

Elle Money

Light drums and music play Hello, welcome to the Compass Festival Podcast. If you didn't already know Compass Live Art is the driving force behind the biennial Compass Festival. We present playful and interactive encounters across the city of Leeds in all kinds of places and spaces. Previously, we've held medieval animal trials, collected 1000 stranger's handshakes in clay, and even let a chicken answer your innermost questions.

Normally, we bring all these projects together in a 10 day festival, but this year, we're spreading them out over 2021, and, to give you a taste of what to expect for the next four weeks, we'll be chatting to artists, makers and local folk all about the themes of concerns of some of our upcoming projects.

Yasmin Goodison-Brathwaite

This week, Popeye Collective will be serving up their own take on traditional Northern staple: mushy peas, as they tell stories, and personal histories about food that makes us feel at home.

Pam Johnson

Hi, everyone. My name is Pam Johnson, and I'm here as part of the podcast series talking to a range of incredible artists. And I'll introduce the artists in just a moment. But a little bit of my background. I am Head of Culture Development for Leeds City Council currently, but before that, I had a career as a professional dancer, spending 10 years with Phoenix dance company here in Leeds, and wonderful stint with DV8 Physical Theatre way back in the 80s. And I went on to, to perform and tour which was just really incredible. I retired at the age of 30, where I started a career in outreach development, really connecting the incredible experiences that I had in dance to local communities, both in Birmingham, and here back in Leeds. And then in 2003, I joined the Arts Council, where I spent nearly 16 years, five of which were in Manchester as their Dance Officer five years in Yorkshire, as Relationship

Manager down to my last six years, were in London, where I was senior Relationship Manager for combined art for dance, and strategic partnerships. And I returned to Leeds two years ago and I as I started in my current role as Head of Culture Development. I am a Black woman, just describing what I look like, I'm a Black woman with dark hair. I used to be able to say black, I can now just say dark hair that's pulled back with a parting to the left. I'm wearing round rimmed glasses, and today I'm wearing a high necked black top with pink and purple butterflies on.

I want to say welcome to Freddy and Kiz from Popeye Collective. Please introduce yourself.

Freddie Yauner

Thanks, Pam. I'm Freddie Yauner, as Pam said, I'm from Popeye Collective. My background is that I'm an artist, but trained in design, and I have a history of running social enterprises. My work generally explores the kind of human drive for continual growth and the impact that has on people and planet. I'm excited about our conversation today. And I look today like a 38 year old white man in a yellow jumper, with curly ginger hair, and a ginger moustache, but only yesterday I had a large ginger beard, but that has since gone.

Pam Johnson

I love that... the power of reinvention in a day. And Kiz?

Kiz Gill

Hi, I'm Kiz I'm a freelance comms consultant. So my work mainly focuses around brands music and culture. But prior to freelancing I worked agency side for over 15 years so working on big global brands such as Google, Disney, Diasio, Amnesty International to smaller collaborations on the music side, there are record labels stations such as Prince FM, working with Ninja Tunes and art institutions such as the White Cube.. so quite varied. And my current projects at the moment include working for Giles Peterson's Worldwide FM

stations, it's a global music and culture platform, where I oversee the marketing and comms. And a few other projects include Notting Hill Arts, Notting Hill Carnival, and Classic Album Sundays. So it's busy, it's varied. But I'd say that the main themes or most of the work that I do is deeply rooted in community and culture. So that's my kind of passion point. And the key theme running throughout my work and something that I guess is also very reflective of the Popeye Collective. Yeah, and then I'm wearing a red, bright red cotton dress, and a gold chain. I've got long dark hair and born and bred Londoner, but I'm British, Indian.

Pam Johnson

Fab welcome both again. Before I launch into finding out a bit more about your current project Pickle and Grind. Could you tell me a bit about about Popeye Collective who are Popeye collective?

Freddie Yauner

Well, Popeye Collective is basically myself, Kiz, and Eddie Blake, who's an architect. And then a loose affiliation of other interesting chefs scientists, food researchers, artists. We aim to be a catalyst for creative responses to plant based food systems. And we enjoy hosting conversations over food. So when we heard we were going to do a podcast, we decided we should turn it into a cooking show!

Pam Johnson

So, tell us about Pickle and Grind your current project, where did the inspiration for that come from? Where did Pickle and Grind start from?

