Emily Khoury: [speaking slowly] Some days we just have to create our own sunshine.

Richard Sennett: Nobody can survive without the cooperation of other people. No country can survive without cooperating with other people.

Declan Rowe John: Art is a way to portray your message to the world and bring people together and show that they aren’t alone.

Rory Pilgrim: [speaking with a slight echo, in a reverberant venue space] Everyone needs to feel a sense of belonging. Connection is the life force that flows through our veins. I would be lost without connection. Others might say the same.

Gaylene Gould: Well, what a journey we’ve been on during this Serpentine podcast series, exploring how we might reworld this gorgeous and, lest we forget, the only planet we have been gifted, to create a more life-enhancing environment for all humans and non-humans. I’m Gaylene Gould. I’m a creative director and a broadcaster. With the help of artists and thinkers during the series, we’ve reimagined, remembered, replayed, and regenerated, gathering breadcrumbs of ideas and practices that might help us more consciously evolve.

In this final REWORLDING episode, we’re exploring the art of relating to each other and how vital and fundamental this is to radically transforming our external and our internal world. This topic is perhaps closest to my own soul. When I trained as a creative coach, helping people to explore more deeply their own thoughts and motivations, I realised that the art of relating requires such a depth and skilful practice – and I’d never been taught! Why did we not learn these practices at school? Might the world be a more joyfully interconnected place if we did? Might we be able to better approach our connections as well as our differences with greater respect and curiosity? Wouldn’t we all just get along better?

That’s what we’re here to explore, because artists don’t just make things. They also create sensitive environments for people to connect in deeper ways, which is exactly what happened during Serpentine’s Radio Ballads project. Over three years, four artists worked closely with communities of social workers, carers, organisers, and residents to explore who cares for who and how. In their project RAFTS, artist Rory Pilgrim and community members in Barking and Dagenham explored the question: in moments of change, what keeps us afloat?
Rory Pilgrim: RAFTS started back in 2019. I had just finished a film, previous to that, called The Undercurrent, working with youth climate activists. [music evolves from ambient tones to bright shards of electronic sound and a reflective orchestral motif, played by strings] When I finished that work, I was left with many questions about just – what is a support structure, itself? When we think about environmentalism or where we are now in just the kind of crises shaping the world, [music fades out] what is this fundamental question of support which has been so decimated in so many different ways.

I came across this text by R. Buckminster Fuller called Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth. There it gives this very visceral comparison to the Earth itself as this lonely life raft floating through space. It felt like such an evocative metaphor to create as an anchor to think about what a support system is. The raft, of course, is also one of great fragility. It’s one in which it’s used through urgency as a means of escape. But it also marks a very phenomenal point of human evolution where we as humans started crossing seas. [orchestral strings return] I just thought it was such a strong symbol.

Gaylene Gould: They were finally able to share their collective work in a joyous moving performance at Cadogan Hall in December 2022. The performances weaved homemade stories, poetry, filming reflections around Rory’s seven-song oratorio that connected work, mental health, home, recovery, and our environment.

Carina Murray: [speaking slowly with slight echo, in the reverberant space of Cadogan Hall] In this journey called life, we’re all just passing through. We just get to travel, but we don’t get to stay for too long. Along the way, we meet others and cross each other’s paths, sharing our experience, our strength, and our knowledge on how to build a raft. What materials do you put together? Be careful now. For a raft to stay afloat, you have to put the right materials together and you have to use the right tools for the right purpose. So you build a sturdy support. So when you’re building your support system, make sure you’ve got the right people and the right tools.

Rory Pilgrim: [orchestral strings return and continue in the background] It started through the invitation of a Radio Ballad. So, for listeners who aren’t familiar, this was a series of radio plays from the end of the 1950s to 60s. They were really important in the history of radio, of documenting workers’ voices, and their experience of work and labour conditions in the UK after this major transition, post-Second World War. [music fades out] Through the invitation of Amal Khalaf and Lizzie Graham, who run the Civic programme of Serpentine, they commissioned four new Radio Ballads focusing on Barking and Dagenham.

So, I was introduced to an amazing arts charity called Green Shoes Arts, which provide different creative workshops for people from the borough. Me and Lizzie spent three months volunteering with Green Shoes, and then I came back with this proposition to work together and to think about what are the different rafts in our lives and the journeys that people are on.
When the pandemic did hit, I mean we didn’t even know what Zoom was, really. But suddenly we found ourselves dealing with this technology and that we could meet online. It really did become such an important space within the week for myself included, just to be able to work in a way or talk or be with people and find affinity. I suppose relate, find kinship in what we were experiencing.

Liam O Connell: Everyone needs to feel a sense of belonging. Connection is the life force that flows through our veins. I would be lost without connection. Others might say the same. Never-ending connection until the end of time.

