**TRANSCRIPT OF EVENT**

**QUEER E(C)HO – ACT II**

**Persons Present**

Jess Connett (J)

Antonio Baia Reis (A)

J: Hi everyone, it’s great to see we have so many people joining us. Thank you for being here. Before we start properly I just want to let you know that this event is being recorded, and we will be publishing it on Container’s YouTube channel and website a bit later this week. We also have live captions turned on for this Zoom, so feel free to select that option if that’s going to be helpful for you.

To introduce myself, my name is Jess Connett and I’m the Interim Editor of Container Magazine, which is a digital magazine about creative technology. We’re based here in Bristol, in southwest England, but we publish stories about technology from contributors all over the world. We’ve just celebrated our first birthday so we’re still pretty new and kind of experimenting with what we publish, but essentially we try to get away from mainstream tech journalism – we don’t do product reviews, we don’t celebrate billionaire Silicon Valley tech bros. What we’re interested in is how technology affects people.

So to give you an example, we’ve published a story about how virtual reality helped a woman through the grieving process after her brother died. We’ve looked at facial recognition technology and artificial intelligence learning being used at international borders, and what effect that has on refugees. And in our most recent issue of the magazine, we published a story about how the anonymous internet has helped women in Pakistan to talk publicly about sexual assault, which is pushing forward the Me Too movement and societal change. So that’s the kind of stuff that Container publishes.

We also have this Artist Residency programme, where we invite somebody, like Antonio, to produce work that explores some aspect of technology and responds to it in a really interesting and creative way. Applications are currently open for anyone interested in applying to be one of our Residents for 2022. You can find more information on our website, which is [www.containermagazine.co.uk](http://www.containermagazine.co.uk).

So let me introduce Antonio, who is our current Resident Artist for Issue 4. Dr António Baia Reis is a researcher, educator, and artist who was born in Portugal. His education spans international relations, media and communications, and the arts. He has a PhD in Digital Media with a focus on immersive media, social change, and creativity. Antonio is currently an Assistant Professor at the Center for Media and Communication of the University of Passau in Germany, and the Director of their Future Media CoLab. He is also the co-founder of artistic collective The Fourth Wall VR, and creates live theatre and performance in virtual reality, installations, and participatory art projects. He also plays the piano beautifully, which you’ll hear a bit later.

So for Container Magazine, Antonio has created a project called Queer e(c)ho, and tonight is the premiere of this work, so thank you for being here to see it. Afterwards there will be a chance to ask questions, so if you’d like to ask anything please do put it in the chat box. But for now I’m going to hand over to Antonio.

A: Okey-dokey, thank you so much, Jess. So hello everyone, and thank you for joining us. First of all, thank you, Jess, for allowing my sort of crazy, creative deviance to invade Container Magazine – it was indeed a pleasure to collaborate with you guys, and you were very supportive and you sort of pretty much gave me like this blank canvas to do whatever I wanted to do, and I pretty much did that! What I’m going to do is, before I actually talk a little bit about this project – because I don’t want to do this, like, I’m used to teaching. I don’t want to be like just me talking, I want to actually open up the floor so we can all engage in a conversation about the underlying motifs and cultural, social, critical substances and lived realities behind this work, I’ll first show the work. So I’m going to do that, firstly, and then we can sort of all talk a little bit about it, ok.

[Film plays]

A: So. How do you think climate change is going to impact the LGBT community in particular. You think there’s gonna be a difference?

Voice 1: Bro, you’re asking some, like, useless-ass questions.

[piano music plays]

A:

the night is silver in its silence

moon-pop echoes of the day

raked up rubble of the hours spent

my, the children slumber

a thousand tomorrows bubbling at their lips

the dream projections lighting up

the clouds’ ample cotton relish the silence

as you’ll relish tomorrow

and the honesty of such raucous noise, thick

child feet of our unfeathered breasts, beasts we cherish

hallway run, sprints to smash the mash of food

tumbling, rolling right into these arms

charmed in their amnesia regarding where one

begins or ends

reminding us of the joy

of first step and the storm after the holler:

mama see, mama watch

pitter/patter

pitter/patter

thunder on a hardwood, heartbeat

this sole and counted rhythm

every generation a temporal fugitive

running from the death grip

every death ship’s watch, yesterdays

we weren’t meant to make it through

relish the memory ingrained in the sound

how these tiny, tiny feet

grip the floor, say

tomorrow, tomorrow

I make you

tomorrow

A: Quick question: so what do you think of climate change? Really, honestly.