Freddie Yauner

Do you remember Kiz? I was spending quite a lot of time making spices and spice mixes. I had started these these sort of dinners where we were having these conversations, and Kiz

and I met through work. And we started working really closely together on that. And I guess I started to change my own diet towards eating more and more veg and plants, and less and less meat and dairy, and realise that the spicing and the flavour element of the cooking became more and more important and more and more exciting. And we had this opportunity to do something during the XR protests, we reached out to some my favourite chefs, Honey & Co, who have a couple of restaurants in London, and asked them if they might come up with a spice mix for us that would essentially make it really easy to make a delicious meal at home, that was based on on veg. And got excited about this idea of collective cooking. And what happens when you're together either eating or cooking together that you get more interesting conversations. So we decided to set up essentially a spice factory in the middle of Trafalgar Square. And started roasting and grinding spices with 20 to 30 people with their own pestle and mortars. And the smell was sort of intoxicating the whole place. And then everyone walked away with this little edition of wrap of of the spices to then go and cook their own meals.

Kiz Gill

Yeah, I think very well summarised Freddie. That was it. And that's how we arrived at Pickle & Grind. And we wanted to do something fun and interactive. I guess that's where the title... so when we were kind of thinking of what to call this, sort of, piece of art and, you know, what would it be. And I think I came up with came up Pickle & Grind, cos it's just quite fun. It reminded me actually of a dance. But, yeah, it was fun that it was quite an experience that I'll never forget. But, you know, it amazing how the grinding and the creation of the spice mix in itself became such an art piece. And it was just this amazing collection of unfiltered sounds and smells and aromas. And as well as incredible conversations that were happening amongst strangers passing by who were who were who were taking part. So yeah, it's quite an arresting and quite abstract kind of moment, the soundscape from it was quite amazing. We had this old Persian Grandma, we had a couple on their first date, we had tourists and a teacher and the wife, then this old quite dandy fashion designer. So the real

mix of characters who just stopped by, decides to stop, then, you know, sit there with a pestle and mortar and start grinding the spices and off they went. And it was great because everyone left with their own bespoke mix, which was numbered, so it felt quite special and personal, you know, a memento of the day. And then, you know, that was the first part I guess, to the piece and then the second part was you know, hopefully they went home and cooked a dish with the spice mix.

Kiz Gill

But before we get into sharing the secrets of the spice mix, let's hear a bit more about the science behind plant based diets from Dr Marco Springman, Senior Researcher in Environmental Sustainability and public health at Oxford

Pam Johnson

Marco, do you want to just kick off by telling us a little bit about yourself and what you look like today.

Marco Springmann

Oh, yeah, right. So hard to describe my my appearance. So I guess I have dark short ish hair, a moustache. Not not quite great yet. A black sweater. I guess not very colourful for the day, but a big nose, maybe important as well.

Freddie Yauner

So yeah, do you want to, I guess before we go into questions, would you like give us a little bit background on yourself and and what your role entails?

Marco Springmann

Sure. So what I'm interested in is all kinds of aspects, perspectives on food systems and on dietary change. What I usually try to do is connect both the environmental aspects and the

health aspects of, for example, where we where we are headed with our dietary patterns where we should be headed, and how can we think about incentives that might move us to the sort of sustainable and healthy direction.

Freddie Yauner

Marco, when we've chatted in the past, you've been a big advocate for plant based food systems, both, as you say, for people's health and for planetary health, can you just set out what the top line evidence is for, for that direction of travel?

Marco Springmann

Sure. So at the moment, the food system, according to the latest estimates, is responsible for about a third of all greenhouse gas emissions. So it's a major driver of climate change. And the majority of those emissions of the food system are due to animal source foods, in particular beef and dairy. And the reason for that is that cows and other ruminant animals emit a lot of methane while they digest their food and methane is a very potent greenhouse gas. But, in addition to that, they also are responsible for nitrous oxide emissions that are generated when crops are fertilised and those would be feed crops for for cows, but also for other animals, and every animal needs a multiple of feed to put in put on one unit of body weight. So they are generally very inefficient converters of of calories into what we when we can consume. So that is a second source of greenhouse gas emissions. And then the third one, our land use related changes that that are responsible for Co2 emissions, for example, if land and the Amazon is cleared to make way for soybean plantations that are then fed to animals or make way for pastures where animals graze. So all those three aspects come together to make animal source foods. So highly impactful when we look at emissions but also at other environmental resources. And if you want sort of a ranking, then you have animal source foods that particular ruminant animal foods like beef, then 10 times less, you have other animal products like pork or cheese. And then 10 times less, you have plant based protein sources, like legumes, mushy peas, and such. So between the highest impact

