TLC podcast jingle by Jackyn Elswyth plays: atmospheric banjo music

**Emeric Bernard-Jones**

Welcome to T.L.C., a new podcast series featuring T.L.C. – trans-led and trans-loved cinema, creating a space for trans curators, writers and thinkers; a space for the trans community and for cis allies to celebrate, learn and share. This is an Inclusive Cinema project by Film Hub Wales using National Lottery funding through the British Film Institute. Over the next four episodes we’ll hear from a variety of trans and non-binary voices, speaking about films they love, films they programme and film’s they’ve made. Featuring four live events in cinemas from Kirkwall to Kensal Rise, we’ll be showcasing trans cinema from documentary to experimental film, from historical films to what’s being made right now.

Across in-depth intros, curious Q&As, friendly panels and engaged audience discussions, our amazing venues, programmers and speakers highlight the many ways to centre and celebrate trans cinema, through the rich insights and shared stories that emerge differently at each event.

At the start of the first episode, T.L.C. project consultant So Mayer, Trans+ on Screen founder Alice Blanc and Fringe! programmer Jaye Hudson share an overview of their experience and insights on great ways to create welcoming events and programmes that work for everyone. Offering a summary of those insights, there’s a screen-reader friendly written resource that accompanies this series, which can be found on the Inclusive Cinema website. So have a read, have a listen, and above all, have a great time with our fabulous programmers and speakers, with a big shout-out to them, the people who made T.L.C.: programmer Rebecca del Tufo and speakers Lillian Crawford, Juliet Jacques and Sarah Pucill at the Lexi Cinema; programmer Milo Clenshaw and speakers Rosanna Cade, Ivor MacAskill, Natalie Ferguson and Katie Somers in Hawick; and, for our 2023 bonus episode to come, programmer Bea Copland and her speakers at the Phoenix in Orkney. From all of us, welcome, with love and care, to T.L.C.

[TLC jingle by Jackyn Elswyth plays: atmospheric banjo music]

**Milo Clenshaw**

Hello and welcome to Inclusive Cinema's TLC podcast series, foregrounding trans cinema across the UK. My name is Milo Clenshaw and I'm the Programme Assistant here Alchemy Film & Arts. Alchemy is a film and arts organisation based in Hawick in the Scottish Borders. We work with communities and artists both locally and internationally using film as a way to come together, have conversations and make positive change. The recording you're about to hear is from an event we hosted here in Hawick called Anything Could Happen Here. It was a screening of artists and lovers Rosana Cade and Ivor MacAskill's trans reimagining of Pinocchio, a feature film called The Making of Pinocchio, which was originally a play and was then turned into a film during lockdown. And that film was preceded by No Words, a short film made by young Borders-based queer people in association with Alchemy last year. So you're gonna hear the panel discussion we had after the screening with some of the filmmakers, and I hope you enjoy listening to it as much as I did recording. If you'd like to find out more about Alchemy, we're always putting on new events and we have an annual film festival of experimental film in April. So you can see a bit more of what we do and get in touch online at alchemyfilmandarts.org.uk. Thanks very much for listening. Enjoy the discussion.

Okay, I'd like to welcome to the stage Rosana Cade, Ivor McCaskill, Natalie Ferguson and Katie Somers. Okay, hello, everybody. For the benefit of the tape, I'm just going to introduce myself again. So my name is Milo Clenshaw. I'm the Programme Assistant with Alchemy Film & Arts. And we've just watched No Words, a short film made with Alchemy in association with young people last year, and Ivor MacAskill and Rosana Cade's The Making Of Pinocchio - two very personal films that feels like, so I'd like to thank you all for sharing them with us. I'll maybe start off with Natalie and Katie as we saw your film first. Could you maybe tell us a little bit about the process of making the film? And what kind of made you want to focus on those themes?

**Natalie Ferguson**

Well, it was a very quick process. It was shot kind of over two days, so just over 24 hours. And Katie and I had never met before. I don't think we - well, I haven't done any kind of film stuff before. It's all very new to all of us. And it was kind of as a result of getting to know each other.

