**Morvern Cunningham:** Hello and welcome to Leith! My name is Morvern Cunningham and I’m Creative Lead with Culture Collective. We’re broadcasting live, yes it is live, can you tell, from Duncan Place Resource Centre in Edinburgh - home to Intercultural Youth Scotland, one of the Culture Collective participating projects who are based elsewhere in this lovely building. This is the live event recording of the final episode of the Future Culture podcast

So as a reminder, in 2021, the Culture Collective programme was created and established a network of 26 participatory arts projects, shaped by local communities alongside artists and creative organisations, funded by Creative Scotland. Since then, they have embarked upon an event series entitled Starting Points, that explored pertinent themes to community-based art projects within the network. This podcast explores what comes next! What does the future hold for creatives and their importance for communities across Scotland as we go forward?

In each Future Culture episode, we considered different themes of importance to the Culture Collective network. At the end of each episode I had a debrief with a guest connected to the episode theme and to the original Starting Points event, to discuss some of the questions raised during that podcast, and to offer their own provocation on the theme. I’m delighted to say that for this special last episode.

The format for today is that we'll be discussing each of the final provocations that everyone gave me as part of the future culture podcast episodes in quick succession. We have literally 10 minutes for each provocation, so you should be in for a real treat.

As a reminder, my Future Culture colleagues and guests are:

* Activist, theatre maker and Artist for Change: Climate Crisis at Eden Court, Ink Asher Hemp
* Advocate for equitable science, creative and cultural participation, and founder/director of the Science Ceilidh, Lewis Hou
* Writer, arts journalist and editor, Arusa Qureshi
* Writer, editor, and publisher, Heather Parry
* Writer, editor and creative producer, Tomiwa Folorunshaw and;
* Dancer, theatre maker, collaborator and micro-activist, Emma Jayne Park

We have an hour to go through each of the six provocations that each of you guys gave to us as gifts at the end of every episode of Future Culture. And I have put these provocations into a hat. Or actually, I can show everyone is a garden pot. So I am going to shake the garden pot and pull out a provocation. And hopefully, we're going to talk about it. Let's go. Provocation number one. So this is actually Arusa’s original provocation, which is: In what ways can we provide more support and encouragement to the grassroots companies and organisations who are doing the work?

**Heather Parry:** Umm money, thank you. Like not to bring it all back to money. But I think the organisations and individuals who are actually getting up and doing the work, they need to be more financially supported by the government, by the creative agencies. And not in a way that is exclusionary as well, like, I'm sure all of us around this table have had experiences of having to apply for funding before and how it relies on you to have a lot of free time and a level of executive function. And also, that you can rely on people around you to help you as well, because none of us are trained in applying for money in these kinds of things. But it also takes away from the work you're doing to have to do that. So I would love to have a conversation about what a more kind of open equitable funding model looks like for those organisations.

**MC:** And what might a more equitable funding model look like?

**HP:** Well, look, I don't want to bring everything back to UBI, but that should be my T shirt, I think for this year. But I mean, I think the direct investment, you know, without having to go through the kind of corporatised, neo liberalised hoops would be a really great place to start. And I think that's a place you can start, you know, we I'm sure we all would love major systemic structural, social changes that benefit a lot of people. But I think that can feel really huge. Whereas removing some of the hoops we've currently got is practical. I think. You were gonna say something?

**Tomiwa Folorunso:** Yes, because I think money. I completely agree with you. And I think I live in Brussels, right and I've lived there for a year and a half. And I think one of the huge differences I suppose I've noticed when comparing Belgium in Brussels' cultural scene to Scotland's is that funding is very similar in the sense that is coming from one body, it is hard to get as difficult. They just want to fund like traditional art forms, etc, etc. So lots of similarities. But what I see a lot more of there is these institutions and organisations that have got funding for five years or ten years that are always going to get funded, are giving that money directly to the hands of these individuals and organisations that are doing the work already and investing in that collaboration because they realise it's important, right and the understand that they are in a position of privilege. So how can we, how can we share that? And how can we make sure that these people, especially during a pandemic, these freelancers, and self employed artists and creators can get money and can keep creating? And how can we platform them? And there's a, there's, I think that creates a nicer sense of community, right? We know these institutions and organisations aren't perfect, we know the need to change is putting it lightly. But what can we do to kind of like put a plaster on that and still create great art and culture?

**MC:** Well, that sounds like a really healthy relationship. Emma, are you wanting to come in there?

**Emma Jayne Park:** I was just gonna say, and I think for me, there's an expansion on that, which is about trust and time. And recognising that some of the, gonna say institutions and organisations but also company, there's that I think there's a tiered level. It's not them and not us. So this is tricky language. But as artists, I think there are some artists that still exist within loads of precarity. However, they've been working for the past 35 years, and it wouldn't have been easy, but had that whole, like, we'll be on the dole and live in a squat, this kind of dreamy image, then the New Labour years, and we're in a position to secure themselves almost like a mini institution. And I think it's about really recognising what is now and what I see is a lot of we should definitely support this artists doing the work. However, can you turn it around in 12 weeks, we want these outcomes, can we can we can we, and I kind of want to scream like you had 20 years to figure you're gonna like to figure your shit out. And not basically you're not affording this person, the same level of trust and the same level of time, which is filthy, when actually they need more rest for the work they're doing. Because quite often, it's connected to like trauma and lived experience and other kinds of community work. So how do we really flip the script and go, just gonna let you crack on for five years because we trust you.

**MC:** Yep**.** And that is the dream, right? 5-10 year funding? Like it's like that? What kind of cycle would that create if grassroots arts initiatives were getting that kind of funding?

