

Bypass Podcast Season One.

TRANSCRIPT | Episode One: Community Chest.

Anonymous interviews with poets, carvers and painters who all live in a system of capitalism.

Poet: I just think it's pretty much impossible to really be creative under capitalism. Do you know, you're always doing a sort of watered-down version of it?

Carver: Retail is very important; because I can't work from someone else's garage.

But, the art is a need. We can learn about the past because of artists, crazy artists, making stuff. And, the art got buried. And now we can observe it and learn from these cultures, from all cultures. But if it's not for these, you know, crazy artists, then we don't have evidence of this civilization or this way of thinking. The struggles they cross through at the time. The art; it's a need.

Poet: I mean, I've been performing all my life and have been involved in various projects and stuff that have been quite successful, and ones that haven't as well. But, I've never lost that thing, where if someone appreciates something that you do, it always still is exciting and buzzes me out because quite often it's something you wrote and you're sitting in bed in your underwear and then suddenly it's this thing that really means a lot to someone.

I don't think that we ever lose its novelty to me.

Interviewer: Where are we?

Krd shop owners: The best one was the one up there, it was a big car park. Now it's apartments and a carpark. But that was the best market, that was amazing. Because we were living here, so we just used to wander there every Sunday. Carboot sales. Lots of vegetables. A pig that used to come on his lead with his owner for a walk and roll around if there was a puddle.

James K. Baxter [sampled recording]: I used to call the old culture the concrete playground. Meaning the Pub on one side and the Church on the other side and nothing growing in between.

Interviewer: Where are we?

Grayson Perry [sampled recording]: And the creative rebel, they like to think they're sticking it to the man. They're sticking it to the capitalist system. They're really showing, like one of them occupies protesters. But of course, what they don't realise, by being all inventive and creative, they're actually playing into capitalism's hands. Because it's the lifeblood of capitalism. It's new ideas. They need new stuff to sell. People are going to get bored of the old stuff. So lovely designers all sitting there and asking, that's good, that will get a new market. Pay them - [applause ensues].

Street Artist: No one seems to put any thought into the back of apartment buildings, like they're always just ugly and stupid and boring. So it's just so neat projecting shit onto them and turning them into something else.

At one point, *Art Space* was painted and they had scaffolding all over the building. Although all of those tags are real old-school, but at some point they've obviously [tagged the building]. Because, there's no access up there except through our place that I can find. But I think I've seen *Artspace* with scaffold on it before, and I think people have just come up the scaffold and fucking painted it.

Carver: It's good too, because it's low rent. You know, I'm able to afford it.

Interviewer: Council subsidised the rent?

Carver: Council subsidised the rent.

Interviewer: There needs to be more that exists like that aye.

Carver: It's needed. What the situation that we have at the moment is, you know, our society trapped onto the wheel of the production, productivity and the financial gain, the capitalism. I understand it's all valid. But the arts are so necessary, so important.

Grayson Perry [sampled recording]: The restless nature of capitalism.

Poet: And that's the other thing is that I think that everything is kind of absurd and funny. Do you know what I mean? And I think you need to see that as well. The absurdity of things like - the world's kind of ending, you know what I mean? And I think that it's maybe easier to continue in the face of all this bullshit if you can laugh at it, and make other people laugh.

Street Artist: So the hardest thing was, I guess, like the eyebrow on the far away eye. And so I needed two paint poles taped together. I do all my painting at home, and then just pack up little mission kits and get everything up here. There's a bit up there where I have to walk along. It's like an eight story drop straight down.

Interviewer: I think it's interesting that, as you say, you've come from somewhere that has experienced War. And for you to understand that art is necessary in that. And in the same way that we saw in [Covid-19] Lockdown when the Country had to completely shut down, what was the thing that kept us sane? It was the art, the music, the books, the movies and everything.

Carver: Yeah, to unwind our minds.

Interviewer: Yeah. And so to use it as a political force or to show histories that could otherwise be forgotten, is so valuable.

Carver: It's very important. If the Council or the Government don't recognise that, well then we're lost, our society is lost. Obviously, it's a humongous issue, particularly where I come from, the society I experienced when I was young. But, if the artists are serious with their art and they want to take the responsibility to talk about it, why not? I think it should be supported.

Obviously, I feel privileged to be able to be here. I'm not entitled. I wasn't born here. Art is not entitled to create answers, we only create the questions. I cannot think of something else, I just create the conversation, create the space to hold the conversation and talk about it. Because the more we talk about it, the people that get more informed, they can make informed choices. But if we not talk about it, we're not creating space. Who's going to talk about it?

James K. Baxter [sampled recording]: Well, yes, the young ones react partly because of the advance of commerce and technology. It smashes up things as well as making things, and it tends to smash up communities. So the young people react undoubtedly. And some of the old ones do, too, in measure.

Poet: I don't know. I don't really believe in compromising. Like, obviously if you live in this system, you have to compromise constantly. But I think that definitely with my art, I don't really believe in compromising. I'm old enough now where I've seen what happens there. And I think past a certain point, and that point isn't very far, like you never get it back, you know what I mean? And so I know people that have completely compromised their art career for maybe 20 grand, but that money's spent now and they don't have any integrity and they don't get to make the art that they're really good at.

Do you know what I mean? And obviously there's people that completely fucking sell out and actually still get to do both. But I think..

