle one as he was looking after and protecting them. And I was like aw that description is so nice. That was a huge drawing and sort of A1 size and they go down to A4 size. His work is in collections all over the world now too. And lots of the time these creatures were smiling. They might have looked a bit scary but they often had a smile on their face. So you were like is it scary, is it happy should I be happy, I'm not sure?

Ru: Yes, is that a sinister smile, ha. Or a smile, smile.

J: Yes well if you saw a photo of him you think of it must be happy.

Rob: Yes we will post some of him because I love his work.

Ru: You were talking about non-verbal artists, there is an artist actually who is making a big splash at the moment who is a contemporary artist called marlon mullen and he was in the whitney biennial, and he is completely seen as the mainstream and his work is incredible. can we talk about him for a bit, do you know a lot about his work?

J: Yes I really like his work actually, but I only found out about it a couple of years ago when I saw it in the new York gallery JTT and he is also represented by Adams and ollman in oregon. But he is a black artist who is pretty much non-verbal and autistic and in his mid 50s. he works out of NIAD which is like creative Growth in California. He does these massive paintings with really simplified imagery on them. so he takes photographic images from magazines, from lifestyle magazines or contemporary art magazines and he appropriates it or abstracts it in his mind into this reduced version of shapes and lettering and does this completely unique version of that cover or image that he was using. So like you used he was in the whitney biennial last year and the san Fransisco MOMA gave him an award last year. and for both of these occasions he is the first disabled artists working out of a studio that has ever been featured in the whitney biennial or to be given that prize from the san francisco MOMA, which is massive turning point in disabled artists being accepted into the contemporary art world more. and it is he is on a great massive path at the moment of amazing things coming his way.

Rob: it is so overdue and his work is so good.

Ru: It is so good but i think he is aware isn't he, he is aware as he goes to the events.

J: Yes he goes to the events and he went to the biennial and had a jacket on that said biennial on the back of it. But yes he goes to visit all these things and although he might not be there to speak, he is taking in the atmosphere and people are coming up to him and telling him how incredible his work is. So he is someone who I think is aware of what is going on.

Rob: Yes. We were talking to Katherine Bradford the other day and she was saying that now in the last five years, maybe a decade, but maybe just five years, people are just so much more interested in new ways of seeing the world and marginalised voices and people that haven't had platforms on so many levels.

Ru: Yes people outside of the mainstream.

Rob: Yes, people of colour or queer voices and all these different voices and i think it is so important that that includes disabled artists or self-taught artists and all this kind of other field as well.

J: I agree but i think that our country is so far behind everywhere else. Like in America this work is celebrated and talked about art critics all the time. Like the New York times features these artists all the time and praises them for the work. You've got MOMA that has a room dedicated to them and other pieces dotted

around their collection. then you look at england and you wonder what the hell is going on here. You see things written about these exhibitions and you see things written like come and see the misfits and like really negative articles about these artists which is not really encouraging people to go and see it.

Ru: is that a real quote is it?

J: yes Adrian Searle, the headline was meet the misfits, and he said that the exhibition left him disturbed. and i just thought you are not really encouraging people to go and see these exhibitions. That was a show that was at the Whitechapel a few years ago.

Rob: Yes that was 2006 wasn't it.

J: Yes then you look at things like Roberta Smith and Jerry Saltz write in America praising this work and out art critics destroy it. And i think because there's so few exhibitions of this work perhaps that's why. Like you had that 2006 show, then the Alternative Guide to the Universe at the Hayward in 2013 that was panned by the press, and a japanese outsider art show at the wellcome that wasn't too bad actually and now the show at the Turner Contemporary in margate. Then you have a few higgeldy piggeldy things dotted around but we don't really have anything that is there all the time for people to see. Like the tate doesn't have specific pieces of this work that they have out for people to gain further knowledge about outsider art.

