Dan & Sleepr – Transcription

Sleepr: So there's really two parts of who I am. I've been an academic at universities, lecturing, teaching, running programs, being a program coordinator, a program director, writing subjects, and I've done my Bachelor, my Master's and then I did my PhD for a couple of years. I've done some research and just been teaching and innovating in the space of mostly at design universities. They haven't been quite the fine art space, but it has just been in creative visual industries. And I've been teaching 3d animation, teaching design, teaching visual foundations and composition, digital art and all that stuff. I've led master's projects, spent a lot of time in academia land, and what that's done is probably refine my tools and techniques to a pretty sophisticated level. I'm a bit of a whiz bang with software in general. I teach programming and I've gone really deep under the hood of a lot of software and tools and digital processes and can smell techniques very, very quickly as well. And that will be important later. So that's where I've spent most of my time. Sorry, did I interrupt you?

Dan: I was just heartily agreeing.

Sleepr: I did commercial work. So I was doing, for a bunch of commercial clients, I did my masters in projection mapping on buildings. So I was doing animation on top of buildings and making really cool interactive installations where I was connecting laser lights and I was connecting led lights and little servo motors and done soldering. I have done every medium that I can think of in the digital space. And once I go deep in one of those areas, I go really deep. But I moved around so much and I ended up wanting to just focus on the simplest possible medium, which is just a single image arbitrarily, but just a single image is a good one. And I have a real belief that there is a lot more to art and the art world. A lot more to art, is the better way to put it than what history has shown so far. So I've got all that professional space. The other half of me, which is the real hidden part that I haven't shared with anyone really, at my workplace, any students, my parents know very little about it, my friends know a little bit, but it's a very, very private part, is I've grown up in Australia and there is quite a large subculture of psychedelic use in Australia. It was just around where I was growing up. And the reasons why is the national flower of Australia called the Acacia tree is quite common everywhere. There's billions of these trees and they're filled to the brim. Just a branch can fall off a tree and it'll be filled with DMT, which is one of the most psychedelic compounds on earth. It is the visionary quality. It is the visionary compound that's in Ayahuasca, which is taken in Peru. But in Peru they will drink it by brewing it with an additional

plant. In Australia, we do brew it as well. But you can also do a couple of steps and convert it into a crystal that you smoke. And then for eight minutes only you see literally a very hyper dimensional, three dimensional world that's very, very bizarre and very strange. And it's filled with beings and spirits and entities, and they're very communicative. And the geometry in that space is very, very strange as well. There's a lot of unique aesthetics that are in that space that aren't present that I've seen anywhere else. I've grown up taking a lot of this substance and becoming quite familiar with this other world, this other spirit world and this hidden landscape. And in Australia, the indigenous culture here is the Australian aboriginals, and their mythology is called the ***"Dreamtime."*** And the dreamtime is this hyper colored invisible world that has these giant, all sorts of mythical creatures. But one of them is this rainbow serpent with a very brightly colored rainbow serpent that is part of the dreaming and part of the creation mythology of how they view the world around them. There's many other studies that have done where independent cultures are seeing these rainbow serpents. So I grew up as a white, young male and really couldn't make any sense of what this indigenous mythology was all about. I'd hear about it a lot because they would share it in schools, in stories, and I actually thought it was really silly and that it just didn't connect at all. I didn't know what they were talking about, and I thought it was just a story until I had these experiences and saw and heard and saw a lot of the things that they were talking about. And it really clicked actually that indigenous culture was perhaps using plants, because these indigenous cultures were real masters of plants. They were probably using one of the most common plants in Australia and accessing the same place that I'm looking at as well. But in the west, we've really cornered ourselves with dismissing mythology and spirit worlds in general. We've really dismissed the idea that these other hidden places, that there's entities, and the world is a very reductionist rather than animist perspective on a living, breathing space that we live in. And that only the things we see are really the only real things. That's how we live in the west. And most other cultures around the world do incorporate an animist or spiritual, spirit oriented perspective about the world that they live in. It's actually only the west. And so it took me quite a while to work out what the hell was going on in the respect that we in the west don't have any framework for even how to interpret this invisible landscape that is repeatable, that within 30 seconds of anyone in the world, you will see it. And it's really just the tip of the iceberg because you suddenly transport into this place. And I'm really just talking about the tippy, tippy top of the strangeness that happens there. It's very, very bizarre things happen. Time becomes strange, it becomes forwards and backwards. It feels like you've died. The beings will say things like, you've been here before, and you've been here a million times. You chose to go back to that place. We've been missing you all these kind of really bizarre things that are also inside of that place. So I was a