It's not like the rich people I know are particularly happy, let's put it that way. Because I think that would be different. If you got to a certain point, just say you got \$2 million and then all the millionaires you knew were really happy. But I know people that are seriously rich and they're just as fucking anxious and as disconnected as everyone else. So I just feel like, what's the point in giving up the thing you love?

Interviewer: I cried when I watched your performance and it was beautiful. Art can interrelate subjects, like I felt it related to the things I was looking at in my own research - even though it wasn't about the same issue, the emotion that I felt in it. I was meant to be there. You know what I mean? I'm really grateful that I was able to be there. And it's moments like that that inspires more than just-
Written text in a history book wouldn't do the same, you know what I mean?

Carver: You know, what you say is very beautiful because what is important in the arts is not a beautiful picture. I'm not against a beautiful picture, magnificent. Someone who can create a beautiful picture; well done, good on you, congratulations. I cannot paint. I cannot produce a beautiful drawing. I can't. I probably have a mental blockage to do that. I could eventually develop the skill, if I want to. But, that's not what I want to. It's not the mission that I have in my life.

Because I witness all these horrors. Firstly, I need to heal my heart and heal my spirit. And through the work I do, the way I show the work to others. Your tears are helping me to heal my spirit and cut the trauma from travelling through my kids and through my grandchildren. And through travelling through my father and my grandfather. Because trauma travels through generations. If we're not taking responsibility of that, what are we doing in life?

Community Activator: Ask me six, seven years ago if I could do art and I would've laughed in my face. I could never, you know. And it's only through doing, applying myself and then other people going like "fuck that's mean bro." Someone buying my piece for \$350. And I'm there going "are you fucking for real? Ok, cool!"

'Oh fuck I can do something, I got something here, I got something to offer'.

Yeah, I want to be here to help any whānau.

My inner me is going 'even though you've given up, you're not the giving up type'. You'll scratch. Even if you're buried in the fucking ground you'll still fucking find your way out. And, I have to believe that.

Carver: I've given it to the arts. And not only that, but you felt it, because it's real. I'm not pretending. I was there. I experienced it. I was in the army. I was there entirely, for many years. I'm born in the place. I saw the struggles of the war. I experienced the terror of the war. I can talk about it. And then if you felt that with the intensity and make you cry, that touch your heart in a way, my work is done. I'm so privileged for you to come up today and tell me that because I've had a hard day today. I was a bit devastated today. I'm struggling with the timing. Since the lockdown, I've felt I have to rescue this boat. The sinking, my business feels like a sinking boat. The government, they give us all this money. I have to have a really good brain to try to put the money right. Invest the money correctly. I don't want to buy things and have a party. I can't do that with the government's money. Or buy expensive shoes or expensive overalls. I need to be wise to be able to put the money in a way that's going to have a return to pay them back. Because I have to pay the money back. And I have to keep paying all my boys, all the people who work with me. It's a humongous responsibility. And I'm struggling at the moment, it's difficult emotionally. I'm feeling like running against the water, you know, like swimming against the water. But, a person like you, you show me that it's worth it.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing that. Since coming out of lockdown I have found I've changed. It's harder to have the energy. Collectively, the creative collective is hurt at the moment and is struggling, and I can feel it. Because we try to unpack situations, and there's so much, it's just a lot. And when you add financial pressure onto that, family, etc.

Carver: And I have a child, I have a young child as well. I have a certain window to achieve so much. It's tricky. But, I'm still here, you know?

I'm still in the game.

Poet: I don't know, because sometimes I feel weird about recommending for people to be creative because I know that..

Like, I guess I'm a success because I'm still doing it and I'm making it work in my 40s - where so many of my friends that I came up with, who are just as talented than me, they're not. And some of them have mental health stuff, which is probably from having that life and having it not work out and the things that you're around as a creative. Yeah, I don't know.

Interviewer: So if we were to come out of isolation right now, and this society was to be restructured, what would you think? [Regrets question] Maybe not, I don't want to go down this whole fucking road, but you know what I mean?

Poet: [Laughs] Yeah, I mean, I'm a poet. So it's not my specialty.

Interviewer: [Laughs]

Poet: Well just what you described. At the very least, like rent control, capital gains tax. I don't think people should be able to own multiple properties. You know what I mean? I think a lot of stuff needs to be owned by the state, needs to be nationalised. I think that we need to look at these bodies of power and make sure that they're truly diverse, make sure that there are people from working class backgrounds on there, people that aren't University educated, people of all different ages, and obviously genders and ethnicities and stuff.

But I sort of feel like those boxes are slowly getting ticked. But then I think that, yeah, I don't know communal living? Because I think the thing is that from my experience, the happiest that I've been in a time where you be with people, and it feels like you're doing the thing you can be doing, is when you are working together. It's not when you get a bunch of money for some fucking thing and go by yourself. You know what I mean? It's when you're working communally. There's no reason why we can set society up like that. And if we want to save the planet, or at least save human life on the planet, we probably need to do that.

Carver: The art is a need. You know, we can learn about the past because of artists, crazy artists, making stuff.

Narrator: Where are we?

Ending song credits : Musician *Gloria Florence* playing two original songs *Monsters* and *I Like to Drink* in front of a surprised congregation at the Ponsonby Church one Sunday. Easily my favourite gig of Glorias. Free tea and biscuits to boot.