thing, animal source foods and plant based foods, you have a factor of over 100. So that means that changing from animal source foods to plant based ones is one of the most efficient ways of getting emissions down in the food system. And it's way more effective than any technological fix that you can think about. So for example, lots of people discuss whether you can feed other things to animals and reduce emissions from methane emissions due to that, or if you can manage manure better. And all those things might make a difference. And they're roughly at the 20-30% scale. So if you put them together, it might be that you could reduce the impact of let's say, a steak by half due to technical issues, but that in no way is comparable to reducing it by a factor of 100. Right. So and if you put all those things together, it's clear that it's always good to do all those things. But it's also very clear that without very drastic dietary changes, it just won't add up, we just wouldn't get to a emissions level that would be compatible with the Paris Climate Agreement and with limiting climate change to below two degrees Celsius, let alone 1.5 degrees Celsius. So dietary changes are very Paramount and the most sustainable diet when we look at emissions, but also from health perspectives and other environmental resource use is a plant based diet. That doesn't mean everybody has to be completely plant based. So some moderate amount of animal source foods is probably okay. But it's very clear that a plant based diet is at the most beneficial and from both perspectives.

Kiz Gill

Have you noticed the change in people's eating habits and or people's views around meat intake?

Marco Springmann

Yeah, I think it is changing. I mean, especially in urban environments, you see more people, for example, trying out being vegan for a month in the in the Veganuary campaign. You'll see people who maybe previously would be a high meat eaters moving more towards to moderate meat flexitarian diet, so I think things are definitely moving. But if you consider

how much out of whack our diets are at the moment, we better move fast. Very often, in lots of high income countries, we consume five to eight times the amount of red meat that we could be consuming if it were to be sustainable. So we definitely have to make a change. And it's good that people are talking about it now. Um, but again, I think if we don't come together as a society, where individuals tried to adopt healthier and more sustainable diets, and politicians help individuals to, to pass the right incentives to make it easy for them, and we still wouldn't change fast enough.

Freddie Yauner

Brilliant. Thanks, Marco.

Kiz Gill

Thank you.

Marco Springmann

So good to talk to you.

Kiz Gill

Yeah. Brilliant. Thank you so much. That was awesome.

Pam Johnson

And right, now you're in in residency with Compass. And part of your your mission, is that right to create, to create the Taste of Leeds, to either create or discover the taste of Leeds? So I'm curious about, I can see how food will appeal to everyone because we all eat right? But how do you reach out to different, varying communities in Leeds, a really beautiful, rich and diverse community? How do you reach out to engage people in that process of discovering the Taste of Leeds?

Freddie Yauner

One of the things that we're excited about in the residency is to start to build a bit of a methodology, which has come from the Pickle and Grind work, which sort of has three parts of interactions at different levels. So there's the recipe development. So we'll probably work with different local groups and talking to real people, and there'll be a limit to how many people we can talk to in that time. And then we're likely to do a big open collective cooking activity where anyone can come and be involved in the cooking and make whatever the probably spice mix or some condiment of some sort, is that will, will enable another recipe. And then that will be packaged up and can be taken away. Or we make these kind of wraps fold up into envelopes. And we've also been sending them in the post. *To Pam* I know you spilt spice in your kitchen! So we're trying to combine the kind of not knowing where we're going with a bit of structure in method. So hopefully guide us somewhere interesting.

Pam Johnson

I love that. So truly interactive, and, and participatory and, you know, opening yourself up to be led by, by the participants themselves. It's a really brave and truly inclusive, I think way to go

Kiz Gill

And also, it's fun. You know, we want to keep it a bit irreverent, want to keep it fun. It's just, and then when people talk about diets and sustainability and plant based ways of eating, it can all get too serious and academic. And whilst that is so important, and this podcast, you know, this episode will hopefully demonstrate that it's also about just keeping it fun and a bit real.

Pam Johnson

Okay, so I'm going to, I'm going to keep it real. And the elephant in the room on this podcast is the fact that Freddie's sitting in front of an incredible backdrop of mushy, really bright green, mushy peas. How do mushy peas come into Pickle & Grind?

Freddie Yauner

Well, it started with Kiz chatting to her dad, actually.

