CONTENT

Introduction

In October 2020, Rupert presented a group exhibition, *Other Rooms*, which included new commissions and existing artworks from seven artists: Kah Bee Chow; Leah Clements; Milda Januševičiūtė; Renée Akitelek Mboya; Joshua Schwebel; Edward Thomasson; Romily Alice Walden. Among the many reasons for developing this exhibition was our wish to celebrate and to bring back to Vilnius some of the brilliant artists who had been part of Rupert's programmes and to explore with them what 'structures of support' can mean and do. As we wrote in the exhibition's opening statement:

> 'Support structures extend in complex webs in which we are inextricably, helplessly tangled. These structures can be fragile, sometimes rough and awkward. Often, they are hardly-noticed gestures, feelings and atmospheres, like the texture of a blanket in a hospital that is soft to the touch or the sound of a voice that sustains a memory. They can emerge from our local environment and they are built from tiny details and with care, attention and tacit understandings. These structures of support form a kind of erratic vernacular architecture, woven together with stories that are gathered, shared and reconfigured. They might keep things going or nudge us toward repair and restoration. They can give us the capacity to imagine, daydream and hope when it feels as if there is little time, space or energy to do so.

At certain periods–like the one we are living in now–these webs of support and the care and work that builds them up may come into relief. Often, it is these moments that show us how to move out of the closed, dark room of individualism and competition into a vast web of interdependencies.'

The articulation, fragility and intimacy of these structures of support have informed how we look at the artworks in this exhibition, for instance, how a work may appear as a manifestation of already existing structures of support or a representation of their absence. Furthermore, we wanted to put our attention on the vital conditions that allow an artwork to be made, maintained and displayed. Often, in curatorial practices and exhibitions, we don't take enough time or space to reflect on these conditions–they can be deemed no longer 'relevant' or 'interesting' once they reach the 'neutral' space of the gallery and enter into the exhibition's particular narrative. What makes up these conditions? So many things, visible and invisible, tacit and explicit: friendships, daily routines, connections, institutions, emotional and physical health, conversations, funding, acknowledgments, the movements of the Moon and Mercury and the furniture and architecture on which our lives so often depend.

This collection of conversations, recipes and recordings produced by the exhibition's artists and curators together with their friends, collaborators, assistants and their new acquaintances is a virtual continuation of *Other Rooms*. It carries on this conversation on structures of support but away from the exhibition space and attempts to record that which can often seem difficult to articulate. The contributions to this collection do not follow one logic or format but orbit around the same questions–how we understand, acknowledge and maintain the structures of support in our private, institutional and artistic lives.

Our sincerest gratitude to all the contributors.

Edward Thomasson and Adrian

This is an edited transcription of an hour-long conversation I had with my friend Adrian, who is a big support to me. In the interview I note when we are laughing together. It sits a bit awkwardly in the text, like canned laughter, but we laugh with each other throughout the conversation, so it seemed important to try and transcribe that too.

Edward: First, let me just explain to you why I asked you to talk with me. Basically I've been asked to speak to someone who is part of my support network about how we support each other. The first person I thought of was you because you've been a constant support in my life since I've met you, or re-met you, more specifically. I'll explain for people reading this how we know each other and maybe you'd like to reflect back on that and add in any details, but not too many.

We laugh

So, we met in a support group, but before that, in a different time, in a different way, we had met before: we had had sex at my flat, when we were both having a pretty difficult time for similar reasons. I think the reason I thought of you straight away is because meeting you in the support group, at that moment, in that new place, having known you before, has been really important for me, transformative. We're linked back to where we've both come from, but our relationship is part of the healing of all that too, if that makes sense. Somehow the fact that like we've been in these different places together really deepens the support that we can offer each other. We've seen each other at our worst. Well, I don't think you've seen me at my very worst actually.

We laugh

Adrian: Yeah, gosh, thank you for thinking of me, it's really touching and lovely because that's all I ever wanted, to be a support to others. And that is one of the reasons why I got into trouble in the past because I'd tried to rescue other people in an egotistical way. But our relationship is different from that. And I think what you're saying is fascinating because as empathetic as we try to be for each other, it helps so much if we know that someone else has gone through exactly the same thing. So to have our paths crossing like this, in this direct way, it does something. Obviously, in the group we go to, I hear my experience in what other people say a lot, and that's amazing in itself, to understand I'm not alone, that someone else is dealing with the same shit that I'm dealing with. But then to experience it with another person, that's even more powerful.

Edward: Yeah it's like, 'we've all been there', but we literally have, been there together, in the same place!

We laugh

Adrian: Yeah, and that really aids our understanding of each other, the compassion and support that we know each other needs.

Edward: So there was a couple of things I've written down about the actual mechanisms of all this because I actually I think that there's a sort of real practicality to it, not like I'm using you, but there's a sort of functionality to it. All of these words sound really uncaring.

Adrian: I think you're right, when I'm explaining these new tools that we're learning in our support group to people, it does sound a little bit functional and cold. I think what that speaks to is that relationships are very often codependent in some way. That's actually what we think care is, what we're told good relationships look like, disappearing into each other. These new tools appear colder because they're less emotionally entangled, so they do sound less romantic. But that's because romance is codependent really.

Edward: Romance is actually genuinely a fantasy.

Adrian: Yes!

Edward: It's literally a genre, like fantasy.

We laugh

Adrian: So, you were saying you want to talk about those practicalities? What popped up in my head was this idea of validation and how, in general, we say that validation isn't a great thing to seek all the time, but really that's what I do with you: if I'm feeling down, I ring you up and I'm seeking validation, I'm seeking acknowledgement of my feelings. I'm seeking a little bit of validation; I want you to make me feel a bit better about myself.

Edward: I think that maybe it's less transactional than that. I think sometimes it's much easier to listen to someone else and hear how they're actually feeling, than it is to hear yourself and listen to yourself. I think when I'm in a bad place, it's very easy for me to paint everything with a very certain colour palette. When I reach out to you, I'm asking you to just introduce a bit of colour and that's not validation. It's having an outside view and that's so helpful. But I always negate the idea of validation, and it's actually not that negative, is it? It's totally fine.

Adrian: Yeah, we wouldn't exist without it, we're social beings, we need it.

Edward: You mentioned codependence, and the opposite of that is interdependence, I think. Without wanting to get too termy, the support group that we go to is built on interdependence, and then echoing that, or probably in light of that, our relationship is really interdependent too. It's what we're describing, I think. Basically, what I've been learning over the last few years is that it really does take a village. I really do not go through one day feeling independent now and I'm so grateful for it.

Adrian: Yeah, it's weird, because I still strive for independence, it's a goal of mine. One of the images I have in my head is being a monk, because they're the most like self-contained people, but even monk's live in a community, even they have so much interaction and so much dependence on that village.

Edward: And all that interaction is pretty hard too. Earlier you were mentioning you used to want to save people. I wanted to feel connected to everyone, and as gorgeous as that sounds, it's not. And I was doing it wearing fucking heavy armour. I would have to really armour up with whatever I could find to go around and look for all of this connection that I'm talking about, and armour gets heavy after a while if you know what I mean.

There is something about wanting to move beyond the limits of our own bodies in both these things.

Adrian: Yeah, if I look back, I was looking for connection and intimacy and belonging too. But at the time it felt like the exact opposite. It was all about escape and numbing and detachment. I felt like I couldn't belong. I couldn't cope with the world I was living in. None of it was about connection. Looking back, I can see that's exactly what I wanted, but I literally went the other way. I wasn't seeking connection because to me it just wasn't workable. So the only way to cope with the lack of connection was to escape even more, to detach completely and just destroy myself basically.

Edward: As you're saying that, I know that's it's a part of my experience too, but I find it much harder to describe it because…

Adrian: It's bleak

We laugh

Edward: Well, yeah, it's bleak, but also you saying it now is not bleak at all, it's brave, I don't think I'm that brave. But we're talking about it now, from another place, and with each other. Well, not a totally other place, I mean, it's not like: oh, it's all gone actually, totally good now!

Adrian: Cured!

