

Transcript for Triple Pocket Napkin Fold - Podcast # 2

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Kari, Mads and Nika (0:06): Welcome to Triple Pocket Napkin Fold Podcast. I'm Mads. I'm Kari.

Nika (0:13): I'm Nika. Together we are GHOST a DIY nomadic facilitative platform based in Rotterdam and Marseille.

Mads (0:20): This podcast is one of a three part series commissioned by Art Space, ideas platform. It's part of a larger project titled Triple Pocket Napkin Fold, which includes 12 audio commissions from artists, poets, musicians, theater makers, and made in collaboration with the player Rotterdam.

Kari (0:37): Today, you're going to hear four of the commission tracks, plus excerpts from related texts and our improvised conversation about the work.

Nika (0:47): This project emerged from a research study group around the ideas of Edouard Glissant, namely *opacity* and *improvisation*, which was held and conducted in collaboration with Tender Center Rotterdam, a queer community space.

Kari, Nika, Mads (0:59): The participants included in this project Triple Pocket Napkin Fold are: Dani Reynolds, Dean Bowen, Isabel Marcos, La Leche Travesti, Cannach MacBride, Ogutu Muraya, Aloardi Collective, The Post People, Angela Schilling, Milena Bonilla, Megan Cope and Isha Ram Das and Karin Iturrage Nurnberg.

Mads (1:13): You can find the transcript of this podcast below and we hope you enjoy.

Nika (1:28): We are going to start with Ogutu Muraya who is a theater maker and a writer and he's practice is embedded within orature.

Mads (1:30): Hang on, what's orature?

Kari (1:42): Definition of orature? The oral equivalent of literature, a collection of traditional folk songs, stories, etc. that are communicated orally rather than in writing.

Ogutu Muraya's piece *The bee, the glass and me*, begins (2:03).

Description of Ogutu's work:

Beat lips. Sensual tapping. Feeling of breath on your face. The particular type of breath produced by words. Humming in the throat deep, harmonic, felt in the stomach. But everything

passes through the lips. The vibration of words made out of breath passes through lips.

*I am pulled out from my deep sleep by a buzzing sound
a bumblebee has drifted into the room
but now it can't see its way out
the large windows are deceptive
it's working hard to break free
it's going to exhaust itself to death
it's buzzing and banging against the glass
but it's trapped
it can see the outside
see the sunlight
see the potted flowers
but it's trapped by the glass effect
it will never give up
its work is futile
it struggles and struggles*

The beat continues. A humming, low and soulful, joins the rhythm. The voice speaks like it tells a story, but with rhyme and rhythm. There is a beat behind the words like the wings of a bee. The narration and lip sounds are accompanied by percussion, shakers and humming. They play with a fast yet enigmatic beat and tone, as if it is a matter of life and death. The bee is in such a situation, it fights entrapment while being watched.

I am now standing up and watching when I realise what a cruel act it is to watch another suffer when I have the knowledge to alleviate the struggle.

The voice explains that pointing the way is pointless, and instead says:

*I attempt to carry the bee carefully away from the window towards the door
this is a stupid move
Of course the bee reads my approach as aggression
it freaks out and I freak out
The bee settles for a moment
I may be projecting when I say it is settled...*

The voice, incessant, explains that the bee is tired, tired of living, tired of working tired of running tired of trying
it is resigned to its fate silence:

A moaning and groaning voice like a trumpet, raspy and vibratory, scattling slowly through different sounds.

The story continues

*Now I'm all worked up for no reason...
After a moment the bee clings again to the paper
this time I pull the paper away from the window towards the open door,
The bee releases its grip and flies away.
...as it flies out of the open house,
I slam shut the open door*

This short narration explores the experience of being trapped – especially where the mechanism under which one is trapped appears at once visible and invincible. Layering the narration with vocal percussion, drumming, shakers, and humming, the audio captures the overwhelming unpleasantness of lacking freedom.

Ogutu Muraya's piece ends.

Nika (7:10): Rhythm is quite a big part of that sound piece.

Kari (7:16): yeah

Mads (7:17): And I guess, in relation to orature, the fact that the voice is there in so many different ways, reflects that use of orality. There is beatboxing at the beginning, and then there's this kind of humming and then his voice is performing like a trumpet at some point.