**Katie Somers**

Yeah, it was like, it was bizarre, because we seem to have a lot of overlapping shared experiences, which is really interesting. As we got to know each other for a really short period of time, we realised that we had a lot of very, like similar experiences, but also very, like specific experiences. They're very individual experiences, even. Which we've thought were - we incorporated into the film.

**Milo Clenshaw**

Great, thank you. And was that something that you kind of knew going into the workshop or you discovered as it went on?

**Natalie Ferguson**

I think we knew that we would have things in common because it was a workshop for queer people in the Borders. And so I was expecting kind of some overlapping, but not as much as there was, I would say, like, yeah, most of you went to BYT. (laughter) I think BYT so pretty much everyone knew each other. And also, like, we were all neurodivergent, which was very nice. If you'd like to talk a bit more about that.

**Katie Somers**

Yeah. And even something similar like, we all had sort of like a small quirk where we'd like do something repeatedly type of thing for individual like sort of reasons, but that just incorporated in the film, which I thought was quite interesting or even just like small things like similar tastes and like fashion and stuff was quite interesting.

**Milo Clenshaw**

Yeah, I think that comes across in the film really well. And then Rosana and Ivor, you obviously know each other very well. How was the kind of creative process for you working together?

**Ivor MacAskill**

Well, it was much longer than two days, I'm really impressed with what you did in that time! Yeah, I think when we started working on it, we didn't have a sort of goal in mind of actually making something. So we started doing – we had a little residency to explore creatively, what we thought might be happening when I sort of started thinking about transitioning. So in the beginning, it was very, like, let's play around with some ideas. And actually making little bits of material was a sort of way for us to talk about what was going on for us as a couple and as collaborators. So at first, it wasn't really about, let's make a show or let's make a film. It was like, let's find a way that we can talk to each other. That's not just sitting at home going, "Oh, this is different, isn't it?" Yeah. And then, but then we were like, oh, maybe there is a show in this.

**Rosana Cade**

Yeah. And I think the – being able to have that creative process together as a couple during that time really allowed us to find our own way of responding to the transition. And I think that's part of what the work is about is trying to kind of think about the narratives that get told around being trans and that you need to tell about your identity to access certain things, but also trying to kind of break out of that and think in a more expensive and imaginative way. So I feel like it was a really useful tool for both of us to kind of process what was going on and have some ownership over how we were representing that, which obviously needed to be getting loads of sticks and pretending to be donkeys having sex.

**Milo Clenshaw**

Yeah, it really feels like both of the films were very responsive to kind of personal circumstances and personalities. And I guess, you know, they're both linked by transition and trans identity as a theme. Do you think you would say that they're trans films? Or do you have another idea about that?

**Natalie Ferguson**

I think, I think that ours is, but I think it's also many other things. I think it's kind of just a gathering of people making something. It's also a study into kind of experiences of neurodivergent people in the Borders. It's kind of my own experience of being kind of a fat trans person and what that means. What would you say?

**Katie Somers**

Yeah, I think like, because most of us are, like trans or have a unique, like, gender identity. I think that intrinsically it is a trans film. But it also is about being neurodivergent and queer in the Borders, as well as just, it's not strictly a trans film.

**Milo Clenshaw**

Were you saying you were from something called BYT? Is that Borders Youth Theatre?

**Ivor MacAskill**

Yes. So I was like, oh, yeah, maybe there's connections there, but kind of a theatre sensibility as well. Because while we were watching that, as well I was so aware that we did that in kind of one take. So it's very, like live, and we changed it into this digital version, because of COVID times. But we were trying to have that intimacy that you can get in a live performance. And I guess, with your piece there's lots of like, looking straight at the camera, and kind of as you would speak to an audience or something. So I think there's that kind of connection as well. But yeah, so it was similarly it's like, yes, it's a film and it's got lots of trans well, not lots of trans people, a couple of trans people. But yeah, is it something in between theatre, film, digital stuff, but yeah.

**Katie Somers**

Yeah.