We laugh

Edward: They're not going to be able to all hear all the laughter in the transcription which is a shame, because basically that's what I mean, it's not bleak because we are sharing it with each other and laughing about it now. When we're in the support group that's what's happening too: the action of the group is to dismantle the shame that we are holding inside ourselves by making it public, or semi-public in the group. Shame is debilitating, it makes me feel very lonely, it's something that I probably will have to hold in various ways forever. But a little bit of it is destroyed every time I reach out for help because I can make something new that's stronger than this thing that makes me feel alone.

Adrian: Agreed, it's a really weird one because like, obviously it's not enjoyable to hear other people's negative experiences, to know that they went through those things, but there is something so comforting in it. Like you say, it removes those layers of shame when you hear that, because you go: you look like a pretty together kind of person, but you've done this or you've been through that. It helps me to rationalise things, because when I'm not in a good place, I don't see myself as attractive or kind. Whereas if I see someone else and I see that they've got positive qualities, but they've gone through something, then I go, okay, well, you know, it happens to the best of us. And that removes a layer of shame. And I go, okay, well maybe I'm not a completely bad person. Maybe I do have positive qualities too. I just went through this shit.

Edward: It's another fantasy really.

Adrian: Shame?

Edward: Well yeah, that's total bullshit. But I meant the fantasy of this seamless existence, that we can move through things perfectly and be so fluent in life that we're just STUNNING. It doesn't exist. And yet that's the way that we meet each other all the time, expecting ourselves to do that and also expecting other people to do that too. I speak for myself here, and it's not like: oh my God, I live without shame! It's so much part of me I don't even know where it is all the time. But I know that if I talk about those things that they lose their power to affect me negatively and affect other people negatively, if I can just acknowledge them and just put them outside rather than keep them in. And that comes back to practicality and thinking about our relationship again, because I know that if I've done something that I feel a bit weird about, I know that I can describe it to you. And that's really practical.

Adrian: Yeah. there's just this level of care and support and love and lack of judgment.

Edward: That's what you think.

We laugh

Adrian: There's like a lack of judgment there from my side, at least. I was thinking when you were describing that, the feeling when you don't want to share something, but you know you should share. It just reminded me of the fear, it's like the fear of a child, a child in fear of being rejected or being told off or being punished for doing something wrong or saying something wrong.

Edward: Like in school that when we get something wrong, we're punished. It's kind of the opposite of what should happen.

Adrian: Agreed.

Edward: We should be held.

Adrian: Hell yeah!

Edward: Thank you for holding me Adrian.

Kah Bee Chow and Simona Dumitriu

Simona Dumitriu and Kah Bee Chow are friends who both live and work in Malmö, Sweden.

> What do 'structures of support' mean to you and how do they work in your daily life and artistic practice? Do they have a physical body, social form or other manifestations?

Simona: In my daily life I find structural support in remembering the force and work my mother and my grandmothers and great grandmother have put out throughout their lives. I have the privilege of coming from a lineage of cis women with fantastic strengths, who all survived and thrived with faint to no presence of cis men in their lives (although they did have spouses from time to time) and who built houses and safety with their bare hands. So I feel I embody all the strength of the world in my mind and my determination, in my self-assurance. And that comes from knowing bits of their stories. I also find support in the queer activism that preceded me, in the words, the poets and the martyrs of queer liberation…
The body of my partner, holding and dancing with my cat, these kinds of clichés…and witchcraft, that I partially come from, although that's another story.

In art practice: the bodies and minds pulling through working side by side to finish an exhibition and having good knowledge of these bodies and minds, of their experiences. I refuse certain people around me because I always compare them to the ones I used to know and work with. I think my two models in ethical thinking and cultural labour would be artists Ileana Faur and Marian Dumitru, two of the members of the collective I was part of, as organisers of the fantastic, mythical and defunct Platforma Space in Bucharest. I am grateful beyond imagination to them.

Structures of support can be equated with institutions too—I mean how is a funding body or an archival body not a structure of support? But there are different sets of eyes and rules, when it comes to (established, well-funded) institutions. Can we even call what they do *support*, or is it rather a bureaucratic reflex of their sheer existence? I mean the word is used to its ends and beyond, right, since each project benefiting from a bit of money or some other in-kind contributions needs to write that it was 'supported by' this and that institution, funding body and so forth. So in that sense, they could be thought of as perennial (?), stable (?) and equidistant (?) givers of 'support'. This wording is quite wrong, because it endlessly implies a benefactor angle, and not an employer/recruiter angle—this could be a vestige from the Renaissance model of relationships between artists and their 'benefactors', which were, in fact, then as now, their employers. Except, of course, these benefactors did not take it upon themselves the tasks of ensuring pensions, health benefits etc.—oh, that's an article in itself.

I am now also rethinking the question under the influence of an article, a transcribed conversation between Lara Khaldi, Yazan Khalili and Marwa Arsanios, 'What We Talk about When We Talk about Crisis: A Conversation, Part 1', published in eflux journal 111/Sept. 2020. With this in mind, I am coming back and thinking again about the neoliberal cultural institution or cultural organisation as a sort of 'structure of support', which it claims to be, while equally being a structure of selection and permission, a taste maker in contemporary art, a pedagogue of the zeitgeist and so forth. A museum, a konsthall or a funding institution are, for better or worse, structures of economic support, through stipends, paid jobs, fees for 'projects' and so forth. They are the visible structures of support, the opposite of my first thoughts or examples. They are the ones that can also be held accountable. Reading through the long, thorough, hitting-right-home conversation between Khaldi, Khalili and Arsanios, it becomes obvious to me how much these structures act as 'benefactors' rather than employers, in the deep capital mindset of today. Why does one constantly feel their wrath or fear their hidden agendas? In the conversation, Lara Khaldi compares the Palestinian situation with that of the Soros-financed centers for contemporary art in the SEE after the fall of communism. I have witnessed this process of creating a structure of support in the making of Bucharest's CSAC (later CIAC - Soros Center for Contemporary Art, later, after the Soros financement ended, renamed the International Center for Contemporary Art). That center had a mission, exactly like Khaldi underlined, to get rid of any lingering communist thinking and boldly direct art toward liberal, capitalist agendas, while also shaping the elite of the local arts. And wow, for a relatively small institution, it did exactly that. It shaped the bosses of today's art scene– the former director of CSAC/CIAC is today the director of AFCN (the Romanian Agency for the National Cultural Fund), which is the main and only nation-wide financing institution for the

visual and applied arts, and all the other artists close to CSAC/CIAC are relatively visible internationally, some of them are heads of Arts University Faculties, one of them is the current director of the MNAC (National Museum for Contemporary Art in Bucharest) and so on. This is not entirely a critique, because both CSAC/CIAC and the persons behind it and supported by it, while teaching themselves and others some neoliberal ways (the Romanian version, of course), establishing power at the turn of millenia and being part of the patriarchal systems woven in the societal canvas, were also fighting against a heavy undertow of traditionalism, deeply ingrained 'grandpa' style corruption and generally did support experiment, performance art, queer processes and so on... So, see, this is a fascinating study on its own, the fights for dominance between various structures of power (and support).

What does it mean to be part of the structure of support for someone else?

Simona: Responsibility, fear. I am supporting my small family, both financially and just by being in close contact with my mother who is living alone and getting older. So it is a lot of fear and I guess egoism, as I and we try to build ourselves a bit out of the semi-safe precarity (I deeply dislike that word) … and then into what?

Kah Bee: I agree that it can be heavy on both sides, I tend to think of these relations for me, as being grounded in mutuality, with varying degrees of unevenness. We have talked of this daily contact you have with your mother before, I have also observed this with other friends whose parents live elsewhere–for example, our friend A would pick up a call from his father in the middle of dinner, and really talk, really check-in and remain very much a part of each other's lives even if they live in different countries, entirely different contexts and so on. This has always amazed me because it's something I struggle to do myself. My family and I have been speaking much more frequently via video calls since we learned of the diagnosis this summer–on my end, I feel I am the one who needs them, I need to know, I need to google search all the terms and procedures I do not understand, I need to sense some measure of control over what I absolutely have no control of and I need to impart that I care in spite of my location; one could say that this care has equally as much to do with my own guilt and need for control as much as care. Yet the frequency of our long-distance calls also provide a sense of steadying, a holding in place in this process, in our mutual confusion and concern, more so than I initially understood. The lack of self-sufficiency can also in turn become a structure of support, a way of containing the unknowables. I am still pretty terrible at phone calls but I'm working on it.

