

Further Afield interview with Sade Mica

Bella Milroy 00:00:05

Hello and welcome to Further Afield, a project which discusses and explores art and disability in rural spaces. My name is Bella Milroy, I am a disabled artist based in my hometown of Chesterfield, North Derbyshire, and Further Afield is a project produced in collaboration between myself and Level Centre, who are a rurally based Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation in Rowsley, Derbyshire, just down the road from me. The project consists of a series of interviews with disabled artists, as well as research into the experiences of disabled artists in rural settings. It seeks to promote their work, and learn about ways of making and producing art that aren't always offered the space or recognition that it deserves. All Further Afield interviews are available to watch on the Level Centre website, and an audio podcast version will also be available to listen to. There will be transcripts of all conversations. Go to <https://levelcentre.com/> for more information about the project, access, and the contributing artists. Further Afield is a project supported by Arts Council England, Level Centre, Shape Arts, Derbyshire Libraries, Haarlem Artspace, Arts Derbyshire and Wying Arts Center. My pronouns are she/her, and for my visual description, I am a white woman in my early 30s with an oval face and round cheeks. I have pale white skin, with short brown hair and round glasses. I'm also working from home where behind me there is a grey sofa, a lamp, some cushions and a stack of shelves and drawers in the background. There may also be some dogs and a cat wandering around from time to time! And so today I have with me Sadé Mica, I'm very, very excited to have as part of the series today. And Sadé's an artist who describes their practice as being rooted in exploring the self. The self in relation to gender and performance; how the world around them affects their relationship to their queerness and the body they inhabit. How movement is policed by environment and us and how fraught the control we have over our perception is when thrust outside of solitary environments. They explore how their body is both freed and restricted, liberating themselves and their limbs in the British countryside, posturing against vast landscapes foreign to them, capturing the stillness of their form and thoughtful movements as well as those more chaotic and less considered. They use textiles to eschew the expectation of stealth bestowed upon trans people and their bodies, and embrace unmasking the performative nature of gender, placing the onus upon those who aren't aware of the sacrifices made to find peace within ones body in the way that they are. Sadé, thank you so much for joining me today. Would you like to do a short visual description before we start?

Sadé Mica 00:02:52

Yeah, I erm, [laughs] I've never done this before!

Bella Milroy 00:02:59

We can keep it really short. It doesn't have to be a long thing

Sadé Mica 00:03:03

I'm a mixed race person with big hair. I have a white t shirt on and I'm sat on a beige couch. And there are lots of pictures, artistic pictures of people behind me. And I have a headset on. Yes. [laughs]

Bella Milroy 00:03:18

Nice! That's perfect. Thank you so much. Honestly, it's it's such a pleasure to have you here. I've said many times I'm probably going to continue to say that throughout this interview, I'm just like really, really chuffed to have you!

Sadé Mica 00:03:31

Thanks for having me.

Bella Milroy 00:03:32

Yeah, oh, yeah. Well, like I said I've been when in our correspondence before we before we've met today is, er yeah, at various points just like it putting out to like, think about in the world of like, "How can I work with Sadé?!" And yeah, I'm really excited to be doing this, because I've been wanting to connect and collaborate with you for such a long time. So yeah, I'm just so excited to be able to feature your work in your practice in this conversation. So maybe you can start by telling me a bit about your work and what you're up to at the moment.

Sadé Mica 00:04:01

So my practice at large is about me. It kind of started being that way. During my second year of uni. I felt a bit stilted trying to make work about anything else other than my experience because particularly at that time, I was experiencing so much internally regarding my gender, my sexuality and just, you know, my place in the world - pretty much standard for a uni student, and particularly an art student! All of this pondering and, you know, these like existential crisis is at the age of 22, as if, you know, I need to know everything about myself right now because it's so important! And if I don't, nobody else will understand me and everyone must! But yeah, my practice is is malleable. And I work with what is available to me at that time. So a lot of the time. Now I work with textiles and crochet, just general sewing, quilting kind of... in a way... And film and again, that is like transformed throughout the years. Sometimes I've worked more with screenprint if that's been available to me, But, I'm really drawn to film and textiles. I feel like those are kind of the definitive mediums for me. I make work documenting my body, my relationship with my body, my kind of growing understanding of my gender, and how I perform it, how I perceive it, how other people perceive it. As you discussed in my bio, I work well. I have in the past worked a lot in the British countryside, particularly in the north and the northwest. You know, travelling to Yorkshire as well, and to just kind of find a connection between myself and the outdoors and being someone who is from the city slash suburbs slash urban areas. I was feeling kind of stilted and dejected from the nature of it all. And so I've made films and photographs portraying my budding relationship to those landscapes and yeah, right now my practice is completely removed from all over that right now. I'm just making to make I'm just trying to find the joy in creating things again, learning new techniques, a lot of crochet, a lot of half finished projects, vests and scarves and making things for loved ones which has been really nice to relieve the pressure of making something that means something and just making something that is something nice for somebody else. Yeah, so

Bella Milroy 00:07:11

That was such a wonderful introduction. Thank you so much.

Sadé Mica 00:07:14

[laughs] thanks!

Bella Milroy 00:07:14

I love I loved that. It's something I think as artists we don't think about enough of like, yeah, what an audience embodies. And like, you know, thinking about an audience being just someone you love and a gift. Your art being a gift for them, I think is just so that's a really beautiful thing to think about your art existing in that dynamic. I think that's lovely.

Bella Milroy 00:07:38

Great, okay. So I think one of the things I'd like to begin talking about is what you've referred to already is like some of the, I guess, more most like well known aspects of your work, which explores movement and your body in different spaces. And I love the way you talk about that in your bio, how your body is both freed and restricted, liberating yourself and your limbs in the British countryside. Erm, this is something I think about a lot within the context of chronic illness and disability and of course, like other marginalised experiences, racism, transphobia, classism, etc. And how the constriction of movement can be a really foundational experience both personally and politically within society, too. And I'm really interested in like kind of ingenuity and resourcefulness and imagination of artists who are confronted by those kinds of constraints of movement in this way. Could you tell me about what draws you to exploring some of these themes via movement of your body in like rural countryside spaces?

Sadé Mica 00:08:45

Yeah. So the the kind of catalyst for it all was erm, kind of unrelated to any kind of political or even really personal plight, or even somebody wants to do an exhibition. I don't think the exhibition actually went through in the end, but they messaged me to make a piece of work that was inspired by something we do completely for ourselves, completely selfish, not kind of moralised any kind of way but, erm, and mine was travel. This was in 20... 2018... 2019? I was learning how to be independent and do things alone. If it needs to be you know, not having friends to go places with and explore new places with, erm on just like not being able to line up our schedules and stuff. And so it led me to exploring the countryside, which was at that time, it was a very limited concept to me. I'm from Manchester. My dalliances in the countryside had been like school trips in year six to random Winmarleigh Hall, which is a place where kids go and like zip line and stuff! Or, like my auntie lives in Bollington, and so we'd go there every so often and erm, it's quite rural near Macclesfield, erm and it's yeah, that was my scope, erm so I started off actually making some films in Heaton Park in Manchester again, which is like was my idea of like, not countryside, but it was a massive park and it's greenery and it's flush and yeah, I remember it not feeling right. I was like, this isn't the kind of thing that I want to document. This isn't a place I don't have a connection to here, erm, outside of like going there in my childhood, and it didn't seem beautiful enough, it didn't seem vast and expansive and the nature was is just palatable as a park. And so I just decided to like looking back, I don't really know how I chose the places I went to or why but I just started looking at rural places. And I think one of my my jump offs was waterfalls. I was like, do have waterfalls in England, like googling these things. You know, I have no one around me to kind of refer to. My cousin travels a lot, so I would, you know, he would have just said Scotland and I'm not driving there. So I just started like you know, beautiful lakes near Manchester or waterfalls close to Manchester and just finding these little places on weird MEN News articles and

listing them. I think the first place I went through was Edale. Again I'm not quite sure why. But I drove myself, my car struggled up some hills. Yeah, I didn't really have a plan. I just knew that I wanted to feel myself in the landscape. I wanted to just feel myself moving. I've done a lot of like film and movement work at that point. It's like dancing, while my poetry played dancing in empty rooms dancing in front of an audience. And it was all about the movement. It was all about that time and kind of reckoning with my woes about how my body was perceived in terms of gender, like, what movements are masculine, what movements are feminine, how all that encompasses who I am, and, being fearful of, you know, encroaching too much on either territory. Something fortunately I have moved past and I'm just not worried about anymore because of my you know, working through that in art. And then it became one of my final pieces at uni - Sorry, I'm kind of all over the place.