**Rosana Cade**

Yeah, I think I was thinking about that question a bit. And I feel like I kind of oscillate in different ways of thinking about it. Because I think, on the one hand, it is actually really important that we say this is a trans narrative. And you know, sometimes people are like, "Oh it is that, but it's also universal, and it's just about a couple." And it's like, it's really great that it can be open and be received in different ways. I think there's lots of universal ideas within it. And lots of kinds of things we can learn from the idea of transness. And at the same time, I think we were really trying to represent something that we couldn't find represented that well, so it's like, I feel like it can go to - yeah, be looked at in different ways. But I also, when I think about a trans film, it makes me think about, like the actual form of the film as well. And I think for us we're really trying to explore kind of fantasy and reality and kind of theatre and film and have these kind of, have something that sits, that can sit in between different kind of binaries. So for me, there's something kind of trans in like, yeah, in the form of it and the structure and the kind of methods that we're using.

**Milo Clenshaw**

Yeah, definitely. I suppose maybe when you're creating something that you feel like doesn't already exist, you're trying to make a representation for yourself, do you ever feel like there's a pressure in that for it to be kind of everything and represent something to everyone?

**Natalie Ferguson**

I think I think that we were kind of wanting lots of people to kind of feel what we were feeling. And I suppose in that sense, we were kind of juggling a lot of things. But I think at the same time, it's very loose, all the things are very loose. So we're not fully juggling things in the same thing, the way that you guys were, in the sense that, you know, it was a longer kind of film, and there was more time to kind of dig into things, whereas ours was kind of just like a quick snapshot of a lot of feelings. And so in that sense, I suppose we were considering it. But then at the same time, we were also just trying to get it done. So not really. (laughter)

**Katie Somers**

No, exactly that. (laughter)

**Ivor MacAskill**

Just get it done. Showbiz. I think, yeah, I think we definitely felt the responsibility of imagining who the audience is, what information do we have to put across so that people are sort of on the same page, and this was like, the beginning of our work is very, it's quite didactic, it's kind of purposefully a bit like a children's TV show of like, "this is what being trans is, and this is what I've done". And to get people up to speed, I think we're sort of speaking to that difficulty that a lot of trans people and queer people or neurodivergent people have to do a lot of explaining and teaching and holding people's hand to, in order to be listened to or to be seen. So it is that tricky thing of, I need you to know what I'm on about, so that you can come on this journey with me. But I also need you to just shut up and let me do my thing as well. So it's kind of that back and forth thing of trying to be something for everyone. And also just trying to be something for yourself, which we're not always encouraged to, to have, I guess.

**Milo Clenshaw**

Yeah, and I suppose, Ivor you mentioned this, you're all kind of theatre makers. And is this all your first time making a film? Or kind of early filmmaking?

**Rosana Cade**

I've made a couple of films before I made a film about a project of mine that's called Walking, Holding where someone goes on a walk through town and holds hands with lots of different people. So a few years ago, I'd translated that into a film and it was all shot on mobile phones. And so that was my first experience of trying to take something that's a live piece. And, yeah, translate it onto the screen. And I think at first, I was quite wary of film, because I do work in live performance and make often quite intimate work as well. I was like, you know, that in that performance, you're walking along the street, you're being seen, you're holding someone's hand, there's so much going on. And so really, how can that come across in a film, but then I actually became quite excited by a different kind of looking that could happen with the film. And also, it felt like something that was much more accessible for lots of different audiences.

So yeah, I'm interested in sort of coming from the practice that I have, which is about kind of liveness and experimenting with the form and thinking about how to bring that into film. And this was another I mean, this was a really unique experience and opportunity, which basically happened because of COVID. We got to be in the main space at Tramway which is a huge space for five weeks with all this technical support and our designer and everything. And like normally when we're making theatre you don't – you don't get that, you get to be in there for like a week or something. So I just feel like it really allowed us to really experiment with what we could do with the cameras and yeah.

**Katie Somers**

I haven't had much personal experience with like filmmaking, I've done small acting bits for friends' film projects, but never like a proper like, producing something like producing a film. And this was incredibly like exciting. And it was the first time I felt like I've ever really had the experience to, like, help make visual art of my, like, personal experience and identity. And it was really, it was really satisfying. It was just really satisfying to see. So yeah, no, it was amazing.

**Natalie Ferguson**

Well, so, three out of four of us went to BYT, and I was the one who didn't go to BYT. I've not done theatre before any filmmaking, unless you count like The Lion King when I was six. So. But, so I make like fine art and the work that I make is about kind of mould. And so it's it's very different. But I felt because of the space that kind of we had cultivated in kind of a short time. I felt like it kind of really chucked myself in because of how kind of inclusive it felt and how overlapping and understanding everyone was of each other.