Mark Jones: In my park, there is a tree. I don’t know why, but it looks sad, because it’s got no leaves. It might be the type of tree that doesn’t have any leaves, if such a tree exists. I don’t know. Or maybe something happened to the leaves and they don’t come out. It looks a bit lonely, that tree, and it’s sad. But I think it’s got a lot of friends around him, so I think he will be okay.

Gaylene Gould: I was really keen to meet you, Rory, because a lot of the work that I’m embarking on, it’s all around relating. It’s all around creating space for people to gather, to share, to tell stories they may not normally do with strangers. So, I want all of your secrets!

Rory Pilgrim: My secret maybe is that I personally find groups really difficult. I relate personally through building one-on-one relationships. How do you cater for the needs of each person within that group and how they relate? I mean it is just on the most human level of how to build a relationship and vibe with someone. Sometimes it’s in a very unspoken way, like just sensing of what that person needs. Are they a talker? Are they more a listener?

My approach to working with people and holding space is always based on this feeling of how do you create a space where just everyone could be themselves, but also they can relate in their own way? Just to witness people’s journeys within the process, just that they might have started very shy or with doubt or even confidence. Just to have the privilege of witnessing what they make is one of the most touching experiences. There’s often times where you’re humbled or just so in awe of the strength that people have to survive. I think the most violent thing you can do is underestimate a person’s experience.

Katie: An oar of courage is what you must have to overcome the stormy waters of despair. The rolling waves will sink your raft without it. My oar of courage was but a feeling in the air when the world stood still during the pandemic. But now the oar is stronger, much stronger than never before. It’s shone a shining light and it opened many doors. My raft has always
been my dreams and my oar that pulled me out of the abyss. If I could animate my dreams, I’d draw them just like this. [clarinet and flute melody returns and evolves into orchestral piece with pastoral feel; continues in the background]

Gaylene Gould: You get a sense of just how moving this performance was that, quite frankly, left me in bits by the end of it. Watching people step out into a new space and reveal themselves in such tender ways, there’s no greater privilege. I was lucky enough to speak to some of the performers and participants backstage. [music continues in the background]

Declan Rowe John: I mean it’s really shown me that we’re all very human at a fundamental level. No matter where you’re from, there’s always going to be things that transcend where you’re from and the differences between everybody. There are always going to be things that you have in common, just like a wave and a nod is just something that you can always expect from somebody.

I think it’s really important to have connections with people, to be able to relate to people who are different from you and who are similar to you, [music fades out] so that you can form empathy and sympathy and things like that for other people. It helps not only you, inside of yourself, but also the people around you. It’s just great all around. [live finger picked guitar melody begins] Art is a way to portray your message to the world and bring people together and show that they aren’t alone. [live guitar melody from the concert is joined by Declan’s voice that sings tender, nostalgic folk pop song]: Safe, only safe I feel when free, free to truly be, when waves fall, tumble around – but if we wait, if we wait, if we wait will there still be a home? For there is not enough in a phone or in a thought, to figure out, figure out, to stay around, to stay around... [singing stops and song continues in the background]

Rome Martin-Whilby: Where I was born, I had a community. I’ve always had a community. So, I’ve always had people, but other people don’t have that. But I feel like connecting with someone, it’s like you’re not lonely, basically. You always have someone to do something, so you’re not bored or you’re just not alone. [music evolves into slow drum beat with clarinet melody that continues in the background]

When you dance, it doesn’t feel like anyone’s dancing with you sometimes. It just feels like you are just there in that moment and everyone else is in that moment with you. It’s just like a buzzing feeling you have, basically. When you have that buzzing feeling and you know someone else has that, that’s how you know you guys are connected. That’s how you can feel it. [song continues with drums, piano and brass melody that rises towards affirmation; continues in the background]

Carina Murray: It’s impacted me in a profound way, because initially it started off with getting out of the house and filling up my time and doing something constructive rather than wallowing in rumination. Then it evolved into a place of solace during the pandemic, because we came together pre-pandemic. Then during the pandemic, it kept a focus to keep going. It’s just really helped me find a purpose within myself and expand upon my own creative skills. It’s surreal. It’s quite surreal, really, but it’s amazing. [song continues quietly with interlocking flute melody]
When you disconnect, it can take you to a very dark place and you lose sight of reality and what’s important. But for me, as well as connecting with others being vital, I also have to learn to connect with myself, because I can disconnect from myself also and then lose another perception of reality. Music and art can be one of the same thing, really, because it’s a form of creative expression, which is universal and speaks one language, but can have a different meaning to each individual, but can unite.

