

Let's see. Magic.

Can you briefly introduce yourself?

Name, country, profession, but also a visual description.

I can start.

Aristide Rontini from Italy.

Performer, choreographer...

community dance practitioner... and activist.

My visual description...

I'm quite tall. I have a brown, short hair...

and dark brown eyes.

I wear big glasses. I have a shorter arm.

Arm, which is the right one.

Sorry for my English.

That's it.

Who's next?

You are very handsome.

Thank you.

So, my name is Chisato.

My sign name is Chisato, tapping on the nose.

My work roles are... I'm an artistic director.

I'm a performance artist and a BSL art guide.

In terms of my visual description,

I have East Asian features...

because I'm from Japan.

And now I live here in London.

I've got short, dark hair.

In terms of my clothing, I've got a blue and white top on

with a design on it.

Thank you.

My name is Katarzyna Żeglicka I come from Poland.

I go by "they", "them" in English.

I identify as queer and a crip.

I've been doing lots of things throughout my life,
but currently I'm a performer, a choreographer,
and also a body work trainer.

I'm short, I'm white.

I have super short hair as well.

I'm wearing glasses.

I'm extremely gorgeous.

You are!

I'm wearing a purple jumper.

And there's also a ring on my ring finger.

Next question.

Can you talk about a performance by a deaf or disabled artist
that has had an impact on you in the last three years?

I can start.

And I would like to speak about Claire Cunningham.

I think she's Scottish.

I can't really recall the title.

However, I do recall how much impact her performance had on me,
and it was actually her influence that made me believe
that I really want to get on the route towards dance
and never got away from it.

She's extremely important in my life.

An extremely important figure in my life, in my artistic life.

I've come up with two artists that want to talk about.

One is one of our friends, Chiara.

We've actually went to see her performance yesterday

at the National Gallery,

and it was astonishing, a really brave piece.

Before seeing the performance, Chiara had already told us
about her concept...

about the painting...

and how it relates to her body and...

how traditional paintings are very beautiful individuals,
how they are represented and her body is different from that.
But actually both bodies are beautiful.
I think the atmosphere that was created in this performance was really amazing.
The title is "Seeking Unicorns".
That was the first one. The second one, I think of...
I can't remember the name of the artist,
but I think you'll know it.
It's a wheelchair user...
They created a film... It's a female...
She was diving in her wheelchair.
So she was scuba diving in her wheelchair and she was filmed
underwater, under the sea.
Can you remember it?
Have you seen that film?
It's really, really beautiful. It's a really powerful film.
And yeah, as a wheelchair user and diving under the water, in the sea...
It really transformed my way of thinking.
And I think it broke some of my concepts of what is normal
and it really impacted me.
That's the one I wanted to talk about.
I also want to acknowledge... Chiara's piece yesterday, for me
it was very important to see.
And will be having an impact on me,
but also the collective.
We are artists...
As we are a group of artists with disability from Italy,
all the conversations we have influence my own way of thinking now,
about the body and choreography.
So I feel also that even if it's not a show...
Even if they create performances and I see their works
and they're important to me, but it also creates a space

for conversation and...

and thinking about how we position in life, in our practice...

for me it has a strong impact, having this space with artists in Italy.

And also Back to Back theater.

Yesterday was, for me, a great performance.

I loved it as an activist.

I found it a very important piece for me.

I would also love to mention a choreographer from Poland,
who died three years ago.

I'm talking about Rafał Urbański.

He made a performance titled...

"He got up and went home"

In this performance, he brought to public attention
how patronising the approach of the Catholic church in Poland is
to people with disabilities and deaf people.

And the thing that will stay with me forever, I guess...
is the moment in the performance where he takes a needle
and sews a rosary to his foot.

Wow.

- Next one? - Yes.

Are you ready?

Was there any artistic work, which particularly inspired you
at the beginning of your career to pursue the performing arts
as a profession?

It's an interesting question.

For me so far there have been not that many works
that have really inspired me.

I haven't found many role models.

Over the last few years,

I've been working with lots of different artists on my own work
and I think it's those experience that I've learned from,
that have helped me form my deaf-lead ways of working.

And have made me adapt.

And I think that is what has helped me...

form my own way of working.

I think that has influenced me working with others.

I feel like it was similar in my case.

I was actually 40 years old when I started to become a dancer.

I feel like beforehand I was pretty much an ignorant when it comes to dance.

Because, mostly, I thought I just can't do it

and I'm unable to do it.

And I also lacked role models.

I haven't met a single person...

a single deaf or disabled person that would be active in the arts.

I knew some people,

some deaf and disabled people who would be doing artistic things,

but it was always in institutions, where this was part of art therapy

or something similar.

What really inspired me to get into the dancing branch

and look for different disabled people who are active as dancers

and performance artists

was actually the first performance that I was invited to take part in.

I started in the theater field,

not in dance field because I felt...

I always liked watching dance in TV programs...

It was my first approach to dance, seeing bodies in TV moving.

I loved it and I would start dancing with them

and really felt, I also wanted to move,

but I didn't allow myself to go to a dance class in my little city.

I felt maybe theater was a good place.

And in the city there was also...

a group of inclusive theater,

which was with an integrated group.

People with disability and people without disability working together.

So I felt a safe space, where my body,
in a way, was allowed to be in the art field.

So I started with theater.

This is my beginning, but at first...

since the first day, I felt this is my place.

It's the place I want to belong to, even if I didn't belong.

I didn't feel I was belonging to.

Next.

Ready?

I'm not very good at it.

Which artists...

or artistic practices inspire you in your current work?

I feel like my inspiration...

within my artistic practice and body work,

I actually draw inspiration from many different places,

not just from someone's artistic practice.