Nika (7:33): It's kind of sensual. I don't know why yet, that's what it brings to me in a way. But of course, there's definitely something very performative in the text.

Mads (7:48): It's interesting that you say that you were picking up on something sensual because I was just looking at what he wrote about the work, and he finishes the description by saying that "*the audio captures the overwhelming unpleasantness of lacking freedom.*" So it's like, on one hand it is insinuated in terms of content, but then at the same time, I think a desiring of being in a different situation might be the sensuality that you're hearing. That there is a kind of desire that's throughout all of the expression of the piece.

Kari (8:27): I don't know, for me the sound is quite... I don't understand it as being sensual or experience as being sensual. But I do experience it as being very intimate, the voice feels very intimate and almost feels like an internal monologue or something that you're kind of hearing or getting access to. But I find, generally, the audio both really pleasing and it's rhythm and it's forward drive, but also very claustrophobic. Like it really gives me this feeling of like being inside and the windows are closed and there is a certain trapped feeling.

Mads (9:11): It's quite incessant, that doesn't really let up on any moment. There's not a pause or a breath.

Nika (9:16): When speaking of rhythm, it does provide a sense of urgency, it's building up to a moment of struggle.

Kari (9:27): I'm not super familiar with his performance practice, I've never seen him perform, but when thinking about orature, it's so extremely present in the track of course. As well the use of voice in multiple different forms, as you were saying before Mads. There are multiple sorts of registers of voice and things that are communicated not only in the text but also in the form and the using of the voice as medium.

Mads (10:05): Yeah, the list of Ogutu's credits it's really nice. There's checkmate Medo is listed as the beatboxer percussion vocals, recording and mixing Dylan Sejpal and then the listing of the different types of sound. So there's the beatboxing vocal percussion, Djembe West African hand drum, egg shakers, hand percussion instrument, vocals humming. It's a nice list of voice instrumentality.

Nika (10:29): I have seen one of his performances in Amsterdam because he used to live there. The one that I saw was actually pluri-vocal, it was performed by Quinsy Gario. Quinsy would perform different voices without changing scenes or acts. It was quite impressive and beautiful. And it's usually quite simple in its setting, just one person and their voice. But he managed very well to move the audience between acts without necessarily changing much.

Mads (11:11): I love that the narrative of Ogutu's piece finishes with release or escape. And it reminds me a lot of one of the elements of Glissant's thought that I love most and it comes from the way that Glissant talks about the term or to understand in French. The *comprendre* has within it, the word *prendre*, the verb to take. And instead of this term he suggests *donner avec*, which translates as giving on and with.

I'm just going to read a small excerpt around this which I feel ties in with the narrative structure of Ogutu's piece in a really nice way.

The opaque is not the obscure, though it is possible for it to be so and be accepted as such. It is that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence. We are far from the opacities of Myth or Tragedy, whose obscurity was accompanied by exclusion and whose transparency aimed at "grasping". In this version of understanding the verb to *grasp* contains the movement of hands that grab their surroundings and bring them back to themselves. A gesture of enclosure if not appropriation. Let understanding prefer the gesture of giving-on-and-with that opens finally on totality. (Glissant. Pg. 191)

Kari (12:32): another commissioned artist who's engaging with I guess orature to some degree or the material use of the voice, the body, the capacity to make oral sound, and the lungs is Cannach MacBride. They're an artist living and working now in London.

Mads (12:59): This track is using a lot of voice but without speech, without lyrics. The use of the throat, and as Kari was saying, the lungs being a kind of instrument. In the interview, we'll hear a little bit more about the process and also the use of the flute in the piece.

Cannach MacBride's *All of the Lungs* begins (13:36).

Description of Cannach's track:

A sound of an inhale, air filling space that expands to fit it. A deep and growing rumbling augments the space. Like a tide leaving the shore, in slow motion or in deep time: it looks like a thousand grains of sand turning over in the powerful twist of the wave. A pulling vacuum. Inhaling gets harder and interrupted. Then a moment of pause of tight equilibrium and air rushes out releases through soft chambers. The body... a body? Surrenders. It is alone moving into an unfamiliar tunnel. Then air finds a route effortlessly, although it was hard to get here. Underneath is something calmly foreboding. It could be bodily, a stomach rumbling or the sound of a storm far outside. Or, perhaps, deep underwater. The body is breathing and hearing its own breaths. It is aware of its fragility and strength. Is there a machine nearby or a cricket trembling?