Ru: Why do you think that is here? Do you think it's because you had gallerists in the states like Phyllis Kind was a hero for promoting outsider art, folk art, self-taught artists. You seem to be like a hero in the UK Jen - you need to win awards - services to the arts - MBE, CBE all the letters. Do you think it is because we don't have that foundation for it here?

J: Yes I do think that is why, because we don't have that in this country. And in lots of other places like in Paris you have the halle Saint pierre, which is a museum pretty much dedicated to showcasing outsider and self-taught art. In lausanne in switzerland that is where Jean Dubuffet's collection is held. In America, well in New York alone you have so many individual galleries like andrew edlin, scott from shrine, cavin morris - they are all showcasing this kind of work alongside bigger places like the american folk art museum. and then you come to england, i mean we have the gallery of everything in london which showcases the work,, but it hasn't been there that long. but really we don't have a place where people can see it all the time and appreciate it more and understand it and you know want to see more of it.

Rob: So true

Ru: Do we have studios though?

J: Yes we do have studios but again I would say that the studios in America like Creative Growth and LAND Gallery in new york, i mean because they have been

going a long time, but they seem to do a lot of high profile art fairs or things like the outsider art fair. and creative growth takes part in things like art Paris and they take part in an art fair in LA I think the Felix art Fair - They seem to have more of a platform whereas our studios don't have that platform and don't seem to have the same recognition that studios in other countries have. So it is just, it makes me really sad that this country doesn't have this amazing following as there are so many amazing artists that work out of this country that just seem to get lost unless i put on a pop-up exhibition and i can't do that all the time as I can't afford to do it. But I just love for people to see it.

Ru: Are you on your own in this world, in this field?

J: Yes completely on my own

Ru: so what do you think should happen now, what needs to be in place, what is the infrastructure to have this more exposed and to get it more respect?

J: Well I'd like to see and I'd like to make it happen. A museum that showcases this kind of work and has a permanent display, a collection, that rotates that then brings in touring shows too. So if you look at places like Gugging in vienna, austria. Gugging is where the house of artists is and this was set up by Dr Leo Navratil and he had patients on his ward that he encouraged to draw. It was an all male ward and he would pull people from this who had great potential in the arts and put them altogether in the house of artists where they could create and be looked after for their mental health needs. And now next to that, next to this beautiful house of artists where they have painted all over the outside, is the gugging museum and the gugging gallery. The museum is upstairs and it has two shows a year that are high profile shows from artists from the outsider art field and things like works from the prinzhorn. downstairs is a studio where artists from the house can come over and use it whenever they like and next to that is the gallery that is run by a lady called Nina - and they do more like 6 shows a year and they're showing work out of the studio and putting it together with people like misledys from cuba.

Ru: Yes I've just acquired some work by Misedy's Catsillo Pedroso - it's amazing.

J: Yes she's got some work there alongside oswald tschirtner at the moment in the gallery downstairs, so they are kind of pairing the two against each other. so artists from the house of artists with other artists out there in the field. so i feel like we need that here and I'd like to make that happen one day!

Ru: yes that sounds incredible.

Rob: but it is true isn't it because one of the only times that i really remember seeing a kind of complete exhibition, well apart from we will walk at the turner, was the museum of everything in 2009 in chalk farm, in primrose hill.

J: Well that was just a pop-up again.

Rob: Yes and also it was just financed by a private individual again. it is not right. and the thing is the audience for this is huge, well art generally, so if someone helps by creating a wing in a leading museum as well or something.

Ru: yes totally.

J: Well yes that has happened at LAM in Lille and they have created a wing there.

Rob: Totally. but there will be crowds of people there as people are interested.

Ru: There's a fascination with the brain too.

J: I'm not sure there would be crowds though.

Rob: Really, but isn't it about education though too.

j: Oh it is definitely about education and this whole field is written out of art history so if art school's would start talking about the outsider art movement and self-taught and folk art. It is never talked about so people just you know like me, i happened across it in a book in the library and that is how i found out about it as no one ever talks about.