**Liam O Connell:** Through the word of spoken poetry, through stories and experience and music, I think this project will connect with people, because it reveals who we are deep down. It reveals our innermost desires, our thoughts, our imaginations. [song continues quietly with more hopeful, upbeat melody of flutes, horns and strings]

**Kayden Fearon:** It just brings people together, if I'm being so honest with you, and sharing stories. Every single piece in this showcase is different stories throughout the pandemic, throughout anything, anyone that's gone through anything. It just brings people together, and that's what we wanted. I feel like we've become very successful with that, just bringing people together, sharing stories, and just relating to one another. The whole process of writing a song is really important to me now, more than it was before. Really understanding each lyric, what am I trying to say, rather than just writing anything for the sake of writing and there's no meaning behind it. [orchestral strings return, becoming louder] I felt like, okay, how am I going to make this into my own but also make it meaningful, also make it knowing I want to help people? What does this mean to them? How are they going to relate to it? [string melody joined by Kayden’s voice singing soulful, orchestral pop song] It’s the way things pass into the darkness for you, until there’s ten thousand flowers, until there’s ten thousand flowers, growing for you... So just bring me your flowers, I’ll keep them safe for you, so just bring me your flowers, I’ll keep them safe like you... Safe like you... To grow for you... [voice fades into piano melody that rises with a hopeful cadence and continues in the background]

**Gaylene Gould:** So, there we heard from Declan, Rome, Carina, Liam, and Kayden, who are all central to this project. Even from this distance of time, this heart of this piece is so strong. It's something to do perhaps with the care and vulnerability that stitches it together. [music fades out] So, I was also very pleased that night to meet one of the people most responsible for *Radio Ballads*, Serpentine’s Civic Curator, Amal Khalaf. Amal is with me now. Hi, Amal.

**Amal Khalaf:** Hi!

**Gaylene Gould:** So good to have you here. I felt like, being at that performance, I was able to peek into this process that you helped shape and craft. So how did you feel at the performance that night?

**Amal Khalaf:** I mean I think, like so many of us in the audience that day, there was so much emotion. It was the same for everybody that was involved in the project. So... I work on a team with two other amazing curators, Lizzie Graham and Layla Gatens. I think all of us were extremely emotional. I think witnessing all the courage that was present in the room, our collective lungs, ears, hearts being filled with all the love and wisdom that was shared through song and through beautiful poetry.
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Gaylene Gould: Yeah. That was just a privilege to witness it. I really got a strong sense that the experience that the participants had on this must have been transformative in many ways. So, tell us a bit more about your role.

Amal Khalaf: I’ve been working at the Serpentine now for 13 years. My role is to commission, care for, nurture multi-year collaborative projects between artists and people. Often the people I’m talking about are communities in struggle. So, we work with activists, organisers, people that are holding things together in the spaces they live, as well as people working in civic organisations.

And so, for *Radio Ballads* and with RAFTS, myself and my two colleagues, we had the immense privilege of spending four years working with this neighbourhood, working with people who are really on the frontline of a care system that’s under attack. There’s a phrase I use a lot by an artist called Brontë Velez. They describe it as co-liberation. That’s absolutely what I feel I’m nurturing, and what many of the artists and many of the collaborators we’re working with in the many projects we commission at the Serpentine, we’re all thinking about that. We’re thinking about these projects as spaces of change. I think part of what I do as a curator that does this work, and I think you have lots of experience doing it too, is you’re creating these containers which allow people to maybe step outside…

[20:00]

To maybe acknowledge that really directly, yes, we are living through and at the knife edge of multiple crises, of a lot of violence and a lot of things we’re all holding here, and let’s use these methodologies, let’s step into an embodied practice that will allow us to dream together or work together and tell the story a little differently, and maybe rehearse together what a more liberatory future can look like.

How do we create spaces in the arts for people to rage, to grieve, to play, to feel sensual, to laugh with each other, and to dream together? So, I’ve worked on about 70 of those, and I think the culmination of all of that is actually a project that appear during *Radio Ballads*, and that is *Support Structures* for *Support Structures*, developed in collaboration with Sumayya Vally, who’s the lead architect of Counterspace and who designed the Serpentine Pavilion 2020-2021.

The organisation gives a piece of the lawn just outside of Serpentine South over to an architect that hasn’t built in London before. They’re able to dream and imagine and create a space of gathering. And so, we started to think together, and a lot of the ideas that she had for the Pavilion was thinking about and honouring communities, migrant communities mostly that have been not so honoured in the imaginary of what London is, and honouring those ghosts, bringing them back and thinking about them structurally. So, we’re now going to hear Sumayya Vally.

[music fades into high-pitched chime; evolves into deep electronic reverb, meditative chimes, birds chirping and ambient tones; continues in the background]
Sumayya Vally: Support Structures for Support Structures was born to support up to 10 artists who are working at the intersection of art and ecology, art and social justice, and art in the archive through funding but also through mentorship and skills support. This Pavilion is very much about embedding itself in London and about being able to fold London into the Pavilion and the pavilion back out into London. We need to ask ourselves if the world around us is being made in our image. If it isn’t, whose image is it being made of and how do we start to make our own?

