

S2E03 Foreword: Art & Engineering

Guest: Dr. Troy Ouellette

[00:00:00] Welcome to Foreword, the podcast where we find new ways of looking at the world. I'm your host, Alison Ines, and each episode, I bring you a conversation with one of our researchers from Brock universities, faculty of humanities.

[00:00:22] I'm joined today by one of our newest faculty. Troy Ouellette. Dr. Ouellette join the department of visual arts as an assistant professor in the spring of 2020, where he specializes in assemblage theory, technology and conceptual art from 1999 to 2006, he was the sculpture facilitator at the Banff center for the Arts.

[00:00:42] In Alberta, he's taught undergraduate courses in design and sculpture at various universities and colleges in Southern Ontario and his own work has been included in solo and group exhibitions in Canada, Australia, and the United States. Most recently, his work was included in the first [00:01:00] virtual exhibition.

[00:01:01] Hiding in plain sight at embassy cultural house in London, Ontario. And we've provided a link for you in the show notes. In addition to teaching with the department of visual arts, Troy will also be teaching in Brock's new engineering program. Welcome. Hi, Alison. Yeah, it's great to be here. Thank you so much for joining us today.

[00:01:21] Um, you've had a bit of an interesting start here at Brock during, during the pandemic. Um, so I imagine. Been doing lots of virtual meetings, getting to know people. Oh, for sure. For sure. Yeah, I love the podcast format actually, right? Because it's sort of, you know, allows people to work on whatever they want to work on.

[00:01:39] They can go for a run, a jog and they can listen to a podcast. It gets them away from the screen. So that's our hope. That is certainly our hope.

So for those of us not familiar with the fine art worlds, can you tell us a little bit about what assemblage theory and conceptual art, what that means? Yeah, I mean, I guess.

[00:01:58] Two separate things, of [00:02:00] course. But, um, it, in 2007, uh, Manuel DeLanda who's, um, part of, uh, like a Mexican extraction, he wrote a book called the, uh, new philosophy of society. Um, and it discusses the nuances of social and historical organizations and its complexities. And. One thing I liked about that, uh, process of, of trying to do that at attempting that at least is that he came up with a number of different, um, uh, sort of criteria five criteria.

[00:02:29] Let's say I'm just going to go with the basics here, but basically an assemblage or whatever it must have kind of an expressive. Um, so a material expressively, you could think of flowers, for instance, having their particular spectrum of light that they reflect. This all relates back to the arts, right?

[00:02:46] Because not only of color and it can be applied to other disciplines on some blush Siri. Uh, the second one would be coded relationships, things have codes. Um, and so we can think of everything that exists in our imaginations usually has some kind of [00:03:00] coded relationship either through language or maybe even our own DNA and RNA.

[00:03:04] You know, we have to, uh, you know, it's coded, um, or we have to communicate through. You know, and an inherit set of instructions within our RNA that allow us and our beings to verbalize things and the way that our Lennox is structured, et cetera, these are all done through. A system of codes, which we've discovered is DNA and RNA.

[00:03:26] So important to, uh, even the, you know, past the pandemic that's happened. Um, there's also a process of territorialism nation. These would be like entities within an assemblage, um, that have like, uh, kind of, uh, establish a kind of a sovereignty or a territory. They stabilize their positions, right. And then what's called de territorialism nation, at least with what DeLanda says and that's coming out of delusions philosophy.

[00:03:53] It sort of destabilizes that environment. So we could think of decolonial legalization as a kind of [00:04:00] destabilization of the kind of colonial projects that went on. Um, you know, in the, uh, since the 15 hundreds. Which we can think of also, uh, having material qualities, these things that are material that play an important part in all living things or non-living things.

[00:04:16] Um, so I, what drew me to this, you know, was that I kind of came out of school. Through, uh, uh, you know, polka, boasts modernism, and kind of, you know, a linguistic term. And I wanted to think about how these other factors of ma materials and, um, codes and things like that were played out in the arts. And, um, Delando was.

[00:04:40] Person for me to research during my dissertation research. And so I've continued looking at, uh, his work, um, and a kind of non-linguistic term, uh, which means that you're focusing on also things like the, the environment, et cetera, and, um, It drew it, it's what still draws me to, you know, environmental architecture [00:05:00] or environmental projects.