Kiz Gill

Yeah. And sorry Freddie, *laughs* I was just taking a photo of you and the mushy peas. *Laughs* How did we get to that? Yeah, well, we had the brief for a while and we kind of just sat in the brief and thought about it. And then I went home and I was talking to my parents about the project. And I suddenly realised they were like, Oh, my dad left Tanzania in the 60s, 1964 actually, he arrived in Leeds. So he has this huge, huge emotional link to Leeds. It's where he first lived when he first arrived in the UK. So that's how it kind of all began. Yeah. And then and then I just started asking him about his early days. And you know, when he first arrived, and we started talking about food and I started explaining about the project. And yeah, he just explained to me how when you arrived, you know, there was no exotic fruits and no dragon fruit or papaya, mango or the things that he'd grown up around. And the same for the vegetables, you know, it was, there's no kind of okra and aubergines are pretty, you know, kind of run of the mill vegetables, which is fine. And they'd make mix-veg curries and use tinned mixed vegetables. So I was like, okay, thinking, you know, maybe he'd offer some sort of amazing insight into, you know, what's his first flavour memory of Leeds? And then, and then actually, we started talking about those early days. And you said, the food that he associates with Leeds is mushy peas, because when he arrived, there wasn't, you know, so like, diet wise, you know, it was all pretty run of the mill, I guess, traditional fruit and veg. Dahls and lentils weren't really available, no Indian restaurants, But mushy peas! So every Friday, he'd get his fish and chips in like in the previous night's newspaper with

the mushy peas with his friends or family. And it became a ritual that, that he enjoyed for years and years. And it was just wow, you know, for him. That was exciting. It was boring and exciting, something that you never had before. So that's kind of you know, wasn't expecting to arrive at mushy peas.

Freddie Yauner

But you told me about it. And I straightaway kind of jumped on it because my, my real food connection to Leeds was also mushy peas, when I was a student. All of my coolest North London mates went to Leeds Uni. And they were all kind of deep into the music scene. And one of my mates Alex took me to this very grungy cafe shop, I don't know what it was, we had mushy peas, and pork pie with mint sauce out of a microwave. And I recreated that meal, I must have been about 100 times once I got back to Newcastle where I was studying. And these days, I don't eat the pork pie so much. And I just saw, okay, there's got to be something in this and I jumped on on the web and found out that there was you know... So mushy peas are made out of marrowfat peas, and there's a kind of white version that is incredibly popular as a street food, as a chaat, in Mumbai. And I've spent a whole of lockdown cooking. My favourite chef at the moment is Meera Sodha. And I've been basically cooked that whole book and I straightaway found that she had a chaat recipe. So I ran to my local shop bought mushy peas, bought all the stuff I needed and started trying to make this slightly mad recipe and it turned out to be incredibly simple and utterly delicious. So!

Pam Johnson

Gosh, I've got strange, strange, contradictory relationship with with mushy peas. So, I'm Leeds born and raised and so any chippie worth its salt, will will also sell mushy peas. I mean, if it doesn't sell mushy peas it's really not a true Northern chippy. And so I grew up with that and it's very commonplace. However, I remember you know, school dinners and and this this this green pile that was on the side of my plates that looks very much like the very vibrant colours behind you right now Freddie. And it was it was most processed peas, and I

hated it. I hated it for the longest time and it took probably decades for me to you know, come back around and revisit it again. But yeah, my first experience if it wasn't great

Yeah, I'm not sure many people have great experience with mushy peas but I can promise you this transforms them so yeah.

Kiz Gill

imagine how I felt when my dad declared it was mushy peas. *laughter*

Pam Johnson

I know! After it's such a natural part of background, I mean, I relate to that Kiz, my parents are from Jamaica. And you know, from the East Island, which is the island which is quite rural. And so similarly you know, used to growing up with very natural, you know, fruits and vegetables. Growing your own your own meals and the like and farming your own food. So, supermarkets as we know them today weren't really dreamed of yet. And so you know, they created, they grew, they farmed their own food and coming to the UK I remember one of the one of the surprising shifts for them was that you know, so much food was available in tin cans. And processed peas was one of those those products that was widely available, and especially in a community that you know, was very, you know, proud working class. So it's it's very much a staple diet and very common, it's just really sad that my primary school didn't introduce it to me very well. But you do something different and interesting with mushy peas, don't you Freddie? So what what are you doing with mushy peas?

Freddie Yauner

Shall I cook you the recipe and we'll see how we go?

Pam Johnson

Make your way across the room!