young kid taking these and having these wild, psychedelic experiences and trying to figure out what it was that space. And no one could give me a straight answer as to what it was. And so I went on a bit of a journey to try to understand, what is it that I was seeing? And a number of things happened that are detailed but important. The first was I would try to describe what I saw. And there's many websites online that are trip reports that can talk about people, write up their stories of what they saw and share with others and connect with others about. I saw a rainbow tunnel as well. And I saw a rainbow serpent as well. I would say 99% of the data that we have on this spirit world is in the written form. Overwhelmingly, all of the data we have is in written form, is 99%, I would say. And it's fine if you believe in language being a very explicit medium. If you start poking around with language, though, you realize that actually ten people saying they saw a tunnel, they might have seen ten different tunnels. Maybe one was an alcove or one was a dome, or one was a hallway, and one was endless variations on all of these words are very slippery, which is fine because we can get there. But if we're talking about trying to really figure out what is this thing, just the very first step in understanding, we're already on very shaky ground because our words may not describe explicitly all of the qualities to help find shared patterns amongst people. So I quickly realized that actually there is a difficulty in talking about the experience itself, because it is an inherently visual hallucination, that the medium of communication about it should be visual as well. So then I went and did my PhD for a couple of years on this specific topic. It was probably a few versions, but the title was ***"New methods to scientifically document the aesthetics of complex hallucinations caused by DMT".*** And it was proposing a few new methodologies that psychology and ophthalmology and really psychedelic research, but in psychology, a few methods that they could use to instead begin capturing the visual data of what those hallucinations look like. And my research was showing that actually, historically, a number of simple geometric hallucinations, compared to complex hallucinations, simple being like stripes or checkerboard or honeycomb lattices, geometric patterns were resolved by neuroscientists who were able to write these 20 page long neuro mathematical equation oriented papers, all from little scribbles on a napkin that some guy saw when he took LSD and he saw honeycomb patterns. Now, this little black and white sketch, those neuroscience and of course the supporting verbal descriptions, but that little tiny sketch was really the pointer to a data set that the neuroscientists were then able to begin deconstructing how such a pattern could emerge in the brain. And so I tried to really prove how important capturing the data sets are for researchers moving forward. And that if that we are suddenly uncovering a very rich tapestry of not only beings and entities and spaces and landscapes, but potentially strange geometry. That that geometry is one of the fundamental backbones of the bleeding edge of physics, of mathematics, of science itself,