[00:05:01] And a lot of my work takes on some of those issues. Um, yeah, so I'm, I'm kind of, I'm still very much intrigued by, um, what Deland is saying. And you know, these, this idea of the things are have a multiplicity or they're complex is, has always been interesting to me because I think it showcases. An idea of difference if we think of difference in terms of, you know, intersectionality, uh, within, uh, people's, uh, what makes up a person's identity, um, that's that can be sort of encapsulated a little bit in coded relationships and other things that the land is talking about.

[00:05:43] Okay. You know, he was just an example of kind of a walking animal form, um, on a piece of solid ground with a surface to walk on. But there's obviously gravitational fields that are working on that entity. There's, um, you know, the, uh, kind of like, uh, [00:06:00] it has a given weight. Um, it has a capacity to form, uh, in this assembly.

[00:06:05] Depending on emergent properties, you could say that it's not reduceable to any one thing, like in terms of gravity or the animal type or species or whatever, but it has

effects and capacities and affordances that are kind of relational. So these things act upon one another and they, they inform how.

[00:06:24] This entity is operating as a living being, but, you know, we could also say that about anything from crystals to anything in chemistry or physics or whatever. Um, so I liked the way that it kind of traverses this kind of, um, ground between disciplines. And I've always thought of myself as very multidisciplinary.

[00:06:43] So this fits right in with what I'm interested in research. So I thought maybe you could tell us a little bit about the, about some of your works from the embassy cultural house exhibition. Um, and as I mentioned in our intro, we have a link there. So our listeners, if they have their [00:07:00] hands free and it's safe, can certainly take, take a quick peek at that.

[00:07:03] As we talk about some of the pieces, um, your, your pieces, they're releasing to engage with themes of labor, data, collections and politics. And, um, I know you were telling me earlier, Specifically about your peace platform, which you created prior to the 2016 presidential election, which engages with that, uh, with, with the Republican party platform.

[00:07:25] So what, what are you trying to do with that piece in particular and with these pieces in general? Yeah. I generally think of these things as kind of like in a way they're kind of one-offs right. I mean, they're, you know, with the, uh, 2016 presidential, uh, Republican platform or the Republican platform in the U S um, It's almost as if no one read that the platform became be aware before Trump came to power.

[00:07:50] Um, and you know, for instance, in the, in the platform itself itself, it says right off the bat, you know, with this platform, we, the Republican party reaffirmed the principles that [00:08:00] unite us in common purpose. We believe in American exceptionalism, we believe in the United States. America is unlike any other nation on it.

[00:08:07] And then it goes on to say, you know, we believe America is exceptional because of our historic role first as refugee, then as defender, and now as exemplar of Liberty in the world for the world to see kind of thing. And so what I did with this was I took a digital approach because I took the, uh, entire platform and put it within a space, a kind of a rectangle space.

[00:08:30] Um, In text in four point type. So you can barely see the platform you have that you'd have to look really closely at it. Um, oh yeah. You'd almost need a magnifying glass, but I was interested very much in, you know, The kind of hypocrisy in a, in a way, um, that this was exemplifying because you, as you know, you know, there's more mass killings in the U S than anywhere on earth in terms of, uh, you know, uh, their lack of gun control.

[00:09:00] [00:09:00] Um, and you know, the horrifying events with George Floyd and other things that have just been, um, you know, in the media more recently, but this kind of garden carnage of, you know, 300 people are shot. I think every year, Day or something in the U S um, and so this, uh, this kind of thing, uh, just made me realize that, you know, with Trump and his memes coming out on Twitter and that not many people were actually paying attention to the very party that he was representing through their platform.

[00:09:31] And, um, so for me, I had to take that on and, and just, um, use, uh, I think I used a, uh, a German font that was popular at the time of national socialism to have the texts laid over top of a black ground. So when you approach the piece, you just see basically, almost like a minimalist, like composition, a kind of a gray.

[00:09:50] Kind of veil on our black ground, but then as you get closer, you start realizing what you're reading. And so it's full of kind of xenophobic and kind of a [00:10:00] verbiage that I thought was very binary and, uh, disturbing. So, so when you made that piece, like, did you have a specific cool in mind in terms of the person who would be looking at that piece?

[00:10:12] Like, did you want them to come away thinking about specific things or were you kind of open. Same here, here it is. Now you figure it out. Well, it sort of speaks for itself, right? The way, I mean, you know, as long as you can read, uh, an English text, you know, you can understand what's going on in the text next.