I vividly remember walking the streets of Joburg as a child and really being in love with it from a very young age. It is a place of so many other places, movements, cultures, and different forces.

I really wanted to reflect a London that is plural and that is about many different places that honours voices from many different times, past, present, and future. The role of an architect is to be able to absorb, reflect, and translate who we are into the world. We need to be able to listen deeply to these silences and whispers. There’s a whole set of worlds that are waiting to happen inside of them.

My ambitions around building are very much about reimagining structures so that they reflect who we are, and we need to do that now.

Gaylene Gould: I think there is something quite exciting in particular, I think, about Sumayya Vally’s approach. Not all architects necessarily see architecture in that way, right?

Amal Khalaf: Yeah, definitely. I remember working a lot with communities experiencing gentrification, and we would see architectural and urban plans. A lot of the time the question we had was like, are they birds, looking from the sky? Do they know there are bodies and lives and worlds here? I loved what Sumayya said about listening to the silences, because that’s where all the worlds that can emerge are. It’s very powerful.

Gaylene Gould: Yes, and absorbing and reflecting as opposed to commandeering space is a really lovely idea. It does put me in mind of the work that you and Rory did on RAFTs, around this idea of creating spaces of absorption and reflection. It’s probably a really nice way of describing that kind of practice, isn’t it?
Amal Khalaf: Yeah, definitely. I mean this idea that we think about these moments of sitting together and being together and what it means to be together.

Gaylene Gould: Yes. Collective imagining. Well, that’s really an interesting thought, because someone who is also studying this quite closely is Richard Sennett, who is a leading sociologist. We wanted to speak to him because of the influential insights he’s offered into helping people connect and work collectively.

[ambient electronic tones return and continue in the background]

Richard Sennett: Today, it’s often thought by neoliberals that we don’t really need to connect to other people, that people pretty much are free, autonomous agents. That’s a fantasy that does us a lot of harm. Nobody can survive without the cooperation of other people. No country can survive without cooperating with other people. No baby could ever grow up without depending on other people and without those kinds of interconnections. You couldn’t mature as a human being. [music fades out]

One thing that has struck me that gets in the way of people having deep connections with each other is the short-term character of a lot of our communications. That’s obvious when you message, but it’s also in the way social media is organised, Twitter and so on. What it’s done at a fundamental level is taken away narrative from people. Without a sustaining narrative, it’s very hard for people to communicate in any deep way – to get the ambience of a communication, what it means for people to be silent or to use body language in communication. All of that takes time.

So, in my writings about cooperation, what I have been particularly focused on is how to give people more time with each other. Of course, that has an economic side to it as well. If you’re an Uber driver, you don’t have any kind of sustained work relations with anybody else. You just have encounters. It’s the social side of the zero hours contract that at any moment a relationship can be broken.

But looking beneath the economy of that, I think there’s really a question about how we recover that long-term time where people can develop narratives about each other, and understandings which are tacit, implicit, contextual. That’s been on my mind for a long time as an analyst.

There are lots of things that people can do to get out of this neoliberal trap. The actual clue from that lies deep in Britain’s past, in the 19th century, when there was no welfare state. People had to make up the institutions that will allow them to bury their dead or to cobble together enough money for a mortgage to buy a house, or for healthcare. There were voluntary organisations in civil society.

That’s how working-class people made a presence in their lives of social connections when nobody was helping them out. I think that’s a very good model for where we are today. It’s very hard for us to imagine that civil society, which is what this is, could make up for an absence of government. We’ve gotten so orientated to the notion that if there’s a problem, the government should solve it. As we’re learning from these right-wingers, they’re not going to do that.
So, what I’ve written about and what I believe in very strongly is that we have to reanimate civil society to do the things that power will not do for us. That means new versions of voluntary organisations online, something that’s exactly the opposite of Twitter.

Crowdfunding seems to be fabulous. Things like unions become really important. There are things we can do to create these civil society institutions. They’re already at hand. The model is something like Co-op, which is owned by the people who shop there. You can do a bank that way as well. You can go from crowdfunding to something in which people actually own the banks. You’re not solving humanity’s problems, but you’re giving people a sense that they have agency by sharing their resources. That, I think, extends to climate change as well.

If you look to the level of governments, it’s hopeless. We’re all going to cook to death. But there are things locally that can be done to at least modify, for a community, these negative impacts. For instance, painting streets white. A dark macadam holds heat, whereas white reflects it. A community can significantly lower its heat load. [ambient electronic tones return] There are lots of things like this that can be done, and it makes a local difference. It doesn’t solve climate change, but it is a way of being present in this problem.