and new forms of geometry being seen. A number of other kind of researchers have described this as hyperbolic geometry, or fractal geometry, or non-Euclidean geometry, complex geometry. That's fourth dimensional geometry, very strange version but a strict describable. But that if people are seeing this extremely bizarre geometry, this will be a very important data set for how is this emerging in the brain? And currently, people are just describing it. So, again, the loop is very vehemently that what's being seen is more important than just validating people's experience or documenting it, because it's an interesting phenomena. I think that it will provide greater insight into mechanics, of the imagination, of mental imagery, and of cognition. It may be revealing a quantum level disruption or process that happens in the brain and that's related to consciousness. But also, whatever it is, is not really up to the artists. I don't see the role that artists are playing here in kind of coming up with the conclusions, which is a safer bet, because all I am saying is that the artists are going to be the ones to retrieve the data that can then be analyzed at a much slower and longer term pace without the scientists needing to be taking psychedelics to see it. And even if they did, they couldn't actually start to collectively work on the same problem. So, for me, Sleepr is a vessel, a vehicle for explorations into this spirit world. And, for me, I think of Sleepr as myself of suiting up almost with a bungee backpack and a bungee cord. And I go in with my notebook and pen, and I look at all this strange stuff, and I try really, really hard to come back with some details that I try to infuse into the artworks that I do. It is such a complex space that almost immediately after a dream, all the details go, and it's the most frustrating process ever. It's this extremely challenging thing to grasp. It's not like seeing a bird on a windowsill or something recognizable. There's very unrecognizable things. And so all of my artwork is I understand the essence of that unrecognizableness, but I'm producing unique artifacts. Some are as direct a representation of a thing I saw. But other times, it's just is the type of thing that I'm seeing over the collective couple of hundred experiences that I've had with it. So in the PhD, we need to document every hallucination, literally. But in the art world, there's this more. There is a weaving and an expression of that space as much as there is hidden clues scattered throughout all of the works that I've done. And what I actually am most excited about is pointing out all of these really specific clues, because they are very, very important little details. Even in some of my works, I'm not even quite interested in almost 80% of it. It's just a colorful container to hold it. But the thing I'm most interested in might just be this little patch of shapes over in the corner that really has that essence to it. And one of the greatest achievements is, this is like a little bit of a tangent. But when we read art and we read imagery and we very quickly group it into a certain pattern of something. It's a bird or it's a face or it's a chair. They're the known objects. But then even in the abstract world, there are many known abstract shapes as well. We know that's a paint

splat or that's a squiggle, or that's chalked line, or even unknown shapes are already become quite categorizable quickly. But one of the things I'm most interested and one of the things I really like about some of the pieces in my works is these shapes feel so bizarre that they almost like a chord on a piano hit multiple stages of visual cortex processing at once. They trigger 12% of a face and 6% of a spilt milk and 9% of the tiger skin. And it's this morphology of multiple elements at once, but never quite revealing any of those that the art of unrecognizability is what I'm really, really striving for. It may not even be unrecognizable, but it's uncategorizable. The only description I could give to DMT hallucinations is, it is so uncategorizable. I just don't even know what I've seen, but it was just the most outlandish, bizarre, complex thing. I can give you a small example of one of a little shape just to begin the process of talking about that.

Dan: That would be great. This is also helpful. I've got a number of questions here that I'd like to sort of firing, and we'll do that in a minute. And I'm thinking of questions both off my own interest and things I've read and my own visual practice. And also the questions I would imagine an audience would ask, both the questions that are of intrigue and the questions that are of skepticism. I think it's important for us to tackle all of that. Particularly when it comes to doing our interview, depending on what that is, what form that takes. But carry on with what you were saying about this shape.

Sleepr: So this piece was one that was put onto Sol. It's called ***"Under the sea",*** and just circled a couple of shapes in there. And so it's clear that it's set up in an underwater world. There's some bubbles that are nice and some strange plant life and some blended shapes. But if you really sit down with that center shape in the middle, there's just a real classical abstractness to it that a lot of classical abstract painters had, where it feels it's just pushing the edges on that recognizability. It's very difficult, and yet it feels very comfortable or homely. It still feels very quite. It's hard to put into words what it is.

Dan: That's abstraction for you. I know what you mean. Sort of out of the school of Kandinsky, Miro constructivist to a certain extent, where there's that otherworld abstraction, otherworldly shapes, but rooted in the language of painting and manipulating paint with a hand and the recognizable objects of life, as you say. Although as also you said, it's easier for us to categorize even things like Kandinsky now, isn't it? Whereas at the time, there probably was less categorization going on of abstract forms, whereas now we engage with abstraction continually throughout the day, don't we?

Sleepr: I think that's a very good point about time and place and the timelessness of that abstraction. I initially talked about technique, and I'm very conscious of my technique being so critical to the process

of landing on that spot that will remain at that unique point or that unique bizarreness for a long time. And some of my early works don't have that much cheaper. All of the work I've released, there's about 90 pieces in total, and I released about 20 over ten years ago, maybe 15 years ago. And then I stopped making work for a long time, and then I've come back and made a lot of work over the past two and a half years. And so the later work has got more refined techniques, more precise, and yet the earlier works is you can see the essence, but it's just the techniques overtake the ability to capture it properly.