Bella Milroy 00:12:56

No, this is wonderful honestly, keep going!

Sadé Mica 00:13:00

Alongside that, the dancing and stuff, I did a piece that was more still - at uni, for my final, like the final show - erm it was me in a room just doing life drawing poses and doing the "male ones" and like "blurring the lines of gender"! Very, you know, "Uni student", but also pivotal to my practice, and, and just like standing in these poses and moving into these poses, and doing them for like 10, 20 seconds at a time and just like really being still and considered and thoughtful about what I was doing, which was kind of very different to how I work throughout my life. I you know, I'm just clumsy and just going everywhere, and I've got to get places so, erm *coughs* sorry, erm, I decided to just do that. I was like, "Oh, I don't want to dance in the mud. So I can just be still just do these small movements, erm, amidst like a landscape that is so vast and beautiful and so beyond any that I've ever kind of placed myself in or have photographs of me in or, have experienced and at first it was like a real reverence for the space and and I felt it was like engulfed, erm, it was more about documenting the space rather than myself.

Sadé Mica 00:14:43

I felt like "wow, the world is amazing!" You know, I'm in this place that's like however faraway, and its so beautiful. And like, I'm not really arsed about the movements I'm doing right now, but it looks so amazing. And I'm really excited to have that on film. And then it became I just really liked going out. I just really liked finding these new places and trying to find a relationship trying to make better films, do better movements, you know, I'm sure if anyone has seen or if goes back to see they'll see I use the same ones. Often I revert to the same "let me just go back, and then let me go forward". [laughs], it just came to me, I didn't necessarily have a plan, I think that's, erm, can be a blessing and a curse sometimes I'm like, "Okay, I've got these like tricks I can pull out of the bag when I'm there" but I sometimes want it to be a bit more refined and focused which is like probably a future plan for now, I don't think I ever really got there, but I would pull these poses out and make these videos and just be still and erm, yeah, just be amongst the landscape and just have this archive of me in Malham, in erm, where else? Buxton on random road signs when I was driving to these places, like pulling up being like "the sunset looks amazing, right now, I'm just gonna get out and film!", and it was about the process was like so much of it. The process was so removed from the final product, which is so kind of serene, erm, still, it's like a snapshot, erm almost a postcard of you know, a place, like a moving one. Whereas I was like, traversing these muddy bogs and lakes and rivers, with like, my tripod with my phone with

sometimes like multiple tripods and cameras and my car's parked somewhere, and I've got my keys in my pocket and I don't want to hear them jangle in the film! Having all these like weird experiences and also people are on walks with the dogs and and like looking at me strangely because I'm in my tracksuit pants in the middle of a river and yeah... I forgotten the question, but that's kind of how it all became!

Bella Milroy 00:14:43

Mmm

Bella Milroy 00:16:32

No that's fantastic. I think you gave a really, you've captured that really well. And I think for people who are familiar with your work and I think your Instagram is a really wonderful archive documenting all of those kind of explorations like that. I think it's really interesting to hear you talk about the how you see yourself in that space and almost, would you, would you say that it almost like your figure becomes part of it in that way?

Sadé Mica 00:17:45

I that's what the goal was. It was to find the connection like, you know, I'm not, I've never really been a spiritual person. I've never been someone to - I feel connected to humanity and like the human experience, and I'm trying to figure that out more, I'm not necessarily searching for this like big moment that's gonna make me feel like "I'm alive!" I think that was part of it, I want it to feel... I want it to respect that you know, even though we are these like weird, advanced creatures who have evolved in ways that I feel are probably wrong, like we shouldn't have brains that are so confused and have to work, we shouldn't have cars and all these things, You know, we shouldn't have paper and plastic and all these things. But we do and I'm trying to like find this stillness in this connection and this like rawness, this animalistic thing I want to feel. We are the trees not to be all woo-woo but we are the trees we are the grass we are the sky we are the water - we are all of it and one day, you know, we'll all be within it somehow, physically at the end of it all. And I just wanted to feel that I was like so desperate to have this moment so to speak, and it just became, I ended up you know, understanding that it wasn't going to happen like that and like I just had to be in it, I was it, even if I couldn't feel it. You know? it's it's like anything else that being loved people search for that that people search for like a romantic love and it's like you are loved by so many things, so many people. You might not feel it in the way that you you expect to or you have been told to anticipate to but it's there. It was like "I am part of all this, and I am at one with it". Even if I'm still on my iPhone at the end of it all you know, I'm documenting it. Yeah, it was. I think the the process of filming those things like looking back at them doesn't sometimes gives me that feeling. I'm like you know, the slow movement, that me, embodied in a way that I'm not usually you know, I don't move like that in real life, and it, I saw myself as like this kind of statuesque, free flowing thing, which was nice, but it was also when I'm doing the movements am, I can hear the sounds, I can smell everything my eyes closed, all focused, and I'm just slow. I'm taking it in. And at the end of the day, I feel really enriched having been there I feel the senses I feel cold my feet won't warm up because I've been like barefoot in a river again, you know, I've got dirt all over me I've I've taken things from the land, accidentally, like you know, the dirt, the rocks, all of this stuff. And so like in small ways, I did find a connection and this part of me now, like since the pandemic, erm, I've not been out I've not made those films in such a long time. I've not been to the countryside, and this is part of me I'm like, so... I miss it. I miss the the exploration of it all I miss the the freedom of just driving anywhere and finding anywhere

and pulling over and being excited to get out and make stuff it was just really fun. And I trusted myself I was mostly alone. I did all of the filming and everything alone. And I could take my time I could walk slowly if I needed to do in my body was feeling unstable, which often was, erm, I could you know rest I could get in my car or something wasn't going right I could leave I could film over and over again, to get the right shot. And I think that was a part of it, you know just really taking time to appreciate the... whatever had, and also like not being in control of what happened sometimes you know if it gets darker or if it starts raining, or, you know, it's like I'm at the will of the world not necessarily me. So, yeah.

Bella Milroy 00:22:29

That was amazing to hear you talk about that. And I think some of my favourite aspects of those films. are the moments where you, you you're kind of moving to a pose and then when you when you find that stillness, there's something just so beautiful about those moments, the way it just, you never know when you're going to stop the pose and you just kind of continuing on and quite often there's like the wind or the river sounds or something else. And it's just there's, there's this real kind of softness to it, and grace but then also there's kind of like tension too, which I think of just like you as an as a viewer you're, there's such an unknown of how the next move is going to take place and yeah, but I love them.

Sadé Mica 00:23:16

Thank you

Bella Milroy 00:23:18

I guess it's really interesting as well to hear you talk about the process of it as well. And I wonder if maybe like those artworks arriving at an at a public audience is just kind of like one element of that and perhaps like the process of making them was in itself the kind of main mission of that and like kind of having an audience at the end of it was just kind of one one element. Yeah,

Sadé Mica 00:23:43

Yeah erm, the experience of again of the practice has been so enriching and that has made it made me more confident in my body, erm, and it made me more ambitious, you know, to find new places to actually go and like to make a relationship with the place you know, I kept returning to Malham.

Bella Milroy 00:24:08

Yes!

Sadé Mica 00:24:09

I really loved Malham, and I've not been there again since 2020, around this time, actually. And it's such a special place to me and having weird experiences with people on my travels like strange conversations, potentially sometimes dangerous conversations...

Bella Milroy 00:24:33

Yeah,

Sadé Mica 00:24:35

Yeah and and, yeah, sorry, sorry.

Bella Milroy 00:24:40

No, it's fine. Please continue. Yeah.

Sadé Mica 00:24:42

No, just becoming more confident in erm... I was gonna say something... becoming more confident in my body and also erm, my, my, myself out there and having those weird conversations having people see me. I remember one day I was, I was finishing, erm, I had an exhibition in London and had one more film to make for the like a deadline and they wanted me to go back to Janet's Foss in Malham, I'd made some films there, erm I were wearing my binders that I make, erm, And I had a film in the waterfall and they wanted me to where, they suggested that I wear one of my binders there because my binders were on display in the exhibition, I was like "okay", and so I had early January deadline. And I was like, "Oh, I'll go on New Year's Day, I'm not got anything to do. It'll be quiet. Everyone's at home." And I get there and it's the busiest I've ever seen it because people are on New Year's Day walks which is not something that I do particularly, [laughs] I sit home and eat food so I was like, "oh..." Can i swear?

Bella Milroy 00:25:57

yeah.