We move again to the ocean, creatures moving deep down singing many many miles away. Benthic in their song. Perhaps this song is a breath, a multiple nuanced shades of monochrome.

People are breathing close by. The breathing sounds vulnerable and strong. Layers of quiet, low, long sounds fold around it. It sounds like we're in a dark and deep place. There are damp clanking sounds like drips falling. It's heavy in this deep dark, but warm and somehow comfortable. Flute sounds come in, layers of slow single notes that slide between low, breathy sounds and clearly pitched sounds. They sound far away. There is a moment of lightness like the sky clearing in a storm. Then the deep dark comes back in but with more rhythm, like the ghost of a bass line. The dark clears again. A melodic flute trills softly while the other sounds fall away until just one breath is left.

Cannach MacBride piece ends.

Kari (15:37): What I'm going to read next is an excerpt of a text by Anne Boyer. A poet based in the US. it's just called *No*. And it's available on www.poetryfoundation.org

Saying nothing is a preliminary method of *no*. To practice unspeaking is to practice to being unbending: more so in a crowd. Cicero wrote "cum tacent, clamant"—"in silence they clamor"—and he was right: only a loudmouth would mistake silence for agreement. Silence is as often conspiracy as it is consent. A room of otherwise lively people saying nothing, staring at a figure of authority, is silence as the inchoate of a now-initiated *we won't*.

Kari (17:25): Hello Cannach, thanks for answering a couple of questions around your work. My first question for you is: Could you talk a little bit more about your process of making *All of the Lungs*, your track for the vinyl. It strikes me that it manages to be a really powerful piece, but

using quite minimalist means. And I wonder how you arrived at that sound or that texture of sound?

Cannach (18:06): Morning. So I'm going to just tell a little bit of backstory about how I came to own a flute, because I think it's really important to this work. Yeah, when I moved to London, I changed my pronoun. And someone said to me, friends said to me or advised me like, why don't you buy yourself something to remember this by. And it was during, I just moved to London, and I was in confinement, like quarantine after travel and I think one of the first days that I was allowed to go out again, I walked past a shop and it had two flutes in the window. I didn't even have any money with me. So it was like a charity shop and I kind of ran home, got my bank cards, came back because I was really panicked that one of the flutes would be gone in this interval. And they were there and I bought one. It's just like a kind of school music flute, it's like lovely. And I don't play the flute at all, but I bought it to remind myself that I changed my pronouns. And I'm really glad that that was such wonderful advice.

And then I guess thinking how that translated into this track is... So there's a lot about breathing. And I guess there's a lot of me playing notes on the flute where I play like my whole breath. And then underneath it there's this recording of breathing from a performance. Yeah, so there's a layer of recording, there's these flute sounds that I recorded, everything's like very slowed down. And what to say... I think often, as you know, I work a lot with words and maybe making this track was actually really important to me in terms of trying to express something only with sound; and to kind of get atmosphere.

So yeah, I was working with texture. Some of the stuff that you've written in the sound description is kind of like the kind of vibe there could be. And then also just want to say that Robin did such a beautiful, beautiful job and mixing of like slightly opening up a bit more space, if you like. Yeah, working with them was a really wonderful thing, actually, for thinking a bit about who you kind of can develop in a mix, like how you can develop the texture and the autonomy and the interdependence of all of the sounds. Yeah, that's it.

Kari (21:15): So my second question is, through its use of layered breath, the track manages to be both highly kind of ephemeral, spiritual, even sort of transcendent, and at the same time, very situated within the body. And this approach, I think, for me reflects the way that you work as an artist quite often. And I'm wondering if you could speak a bit about how you understand or how you place this work, as situated within your broader practice?

Cannach (21:48): It kind of relates to the first question about process, but maybe it's a different way of thinking about process. So I'm gonna see the kind of process of how things move through me and my practice.