**Milo Clenshaw**

That's great. Yeah, I guess another question, kind of related to that is, how do you feel when you're exploring something kind of as transient as identity having it in legacy and film as something that you can't change afterwards?

**Ivor MacAskill**

Good question. I'm distracted, because I'm imagining you making a film of The Lion King with lots of mould. (laughter)

**Natalie Ferguson**

It's separate, it's separate! (laughter)

**Ivor MacAskill**

Anyway, yeah, I think, especially with when we were sort of beginning to think about what material we might make, we were looking at lots of transition YouTube videos, and I think Rosana talks about the idea of wanting to document this change, because it is this, if there's an actual medical transition happening, or a transition happening, then it is a sort of amazing thing that you want to try and hold on to. So I think that's where we started thinking about using cameras and visual material as this way of documenting and marking the change. And also the, it became this sort of metaphor for this weird way that you're sort of shape shifting, and kind of coming in and out of focus. And so, yeah, but as we were doing that as well, we could sort of see the problems of the idea of before and after and you're broken before and then you're fixed afterwards and stuff like that. So we were definitely aware of the issues of having like, some video from the past and really, and then video of you now. And then even, yeah, I guess I can see like, oh, my chest is hairier now. And there's like differences or, yeah will you get to a point where actually you don't want that to be seen. And I think those are kind of the general things that people who transition are dealing with all the time anyway, of like, what do you do with your, the photos of you as a kid? And what do you do with your like, when you meet someone who knew you a long time ago? And so I think, yeah, those. I don't know what our answer is, but I think those questions are sort of in the air as they are in the air in sort of daily life.

**Milo Clenshaw**

No, I think that's a great answer.

**Natalie Ferguson**

Well, Thomas, who was one of the people in the film, they, my partner, kind of has been on a very big kind of gender journey. And watching the film, kind of from the context of what I know today. It's very, it's like bittersweet, because I think it was very emotional for them to stand there and claim being a man at the time. But they no longer feel that way. And I remember them actually mentioning this film, the first time they watched it, there was like this kind of "ugh" which they were like "That shouldn't have been there for me, because I'd worked so hard to get to that point, but it didn't feel as satisfying." I think that it's difficult because like you were saying, like, as trans people, there's always gonna be kind of these things kind of following you around. And it's about kind of, I guess, being able to look back at them and feel proud, feel proud of yourself in the past and feel proud of yourself currently, for being able to go on that journey.

**Milo Clenshaw**

Amazing. Thank you.

**Ivor MacAskill**

And I think that within your piece it sort of felt to me that there was this sense of the way that you're all kind of blurring in and out of each other and your voices are going backwards and forwards, it's sort of speaking to that sense of, we're not fixed. We're not like, this isn't us forever. This is like where we're at right now. And I think that's a kind of really important message of it. And I guess, like, yeah, maybe both of the pieces are filmic. And it's like, okay, they're shot, then, and that's then, that's an archive of that moment. But they have that sense of possibility and change. And yeah, that's not sort of set in stone, for some reason I'm thinking set in aspic, where did I get that word from?

**Milo Clenshaw**

Set in wood, maybe. (laughter)

**Rosana Cade**

But this is something that we were talking about a lot when we were making the... show? Well, yeah, it is a show. We were originally making the show and made that on the way and now it's not a show, but that is the piece as well. But anyway. We were sort of responding to there's like quite a big trend in experimental theatre to make a lot of autobiographical work. And this sort of sense that you get on stage and you tell your truth, and that is the truth. And that's you being real. And I think we were quite wary of that. And that I'd sort of made some autobiographical work in the past and realised, I'd written all this stuff, and then I was still touring it a couple of years later. And I was like, I'm saying these words, but they just don't feel true to me anymore. So we were, yeah, just interested in how to create something that really tried to kind of have a fluidity around the idea of anything being a fixed truth and, and play with that a bit as well. And at one point, we were going to have like, versions of us in the past, having conversations with us in the present and in the future. And but in the end, we just had one video from the past, which I think worked quite well. But the hardest thing with this is that it is fixed. And because we now perform it as a live performance, and we've developed some of the bits or some bits we've made a bit faster, I just find it hard that we can't like, because with performance, you just go on stage and you can make little changes. So yeah, it's a very, it's funny to witness it in that form, even though we are happy with this.