Voice 2: Ok. Uh, to be fair I don’t.

Voice 3: We’re going to die anywaysssss.

Voice 4: No point.

A: That’s fair enough, that’s fair enough. But did you ever thought about it?

Voice 5: Hello, daddy.

Voice 2: No, I’ve never thought about it.

Voice 6: I don’t know who you are.

A: The roots of climate change are tied with the roots of multiple oppressions. Climate change raises the hardships of trans and queer people worldwide. Because of this, queer liberation must be held up as a core concept of climate justice organising. The queer community has struggled for the longest time for their rights and visibility; hence they possess a strong urge to fight, and knowledge of climate change. To achieve safety and justice for the LGBT+ community, climate justice must be realised. And for that, queer liberation must be lifted up in movements and address the environmental crises.

Voice 7: I wouldn’t differentiate too much, personally, but I generally think – since LGBTQ also includes a bunch of marginalised groups, um, it is to be expected if things go south in this world that they will be more impacted. And like also, at least my understanding hinted at that they, um, there is already this conglomerate or group

Voice 8: Yaaaaas!

Voice 7: This self-identifying social group of people who experience or see themselves as part of the LGBTQ community

Voice 9: What are you looking at?

Voice 7: Who would mobilise, yes, because there is already structures of, um, fighting oppression, of fighting stuff, of being socially active. So that brings, yeah, brings to mind a good opportunity for a structure to use, um, in the fight against climate catastrophe.

A:

Admitted to the hospital again.

The second bout of pneumocystis back

In January almost killed him; then,

He'd sworn to us he'd die at home. He baked

Us cookies, which the student wouldn't eat,

Before he left - the kitchen on 5A

Is small, but serviceable and neat.

He told me stories: Richard Gere was gay

And sleeping with a friend of his, and AIDS

Was an elaborate conspiracy

Effected by the government. He stayed

Four months. He lost his sight to CMV.

Voice 10: Um, umm. It will be, it will kill all the LGBT people.

A: Climate change? But is it going to be different for other people?

Voice 10: No, no. I want that the climate change kill all the LGBT people.

A: Oh. Ok.

Voice 10: They have to die! Like my mum. Like my mum, with cancer.

A:

If we, the children of the meek,

should inherit an earth

whose rainforest lungs

breathe a tale of waste –

an earth where the ailing sea

shudders in its own slick

If we, the children of the meek,

should inherit an earth

where the grass goes nostalgic

at the mere mention of green

and the sky looks out of its depth

when reminded of blue

If we, the children of the meek,

should inherit such an earth,

then we ask of the future

one question: Should we dance

or break into gnashing of teeth

at the news of our own inheritance?

[piano music plays]

[Film ends]

A: So that’s it, this is the work, and I don’t know – if you want to ask me questions, or you want to tell me what you thought of it, I think we could start from there.

J: So I have a question to kick us off first. If anyone wants to participate, you can use a ‘reaction’, I think you can put your hand up and I’ll be able to see you, or you can literally wave if your camera is on and I can come to you. Or if you’d just like to put your message in the chat, then I can come and put those questions to Antonio. But the question I’d like to kick us off with is the fact that you kind of placed this work in virtual reality. So I’m interested in why you chose that as your setting, and what was it about using people’s voices, and having your own character in the show, but having it outside like a real world space, that that made you feel like it would fit this topic of LGBT+ representation but also climate change.

A: Yeah, well, what a tricky question. No, it’s a good question, actually. So, it was a bit of a, rather strange process, because I had one very clear idea at the beginning, which was to a straightforward live performance in VR. Because that’s what I usually do in the work I do with La Cuarta Pared VR, The Fourth Wall VR, in Madrid, it’s basically that. But then I thought it’s the sort of thing I’m used to doing with my group. So with the people that can sort of back me up, and support me. Then I realised this kind of work – and I was like, no Antonio – this is kind of like a more introspective thing that you’re doing here.