Freddie Yauner

Across the desk! I've set up a makeshift kitchen in my studio. Okay, well, we're just going to wait, this little hob needs to warm up so we might need to kill some time but essentially: some oil in the pan, I pre prepared all of the garnish. So, we have one tin of I mean, this is expensive mushy peas are normally 69p and this is 70p. And they come in nice small tins, garish and wonderful. So a bit of a bit of oil in a pan. Chuck in some shallots or some onions. So I'll cook those onions for a little bit. And then once they're cooking down, I'll just chuck in the peas, with some green chilies and as teaspoon or two of the chaat mix and I have much more than you were sent! *chuckles* And the main ingredient in the chaat mix is Amchur Powder which is basically unripe mango powder. And then there's black salt, which is really sulphur, like high sulphur content, it's really quite eggy. So the combination of the sweet and sour, the mango and and kind of eggy salt, mixed with more traditional spices: coriander seeds, cumin and so on. Some dry ginger and then I've added dried mint, which wasn't in Meera Sodha's, original recipe but doing some research into other chaa mixes it seems like dried mint is another thing.

Kiz Gill

While we let all of that cook we'll hear from Manjit from Manjit's kitchen. Manjit's kitchen started off as a street food favourite and is now one of the most popular spots in Kirkgate market....

Freddie Yauner

Hi Manjit. Great to meet you. Do you want to tell us a little bit about yourself and give us a visual description.

Manjit Kaur

Yeah, sure. I'm Manjit, the founder of Manjit's Kitchen, we do Indian vegetarian street food. And I've got darker and I'm wearing a grey hoodie. And I'm from Leeds.

Freddie Yauner

Brilliant. Can you tell us how you started Manjit's Kitchen?

Manjit Kaur

Oh, it's tied back in... growing up basically where family and friends used to get together at my mom and dad's house in the garage cooking big pots of curry for family parties and weddings. And this is back in the day when I was probably about seven or eight or even younger. And that's where I got the inspiration from. Yeah,

Kiz Gill

Amazing. Hi, Manjit. Sorry, I just introduced myself I run Popeye Collective with Freddie too. And so I guess you know, we're here to talk about mushy pea chaat. What did you think when you first heard about Mushy Pea Chaat? And have you ever made it?

Manjit Kaur

Well, mushy peas obviously from here, from Yorkshire, from Leeds, it used to be like a Friday thing. Fish and Chips - my parents used to order fish and chips with mushy peas. And that's that's my first thing of it. And then when you said the chaat then it's like, we make mixtures of chaatss as well. So it's kind of nice to actually find that too.

Kiz Gill

Yeah, have you have you tried it? Have you tried putting it together yet? Or?

Manjit Kaur

Well we do the Pea Kachori, which is basically like Indian-style mushy peas but not like mushy peas, but it's all like mashed peas. In a kind of like a pastry.

Kiz Gill

Wow.Wow. Gorgeous.Are there certain flavour combinations around charas? I mean, I have my own experience of it and also are there is there are there certain traditions like I know it's a street food, isn't it. But could you talk us through any of this or flavours or the rituals or traditions around a chaat recipe?

Manjit Kaur

It's always hot and spicy, has to be hot and spicy. It's like when we used to get together in our dad's garage and make the the pastries, the food and it's just always cumin seeds, the garlic, the ginger, just all the spices mixed together. Now, we bring in the mustard seeds as well the flavours are just like, you know, you just get hit by the smell of the cumin seeds popping and the seeds and everything. So it's kind of like a hot and spicy taste. Mushy peas is kind of like simple, where the chaats is just adding that extra spice and flavour to, to the to the foods and the snacks.

Freddie Yauner

Manjit I was wondering, have you seen a big change in your clientele in recent years around people moving changing their eating habits to eating more vegetarian food?

Manjit Kaur

Yeah, at the beginning, I think everybody just wanted meat and didn't realise that we just did just vegan and veggie. Since we started I've seen that change in the past couple of years that everyone's just more or less, 60 70% of people just change into vegan. So it's kind of nice to see that because we used to go to festivals, and people just used to walk past the door because they just were meat eaters.And it used to be really strange.And now it's just

turned around massively, you know, and it's, it's in our favour. And it's kind of like nice to see that change happen. You know, at the beginning of 2010 it was just all meat related. And now like I say it's kind of a big thing now that it's like, "yes!". They want to eat vegan and veggie food and it's it's it's what what we need

Freddie Yauner

Yeah I mean, you know, I was like the biggest carnivore you can imagine. And it's drastically transformed my dietary habits and perhaps you do you're certainly I know from working with Kiz, you know, it's just the norm for her. So she was brought up to eat vegetarian food. But do you think there's different we should be trying to get actively trying to get more people to eat in that way for the planet for people's health? A bar? or any of that stuff? Or is this just the food you know how to make that you love making?