[00:10:30] You ha you're forced to look very carefully. Yeah. Got it. And one of the things about us on blogs, I think too, is, uh, you know, another proposition here that DeLanda doesn't talk about maybe as much, but. I mean, he does in terms of macro micro distinctions, he tries to get rid of those as distinctions, but this idea of like proximity being close to something, you know, if you're in the United States and you're embedded within that context, you're, you're going to be, you know, um, subject to it.

[00:10:56] I mean, I believe. There's a, a bill that went [00:11:00] past called 10 33. And, you know, it's, it's using a, what that does is like use old military technologies and it sort of gives them to law enforcement agencies within the United States. And then they further patrol neighborhoods. Usually, you know, African-American neighborhoods or like low income neighborhoods.

[00:11:17] So there's this other, there's this underlying, um, kind of, um, very dark side to, uh, the military industrial complex and the way it's being used to control populations and against populations. What do you see then as the relationship between art and politics and are there particular. Trends or ideas that you've seen emerging in light of the black lives matters movement.

[00:11:44] Decolonization. These, these social justice movements that have been gay have been gaining. Broader awareness again. Yeah, it's a, it's a good point to make. I'm certainly because of social media, I'm sure is a major factor for, uh, the ability to have Reno [00:12:00] recordings of these kinds of wrongs that are being perpetrated.

[00:12:03] Um, I look back at this and I've got to say, you know, in the sixties and seventies, it, it really took off, especially with performance art. Within conceptualism. Cause what we were looking, you asked that question, you know, what do you think, you know, conceptual art is. Um, and it's a great question because it does have all these other permutations within conceptual art.

[00:12:24] I mean, I, I look at it as like tropes of conceptual art. Um, just foregrounding the idea of politics within conceptual our first. So conceptual that if you, if you know, you'll, you know, many people think of it as ideas over, you know, making a process of making. Okay.

Maybe. Um, so instead of painting, you know, you would have, uh, usually it's linked to linguistics or, or language somehow.

[00:12:47] And politics are a prominent theme in conceptual art. They always have been. Um, so you can think of that emphasis on language. There's an emphasis on some kind of a system or possibly mathematics. That could be one branch of [00:13:00] conceptual art, a kind of faint objectivity. I don't really think conceptual arts artists think of themselves as like objective, but they can, they can sort of like mimic a kind of objectivity.

[00:13:11] Um, I think there's a predominance of photography because photography is kind of like a mirror, you know, digital photography is quite different now though, right? I mean, it's, it's quite manipulated, but analog photography as it existed in the sixties and seventies certainly, um, would have been, you know, the, a mirror to a, um, an instant on less, it was, you know, staged or what.

[00:13:32] We could think of, um, you know, Jeff Wall or someone in Canada looking at, uh, that kind of work and conceptualism, maybe west coast conceptualism. But I think another one is a kind of clear, clean and austere, um, this kind of mimicry of modernism and streamlining. And then there's maybe a little bit of humor and absurdity in it as well.

[00:13:54] Um, and here's a good example of, you know, political, um, peace, right? Uh, Louise Lawler [00:14:00] did it. Piece called bird calls and bird calls 1971. Right. Louie sees that, you know, there's these exhibitions of all male artists and, you know, so she proceeds at the moment to use these bird calls and call out the names of, you know, Vito Acconci, Carl, Andre, Donald Judd, you know, whoever else is in the show.

[00:14:21] And it's a hilarious piece, but it's also drawing attention to the fact that there were not many women having exhibitions, especially in major centers, New York, Los Angeles, and a major galleries. Um, so she saw that as a kind of a, you know, a avoid that, um, where it needed to be commented on. And, you know, as so many women of that era did within a performance.

[00:14:44] You know, we can think of Adrian Piper, you know, who draws attention, um, uh, uh, you know, uh, in terms of like gender, uh, you could think of Yoko Ono's cut piece. I mean, there's all of these great works that are coming out and they're risky, you know, [00:15:00] they're, uh, these performative works are often very risky, so there's an element of risk involved.

[00:15:05] I would say conceptualism started maybe with, with, uh, in that room. Early part of the 20th century. Um, and it, and it also involved a kind of institutional critique and it has a connection with minimalism. So there's many different permutations, you know, it's even called various things like good Ty and Fluxus and Neo data and photo conceptualism and land art.