Sadé Mica 00:25:58

"... Shit!" [laughs] I was like, "What do I do now?" And it's not as I'm not filming in front of people before but this was like an audience you know? Usually, it's some people walking past or I might be with my mum, so it feels, it's not less weird because she's not got a clue, but she's helping me and there's like an ally in the weirdness.

Bella Milroy 00:26:17

Yeah, yeah

Sadé Mica 00:26:18

But this was, like, busy! like 50 people, and people coming and going and coming, and I was like, "Oh my God, I've got to do this now". And I had, I didn't, I didn't wanna go back. I could've done, but I was like, I don't want to

Bella Milroy 00:26:31

Yeah,

Sadé Mica 00:26:31

this is the time I've got, it's freezing, erm, I guess I'm just gonna do it! You know, I'm kind of I've always been an attention seeker, you know, in ways.

Sadé Mica 00:26:41

I'm an only child, well I was raised as an only child, So I have always adored having eyes on me and being "weird"! So, you know, I can't lie and say it was like, the, terrifying it was just like, "oh, for god's

sake now..." So I set up my tripod and I get out there and I'm like, in shorts - again, January 1st, it's freezing.

Bella Milroy 00:26:41

[laughs]

Bella Milroy 00:27:03

Yeah

Sadé Mica 00:27:04

I've got a weird binder on that these people they can see me like getting dressed essentially, erm, I'm in the water barefoot or in my crocs, whatever and, filming and doing these weird poses and people are walking with their Jack Russles and then it's running in the water and getting in my shot and I'm like, "don't apologise..." people are like "Sorry" I was like "Don't be, I'm being weird, not your dog!" erm, And yeah, just be like "right, done now, I got the shot pack up go home" and I imagine they were like, "there was some weird person in the water and..." and also on top of that, again, like being visibly different than me, like being Black, mixed race. Most of those, well, all of them were white, I assume if my memory recalls, but usually they are. It's a strange sight. I can't argue that. So yeah, having a confidence in where it's like, "I've got to do it. I've just got to focus on the task at hand and then go home".

Bella Milroy 00:28:05

Yeah. And did you find almost the more you were doing it, the more you were able to find that resilience to like feeling somewhat othered in those spaces, or like you say that maybe that was perhaps more challenging. Or the other in other kind of encounters of that?

Sadé Mica 00:28:23

Yeah, I mean, as time goes on, like when you experience weird things like that, it just is what it is. And it's kind of I do have I guess an audaciousness where I'm like, you know, the people are walking in this space with other people, I wasn't really doing anything that was not allowed, you know, people get in the water and stuff. So I'm like, "I can get in the water, It's fine. Like I'm filming I'm not doing anything that disrupts the space or it's disrespectful to the space or..." you know, the only thing I'm wary oftentimes is like, people want to take pictures of things and like the waterfalls or somewhere - I can't spend too much time there, it's not just mine. And I try to wait for people to go and I'll film in other areas, and then when it's quieter, I'll you know, take up a bit of space and then go but yeah, it does get easier I think you know again, with, experiences still happen. uncomfortable situations happen uncomfortable conversations and sometimes confrontations, erm, and now that I've been away from it for a while, erm, and I know that I could go back and do it again, but I know that there would be some nervousness I guess... to be like "Oh, go do this again", I think mostly the nervousness is about my body in the landscape like actually traversing and like walking and climbing and all of that. My body's different now. I feel less in control of it, or less confident in its abilities... it's resilience, so to speak. So, yeah, but yeah, I mean, the more you do it, the more you're like, "Well, I've done it before". And again, I'm like at the end of the day, I just want to like "well.... it is what it is, whatever".

Bella Milroy 00:30:10

Yeah,

Sadé Mica 00:30:11

they've got something to talk about when they go home I'm sure! because I would do the same thing. I remember being on a train once to Edinburgh and seeing a man like by the train tracks, but not in a dangerous way but like in a little patch of nature just doing yoga. And as the train went by I've told people about that and been like "oh my god, there's this man, this bald man!" [laughs] erm, so you know, I'm sure I'm the bald man for some [laughs]

Bella Milroy 00:30:16

[laughs] brilliant! thank you so much for talking me through like that. I feel like we've got a really good full, full picture of what kind of draws you to those spaces. I guess er, one thing I'd really like to talk to you about is that you were part of a show at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in 2022 called On Queer Ground, and on your Instagram you talked about working with the York Sculpture Park is one of the highlights of your career so far. I wonder if you could talk about what made that such a positive experience for you?

Sadé Mica 00:31:14

Yeah erm, So I got to stay at the park. They have when you when you like first go in there's these like arches to the left, erm and they are flats, there's like two flats I think in there, And so they were like "you can come and stay, we've got -" I think it was like a week they'd, they'd given me but I ended up staying there for just like three days. And you can you've got full access to the park like, "anytime we'll give you a lanyard if the security come you show them that it'll be fine". So I was like, wow, I've been there once before, when I was 16 in college, so that would have been 2011...12 and, yeah, you know, it was just like an art... arty place and I was like, "Oh, there's sheep!" [laughs] I didn't necessarily you know, I had a nice time, but like, I didn't have enough time to really appreciate what was there. so just the premise of like, "wow, I can stay there and I can go anywhere... I can do - Yeah - while people aren't there and I can have peace..." so you know, it was amazing. And it really was I actually had a bit of a mental wobble, like right before in like was just like not in a good frame of mind, but I was like "I've got to go through with this" like on the drive there I'm like "I don't want to go!" [laughs] but I was like you know "I've got something to do and also it will be fine". And it was I got to just be free and there's like beautiful place with like, amazing, like larger than life art. I don't get to see so much art and so many just like really engaging sculptures and installations and in such a space you know, I I usually I'm trying to make the art and the outdoors so it was really nice to be in something like that wasn't an enclosed like gallery.

Bella Milroy 00:32:04

Yeah

Sadé Mica 00:33:08

And, you know, there are animals around and there are different erm different landscapes so to speak. You know, you've got the water you've got the grass, you've got like really muddy parts that you can get stuck in [laughs]. And yeah, just it was a really, really, really nice weekend. I got up early on the second day before it opened and it was beautiful weather like the suns shining and it was freezing, it was in

April and then I just filmed and like the ducks are quacking in the back of the film and the sheep are like running away from me I'm trying to be like "hello!" [laughs] and they're a part of the film you know, and I just got to... I don't know I'd have free rein of this like beautiful place. And I got pushed by all of the cows, one of the Highland cows, I was like, it was the first day I was just scoping out places and it like saw me and like came over to me and just headed straight towards me I was like, "Oh, no," I've got my phone and I'm like holding my my backpack trying not to like drop it, because I don't want to startle it, and it came up like right in front of me, started pushing me with its head, it's horns and I was like, "ahh!", and there were some people that were close by me I was like, "It's fine, if it starts like trying to, you know, maim me they'll help" and then I turned and they were gone

Sadé Mica 00:35:01

And they'd seed it! And I was like "why are you not helping me here?!" But I didn't, in the end I think it just wanted to be my friend, erm, fortunately for me, I'm alive to tell the story! But you know, it was just like this really cute experience. I don't know I just felt free and it's a beautiful place. It's so peaceful and nice and erm, yeah I just walked a lot and just had the time to just engage with this, like I just I felt it was like special to be there outside of hours as well as like "wow, nobody gets to see it -" well, it's it's not like it ever gets massively busy to the point where it's like "God, I wish people would go away!", you know, theres a bit more secluded areas and there'll be times when you won't see anyone around but it was like so still and so beautiful. And just so vast and

Bella Milroy 00:35:01

[laughs]

Bella Milroy 00:35:25

yeah,

Sadé Mica 00:35:32

aw it's amazing.

Bella Milroy 00:35:58

Yeah,

Sadé Mica 00:35:59

yeah,

Bella Milroy 00:36:00

that sounds absolutely brilliant. Yeah, I I went not that long ago, I think it was like October and that was the first time I'd been in a really long time, like many years. And yeah, I was just like, just like you, and this was just something we went through the afternoon. And it was just like just that sense of immersiveness I think it's just like so wonderful. like, and again, like you say like being immersed in art is like, I'm always like, "oh, yeah", like it's not something that I get to do very much and so, yeah, like being immersed in that space and like, I don't know, it's something that, like the attraction of the blob like these huge blobs of sculpture just like massive big lumps of stuff and you feel really small amongst it Yeah,

Sadé Mica 00:36:23

so still as well, You know and like so erm... it feels redundant to say statuesque but they're so powerful and statuesque.

Bella Milroy 00:36:48

Yes.

Sadé Mica 00:36:48

And then there's just like this moving tree.