So, I thought that just doing it in VR wouldn’t be enough. So I wanted to make use, somehow, of my toolkit; everything that I have in my toolkit, or that I think that I have, you know. And so I wanted to express myself in the various ways that I, you know, have used art and performing arts, even in a more kind of traditional way, non-VR or non-immersive – well, that’s debatable, what’s immersive? If I read a good book, I am immersed. I’m just thinking about that. But that’s another thing.

So what I thought is that, ok, I still want to embody a digital skin, and create the sort of alter-ego, and that’s what I did, I created this character in VR, and I very much liked it, and it was just super fun and liberating, creating the character with this, like, high-tech suit and that orange cape, and that makeup, the long hair. That’s me perhaps being afraid of losing my hair since I am 34 now, I don’t know, probably I’m just projecting! So it was interesting to create that character.

What I like about the idea of VR is that I don’t need a lot of production around me. I didn’t even build up this world – usually in my collective, what we do in Madrid is we build up the worlds on VRChat, we use the developers kit. We have a really clever and super talented developer, XR developer, who creates these worlds from scratch and sort of materialises our vision. I just, you know, went to this world on VRChat that I liked, it sounded futuristic somehow, I liked how it felt when I was there. I just put it on private mode and I just recorded myself in that world. So that’s the part of the VR thing.

The more like, I would say, the more social nuances around it would be that I am very interested in understanding – first of all I hate the world ‘metaverse’. I use it, you know, there’s going to be an article showing up very soon, where I actually have ‘metaverse’ in the title, but I actually decided on that title a few months ago. It’s very hyped, I like the idea but I think it’s very drenched with marketing significance, and I think we’re a few – many many years away from that actually. But what I’m interested about is the turning point with VR going social, and the pandemic sort of helped.

So before, virtual reality was very, like, individual, very self-centred, I’m putting on the VR glasses, I’m doing this experience. It’s very like single player gaming, I would say. With social VR and the social media, social virtual reality platforms, like VRChat, Rec Room, etc. So now it’s not just about me doing an experience, it’s about me hanging out with people that I don’t know, in these ‘alternate’ realities, let’s put it that way. If that’s going to be monetised, if that’s going to be the embodied internet, Web 3.0, I don’t know – let’s see. But so I’m interested in understanding how, you know, how us, as social beings, how we act in these worlds.

Because now we have digital skins, it’s like puppeteering. I can be whoever I want to be. I was intrigued in the beginning, what the sort of work –like, the first phase of this project was me going on VRChat and talking with random people. And that some of those bits of those conversations, I put it in the work: people saying ‘I want LGBT people to die, like my mother died of cancer’ – probably that Italian guy was just, you know, relaxing on VR and going crazy, you know. But, then again, you’re saying that to someone. That adds meaning, in itself, and especially if I receive it in a strong way, that’s going to have an impact, even if it’s just from one person to another.

So I did that, and I was like, ok, if I’m going to ask two questions, two straight questions to people, which is like “what do you think of climate change?” and “how do you think climate change is going to affect LGBT community in particular?” I thought I should have the most, kind of, neutral avatar possible. So my avatar was this floating orb, made of metal. So I was pretty much an orb, floating around.

Obviously my voice, I didn’t change my voice, so they would, through the voice, they would associate, you know, to a male kind of voice. But then again, the visuals were very strong. And so I didn't get like feelings –like I wasn’t harassed, there was like, no verbal violence towards me. So yeah, I'll shush myself so that I can give room to other kind of opinions.

I chose VR because I'm experimenting with this, and I think performance and theatre sort of found their way through the crisis – that doesn't mean that theatre is going to die, the traditional theatre. No, my background is from, you know, traditional theatre and I was a professional actor in a past life, I'm sort of getting that back now in VR.

But, you know, television didn't kill radio. The digital didn't kill television. So I don't think that necessarily. This is a new expression and new art form and a new language. And so I wanted to explore with that.