[00:15:26] I mean, there's, you know, You can, you can keep going. But I remember doing a project and the data is, um, in, uh, in high school, utterly fascinated with, uh, with, with the absurdity of it. Right. I don't know how much of it I would remember now, but, uh, but yeah, the, um, calling attention to things in, in, um, interesting ways, um, that maybe don't always

seem intuitive, I guess, on the, on the first, at the first glance, you kind of have to dig a little bit to, to understand.

[00:15:56] Yeah. Sometimes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. [00:16:00] Do you think that, that that's a challenge for people engaging with, with, with conceptual art? Like do, do people from outside of the artistic area, new newcomers to, to the field, um, What, what can they expect to experience when, if they're trying to engage with, with a conceptual art piece?

[00:16:19] Well, it's really tough. Right? And a lot of instances, you know, like Robert Barry would, um, maybe have like a radio signal that would be in the gap in a gallery situation. And unless you were able to tune into the frequency, you would hear nothing, right? Like, uh, as a, as a human, you wouldn't be able to perceive it.

[00:16:35] But what I think it draws attention to is, um, some of the things that are hidden and our investors. Like that, you know, the title of that very show that I was in London, like hiding in plain sight. Sometimes things can be right in front of you and you don't even know that they're there. You're not aware that they're there.

[00:16:50] Um, we could think of this in terms of the way, you know, um, stereotypes are, are, uh, you know, out there and, um, [00:17:00] pervade our consciousness and we, we maybe ascribe something to somebody knowing nothing about. Right. Uh, knowing nothing about, uh, where they're from or, and, um, at least in Canada, like, see, I was, I thought that that Republican platform was kind of an upfront in a way.

[00:17:16] Um, and my kind of Canadian sensibilities, I don't even know if it's national, it's just my own sensibilities. And so that idea of forces playing out, um, and influencing things is I think something that conceptualism, um, in all its iterations, uh, Provides us with a kind of an insight things that we didn't think of before.

[00:17:38] And they allow us, I think, to decide more as a people experiencing these things, then something that would generally direct our attention to any specific, to something that's more, a little more specific. Um, so this sort of generalization of, of thought and this free thinking, um, Arena that people are engaged in once they've engaged with these pieces is something very [00:18:00] powerful for me.

[00:18:00] You have a couple of pieces in that hiding in plain sight, that, that also deal with the idea of consumption and garbage. Um, and, and that kind of thing, which again, is something that we're busy when we're busy consuming. We're not always thinking about. Where's this where's this going to end up or what garbage has been produced in the process of this, of this thing.

[00:18:25] Um, did you want to tell us a little bit about those pieces? I know you've got the, um, uh, the politics of trade and trash, and I'm not sure if I'm going to pronounce this. Right. The judge reduced scope. Yeah, that's right. Yeah. Um, yeah. Uh, both of those pieces use kind of, you know, post-consumer waste and, uh, it all was brought about by a project that I did in Windsor.

[00:18:49] It was the, um, the biggest, um, trading, um, nexus for trade between the United States and Canada, that border crossing. Um, and so garbage would just [00:19:00] litter the Huron church roadway. Um, and so I proceeded to do a performance where I kind of dressed up in this. Uniform. And I went out and I picked up all this garbage and then I tried to trace it, um, sort of the politics of trade and trash.

[00:19:13] I chronicled everything. I tried to trace it, map it, um, and thereby showing the complexities of, of trade in a way, because the trade extended to some parts in Europe, they extra extended all the way through these Southern United States. So the bringing of material objects from one place to another was exemplified.

[00:19:35] One project after I collected all that data, I had this little data screen that would just like scroll with all of these different items and the best description that I could give these items. Um, there was a McDonald's located on here in church road, right at the border as well, which was kind of heavily militarized, right after nine 11.

[00:19:54] The, um, the garbage took on, you know, this, uh, iteration of this large map of north [00:20:00] America, where most of the trade was taking place in terms of how it was being traded and transported. And, um, and then just try to scope came out of, um, my research into, um, medicine and how much waste was being generated through, uh, trying to keep us healthy, which ironically, you know, yeah.

[00:20:20] It makes other people unhealthy. I was just going to say, you could probably update that with all of the waste that's being generated now with our disinfecting wipes and with our. Single use masks and gloves and gowns and finding that, that keeping us safe. But then we're, there's also that other, the destruction side of that.