Manjit Kaur

Well, I love making veggie and vegan food but like I was saying, like you were saying that you you're a meat eater, my brother's a meat eater and he's never had a chilli paneer wrap. And the first time he had the chilli paneer up, he actually loved it so people don't get that, they think that it's just vegetables... boring vegetables and you know, things like that. And it's just like, once you taste it, you know that you can do more with vegetables. So it's kind of nice to see that. And it's like, yeah, people need to eat more veg!

Freddie Yauner

I think once anyone's tried chilli paneer, there's no going back!

Manjit Kaur

I mean, it's just really weird. And there's a lot of meat eaters that want to try the Paneer Wrap and they're coming back every week. And they're like, "you know what, I never knew that existed! And it's nice to see that and hear that. And it's like "Wow, that's incredible".

You know you get some some people come up to me and they go "That was the best meat ever!" I'm like "what?!" It's kind of weird and wonderful at the same time.

Kiz Gill

Thanks Manjit!

Manjit Kaur

Thank you

Freddie Yauner

So I'm putting in my my spice mix.... I was about to say it's funny cooking indoors but I suppose most kitchens are indoors. It's funny cooking outside the kitchen.

Kiz Gill

Live in direct! So chaat, doesn't it mean 'to lick'. You have to really get into it. It's quite immersive. You know, there's no elegance around enjoying chaat food. You have to just get in there with your fingers and your hands and get the plate. Which is quite fun. Yeah, derived from 'To lick'.

Freddie Yauner

Yes, so you have to lick the bowl. And usually it's all about the stuff you put on top of the chaat. And you can basically put it on anything. You know, you can actually, I'm going to test it, you can put it on top of fruit salad. Apparently it's lovely.

Kiz Gill

I've had that. Mmm! Supposed to be a really good way to digest food after a heavy meal you have bananas and apples and with some chaat mix.

Pam Johnson

Okay, okay, How's it going Freddie?

Freddie Yauner

You top it with a sort of a sweet chutney and some yoghurt and some ginger and some more chillis and coriander. And one of the interesting things that I've added to this recipe is Henderson's relish, which says "Strong and Northern!" on it. And it's actually a plant based version of Worcestershire Sauce - it hasn't got any anchovies in. Right, so now I'm getting out of the pan into my that was serving bowl. And this is when the fun bit happens. It smells delicious. So there's the Hendersons, I've got a bit of coconut yoghurt, just to be authentic to the plant based theme. And then some small bits of cuts up ginger, bit more chilli and a shedload of coriander, and I'm sprinkling it from on high! And there's your finished dish.

Pam Johnson

That looks amazing.

Freddie Yauner

I'm going to add one extra little dry sprinkle of the spice mix on top. And then we go!
Gonna turn off this cooker before it explodes.

Pam Johnson

God, a throwback to my to my youth remember in the 80s they used to talk about, you know, technology, you know evolving to include smellivision and I wish we could get that right now.

Freddie Yauner

Should I try it for you? That's good! Success!

Pam Johnson

Could you tell me a bit more about about your work? And and how socially engaged practice informs your work more broadly?

Freddie Yauner

Yeah, I suppose it's, it's an intention. At the moment, I don't feel like I've got there. But as I mentioned earlier, my background is in design, and in social change in the charity sector. And I have this sort of deep belief that cultural outputs can be a social catalyst. I suppose, in essence, I think art can carry really important messages and urgent ideas and start new conversations. Sometimes they pitch so high, but you know, it's just for the art audience. But if we can think about ways of doing that, either by reaching a broader audience or perhaps reaching people in power directly, then I think, you know, art can be quite a vital lever for change. And there's definitely no shortage of of change, that could get positive change that could happen right now.

Freddie Yauner

Someone that's really been a champion of that positive change, especially over the last year, has been Alan from Slung Low in Leeds. We heard from him about this change and how Slung Low's socially engaged practise works with the community in Leeds.

Freddie Yauner

Hi, Alan. So nice of you to join us. Can you tell us a bit about Slung Low, and the fact that you found yourselves effectively running a food bank?