Since the pandemic, I would say going to work in my studio collective here in Malmö and meeting my friends and colleagues there almost on a daily basis has been an important source of constancy–it has always been, but markedly so over this period. I want to acknowledge the kindnesses and generosity I am fortunate enough to have around me. None of this just happens, it takes a very specific constellation of existing support structures and people who care enough to make it possible. In this case, there was already another collective in the building, Alta, with people who had established a good relationship with the landlord who drew out the possibility of us even working in this space. There are among other funding structures, a studio grant which Malmö artists can apply to every two years from Malmö city which help subsidise the rent to a degree. Also there is the fact that there are enough of us who want to work together in the same physical space; and value being part of a community. None of this is a given.

At the same time, I would also caution against romanticising the collective or positioning it as a kind of magic pill towards all ills; it is important and necessary to work together, to talk together and to live together; it can also be extremely difficult, it is also maybe not an option evenly available to all. I remember laughing out loud when I read this tweet earlier this year:

'*very few of you have actually live* [sic] *in a commune type situation so let me be the first to tell you that actually, it fucking sucks. it is a full time job. everyone is rude and irritating and no one cleans the fucking kitchen. every large commune of the 60s collapsed the same way*'[1]

It's a little wholesale for sure but it's also familiar. I wonder if we can speak for the need for community without exalting it? Or without idealising it as a

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1   From Eliza Gauger's twitter account: "i was in an illegal oakland warehouse art commune a few years ago. 'hey man the quiet hours are very clearly stated in the house rules, please use headphones' became a massive mailing list argument. again, i must emphasize this: no one cleaned the kitchen"

utopian wet dream?[2] I am not advocating a solitary life in the forest but I want to acknowledge the inevitability of conflict and of sharply coming up against conditions upon which this togetherness or alongside-ness is possible, where the difficulty can also be unevenly distributed. Simona, whenever you speak of Platforma in Bucharest–forgive me if I completely miss the mark–I tend to have this picture of everyone in the courtyard seated around a long table, discussing ideas, arguing passionately, endless debates, strong disagreements but also still motoring the dialogue on and on. It feels like a form of vital work, maybe acting in the Arendtian sense, which also takes place in a very specific kind of space, I mean a space where I am not expected, for example, to sit at the same table as my ex's racist grandmother and argue for my right to personhood–although I understand this is precisely the kind of conversation many would expect me to undertake in the interest of...?

Simona: Haha, that's funny, it is a romanticised open air image but a beautiful one. We didn't have much of a courtyard, I mean there was an asphalt parking yard where we could and did sit to smoke or have coffee, on a lateral staircase. Otherwise the space itself was large, light sometimes, dark at other times, always sort of dusty. But yes, it contained the privilege of such conversations that you're imagining, sometimes (not all the time though).

I am also familiar with the conflation: community, commune, commonality, what is it that we have in common and so forth. From my increasingly separatist experience, there is a thread through all of them. And I am coming back more and more to the word *commonality,* out of them all.

> Why are some structures of support invisible or ignored in the first place? What does it mean to make them visible in artistic work or an exhibition? How and what frames exist to make them visible?

Simona: This question makes one think about separatism and the very many reasons why groups that are generally subjected to discrimination have to create separate, safe(er) environments for themselves. Uh, making them visible should not be in any case a purpose for the sake of some art

or other. Such groups may themselves decide to present themselves in a specific way and that's about the only ethical way to make these structures of support visible: when they themselves decide to become so and to whomever they decide to become visible to. Any other attempt to 'make them' visible would equal forced visibilisation.

Kah Bee: In terms of separatism, there was this one part of Eli Clare's talk (as part of the events programme for this exhibition) whereupon after describing a real-life encounter, he preemptively counters, 'and I am not making this story up, I am not confabulating details, I am not even exaggerating it. I couldn't make this kind of crap up even if I tried.'
I deeply recognised this reflex: this anticipation of disbelief, the expectation of scrutiny and suspicion, that the questions to follow will question your capacity to speak of your lived experience without an attendant paranoia, without madness or bias. Will your version travel across the chasm to better adhere to their version of reality?
I think separatism can offer, even just momentarily, relief from having to relentlessly accommodate someone else's preferred certainty.

> What can we do to make these structures less fragile, resistant to 'self-interest' and individualism which is being constantly fuelled by neoliberal capitalist agendas. Instead, can we think of the role of structures of support to increase collectiveness?

Simona: I don't really relate to this question. I believe real structures (or groups, or persons) of support are very strong and resistant to context. And if they are defeated by context, there is nothing an outsider can do to prevent that in any case. Maybe one good thing would be to stop mimicking them, to not suggest that some semi-hipster 'woke' (this word is now getting super instrumentalised) artsy group running an artist-run space in some hip space is equal with people that actually do the work and build safe environments for themselves (or at least try to do this work and often get drowned and muddled in the over-vocalisation of the former). So all of (us/me) hip people doing art should at least work from this perspective of respect and difference.

2   (I know at this point I am conflating community, collective, commune–but uh you get where I'm going)

Kah Bee: David Graeber cites the work of Peter Kropotkin as representative of an alternative school of Darwinism which emerged in Russia (in the early 20th century) positing cooperation rather than competition as the driver of evolutionary change, suggesting that 'animal cooperation often has nothing to do with survival or reproduction, but is a form of pleasure in itself.'[3] Suppose one is not naturally a 'calculating economic actor trying to maximise some sort of self-interest', suppose we are not inherently selfish creatures and we actually enjoy helping each other. One wonders how deeply internalised this ascribed selfishness has come to be.

Within the art context, the narrative of individual exceptionalism is so deeply instilled and entangled with our value systems linked to our perceived chances of survival. How wedded am I to it? As a recipient of a two-year working grant from the Swedish Arts Grants committee myself, isn't this the reward system that enables me an income as an artist? How am I paying the rent?

So I found out today that you had already written an essay on this in 2018: and wow I actually think the essay addresses all of these questions we have been presented here with so much more specificity and care than I would know how to do—I am tempted to just cite it in full honestly... In the following, you write about the Swedish Arts Grants accounting report from 2017, deducing from the figures of how many might operate, even temporarily, as an 'ideal artist':

'... as seen from *Konstnärsnämndens årsredovisning 2017*, one of the major stipend-givers can only cover, at the moment, a total of 1586 successful applications (including all types of grants) of the 8540 sent-in. I would then estimate that the ideal artist, as described above, is one of around 200 to 300 per year, which would win both grants: the one for living and the one for having a studio for production. By cross-checking this list with the artists who may win grants for their personal projects, ensuring enough funding for more elaborated production, I can imagine that around 100 artists would have it all, in one year. And 5 to 10 from them would be from Malmö. Around 10 in Sweden would have non-Western sounding names. Not artist groups, or duos, or collectives.

I have built this extensive digression, while fully aware of the truism that one can never cover the demands of everybody, as an exercise for imagining the limits of the MU agreement and the descriptors of a few hundred solitudes which feed the solitude of the others. A maximum of 300 artists in Sweden, each in their own name, with a contract in their own name and a practice strong enough to stand alone in front of a jury and receive a grant. 300 solitudes, I would call them, in order to clarify what I mean by the word solitude in the economy of my narrative so far.' [4]

I wonder how is it possible to re-arrange these solitudes? Perhaps these grants are also awarded in good faith that the solitudes redistribute in infinite ways[5]—is this a realistic expectation or is this a convenient way for me to frame my own reward and guilt?[6]

What are the privileges accorded in every successful application, every acquisition, commission, invitation? What are possible ways of sharing, rethinking and questioning these advantages? This is certainly not a new question—and I want to say that I do already see my friends putting into practice these questions on a daily basis, affording others their care, time and resources; whether it is O documenting his friends' exhibitions, L doing the dishes after our afternoon coffee, I producing and publishing books for her friends. I learn from them everyday. I know these examples seem minute in the face of the omnipresent structuring logic of capital. All this is also not to serve as an excuse for complacency, but to pay attention to these already ongoing considerations and lived practices—what is possible for us to build on and expand upon? We already do this and we have the capacity to do this; supporting and helping each other as an end in itself.