**EJP:** Also communities. I'm from Dumfries and Galloway, born and bred there, been away for 10 years. So now I'm not actually seen as part of the community by a lot of people. Because I've only been back for two years. And it's how long does it take to really be part of a community. It takes longer than 12 weeks, I think five years is a minimum.

**MC:** And you also said flip the script, which is directly the title of Arusa’s book, and Arusa is waving at me. So I'm going to put the volume up on Arusa.

**Arusa Qureshi:** Thanks for the shout out. I appreciate that. I just wanted to like echo what everyone was saying, I think you've made some really, really great points. And I really strongly believe that we can't always rely on big organisations or companies to make significant changes, we just can't. And especially recently, with things starting to happen again, and things starting to come back, I feel like that has been proven, because it feels like so many promises that were made in terms of changes to come post pandemic, they've either been forgotten or ignored. And honestly, it feels like in some cases in the creative industries, people are just pretending that the last few years didn't happen. And where I really see the positive change and commitments to making the landscape more equal, is in the grassroots and smaller companies and organisations and I feel like they're the ones leading the way. And then the more significant institutions follow. And with that in mind, kind of echoing what other people said, relating to funding, I think that we collectively in the creative industry should be okay with the idea of certain institutions just not existing anymore. And we shouldn't be doing everything we possibly can, for example, to just save a company that's been around forever, it's time for funding and big pots of money to go to maybe smaller companies and organisations who, even though they're brand new or tiny, are the ones that have been shown to do something about things like access and diversity, etc.

**Lewis Hou:** Can I just add to that, I think being a little bit on both on the grassroots side, but also supporting a participatory grantmaking fund and trying to do that to bridge communities and researchers in particular, you know, We by no means have the answers to taking a relational approach. I think building on what people have been saying it's also thinking beyond the money as well. The money is important. Let's not like understate that. But there are a lot of things particularly when we are working with communities, who are minoritised, who had been ignored don't have certain skills, it's more than just money. You can't just buy out time, especially some of the communities work with Highlands and Islands that are rural. It's you can't just say okay, instantly we're going to fix and buy out my time when people have got hidden responsibilities or whatever. So a lot of is about how do we invest directly communities circles back a little bit to the models of funding the five year cycle. If the aiming five years, the UBI. These are the actual models that are going to change things. I think, rather than project by project funding, we just, that's not really where the investments going to be.

**MC:** There in life lies burn out I think…

**LH:** Yes, exactly. Yeah. Because instantly you're thinking about the next thing. You have to think about that otherwise, you know, and so I think there is a will from that, certainly some of the funders that we're speaking to, but you know, and it is a whole wide problem. That's the, you know, the capitalism to blame. I mean, capitalism is to blame, you know, that kind of model it is, but how do we approach it differently? How do we take it so we can make the right decisions? And you invest in everybody?

**MC:** Okay. This is Tomiwa’s provocation from the Broadcast episode. So when thinking about access, how can we make sure all members of the audience are participating or being engaged with on an equal level? Has anyone got anything for this?

**LH:** I can make a start, if that's helpful, I think a lot of our work is around thinking about that language and thinking about that kind of moving away from just thinking about democratisation of culture and making things more accessible. But really, truly valuing the starting point that everyone is cultural. Everyone has a creative life. I've never met someone who is culturally bearing and I think there's something really interesting with the kind of, you know, we had a conversation with the Culture Collective members, and I really liked this provocation around. Why are we always problem solving? Why is it always the narrative that we've got, we go in to solve a problem, whether that's health and wellbeing. And I really believe, of course, in the power of arts and culture to support health and wellbeing but everything. And I think part of it is actually we've, we've just been trained in a funding model to need to be needed. I think there's something about how we break down some of those barriers. And because that very often leads to the gatekeeping. And that deficit model of oh, well, these communities, these poor communities who don't have access to arts and culture, I've never met someone who doesn't have some arts and culture in, who doesn’t have creativity. And I think we have to balance that really carefully. I think when we work with community, we don't build ourselves into a need, it's about co-development, it's working with communities in particular. Yeah, I think that's probably what some of the starting point is, we need to think and sometimes be critical with ourselves, like, have we built in this model that we are saving a community in some way. And I think we have to move really strongly against that we're never an expert on anyone else's life. And I always try to remember that that's one of our key, always come back to that.

**MC:** Go for it Ink.

**Ink Asher Hemp:** Um I, I find the word equal, interesting. And the difference between, like, equal and equitable. And, and, and, and if equal is trying to give everyone the same, is that maybe like, part of the, is that maybe like part of part of part of why we're getting stuck, because whose experience is that centering, I think quite a lot about, about about about about about about the access of the work we make be that be that be that like us, like on a sensory level, or a financial level or whatever. But thinking specifically about different forms of like, disabled access to work. When I was reading the transcript of this beautiful podcast, it was a lot about language. And there's this, like, thinking about the way BSL interpretation is provided, is often like, made me realise that that's a step between, between between between between thinking about access language and disability access, and, and and, and accesses. Whether it's often often often people try to bolt it on at the end, or keep it at the side in an attempt to, to give to give people exactly the same experience to stop the access interfering. But then that's, that's centre that's trying to create a an equal experience instead of an equitable experience, because it's like centering the non disabled experience and saying that everyone should try and aim to get that, if that makes sense. But how do we just acknowledge that there is an honesty and everybody's being in everybody's body and experience being different? And how do we go back to trying to tell the truth of a story instead of give everyone the same, if that makes sense?