Bella Milroy 00:36:49

Yeah.

Sadé Mica 00:37:00

And the sheep! There was one, I don't know if it's still there, it probably is but, it's kind of like if you made mesh into a big 3d Like, structure, kind of like scaffolding type thing.

Bella Milroy 00:37:18

Yeah,

Sadé Mica 00:37:18

And the sheep, we're not allowed to climb on it. But the sheep were just like walking through it And I'm like, "Oh, you don't understand like your your privilege as a sheep to be able to engage with this artwork and just walk around it and probably poo in it!"

Bella Milroy 00:37:31

Yeah!

Sadé Mica 00:37:32

It was so funny and so sweet.

Bella Milroy 00:37:37

That sounds like a really great experience. I was er, It sounds like it was a really open invitation for you to come and simply be in that space. Would you would you say that like you know, like in terms of how art organisations can support artists to have those like outdoor, immersive experiences like that, obviously, like Yorkshire Sculpture Park is like a unique place in that respect. But like, yeah, what was it, There's something about that kind of open ended invitation to simply turn up and just experience it, that felt like it enabled you to have that really positive time there.

Sadé Mica 00:38:17

Yeah er, I don't like too many questions and like plans and stuff and emails and all of that. I don't... I feel like I've been quite fortunate in my career, erm, people don't like expect, they just trust that I will do things because I'm you know, open about it and I'm and I'm just kind of to the point. But so are they

which I really appreciate you know that they were just coming to the space they like you know, made an effort to build a relationship too you know, like while I was there, introducing me to the space and we went to dinner and stuff, which was really nice with some of the people there, Sarah. And it was just yeah, like no pressures, they'd seen my work, they kind of knew what I did and just kind of offered the space as like a canvas essentially, you know, and like letting me stay there as well was really cool. It was like, you know, "you don't have to just come for the day you know, you can be there while nobody else is" and also, I filmed while people were there as well. You know, it was a nice mixture of things. And just a like trusting, trusting me to do that. And just, I don't know, like it just felt I just felt really special. I don't I don't know why and how really, but it just felt like super nice and like, chill and casual that they you know, just kind of Yeah, given me this, this - it really was just a blank canvas and time to just do what I needed to do. And no expectation of like what the end product would be, but kind of knowing that I would figure something out.

Bella Milroy 00:40:11

Yeah, I think it's so wonderful when organisations are able to like trust in artists like that and allow them to like and be led by what the artists kind of like what emerges through simply spending time in that kind of space, you know, and that not following a kind of prescriptive formula of like, an expectation on something but like, kind of this like investment in your time and you know, the history of that whole like research you've been doing and then applying it to that space. Yeah, that sounds that sounds really great. I'm so glad you got to do that. How are you doing? We've been talking for like, yeah, best part of an hour or so like 45 minutes or something like that. Would you do you want to take a break? Are you okay?

Sadé Mica 00:40:59

I'm okay, to carry on.

Bella Milroy 00:41:00

Great.

Sadé Mica 00:41:01

If you are, if you are

Bella Milroy 00:41:02

Yeah, yeah, that's that sounds good. I think we're on a roll. So let's let's keep going I think one thing I'd really liked to talk to you about is the kind of intimacy of a lot of your work, which is something you kind of touched upon in talking about like you're making work in in rural settings and landscapes. So that kind of the vulnerability of your body in those spaces. And in 2020, you had your solo show, It Teks Time, at Outpost Gallery, where you displayed film, sculptural installation, and embroidered duvet of handwritten notes, all exploring your experience of counselling. Your films feature you in the countryside of Northwest of England, posing, standing gazing, all of these feel like really intimate yet, also open and wide, and exposing these landscapes. And can you tell me a bit more about what intimacy means to you in your work, if that's something that you think is relevant to this question?

Sadé Mica 00:42:11

Yeah, I think, you know, by virtue of being about about "the self", even if it wasn't all kind of a lot, so much art is intimate, but like because I am kind of documenting and interrogating my experience of the person and kind of being vulnerable in that way, erm, it is intimate, it's choosing what is appropriate to share. A sacrifice in some way. I don't mean to sound like a martyr at all because I'm not I'm just, I'm just an artist and an administrator. I'm not doing anything groundbreaking. But I, it is you know, if I feel like if you want to make something particularly about yourself that is moving and impactful there has to be an intimacy, there has to be a care, there has to be some kind of sacrifice where you share more than might feel comfortable for other people, like you shouldn't, there's a limit to pushing your own boundaries, you know, and how much you want to give to people. Say for instance, like if you photograph the body like if you don't feel comfortable being fully nude, and that's not something that you want to be like in the cannon forever, you know, you really have to have conversations with yourself about what you feel is appropriate and what you feel is right for you. But also that being open for that to change and understanding that it will be subject to experiences and understandings beyond you. You know, I put my work, I remember in uni I put some, I made some pictures of myself this was like super early obviously into my practice, but I was photographing my body. My friend was helping me, Emily. And like it was the first time I'd been like, in underwear around someone and then putting those pictures on the wall. And it was about you know, my queerness like parts of my body that I saw, I saw myself as fractured at that time, like say my hair is the Black part of me, or a Black part of me that that says that to other people my skin colour, my hairy armpits are queer and my boobs are feminine and female. All these things I was like breaking myself up into these portions and I put that on my wall. And then we had a crit and a lady on my course said, "Oh, you're so brave", and I was kind of relating it towards body positivity. And I was just like, I'm happy for you because, you know, I get it. And at one point, that's what I would have felt or needed. And, you know, this is the first time I'm showing my fat body like to people in a vulnerable, intimate way. But it's not that and I was like so dismayed and like, like, stuck and like, and not annoyed, but like "ughhh" because I was like, Is this what it will be like, I don't have to spell things out. I don't want people to have to read the accompanying little plaque about my work to like understand what I mean and not just immediately go to that are like - I don't want to say reduce my work to that because it's not necessarily reduction because some people are making stuff about that that is really important, but, that's not what I was trying to focus on. But then I was like but that is the nature of it. You know, that is you have to let it be you can't you're never gonna be able to inform everybody's thoughts and understandings. It's not necessarily about if they like it or not, but like their understandings of of what your work is, and that is, you know, if you are being so vulnerable and intimate it, it's just going to be that way and you have to accept that. and it helped, you know, it helped. And every - I was just gonna say "every little helps" like Tesco then [laughs] - every little, like project that happens, when I make, you know, adds adds another layer becomes more vulnerable becomes more intimate like you're saying, and sometimes intimacy for me was like my, like you saying the project's about counselling. I made a film, the film's the same name, It Teks Time where I was in Malham, and I had my tripod set up and I had my to chairs that I found that work, set up was like a counselling session, and I had a counselling session with myself, so to speak, I was speaking to the other chair [laughs]. And, you know, like being real. I looked back and I guess there were some things that I censored there were things, I put all of the film in but into what was going on in my life at that time. But I did speak about my relationship with my mum and dad, and my money at the time, and fears, around being in debt. All of these things were happening at the time. And it was, you know? Yeah, it was like, Oh, this is a new level of like sharing myself. Essentially, it's like a podcast, I look back

now and i'm like people share worse stuff on podcasts - not worse - but like, people just divulge information that's like more intense than that. But it was, you know, a lot of my work even though I have words and a lot of my work is very postured. It's very, I'm writing poetry and being very considered again, and this was just me talking. And I look back now and I'm like, you know, I could have, there is, if I did it now I would be more comfortable. I'm a different person now. It's been four years... Yeah, four years, five years, and I'm more confident in myself now and I also am more confident in my... erm...

Sadé Mica 00:48:50

I'm not as shy - I was never shy [laughs] - but I'm not... I don't know. I'm just more free I guess. And again, I've heard and seen so many things that other people willingly share on the internet and I'm like its nothing and like, it's fine. So I would talk about different things and I will get deeper and I would be less, I would hold back less but even then, you know, it was like, it wasn't that long ago, actually. It was 2021 or 22 that film. I was being honest. And yeah, I was like, Oh, this is a strange people going to be watching me talk and you know, there wasn't a counsellor there. But it was still the, I was treating it as though they were asking me - my counsellor at the time Heather - was asking me those questions. And trying to be as honest as possible. And it's, you know, it's... yeah I dunno, it was like this part of me that, counseling changed my life. And I went through multiple rounds with the same person and she really transformed things to me. Again, being able to be intimate, being able to be vulnerable, being able to talk about things that terrified me be able to cry in front of another person, erm, every session from the first session you know, that feeling safe in that way around a stranger. And I wanted to pay homage to that - homage, homage? homage? I don't know, I've read that word and not said it out loud [laughs] - I want it to like to make, I think at the time I said I wanted to make tangible, some, something tangible from it, that from an experience that was so worthwhile to me, and it was an ode to Heather, my counsellor, it was an ode to the time that we spent it was an ode to the work I'd put in and it meant I don't know you you need just like giving people these layers, like people are watching that film, and like seeing, hearing the intimacies of my life and reading the notes on my bedding and they don't, they've never spoke to me, you know, it's like, "whoa, that's weird", but I think it helps again, being in an age where we share all kinds of things all over the internet and things aren't too taboo or terrifying to talk about now. So I'm like, fortunate. I think it would be a bit more revolutionary if it would if it was like 20 years ago. So I can't just credit myself for being this like really confident person [laughs].