Can you bite the hand that feeds you and care deeply for it at the same

3   Graeber, David (January 2014) 'What's the point If We Can't Have Fun?' In *The Baffler* no. 24 thebaffler.com

4   Dumitriu, Simona (November 2018), 'Translating Experiences into Space: Pedagogies with and without Money'. In *Paletten* #312-313 published in Swedish as 'Att omsätta erfarenheter i rum: pedagogiker med och utan pengar.'

5   It is also important for me to stress that Konstnärsnämnden is an extraordinary support system for artists in this country, not only because it has been a crucial lifeline for myself and so many other artists, but also as we now also see this potential collaboration between right-wing and center parties in Sweden working together to present a budget and one can see also how easily these existing support systems can be dismantled. So I acknowledge my own bias here too, in wanting to care for it, protect it yet rethink it at the same time.

6   SD: Well, in my calculations I was not really thinking about dismantling the structures of support but rather considering the fact that, within an ideal model of the lone applicant with perfect perspectives, a specific model is built, one that does not find a place for deep, long-term collaborations or collective thinking. KBC: Definitely, and I agree, and I am maybe (trying to) also imploring artists to not accept this model as a given and to question this solitude too.

time–beyond acts of convenience or as a kind of grandstanding employed in a forum like this? A good friend told me recently, 'critique can also be an act of love. And love is often very difficult and a lot of hard work.' I received this message at a time when I really needed it and I really appreciate that this love or care is also not easy. I mean, nothing is easy, why should it be? And then also to return to David Graeber again, who says critique itself can also become a trap in that 'if you apply the logic of critique too consistently, you create this almost gnostic notion of reality, that the one thing we can do is to be the person who realizes the world is wrong.'[7] He goes on,

'But it strikes me that radical theory has always been caught between that moment and the Marxian moment in which you try to understand the rule, all the hidden structures of power and the way in which every institution that might seem innocuous contributes to reproducing some larger totality, which is one of domination and oppression. And so, if you take it too seriously, critique rather loses its point because it becomes impossible to imagine anything outside. That's when you end up needing, relying on, the logic of total rupture. Something will happen, I don't know, a really big riot, and then during the effervescence a new world will just come into being. There are insurrectionists who say that outright.'[8]

I think we have spoken about different versions of this before in our work together: the desire for immediate gratification, the pull of romanticising radical break when the pace of change– not superficial change–is sometimes painfully snail-like, incremental, perhaps invisible, with no explosive gestures to mark one side from another. The quality of the work can be boring and terrifyingly banal, Arendt would probably disparage us as bureaucratic failures, but this is also our political reality of what might help shift.[9] Even though I am a complete bore myself, I would also disagree with what Graeber says here in denigrating the value of a big riot (I mean this is also in 2012)–we have seen in recent times the efficacy of exactly such ruptures too.

Simona: I am, if you will, a model of disruption that is forever faced with its demise. I agree and posit that without critique (in a sense of public

self-awareness, public self-positioning within the context one is part of) there is no possibility of commonality, collectivity or change. Without a space for anger to be released, a group or collective is going to suffocate in its own soup of politeness and lies. So if the original question was whether support can increase collectiveness, I would argue that dissent increases collectiveness.

> What structures of support are about maintenance (keeping things going, just trying to live) and which are about change? Why do we value change over maintenance especially in the arts?

Simona: There is change and then there is change. For instance, if in, let's say, five years, a big cultural institution would decide to just purge its insides under the influence of Black Lives Matter and actually hire BPOC (with a representative amount of QTBPOC too) in higher up positions, that would mean valuable change (also that would mean we already live in a dream-like utopia where white supremacy and heteronormativity ceased to exist, so...).
But if, let's say, a (big) cultural institution decides to destroy structures which already existed within it (in its crevasses, or margins if you will) or people who already transformed the institution by seeding in it the very instruments of good change, that means destructive change, painful instrumentalisation and a void in the end. I've lived through that several times even, and I have seen others being affected by the bitter claw of maintenance.
The strongest structures of support are both about maintenance (just trying to live) and about change, or by their very existence they represent change and I am thinking here even about mid-size independent institutions, such as Savvy Contemporary in Berlin.

> What is the relationship between curators, artists, institutions? What are our roles and how do we support each other? What can we change in the way we work, communicate, curate exhibitions and create institutions in order to be more supportive?

Simona: Supportive of what? There are so many things one can be supportive of and fight against... This is indeed the problem: cultural institutions go with the flow and the latest trend, corporate organisations that they are. If it's about climate change, we do it like that. Or we get ourselves at the forefront

7   Sorry so much David Graeber in this. Graeber, David and Kuo, Michelle (2012),
        'Another World'. In *Artforum*, Summer 2012. Available here
8   ibid.
9   Why do I keep imagining Arendt terrorizing me??

and support the BPOC fight for an exhibition or two. Two years ago it was all about memory and poetry and circumventing abstraction. Somewhere in the West. Could a museum decide overnight to become a non-hierarchical, consensus-driven, dialogue-based collective? Could a konsthall decide overnight to become a dancing school if that's what's really needed in the area? Would any big institution stop grasping for their role in forming what art is (or at least for their role as educated mirrors of today's society)? What would we change then? The same mid-sized and small independent organisations which function more and more as nothing else than CV-builders or practice grounds for the well-meaning ones or the future elites? I am too sour perhaps or rather I have been confronted recently with either monolithic or mythic models so my mind is somewhat shut when it comes to the vast middle ground out there.

Thought exercise: how would a big institution look–say a contemporary or modern art museum–if all of a sudden it became a collective, non-hierarchical entity, with each employee having its equal share of responsibility and benefits, with no one fearing for the safety of their jobs, with a governing body made of every employee and a governing system based on consensus and dissent; while functioning still as an institution, rather than an artistic project, a peculiarity…? My mind often travels to where societies are rebuilt from what was in novels or rather it travels to Octavia Butler's famous trilogy *Xenogenesis,* or Lilit's Brood.

Would such an institution be a battle ground? What would happen to its collection/s and archive/s, both already existing and in the future? What would access and support look within such an institution? Would the eventual racist or sexist employees be finally kicked out of its collective body by consensus or will they just become 'justiciary' versions of themselves?

I dreamed once of a place like that–or was it a real place in the capital city of Republic of Moldova? A big, derelict museum now filled to the brim with random stuff pulled out of its vaults and dungeons and hanged in every musty corner. With employees sitting by a campfire in its courtyard.

Image credit: NASA. Jets erupting from the south polar terrain of Saturn's moon, Enceladus.

Image description: Black and white photograph showing the top curve of a mottled grey orb with rays of white light emanating from it, against the black space behind.

The Open Door

The following is an extract from an astrological reading that Johanna Hedva gave Leah Clements on 31 January 2020. Full audio recording here.

I wanna talk about your open door…

OK, south node on the moon. I have a feeling that you already know about this. It sounds like you do, in the sense of me asking you about it, and your Dad already telling you.*

I'm just gonna read to you what it says in my book…Moon south node, I'm gonna read the negative tendencies first right? Ready?:

Depressed
Did not receive enough nurturing from Mother
Undernourished
Sensitive
Lonely
Isolated
Psychically oversensitive
Easily controlled
Impressionable
Timid
Fearful
Emotional troubles
Unstable
Unhappy
(Johanna chuckles)
Light-sensitive
Tormented by memories or past-life recall if you believe in that.

Positive. I've known several south-node-on-the-moon people very well, my mother was one, one of my best friends is one. All of those negative tendencies are certainly true but, like, get into the positive, OK?:

Sensitive
Kind
Charitable
Devoted
Sweet
Unselfish
Poetic
Musical
Spiritually inclined
Compassionate
Generous
Empathetic and Sublime.

So, you know, take or leave whatever you want from those lists. Basically the point of them is just to have every possible manifestation in the list, so that you can kind of see which ones apply.

I can tell you though, I kind of got that feeling when we were at Wysing. I was like, 'Something about Leah is...she's got a foot into the other dimension.' And I wasn't sure what it would be. When I saw the chart though and I saw the south node on the moon—in the first house no doubt—I was like, 'Oh that's why'.

And this is what I was saying in the email, it can make you psychically fragile in *this* reality, and that's definitely something I have seen for folks who have this, is that it's *hard* for them to be in this reality. It's *hard* for them. It's painful. Like my dear friend who has it, she describes herself as being a lightning rod for other people's pain. That is absolutely true. And I can tell you that it's the sort of thing that in this reality is not really an asset, but in the other place, 12th-house kind of a place, right? Like a spiritual place, an imaginative place, a dream place, a sleep place, something else, somewhere else, mystical land, it's absolutely an asset.