Rob: and interestingly the other champions of outsider art are other artists as they've got curious minds. and also collectors actually as collectors have a curiosity and they want to research things and learn things. it is definitely interesting actually.

Well we definitely want to include a whole chapter in the talk art book we are doing, about what you're doing and this art as we want to give as much platform as we can to other art forms.

Ru: yes and inclusivity, and break down art labels and just get this out there. but let's talk about you jen. we have talked about the artists. as well as being a trailblazer and a hero. you are also a trustee for the barrington farm trust in norfolk which is supporting learning disabled artists and again hero you are going to have so many letters after your name, tell us about barrington farm trust.

J: aw it is such a great centre. it is based in walcott in norfolk about five minutes from the sea and it is a working farm, so some of the people there don't do art and they work on the farm there. so when the baby animals are born they help out and they help to feed all the animals there too and help to rear them and everything then there is a barn there which has an art studio in it which is an incredible space with a kiln there. the artists are free to do whatever they want. there is one guy called michael smith who is quite often found cutting up pieces of fabric and sticking them back together again with masking tape and winding and winding it until things are completely covered and then he will just hang it up and move onto the next thing. so there is the art barn, then they have another part of it where they do exercise classes, they might play boccia. so it's like a day centre with an art section and then a farm. most that attend live on site. So

there's little cottages on site where the more able live together and a carer comes in to support them and then they have a home on site with the people with more severe disabilities who have 24 hours care. they are then taken off to the barn whenever they want to go. It has been going for years and years - I think since the 80s it has been going and it is quite a small place and not many people will have heard of it or visit the space, as it is kind of remote where it is, but they have some really incredible artists that come out of there. One of them had some work in Norwich art museum and it was an open exhibition. He had a huge textile piece in there as he does hand embroidery and he was selected from all these artists to win the top prize which for him was just amazing. A learning disabled artist who works out of a studio, won the top prize and some money and he's due to have a show. It is just a wonderful place and wonderful place to be involved with. I've been a trustee about 3 years but I've known about them a lot longer, but they're just great.

Ru: And what does being a trustee involve?

J: I think in comparison to other places because it is very small, we don't do as much as other trustees from big powerful organisations. but you read through financial reports and they suggest things they might want to do and you have to okay on them, and see what they want to spend money on and checking in on health and safety and risk assessments. It is not all glamour. Ha. Lots of reading.

Rob: And a lot of listening too.

J: Yes lots of listening and thinking what is best for the art barn and the artists that attend there and different opportunities that you can get them into as well. So yes, it is great.

Ru: You had a show in April so you put out a two-week call out and I think that is when we connected again. i mean I follow you anyway and we connected after we had been to Kaws studio and seen some work, but there was a show called Art Unlocked Unearthed, where you were looking for artists that defined themselves as disabled or Deaf to submit an artwork and you were trying to find a lot of Deaf artists weren't you.

J: Yes. Ive just done some research with some money that I got from the Arts Council into what is and isn't out there for disabled artists and from talking to some Deaf artists recently and i was supporting a Deaf artist with an Arts Council application as well. it occurred to me that there is barely any information available in BSL, so there is nothing out there that explains these opportunities to them in an accessible way that they can understand.

Ru: BSL is British sign language.

J: so not only was I looking for disabled artists but I had interpretation done by someone i know so that I can target those people so it was really lovely that i was getting applications and queries from deaf artists to be included in the exhibition. So when i put the exhibition online afterwards I got this same person

to do the exhibition text in BSL so that these artists could understand what was being said.