Bella Milroy 00:51:37

I think there is something really distinctive about your work in that way. Like similarly with your films in with you in the landscape posing. I think that like there's such a triteness of the way in which we like we've come we have come so far with the way in which we talk about mental illness mental health in culture and society, but we're still [laughs] there's still so much there's so much more to go! You know, we're still at a point where we say "Oh, it's okay to talk". It's like, is it though?! like because I think like most people find that really hard and don't respond in the right way etc. But I think what's really, you know, whilst we're kind of bettering our kind of space to be able to say, yeah, it's okay to have had mental health times and things like that. It also can feel really trite you know? a joke that I have with my partner every time we watch like Springwatch or Winterwatch or something like that is like do do a shot every time they say "going outside is good for your mental health you know?" Its like "Really? is it really good?!" You know, and I know it's important to say but also like, like, I guess what I'm trying to say is there's a there's a triteness there's like kind of like... it feels it can feel really repetitive and a bit

redundant the way we kind of expose certain aspects of mental health and mental illness and, and it can it can be difficult to kind of push beyond that. And I think the way in which you're talking about not just sharing your experience of that and your process of counselling, but like actually paying like tribute to your counsellor, I think that's so beautiful. And that's not the angle that we usually get when those kinds of settings and, and kind of reveals of those experiences quite often it can just like stop at the, like, "mental health is a thing", you know? [Laughs]

Sadé Mica 00:53:34

[Laughs] Yeah, yeah, I completely agree. And I think I think... I am in a bubble, Sometimes? you forget that especially when you're working on things that like when I'm doing that work, I'm like, oh, yeah, this is so normal. or, when I'm - my friends, we talk about our mental health so freely and openly and, and I follow accounts on Instagram and whatnot that you know, more personal and vulnerable and then you know, you get into the real world, you talk to your dad, for instance, and I'm like, "How are you?" and he's like, "yep, sweet. fine." And im like, "Okay", you know? and I'm trying to be like, "you know, you could talk to me if you want to", and he's like, "You're half my age fuck off".

Bella Milroy 00:54:20

[laughs]

Sadé Mica 00:54:21

I'm like, "Ah, okay!". But you know, it's true. I yeah, I I recognize and completely understand and feel the same way. It feels, I think. I think the only approach to have is just to be... I just want to be - not to be Gemma Collins... "I just wanna be me!" like I do! I just I try to approach it in a way that feels like authentic. And, you know, everyone says that, but I just like when I'm in these art spaces.

Bella Milroy 00:54:52

Mmm

Sadé Mica 00:54:52

It's people that a lot of the time are not like me, they're I'm from the North even, they're not working class they're not these things. And I'm like, I'm not I can't put on airs, I can't do that. I know how to talk. I know how to be in those spaces, I know how to "play the game", for instance, to a point - but I'm always going to be a university receptionist slash administrator, who didn't even think they would go to uni, didn't know, like didn't have any understanding of that as a concept didn't you know think that art could be a career didn't, is just, lives in Oldham because I can afford to live here. You know what I mean, like, all these things. Like it is yeah, I'm just trying to I'm talking like I do in my accent. I'm writing my poems like, I speak because it's important for me to have my my actual voice there. You know, I know how to write in the Queen's English, so to speak, but that's not how I communicate even like, you know, interviews like this, and conversations like this, I'm trying to be as thoughtful as possible. And really like interrogate my work with like the right words. But if I was just talking to my mates, I'd be like, "Yeah, I just went to the countryside and just took a few videos and I was like, pissing about, And I saw the sheep shit, oh my god it was massive!"

Bella Milroy 00:56:15

[Laughs]

Sadé Mica 00:56:15

You know what I mean, like, I'm not. Yeah, but I want you know, obviously, I have bigger thoughts and just that I have more of a world inside of my head than that. But yeah, I get it completely like everything. It feels frustrating for us to be like "we can talk about mental health we can do this" and then it's like, the what the talking about mental health that you're doing is just saying we can talk about it

Bella Milroy 00:56:40

exactly

Sadé Mica 00:56:40

like it's not gritty. It's not real. It's not embarrassing. It's not... and it has to be for it to mean anything. And, and yeah, I guess that's what it was. It was like, people are gonna see this and be like, "fucking hell, you know, this is intense" and like, you tell them all your business and, you know, some people see it and be like, this is this is too much, you know, yeah. Some people will see it and think it's cringy or whatever, and you've got to be to make anything worthwhile you have to shew all of that. You've got to just, I don't know, it's hard or it can be hard for some people. But

Bella Milroy 00:57:20

I think when you say that, "I just want to I just wanna be me" like

Sadé Mica 00:57:24

[laughs]

Bella Milroy 00:57:24

I know you said it with a smile on your face, but it does feel really like you know, it feels... I was like, "it feels authentic!" [laughs]

Sadé Mica 00:57:32

[Laughs]

Bella Milroy 00:57:32

Like it does, it feels, and that's feel like that's really present in your work in that way, it feels like you are like, experiencing you! and you are integrated into that work in such a integral way that's really that is really really thoughtful. And you know, same with like the you know, talking about that that show in particular and exploring mental health and, and counselling, but also like in your video work. And the kind of posing you do in landscapes like, again, I think it just offers a kind of truth of of that experience in a different kind of way from Yeah, "did you know that getting outside is really good for your mental health?", you know, [laughs]

Sadé Mica 00:57:35

[laughs]

Bella Milroy 00:57:38

like, it's just like, yeah, and I think that's what resonates with so many people why people are so drawn to it because yeah, like they are like, I really love talking about your work to friends and peers and we all have those same kind of like responses to it of like, yeah, isn't it that that kind of really, really kind of comes through in that way, so yeah, that was that was wonderful to talk through that with you

Sadé Mica 00:58:40

Thank you

Bella Milroy 00:58:42

I think it takes us on really nicely to the other aspects of what I wanted to kind of talk about with you and and kind of, I think would be like, really invaluable to audiences listening and watching this is that you're currently taking a professional break from your work. And as I said, at the start, like this feels very, very special to like, have you here! like when I contacted you, I was like, "oh, I dunno, it's kind of like in in the violation of the break!" so this feels really special and generous of you to offer your time. Maybe if you if you're up for it you maybe you could share some of the motivations behind your break and and what what taking a break embodies for you. I know you've touched upon that already. But yeah,

Sadé Mica 00:59:28

Yeah. First of all, it wasn't a violation of it [laughs].

Bella Milroy 00:59:30

[Laughs]

Sadé Mica 00:59:34

I really respected that you're, you kind of again, you were "real", you were "just you!"

Bella Milroy 00:59:40

[laughs] yes!

Sadé Mica 00:59:40

and said that, you know, like, I don't like when people kind of dance around the point. It was nice to just be like, tell me if this isn't right. You know, it's just I respected it, but it's it's not at all you know, this is like talking about myself as easiest thing in the world.

Bella Milroy 00:59:53

[Laughs]

Sadé Mica 00:59:55

But yeah, I had a turbulent time, as we all did, over the course of like, early pandemic and I was making a lot of work actually in in 2020. I was doing a lot of things still. And trying to adapt my practice and it was fine. And then in 2021 I had a breakdown, like, mental nervous, whatever, and, and just had all these like reconfigurations of my priorities and my like what I could allow myself. There are things I won't go into. But it is also I guess, you know, their biggest thing they're the other things that are like

personal to me, I guess, but there, it just didn't feel right anymore. Like I would get opportunities or I would think about the opportunities that I might get or might would imagine - like in my post on Instagram, my "farewell" post! - that was very, even writing that I was like, I feel like a dickhead I feel like Ariana Grande or something like "I'm leaving the internet!" [laughs]

Bella Milroy 01:01:12
[Laughs]

Sadé Mica 01:01:12
No, no disrespect to Ariana Grande but...