[00:20:41] Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Like for, to just try to try to scope it. I just went country by country and looked at how much waste was generated. And, um, a lot of the, uh, the basil convention was supposed to take care of, you know, um, The trading and waste. So if one country got rid of their waste and other country might [00:21:00] buy it or whatever, that happens all the time, right?

[00:21:02] I mean, we get waste from the United States, goes up to a landfill here in Canada, or Toronto's waste goes down to, you know, Southern south of London. So you're so trading in waste happens all the time. And, uh, sometimes it even happens, you know, and these kind of like very dark undercurrents of marketplaces that will buy and trade and sell those things.

[00:21:24] Um, so, uh, to try to scope was just an inverted, like it was a speaker, um, that was hung on to a, um, what looked like a stethoscope kind of. Right. Um, and then it just verbally just set out the numbers for each country. Uh, that was. So, how did you get interested in the environment? That's come up in a few of the things that you've, that you've mentioned.

[00:21:52] Um, how, how did you get interested in, in exploring the environment through art? Um, I think it was actually, [00:22:00] maybe my mom had an influence actually, because, you know, she was kind of an, a staunch environmentalist. And so growing up, you

know, in that household where, you know, I was looking at, um, You know, biology and species of animals.

[00:22:15] And, um, you know, those were mostly my mom's interest. And, um, so I came to it eventually like doing these community projects, these community-based projects. And, uh, one was where I built a greenhouse in my backyard. And this is well before, you know, uh, you know, marijuana and that was more legalized. So for sneaking at this greenhouse, what's this I do.

[00:22:39] And, you know, um, So, um, anyway, I was, but all it was doing was so innocent. It was just growing these tomato plants and then gifting them to the, my neighbors. It was kind of funny. Um, and so, yeah, it was this wacky project, but it. But it did produce a lot of, uh, of these heritage [00:23:00] tomato plants that I then just gifted.

[00:23:01] And, um, I did another project like that, uh, down in the winter that had to do with hidden labor, um, and, and gardening and people beautifying their, uh, their own yards and growing food and things like that. And, uh, it was a process where one would come into the gallery, see these little seed packets on the wall and this big map.

[00:23:20] And they would place a pin where they were going to, you know, grab the seeds and then plant, plant the plant. So the city was kind of in a way, my canvas, right. And. By gifting the seeds, they were obliged to donate some money and then the money went to the, uh, local food bank. Um, so it tried to it try to have this kind of healing.

[00:23:41] Uh, it was kind of like a healing process, uh, for the city and to engage with this notion of like hidden labor, which is great show at art site and measure. So you had residents visitors to the exhibition. Become artists as well, in a way as they, as they finished your [00:24:00] work for you or helped, helped finish it anyway.

[00:24:02] Yeah, exactly. Yeah. That's, that's, that's really interesting. Um, gardening is, is one of those, um, hobbies that has or interests, um, that has really taken off since, since the pandemic. So, um, if any of our listeners are involved in it, Gardening related artworks get in touch because I, that sounds, that sounds really interesting now sounds like a good time too, a good time to be doing that kind of thing.

[00:24:28] Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So we also, I also wanted to ask about your, um, interest in the Bauhaus movement. Um, you've done your, your PhD dissertation on that. Um, and the Bauhaus art school became famous for its approach to design in the 1920s, Germany, and then later, um, many, most perhaps of the, um, Artists and architects in that school moved to the U S and we're based out of Chicago if my research is correct.

[00:24:59] Yeah. [00:25:00] Okay. I'm always a little nervous sharing my research with the expert. Um, so could you tell us a little bit more about this movement and what attracted you to it? Principles and if some of it, and if some of their principles, um, come through in some of the work that you do now. Oh, it does. For sure. I mean, one of the things about the Bauhaus was that it started in 1919, and it was in a, um, uh, invite our Germany, which is a very conservative place.

[00:25:27] Um, All of a sudden you had this kind of Bohemian school, you know, with like rebel artists or whatever that were invading the town. And, um, and so it rattled a lot of cages in terms of the administrations within the city. Um, but what they did start was a course that involved, um, everything from like metal work, uh, to textiles to painting and the Bauhaus.

[00:25:53] Continues to fascinate a lot of people because, um, what they're trying to do now is also look at [00:26:00] the students. Where did the students go? Um, not just the instructors. We know where the instructors went, um, and, and Mohali knowledge and Yorkie campus. That was part of those inner circles of the Baha'is.