Alan Lane

Yes. My name is Alan. I'm a 40 something man wearing a blue jumper with brown hair and very tired eyes. Yes, we were asked by the Council to be the social care referral unit for the

Coronavirus helpline, which basically meant if you lived at Holbeck and Beeston and you rang council asking for help during COVID, your phone call was put through to me, or to us in actual fact. And we would then try and do whatever it was you asked of us. And after a few months, what we discovered was that most mostly people wanted was food. So we became a non means tested self referral Food Bank, which means if you ask for food, we will send it to you straightaway. And the minute we do about 300 food parcels week, which is about 2100 bags of food.

Freddie Yauner

Wow. And how did you get to be asked?

Alan Lane

The idea of staying open during COVID just seemed a bit insane. So we shut early and we started driving for our local food bank. And then we wrote a letter to the 200 houses nearest the theatre saying "We know you're scared, we know you're worried. We're still here. We've got a van and some money, let us know what you need." And they answered by asking us to walk their dog, do the shopping, the laundry, and pick up the prescriptions. And I think it is, I've never asked them, but the council heard that we were doing that. And they decided that they would like us to do that for the whole ward, which is 7 & a half thousand houses and we said yes because I couldn't think what else would be a useful use of our time during this period.

Freddie Yauner

Amazing. And you guys have basically become a figure in the community upholding the kind of notion of the social club?

Alan Lane

Yeah, I think the difference now is that our connection with our communities is much better than we ever hoped it could be like, we beforehand we would go and deliver a flyer to every single house in Holbeck three times a year. And it was a kind of Shibboleth that every member of the team would go do this, go and fly over the 2000 households. And then we did the foodbank. And all of a sudden, I was like, Where is this street? How do we not know where this is? We've been, it was like platform 9 and 3/4 in Harry Potter. These things started appearing. And then we started going into the primary school and we did a whole series of projects with them during lockdown. And recently we them and one of the teachers said "Slung Low are in, who knows Slung Low?" And the first lad, puts his hand in the air and says, "Oh, yeah, they do those shows in the car park at the club" and another lad puts his hand up and said, "Oh yeah miss they wrote that book that we all got a Christmas" and the final lads puts his hand in the air and he says, "Yeah, they deliver my food every Wednesday". And I was like, yeah. All those things.

Freddie Yauner

If someone didn't know the breadth of what you guys do, am I right in thinking that they would describe you as a theatre company?

Alan Lane

I don't know. I don't think so that's certainly where we get our money. We get funded because we make large scale outdoor fair with hundreds of people in it. And if we have a reputation in the industry, that's what it's for. We exist to fulfil a mission. And that mission is that we spend 500 million pounds worth of public money on the arts in this country. And if that's true, which it is, then everybody in this country should have access to a really great cultural life. And they don't we know they don't. And that should change because it's wrong. And it's cruel. And we can't be complicit in it. And Holbeck is a hill we're dying on. Because it's ours. It's our place. And so we will do whatever is necessary. And it's necessary, the food

bank is necessary, to save the local pub or whatever it is that the people of Holbeck get the best access to a cultural life that they can.

Freddie Yauner

Yeah, I don't have a very complicated question. My simple question is, what do you think of mushy peas?

Alan Lane

laughs I love mushy peas. One of the things we do here is we feed the audience. And we try many different things. But pork pie and mushy peas is our most popular meal we have here by some distance.

Freddie Yauner

That was my first Leeds food. That's how we came to this story.

Alan Lane

And then there was a big row about mint sauce or not mint sauce, and then someone started chatting about vinegar. And it all, it all went off. Food's really important here. I mean, obviously the food bank, but we always feed the audience when they come in. And yeah, and the food's really vibrant here. Manjit's Kitchen teaches cooking here. And we have a number of other people who come and provide food from all around the world, as well as pork pie and mushy peas. And it doesn't matter where the food comes from. When it comes out. Everyone stops around for a little while. And we're very aware of that. That is our kind of nuclear bomb... we're like "Bring out the trifle!" and everyone shuts up for five minutes.

Freddie Yauner

Well, thanks. I'm gonna be watching everything you do from now on, as is many people it seems.

Alan Lane

It's lovely to meet you and thanks man!

Freddie Yauner

Next we're going to chat to Josh Cockcroft, who's a TV and film producer and a funder at the Esmee Fairburn Foundation and is a brilliant amateur chef. Josh, would you like to just introduce yourself and also tell us what you look like?