**Milo Clenshaw**

And then with all that being said, do you think any of you will go on to do some more filmmaking?

**Ivor MacAskill**

Never again. (laughter) That was facetious. Well, during, I mean, the COVID times have been interesting, because we were supposed to perform another piece in London and the Festival called, what's it called Splayed Festival? And they suggested, well, we were like, well, we can't show your show. But why don't you make a video piece? Otherwise, you're not gonna get paid. And we were like, okay, okay, let's try that. So we made something, but it was all with sort of footage of us that we had already. So that was a kind of editing process thing. But there's, I guess the kind of restriction within that was that we only had what we had. And some of that was like, holiday snaps and videos and things like that. But, so that was definitely a really interesting process. And I think we're just really interested about the framing of things as well, that's in a theatre space, what we love is that you know, the whole, it can be a landscape that changes and something can change, and you miss it and things like that. And with the camera, you can force people to look at what you have to look at, everybody knows that. But it was kind of news to us. So yeah, that's been really interesting to kind of have that clarity on certain things, or to show something that's hidden and so yeah.

**Rosana Cade**

Yeah, I feel like we learned quite a lot making this and it would be really great to try and use that moving forward. So we'll see.

**Katie Somers**

Although theatre is more like, like a home base, I feel like very comfortable in theatre and doing theatre work. I would love to do more film work because it's just, it's such an exciting art form, you can do so much interesting stuff that I never knew you could do with it. And it feels like I can display more of myself on screen than I can really do through my work with theatre.

**Natalie Ferguson**

I think I'm still, I'm very new to kind of theatre and film and kind of any performing that involves kind of me directly. I've kind of been just kind of focusing on learning. I want to kind of learn more and gather more information and take kind of each opportunity as it comes while trying to kind of continue with like the work I'm doing at the moment. But I would definitely want to do it more at some point, yeah.

**Milo Clenshaw**

That's good to hear!

**Ivor MacAskill**

And here's the commission. (laughter)

**Natalie Ferguson**

Please. (laughter)

**Milo Clenshaw**

I think unfortunately, that's about all we've got time for. But thank you all so much for joining me. It's been great to talk to you about your work a little bit more. And if anybody wants to watch No Words again, it'll be on the Alchemy website. And if anyone wants to see The Making of Pinocchio live, where can they go?

**Rosana Cade**

Yes, it'll be at Tramway in Glasgow on the 27th and 28th of October, the live show.

**Milo Clenshaw**

Brilliant. Okay. Thank you very much, everybody for joining us. And thank you as well to Lou Hanson for interpreting.

[TLC jingle by Jackyn Elswyth plays: atmospheric banjo music]

**Hannah Jones Jones**

You have been listening to T.L.C. This is an Inclusive Cinema project by Film Hub Wales using National Lottery funding through the British Film Institute. Thanks to our wonderful venue partners The Lexi Cinema, Kensal Rise, London; Alchemy Film and Arts in Hawick, in the Scottish Borders; and the New Phoenix Cinema in Kirkwall, Orkney.

Thanks also for their support to Trans+ on Screen, and to our fabulous intro and outro voice artists Emeric Bernard-Jones, pronouns they/them, and Hannah Jones, pronouns she/her. The music heard in each episode is by Jacken Elswyth, pronouns she/her. Thanks to our producer Daniel Fuller, pronouns he/him.  Remember, there are four episodes of T.L.C. to enjoy, with our final bonus episode arriving in March 2023, so don’t forget to subscribe! The written resources and social cards for T.L.C. were designed by jas calcitas, pronouns they/them.

You can find Inclusive Cinema, Film Hub Wales, the Lexi, Alchemy, Phoenix Cinema, Trans+ on Screen and many of our programmers and speakers on social media: if you’ve enjoyed the podcast, show them some T.L.C. for their amazing work. Please keep sharing this resource to increase the virtuous circle that brings together venues, audiences, programmers, filmmakers and critics to show some much-needed T.L.C.