**MC:** 100%

**HP:** That also kind of chimes with conversations I've been having with people about access for particularly literary events, because that's obviously where I work in. And I think there's in everyone's desire to make things accessible. Disability Access often gets kind of, it's an afterthought. So the idea is, well, we'll film something you know, an event must always be filmed which of course, is a huge step towards access. But also you have to think about the quality of experience that's being given to the people who are then having a digital experience versus the people in the room then because, like you said, it's not equitable. If it's, if it's a camera phone, at the back of a bookshop, that's not a great experience people can't hear properly is not going to be, you're not going to get that same kind of warm hug of being in the room. So I always think in that instance, would it not be better to have two different events? Would it be better to have one in a bookshop, and then zoom one, but with the same people that will be easier to do a good quality control or something like that? I think it comes down to like, there's no easy answer. And you can't just apply one thing, you would know much more about this than me Ink. But you know, you can't just apply one thing across all events. Basically.

**IAH:** It's about it being part of every single decision in every single process, right? There's not, there's not like you can't go like, here's the access plan that makes everything work, every event.

**HP:** And access needs often clash, too. So yeah, it's not it's not a simple answer.

**EJP:** It also makes me think about infrastructure lords, though, and I think the culture industry is hilariously good at imagining we don't exist in the rest of the world. When When does our work? Start and Stop? Does it start getting to the building and great, there's around? Like, no, because if you've had a really shitty boss journey, your event is trashed anyway. And so I think there's something I was going to mention it later to do with freelancers, I think the best thing we can do for the people we say our workers for and for the people that make the work is to pick ourselves as part of a broader infrastructure, and really embrace that whole experience and the societal issues. So when you mentioned universal basic income, of course, like my heart just goes, yeah, because that infrastructurally opens lots of things up and makes space for people to realise what they do need. stead of just being scared all the time.

**MC:** I think what you mentioned Ink was make me think a little bit about the origins of SQIFF, the Scottish Queer International Film Festival, and one of their kind of commitments from the very beginning was to have all films, whether they were English speaking or not to be captioned. And that seemed like such a radical thing. And I think that's something that Arusa talks about as well about organisations who are grassroots actually leading the way. And still, you know, I mean, I used to work in arthouse cinema, and people would complain about the captions, because they were like well I just keep reading them. And it's like, well, YES. But in the same way, as you can train yourself to read subtitles, you can also train yourself to not read captions, but it's a skill that you should learn. Because, you know, for just so everyone can actually access that film. So that's, and that's the basic, and that's something that also came up with the Broadcast event as well, was that actually captioning, all of your events is not good enough. Because folk that are deaf, might not necessarily, English might not be the first language. So just thinking about, about all these things, and sometimes it is just, you know, knowing that you're not necessarily doing it perfectly or correctly or right, but at least you're thinking about these things. I mean, I don't know if anyone has any suggestions about what could be the way?

**IAH:** I just like the phrase, anything worth doing well is worth doing badly. And it's not, it's not saying like, don't get better. But but but my friends send it to me as a text at a time when when when I couldn't do all of the life things like Like, like, eat and get dressed and shower, and clean the bathroom, and wash up. But like it's better to eat something than nothing. And it's better to to to to to to have a shower and get back into dramas than not get dressed at all. And like, we’re never gonna start perfect.

**HP:** I think it's part of that as well. We're often scared to ask, because the people who know most about what they need are the people who need the things. But often I think institutions especially don't want to say, well, what could we actually do better? Because then they're kind of admitting that they're not done perfectly. But like you said, we're inviting criticism. And but you won't ever get the information if you don't ask and if you don't recognise, and, you know, yeah, we do, we will make mistakes. And, you know, we will do it wrong. And but that's part of improving, isn't it?

**MC:** Anything else on that before we move on?

**LH:** Yeah, I think there's something really interesting about that intentional inclusion and that like, I suppose there is an element where, as you say, you know, it has to be a conversation. It has to be evidence it started with I think what's interesting, particularly with grassroots is around the leading away, but also acknowledging that, you know, actually in the infrastructure, it's really difficult to build in these these costs like and again, you know, I think there is a place for things like micro funding, but then also acknowledging that actually the like for something just there are costs and right quite rightly people need to be paid to, you know, to make these things happen. And so I think there is a conversation to be had about how we support that better. And I think it'd be really interesting to see the role of bigger institutions being able to provide, you know, these kinds of access pots, so that that maybe small organisations can link into, so if they don't have this type of cost, they can make it really easy that level of access, if that's the right way to do it, we can't necessarily expect small organisations to hold money. Or they won't might want to, but actually, I think what we're learning is very often sometimes, you know, it's just about trying to find different ways to build it within that system. And that example, about sound, I think, is a really interesting one about because actually, I read an article recently, I won't go into too much detail, but it's actually film, audio is just not as good as it used to be. And that's all to do with the whole film industry. And how timelines are really tight. And they always go for like good shots, rather than like where the mic is, because they want cinematic things. And I just think it's a really nice example, really interesting example of how structurally, the whole setup is built. So actually, sound isn't as good. So talking about subtitling captioning, like it's just an example where it's just there just isn't this as much thought they'll do it in post, and so they don't do another take. It's actually built in the system. So if you are needing to access files, just more generally, that's actually a systemic thing, as opposed to necessarily just, it's not just you.

**EJP:** I think the only other thing for me is I'm also like, pulling ourselves out of any form of expectation of our audience, like, I've witnessed a lot of like, well, we've done this thing, and then these people don't turn up. And they don't appreciate all of this work that we've done to make it whatever. And I just think like getting into a rhythm where we go, we do this, because it's important, everyone has the option to opt in. But no one owes us gratitude for that. It happens rudily all the time. But I also see quite a lot with BSL performances. Well, we've put this on a Thursday afternoon, and where are all the deaf people and you're like at work like everyone else. Like why is it Thursday afternoon? Or rurally? I think I said this to you previously, Morvern than no one's sitting about Gretna Just waiting for something to happen. Like everyone has a life. So again, time how do we just do these things, like consecutively overtime and consistently, so people eventually go, I could opt in, and then make space to opt in when they want to.