[00:26:11] They went and founded, uh, the new Bauhaus in Chicago. But when the preliminary course was developed in 19, 19 as early as that, they were already looking at. These kinds of foundational courses, which ways basically became a model for almost every art school since, you know. Um, and so that's how it's important.

[00:26:32] Um, it involved like Gropius who started a Walter Gropius, you know, it was an architect. Um, and then it went on to Hanis Meyer and, and, uh, miss Vander rose. So there were. People involved as the director. Uh, but, um, it's, it's come under a lot of criticism lately, mainly because, you know, there, there is not investigation on where the students went.

[00:26:54] Um, and there was heavy criticism for the way women were treated at the time because the, [00:27:00] they weren't involved in things like they were sort of encouraged to go into textiles. That of like painting. Um, so there was this real division between craft, I think in art that's still existed, like higher that existed.

[00:27:13] Um, and so that's something that now is being pinpointed as you know, where we're trying to, um, get at these kind of hidden histories. Um, and look at the more intricate kind of nature of how the ball has operated and, uh, cause it recently celebrated a hundred years and it's been around for a long time.

[00:27:33] Uh, we, and so, you know, it's fascinating to me because I was more interested in it as an institution. How did it operate as an institution? And in those initial years of 19, 19, up to about 19 23, 24, before it moved to the, uh, main school headquarters, which was in depth, it, uh, it was on the verge of collapse almost every year, you know, Yeah.

[00:27:58] The, the stereotype [00:28:00] of the, uh, artistic institutions struggling. Yeah, yeah. Even the bar. Oh, that's right. And it struggled for a long time to find a city to kind of settle down into, and then when it finally did, of course, the Nazis came to power and they closed the school. I think it was 1933. So, uh, it's a tragic story because, you know, had it been left as a school that was like a free-thinking school kind of had socialist, uh, overtones to it.

[00:28:26] Um, it, you know, it would have probably revolutionized for its time, like architecture, uh, metal work. You know? Um, so, um, it came out of other movements, but, uh, it, it was, uh, a pretty astounding place, I think. Yeah. And even some of the everyday objects, like our students are familiar with modular stacking chairs and those kinds of things.

[00:28:50] Just very, yes, like things, again, hidden in plain sight, things that, uh, that are there that we don't necessarily think about as art or, or design work. [00:29:00] Um, we'll put some links in the show notes as well, for those who are interested in learning a little bit more about that. So you were interested in it as, as an institutional, um, facility.

[00:29:11] So have, have some of those ideas seeped into your own teaching then? Oh, for sure. I mean, I can't ignore the fact that. Um, the Bauhaus, you know, uh, really looked at things like performance theater, um, you know, it was just so radical. And so multidisciplinary that, um, you know, for me at least, uh, I have to acknowledge where these traditions come from.

[00:29:34] You know, if it's performance art, for instance, I mean, it's coming out of, you know, these cutoff avant garde theater works, or, um, it's kind of, it's coming out of guerrilla theater or. And, um, I find that all fascinating, the way that those lineages kind of can get pieced together. So the history is become an intricate part of anything that I teach ever in any course that I teach.

[00:29:56] Um, and you know, w we're dealing with a lot [00:30:00] of. Topics now we're dealing with, you know, truth value with an images we're dealing with, you know, uh, the politics of the day we're dealing with, you know, things that are well beyond the ball house that had to do with, uh, you know, electronic arts, new media. Um, you can also think of like disability arts.

[00:30:19] Um, and so for those things, you know, I want to show the lineage, but also what the Bauhaus was not. And one, one of the things that it was not, um, even in, in 1933, when it closed, it, wasn't looking at electronics at all. Um, there was no department that was looking at electronics, although Mohali knowledge, who was, who was looking at new materials, new processes, you know, it was very innovative.

[00:30:43] Um, he was looking at more like motorized, you know, sculptures and things like that. But electronics. Come about until you started looking at center for advanced visual studies at MIT, um, new ball house wasn't even engaged in looking at electronics. And then there was a major [00:31:00] exhibition in the seventies called software, uh, through, uh, Jack Burnham.

[00:31:04] Um, and that was at the Jewish museum in New York city, um, at an involved. Yeah, I think an emphasis on software and systems that would come to actually dominate our lives in a lot of ways, you know, so I thought it was not only prophetic, um, but it was visionary in the way that, um, those projects were, uh, came about in that gallery for that time.