Gaylene Gould: I can see you’re really excited here, Amal. Tell me your thoughts on this.

Amal Khalaf: It’s something I’ve been thinking about for a long time. I didn’t grow up in the UK. I actually grew up in the Middle East. I lived in places where we knew that the government wasn’t taking care of us. [laughs] And I came here, and everybody believes and has collectively decided that we are living in a social welfare state, and that things function, and government tells the truth and things like that. But I believe that witnessing austerity in motion, which has been what my experience has been over my career at the Serpentine so far and through these 70-plus commissions is really like we’re witnessing the breakdown, but people don’t really realise that now we’re here needing to self-organise. We need to really learn the tools for working together again. We need to create spaces where we can flex those muscles, do a bit of training to dream together. We have to relearn that.

I do think we, as artists and creative practitioners, have some of the technologies to support people to do that. I truly believe that. So, that really resonated with me. [ambient electronic tones continue the background]

Gaylene Gould: I do think there’s something really interesting in what you’re saying about we have to learn the tools, because this art of relating, we all think we can do it. We all think we know... We know how to have a conversation with someone, we know how to exchange a story, but actually the practice of it is really quite skillful and quite deft and requires unlearning. [music fades out]

Amal Khalaf: I love that you used the word unlearn. Education was created in neoliberal context and capitalism. It’s made for us to become productive and uphold the status quo. It’s our right and
responsibility, especially for bodies who are not just erased but completely destroyed under the status quo, it’s really important for us to be starting to unlearn and understand that these systems are not for us.

And so, I feel like one of the things we really need to unlearn is hierarchy. I think that’s one of the things... And practicing collaborative work and why for me it’s the most urgent thing that we should all be doing, and which is totally illegible in so many systems, with this idea that we’re just individuals. Even the way that the mental health system works, that’s a lot of the things that came up in RAFTS. A lot of that is really individualised. We need to talk about it as a system problem. I think we really need to unlearn this thing that we are individuals acting on our own. We relearn, reimagine, learn from our elders, look to our ancestors, look to utopic spaces and practice being together.

[ambient electronic tones return and continue in the background] I think the other thing to unlearn and the thing to relearn is listening, and collective listening as well. This is stuff I learned a lot from Janna Graham, who was a curator at the Serpentine when I started. She is part of a collective called Ultra-red. They emerged out of the AIDS crisis in the ’90s as a needle exchange. They were really thinking about the power of sound in relation to amplifying or talking about organising, and developed since then really amazing methodologies for creating collective listening. Through them, I really started to understand what deep listening looks like, what listening looks like in relation to organising.

There are many things they’ve shared, but one of the things I really understood from working with them is listening really is a form of political encounter. It’s a space where we meet the other, where you want to go. I’m able to approach you if I’m able to listen. I think it’s only in that space that we’re able to then start to move together. [music fades out] [slow, deliberate, acoustic drum beat begins, joined by assertive piano melody and plaintive strings; continues in the background]

**Rory Pilgrim:** How do you really let a person speak their truth? It sounds very American to say that, but I think that’s what I’m left with. I might maybe just use the raft metaphor, that together it builds something, but it’s built from all of these individual pieces. Even if one piece of wood isn’t strong enough, it could capsize the thing. So, we have to look at that specificity of where that hole or thing might be. Because so many of our social systems are failing individuals, people’s needs are just not being met. [music fades into ambient tones that continue in the background] If there’s anything which I hope carries further, it’s that we think about a way of supporting people, which is just based on listening.

**Gaylene Gould:** It’s exactly what you were saying, Amal. Listening really is the secret sauce. I mean, that is the material that weaves us all together, isn’t it?

**Amal Khalaf:** Definitely. I was mentioning Ultra-red before, and something they do is they develop these incredible workbooks, which I recommend everybody listening to check out, if you’re interested in listening. But in one of them, they quote Audre Lorde’s poem ‘Echoes’, and I’m just going to say this. “There is a timbre of voice that comes from not being heard and knowing you’re not being heard,
noticed only by others, not being heard for the same reason." I feel like, yeah, there's something really powerful in that. It’s that ability to make space for certain voices and to create spaces for people to listen to those voices together.

**Richard Sennett:** Agency, it’s not necessarily the same thing as being effective or successful.

**Gaylene Gould:** It’s a good time to go back to sociologist Richard Sennett.

**Richard Sennett:** It’s something deeper, which is that you are present, that you are not passive, that you don’t withdraw when somebody does an injury to you. [music fades out] What has struck me always about the social wounds that people experience, being arbitrarily fired at work or not being recognised as good at your work, or being discriminated against in the community, is that people develop this scar tissue.