Alexis Pauline Gumbs writes a lot about breathing as a black feminist practice. And I think it's been sitting with some of those ideas with me. And I was. And I remember listening to an interview with them, while I was making some work for something else, like while I was installing a show, and then they were just very present. And it was around the time that M Archive had

come out, the second part of their trilogy. I was sitting with them talking about their work, and other people talking to them. Oh, my God, sorry, this is a very long answer. But basically, to say that their work was sitting with me while I was making some work. And then I made this performance, which is where the breathing sound comes from. That's like the base of the track. I think that performance was somehow also really sitting with Alexis Paulline Gumbs. But thinking about it, you know, obviously I'm a white person and I think that performance was thinking a lot about ways to understand historical Europeanness and histories of whiteness. And the beginning of the performance was kind of like the end of the world. And then the end of the performance was this moment of kind of collective breathing where it's not clear what's coming. And in between, there's been this journey through the sort of like, various pasts that existed, but we're not dominant. Sometimes I really have the feeling that other people's, the things that people put into the world, these very generous gifts that some people make, somehow I feel like they sit there with me. And I can't explain how they sit with me or what they do. I can't necessarily give that language but they somehow sit in my body.

So I guess what I'm trying to say is that one example of how something moves through me towards this track, very, very, very, very slowly and through me in relation to lots of other bodies. And then, and there's, there's other things sitting in the track, as well, like that. But that's, I guess, that's kind of, that's a very long winded way of saying something about that. And also the, I wanted to see that. I'm happy that you hear these two things, because I think in a way, we all, we, that's obviously complicated, but whatever kind of we you want to define. And I may be defining we in a very sort of open way. We all have a material, we all have a body wherever we are, I don't mean only we as people, and I definitely don't mean to speak for or demand that other people be part of my we, but we all have a material and all of those materials are interconnected. My body is a starting point for being able to, or not a starting point. It's the place from which I can relate to all other bodies. Oh, my God, this is so wobbly. But thank you, I guess just thank you for seeing that.

Kari (27:14): Okay, and the last question is, as someone who's worked extensively with listening and with listening practices, how do you invite people or not necessarily people that can be critters or other entities to listen to this piece? So like, what's the relationship with listening? I suppose.

Cannach (27:36): Yeah, I think some things I make, I have quite a strong kind of consciousness of what kind of listening possibilities might be associated with them, because I don't want to prescribe entirely as well. It can be listened to in whatever way it feels right for the listener. And thinking a lot about the fact that nobody here is in exactly the same way, everyone's body is different. But also nobody listens in the same way because you know, we are all slightly differently cultured in how we listen, and that's kind of mixed on to slight differences in our sort of bodily capacities. And so I think I don't want to say, this is how you should listen to this, because there is no way... I mean, sometimes, yeah, sometimes I do make things where there might be a certain kind of intention or prompt and kind of like, like, let's approach this with certain intentions. But I think yeah, this piece for me feels more like a kind of little portal, you can use it in any way that you like or not.

Nika (29:16): We're now listening to Megan Copes' track in collaboration with Isha Ram Das. The title is *Untitled (Death Song)*.

Kari (29:27): To give you a little bit of context on the track. I'm going to read from Liquid Architecture's website www.disclaimer.org. It says,

"Comprising a suite of sound sculptures constructed from discarded mining equipment, *Untitled (Death Song)* is a meditation on the ghost-like Call of the yellow-eyed bush Stone curlew, a sound that is understood as a harbinger of death in Quandamooka culture, in collaboration with musician and Instrument builder Isha Ram Das and Liquid Architecture curator Joel Stern. Cope engaged a quartet of artists to sound the work. Drawing the call of the curlew out the industrial instruments using a range of extended musical techniques. In so doing, Cope directs our listening towards the deathly vibrations of extraction, expropriation and extinction wrought by these tools and those who wield them.

Mads (30:30): Megan has written "*I'm deeply interested in the sound of country. If the land could sing how might it sound? Taking cues from the Bush Stone Curlew, Untitled is a lament.*"

Megan Cope's and Isha Ram Das, *Untitled (Death Song)* begins (30:40).

Description of Megan Cope's and Isha Ram Das' work:

Two string instruments - Metallic and crying. They glide from note to note creating, strange harmonies and the reverberation is soft. They pause between each call. A low and tone builds - vibrato and trembling: it's building tension in the space. Drops of water intermittently, and a higher pitched, quick-stroke cries in falling repetitions. Crumbling of something hard. A pluck echoing, almost mechanic in its repetitions - it has an ominous and thrilling sound to it.