**MC**: Oh, this is a lovely one, actually, this is Ink’s, provocation from the very start, which is, which is really poetic and beautiful. So I'm going to try and do it justice by speaking it. What story of the world we want to live in do we make true?

**AQ:** So I thought this is a really interesting publication. And I think it’s the story that involves us thriving, not just surviving, and often feels in the creative industries, like we're just getting by just kind of surviving, when I think we really deserve to thrive. And, you know, it's no wonder that people leave this industry, because sometimes we're made to feel like we should be grateful to be here. And I hate that mentality, because it totally diminishes your worth. So yeah, thriving, not just surviving.

**MC:** I mean, one of the things that I think about is that how do you know where you're going, if you don't have a vision of where you want to be? To begin with? Like, you need to have some kind of idea of a utopia. And maybe, as I mentioned, as well, that kind of, maybe, when you get there, even if you never get there, it's an imperfect version of what you want, but at least you have something to work towards. And Arusa’s nodding but I'm imagining that Arusa’s point around thriving, not just surviving is when you're surviving, you don't have time to think out of the box, you're just trying to get by day to day.

**EJP**: I think for me, so it's maybe worth saying I'm a dancer, and a movement person. So I struggle with stories if I'm honest. And I think for me I either want, no stories, or 100 stories. But I think there's a I think I have witnessed and even in the introductions we give ourselves that's a story about who we are. And I feel like presently, stories are often used to stop seeing each other's full humanity. Like they’re a tool of simplification that in the structures we have to navigate, reduce people and also take me away from what I'm actually feeling. So I feel like my story is that I'm an artist, I'm not, I'm a warrior. I do loads of admin, I'm fundraising. I'm trying to keep my bedroom tidy. I'm an aunty, that one's important to me. I'm not often an artist, actually. But I have to tell the story that I'm an artist, if I ever want to become an art to be making the art, and I've got a real problem with the fact that I kind of cut about having to lie a bit to make something happen when what I want to do is like to feel things everyday and move move from a place of stories to like instinct and humanity and impulse. So I'm not thinking about the future. I'm not thinking about the past. I'm doing what I'm doing.

**TF**: Yeah. And I feel like that goes back to Arusa’s thriving, not surviving point. And it makes me think when you see that, because it's like, so often even you just introduced me today, like, as a writer. And I always think people ask, what do you do? Who are you, then like, I'm a writer, but like, I have no time to write, because I'm doing all these other things, which are supposed to give me time to write, but in actual fact, they don't. And that's a whole thing of like, finding time and making time and making time for what's important to you, like your art and your creativity. But at the same time, if you are in that, like certain like survival mode, which like the industry really puts you into, and like, especially as someone as a writer you're on. It's like commissions, and it's pitching and it's getting enough money to keep on writing and you can get sucked into that, that you don't even get to write and then you move to other creative things. Because of that, and it just, yeah…

**MC:** No, I like that. I mean, are you still a writer if you don't write but then, you know, it could almost rephrase Ink’s question with your permission Ink about kind of what story of yourself, do you want to make true? Could you say you're a writer, before you're recognised the writer, if you say you're a writer, you're a writer,

**HP:** I think so much of it comes down to like, giving people space to find because like, as a writer of stories, II once went to residency and I went and I had a whole plan of a novel in my head, I'm gonna write this, this is what every chapter is going to do. This is how the story's gonna go. I wrote it. And I couldn't look at it for four years. And then I threw it away because it was dogshit. Whereas when I've written things really well, I've started out from a place of like, great feeling like, I've been pissed off usually sorry, for two swears, being angry, or like, you know, [inaudible], like there's an urgency to her work. And when you've got that urgency, and I think this really comes out in like how we build societies as well. Knowing where you're going doesn't really give you the space to find out where you want to go while you're doing it. Whereas starting from a point of urgency and having the space to explore that. For me, that's where my work is the best. But I also think maybe that's where social change is best as well. And not, you know, you spoke about the New Labour years, but it's old news neoliberalisation, isn't it like, you've got to check boxes, you've got to do this, you've got to hit these goals. Well, you need room for imagination, like remember at the start of the first lockdown, and you could go outside your house, and you could walk across like a three lane road that you could never walk about before. And you could hear the birds. And I found that so inspiring. Because I was like, it's hard to say to someone, you have to give up your car, because we're killing the planet. But it's easy to say, Isn't it beautiful that you might be able to hear some birds outside your house? Sorry I've gotten really romantic and lyrical that I didn't really mean to, you’ve inspired me Ink with the question.

**IAP:** I just, I, I was enjoying that you were taking like quite back to quite practical place. Because I feel like we kind of were touching on this stuff earlier when you were talking about buses, because you said like, sorry I'm talking to Emma for audio purposes you were saying about about about about about like, I'm not a story person. But like for me, for me, when you talk about the bus on, to get there, that's that's that, like, that is the story. Like it's widening what we consider to be part of the part of part of part of part of part of our, our, like, our remit, or our, our like, like, like, like what is part of the experience or whatever and to like, like, like the world is the story. And either we can either we can either we can either we can either we can put it on the stage, or we can actually literally do it outside. And then we get to live it every day and not for just like half an hour.