In social life, unlike in the body, scar tissue is a bad thing. It means you’re not really present. You don't feel present. You're somewhere else. That gives a field for the people who have injured you to keep doing it. That’s one of the good things about strikes. Whether you succeed or not, it’s a declaration, "I'm here." I'm not just huddling in the corner complaining in the coffee room about how shitty things are. I’m actually present, here, to you.

It’s a very elemental and basic part of agency, that is that you are present to the people who are hurting you rather than finding refuge somewhere else. Of course, what we want is that this agency be shared with other people who are in the same boat, rather than something which is personalised. It’s not necessarily that we’re going to affect change by being more collective, but that we see a social bond as more important than a personal revelation.

Neoliberalism encourages that kind of personalisation, personal focus. My story is unique to me, which means that you don’t have any bonds or any responsibility to other people. So, we have to change the language we use about ourselves. What we want is a social language about support, about facing adversity together.

[40:00]

The point is not to be successful in the sense that other force goes away, but that you fight against it. It’s not fulfilment. That’s a consumerist notion. But what you can be is feel that you have a purpose, that you have agency, you’re present with other people, that your life matters to someone else.

[ambient electronic tones return; continue in the background]

**Amal Khalaf:** There’s a way that this economy that we live in has made it impossible or very difficult for huge swathes of people to feel like they have the ability to change where they are, their situation. It’s a really big leap for people to feel like they can have responsibility over their future when you’re just met with so much change and, without your permission, your whole life being dictated by circumstance and situation and economy and your status in life, your structure, your identity, all of those things.
And so, in these spaces, this idea of agency is about building trust enough in the space or feeling safe enough in the spaces in which you're collaborating with others, that you feel like your voice matters or what you have to say or what you're dreaming or thinking is meaningful. Even being allowed to dream is a huge leap for a lot of us. I remember when I wanted to do art, my parents were like, "Are you a princess?" [Gaylene laughs] I think about that a lot, and I was like, "No, I'm not a princess." It's only princesses who are allowed to do that?

Gaylene Gould: That's brilliant. I love that all artists are princesses!

Amal Khalaf: I mean I think a lot of you know, brown girls out there, we have that same thing from their parents! [both laugh]

Gaylene Gould: Exactly!

Amal Khalaf: But this idea of agency is powerful.

Gaylene Gould: I think you've nailed why I think RAFTS was such a moving experience, because there's something about watching people. We've all lived a life and we all take that for granted, that everyone's got a story and everyone's lived the life. [music fades out] But actually watching people who have had time to process that, who have time to think about what that means, to have time to extract the meaning for them and then tell us, that's the kind of processes that you were engaged in and you helped create. [slow, orchestral strings return and continue in the background] That is transformative. That can create new worlds for people. It's time to go back to a final word from Rory, I think. I asked them about this, that in our new world that we're making together, what would they suggest we do to relate to each other better?

Rory Pilgrim: It's always good to have a sketchbook and a pack of colouring pencils. [Gaylene laughs] When you feel powerless, it's amazing what you can just do with a pen and paper, either to be able to reflect on it and then think through how that reflection can help you find support in other way. [music fades out] Through a pen and paper, you can correspond with someone else.

Gaylene Gould: The path to world peace is a pen and paper, basically. I concur. I can see it. It's reflection and sharing, isn't it?

Rory Pilgrim: Yes. That's it.

Gaylene Gould: That's what it is, tools for reflection and sharing. [ambient electronic tones return; continue in the background]

Rory Pilgrim: I mean I've learned so much from others and, of course, the work that I do would be not possible without the work done by all manner of different people. I think it's just also being aware of ... So, building your own world, but also just giving that space where you can be in completely awe of
others and not be paralysed by it also because you don’t feel good enough. How beautiful it is to see or be inspired by a person. Maybe to finish just the words of Emily, who I work with, where she says, "Grateful for all I can do." It is that gratitude of just seeing what people are capable of.

**Gaylene Gould:** Yeah. In the great words of Emily, who has now become my friend after going to see the live show: “we’ve got to make our own sunshine.”

**Rory Pilgrim:** Yes, some days you just have to create your own sunshine. [music fades out]

**Emily Khoury:** Some days we just have to create our own sunshine. [sighs] These words are like a mantra to me. I regularly remind myself to be mindful and practice gratitude daily, grateful for all that I’m able to do. [voice wavers] [audience applauds loudly, clapping, whistles and whoops]

**Gaylene Gould:** [in the concert hall] Oh god... [laughs]

**Katie Callin (audio producer):** I’m just recording Gaylene crying... [hum of large crowd, laughing and exclamations in the foreground; twinkling electronic theme returns]

**Gaylene Gould:** Oh, this is so cruel, having to record while I’m in complete bits. Oh, wow. I mean I can see people in the audience hugging each other now. I think it definitely makes you want to do that. It makes you want to appreciate the people in your life and appreciate the things that you’ve got to be thankful for. So, we totally get it. We totally get why connection is important.