Dan: Which is a really interesting point. That slippage will be key for an audience's engagement with it. The narrative, as you said, of the bungee cord dipping down into the strangeness of this place and trying desperately to record it where it remains elusive, or you become amnesiac to it, just like dreaming, as you said. But some parts of it seem to remain in memory more clearly. Is that what you're suggesting? Obviously, it's a bit different for you in life. Let's say, the average person on a forum, like you said, who's maybe done it two or three times. I saw a tunnel as well. There's enough one major thing that stood out. You spend more time doing it and maybe therefore have been able to in some way remember more because of your experience, or is it always the same? Is it always as amnesiac every time, and there's nothing you can do about it?

Sleepr: No. I think over time, I've gained 0.1% of memory each trip and ground. As crazy as it sounds, my cognition has created categories for that new unrecognizableness because of the time spent as best as it can. Which is very poorly when you actually experience it, because you come back and always laugh at the art. But compared to others, what I have is the time in the space. That's what no one, unless you go do it. Technique wise you may even be able to follow my techniques. But what you can't get is the creative direction choice on capturing that strangeness. Because what I'm trying to do is match it to that unrecognizable box I've got. Or whether it be little cheek and the gremlinness or little crawling, little sneakiness that comes through some of these shapes that resonate with qualities of the entities over in that space. There's a lot of resonating going on that I'm trying to capture that match my time spent in the dream world.

Dan: Great. Do you mind if I fire a few things out?

Sleepr: Go for it.

Dan: I'll sort of cycle round. But really, my two thoughts of inquiry right now are the moral, spiritual, emotional, critical element of this place, what that means. And the other side is then the design ***"Of your work"***, and the style that you choose to represent it in by digital. And what are the choice is about

that how much of a failure it is, and in a sense, to translate something untranslatable and the frustration of that, but then the graphic quality of the work. So if I just come back to the first about the place, one thing that when Darius introduced me, of course, I've seen your work a lot before, I have been in the space for a few years now, but only knowing fragments about it. But when Darius gave me a bit more of an intro, and now with you here as well, one thing that really struck me was the similarities to near death experiences, or NDEs, they're called. I don't know if you've come across that a bit in your own research. I spent some time reading about that last year. And it's very interesting how similar things are, not visually, but experientially. And by that, I mean the idea. Bruce Greyson, who is a doctor and neuroscientist. He accidentally gathering the first archive of NDE experiences similar to what you're doing is that there is no data or there is very little data or there's data, but it's only viewed at in one context. What's the simple brain function that's taking place here to create this imaginary place or something like that? Which is interesting sort of point to start discussing around that. What's interesting to me is, and what I'd like to hear more about is the emotional nature of it as well. Because with NDEs, people go through these experiences. So they've been dead for a number of minutes or hours. Usually it's in a hospital scenario or car accident or something like that, and have been able to come back to life. But almost all of the experiences that people have been able to write about that are the same. Being able to leave their bodies, being able to see their bodies from outside of themselves, certain visual things that are the same in everyone's experiences. And this is thousands of experiences as we started to collect. But what interested me is that a lot of people after having these experiences, actually their whole personality changes. And a lot of them end up having to get divorces or leave their families and go for quite intense therapy. And almost like the opposite of an alcoholics kind of thing, they need an NDE experience groups they have to go to because it's so un-describable. It’s kind of ironic in a way, but a lot of people who end up having near death experiences are people in really shitty places in life. Obviously, because they're overdosing or something like that. And a lot of people who have these experiences, then the experience is so incredibly powerful, and a lot of it is involved. If a lot of repeated experiences are seeing all the issues in your life from a different angle and suddenly being able to understand them all and where you went wrong, but it's all in rapid succession, in a matter of seconds, but you're somehow able to access it all at the same time as time operating differently and things like that. And it changes people's lives so much that they just have complete turnarounds from who they are. And that can be really positive in living a life of absolute desolation. And it just turns around to a life of joy, of appreciation, of deeper understanding of self, but then also of breakdown, where a lot of people actually hate that they had the experience because it was so intense. They now don't see life as