I feel like the body work that I've been doing together

with a number of queer feminist activists

are a constant influence on me.

This is where I first met with such a level

of sensitivity and empowerment

that actually had an influence.

And my work was developing in this context of awareness

and empowerment.

I feel like my current interest in body work

is very much focused on the idea of rest as a resistance.

And I draw a lot of inspiration from the Nap Ministry collective,

as well as a polish activist collective,

under the name "Ucieleśnienie", which means embodiment.

I'm kind of looking at what they're doing

and I'm adjusting it to working with deaf and disabled people.

I also want to add that I feel hugely inspired for my current project,

under the title "Wild Grown".

I draw a lot of inspiration from a book about the approach to animals and plants, written by...

The title of the book...

Translates roughly to "Cattle Yoke",

even though I have to admit, I don't know the original English title, so you would have to look it up yourself.

Thank you.

If you want...

No, just thinking about artists.

I think if we look at artists practice,

I think what's really been useful for me so far has been...

getting involved in different projects...

and also my work as a BSL art guide.

And also I really enjoy talking with...

hearing people and asking them...

how do they realise sound? What does sound mean to them?

How do they understand it?

And having those sorts of conversations.

And that's been a lot of my art practice.

It really, really helped me to think and consider what I can create with my artwork.

And I think that's it for me.

Short and good. Short and sweet.

For me, it's very important to practice what I've learned...

in the last five years during many workshops.

And it's about resting, but perceiving your body

and your movement and your needs and desire for movement.

So it's like my body is a source of inspiration

and I can listen to it and it knows what I need.

And these needs sometimes are covered by society's...

society's demands.

So I found very useful this practice of listening and perceiving...
and move from my needs.

So this is a practice that I cultivate all the time now.

I feel it very useful to connect myself.

Another... I really like to play,
so it's more maybe theater oriented, but I really like to play with things,
with myself, presenting myself.

Because for me, stage is also a place where you meet
and present yourself and it's also about identity.

So it's how you play with all these presentations.

But it's a very playful way of working with myself.

And of course, I was inspired by my first theater teacher who is...
very politically engaged and their practice was very critical
towards society.

So I feel I...

This is a legacy I took from her.

Do you remember any actual practices that you could share with us right now
about looking deep inside your body
to discover those needs and allow the body to rest?

I've learned it from...

Sorry... It's about...

you perceiving the weight of your body,
Scan your skeleton, perceive your blood system.

Listen how the breath is connected to the world
and the rhythm of your breath to yourselves...

You can go even deeper and deeper.

From there, starting moving very slowly and see what are...
without the constructed...

It's not the mind that tells your body what to do, but it's your body
that do its needs on time...

It might take five minutes before you move
and you just...

It's about this. I always start like this...

Then I play with another body, like another perception...

of environment... so I can play in a different way,

because otherwise I feel...

I'm not connected deeply to myself.

I'm playing with all other layers.

Also, in my way of working, I'm really collecting a lot of things

and let things go out a lot.

A lot go out... just too banal things.

The first thing that comes into my mind, I do it, I record it,

and then I practice and...

many things come later...

But for me, they're all equal, important, banal things,

very innovative things...

With all this huge amount of material I start...

reflecting on it...

choosing... tailor...

I think I really understand what you're saying, Ari.

Just about our bodies remembering our past and...

they remember what they've done and have that muscle memory

and how you can work with that.

Okay, move on. Next question.

Can I just see... one, right?

- One or two? - Yes, one.

One...

Is there a regular way you develop an artistic idea,

or is each process different?

I like these questions.

That's a quick one.

I do have a method that I always use.

Throughout the whole creative process, I write things like individual ideas,

collocations on small pieces of paper,

and then I keep them all the time and I arrange them and rearrange them, putting them together into sequences, scenes, chords.

I also record a lot. I record myself...

Every creative process goes hand in hand with...

with the accessibility process, where I reflect on how whatever comes to my mind fits into the idea of accessibility.

So that as much people as possible can access it.

I feel like also one thing that connects all my artistic work is that it takes really, really long, and it's really, really hard work.

Thank you.

For me the process is always different because each project needs a different process.

And maybe the way I develop the idea...

It has some common points with the processes I've run until today.

It's something like I told you about already, collecting a lot of material, it can be books, images, movement, and then a discourse or just intuition.

It can be body-wise, space-wise, time-wise... or just a collection of images in a succession, and these are tools that I use often,

but at the same time, each process... for me, is different because the project needs a different process.

Because of the needs of the project.

And it also takes a lot of time.

It's really interesting what both said.

I think I would agree with the slow process in needing time, for that process to really work itself out.

My process is very much based on research coming first.

So I think same as both of you have said, It's looking for those materials.

It's almost similar to my work as a BSL art guide. It's quite similar.

I also think accessibility is, as we said, very important.

My work style is deaf-lead.

No, I'm not finishing. I was just waiting for the translator.

Sorry.

Maybe when you finish, you can always tap the table.

Because then I know you're done. Perfect. Thank you.

So yeah, my work is deaf-lead...

so my team usually all hearing.

I may have some deaf people involved,

so we really need to have a clear concept before starting.

The next step is creating like a storyboard,

so it's visually accessible for anyone that may need it.

This means the interpreters or the team can say,

"Okay, what does Chisato want? What's her concept?"

And I'll have it there and we can discuss it.

We can say what part is everyone doing, we collect that together...

and it's a very collaborative process.

Thank you.

I think we've got it!

Thank you guys. Thank you for coming tonight.

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Yes.

I'm trying to train my presentation...

I'm trying to play, you know?

How are you doing?

Thank you.