**LH:** I mean, for me, I read this really I guess I read this almost I trained originally in neuroscience and for me like there's a lot of work around how just brains and stuff like stories is how we invent stories about ourselves that we picked up, like stories are powerful. I mean, we live in an age where, you know, with false news and all that kind of stuff, right? And you know, the power, the power stories are thinking about that, from a perspective around, also realising how few stories we've heard and or how narrowly we thought about different stories. You know, there's this Palestinian writer I can't remember the name but I think like one of those powerful ways to the quote goes something along the lines of to disempower people is to start their story with secondly, and I think there's something around that around, you know, and then David Soga, for example, talks a lot about decolonising. And about just how narrowly we've seen the world and whose stories we've missed. And I think there's a real, you know, I think, hopefully a genuine interest that the movements really uncover those stories. And I think when you then apply that, to a cultural perspective, I think it's about being able to be critical and developing meaning and that's almost the privilege that is a privilege to be able to co develop and develop stories in whichever modality we do with with different and communities and hear different stories and be us platform that in a way that's creative and joyous. You know, so much of this work on EDI is always seen as like, negative, is burning the statues and the books. It's not like how amazing is it? There's whole world, you know, of stories that we are yet to uncover. And we can tell each other. And I think that's and that point before about the future. I think that's so important. And again, I forget the name, but our the author, the Broken Earth series, for example, talks about, you know, we talk about Black History Month, Asian History Month, when's there going to be Black Futures Month, you know, that that power of hope, moving forward, like we need to see ourselves in the future. And I think that is, that's so integral to storytelling,

**IAH**: To insist that you will be alive tomorrow is the most universal way to resist.

**LH:** All emosh.

**MC:** On that note, so this is Lewis's provocation from the Nourish episode. So I'm going to try and give it justice now. So the question is, how do we balance professional artists and everyday creativity whilst not gatekeeping what culture and creativity is at the same time? Anyone want to jump in on that one?

**HP**: I don't know if this is a thing. That's, I think it is relevant. But I heard this week that local authorities don't actually have to provide any cultural programme for the people that live in their local areas. And I am shocked by this, it could be rubbish to the person who told me could be absolutely [inaudible] But I believe her very much…

**MC:** I think they can slash their budgets, some have and have very little or none.

**HP**: Yeah, but I feel like having, you have to bring culture into everyday life. You know, we were Emma talking about stories before and who's a storyteller? and who isn't? I bet you I think you are from us speaking now. I think you are a storyteller. And I'm from somewhere where you, you know, it's kind of like a post industrial, you know, post sort of coal mining area. People don't think of themselves as storytellers, they don't think of themselves as cultural. I didn't know anyone growing up who worked in the creative industries or anything like this. But my God, people can tell stories. You know, and I'm sure there's so many places in Scotland where people wouldn't think of themselves as particularly cultural, but the way they speak and talk about the people in their lives, or the day to day things, like you said, they're just their culture, that's culture. So I think, you know, the cultural industry, in a way, I'm doing sarcastic air quotes for anyone not watching. The industry part of it is almost like removes a huge part of what it is, I think.

**EJP:** tThat pretty much is what I was gonna say is, I think the greatest way to reconcile this question is to destroy labour economies as they exist, and ensure that being an artist doesn't have to be a job. And I don't think it's impossible. There is a shark that is the same age as modern capitalism, like, everyone rolls their eyes, but you're like, we can get rid. You can't get rid of capitalism. It's like, yeah, there's something floating in the sea. That's body still working is super young. But I think for me, that's the, I really struggled with these questions and the language we use, and then I get frustrated that we get, like, caught up in semantics. Because I think culture and creativity are different things. And I think we have to be really cautious that we don't imagine, we with all of our roles, our culture, and because to me, that's what actually puts people off engaging with the work that we do, like this weird social gentrification of places or imagining that what we do is special and I really I spend a lot of time being like, how do how do I do my work and just exist. Very recently had a funding grant that was unsuccessful for the marketing strategy, which was out of our four day week, one of the days was a four day week, I'm just gonna say that one of the days would just be spent volunteering and local, local, whatever that was interesting. Just so there would be a dancer in and around people's lives not there to sell them dance just to exist as a dancer, because I know that actually that would be the greatest way to bridge this gap is just be like I’m a dancer that also goes to the shop and has a chippy on a Friday and whatever. Because that's the culture where I'm from. And for me, that is culture and for me to arrive and go but look at my stretch. That is really violent. Gonna stop because I'm processing this out loud. But yeah, there's something for me about eliminating this as a job. So we can sack off making money and actually get back to doing what is meaningful. That requires massive societal change.

**MC:** Cultural institutions around Scotland are shriekin in horrified response to what you're saying. Because if you say that there is not, yeah, just just don't even blur the line just like dash the line, then everyone's noticed, then almost is does that does that blow them out of the water?

**TF:** Um yeah, to your point? Because, yeah, and to follow on from what you said, right? Like, culture, this idea of culture. I'm studding a master's in cultural studies. And so often, people ask me, what is culture? And I'm like, I don't know. But also I do know, because like, how do you explain that? We, how do you kind of say that to everyone? And also, how do you separate culture and creativity, because so often they are seen as one in the same and culture is, I would almost define that as everything, anything and everything. It's how we live our lives. It's how we communicate, it's like us being in this space. It's the food we eat at home, it's the parties we throw it's absolutely everything. Are we as creatives as working creatives. And artists? Are we partly responsible for this kind of now gatekeeping of culture, because we are part of various different cultures, and we are artists or creators, and we have the industry in the kind of society has forced us to, I suppose, like profit off our culture, in a sense, and that kind of like position, almost could potentially be we're doing more harm than good, right, like, and so that's a reconciliation that we have to do and to understand and why are we doing this work? And like, I think something you said earlier, but like about like, what is the impact? And to be honest about that impact? And is that impact really important? And it comes back to funding because we're forced into that, that box in this way of thinking.