Bella Milroy 01:01:16
I can I can say like reading that was I think is an absolutely amazing thing to write and to share and so valuable like getting to talk to you about your work in practice and part of that being this, this indefinite break I think is just like it's so important for us to be able to like see that existing and that being like a valid part of a creative practice like that. And yeah, I reread it just the other day. It was like "That's so good, its so good!"

Sadé Mica 01:01:45
[Laughs] Thank you. I think it was just to be fair, it was it was pressures of Instagram, like I didn't, I couldn't go on that Instagram for so long and still I don't - it's so weird because it's just an Instagram account, but it feels like a physical place, like I log in. And I'm like, "Ew."

Sadé Mica 01:02:04
[Laughs] like there's er, something looming and waiting. Whereas now I'm on my other Instagram - not to plug myself but - "What's it taste like?" where I talk about food and I discuss what things tastes like. And it's so easy and free and even sometimes there I'm like, "I don't want to be perceived. I want to delete this. I don't want anyone to know my thoughts. Oh my god."

Bella Milroy 01:02:04
yeah, [laughs]

Bella Milroy 01:02:23
Yeah

Sadé Mica 01:02:24
And then sometimes I'm just putting up pictures of Cheetos and saying they're amazing. I would log into that Instagram and like I hadn't posted work in so long and for so much of my practice it was like I need I need to be regularly posting I need people to see what I'm up to I need to be present and seen because that is how the art world works now like is being online and is, you know, letting people know that you're still working like "I'm still here! I'm still here! I'm still here!" you know? And I was like i'm not, and I've not posted anything and you know, I would still get emails for opportunities and stuff and I couldn't respond like the amount of emails I've just not responded to was like, it's so overwhelming. And

I felt awful and I was like these people never gonna want to work with me because that was something that I prided myself on. I am in admin, so I can respond to an email [laughs]

Bella Milroy 01:03:22

Yeah

Sadé Mica 01:03:22

But it was like a physical I don't know, aversion to it?

Sadé Mica 01:03:30

And I just felt like I was like I need, I want to just say something I felt like I needed to in a respect. It was just kind of like closing a chapter and also just being honest, I didn't, I don't know. It felt wrong. I said in the post that I might archive it and not have it be there anymore. And I can't, I just shut that Instagram and don't think about it so that I don't spiral. Erm, but yeah, I just wanted to say I'm just I don't feel the excitement and joy of doing exhibitions. I don't, it doesn't do anything for me. I think it was this expectation of progressing in my career would bring joy and like more people knowing my name and following me would, but it again, it was that intimacy, it was that vulnerability it was like, "Oh wow", paired with you know, like the personal things that are more pertinent but I just kind of, you know, mine to keep and hold and work through. But it was just like "this isn't... right. I don't, I'm not enjoying this. I feel pressure now in a way that I didn't before". In 2020 when I was making that film when it was New Year's and I was filming in Malham right before the pandemic fully went off I was the busiest I've ever been. I was working on so many things. I had so many deadlines, and it was fueling it was good it was a good busy I didn't mind, I was you know working full time as well. But then, again, like one email would send me over the edge I was like "Oh for gods sake fucking emails! I know you're offering me nice things it's amazing, leave me alone. And I can't even tell you I'm sorry, thank you for the offer, maybe in the future. No." And I was like, it's just I just didn't. I was like, "why am I doing this if it doesn't feel right?" what I like to do is to make and create and figure things out and make things wrong and then, you know make a crochet vest and it's too big and I have to unravel it all and I'm fuming but also I've got like a need to be dedicated and make something good there's no point like I didn't used to have that, I'd just make something shit and be like "Ahh it's alright". But now I'm like, you know, things that nobody's gonna see apart from when I wear them out to town or something. Like I'm like, you know it needs to be nice. I have that dedication. But yeah, I just I just kind of was asking myself like, "what is it? What is it for what why am I doing this?" I don't I don't want fame. I don't want I don't want my life to change in a way where my current everyday looks unrecognisable. I don't want to be bogged down by like these deadlines that are looming and like, one email won't suffice. I can't just say "I'm gonna do it. It's gonna be done by this date. Leave me alone." They want updates [laughs], which is understandable, but they want updates they want me to come here there and everywhere and have meetings and do this and I'm like "fuck off fuck off"

Bella Milroy 01:03:30

Yeah

Bella Milroy 01:03:30

Yeah

Sadé Mica 01:03:41

And they're asking me "how do you want your work displayed?" "Do whatever you want, just don't damage it". And they're like, "oh, is this okay?" "Yeah, I've told you." And again, I'm not nasty, not to be nasty.

Bella Milroy 01:06:42

No no, I understand what you're saying

Sadé Mica 01:06:44

It was just like "Ahh!", yeah. So yeah, it was just like this reckoning of like "this just doesn't. I don't want to do this." And, you know, it was scary it was like I'm throwing away this potential. I'm throwing away this work that I've done, but I don't see it that way now. I'm trying not to, i'm like it was something that I was like, I need to figure out how I actually feel I need to sit down and set some time aside to realise what I want. And that's not how life works. It's just like with counseling and everything. There's never a right time to delve into something. There's never I'll figure this out and then we'll work through problems. Life doesn't work like that. And you can, feelings and understandings and worldviews can progress without you, actively sitting there and taking time to work through them. Like the gut feeling for me is the right one. My, after my breakdown my gut was like, truly, if something started to feel wrong, my anxiety would spike and I'd be like, "I'm not doing that. That's my answer. I don't need to like kind of sit and ponder the pros and cons of things." It was like my body's telling me now. My body's telling me "that's not right for me". And it was good I felt really confident in that I was like I'm glad that you know even though I feel so off kilter right now that there's some part of me that knows... knows what I want or what I don't want... and has some kind of control amidst all of this chaos. And yeah, it was like, you know, my, my old lecture follows, follows me on Instagram, Brendan, and he's been you know, a gem, like throughout my entirety of my, from since knowing him since 2020 like starting my course at Salford University, erm... Brendan Fletcher, I'll says full name! [laughs]

Sadé Mica 01:08:44

And he always believed in me always supported me and always has just given me so much praise and reverence and been really excited for me., and I remember thinking " Aw what's Brendan gonna think?" like, I'm sad to be somebody that he really championed for and I felt so much respect from and for - "I don't want to do it anymore". I don't want to do it in the same way or I'm not gonna do... I was like, wow. But I can't do it. Like it's not even a case of like choosing. It's just like, what, what I was doing is no longer what I can give. I've slowed down, the pandemic and the time that I spent and just being ill, mentally and sometimes physically, like, I... there's just no way to exist in the way that I was anymore - sorry I'm rambling right now.

Bella Milroy 01:08:44

[Laughs]

Bella Milroy 01:09:39

No you're not - It's really, I mean, Sadé it's such a generous thing to be sharing these these, erm, Yeah, like really, really, really hard stuff to like, talk about. Yeah, like I say, I was really grateful for you offering

to talk about this in this interview. Because I know it'll resonate with so many people, not, not least on myself, like when you're talking about emails aversion like that, that is like a real problem that I have that I need a lot of help with. And sometimes it's been really bad and then sometimes it's better and and emails is something that I feel really passionately about talking about in terms of like having a practice and like supporting artists to like, do that in a way that's like feasible long term because, like, as we've talked about in our in our own exchanges, just like nobody tells you at art school that emails are like, 80-90% of the job! [laughs]

Sadé Mica 01:10:40

The bulk! [laughs]

Bella Milroy 01:10:41

This is it! this is what we're doing! Sat at the desk all the time! and you know, it's really challenging, Aah yeah, so you're not rambling at all this this is really, really generous and really thoughtful and yeah, thank you so much for sharing that. I wondered like maybe you've touched upon it a little bit with - and please just say if any of this is stuff you don't want to talk about within this context of like, your break and that kind of thing - but you know, we talked about like the intimacy of your work, the vulnerability of that has taking a break, been motivated by some of the different boundaries that you might have around like, because it's something that I think about a lot within my work is like personal cost. When your work is the creative resource is this internal mind-space-body [laughs], you know, and yeah, I wonder if that sometimes the personal cost has been too great? And maybe that's also part of motivating that, that professional break from that, maybe?