worth living anymore, if that makes sense, because nothing can compare to the understanding that they had and the peace that they finally felt for the first time. So I just wanted to draw the connection there, because although the visual side is different. What I think is interesting to me and conclusion of Bruce Greyson's book is that what's funny is that what should be happening in terms of neurologically, when the brain is shutting down, there should be less capacity for thought, for imagination, for things like that. That's what the science should say. But when people's brains are shutting down, what they're finding is an increased capacity for consciousness. So he's like, what the fuck is that about? His idea is then, which is where it gets really difficult. And the same for you in terms of talking about it in the scientific community. He's saying, ***"It seems as if our brain is a filter for the mind."*** Obviously, that's the other sort of dirty secret of neuropsychology, isn't it? We don't know where the mind is, and the mind and the brain are not the same, obviously, but it seems that the brain is a filter for the mind. But when you remove the filter of the brain, the consciousness aspect, you start to see for the first time in its fullness. And that's when you're able to leave your body see things from different multiple viewpoints at the same time and understand things in a way you hadn't before. That's the scientific viewpoint. So what's interesting about what you're saying is the terminology you use about over there or in that space, you seem to discuss it as it's other from you, maybe I've got that wrong. We can come to that in terms of what is a person anyway? And where are you when you're in this space? So I'd love to hear a bit about what would you say to someone who said, this is just all in your head? It's simply just fragments and shapes, any narrative or any meaning you're getting from it, or that you're saying, these beings, as you call them, giving them otherness, saying that they talk to you. What's different like that from a dream? Something that's just made up in my brain to trick me? And would you see this place as real? That's the other question as well. And what that could even mean, is it a place? There's a lot of spiel there, but I just wanted to get some of that thinking out in terms of myself.

Sleepr: That's totally okay. I'll work backwards from the last question to back what you were saying. I'm very neutral as to my conclusions, so I don't need to be in a conclusion oriented mindset about what this space is. It will just lead to nowhere. What I am in a space of is, is it real? I don't even know what that means but it really happened. The experience was real. Where it is, whether it's in my brain or whether it's a consistent place that is a secret room that you can open up and everyone can go into this same room. It really very unclear. What I do know is that the cycle of when you take this drug, the first few times you think, ***"Wow. That was really strange."*** And it was maybe all in my brain. And then you take it 20 times and you think, Jesus Christ, these things are real. Then you take it 100 times and you think,

maybe the brain is so complicated. Maybe it is just all in my head. And then you take it 200 times and you think, what would I know? Why do I have to keep saying.

Dan: So you move further away from understanding.

Sleepr: You get proven over and over and over the veracity of these experiences. I could just break down now into complete tears thinking about any one of these experiences. The intensity and the pin pointedness of otherness that comes through. It's suddenly like if you've walked around a zoo and you are looking at the animals, and sometimes there's a big animal, a big tiger or something, but if you get close enough to it and you can see in its eyes, you know that it's looking at you, but also it's not in your head. You didn't just dream up the tiger. The tiger is really there. And the same feeling is very, very consistent. And so to be more truthful is to say it really feels like there is an otherness in this room when I go into these places. That would be the most truthful thing I could say. It feels like there is a real otherness there. The whole process of positioning this as data so that we can understand it later keeps the conclusions to be neutral. I don't know what they are. I don't know whether they're real. We'll figure that out later, but we can't ever figure it out unless we go through this process of documentation.

Dan: That's coming back to then the role of the artist. I'm currently writing a course on understanding art history, mainly for people in the NFT space, and an alternative to art history, which is something you mentioned at the start. Some forms of art history are so restrictive that they give us a very narrow idea of what can happen or what has happened. So I'm writing a course where you've got the alternative art history. Sort of critiquing that first hour. I've been thinking about just to say that, because I've been thinking about these things a lot at the moment. It's interesting that in thinking about visual representation, and we can discuss whether your works are paintings or not, another point, but there's an interesting thing here, that historically, an artist's job would have been to document the world. But as much as you say that, it would also have been an interpretation, particularly when it came to portraiture of the king or something like that, or a description of a great country, when you've got actually political and racial goggles on, when you make the work in itself. So you've got that interesting traditional thing, but you've also got abstraction and that history just seeking to break from that tradition in a sense, not represent but to at least contextualize or formalize or experientialize the nature of otherness when it comes to, let's say, Montrian and that area of more historical abstraction, which is looking at a universal shape, stuff like that. And what's interesting to me is that you've got both things in your practice, like banging against each other because of this weird experience that you have. And that's fascinating where to place your work art. Historically it’s a serious question, but it's also really funny to