[00:31:26] Very early on. Well, before 11 man of it, you know, um, was writing his book called, uh, software tastes, uh, command. I think it's called on my bookshelf somewhere. Um, but it's in 19, you know, uh, 2013 that tech. So you mentioned disability art, and I know that you're doing so. Around ideas of disability and art, um, with disabled performance artists.

[00:31:51] Um, can you tell us a little bit more about that? Yeah, I'm just sort of, you know, one cog in that machine of the major people are, uh, Jenelle [00:32:00] rose and, uh, Gayatri Persol, and rod Stricklin and RD. Hollender, there's a whole slew of people, but it basically came about through a David initiative who started a Viber fusion lab, uh, in London, Ontario.

[00:32:14] Um, and he's one of the prime, I think, movers of, you know, getting this on the radar of, you know, the Canada council on Ontario arts council, um, and just getting it out there, um, in terms of something that should be considered within the arts. And, uh, I know that. You know, even with the podcasts, like if it's, you know, you want to communicate to other people that maybe have hearing disabilities or whatever you have to make available some kind of a transcript or whatever.

[00:32:42] Um, I think the advantage that we have in terms of the ability to use new media is astounding in that way. Um, And so the project that I'm working on is one where I'm building this little spectrum analyzer for sound, but a dancer could wear on their sleeve. And [00:33:00] as the music plays, it's either picked up through a Mike or sent to the unit through a radio signal, and then the frequencies of the sound get transmitted and transferred into light pulses.

[00:33:12] And then the dancers able to. Not only maybe feel a vibration through these little transducers, which is something that, you know, Jim, uh, and other people in the collective right now are, are looking at, but they, they can also just look at the light patterns and then, uh, use that to, uh, uh, do some of their choreographic work.

[00:33:31] So we'll see how that goes. I mean, I think it's a three-year project. Um, David's like really active, uh, in that. So, yeah, we'll keep us posted on it because it does sound really, really interesting. And we're always, um, I'm, I certainly am always eager to hear about how folks are highlighting diverse communities in, in, in, in their disciplines and especially those communities that maybe have been overlooked in the past.

[00:33:57] For sure. So in terms of [00:34:00] your teaching at Brock, um, what kinds of courses I know, I know you're still kind of. Um, settling in a little bit. Um, but what kinds of courses are you teaching and what kinds of courses will you be teaching or, or are you hoping to teach at some point? Well, as you know, like Brock starting up a new engineering program, um, and so.

[00:34:22] The engineering program actually seems quite diverse and multidisciplinary, um, uh, through a university, you know, there are other colleges and universities around the country that focus in on, uh, one type of engineering. So even that term is a very loaded term because it's not expressing any one real discipline it's, uh, you know, you could think of electrical engineering.

[00:34:43] I think of chemical engineering, biological engineering, um, You know, structural, civil, you know, uh, you get the picture, right? I mean, it's, it's a, it's a lot of different types of, uh, investigations. Uh, so I've been drawn to that and drawn into that because of [00:35:00] my interest, I think in, um, our technology, art, techno science collaborations.

[00:35:06] Um, and this goes as far back as maybe looking at, uh, experiments in art and technology. Um, and experiments in art and technology is interesting because for the first time in the United States, at least from in the nine evenings, and that sort of era was about 1966, but you had engineers from bell laboratory work with people in the arts, like Robert Rauschenberg, or listen to Childs, or, you know, Alex and Deborah hay.

[00:35:36] And it was a, it was nine evenings where a theater and electronics and electrical engineers were working together to facilitate, uh, uh, 19 evenings of performances, um, and eats, always captured my attention. And so when I, when I look at that, I look at also, um, You know, architectural structures that are more innovative.

[00:36:00] [00:35:59] Um, I look at, uh, how the arts have informed how, um, architecture can operate and work there also late MIT's architectural machine group that came out in the sixties. So again, my interest in the sixties, doesn't it, you know, it doesn't, um, just stand still, uh, you know, just looking at the histories, but seeing ways to integrate what's going on in the past week.

[00:36:23] The things that are happening today. Like, uh, so I'll be teaching things like, uh, you know, uh, first nations design and the engine indigeneity within environmental projects. Uh, I'll be looking at metamaterials and AI and virtual reality. How does, how will that function within the future structures and design?