I don't just do my gallery stuff as although it is my main passion, I cannot live off it. I am not one of these big dealers that have been going for a years and I am young new generation of dealer who has only been going for three years, I don't have enough money to warrant doing it full-time so I work as a freelance producer and curator with disabled artists. So this call-out was aimed at disabled and deaf artists that I work with, to give them something to look forward to during lockdown. you know everyone was in doom and gloom and i work with a lot very vulnerable artists and lots of them were told you have to stay in and can't leave the house for 12 weeks and whatever, and a lot of them became depressed. so I wanted to give them something to look forward to and something to share with their friends and family - so to say my work is on this website and it's in this zine - isn't that a wonderful thing that is happening at the moment. so that was the reason I wanted to do that.

Ru: Jen you are a wonderful thing. This is a wonderful thing.

Rob: We love you Jen, we are your biggest fans.

J: Thank you.

Ru: and also you help people with their applications and go out of your way to assist people who are confused by this whole process and that is something you offer right.

J: Yes. And I am just working with an organisation in London and doing some freelance work for them and I've just written an easy read application for a call-out for them. Because for me inclusivity and people being able to understand information is so important to me. so i don't ever write things with any art jargon or any big words as i want the text on my website to be understood by a lot of people. So when I was working with this organisation I said it would be great to put the application into easy read which is a simplified version with plain english text and imagery next to it to explain it, so that someone with a learning disability or someone that can't take in long panels of text, could read that and then would still be able to submit without having to ask too many extra questions. So making things as inclusive as possible is a real passion of mine.

Ru: So making it accessible?

J: Yes making it accessible. LIKE with my monochromatic minds exhibition i spent so long in London looking for an accessible venue as so many venues do not have ramps to get into them which is just absurd in this day and age. And then once i had found one with a ramp I then did an audio tour of the exhibition as I work with people with visual impairments and i wanted them to get more form the exhibition rather than just coming along to chat to people, so they could come along and listen to this. And then I did a film and I subtitled the film with 5 of the artists, because I wanted people to hear from the artists in the exhibition - what does art mean to you? why do you do it? please share with people where

this art comes from inside of you? so I had this film on repeat in the show and I got some of the artists to come and give talks, and one of the artist traveled down from Edinburgh and he's called James Allison. He attends a studio in Edinburgh and he took part in this little talk and he had prepared a short speech. So he got up and you know it was a very simple speech, i like art, i like drawing birds, i like drawing trees and i like the colour blue. He got to the end and everyone clapped and he sobbed and he just said I am so proud of myself for doing that and I was like we are all so proud of you, and it was just a really magical moment that he was able to travel down and talk about his work in front of just a general art audience it wasn't just people from the disability arts field, but people from all walks of life to come and listen and it was just such a wonderful moment. And I mean he set me off and I was like I've got to talk again now!

Ru: Yes I've got tears in my eyes now just hearing that story.

J: he draws really beautiful simple pictures of birds, they are amazing.

Ru: You now what Jen, next time you do a show i would be up for doing the audio tour, if you tell me what to say. If you give me script I would voice the audio tour as I would love that, I think that would be amazing and really exciting.

J: Oh that would be amazing. Definitely. it might make more people come to my show. Ha.

Ru: Well we've got to, this has got to happen. There's an artist you work with called Terence Wilde who describes himself as an adult survivor - what does that term actually mean and is it used to describe a lot of artists?

J: Aw Terence. Yes I would say that a lot of artists would describe themselves as adult survivors. I mean he was someone who was abused as a child and he suffers from post traumatic stress disorder because of that and also has mental health issues so he uses that description to describe himself and so I use that description to describe him too. But his work is incredible. His work was in my show but i represent 25 artists in total and he is one of the artists that I represent more fully as opposed to the artists that were just in that black and white show. So i've just done a mini series of interviews on my website with artists that i support and he was the first one that I did and i was asking them you know what have you been doing in lockdown, and i was like ooo based on talk art what have you been doing or what is your new skill you've learnt. so I've done that with every artist. But Terence I've known him for years and years and when I set up my gallery i asked him to come on board with me and i really champion what he does. So he creates these really incredible really detailed works and he has 2 sides to what he does. so he does this colourful work that he says is like his money making work. he doesn't sell it for a lot of money so it goes between £50-£200 and he makes it as he knows it is more likely to sell. And then he makes this black and white work which is the work that I obviously prefer - but his black and white work is all to do with his mental health and what has happened to him throughout his life and often has quite negative things put into it or wording and negative wording and saying and things. I think it is really