Here's what I would suggest you do though: find a way to close the door. When you want to. This is very important. Sounds easier to say, I'm sure, than it is to do. But I can give you some tips. I don't have a south node on the moon but I do have a similar-ish kind of thing, I have a south node on my rising conjunction, which is also known as being like an open door. I also have a moon in the 8th. It's not a lightning rod for other people's pain but it's more like...I wouldn't call it a lightning rod, I'd call it a phone, that is just always ringing with other people's pain. And I can choose to pick it up or not. That's the thing to try to do. Here's how you can do it:

One is to wear protective stones. For a time. You don't have to drape yourself in black tourmaline every day forever, but it wouldn't hurt to carry something in your pocket or wear around your neck that is dark. Black. Impenetrable. You do *not* ever want to wear labradorite, it's dark, but that's just like an open door that you're carrying around in a stone.

Basically you want to do protection magic. Wearing white is not recommended. I mean you can, only after you've learned how to close your door I

would say. The reason for that is, I don't know if you know about Santeria? If people are being initiated into Santeria to be priests or priestesses they have to wear all white for a year. And they cannot handle money or touch people. And the idea is that you're purifying yourself and entering into this kind of pure spiritual place or state. But there's a reason why they wear white. White itself is like an open door. Obviously in the Eastern traditions it's the colour of death. This is why I wear black actually. I mean I like it aesthetically and I'm a goth, but I also wear it because (laughs) because it's a protection thing. It's like 'No you can't come in. Unless I ask you to. Or unless I choose to let you in.' Spiritually, I'm talking. I mean it works for people in human form too, but I mean in terms of spirits it's like what you want to close the door on is experiences or forces that you can't see but you can absolutely feel. And you want to be in control of when you let them in or not.

So dark crystals or stones, guardian kinds of protection. You know this is also why Saturn is good for you I think. He's the guardian, his colour is black.

Other things that you can do are: find some kind of protection prayer or mantra that you can say. I mean you said your spirituality is mainly through sleep. Here, you said 'there are some nice traditions like each choosing a song to share with each other when we hang out as a family.' I would ask maybe if there's a song you can sing when you need protection. There are all kinds of magical things you can do. If you don't want to do that you can just have a song that indicates that your door is *not* open. And then you could just sing it. You could say the Hail Mary prayer or whatever, like any kind of protection mantra or prayer.

But the real kind of thing here, I mean and it's just sort of amplified by an order of magnitude because you have a Jupiter in the 12th, exalted! Jupiter in the 12th, also super spiritual, like...but not in a witch way. Like, I was looking at your chart and it's not necessarily like you're a witch, it's more like you're a...I wanna say an oracle. Because there are messages that will come through this chart that are different from witchy stuff. I mean, you can certainly be a witch, definitely. But I mean normally when I look in a chart for spiritual stuff, I was asking you about your spirituality, I'm looking for what your assets are, like what you could get helping you out or sup-

porting you on a spiritual level, and I mean having Jupiter in the 12th house, just google that, it's such a...abundant and generous place for spiritual energy. Yeah, it's super cool.

The thing here that is the case is that you *have* this. And there's no way of getting rid of it. Right? It's not like the open door thing; or the tendency to be porous; or the psychic fragility in this realm; and the psychic kind of generosity in the other realm, it's not like these are going to go away. The challenge or the task is to learn how to control them. So that *you're* in control of them.

Because this is what happens when you have this kind of stuff, is like the ancestors or whoever the fuck is in the room, will use it. And I kind of like to tell people who have things like what you have, if you want to call it psychic, or medium, or whatever, you can. But it's not that you're particularly special. I mean you are, but they're just talking to you because you can hear them. Right? That's the thing to remember. Is that it's that some people are like, 'Oh I got this message in a dream!' or, 'A spirit visited me and they gave me a message, I must be so important I must *do* something with it!' And I'm like, no, actually. The only reason you got it is because you can hear it. They're trying to give their messages and talk and communicate to anything and anyone that will listen. And so the skill you wanna develop is choosing when to listen. And if you even want to. And once you can start to really be in command of that, *then* it can start to be a gift. Then you can ask them for things. You can say, 'Hey, I wanna know...', you know? 'Please communicate with me.' And then they will. But you can't really do that until you show them who's boss sort of thing.

With other witches that I know, we always talk about it like, 'Oh god, and then the ancestors wanted *this* thing from me and then *that* thing and finally I had to tell them to, like, you know, cool it! Cus I got my own life to live!' It's sorta like that. So you would wanna learn how to close your door. There may be some sleep rituals, some pre-sleep rituals you can do. It can be something very simple, it can just be something where you just say out loud, 'Nothing that wishes me ill will is allowed here.' And that's it. It can be that you call on someone in your ancestry to help protect you.

To give you an idea, whenever I do these things with clients where I read

their chart—right now I'm not just doing this in a room—you know, I am prayed the fuck up and my grandmother is with me and my mother is with me and they are protecting me against whatever it is you might have. Not to say that you have anything bad, but it's just...I don't just look at your chart and enter into this sort of spiritual relationship with you without any kind of protection or grounding on my side. Does that make sense? The reason I'm able to look at this chart is because I'm protected. And because I can close my door when I want to.

So, it's the sort of thing where it's like a great gift, that you definitely have, and I think that you already know that. But learning how to control it and to be in command of it and to choose when you want to use it and when you want it to not happen, that is the task.

* 'Drugs are a way of opening a door,
  and your door's already half open darlin.'

- Leah's Dad, Richard Clements

Renée Akitelek Mboya and Hera Chan

Renée: Hera, I wanted to talk to you about this idea of structures of support specifically because I think this last year has challenged both of us in the way we think, the people we turn to when we need support and the ways in which we've learned to articulate the types of support we need. At the moment, for example, we are both living new dimensions of our diasporic selves, though they are somewhat tempered by the homogeneity of the so called 'international art world'. What are structures of support for you?

Hera: What I have come to define as 'structures of support' has been largely influenced by the ongoing movement in Hong Kong which began in 2019, my work in community journalism, and in activist-oriented organisations in Montreal. 'Structures of support' are concomitant with 'community', yet should not be conflated. What many now like to call the Be Water Revolution of Hong Kong taught me many things, mostly that there is another way to do a revolution. A friend recently reshared a Tweet by Kelly Hayes. It said: 'Think of your politics as something you practice, rather than as an identity or personality, and you will be much better positioned to process criticism,

and when necessary, adapt or shift your practices accordingly.' For me, there is no difference between my daily life and my artistic practice. I want to be grounded in the political reality of the now. When you ask me if the structures of support have a physical body, social form or manifestations, I have to answer affirmatively, and perhaps in the most militant way possible. In the movement, we were a physical mass on the street. In a social form, we created ways to enact forms of direct democracy in minute detail, hosted mass conversations about inclusivity and ways to move forward–we have since shared these tactics with others. As a manifestation, the fight for freedom still continues. I feel that I am always running out of words to describe the concrete examples of how the movement created a vast network of mutual aid. It was guided by intuition and planning and history. It was the essence of what it means to 'be water', to be reactive, to take care. All I can say is, if I fell down on the street, I knew that someone would catch me before I hit the pavement.

Renée: As you say this, it immediately makes me think of what Mumia Abu-Jamal calls the 'industry of fear' – that there is a coercion industry (i.e. the courts, the prisons, the police) that is responsible for promoting and reinforcing the state's coercive apparatus of 'public safety'. In the last year, I think that the political and cultural conditions which kept us fearful in those ways have started to collapse. This might be because we have nothing–and certainly nothing left to lose–but I think it's also to do with the strategies we're learning from each other and from movements around the world that are really exemplifying new ways to show up for each other and for our communities. Hong Kong, Belarus, Sudan, BLM, BDS: these movements are all in the streets yes, but also in kitchens, on farms, on ballot papers and in discussions around breast milk. For me a structure of support, ultimately and finally, is intersectional. I want to support you in things that are mundane and colloquial in the same way we strategize over how to hack state surveillance. What does it mean for you to be part of the structure of support for someone else?