Then I wanted to put stuff that comes from, you know, other more traditional languages within my toolkit, that's why I brought the piano up as well, because it's very, it pervades me as an artist since forever, I would say, and so I always come back to music somehow, I don't know. So yeah. Thank you for your question, Jess. It was very insightful. I'm very happy about it.

J: Thank you! That was a really interesting answer. There's a question in the chat from Beck –

A: Hi Beck!

J: – asking: “Did you find the communities you engaged with welcoming or challenging in any way?”

A: Very good question. Crazy people out there! So let me tell you about it. People just go crazy. And I think – ok, so let me do like, market study. Let's go full on professional here, and objective.

I would say, more than 80% of people on social VR are teenage kids from the US who just go there to troll other kids, and just release themselves from reality, and just go crazy. They are very rude. There's a lot of violence and verbal and abusive language. So. But then, it is curious – they are people after all, you know, and they've got these crazy avatars, giants, and they just – you know, most of the people – it was difficult to engage in a conversation with someone: actually stop someone from running around yelling.

I took the more, kind of, approach that seemed natural to me, or that seemed that would work, which was like, I would have this really soft voice, and would really try to calm them down. And would be persistent. They’ll be, “who are you, ra ra ra no,” and I was like, “ok, are you going to stop now? And can we actually talk?” Then: “No, no, no!” “No, really, I'm going to go away. I would really love to talk with you, if that's ok with you”.

So I would be persistent. And, you know, eventually I would have someone that would stop. And even in VR, they would be in this kind of awkward position, you could see through the voice, you know, because a little bit mumbly, like “Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. What do you want?” Then I would engage in a conversation.

So the kind of communities that are engaged, I would say, are mostly these crazy kids. But then again, I would find people – very distinct people, that you could see by the way they expressed themselves and the way they talked, they weren't necessarily know these native kids, born in immersive crazy and, and they actually engaged.

One of the examples I've put in the work, I think it's one of the last clips, this guy actually becomes very intricate and elaborates this discourse about the thing: “Since there is a historical route in the LGBT community, you know, for fighting for their own social justice, we can sort of emulate from that and use it to climate justice because they have this, kind of, know how – of going through that process.”

And that was wow! That’s like, thank you, that was actually insightful. So yeah, and you know what, Beck, then I was I started to looking for worlds that would, you know, looking for keywords like queer, LGBT, etc. There are not many places out there, but the few places I found were very interesting.

They were like, like safe places. So like places where the rules are like, this is a place to respect. And this is a place that, you know, if you go in, you can just talk with people. So for hanging out. Which then brought this idea to me that we can actually use this places and curate them, perhaps, to create spaces, like for public deliberation, even externalisation of emotions. They are safe places: there's no Omicron there, you can use your own avatar, you can use the persona that you want.

So a little bit like we use social media, but like you're not constrained by language. You're talking, you're using your body. So it's very intuitive. It's very organic. So, yeah. That's it, I think, I suppose. Thanks Beck for your question.

J: That's super interesting. I love that idea that you you've managed to kind of get through all the horribleness of social media and then find this little safe community – like that kind of feels like the challenge for a lot of social media companies right now, to get through all of that awful stuff and actually allow people to be social and have the platform work in the way it was designed to. So there's a there's a question here from Spandan – I hope I'm saying your name right. They say: “I find it interesting, the way you designed the sound. It would be great to hear your thoughts behind designing the soundscape.”

A: Oh, someone asking about the sound – the underdog of every visual art! Which, thank you for that question, because it's usually the underdog and it's so essential. You know, to be bluntly honest, Spandan, this was, it was just chaotic. Actually, it was very intuitive. It was very just putting it out, actually. So going to the basic kind of melodic things with a piano, the melodic parts, they were just like me sitting on the piano and just, you centering myself on the topics and, you know, thinking about what the work was all about, and the, social meaning and what it meant meant to me, and just, you know, bluntly, improvise it on the piano.

Perhaps people might be expecting something more futuristic, more out there, you know, more like, black box art installation kind of material. But no, I was just honest with me and the piano and sort of, you know, put it that way. Then, it was a little bit basic. I like I love lo-fi, I've always loved kind of a lo-fi perspective, you know.