powerful work and that's why I love to show that work - not because I am trying to scare people but I think there's lots of people in his position that I think don't want to talk about it or think they're alone. so i think that by sharing his work, and lots of people said that about the film as he was in the film, he was sharing things about himself, but lots of people who felt alone could relate to it so after watching the film they realised they are not alone in what they've been through and what they go through on a daily basis. and Terence is someone that is quite open and open to talking about. so i like to to work with him a lot as he is very generous in sharing what has happened to him and want that to help other people along the way.

Ru: Amazing

J: and also he works in a hospital with other people with mental health issues, and he runs art workshops for them and I think he says that it is great for him as when they says to him about how they're feeling he says I know exactly how they're feeling as i have been there myself, so I really relate to them in that manner.

Ru: oh jen

J: I feel like I've depressed you!

Ru: No you haven't - you've inspired, this is really an amazing chat. you are an incredible woman.

J: I wanted to quickly ask Rob, have you been to the shell grotto in margate.

Rob: Yes I love it, i've been a number of times.

J: oh good, I didn't know whether you would have as that would be classed as an outsider environment.

Rob: yes totally, and actually they used to have seances in there. there are photographs pf a seance currently wallpapered on the wall in there and it made me think of the artist you were talking about earlier with the spirit guides. And actually Tracey Emin is a big fan of it and she's also done a little podcast with gemma cairney who lives here in margate. but yes I love it and i make every single person go there who visits margate.

Ru: I still haven't been there yet Rob

Rob: Yes one person who hasn't been there yet is Russell.

Ru: But do we know the artist who did it or is it a secret thing?

J: Well it's 180 years old and we don't know too much about the history and there's all these different stories about it and it has kind of been muddled over the years so I don't think anyone knows the true story anymore.

Rob: Yes it could well be tourism, there's loads of ideas about it. And it is the kind of thing that Russell would go crazy for, so next time!

Ru: I think I've always got the dogs so that's why, so I feel like i can't take the three dogs into the shell grotto. I'm not sure what they would be like around shells everywhere.

Well Jen we ask all our guests coming on 3 exciting questions. The first one is, if you could do an art heist, if you could steal nicely any work of art in the world all for yourself what would it be and why.

J: See mine is quite obscure as I have been thinking about this question. But I've since I saw it I've loved it. So there is an artist in the prinzhorn collection which is in germany which us a collection of pieces from institutions, and there is an artist called agnes richter who did a little jacket - it is called the little jacket and it was embroidered in 1895. There is barely anything known about this artist other than the fact she was in this institution and was born in the 1840s i believe. So she has this little jacket that i believe was a strait jacket that she cut up and made into a little peplum jacket and she stitched all over it with thread, which apparently came from her socks but who knows, and she stitched all over this little jacket. so on the sleeves of the jacket it is all on the outside, but on the actual jacket itself it is all the inside and because it is so old , you can't really read what it says, but i don't think it made much sense in the first place. But it is just a really beautiful piece that I saw in an exhibition there called madness is feel. it is stunning, just a stunning piece of work. They won't let it tour anymore as it is so fragile so it has to stay in their collection, so everyone should google that because it is beautiful. I mean i couldn't ever do anything with it except put it in the corner and admire it.

Ru: But it's a miniature jacket right like a dolls jacket?