Sadé Mica 01:11:49

Yeah, I think again, like the other stuff is like the bulk of that. Feelings of guilt. "Do I deserve this? Does my voice... should my voice be heard, should my work be seen?" all these things again, like, is my stuff, but also knowing that like going if I was going to be honest in my work, and going forward, like that would be what I would make my work about and it's just not the vulnerability that I'm willing to share or even I can't make, I can't do that. Like it's just stuff that I have to figure out on my own and address on my own. But also it was just, I just didn't want to do it. I didn't feel an enjoyment. I didn't feel like when my exhibitions were up. You know, I enjoyed meeting people and it was nice, but I didn't feel this like "Wow!", when my stuff was on a wall. It was, it was cool to see it. It was like "whoa", but I dunno? I think again, that is you know, these expectations that we put upon certain experiences just like say, say like getting married, like people like "my wedding day is gonna be so amazing" And then you hear brides be like, "it's the most stressful thing I've ever done. I didn't see my husband or my wife or my partner all day. I was talking to family members that I don't care about", you know, it's like we have the reality of things is not what the expectation is, and it's, it's good to come with that. Again it's that thing of like, being honest, being me being Gemma Collins, and just being like open about like what it is. I felt like I was betraying some sort of... people, myself, my dedication, all of it. Cos I was like, "this isn't that fun?!" Like it's, you know, I feel, I feel fortunate and very thankful. But I don't revere this in the way that I feel like I should. I don't, like what is fun, again, what is interesting for me is the making is like speaking with other artists and hearing about what they're doing and seeing cool work and mostly just not to be self centered, but just making my own stuff. I just really like making stuff. And the rest of it was just like, "Okay?". I didn't, I didn't... I wasn't enamoured by institutions and just like the idea when you're younger

and being famous, it's like, "Oh, my God, it's amazing and I have so much money" and then you see, like, people - I've recently watched Elvis, sorry to just go everywhere with this but... and I wrote a massive letterbox review about it [laughs]. But I was like, oh my... and I know, I know, fame is awful and evil, But I was like this again, is this this thing where people "well at least he had a wonderful life" and it's like he didn't, just just tragedy all the time and like being exploited and taken advantage of and even if it wasn't that it was like, people are in his business and he can have privacy and all this shit, and like, these things that we were they're just like not what we're told that they are. And it's not as like, tragic and drastic for me being an artist and sending emails but I was just like, this is just not serving me and like the personal cost like you say is like me just not being true to myself if I was continuing with that, if I was saying yes to things. There were things I said yes to and then had to be "I'm so sorry. I can't do this". And it was like, I felt like I was letting people down. Whereas if I just if I tuned into myself, when I first got the email and just was like, "No, I don't want to do this. I'm, I don't have the capacity for it". Rather than working myself up by like, desperately trying to meet a deadline. It was just just pointless. And then again, it did allow me to just get back to creating for the sake of it and it's taken... like my exhibition, It Teks Time [laughs], erm, it is taking time. It's

Bella Milroy 01:16:06
yeah,

Sadé Mica 01:16:07

you know, I'm not doing things that aren't necessarily - again, I'm not making things I would put in a gallery, I'm making vests, I'm making a coat for my partner, I'm making like all kinds of weird things that are just like everyday, use, useful items, which feels good as well. I'm like "Oh, there is a purpose in this". I'm making stuff so I can wear it. I'm still displaying it in a sense, and it's not my practice, it's not like "fine art", not to, you know, diminish, but this for me is just a crochet vest. Maybe one day I'll make a crochet vest that I feel like might you know, be displayed and be like, part of the canon of Sadé Mica and not like something I'm displaying on What's it taste like? like "I'm I'm going out for dinner do you like my vest?!" [laughs] You know?! Yeah, and - sorry.

Bella Milroy 01:16:56

No! I just think that that's it, it's so interesting the way in which you know the art world functions on a basis of professional practice being the primary basing of of what it means to be an artist. And I always think, you know, if I think about my own personal experience of that, as a chronically ill disabled artist, it's like, I have to have a foundation of my personal practice being the the first and main thing because my work has existed outside of that professional space for so long.

Sadé Mica 01:17:39
Yeah

Bella Milroy 01:17:39

But in many whilst that's those, there are lots of barriers to that in terms of income and stuff like that. It also kind of like really really kind of, there's a real preciousness to that of like, like you describing just like making for making like, isn't that isn't that it?! This is it right?! This is it! like all of the other stuff is other stuff! like this is it, the crochet vest is it! like that's the thing.

Sadé Mica 01:18:09

But then you like realise like you say that to be an artist It's, it, or to be a practising artist the expectation is that it's not, the making is not it, it's the networking, and it's the it's is the emailing - not to go on about emails again -

Bella Milroy 01:18:24

No but it is!

Sadé Mica 01:18:25

but it is posted on Instagram it's the

Bella Milroy 01:18:27

yeah

Sadé Mica 01:18:27

it's it's the attention, it's the constantly seeking attention and like people to follow you, not in a bad way I don't mean that in a negative way

Bella Milroy 01:18:35

Not but it's part of the system isn't it

Sadé Mica 01:18:37

it's not the makin you know, like there are exhibitions that I've had that I've featured work that I've made, I'm not made for that exhibition is work that exists. Yeah, I've got binders that are lamenting in Melbourne, Australia right now, because I can't answer the email to tell them please ship them to my house. They sent me the email months ago and I'm like "fucking hell" they're just gonna keep them. I've got other work elsewhere and I'm like yeah, "I don't, uhhh I don't know! Just send it to Manchester or find me somehow!" Like [laughs], I just, but it's so true, like, it is isn't it the making like that is truly you know, you need to make a vest that says that.

Bella Milroy 01:19:15

Yeah!

Sadé Mica 01:19:17

You know but it is and I'm like, it was just, I think the fear... so much of it was like some of it is I know that without participating in the art world, and like getting an exhibition and having funding there are limits to my work. There are films that will never be made.

Sadé Mica 01:19:38

They'll just be sculptures that, I'll have ideas for things and I'm like, well, I need £1000s of pounds to do that and I'm not gonna get it because I'm, I'm not doing an exhibition. And it's again, it's just like, well, I've got to adapt then. And like, maybe I just draw that out in a sketchbook and it exists there and the idea is in the ether, and it's like, you know, my work, that that is the idea - people die with ideas all the

time, people die with unfinished work, so I have to be fine with that because it's going to be the case, even if I engaged in all this, it's going to be the case. I think it was just the fear of what my practice could be and could have been. But I have to accept what is and not lament that. I can't sit and be sad about that because I'm not doing that. I've chosen not to do that to protect myself to honour myself and honour the other things that I'm dealing with. And so I have to move forward. I can't... what isn't, isn't and what is, is you know? not to like air out my parents but! [laughs] I love them, but there have been times in my life and like things that they harp on about like oh, you know, "you should have done this... When you had that chance -", not about art but just like, say like, say like I £100 pound or scratch card, and then I blew it on, going out. And then a week later, my car needs fixing and it cost £100 quid. "Oh, well, you shouldn't saved that £100 quid" It's like right well, I didn't, and I don't have it now. So and I'm gonna have to figure out how to find it." Is that thing like I don't want to lament about what - it's done now. I say it all the time to my partner, "I've done now, I've done now". It like it is what it is.

Bella Milroy 01:19:38

Mhmm

Bella Milroy 01:21:24

Yeah,

Sadé Mica 01:21:25

you have to move forward and have to, you know, just like in the pandemic - I'm sorry to keep talking about that - it was really this thing of like, I don't have access to XYZ I can't, that, I was limited to Heaton parked, to go back there, that was my rural, that was where I was going when I was on furlough. I wanted some outdoors and I was sitting in grass there and trying desperately not to play with this woman's dog because I didn't know if I was gonna get COVID off it or if I was gonna give it COVID because no one knew what was going on! And it kept coming over to me and bringing its ball and I was like "hmm!", so like, you know, I had to deal with what was there. I don't want to lament and so I guess you know solidifying that, writing that Instagram post was like, just letting people know. and I have used Instagram as this, I'm no one's influencer, I'm no one's like preacher, but I have used it since graduating and having like my scholarship where my university paid for a studio for a year that was like, again, this experience where I thought "oh, it's gonna be amazing. I've got a studio and I don't have to pay for it" And then because I had a full time job and I couldn't get there enough, what I felt was enough, I was sad and it was like this, this looming weight and this grey cloud over me because I was like, "I'm wasting a good opportunity! And I'm trying to get there as much as I can, but when I'm there I don't know what to do and ahhh!", and then it was like, oh, again, this thing, this expectation of this thing, and then when I just kind of leaned into it and was like, Well, I've got the time that I've got. There's no point in lamenting what I don't because it's not real it isn't there, what isn't, real isn't real. What what is, is. so like, use that use it like, don't be sad about not to be like, I do sound like an Instagram, like post

Bella Milroy 01:21:55

No you don't!