**HP:** Your idea about a dancer in a community [to Emma] I love. And to me that is very much like one of the things which I think is really quietly really radical, which is the piano in train stations, like I go through two train stations to get here, well, three, and there's two in the ones in Glasgow, and there's always someone playing it. And that's just as likely to be like a bunch of kids just messing around and making sound than it is to be some like skinhead old lad playing like a sonata. Or like a young music students playing something that they've written themselves, which then everyone, hundreds of people in this train station can hear. And I like get genuinely choked up every time I go by past because then someone else's creativity is part of your life. Like part of like you say, your journey, you're getting from A to B, what like that, to me, is like a great example of that.

**TF:** This almost like idea or thought that if to be a creative person, like people, lots of people must experience your creativity. And I think we and that is because of Yeah, I suppose like kind of like people like us. But I think some of a lot of like, I look at a lot of my friends who don't work in Creative Industries, but are some of the most creative people I know, some of the best artists and the best musical instrument musicians. Yeah, musicians. So like musicians or dancers, or yeah like and you know, like if that's being sent like a beautiful card, and they would never call themselves creatives. And I would almost never think of them as creatives, but they still are like this creativity, just one person, even not even one person even if it's just for you doing something that is creative and is art. That is enough to call yourself creative. It doesn't have to be this kind of mass produced seen by a huge audience.

**HP**: And it also doesn't have to be sold yet. It doesn't have to have a commodity value. You can create something and destroy it. You know, and that's like, be creative. Yeah, it's like someone's mum making a beautiful birthday cake. Family. Yeah, that's so again, quietly radical because you're making something you're spending loads of time on, you're being creative. You're presenting it to people and then you're eating, it doesn't exist anymore, it can't be sold.

**MC:** EAT YOUR ART.

**IAH:** this is messy, and it's not finished. And I don't I don't understand it properly. Yeah. But but but but but but but. But the, the longer I, the longer I orbit the sun as a disabled person, the more I understand how just fucked the concept of work is, and the role of work within a society and the way work is, is used to determine the value of people and their value to capital. And, and, and and, and so this is the bit where it gets messy and not, not not finished but but but but but but but, but but but but but but but but, but, but it feels like anything that this concept of work touches, gets rotten and spoiled in some way. And like, my inconvenient body cannot hold all of the conveniences of this world. And my incorrigible body is irrelevant to this world without you like, like, like, like, like, like, like, like, like, like, the thing that allows me to stay here is the care of other people. And, and, and, and, and, and, and, and, and in the face of in the face of in the face of these systems, saying that, saying that saying that I in how I've been like, the vast majority of people shouldn't exist. But but but but but but how do we get it's big and theoretical and doesn't make any sense. But how do we get culture back to that point where it's about the care of me looking at you and acknowledging your existence? And you looking at me?

**MC:** I love that Ink, thank you. We might have to move on on that subject. But one of the things that I was thinking when you were talking was around the fact that if we create definitions about what is and what isn't culture, we create the possibility for people to feel that something isn't for them. And actually, if we just break that down, and as you say, just break it down to the connections that we have between people. And the way that we can make those connections in a creative way, is a beautiful, it's a beautiful way to move on.

Okay, we're almost there, we've got two more to go. This is Emma's provocation, which is, are we genuinely willing and equipped enough to be brutally honest with ourselves about the work we are doing, why we are doing the work in our role in that place? I don't know if you want to give a little bit of context for that Emma, you can or don't have to?

**EJP**: I might give a tiny bit because we had a, we chatted before this as well, we're like context would be helpful. I also think we're there already, I think we've already started to give the context to that and where that comes from. It basically is a provocation about being co opted and being complicit in cultural gatekeeping. And because I, to be brutally honest, feel pretty hopeless, right now in the world, and I think the industry of everything is making me very unwell. And trying to fit into that industry for over a decade is making me significantly unwell, basically, I think I work alongside lots of good people with really good intentions, and witnessed all of us having to decide what we're going to compromise on, how we're going to compromise and why. And I think I keep seeing values being squeezed by what exists, and then the initiators of those things, actually becoming the thing they set out to resist in the first place. And then I see lots of like, as artists, we should interrogate our role, and that we're not interrogating what we're doing is giving a disclaimer and making ourselves feel better about the things that maybe we're, we're not doing in the way we'd like to, and it makes me think about what I think exists loads when you've talked about please because this line of artist and community member is blurry and like are we tainted by our own agendas? Yes, I'm a community member, but actually, am I there with something else in mind? Am I listening? And, also, the thing that I think for me is that people who distribute the resource only engage with the people who are palatable to them and who they can reach. So it like Gretna is my prime example. It's where I live. Loads of money is now getting pumped into Dumfries and Galloway because its recognition has been overlooked. None of it is reaching Gretna, none of it is reaching the people that I love and grew up around and caused chaos with, none of it because no one is willing to start from the actual beginning and listen in that place. And so I'm wondering like, can we call bullshit on ourselves? And can we do it in a way where we recognise a lot of us are existing from a place of fear, a place of love, and like an initial hope for change that then gets skewed along the way?

**MC:** I'm gonna pass to Arusa.

**AQ:** Yeah, this is a really great provocation. And I guess it makes me think of what we were talking about earlier to do with kind of grassroots organisations and larger scale. Yeah, I really questioned whether large scale organisations and companies are willing to be honest with themselves. And even when they do interrogate certain things, I feel like there is often resistance to change. And again, individually, whether we're equipped, like you said, I'm not so sure either. And this is where I think things like anti racism training can be so beneficial to so many different people. Because sometimes you think that your head is in the right direction as far as your thinking goes, but then training or things like that can encourage you to think in a different way. And it makes you or forces you to be a bit uncomfortable, I think being uncomfortable is a good thing. It's good to sit with that for a while.