J: No she used to wear it. It is human sized because it was a strait jacket cut up into a jacket and apparently she used to wear it. But when i was at university doing my degree you had to do a piece, a visual piece to go alongside your dissertation and because my dissertation was about outsider art, i did my own interpretation of this jacket. so i made a victorian style petticoat that i cut out and made into a blouse and then stitched all over about this victorian ladies life who then suffered a breakdown and did all that sort of stuff and in 2011 my embroidered shirt was hung alongside this shirt in the prinzhorn colelction in journey which was well exciting.

Rob: Wow, that's so cool.

Ru: And where is it now jen, have they left the other one behind and now yours is doing the tour? The new life

J: Mine is like tucked away in a drawer somewhere.

Ru: Aw.

Rob: Well we will post a picture of Agnes Richter's jacket but also we need to get a picture of your jacket too.

Ru: With you wearing it.

J: No I could never get it on, i made it too thin on the arms.

Ru: And was it from your own strait jacket?

J: Well obviously! ha. no i made a petticoat that I cut up and made into a victorian style blouse.

Rob: Awesome. Well the next question we ask every guest is very simple, what is your favourite colour?

J: Well I would have to say black. Which you know is that a colour, is it not a colour, I don;t know.

Rob: It is definitely, a colour.

J: Well I am very pale with red hair so i feel that I have to wear quite dark, bold colours. Otherwise I just look like a ghost.

Ru: Do you wear a lot of green?

J: Not so much green, mainly navy blue or black. Not very exciting on the colour front there.

Ru: Is that the black and white that comes through in your collection then?

J: I feel maybe that's what comes through yes! ha

Rob: And you share that colour with jonathon lyndon chase who we recently interviewed and they actually painted their bedroom completely black which I thought was very cool.

J: I think that might be a bit scary!

Ru: i don't know i think they feel safe. horses for courses!

Rob: Even though we aren't asking everyone at the moment as lockdown is beginning to end now, but was is a hidden skill you've unearthed during lockdown as you've referenced it on your own blog.

J: Oh yes I have with the artists I interviewed. I have been thinking about this as well. I think two skills that are skills. One of my friends teaches clay classes and each week she has been dropping a kg of clay off and a worksheet in order to

make something out of clay - which has been amazing. So i've made a salt pig, a jug and a pinch pot.

Ru: oh wow

J: so she takes them away and fires them and asks what colour glaze you want and glazes it and brings it back to your house. it's been amazing.

Rob: That's so cool.

Ru: That is amazing, has she been doing that for everyone or just you? Is this a service she offers.

J: You had to pay it was £5 week to sign up for it, so was great. This was in Manchester and she's called Sarah Crosby

Rob: love that

J: Yes and the other thing is normally I would go to lindy hop classes each week, so lindy hop is like 1920s Charleston dancing, so i've been doing online classes learning things like the trunky doo and the shim sham which are like jazz routines, so I've been dancing around my living room leaning these routines.

Rob: That's classic!

Ru: Oh my god. You are inspiring on every single level. There is another artist we want to talk about before we go that makes me want to go to India. and when we were talking we were talking about Nek Chand who is known for making the second most visited site in India behind the taj mahal which is the rock garden of Chandigarh, can we talk about that and how long you've been working with his estate or did you actually work with him when he was still alive, i don;'t know, so let's talk.

J: Yes well Nek Chand is an indian artist who lived to the ripe old age of 91 so he only died maybe like 4-5 years ago. and when he was 34 years old he was working as a road inspector in India and then he decided to one day, well he found a plot of land behind a wall so started colleting some river stones in different shapes and sizes, and different its of materials he could find and broken bits of pots etc. and for 18 years in secret he built what is now known as the rock garden of Chandigarh. It is now 40 acres in size and has over 2,000 sculptures in there and he built it all by himself for 18 years and since it was found the authorities originally wanted to get rid of it, but got talked round into keeping it and thank god they did as it is such a popular tourist attraction. And he built these sculptures around things as an armature like a bike wheel underneath it and he would build up with sand and cement over the top. So some might have broken bits of crockery mosaiced all over them with faces and he would put eyes and maybe a bit of shell in the eye. Some are known as the bangle ladies, so he would find broken bits of bangle and cover them completely in these broken bangles and he would put one next to the other next to the other. There would be