Hera: To avoid being overly general, I would say it depends on the situation you are in. I worked for the last two years and more in a new contemporary arts museum in Hong Kong. As a first timer in this scale of an art space, I experienced a sharp learning curve for the bureaucracy. Every bureaucracy is designed, edited and adjusted differently. The bureaucracy myself and

my colleagues experience or continue to experience within the museum was also enmeshed in the wider bureaucracy of the city. Bureaucracies extract life energy, rendering its human machinations feeling powerless, slowly eroding the ability to dream of real change. Under that rubric, I found myself pouring myself into establishing real relations not in spite of that system but within it. I found myself organising my time around figuring out how to make my colleagues feel seen within that system, to veer away from seeking affirmation from that system, saying: 'no, you do not have to confess your identity and give your identity to the institution'. I think often of what Fred Moten and Stephano Harney said about being on a pirate ship. In all, I do not think I was successful at building an actual 'structure' of support within the organisation, though I hope that I contributed to a sense of camaraderie among my peers. Even now, I feel as if my actions had an impact on the symptoms, and hopefully helped create a larger psychic space to imagine, but an actual structure of support would require a much larger upheaval.

Renée: 'Why are some structures of support invisible or ignored in the first place? What does it mean to make them visible in the artistic work or an exhibition? How and what frames exist to make them visible?'

I think this is first and foremost a question to do with whose labour is acknowledged, and by whom it is acknowledged but also which and when folks fall out of citation and who has the power to choose ignorance over speaking out about a thing. It's all well and good to imagine that art has import and some kind of structural power, but I think we know by now that often in exhibition contexts, in contemporary arts contexts the inequalities are built in.

Hera: One of my favourite models of a structure of support that is largely invisibilized outside of its networks are the family association networks that essentially established the first wave of Chinatowns around the world. Many of them were rooted in villages in China having a branch outside–as in Hong Kong, or San Francisco, and so forth. If you were from that village, you could seek out this association of community members and they would help you with the immigration process, settle in, introduce you to people. Early immigrants struggled or were flat out denied access to opening bank accounts and taking out lines of credit. There were groups of people who

would each put in a sum of money each month, then once a month one of the members would take it all out to start a business, and pay it back to the group with interest. My maternal grandfather started as an unlicensed taxi driver this way. He bought a car. Networks like this have permeated into art as well. Like Godzilla. An Asian-American network that sought to help artists find opportunities in New York. The artist Bing Lee, a founder, is a much better storyteller than me, so you should ask him about all the adventures they had in 90s New York sometime. One of the things Godzilla did was appeal a decision made by the NEA—or National Endowment of the Arts—to revoke a grant to Mel Chin.

I'm not sure these networks are necessary to make visible. Sometimes, it is the invisibility of it that lends it its power. I've always been interested in exploring this kind of economic model, or any others for that matter, in the arts. I think one of the reasons why there are not strong structures of support within the arts is because everyone is relying on the patronage model—whether that be the government or collectors. The structure of the arts is largely built to create a coexistence of artistic production and its patron, a tough job as it is, meaning it is not designed to give life to many of the art workers. I feel like I am not exactly answering your question. I suppose what I want to say is, I'm less interested in exhibition work that illustrates possible models for structures of support, and more interested in time spent actually creating those models. The work can illustrate one thing but the processes behind it can be something else. This micro-political is important here, and visibility—on most fronts—is not my personal political aim.

Renée: 'What can we do to make these structures less fragile, resistant to 'self-interest' and individualism which is being constantly fuelled by neo-liberal capitalist agendas. Instead, can we think of the role of structures of support to increase collectiveness?'

Hera: I'm in a reading group—or wine club?—called Chromium Groupsome. I laugh even as I type that. But the name comes from how we ended up describing the first book we read, which was *Crash* by JG Ballard. We are essentially various Asians dispersed across various places. This week, we are reading Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology by David Graeber. He wrote:

'Even if one compares the historical schools of Marxism, and anarchism, one can see we are dealing with a fundamentally different sort of project. Marxist schools have authors. Just as Marxism sprang from the mind of Marx, so we have Leninists, Maoists, Trotksyites, Gramscians, Althusserians... (Note how the list starts with heads of state and grades almost seamlessly into French professors.) [...] Now consider the different schools of anarchism. There are Anarcho-Syndicalists, AnarchoCommunists, Insurrectionists, Cooperativists, Individualists, Platformists... None are named after some Great Thinker; instead, they are invariably named either after some kind of practice, or most often, organisational principle."

I am increasingly interested in the physicality of structures of support, which are ultimately invested in a platform politic. An ex-lover once said to me: 'if you don't give someone all the information, you leave them no choice.' It's not just about what we are communicating, but what we are communicating with. Everyone in a structure should be informed, help others be informed, and take it on themselves to be informed. I have been most impressed by open-source developer groups that built a police action live-tracking app in Hong Kong, or hacked into another app to denote all the pro-democracy establishments in the 'buy yellow' movement.

Renée: I've been looking at a lot of recordings, for years now, of court proceedings of incarcerated freedom fighters during Kenya's Mau Mau Revolt— trials that happened at the height of the conflict between 1952 and 1960. One thing that has always been a problem in how information flows in Kenya's court system—and I assume this is deliberate as a century is a long time to leave something like this unresolved—is that when you enter a plea in Kiswahili, the question the advocate asks you translates as 'do you accept the charges' not 'how do you plead, guilty or not guilty'. Do you accept the charges is a yes or no question, and what it actually sounds like in Kiswahili is something like have you heard the charges or do you understand that you are being charged. So you say yes, because you know and you see where you are, but what is entered is a plea of guilty. It's exactly what you said, 'if you don't give someone all the information, you leave them no choice'. I think ultimately a structure of support is one in which there is an equitable distribution of information and people are able to make choices—good choices, bad choices, any choices—and be upheld in those choices.

Dear reader,

We are very happy to invite you to our dinner.

Here you will find five starters, one main dish and one dessert. The recipes for these dishes were created based on the idea of food as a support structure. In the margins of the recipes, you will have a chance to read some of the overheard fragments of a conversation between seven close friends as they ate together.

xx,
Eglė & Milda

*'all I hear is the heavy wind
and a blurred R&B track'*

Cheese platter (GF)

This starter contains three main elements: cheese; beetroot, garlic and balsamic vinegar jam; plum, onion and rosemary jam. We will describe the ingredients and preparation for each.

> Cheese (3-4 different types of cheese of your choice)
> Beetroot, garlic and balsamic vinegar jam

INGREDIENTS:
• 3 big beetroots
• 4-5 cloves of garlic
• Balsamic vinegar
• Few spoons of honey
• Salt
• Olive oil

Peel and grate the beetroots. Peel and cut the garlic into small pieces. Heat a pot or deep frying pan, drizzle in some olive oil and add the beetroots and garlic. Fry for a bit, then add some water and braise for about 10 minutes. Add vinegar, salt and a few spoons of honey. Braise for 30-40 minutes or until the consistency becomes soft and smooth. Chill and serve with cheese.

> Plum, onion and rosemary jam

INGREDIENTS:
• 1 kg of seasonal plums
• 2 red onions
• Few small branches of fresh rosemary
• Salt
• Olive oil

Cut the plums in half and remove the stones. Cut the onion into thin slices and peel the rosemary leaves from the branch. Heat a pot or deep frying pan, drizzle in some olive oil, add onions and fry until softened. Add plums,

rosemary and a pinch of salt. Simmer for about 45 minutes, constantly stirring over low heat or until you get a soft and smooth consistency. Chill and serve with cheese.

Pan-fried sweet milk cottage cheese with honey and smoked paprika (GF)

INGREDIENTS:
- Sweet mild cottage cheese, either lightly salted or with some cumin
- Smoked paprika
- Few spoons of honey
- Olive oil

Cut the cheese into medium-thick slices. Heat a pan, drizzle in a bit of olive oil and put in the slices of cheese. Pan-fry the cheese slices on both sides. After removing from the pan, sprinkle with smoked paprika and honey.

Oven-baked tomatoes with smoked kale and parsley pesto (GF, vegan)

This dish consists of three elements: oven-baked tomatoes; smoked kale; parsley pesto. We will describe the ingredients and preparation of each.