**Katie Callin:** Aww, I didn’t mean to be recording you crying!

**Gaylene Gould:** [laughing and sighing] That was good. Oh my god... [crowd fades out; twinkling electronic theme continues in the background] I mean that is how I felt at the time. [laughs] Thank you, Katie, for capturing me doing that! But it’s also how I feel now. I mean it’s really easy to feel so connected to the participants of RAFTS. It’s so easy to feel connected to Emily in that moment.

**Amal Khalaf:** Just listening back, I’m filled with emotion. We had so many workshops that we ran together. A majority of them were not in-person, but I felt ... We all felt, I think ... a relationship growing between us. I think one of the things when I’m saying there was a web of connection growing between us, it was really love, and I think that’s what I feel and so much gratitude for all the wisdom they share. I think that witnessing the courage that they displayed, not just in the performance ... I mean before the performance, we collectively made a film together and there were also many, many moments where I witnessed what it was like to hold ... How we could hold each other across space and time. I can still feel the embrace of this group. [twinkling electronic theme fades; simple, plinking electronic melody begins and continues in the background]

**Gaylene Gould:** Amal, thank you so much. Personally, I’m very happy that this is the last episode in this series. If we’re thinking about reworlding and creating space for a new world, it has to begin with
the very basics of how you connect to another soul. So, is there a piece of wisdom on relating that could make our final piece in our raft to our new world? What might you leave us with?

**Amal Khalaf:** I never feel wise, but just because we’ve been listening so much to RAFTS and I’ve really been transported to the process that we had together. Maybe I’d like to share something about this really visceral, embodied feeling I’ve been having over the last few years, which really started to shift the way I understand connection and relating. It’s just how aware we were of each other’s breath. I really started to think about our breath as a tempo that we have in the world and how are we able to tune into a rhythm together in order to create new worlds together that feel loving and nourishing. Maybe that can lead us back to RAFTS. Some words that Hugh shared in his poems. He was an incredible not just poet, but performer and holder of space. He shared this beautiful poem that he wrote about a tree in the park. I think about those moments we feel broken or the moments we feel alone, and there’s just so much beauty and love with what Hugh has to say.

**Gaylene Gould:** Amal, thank you so much for sharing this world with us, helping to create this world from such foundational knowledge and wisdom. Thank you. [plinking melody echoes and fades out]

**Hugh Prior:** [speaking with slight echo, in a reverberant space] You see a picture behind of a tree. Now this is a tree that’s special to me in my local park. I often do laps of the park. It gives some time to think and wander around. I always noticed this tree, especially during COVID, when we only allowed out for short time. A lot of us struggled with that. But this tree always spoke to me, to the extent that I wrote a poem about it, which I'll read for you now. It’s called ‘The Tree That I See’.

"There’s a tree near me that I always see when I break free from the confines of TV and head to the park for a wander. It’s not the biggest tree or the tallest tree, but it’s the only tree that talks to me when I head to the park for a wander.

[50:00]

It’s a tree that has been torn asunder. But within that tree there’s strength for me, and I nod to that tree and I thank that tree when I’m in the park for my wander. It’s a tree, you see, that’s been savaged like me, and left hollowed like me, but still stands free, offering hope for the broken who wander.

It’s a tree that has not gone under. Rather, it’s a tree still strong following all the wrong, an inviting song suggesting that all along there’s a tune for the lonely who wander. If I invoke that verse as I traverse, then there’s an end to terse and the believing curse when I’m in the park for my wander. It’s true. And each time that I approach that tree that has time for me, and speaks to me and helps provide me with a sense to see that I too am free, I nod in praise to thee, most genial tree, and it doesn’t seem ridiculous to me, and then neither does life. So, I carry on." [audience applauds with clapping and whooping; fades out into ambient electronic tones that continue in the background]

**Gaylene Gould:** Rory’s vision of a raft is a perfect one to leave us with as we come to the end of our REWORLDING journey. The idea of world-building can sometimes sound like a big tech, big budget escapade, a SpaceX, Y, or Z production. But maybe reworlding is more like collectively hand-making a
raft, fashioned from planks of imagination, a rudder of remembrances and shared stories, a sail made by playfully stitching together colourful games, and an arc where other species help design and build the vessel and in which we share quarters. To do all of this requires space and time to learn how to be together and to rebuild those tacit, implicit contextual narratives between ourselves. As Sennett says, this is not a passive exercise. It will require each of us to have agency, to be present and active in building these social bonds. To do that, we have to look out for each other to support the kind of space and environment that we each need to grow.