rows and rows of people and he did monkeys as well. After a while the Nek Chand foundation was set up and this allowed volunteers to go over and help to support nek chand as he got older to finish building the rock garden and fix some of the broken pieces there. So there are huge massive rock mounds, with waterfalls over the top and swings hanging off things, like swings for humans to hang off. I've never been and I really want to go but it looks like the most amazing place. so it is known as an outsider environment.

Ru: Yes I want to go so much. Do you work with his estate as you have his work.

J: Well most of his work is in the rock garden so the pieces that came out are pieces that were surplus to what was there and they came out and might have gone to an exhibition and at one point they couldn't afford to bring them back to india, so some of those ones came onto the market as there was nowhere for them to go. But they are just incredible amazing pieces that bring so much joy when you look at them.

Rob: Yes and also it was such a commitment as it was such a large scale sort of vision

J: And for so many years with nobody knows he was doing it.

Ru: I mean how did he do it, how did he get away without being discovered.

J: I just don't understand it either. I mean he was moving things around in wheelbarrows so I don't get how people didn't see.

Ru: There's got to be a movie in that. Someone has got to play that. That's an incredible role for someone.

Rob: It is like the guy in islington, the mole man. You know sue webster bought it and an architect renovated the house. So he dug under the house and did drawings on the walls. I think sue webster has preserved all these tunnels and things. I think one day a bus drove over the road and there was a huge hole in the ground because of all his digging. So these things do happen. And actually it makes me think of that Gerry's Pompeii. you know, that flat in london that came to people's attention last year.

Ru: That got saved didn't it?

J: I think it did get saved yes, I think enough money was found to save it. yes. But there's loads of little random places in London - have you ever been to Stephen Wright's house - the house of dreams in east dulwich - wow you need to google it. He opens his house mabe 8-10 times a year. it is a house on a street in East Dulwich and the ground floor of his house is just covered. I don't want to tell you too much but i want you to google it to see the pictures. but it is stephen wright - wright with a w. and when he passes away i believe the national trust is taking it over.

Ru: Is it all glitter? Is that what i'm imagining.

J: There are like bottle caps, and mosaics

Rob: Oh i just googled it, it looks incredible.

J: It is incredible and there's amazing sculptures inside it. But people go round his house to donate things. so i remember he told me that someone's mom died I believe and she had 15 pairs of glasses and Stephen has built them into the wall there so this man goes round there to visit his mom's glasses as though it is kind of like a bit of a shrine. so there are all these things that people have donated. and he builds them into this kind of incredible space that he has. and if you go upstairs, well you're not allowed to, but it's like minimal white walls and completely opposite to what is happening downstairs.

Ru: Like the two sides to his brain, like a calmness and the other. wow

J: Yes it is amazing. But he opens his house to the public maybe 8 times a year and you pay to go and visit this incredible place that he has created. amazing.

Rob: amazing. well thank you so much this has been such a wonderful hour and half together and I really hope we are able to do this again sometime. You know what we should all go to India and make a tv show!

Ru: Yes

J: Totally

Ru: Yes that's a really good idea.

J: Yes you find the money and i'll be there! ha

Rob: We can do a talk art special. Yes, big time. And i really hope you get to come to Margate and we get to see that show together and the shell grotto.

J: Oh definitely. as soon as i can get down there i will be there. I mean I watched the online tour of that show but it's never quite the same.

Rob: wonderful. thank you so much Jennifer Gilbert we love you.

Ru: thank you so much. well you're on Instagram Jennifer Lauren Gallery for all images. @j_lgallery is the handle. for anything else look at the talk art on Instagram and Twitter.

Rob: thanks for listening everyone. Jennifer you are amazing

bye everyone