me. You are this classic artist with their pack of paints, walking into the landscape, or going into the room, let's say, the studio, and trying to communicate this experience of being in a place. Even the romantics, but also the feeling of being in a place. Because the nature of the place can be so broken down in terms of its geometry, you end up making abstractions. I'm saying this because I want to get it out, because I want to write about it as well. So, to me, that's a really interesting place to be. So that leads to my second question, which was about the nature of then the way you make. To me, it feels like, what could it mean to be? I guess, the question is, how honest do you want to be as an artist when you go there? Because there's a failure in that you'll never be able to represent these things. What might that even look like in the first place? Especially if you're coming at it as an artist? If we were looking to represent it truly, it'd probably be better to try and create a full 4D goggle wearing environment using algorithms. But that doesn't communicate anything of what you're trying to say this space is about. That is what it is. But as an artist, we're not boundaried into that when we're trying to communicate what something's happened. So we may try and communicate the experiential side of it, which maybe beyond communication in any way. But then you also make graphic choices when you make these works. We both make abstract work in a sense as similarities in our work, but it's completely different. And when I see the flatness in your colors, the way you don't allow for clear representation of three dimensional space in a way that is like, you're not using shadow to the same extent and trying to represent a location. So, for me, what's that process for you? How have you landed on this flatness of color and these compositions? You're trying to faithfully represent this place, because that's beyond ability. So there has to be some choice making.

Sleepr: The reason is when you go into these rooms, there is a three dimensionality with a sheen polished surface across everything. It's almost like you're in a three dimensional Simpsons cartoon. There is a very vividness, but there is a very crisp flatness to it as well. It actually isn't.

Dan: And would you say, as much as that is universal for people who have been through these experiences? Which, again, as you say, is still at the burgeoning level of collecting data. Would you say that was similar for everyone who would describe it as best as they can? I think that there is a smoothness to it.

Sleepr: I think there is. If you look at enough psychedelic art, you end up seeing people trying to convey those qualities. Even in the work I just shared in the chat, which is one of the closest ones I've done, but it's very three dimensional. But they are flat graphic called geometric patterns across sculptural forms. Actually, in 3D, there's some interesting techniques. One is if you don't include a light in the scene,

everything gets lit evenly and uniformly. But 3D tries to mimic real life. Whereas if you put a lamp in there, it will cast light and cause a shadow and from a certain location. But in the mind or in this space, it's like there's no light in the scene in the hallucination world. There's no source light that's casting a shadow. So everything's evenly lit perfectly and brightly and colored very brightly as well. A lot of people almost say it's like stained. They don't say it's like stained glass window, but stained glass window is a common thing. It's like, I was being in an animation film. Even if you go look at all the Al art, Al just rolls endlessly through these strange morphing room, people's faces and shit. But there's a polishedness that's removed all the paws and it's screwing up the lighting incorrectly of what we're used to with lighting. There's many sources of light in the morphed composite of the pixelation that it's done because there were many different source lights in all of the different photos that they've cut pieces out of that they've joined together. So it's not following a traditional lighting principle. One is, it's arbitrary. But strangely, I start in 3D software and then I move into 2D software and draw over the top. Because part of it is because the software itself supports those processes better. So creating a landscape or a scene or a container is easier in 3D to create a good stable foundation. But then the morphological aspects of some of these elements are really hard to do in 3D. 3D is just not a great technical medium. It's very difficult to bend and warp and split apart and get these really nuanced strange shapes. So that's where I do these more 2D flatter shapes on top of these 3D spaces. But I convert all of the 3D spaces back into feeling very cell shaded and 2D as well, so that there's a unified look and a feel at the end of it. So it's layered. One is to help the process capture the best details possible, or lend themselves to the best process possible for capturing structure and form, which are in the hallucinations, but also then this morphology. And then also there's this cartoon esque super flatness to the hallucinations. It is an aesthetic trait of it as well. It may not look like how I do it, but the opposite of it being a realistically rendered 3D scene. If that is the dichotomy or the oppositeness, it would be leaning much more this direction than maybe 3D one.