We think about VR, we think about actually refining sound: we think about, you know, specialisation, we think about Ambisonics, 3D sound, VR sound. And we don’t need that, I thought ‘I don't need that here’. I used VR for the medium to, you know, embody an avatar and perform, but then I can go full lo-fi. And there are moments where I feel that the power of the voice is very important that I want it very clean. And there are moments that I just wanted to have a little bit of sound natures, that's what I used, you know, a little bit of desert there, there's some water there. So bring a little bit of that kind of eco materiality to the game.

It wasn't like – I wouldn't call this sound design. That's very flattering of you. It was more like this construction, as I, you know, went from one step to the other. Sound for me is so crucial. It's so crucial. It's so important. I also did some work with sound specifically, like some soundtracks, previously. And that for me is, like, that's a different thing. I just totally looked at the visuals, looked at the story and just go full on the piano. Here, I wanted to get that kind of musical substance somehow. And yeah, to not be so dry even. Yeah. But thank you. Sound: very important. Always.

J: That's great. And there's a question from Ahmad in the chat now: “There were a lot of chaos indications like unharmonised talks and images.” Can you talk a little bit about the message you wanted to create from that kind of disharmony and that chaos?

A: That's a really good question. I wanted to be like that because the topic is still messy in my mind, has always been messy in my mind. It is curious that, if you look, if you go through my portfolio as an artist, I've started a lot with music, with acting, like traditional stuff. Then I entered media arts and started doing some crazy stuff. But I've never sort of explored directly the fact that I identify as a queer person – that I'm a gay man. I never put it out. I don't know, it never happened.

I'm at this moment in my life that it sort of made sense to start to explore that. But then again, I was always very, how do I say, always very self aware of the kind of general discourse that is out there. And I'm not gonna say that I'm more aligned with this kind of approach or that – and I'll go there: let me talk about the fuzziness that leads to that actually.

So the fuzziness: it seems that it is chaotic, and It is chaotic. So I wanted to – although it might sound a little bit cliche, or you know, even kitsch – I wanted to have that kind of fuzziness, that disharmony, because it's still fuzzy for many people. There's a lot of prejudice out there. Even this strange entanglement that I'm trying to do here with climate justice and queer justice. You know, at first sight, it doesn't seem logical. But then if you start thinking about it, actually we can create these connections.

I wanted people to feel a little bit of discomfort, you know. The final sound design, going back to sound design, actually had some metallic sounds there. And I chose to take those out, because then it was too fuzzy, in my mind, and I also wanted not to be completely out there and crazy, so that people could feel a little bit confused but also have moments of pure lucidity. Like, the moments when it's just a piano, it's for people just to just, like, relax from that craziness. And actually, you know, have time to absorb.

Then this leads to this idea of advocacy, of activism, of artivism, even. And oh, boy, I don't know, sometimes I have this approach, then I see stuff happening in the world, I become angry, then I sort of become like, more softened: that's why I will never be part of a political party in my life, because they change like, every month, and it's so blurry now.

But here's, you know, in short, long story short, here's my honest approach about it: there's a lot of social agendas going now and humanitarian agendas. It's almost like a lifestyle thing. You know, I go to Africa for one month. Oh, I do voluntary work. Oh, let's put it on Instagram. Oh, look at me. I'm so engaged with the world’s serious issues.

So what did that tell us about that person? Ok, they went there, they did something – there was something, right? But how is that micro-action going to build up? There’s these three big ideas that popped in my mind throughout the project, this idea of micro-impact, this idea of social change, this idea of social development.

And we can sort of put these three, like, in terms of time: social development is historically something that takes time, something like, you know, development takes like 10 years, 20 years, even more.

Social change might be this kind of change that's tangible. There's something that happened, there was some action, there was some agency, something changed, actually.

And then there's like micro-impacts, which is the kind of thing that I particularly am more engaged with, in trying to understand what it is, which is something like what we're doing right now. Like, 11 people talking about something. Just the fact that we're talking about something creates dialogue and create some awareness somehow. If that is going to generate some tangible impact that is, you know, measurable, I don't know. I'm concerned about that and I would love for that to happen, but I just want people to talk about stuff, basically.