[00:36:42] Um, And I'll be looking at the landscape, uh, work as well through, uh, Cornelia Hahn Overlander, um, I'll be looking at utopias and grand projects. So see even the unrealized projects, but then relating it back to the place where I. [00:37:00] Exists, which you know, is St Catherine's. Um, so I wanted to have the students, uh, I will have the students actually develop models, uh, to rework the Welland canal.

[00:37:10] And re-imagine it, um, as a kind of a hypothetical project that they can work on within groups to maybe figure out, okay, how would you design a new bridge? Maybe, how would you make, uh, the canal area, more pedestrian friendly? How would you, um, allow maybe for food production on the banks or how would their entertainment and you know, how could you revitalize that area?

[00:37:34] So I want the projects to be yes, hypothetical, but at the same time, Um, possible. So I would be remiss as a podcaster if I did not ask you to plug your podcast that you are working on. Um, because that's the number one rule of podcasting is to get people on to plug their podcast. Um, yeah. So sure [00:38:00] you have been working on a project.

[00:38:02] Um, I believe it's just a handful of episodes. Yeah. Yeah. Really expensive. Yeah. I think there's multi episode, right? Yeah. Yeah. About six of them. Um, and it's called media art, other they're just 10 minute podcasts. I wanted them to be kept fairly short, um, their podcasts during the pandemic. And they're very much about that kind of like being able to tune in, um, just briefly and then, you know, do do something else, but, um, I'm I'm hoping to have it, uh, out by the fall when there's a little bit more of a listener base.

[00:38:37] And, um, I can, I have a little bit of post-production work to do. Um, but anybody who is interested in media arts that, uh, you know, kind of interrogates, uh, race, class,

indigeneity, disability arts, and post-colonialism those sorts of things they can tune in. Um, They'll also tackle all kinds of different subjects, uh, like mental health and politics, identity [00:39:00] politics, those sorts of things.

[00:39:01] Um, but one of the people that actually is sending me a podcast today, uh, is David Bowlby. So, um, the person that is involved in disability arts, um, he specializes that and he'll be in that mix as well as, uh, Dr. Krishna Navi an independent curator that looks at, uh, Um, and a malady and kind of like animals.

[00:39:22] Um, then there's Evan Curtis Norcross. Who's a sound artist. That's done recordings all over the world. Um, Dr. Sarah Cook, who's a curator out of the UK, uh, Candice Hopkins, first nations curator, and a Raven Chicago. Who's a, um, sound and installation artists from a Navajo. Uh, and so I am hoping to get all these produced and out there.

[00:39:47] Uh, people listening. It takes a bit of time. We know. Um, so are these, are these kind of like a Q and a interview format or is it, um, more of a, just an extended, [00:40:00] um, log, I guess, for lack of a better word? Yeah. In a way it is the model log, uh, format. So, um, I've sent them just a number of questions or ask them to talk about a specific topic, uh, to fit within that 10 minute timeframe.

[00:40:14] Um, I don't know how fast they're going to talk. Maybe they're just going to. But the imperceptible almost probably. Um, but yeah, yeah. Uh, we'll see what happens and, uh, but the one sort of come in so far extraordinary, um, and interesting. Um, and I've let them have a kind of creative freedom so that, uh, you know, the listener, uh, can get information within that 10 minutes and then look at some of their other work, uh, on their own, et cetera.

[00:40:41] That is fantastic. Um, certainly keep us posted on how that project goes and we will pluck it on our social media, which is at Brock humanities on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Um, so if our listeners are interested in, uh, in catching that, um, we'll, we'll help you get the word out for that because [00:41:00] it does sound very interesting.

[00:41:02] Thanks, Allison. Okay. So thank you for joining us today and thank you to you, our listeners for joining us as well. If you're enjoying the podcast, we hope you will subscribe. If you haven't already and start by apple podcasts, give us that coveted five star rating. It will make us make us so happy. Um, and it will help other folks find our podcast as well.

[00:41:26] Um, you can also let us know what you think through Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, as I said at Brock humanities, pretty easy to. And we've got links in the show notes as usual. So join us again next week for another interesting conversation.

[00:41:46] Thank you so much for listening to forward. Find all of our footnotes links to more information transcripts and past episodes on our website. Rockview dot a forward slash humanities. [00:42:00] We love to hear from our listeners. So please join us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram at Brock humanities, please subscribe and rate us as well on your favorite podcasting app.

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