Dan: It's really helpful.

Sleepr: It's tricky.

Dan: I probably need to wrap it up soon. I got a load more questions. So probably let's do another session, maybe next week or something, but this is just good for me to be thinking on. I think pretty much touched on all the questions I thought of for now in really helpful way. Here's the last question maybe I had. Next time we can talk more about, what an audience might be thinking. But you may have already answered this in the sense that you can't really know whether it's a real space or not. And

actually you don't seek to be clear about that or find out that. Do you bring any morality or critique to this space and to these beings at any time? Are you active in the space in that? It all seems to be all about receiving and seeing. But you haven't mentioned about, let's say, moving through the space, walking, interacting, changing the space, being critical of the space, trying to understand it while you're there. Is that part of the journey or not?

Sleepr: I run a lot of ceremonies as well. And ceremonies in Peru, they are healing ceremonies. So the Shamans in Peru, in the middle of the Amazonian jungle, will sing these specific songs to tweak the hallucinations to resolve in a very interactive way the actual hallucinatory world. So what is going on, in the west, we think there is a physical body, and we've only just recently begun to include the mental body. But, in Peru, they also have a spiritual body. And these visual hallucinations, the Shaman will actually directly interact in the spirit world. And perhaps they will pull out black gunk out of someone who is laying over the top of a pile of colored feathers, and they may be spewing out this black gunk. And the shaman may pull out this gunk and call in another spirit to take charge and consume it all and resolve it. And what happens is that interactive process then filters down into the mental body, and that mental body then filters down into the physical body and physically heals them. So, during the trip, I am interactive in engaging with those beings. I'm asking questions. I'm trying to find out what's going on. I'm trying to listen and understand. They're showing me objects. I'm trying to work them out how they work. I'm moving through different spaces or different rooms. I'm trying to beeline past negative entities and move towards kind of ones that are positive. And on multi hour long trips that might be 5 hours long, I can't even begin to describe the complexity and just a series of visionary spaces and worlds that open up that you do navigate through. So although remaining neutral to keep learning, there's still definitely an interactive element to it. And there's definitely negative and positive entities in that space as well.

Dan: That's what I was going to pick up from. That's a really interesting thing that you said that. And in what way can you judge, under what criteria is negative and positive gauged in a place like that?

Sleepr: Well, it gets really weird. There's heaps of weird things, but I've traded a lot of stuff. There's been lots of trades that have happened that they will give me things or show me things if I give them things. And a lot of the time, it's really a gut instinct. It's like you just feel you're in a room with someone that's not looking out for you. But detecting morality in that space is really just like how you would with a group of unknown strangers that you don't know at a pub.

Dan: So you can use your own forms of processing which may or may not function out of that space in the same way. And when you feel a sense of the negative, is it the same feeling of the negative as you will go into a dodgy bar and you're like, ***"Oh shit, I've come to the wrong place."*** Is it that exact same feeling or is that difficult?

Sleepr: It's pretty identical. The whole time you feel very sober. You feel like you are in that space. You're just trying to work out what's going on.

Dan: That's really helpful. Because in my mind, having not done anything like this personally, my fear would be that I would feel out of control. That's interesting to feel that it feels more engaged. That's really interesting. We probably wrap it up there. Going to another call shortly, but really helpful start for me, and I appreciate the time. And I can already sort of visualize an exhibition text and a longer one. The narrative with which to draw people into the work is so clear and that's going to be quite simple. But then obviously we'll run, as I continue to create that, we'll keep you in the loop about that. But at the same time, I do want it to remain distant from you in the sense that I don't want an exhibition text to feel like an artist statement. I want a write looking at you and what you're doing, which allowed me to draw some conclusions of my own, if that makes sense.

Sleepr: I really like that.