And also the fuzziness is because I'm pretty much a bit cuckoo. And so I really like making crazy stuff. But yeah, a little bit. It's nice to see you! Finally, you know!

Ahmad: Thank you, it’s nice to see you too! Thank you for your answer.

A: Thank you for your question.

J: I think that the idea of the micro-impacts and then the social developments and the social change, I think that comes to and kind of links into a question I want to ask you, which is: you’ve said you wanted this work to be something of a manifesto for LGBT people to think about taking action for climate justice. How do you see that happening, and is this a micro-impact or is it bigger than that?

A: Oh, I don’t even think this is going to be a micro-impact, that’s very flattering of you saying “bigger than that”. First of all, let’s undress the classical idea of a manifesto. It’s not politically based at all, it’s a very straightforward person. I like the idea of a manifesto more – I would say I draw more on design manifestos, within design studies and visual arts. Which is this idea that we can actually come up a few guidelines or a few big ideas and organise them somehow, visually, and artistically, so that the message more subtly comes through to people. It’s a little bit like science communication: you’ve got intricate science, then you invite an artist, he does a performance: “Oh, now I understand chronic asthma, because they did a dance about it.”

So, my idea is to actually do that, you know. It’s just – it is what it is. I chose those poems, and I connected with those poems. They have a subtle message behind them. I hope it makes some kind of a change, you know. Just the fact that I’m sharing this information and this work is a form of change. Although it is just an interaction and a little bit passive, it is a form of change.

I really hope so – it can constitute as a tiny little bit of a strange manifesto, a la Antonio, that pokes people’s brains.

And I know we’re all Omicron and Covid and we’re on Zoom again – how terrible is that! I’m so tired of this! This would be interesting, we’re 11 people here, we could be in a coffee shop now, having some nice coffee, some pastries, talking about this. We would be more engaged in actually talking, it would be more chaotic because with Zoom we got like, mute yourself, unmute yourself: even the interactions are curated.

So, here’s what I hope about this work: that somehow in the future, there’s going to be an in-person screening. That would be interesting. In, like, no cultural venues – like, I don’t know, a restaurant. Next to the beach. Come to Portugal, it’s nice – it’s always nice here. Or Madrid.

J: Wouldn’t that be nice. It is pouring with rain here in Bristol.

A: Good luck with that!

J: It’s December. Yeah, wouldn’t it be nice to go somewhere warm and be somewhere in person.

A: That would be cool. Absolutely. There’s something from Beck here as well, right – “I felt the piano…” let’s see. Hey Beck. Ok. So, “I felt the piano matched the narrative of the journey in the sense of the discourse at the beginning and then the melody at the end of finding that community.”

Oh, very nice. You uncovered things that I did not while I was doing it. Thanks, Beck. Yeah, it was – the piano part is – I’m very fortunate, because I’ve started learning when I was a kid, and I sort of explored piano in various ways: first learning from a more traditional, academic, classical perspective. But then for many, many years I did these jazz gigs in a jazz bar downtown in Porto, in the city centre – for eight years, in the same bar. And that opened up a lot of hidden places in my mind, for connecting with the piano. Probably because of the amount of gin and tonics that I had! Well, I only had two, kids – don’t drink too much!

The piano is always, I don’t know, I always feel if I have an emotion that is not tangible to be defined by words – that is not susceptible to be defined by words – the piano usually gets it. And sometimes it comes out ok, sometimes I don’t like it, but yeah. Thanks, Beck.

J: And there’s another question there from Beck: “What’s the next stage or next step in this project?”

A: Well, I have received an invitation from Hollywood, yesterday. No, it’s a joke! I’m going to go full-on blockbuster!

Let me be a little bit indiscreet. The last meeting we had, Jess, when we were talking about preparing this, and before Covid was going into this sudden crisis, I actually was going to suggest to you – and then I ended up thinking no, this is too crazy, you already have a crazy agenda, don’t do it. I was actually going to suggest, you know what, Jess, I’m going to travel, I’m going to go to the UK, let’s make it in a place with pubs and stuff, and let’s have a group of people.