As Rory says, the raft won’t make it if some of the boards are weakened. The survival of our species relies on strengthening ourselves and each other. Maybe if we put all of our imaginations in service, if we allow for new ways of remembering and learning from our shared pasts, if we put down the laptop and go play with a stick sometimes, if we begin to worship the interconnectedness of our earthly species, [music fades into sparse ambient tones] and if we listen deeply and with care to each other, our raft just might make it to a new, more resilient, more caring, more thriving world, and we’d have created our own sunshine in the process. [sparse ambient tones continue in the background]

Thank you for sharing this moving journey with me. I can’t wait to see you all in our new world that we’ve made together. Keep an eye and an ear on your podcast feeds for our next series. We will be back soon. Thank you to all of the people who have been so kind and generous as to share their wisdom with us along the way over these last five episodes of REWORLDING. Thank you to Emily who tells us about creating our own sunshine, who should absolutely have the last word. This is a letter she wrote for RAFTS. [music fades out]

**Emily Khoury:** [voice distorted as if on the phone, with slight echo] Hi, folks, Idahoans. With the magic of a time machine. I choose to go back in time 49 years. I heard an inspiring song on the radio called 'This is Me', and it gave me courage and I knew I just had to do it. Are you sitting comfortably? Well, I will begin.

It was a warm sunny day in May when I arrived in 1971. As I walked through the park, I smiled at hearing birdsong and seeing blossom on some trees. As I approached the rose garden, I noticed a young woman sitting on a bench. Before passing by, I heard her sobbing. I walked over and said, "Can I sit here?" She looked up at me with a quizzical look on her tear-stained cheeks and nodded. I took a book from my bag as she snuffled and blew her nose. I didn't want to appear intrusive, so I began reading. She continued to sob quietly now, not seeming able to stop. I turned to her and said, "Is it one of those yuck days, pet?" Her reply was quick. "It's been more than a day and I'm dreading my time ahead." Well, bless her. She opened her heart in telling me her situation. [distant rumble and low hush in the background]

As it’s confidential, I’m unable to share her story. What I can share are my words to her. "Sorry pet, for your emotional pain. Would you like to hear a little bit about me? Call it girl power, people power." She nodded and, by now, the sobbing had ceased. "Well, it’s been a long old road I’ve travelled in life. I’ve had my ups and downs, worries and worries. I remember a traumatic time when I didn’t know how I would manage. In my mind, I would think just put one foot in front of the other and call out for help to
a friend, doctor, counsellor, or all three. Well, I did just that. I did just that, pet, and got through my pain, not over it. To sum it up, pet, I didn’t realise my own strengths when at times I felt so weak in mind and body."

[ambient electronic tones return and continue in the background] I went back in time to visit a beautiful, long-ginger-haired, bright-blue-eyed, shy, 16-year-old. I know for definite with a smile on my face that she will be all right. Her life will be tough at times, yet be balanced with uplifting experiences. "How do you know," are you thinking? I know you’re thinking folks, "How do you know?" Well, that person was my younger self. Yes, for real. I’m here now feeling so, so proud of her. She was unused to a sympathetic person to listen to her, let alone give her positive feedback along with a hug. That too was a rarity. I will refer back to the song I heard on the radio from Greatest Showman, ‘This is Me’. I say to you, folks, this is me, warts and all, and right now, aged 65, I’m doing grand and am proud of myself. Now, not needing positive feedback from people, I feel at peace with who I am. This is me with love in my heart for everyone. Not a people-pleaser, however, being true to myself with mindfulness. Yeah, mindfulness daily. To sum it up, folks, if I am not caring about myself firstly, then I will be no frigging good to anyone, ultimately.

[ambient tones fade into orchestral strings that continue in the background]

Gaylene Gould: Serpentine Podcast: REWORLDING is presented by me, Gaylene Gould. The series was produced by Katie Callin, with production support from Nada Smiljanic at Reduced Listening, and curated by the Serpentine Editorial team, Hanna Girma and Fiona Glen. Thanks to all members of Serpentine’s programmes, communications, and audiences teams for their direction and contribution. Special thanks to Serpentine’s leadership team, Bettina Korek, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Yesomi Umolu. The theme music for REWORLDING was conceived and produced by KMRU. [music fades out] Our thanks go to all guests, contributors, and advisors on REWORLDING.

[60:00]

[deep alto voice singing uplifting, affirmative melody, backed by a choir of voices in harmony; rising orchestral strings]: So, go shopping for ornaments to decorate the sides of your sheets… I can rejuvenate my feelings, so that we can unfold… So release it, release it... Don’t leave it... And don’t take fires on board, don’t take fires on board [repeats]... ‘Cos if you say what you’re looking for, in the ways that you’re looking for... I can only... Only... Pray deep... And I can only... Only, believe...

[solo alto voice fades out]