Dan: Well, for me, it's about the worst art writing is interpretive art writing that says, this is what this means. And that's what I'm telling you. The best doesn't leave open ends, necessarily, but it contextualizes. It puts the work into a context of how it's being created and why and by whom. And that's really what I want to do. And what then that brings up, that's the way I'll approach it. I want to try and hit on the exhibition text. The most narrative led is interesting for a wall text, like this is. But also the most expansive way of looking at it, that people could come from any sort of situation and think, ***"That's a really interesting process"***. Whereas in the deeper text, I can go a bit further where people might have to do a bit more thinking about what I've said and try and work it out a bit. But got so much to go on here. I guess then maybe for the next meeting I could think about some more questions. But the second part would be for this interview idea that we've got between you and I, what that might look like conceptually, if it is more of a performance?

Sleepr: This is in the space.

Dan: Prior to the opening is what I'm imagining. So you've got a selection of people. So we're not in the madness of it yet with the music and all that, where you can't actually really have a conversation like that, in the sense that you can't have quiet and people listening. The opening will be crazy. It'll be hundreds of people. We can't suddenly gather everyone quietly into one space to listen. So this is pre-opening, hopefully some people who are going to write about it, that kind of thing. A chance for them to hear about the work from ***"YOU"***, but through me interviewing you. But then if you seek to remain anonymous for all the reasons that you've already described in this bit, how that might look then? And if it is conceptual, what that looks like.

Sleepr: I can have a think about that.

Dan: That would be great. And whether it's a replica of what you were doing at art Basel, we contact you through a means, but we are unseen. I am playing some sort of recording. There's so many ways to think about it. Mainly what I want you to think of is what you would feel comfortable with. And by that I mean contextually, it makes sense. It isn't something that doesn't connect with the work, but it also helps you to feel that you're not having to come out and have your face up front and all that if that's not what you want to do.

Sleepr: That makes sense. I'll do that, Dan. Thanks so much.

Dan: Because it will take a different form than the writing is taking, and it will require its own work, therefore, which would be good to get underway with sooner rather than later.

Sleepr: And how long do you think of it as, like 20 minutes?

Dan: That is up to you. I think the shorter the better. I'm not talking two minutes, but I don't think also we're talking about seated interview. Like, you've got the artist up on stage. It's an hour and a half with questions. I'm not thinking it's going to look like that. So it has to be something that people can engage with quickly and easily and while standing. Those who need to sit can sit. But not something that we'll have to then close down, if that makes sense. Unless you think of it this week and think, actually, I do want more of a formal interview, even if it doesn't look like a formal interview necessarily. And I do want it to be 45 minutes with questions, whatever. So just let me know what you think about that. There's obviously plenty of space to do that as well if we wanted to, with the secondary rooms around the main central room. The last thing for me, and this might be something that is not something that

you provide, but something I can ask the others about is to actually see the works that are going in, the specific works.

Sleepr: This too getting made.

Dan: So are they all being made still?

Sleepr: I can show you a couple, but I tend to work where they're still at quite an unfinished state. As long as I can leave it, I continue battering away, looking at them instead.

Dan: Obviously you're not going to surprise us all, and then suddenly it's completely different to everything you've done before. So I'll be able to write about it generally, knowing what your practice is like.

Sleepr: But I can definitely try and show you a few to give you a heads up because I'd love the specificity of those works as well to be mentioned.

Dan: That's exactly what I mean. I wouldn't want to draw just from previous work, and then there may be some gaps in writing which would be sad. So feel free to send me stuff on here, or we can work out how you want to do that. But it'd be good to see that before another meeting. Would you be up for doing next week as well, possibly same times and same day?

Sleepr: That's all good.

Dan: And with that being in mind, further questions that I've got, but I can start working on things. And also with the interview, however that's going to look in mind.

Sleepr: That's right. If we do need to push it back a week just to get some space to think about it all. Right now, we can just pencil in next week.

Dan: Cool. Have a good rest of the eve.

Sleepr: Thanks, Dan. I really appreciate you listening and really appreciate everything you're doing.

Dan: I really enjoyed. It's really exciting.