'comfort food is something that requires minimal effort to cook'

> Oven-baked tomatoes

INGREDIENTS:
- 12-15 different types of tomatoes. For example, black, yellow and big raspberry tomatoes
- Salt
- Olive oil

Wash tomatoes, add to the baking tray, pour some olive oil into the tray and sprinkle the tomatoes with salt. Place the baking tray in the oven, preheated to 220°C. Bake for about 60 minutes or until the tomatoes are soft and slightly browned. After about 40 minutes, reduce the oven heat to 150°C. Remove baked tomatoes from the oven and let cool. Serve with the other elements of the dish.

> Smoked kale

INGREDIENTS:
- 300 g or 4-5 big kale leaves
- Ice cubes
- Hay

Peel the kale leafs from the stem. Boil water in a pot and add the kale and let boil for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, add ice cubes to a bowl of cold water. Take the kale out from the boiling water and add to the icy water, leaving for about 3 minutes, making sure the kale doesn't lose its texture. Take out and gently dry the kale with a clean kitchen towel.

For the next step use a baking tray /pan/ pot in which you can make a fire. Put about 3 handfuls of hay in it, set it alight and then blow the fire to make as much smoke as possible. Put the drained kale in a sieve and place it above the smoke. Add a clean towel on top of it so the smoke does not escape and the kale absorbs as much smokiness as possible. Serve with the other elements of the dish.

'parsley is not your casual dish decoration'

> Parsley pesto

INGREDIENTS:
- Big bundle or about 150 g of parsley
- 1-2 cloves of garlic
- Handful of walnuts (or other types of nuts, whatever you have at home)
- Salt
- Olive oil

Wash the parsley and cut out the hard stems. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Add parsley, garlic, salt, nuts and oil in a food grinder or a stone spice grinder and grind it all until it becomes a smooth paste. If you want to achieve a creamier texture, add more oil. Serve with the other elements of the dish.

CONNECTING ALL THREE ELEMENTS:
Place the oven-baked tomatoes on the bottom of a deep plate or bowl, sprinkle with the remaining oil and the sauce from the cooked tomatoes, then place on top the smoked kale and and with a teaspoon place dollops of the parsley pesto.

Arancini with ajvar (GF, vegan)

INGREDIENTS:
- 500 g of 'Arborio' rice
- 1l of vegetable broth (made in advance)
- Gluten free flour
- Aquafaba - the liquid from canned chickpeas
- 'Ajvar' relish
- 1 onion
- 4-5 cloves of garlic
- Salt
- Olive oil

Make the vegetable broth in advance.
In a deep pot drizzle in some olive oil and fry finely chopped onions and garlic until they get softer. Add the rice and fry while gently stirring. Add a scoop of broth into the rice and stir it gently. Repeat this process until the rice is cooked and you get a creamy consistency. Let this cool.

In two separate bowls add aquafaba and gluten free flour, arrange an area to roll the arancinis. Take a ball of cooled risotto and flatten it in your palm to create a kind of pancake. Place a teaspoon of ajvar in the center and roll into a ball. Dip the formed balls into aquafaba and then into the gluten free flour mix. Continue until you have used all the risotto mix. In a deep frying pan heat the oil and fry the arancinis on all sides until golden. Remove from the pan and place on a paper towel to soak up the excess oil.

Sunflower seeds (GF, vegan)

'I like to eat sunflowers seeds directly from the flower'

MAIN DISH
Seasonal vegetables 'čenakai' (GF, vegan)

INGREDIENTS:
- Seasonal vegetables, for example: celery root, parsley root, pumpkin, kale, carrots, onions, garlic, celery
- 2 cans of chickpeas
- Čenakinės or oven pots
- 1l of vegetable broth (made in advance)
- Unsweetened soya yoghurt and fresh mint leaves (for garnishing)

'do you remember when it was cool to eat pumpkin seeds but not the sunflower seeds?'

If necessary, peel, shave and remove the seeds from all the vegetables, cut into similarly sized cubes and fry in a large pot or deep frying pan until lightly tender. Add all the vegetables from the pan to čenakinės or oven pots, add the chickpeas and pour in the vegetable broth. Bake in the oven for about an hour and a half. Serve with the soy yogurt and fresh mint.

'forks are dancing to the rhythm of mmmm, omg, wow, ahmmmm'

'Do you also have another stomach for apple pie?'

'my blood supply had been mobilised as a matter of urgency from my brain to my digestive system'

DESSERT

Apple and plum crumble with coconut ice cream (GF, vegan)

INGREDIENTS:
2 kg of apples
0,5 kg of plums
200 g of vegan butter
500 g gluten free flour mix
300 g brown sugar
Coconut ice cream - for serving

Cut the apples into quarters and remove the seeds. Cut the plums in half and remove the stones. Put all the fruits in a baking tray. In a bowl, mix the butter, flour and sugar until you get a 'sandy' consistency. Pour the mixture over the apples and plums in a baking dish, place in an oven preheated to 200°C and bake for about 45 minutes. After about 30 minutes reduce the oven heat to 160°C. Serve the cake with coconut ice cream.

Do bellies dream of smoked kale?
Nothing tastes the same anymore.
It's pretty bad.
Probs it'll take months to recover from this food-crush.
Only time can heal.

On support structures in art and cultural work

Joshua Schwebel and Ernesta Šimkutė

Josh: I have chosen to invite you to have this conversation about support structures because of your invaluable support for my piece, *Accommodations*, and your involvement in the overall preparation of the *Other Rooms* exhibition. I was introduced to you as an intern working for Rupert who was available to help me find used couches in Vilnius and negotiate their purchase in Lithuanian. I was not given much more information about your background, vision, or experience, or about how you would be compensated or credited. Through this conversation I have learned about your significant experience as a cultural worker and our intersecting interests in institutional critique and structural reflection on the prevailing models of arts administration. I wanted to ask you about whether you experience a contradiction in that you are supporting an exhibition about support structures from an invisible, uncredited and unremunerated position?

Ernesta: With this question, you touch upon the issue that many cultural professionals face in their career development, and that is an experience of unequal pay or 'free' labour across the cultural and creative industries.

Those who can volunteer or do unpaid internships in their early career are often coming from a position of privilege. Before answering your questions, I must admit that there are some privileges in place with my involvement at Rupert as an intern.

When you know that your labour will not be remunerated, the main motivation becomes learning, building networks and thinking of the ways to use this position. On one hand, if interns are treated with respect and are allowed to develop their own ideas or get mentorship, it can be treated as the support for the inexperienced or young practitioners. (I must admit, this way of thinking might be the product of the system itself, as such 'opportunities' are often an excuse to decrease support.) On the other hand, as someone who wasn't able to do an unpaid internship earlier in my career and volunteered at multiple art institutions without getting fair acknowledgement, I think that this universal institutional practice is on the whole exploitative and unsustainable.

I applied to work as an intern at Rupert because I was curious to learn about the different programmes that they provide both within their local and global position. To answer your question about my experience supporting you and making *Other Rooms*, on a personal level I do not feel invisible oor used. The internship is embedded within my MA programme, so I could not get credits without doing a placement like this one and Rupert have credited me as one of the exhibition coordinators. So maybe the attention should shift towards the accepted norm of unpaid internships or traineeships that not only art institutions and companies offer but also to universities, academies and colleges that propagate this culture. I believe that the most effective way to oppose this and other exploitative practices is through activism and collaboration. For instance, in 2018 workers who were members of MoMa Union organised a large scale protest as a response to the institution not providing contracts and a lot of the workers had no job security or low wages. After months of strikes, MoMA eventually negotiated with the union for a museum-wide raise. Another collective action that raised a lot of eyebrows was when in 2019 museum workers around the world shared an open access document stating their salaries online and through this highlighted the vastness of inequality. Speaking of different activist actions and interventions, I was wondering how your work responds to problematic institutional habits. As you work alone most of the time, do you feel supported?

Josh: Yes and no. I attribute my survival as an artist to the public arts funding system in Canada, which has supported my practice and fostered a wider culture of independent, non-commercially dependent art and artist run centres. Because of this base, I can make work that is critical of many hosting institutions, since I can build my practice with more of a buffer from the local discomfort it might produce. So while I have encountered hostility, outright censorship and interpersonal misunderstanding, i.e. I am not always supported by the institutions that host me, I have the immense privilege of access to an arts funding body and culture of artistic solidarity that sets a precedent of professionalism and establishes the value of my work.