**LH:** I think there's always that kind of, I think, and racism is a good example, I always compare some of that with climate change, as well as like, sometimes you just get swallowed up in it, it's massive, you know, these massive systemic issues that are built over lots of time. But that doesn't excuse the individual. And that's always the tension is like we all have a part to play. But we also can't pretend that we shouldn't, you know, pretend that we are going to be the individual changemaker in that because that's when the bigger changemakers don't get called into account. It's the reason why we all get convinced to teach our kids to recycle, but not actually call out companies. And you know, it's a false choice. It's an impossible decision that we are given. So I do think, yeah, I think it's a really great provocation because, you know, as you say, we have a false decision. We like a false choice and so much about the sector that we're in the drivers, are there mean that you can't be you have to make compromises and that and that's and what kind of shoddy affair is that I think there's something there around. So for Fun Palaces, one of the co directors talks, Sarah Duffy talks about cultural Marxism, what's the wants, she wants to see is like nothing short of, you know, complete social revolution, you know, social change, because that is, sadly that is the everything. And sometimes I think about that a lot. I think about like all the EDI, all the equalities, all the discussions we're having is ultimately just window dressing until we actually have social change, do you not I mean, it's all tokens and representations up until the fact that that we need to do and I think we shouldn't I think there's a perspective there around not confusing those quite right and well intentioned tokens for the systemic change. I think that's, that's the bit where people then, you know, and you see that in climate change as well, it's important that we raise awareness, but there's been plenty of behavioural studies showing that if you raise awareness, you actually less likely to do other things. And so I think there's something there about holding that space. And that's exhausting. You know, again, coming from a health and wellbeing perspective, we also have to appreciate, like, we got to look after ourselves and our mental well being and sometimes that does require taking a breath, you know, we can't solve everything. So there's, there's no answers, but there are intensions, there's that individual versus the collective, it's about being engaged and constantly checking yourself is also giving yourself some space. And when it comes to these issues of racism in terms of the culture section, the inbuilt inequalities, that we have the whole global politics, capitalism, all these big things, you know, I think we need there's a lot, there's a lot in there, but I think constantly checking ourselves is the way to go forward. But yeah, I think it's good that this feels like there's more conversation about that more recognition of that space. Now more than ever, but maybe, I don't know, maybe I'm being optimistic. Who knows?

**MC:** I'm all here for the optimism, by the way, Ink, would you like to say something?

**IAH:** There's, there's, we can look at it on like a massive level, right? Like, like, like, like, how are we going to transform the whole of society? And, and, and but which, which, which? Let's have that conversation? Let's do it now. Let's make it happen. Let's, let's let's let's let's let's let's let's let's let's actually make the world we need but like but but but but but but then there's also like, the much much smaller version of this right is like is like is like I don't know how I feel about what audience member at the moment, but whatever. We'll use it in place of something better for now. But like that as an individual audience member's experience of a piece of work. And, and, and, and, and, and I keep wanting to ask organisations and institutions and companies working within the arts, like, Where does the performance stop? Because Because Because this this specifically anything around access, like so often the the they right? If there is information about access attached to a piece of work, it's it's, it's, it's, it's it's information describing the ways they wish it was accessible, not the ways it is and isn't accessible. And I think the key word for me is *honest*. Like, like, like, like, like, like, like, it's far better for someone to know that a piece isn't accessible to them than to turn up and then and then have a bad experience. Like, where, where, where does the performance stop? And when can we just start being honest and saying what we're doing well, and what we're doing not so well.

**MC:** Hallelujah. We have come to our final provocation. You’re gonna like it. I feel like I'm talking to the right people. This is Heather's provocation from the Spotlight episode. How can we better employ freelance creatives in the changing world of work?

**AQ**: Yeah, this one spoke to me clearly, I became a full time freelancer, after losing my job, am during COVID. And it was never part of that big plan. And at the time, I guess, I just wasn't having a lot of luck applying for jobs. And I was kind of thrust into this world of freelancing. But it ended up being the best decision for me. And I'm really glad that I was able to do it. But one of my biggest fears about freelancing was that typical thing of, you know, struggling to find work or not having safety in terms of work. But I'm lucky and I'm grateful that it did work out. But part of the reason I think it worked out is because I was willing to kind of try different things, and things that I didn't realise I'd be good at. And in turn, people were willing to let me try those things. And I think that's quite a common thing amongst creative freelancers, I guess, is that because of the nature of being creative, you can turn your hand to quite a lot of different things. And what I love to see is employers recognise how your skills might be perfect for a job, even if you're not from that industry or that particular world. I'd like employers to give freelance creatives a chance to build skills, they have and learn knowing that's probably a win win, because they've got another person they can rely on, then you've learnt all these great new skills.

**EJP:** I think number one, just like, we need to look at the world of work, big question. The other one for me is like broader infrastructure, honesty, stop infantilising us, I'm a fully grown adult, I don't need you to care for me, or tend to me, or any of that stuff. Like I need you to be a caring person. But I also just need fair access to work, I need rates of pay that actually represent the cost of living and you've not just plucked out of your arse or the bottom of your budget, I would like that pay broken down so that you're not going this is to cover your travel fee, and whatever, without any recognition that those things cost money. Like I want you to do the songs. So you have to sit with what you're willing to pay me. Recognising that no one size fits all, and less training me to be a professional. I think there's a thing about going I'm allowed to be a full human in the space. Some of your staffers also come in and one day a week just piss about, why when I turn up then is it like we've got these nine pieces for you to make. And you've got half a day to do it. Like I'm some kind of superhuman. And then lastly, because I could go on forever. There are two versions of this statement. But we have to recognise that in the creative industries, not everyone is freelance by choice. Some of us are freelance because jobs do not exist doing what we do. There is not a single movement director job in Scotland. That is a job. I want to be a freelancer. So to me the answer isn't just make jobs because that's often what I see is the solution. We should just make jobs. No, I want to be a freelancer. But I don't want the precarity that I currently have to live with. And I think we need to start from the most precarious of workers and make the conditions fair for them. And then everything else should work.