Josh Cockcroft

Yes, of course. So I'm Josh, I do a few things. I spent some of my time working for the Esmee Fairburn Foundation, which is a UK based charity foundation that work around the arts, and the environment, and social change. I also work as a producer in film and TV. And I'm currently putting together a fund to support the development of climate change stories in mainstream media. In terms of how I'm looking today, I have very unkempt hair. I haven't shaved in for a few days and so I've got a fairly dark beard and some unruly eyebrows and I'm wearing a blue jumper of some description.

Freddie Yauner

Brilliant thanks. So Josh, jumping straight in. We have talked previously about how important it is for artists and the artist to have conversations and make work about social change? It sounds like you're deep into that with your new funding you are developing. Do you want to tell us where you're thinking currently is on what a creative community can do?

Josh Cockcroft

Absolutely. So I'd always been quite fascinated by this idea of what art can do to transform society. And as people who work with artists and writers and creatives of all kinds, you often hear this mantra that, you know, "art can change the world". And I think if you're

working in it, it's so gruelling, that at times you read to have to believe that's true, otherwise, why on earth are you doing it? And then last year, I met two people who came up with this idea of actually putting together to support stories about climate change, within film and TV, to try and get more stories about climate change or big kind of network pieces that kind of thing. And I started doing the research around, I was amazed to find that there was actually remarkably, a robust evidence base of how stories can be used to change how people think, and how are all kind can do this. And essentially, I think we all know, intrinsically, that if you are given, if you are told a set of facts directly to you, the chance are it is not really going to convert your worldview. You're still going to believe what you're going to believe that you're not going to really you're quite often, you're quite disinclined to agree or to kind of accept facts, which kind of directly challenge what you think what you think is the truth. But stories and art are processed differently by the brain. And it's easier to get people to engage with ideas, which are alien from what they know to be true. And for them to be become aware and less critical of viewpoints, which aren't what they otherwise would have thought about. So this works really well, for ideas like climate change, in particular, which is huge, big, complex ideas in which you can't really see. We know climate change is happening, but only really, because scientists and experts tell us what's happening, not because we can see in front of our very eyes. So those stories are, which can show people what climate change is doing and reports about what you as an individual can do about it have a huge amount of power to transform what society is.

Freddie Yauner

Wow. So when when you kind of work in a more institutional role. Do you interface with policy on that level? One of the questions we've been talking to people is about, you know, personal choice and personal change versus sort of systemic change, and what role the arts and culture might have in that.

Josh Cockroft

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think it has to be both vents to it. I mean, I think that you can't have this kind of level of change that we need, without some serious policy directed policy directives from the top. But equally, you also then need to do to handhold and actually bring the minds with you as well, as you know, as well as the legal ramification. I think in the least sinister way possible they do need to work together to a more positive end, freely.

Freddie Yauner

Thank you so much Josh I mean, it's also just good to hear that you're being so proactive about supporting people to make this work. It's dead exciting.

Josh Cockroft

Pleasure. Thank you for having me!

Pam Johnson

So I'm going to return this back to that image that is behind you, that vibrant image of mushy peas chaat. The recipe is on on your website, just reminds us of website address to get there?

Freddie Yauner

popeycollective.org/chaat Which is 'chat' with an extra 'A' - C H A A T.

Pam Johnson

And then how do people get the spices? Is there a recipe to make the spice? or how can they get the spice?

Freddie Yauner

I'll put the recipe to make the spice up there. But also I'm happy to send the spice out to people. So, you know, if people want to get in touch, so maybe we can think about a broader campaign that we want to send the spices to. But yeah, I can send out spices to people or people can make it themselves at home.

Pam Johnson

That is great. So it feels like an invitation to make mushy peas chats.

Freddie Yauner

Yeah. And just to reassess the staples that you know, so people have an issue with it if it's not British. This is like such a thing that we've all known that we've all tried. And actually, it can be much less neon, and much more delicious. In my opinion, feed Chuck in some, some wonderful love and spice.

Pam Johnson

Fantastic. Thank you very much, Freddie, Kiz thank you for spending some time with me. Thank you for showing me how to make the mushy peas chaat. And thanks for telling me that you know you it's you tried the spice five times before so that's a guarantee then I will go go away and try the spice. Really looking forward to it. It's really great that this conversation in some way will continue in my kitchen. And I hope it will in other kitchens as well. Thank you so much. Great to meet you and to learn about your work.

Freddie Yauner

Thanks Pam it's such a pleasure meeting you.

Kiz Gill

Yeah it has been great!

Elle Money

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