Due to the Canadian funding that I have been awarded I have been able to pursue projects that criticize how funding, or lack thereof, structures the art field. In 2015, as the work I completed while in an artist's residency, I used the total budget allotted to my upcoming exhibition to compensate the otherwise unpaid interns working in the office of the residency administration at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin (*Subsidy*). By compensating the interns, my intervention questioned the normalisation of the incorporation of non-waged labour in the arts, and implicated the residency management within my artwork, and within the process of devaluing their own labour. Through this action I also wanted to examine whether internships in arts institutions are in fact support structures coordinated to manifest learning opportunities to benefit the intern's development as a cultural worker, or if they are a direct expression of hierarchy and class barriers for those who cannot afford to work for free.

Ernesta: Your actions, such as paying interns from the exhibition budget and inviting me to do this interview, are generous and provocative interventions but it makes me wonder what it does for the institutions in countries where economic, social and cultural rights differ. As an artist who works independently, you are not attached to these institutions and your fast reaction to long term issues can shock the system but it does not necessarily achieve long-term positive changes, as the majority of cultural institutions depend on public funding which is often insufficient. As smaller spaces are struggling to survive in the capitalist economy, they are pressured to employ volunteers or unpaid interns. Sometimes I think that until policies change and larger institutions such as MoMa or Tate and other major galleries will be restructured and those in power be held accountable

for their expoitative actions, we won't feel a lot of changes in the arts. On the bright side, smaller institutions and independent spaces have power to challenge these institutional habits and in many ways, this is what you are doing within your practice. Do you think actions like these can have an impact long term?

Josh: That's a really good question, and certainly something that I think about often. In the work of trying to hold art institutions accountable there is a need for multiple approaches and strategies. Too many of our institutions, with the larger ones setting the precedent and the smaller or more independent ones resisting despite lower or insignificant budgets, have acquiesced to the exploitative practices demanded for survival in capitalism. I see this devaluation of cultural labour as undermining the political imaginary and practices of myself and many of the contemporary artists they exhibit. My work reflects on what art does and what art institutions do, not only what they represent in the controlled environment of a gallery, but how they apply these representations internally. I challenge institutions to transform their actions and values by addressing my work not directly to the public, but to the administrators, directors and staff of cultural institutions.

My work deliberately operates on multiple registers––the personal, the public, the practical and the symbolic. So while I recognise that the kind of structural change that is needed is still in process, I think that there is also a value in putting the need for these changes under the noses of the administrators capable of making them happen, and I also think that as an artist I have the platform and the responsibility to raise these issues from a different place in the hierarchy, with the additional leverage of the public visibility of an exhibition. This leads to different outcomes than activism and organising, perhaps individual cultural administrators might approach the daily negotiations of their job with more awareness of their own negotiating power to advocate for those with less status, or the work might create chances for greater solidarity amongst working people within cultural institutions.

Ernesta: Artworks also reach a wider public that sometimes is unaware of issues existing in other disciplines or the context in which culture and art is produced. What I also have noticed is that alternative management

methods that can have long-term impacts are mainly applied by smaller institutions or self-organised spaces. For example, the Index Art Foundation in Sweden. While it's run by only three or four staff members, they have regular board members and have formed the Teen Advisory board, which is an important way of including younger voices. The Director Marti Manen and Curator of Learning Emmeli Person invite teens to constructively question how Index is organised, how public funding is distributed and discuss the importance of contemporary art in Stockholm, Sweden and abroad. It not only challenges the vertically oriented management style that we are surrounded by but also prepares future cultural producers to think critically. I am aware that Sweden is different because of the better social security and funding opportunities that artists and institutions receive but I wish more contemporary art spaces and museums would experiment and be open to receive critique. It probably sounds utopian but I think that by adapting new ways of working and unlearning bad habits, we can fight classism, racism, ableism, sexism and other forms of oppression.

Josh: I agree. For me the biggest problems we currently face as arts workers have to do with class and access, which intersectionally dovetail with race, gender, and ability. The internalization of unwaged labour normalises a paradigm of entrepreneurship and amateurism that is only sustainable for those with privilege. Who else can afford to work for free and cover their own living expenses for months, or years, as more and more internships lead only to a more prestigious internship, and most emergent cultural spaces operate with no budget. Only those with support from external sources, ie, class privilege, can access paid work in culture if internships and connections are its prerequisites.

Moreover, advocating for the value of cultural labour should be seen as self-interested advocacy on the part of those who are paid for their work in culture. As Leigh Claire La Berge describes in *Wages Against Artwork* (a book I am reading thanks to your recommendation): 'we do not have a term for the state in which our formal labour is devalued to the point of wage-lessness while we are still doing it' (p. 4). What I mean is that the incorporation of unpaid work within the field actively devalues the labour of those who are paid, since it introduces the presence of qualified people willing to engage and contribute without remuneration. If only institutions and their funders could understand that it is both radical and ultimately self-serving

to pay artists and to pay their staff, that it is so important to compensate artists for their work, to value what we contribute and to help us continue working, and to advocate for artists fees whenever possible. Organising for funding artists and cultural workers is organising for access, since it opens career paths for contributions from people with experiences other than white, cis male middle or upper class privilege, and for an art world that isn't defined by competition and capitalism.

Ernesta: I think that art residencies could be a great way for institutions to learn, exchange and change. You have taken part in quite a number of art residencies, so I am interested whether in your experience they have been well-utilised and supportive.

Josh: I agree that the open-ended possibility of arts residencies have much potential for institutional learning and exchange. The governing premise of a residency should be to offer time to fail to the artists, without expectations of productivity or success, but equally that staff should feel a certain amount of structural flexibility to re-organise around this premise. Of course this is an idealized vision, and interpersonal dynamics require constant negotiations. More difficult, perhaps, is how the worlds of work and art intersect in the management of art. How does the aesthetic influence the management of a residency, and conversely, how does 'professional' work culture constrain the responsibility of managing space and time for artists? In seeking non-hierarchical forms of working, or more horizontal approaches to organising cultural work, does the organisation turn further inwards and forego supporting visiting artists? Or can an experimentally structured institution more effectively intersect with invited artists? These are hypothetical questions that emerge when we reflect aesthetic-idealistic concerns onto structural ones.

In my experience, however, too often residencies model themselves after pre-given institutional structures and metrics, rather than asking the artist what support they need, experimenting with collaboration and collectivity, thinking through horizontal organisation structures, etc. In my mind, failure and non-productive time is not wasted: more is learned from failure than from repeating an already-familiar technique, despite perhaps not producing measurable outcomes.

I understand that residencies are often themselves precarious organisations, dependent on insecure funding, but I regret when arts administrators succumb to the pressures of eliminating risk / producing measurable outcomes. In my experience, the majority of residency programmes have far too many expectations built in, although since these programmes are relatively new, there is effort being made to standardise what is offered, but nonetheless each has had different strengths and weaknesses.

One final question: How would you restructure artists residencies and cultural work to achieve a more supportive, caring and healthy culture?

Ernesta: Haha, it won't be easy to answer this question concisely, but I will give it a shot. You know, I had to do more research on the history of Art Residencies and it seems that since the 90s, artist residencies have become closely linked to the professionalisation and globalisation of contemporary art. It is expected that artist residencies must provide the space that is often difficult to access for artists and curators to work independently or collaboratively. While many residency models exist, there are two types that I want to distinguish: a) residencies that provide space for research and experimentation, and b) spaces focusing on production and presentation of the final product. I guess the choice of residencies depends on what an artist wants to gain. But the fact is that the turnaround of artists in these spaces is fast, and as you mentioned earlier, there are high expectations to produce quality research or artworks in a short period. I am more interested in research and process-based residencies, where artists can experiment and play, and where locality and their position is equally important to address.

In 2009, curator Megan Johnston wrote about Slow Curating, which 'embraces methods to facilitate deep connections to community, locality and reciprocal relationships (between people and between art/objects and audience) and evolves over time'. In the fast-paced art world, where institutions and artists are always trying to stay relevant, any art institutions, including art residency programmes, could benefit from taking and providing time for building connections and collaboration. This curatorial method has a more caring and sustainable approach towards the art production, collaboration and education. I might be speculating now, but maybe application of this and similar self-reflective methods could remedy the cracks in the system and would create more caring and healthier work culture.