It's dark here. A throbbing, droning instrumentation begins to layer on top, a conversation in different languages. They are improvising something together, rehearsing. One speaks constantly in the back, the other one speaks on top with gaps in between, and the third one screams loudly in response. Otherworldly, a moonscape or desert, or a forgotten prehistoric island.

Mads (34:20): I find that track absolutely incredible. One of the things that totally find fascinating is that all of those sounds are produced analog. Even though they have such a metallic digital quality at times, there is a certain kind of playing of the string instruments that really sounds electronic to me.

Nika (34:42): It made me think a lot about the space in which it's recorded, actually. Maybe because of the reverberation of the space, it feels kind of undergroundish. I don't know why, but maybe it is the reverb as if it is bouncing on some rocky solid type of texture.

Mads (35:00): The track that we include in the vinyl record is an excerpt of a longer performance that took place at the Art Gallery of South Australia in 2020, as part of the Adelaide Biennale of Australian Art, Monsters theater. So the song is also a document of a performance.

Kari (35:27): Which I think you really hear, you were saying that Nika, the atmospheric kind of resonance and the sound, which I think really communicates that it's -I mean, I don't know but, to me-, it sounds like a bunch of people are together performing. It's not being recorded each instrument separately and then put together. It has this kind of melodic, lamenting sort of build or resonance. And I find it to be such a beautiful and poetic piece. And made me also think about how things are sort of preserved or how you can preserve the sounds of a landscape or of an environment. And in this particular case, it's kind of being replicated and in some way, sort of archived and recorded through the means of its own destruction; through these kinds of artifacts of extraction and extinction. So I think it's like a really interesting kind of complex way of recording a particular kind of sound.

Nika (36:38): Now that you mentioned that it was performed in the framework of an exhibition space, actually I wasn't thinking of it at all like that. Maybe because of the introduction and the text, I was actually situating it within a landscape. Maybe the mysterious sound of it, I was kind of imagining it quite dark in the space, because I do find it very mysterious.

Mads (37:13): On the website, the general website of Liquid Architecture's www.disclaimer.org.au, there is a really nice description of the different calls of the instruments. Maybe we don't need to talk about them all, but we can play just a couple of them.

Sounds of instruments begin.

Nika (37:33): "Straight long down one single phrase earo. Two note phrase long flattening note with brief to sudden drop to lower pitch."

Kari (37:56): Quick frequent high, single phrase repeated, wip wip. pulsating, high pitched staccato, cheap, with a short flick upwards in pitch.

Mads (38:19): hissing, single phrase repeated, hash scratching, elongated, throaty hiss of even pitch.

Sound of instruments and cited descriptions end.

Nika (38:47): The next track is Angustia (Papaver Somniferum - A. Artaud - Amapola mix) by the visual artist Milena Bonilla.

Milena Bonillas piece Angustia (Papaver Somniferum - A. Artaud - Amapola mix) begins (38:57).

Description of Milena Bonilla's track:

Sounds like Disney, cartoon sweetness sparkles sprinkling notes like Bambi. Flowers rise their heads to the sky as a rich, luxurious melody begins. Flutes trill and violin dancing poised like waltzing. A woman's voice, she seems to sing from deep in her body, her intestines perhaps.

*De amor, en los hierros de tu reja
De amor, escuché la triste queja
De amor, que sólo en mi corazón
Diciéndome así con su dulce canción
Amapola*

Her voice is rich and smooth like melted ice cream, it's delicious but too rich to drink. She sings in the Spanish of love. The song sounds like it is from another time, the 1950s or 60s perhaps. There is elegance and seduction: it drips with the sincerity of a ballad. Like an anthem, it invites many voices to sing along. A second voice interrupts as it clears its throat - comically and out of place. The second voice feels as if it is speaking in our time; now. Digital, rhythmic and unattached, in English. By comparison the singer seems more distant or placeless even. The second voice speaks with a sharp, sober tone very different from the singing voice. The second voice seems to translate each sentence of the song.

*Poppy flower
beautiful poppy flower.
My soul will be
only yours...
I do love you
Beautiful child of mine
Equally as a flower cherishes daylight*

The tone of the second voice is perhaps cynical of the song, of its sentimentality, it gently undermines the romance of the ballad.