Sadé Mica 01:22:54

I sound like those infographics in a gorgeous font, "do what you can!" [laughs], but for real it was true! As I'm getting older, I'm learning that all of these idioms and phrases and sayings, phrases and sayings. I'm like, Oh, they're so true, though. Like they're embarrassing and the cringy and they're kinda real like,

Bella Milroy 01:23:29

I think as well like it's a, you know, you're talking about, you know, maybe there's those films that will never get made those artworks that you'll never get back or whatever, you know, those kinds of things, which are real griefs, you know, as part of something that you know, you've you invested in the system that wants you to do all that to be quote unquote, "successful" or whatever. And, but like, the direction that you are now focusing your time and energy in, you know, all the things that you're making and being passionate about making, they exist because you're doing that, you know, that otherwise wouldn't exist, had you been doing all of the other stuff and I think that's what's really hard to kind of convey and express is that like, these things are - and again, like I sound like an infographic now like -

Sadé Mica 01:24:22

no but it's true

Bella Milroy 01:24:23

There are like opportunities to do something different and I think that's what I'm so passionate about talking to artists like yourself of like, you know, who are faced with these kind of quite hard like quite hard circumstances of like, you meet those like those hard walls of like, can't can't push through anymore. And like there's a kind of resourcefulness and an imagination that kind of emerges from that hard, those are often like quite hard decisions about realising what you've actually got the capacity to capacity to do. So yeah, I think it's a really beautiful thing to be sharing. And, you know, not something that we we get to make a lot of space for er, especially within professional spaces as well. I mean, professionalism, like can we just, like end it, can we end it?!

Sadé Mica 01:25:19

truly like you said there, it's this... when I was 24 - I say like, I'm 50 - but when I was 24, and like doing all these exhibitions and making all this work and pushing through and it was exciting, I was I was operating in a different brain. I am wasn't who I am now, and it feels like, I, it's a confidence knock, you know, like, I can't sustain that. I can't do that anymore. I can't even do the the basic, but it's, It's in some ways, Not to sound like again, a martyr, I am, It's not important in the grand scheme of things but like in my life, I have to do, has to make these decisions to survive. If I was going to continue to do that I would break down again. I would not be functional. I would be riddled with anxiety and all these things, erm, I'm adapting, i, it's just, it is sad, and again, I have to take time to grieve that and in ways I have or like and I will be you know, things might change and they might not, I, I will have a different relationship potentially, but I have to understand that it's, I don't, I don't know, that, I'm making an informed choice. Again, my body is and my mind is making a choice for me. It just is it just is. And I can still find ways. I think it's also it's just the outside it's it's other people again, it's like oh, you know... I don't, seeing people my peers who have been in exhibitions who've progressed and my friends from uni like keeping progressing and and being like, "wow, you know, I'm not doing that, I'm, not anymore, I'm not having exhibitions anymore, I'm not, people aren't seeing my work in that way anymore". It's like a sort of yearning for that and a jealousy sometimes, but it's, again, just kind of centering myself and be like, well

it is what it is. Like I, I'm harping on the point now but I don't know. Just accepting and moving forward and appreciating what I can do. I still have I still use my hands to make I can still use my mind to think I can still write things down in a sketchbook I can still share those things should I want to do. I can still adapt, I can still learn I've still got a practice within me. And that's where it all started. And my creativity and my joy for making does not... is not dependent on a claim... or exit...exhibiting or Instagram, attention or money even, you know? Yeah, I don't know. I'm just happy to be crocheting. And I was proud of myself when I made my vest... multiple like again, I've made halfway and then moved on because my brain is like that, but I'll come back to them and I've got time to, and I'm being patient. And I dunno, it's just fun. And it's nice to be able to do that and to not lament again what isn't because this is what is and it's like breaking that notion of like what was supposed to happen.

Bella Milroy 01:29:17

Yes,

Sadé Mica 01:29:18

life isn't, again, life isn't that

Bella Milroy 01:29:20

Yeah.

Sadé Mica 01:29:22

I didn't think that I would ever like cut my hair short when I was - it's longer now but - I didn't think that I thought I was gonna grow it that way but things changed within me, I wanted to explore a different part of my gender. And I cut it. And it was like, "Oh, I didn't expect that". But that became like there is no set path. And so what is, is.

Bella Milroy 01:29:45

Yeah, and when you talking, when you say what is, is you know your work still is, you know, the work that is public that has been experienced by other people like, I know myself, it'll continue to be works that I love and appreciate and you know, that I think, you know, I think that the fact that they still they still have not to sound woo-woo, but like energy in the world, you know, people still find them and connect with them, regardless of you being present and going "look!" you know,

Sadé Mica 01:29:48

yeah, thank you.

Bella Milroy 01:30:21

Yeah, totally. I guess maybe like we could, we could just finish up on like, just kind of some of the things that yeah, that we've just talked about, which would be like a couple of really short questions. And you already you've already said like crocheting and is like, the thing you really loving at the moment but like, what are the like really fun nice things has this break facilitated? Like other things? Yeah.

Sadé Mica 01:30:52

Erm, really appreciate and my friends and spending time with people more, I fell in love with my partner, Tony. And for the first time, I embraced parts of myself that I hadn't before, and other people and now just really building a family and appreciating being around people particularly again from the pandemic. I was so, before that I was so used to spending time on my own and I was fine my own company, and then I was like transformed, I was craving human interaction. And now you know, I have so many people in my life that I've can engage with all the time, which has been amazing. And they have a community and a family, from people. Writing letterbox reviews [laughs], watching films again, eating foods and documenting those on Instagram. Yeah, reading, well, not reading books, I'm really trying to but like, reading all kinds of things on Wikipedia all the time and like learning ridiculous facts and then discussing with my friends and partner about them. Erm yeah, there's not been too much. It's been a very slow time and it's been filled with Yeah, just just experiences... dancin... Yeah.

Bella Milroy 01:32:46

Amazing, Ah, that's a really nice thank you for sharing that and I guess given the context of this series, thinking about rural spaces. I know you've made lots of work in Malham. Are there some like other top top spaces that you've either like been to or you would like to return or you'd like to go and maybe like, you know, continuing this kind of space that you're in at the moment of just like thinking and feeling and just being in there like, yeah, and that being part of your practice now.

Sadé Mica 01:33:18

Yeah, I really want to go off to Scotland. Last time I was there, was 2019, I was on the train to Edinburgh. And that was one thing that I do that is not really fruitful [laughs], but I'll screenshot on Google maps where I am in that moment if I see something amazing I'm like trying to figure out where I am sometimes signals bad so I don't get it, but I'm like "I need to return here". So I've just got random screenshots of like animated lakes and stuff. And I really want to go to Scotland more which is a very broad answer because Scotland is is vast. I do just want to return to Malham, I really want to take my partner there Tony has been asking. I'm between cars at the moment because mine was going to fail it's MOT so I'm on the bus now. But when I get another car, erm I really want to drive her there and hopefully it will be like spring or summer time. So she can like see it in its glory. And we can go to the waterfall, erm

Bella Milroy 01:34:17

amazing

Sadé Mica 01:34:18

Yeah, I want to I want to go to Norwich again. I went to Norwich.

Bella Milroy 01:34:23

Yeah, totally different from Malham.

Sadé Mica 01:34:25

Yeah. But it was it was really beautiful and It's not necessarily the rural parts, I went to the town but it was really gorgeous. And yeah, beaches abroad. Yeah, I think I think Scotland and maybe some more in the Lake District too. I went to I went to a place called, right before we got shut down actually for

COVID, Ulpha. I was on the way to, on the way to somewhere in the Lake District and then got lost, and I stopped in like this little tiny like rural village, I guess, called Ulpha, U-L-P-H-A, and it was gorgeous. I've got some films and it was just like running river, it was amazing. And I'd like to go there again. And it scares me a bit now like because I don't drive in these weird places where sometimes I've got no signal anymore on my phone and just stop off and they're like weird men fishing. But yeah.

Sadé Mica 01:35:25

Thank you so much Sadé, this has been such a treat to get to talk to you and like I said, you know it's been really even more special to be able to share this whilst you're on this break. And yeah, just really, really grateful to have you as part of the series. Thank you so much.

Sadé Mica 01:35:42

Thank you so much for having me you've been amazing. And so thoughtful and kind in this process and I've loved talking with you. It's been really easy

Bella Milroy 01:35:50

Ahh I'm so glad that's really, that's wonderful to hear. Yeah, this is great. Thank you.