Then I thought, it’s gonna be crazy, Antonio, don’t do it, you’re not gonna have time, then you’re going to be overwhelmed. That was good that I didn’t do it – then I had a lot of stuff coming up.

I would like this – you know what, I don’t want this to be like the lifestyle, send it to underground media art festivals. I might send it to a festival that I like, I don’t know – perhaps. But I really wanted this to be somehow part of a live event. With someone. With a group of people. Somewhere in the world, I don’t know when or where. But that would be the next step for the project.

This is pretty much like an isolated thing: this happened, and here it is. If I feel that I wanna go forward with it, I might go through different venues or expressions or geographies, but let’s see. For now I really wanted this to get out of Zoom and in a certain moment in time happen somewhere, with a group of people – that would be interesting.

J: The idea that this might be kind of a stepping stone or something that makes you think about ideas in different ways is kind of the point of the Residency – like we want this to be almost more about the journey than the end. We love that you’ve created this output, this video that everybody can watch and share and we can talk about it here, but even if you had just done some research, some thinking – you know, I think that thinking time is so valuable as an artist. When do you get paid to do that usually?

A: Boom. Just like that. One million pounds, I got from Jess! I got enough money for wine. No, you actually – that is a really good point there. And actually I’m an advocate for this idea of slowing it down. And I’m not saying this because now it’s trendy to do digital detoxes and talk about it – ‘oh, you know what, I went for one month to the mountains with no internet, oh I feel so refreshed. I found my inner, whatever – Nirvana’.

I like that idea, but here’s the thing – here’s one bad thing about my life now: so I’m a scholar, I’m a crazy artist or whatever, I have a cat, and I’ve stopped reading books the way I was reading them in the 90s when I was a kid. I’m 34 so in the late 90s, early 2000s, I was reading a lot! I was reading, like, one book per week. If I read one book per month now, I’m like, woo! That’s crazy.

Because as an academic I have to read a lot of papers and I have to go through my students’ work and essays and stuff, I read a lot on the internet and I read emails, so I don’t want to see stuff, I just want to sit down and put the shittiest thing on Netflix or go on TikTok and see the craziness that is happening there, and go full-on non intellectual, you know.

I would love to tell people ‘oh, I’m reading three books a week while I’m enjoying some hot cocoa and a blanket on my nice armchair, thinking about Dostoevsky’ – I have those moments, I still have those moments, but then again I’m so overwhelmed with how fast things are today: like, everything for today is for yesterday. So it’s a luxury that we have a full day for doing nothing. But it’s not like a full day – you can do nothing per se, but if you allow yourself to process the nothingness of being with yourself, thinking about ideas, even creative projects.

My students – Thomas is here – my German students, they’re still getting used to me because they are very structured. They say: ‘So is this an academic paper?’ – no! I want this to be like 50% academic and then 50% I want to know your opinion about it. Whoosh. Like, what? ‘How are we going to do that? It’s not structured.’ Like, take your time. Some of my students are still brainstorming and the semester is coming to an end. But I told them ‘ok, take your time. Even if it’s a short paper you come up with in the end, take your time’. So it’s a luxury, taking time to absorb things.

Creative processes go so fast: you get funding, you need to have the idea in one week, then the second idea, second week you have to be on the development phase. It’s all about ‘agile’ and ‘scrum’ and ‘sprint’. That’s ok if you’re into that. But what about taking one full month thinking about the idea and doing absolutely nothing. But it's one full month of engaging with yourself, with your thoughts, and then pour it pour it out.

And so, yeah, I'm dying to get to Christmas time so that I can put an out of office and say, ‘send me an email only if I'm dead’ or something. So I don't know. I’ll shush myself. I talk too much. Sorry, guys!

J: We are going to finish this talk in in sort of eight minutes, so if anyone's got any last questions, please put them in the chat now. We've probably got time for maybe two very small ones. I have got possibly a big question, which is about climate change: how are you feeling about the state of the climate change movement and where climate justice is right now?

A: We're doomed. We're all gonna die! We’re doomed. Here's the thing. It’s so funny, my grandmother is 95 years old. And like, six, seven years ago, and it's funny, she was a teacher, she was a primary school teacher. She's very lucid, you know, I envy her, I'm not going to get that old and that, you know, healthy as she is. And like six years ago, she was doing this joke when the first, like, big stories on climate change started to populate news media outlets, and talking about, you know, the rise of temperature and all of that.