**AQ:** Yeah, just wanted to say like, amen, all of that. And obviously, you know, we always talk about this, but everyone should be paid properly in the creative industries, clearly, but as a fairly new freelancer, I know how difficult it can be to have those conversations at the start especially and just kind of set your rate and know your worth. And I think sometimes people can take advantage of that because, you know, they think that you don't know, but what's really helped me is other freelancers being open and transparent about things like their rates, so that employers can take advantage of us and I really appreciate that and I found just the freelance community especially in in Scotland. It's been really lovely to someone like me who is a new freelancer.

**MC:** Well, I don't know if we've plugged the Illustrated Freelancers Guide enough Heather. But is there a resource somewhere where people can like find out everything that they need to be a freelancer?

**HP:** So yes, me and the brilliant illustrator Maria Stoia and created the Illustrated Freelancers Guide, which is a free access, downloadable, and now in print guide to creative freelancers rights and best practice and things like that. And there are going to be more accessible versions coming out. There's going to be an easy read version and a plain text version and hopefully some others. But I just want to say as well, I couldn't agree more with like everything, Arusa and Emma said, and I think speaking about it is so important. And this idea of like some people aren't in a freelance job because they really want to be it's because they are and then you we all have to think about how we actually treat freelancers. So on the train on the way here, it's one of the tweets that I write and then delete there are an increasing amount of them. I wanted to you know, there's like a #FreelanceFriday thing I wanted to start #FuckedOverFriday for freelancers to talk about the kind of absolutely ridiculous rates they've been offered that week. I know someone who's just been offered 60 quid to write and deliver a keynote speech at something, but also for them to say how much money they're currently owed, which they have invoiced, which I'm happy to say mine is 1700 quid I'm waiting to be paid today from various different projects that I have invoiced, some of them already late payments, but we need to talk about these things. You know, the the reason Arusais feeling more empowered to talk about these things that other people are. And yeah, just treat people well, like, it's not hard, don't take the piss employed and probably pay them properly and pay them on time.

**TF:** Yes, I completely agree with you. And I think yes, there is a lot of I want to see like not ownership, but like as freelancers. Yeah, we, it's so important, we have that conversation with each other. But also, the employers that are employing these freelancers, just need to do better like and the difference when I've worked with a charity for over a year that have a very, that have created and there, then they've been in a really good position, because they've actually been a charity for about three years. So they can kind of create these structures. They said, We want to work with freelancers or consultants, because we're not quite, we don't yet have the infrastructure to have five employees. But how can we do this in the best way possible? How can we have like a fair payment structure? How can we make sure we're not just working month to month, and we have a letter of terms of agreement, that is for three months, and that protects us and this consultant. So I think a lot of the time a lot of like organisations, companies will ever get these freelancers in and don't really think about them and don't really care and just want them to do this piece of work and then go and so like to see a little bit more care happening. That protects both would be good.

**EJP:** A lot of I think the conversation pad is about subsidised culture and essentially creative Scotland. I think there's also a thing about from what Arusa said that we spend most of our time just figuring out what's going on as freelancers that's my biggest brain waste. Really negatively impacts me as a disabled person. Because if I'm brain foggy, sometimes I just can't figure it out. Creative Scotland has the power to say over the next five years, all of our regular funded organisations and people we fund transition to this model of contracting and this payment scheme. Like what if we streamline joined up think and make the systems simpler, because then as a freelancer, I spend more time making art and lifestyle just being like, I think this is what's happening. And I think that we don't have more money right now. But we can make more time, if we're strategic.

**HP:** And can I also do what I was doing and trying to shove something in, to that point. There is currently a Scottish Government Spending Review going on. And as part of this Creative Scotland is going to have to think about the future of funding. And I would love for those people to listen to all of this and all the things we've been talking about. And you know, if we can't have UBI, which maybe we can't just now I don't know, it's not up to me. Maybe we can do a thing where we, you fund someone but it's not for a six month project. It's you give them a living wage for three years. So they can advocate for themselves. So they can make the space you know pay for what they need to pay for. They can deal with their own access costs and things like this. You're empowering them, but also you're giving them the space to imagine and change things which we were talking about.

**MC:** I hope you all feel provoked, Arusa’s giving us like a double thumbs up, I think we need more than that. I think we need a round of applause. Yas. It's been really lovely to have this space and to have this time, I'm looking forward to listening to it again. And that's all from the Future Culture podcast for now.

That’s all from the Future Culture podcast for now. If you want to contribute to the conversation, why not head over to our Miro board, an online space that’s been created to invite you to add your thoughts, insights, experiences and questions to the discussions we’ve been having. You can find the link in the show notes to accompany this podcast or on the Culture Collective website. You can view videos of the original Starting Points events there too. You can get your podcasts from wherever you get them, that’s the cool thing people say.

And the very last thing I have to say is:

**Credits:**

The Future Culture podcast is presented by me, Morvern Cunningham, produced and edited by Halina Rifai, the excellent Halina Rifai with music by Hen Hoose. Culture Collective is funded by Scottish Government emergency COVID-19 funds through Creative Scotland.

Thanks to everyone. Woooo!