*poppy flower
beautiful poppy flower
don't be such a disgrace
call me back
poppy flower, aha
how can you survive*

The singer addresses the flower like a person, like it has agency. The song is grey, grainy and sentimental, the second voice is museological, expertly turns the song over in its hand like a stolen artifact. Now the song continues but the voices split. The singer continues in her sentimental tone, now receding into background.

There is one sickness against which opium is supreme. This sickness is called anguish - in its mental medical psychological physiological logical illogical pathological or pharmaceutical form - you name it.

The honey-like backing track of the Spanish song continues swaying and dipping in the background.

*Angustia - which makes men mad
Angustia which men commit suicide
Angustia medicine does not know
Angustia your doctor cannot understand
Angustia which endangers life
Angustia which shatters life's umbilical cord*

The spanish voice continues in its finale and sings with the english voice speaking simultaneously:

How can you survive so lonely?

Milena Bonilla's piece ends.

Kari (42:22): As the sort of Spanish speaker, Latin American among us, I wonder if you know anything about this song, Nika. The original song I'm referring to, the one that is sort of underneath the artist talking in this track. If you could tell us any kind of context.

Nika (42:44): I actually had not heard the song before. It does sound like a ballad, un bolero. So it has that quality of sound, which is, you know, it's a type of song that is part of our sentimental education. Boleros in general are very much part of our sentimental education. So that's as much as I can say about the actual song. But actually the voice you can hear is a Spanish accent, not a Latin American accent from the singer specifically, but the singer is not. She's covering the song. She's not the original writer of the song. And actually, this work is an extract of a larger performance called Poison, Behind the Grid There is a Maze. Just to keep that in mind.

And actually more of the context of Milena's work. I think there's an interest in her practice to think of how certain non-human bodies or plants or animals have been assigned a certain type of bellic connotation, either bellic or some form of coercive connotation.

Mads (44:15): what do you mean by bellic?

Nika (44:19): Warlike, war related, and how they have been instrumentalized within wars. And in previous works she speaks about cocaine also, and how the coca plant was then assigned as the murderous plant. But, you know, it's not the coca plant's fault, the whole production of

cocaine or everything that happens after processing the plant. So there is an interest there. And she does work a lot around this not only with plants but also other animals that somehow get assigned those connotations.

Kari (44:58): And like often negative connotations specifically, right?

Nika (45:00): yeah, exactly quite political as in instrumentalized for some form of political discourse.

Mads (45:07): So on this track, because I think that there is definitely something that comes through that is a sort of doubleness, like there is an ambiguity between celebration and criticism? Like it's playing with both of those while they are happening simultaneously?

Nika (45:23): Well, I think that in her practice there is a lot of that use of irony, and somehow subverting the narrative and including some humor. And I think there is a kind of dreaminess that is then contrasted with politics and political discourse, and instrumentalisation of bodies. Those opposites are recurring in her practice.

Kari (45:55): There's actually also a piece in the audio description, I'm not sure which one of us wrote it, about this track that I wanted to pull out, which is: "The second voice is museological. Expertly turns the song over in its hand like a stolen artifact." And I thought this was really nice, also thinking, I have a limited knowledge of Milena's practice, but from what I've seen, since I have seen a couple of exhibitions by her, and I think her relationship to the past is very interesting, like taking these kind of past events, histories, sort of legacies and political mythologies and ask how can you - almost exactly that- how can you turn it over and look at the other side of it and what does that reveal about conditions in that time? The way that that thing was thought about then?

And I think this track really seems to do a similar sort of trick or something. And so yeah, it doesn't feel like it takes away from the original track but it kind of adds another layer and another framing.

Mads (47:03): It's getting dark outside and our stomachs have started rumbling.

Nika (47:08): Ours or mine? I think just mine.

Mads (47:10): It's true. But it's sign enough to finish this episode.

Kari (47:16): Yes, thanks a lot for listening. Thank you also to Art Space, ideas platform and to all of the artists involved in this episode. If you want to, you can find the transcript of this podcast linked just underneath the episode. And if you enjoyed this one, there is two other episodes, so keep an eye out for those.

Kari, Mads and Nika (47:39): Thank you! And Bye!