And from time to time she comes up with these strange phrases and sentences. She said, ‘You know what, the world is a big ocean of plastics’ – just out of nowhere. And then like, one minute later, she would say we have to buy onions, we're out of onions. I like the craziness about her!

And it's interesting, because I never thought about it. To be bluntly honest, because I come from an acting background, we have such an inflated ego, that traditionally actors are not engaged with social issues. I would say, I'm 34 now: in my late 20s, I started to think a little bit about – I started to gain some perspective. Not a lot, but I'm building up on that, hopefully.

I started to listen, more than to one up, you know, try to monopolise the conversations. And I started to understand that although I don't know the science behind it, I know some, I read some papers, but I'm in social sciences, so I understand them to a certain degree. But I've come to realise that it seems like, right now, there's no coming back.

Supposedly, 10 years ago, we were still on the verge of actually trying to reverse the situation, like the the macro kind of situation of all of these things that are contributing to the planet slowly dying, basically. But when I saw, it was this year, I think, this red alert, this climate emergency shout from from from United Nations, and I said this, the discourse from that speech from António Guterres, I was like, ‘Oh, now there's no way back’. Ok, so there's no way back.

Now it's all about how we're going to deal with it. Obviously, we can all say, hey, I'm 34. I can say, you know what, I'm going to die hopefully, when I'm like in my 90s or 80s – so I'm not going to experience that. So what I'm trying to get into my own mindset, and slowly try to somehow share with people is this idea that we have to think about the long run, we have to think about it.

I'm a gay man, I want to have kids. I don't know when. I know that I have that – at least now I have that idea. In a few years perhaps. If I think about that idea, I think about so what sort of world are my kids going to live. I know this might sound melodramatic, but it is as it is. I can die when I'm 82 but then again, my kids are still going to be young and probably there's like more volcano eruptions are going to happen like the one that happened in the Canary Islands, you know.

So I just want to talk about it. And without being extremist about it, just bluntly honest about it, expressing my feelings about it if even if they're not actually scientifically accurate. I'm not trying to be a tiny little Greta from Portugal or Al Gore. I'm not that kind of person. I really just like to, you know, share my ideas. Some, well, they like the Al Gore reference reference. Ok. So yeah, that's that's as honest of an opinion about that, that I have.

I'm more interested now in learning about this and understanding what might happen in the in the short term because it's gonna happen. It's starting to happen. It's scary, somehow, you know?

J: Yeah, totally. In the UK, we've just had this very big conference up in Scotland about climate change, and it's just been constantly in the news.

A: COP26 – yeah, I sort of I saw a little bit of that and read some articles.

J: It just feels hard as one person to try to do something. But if every one person does something, then that's how we create change, I guess. I think we're gonna have to wrap this up, we’ve kind of got to the end of our time. I just want to say Zoe left a comment – not a question, just a comment – just saying how much she appreciates everything you're saying. She found the piece super moving, and very soothing and that it was “great to see challenging art on queer and climate justice: an important intersection”.

A: Oh, lovely. Thank you so much. Thank you.

J: We also accept comments – sorry, we also accept compliments in in the comments!

A: Absolutely. Should we put our Patreon? This is my Patreon! Yeah, no, no, thanks guys. Thank you so much.

J: I think we've come to the end of our time here this evening. So I just want to thank you all for being here. And thank you so much to Antonio for presenting the work from your Residency in this way and it's been really fascinating to hear you talk around the Queer e(c)ho project, as well as seeing, seeing what you have created. This is the final Container Magazine event of 2021. But we'll be back in New Year. If you'd like to be part of Container in the new year, whether you're creating content for the magazine, or as our Resident Artist, as we talked about, do have a look at our website for all the details. submissions are open until the ninth of January. That was the little plug I had to do.

A: Boom! Just like that. Wonderful. Wonderful. Thank you so much. Stay safe, be happy. Bye. Bye, everyone.

J: Thank you! Bye.

A: Bye.