Shake & Sleepr Podcast – Transcription

Shake: Sleepr and Indie NFT artists on Solana. I've been buying a couple pieces of his work, and I'm happy he's here to talk about his story and his creative process. So welcome, Sleepr.

Sleepr: Thanks so much, Shake. I really appreciate being on here and all your support so far. It's been really meaningful.

Shake: And I'm going to pull up your art here so people can look at that instead of just my big head. I'm actually going to shoot out a tweet since we are live. Let's go more. So just tell us a little bit about yourself. Whatever you're comfortable saying, if you're comfortable saying where you're from and when you started making art that would be cool.

Sleepr: Cool. It's a pretty interesting story, actually. I'm in Australia, and I didn't really grow up making much art. And also, I just shot in a chat. We've got Sleepr art, which has got all the works. The Holoplex store has got most of it, anyways, that's cool. I didn't really grow up making art very much, and then I had a really crazy experience, and it really triggered me into producing a lot of work maybe ten years ago. So it's a bit edgy. But I was a young guy trying to experiment with life and then ended up down the crazy, psychedelic route. And I was given this pure DMT when I was 15. And I had this experience that just literally cracked open my third eye, and I just saw all these really complex hallucinations and was so inspired by that. It was such a really radically unique experience. I'd always been interested in dreams and imagination and things like that, but I had this really visceral and real experience of something that I'd never seen before. I just never seen images or colors or patterns or shapes. It was a really weird, strange place. And I was like, ***"Wow, I really want to try and make that."*** Actually, it wasn't even like I wanted to make. It was like I tried to tell other people about my experience and I couldn't even start saying it. How do you describe this one on screen here? If you see these forms that are just really complex and knotted and twisted and strange. So I was struggling with having these internal experiences and then being unable to communicate or share, share them with the external world. So I feel like I'm a bit of an outsider art. I make it not with a traditional illustration background. It's kind of abstract or even like semi abstract art where there's figures and forms and real components blended in stranger components. But my whole shtick is that these have been triggered or inspired from real experiences.

Shake: Wow, it's honestly a much cooler answer than I thought it would be. That's really cool. So it was one particular experience with DMT that inspired you and before that you weren't creating art?

Sleepr: That's right. I wasn't making anything like that. And then I had it once, but then that began a very long journey with those things. So throughout the last half of my adult life, it's been exploring and continuing that experience on many times, hundreds of times, because it still rattles me to this day, this place and this space. And in fact, actually, it's consumed so much of me that I then tried to formalize that. So I went to university. I was studying in creative industries, not in visual art or anything. Then I did my Masters in programming and 3D animation and interactive and visual design. And then I did my PhD for two years. And I actually did it in psychology and 3D animation on ***"How to visualize complex DMT hallucinations?"*** So I tried to formalize this study of ***"How are they actually going to be able to unpack what these experiences are?"*** And I realized that they actually completely can't. There's no microscope or binoculars or telescope to just watch what happens to Shake while he goes under for ten minutes. So actually, this is where artists are suddenly a really, really key tool. And they're the ones who are able to capture these dream spaces. They're the only ones, actually, they're the only tool left who have trained at this ability to see something in their mind's eye and then transfer it onto a screen or a page. And until we develop a neural net head cap or something that instantly transfers mental images, there's no other way. So that was a really interesting topic to go down. And I studied that full time for a couple of years, and it all became a bit too much. They said it wasn't scientific enough, and there was a few other problems that happened. So we basically just stalled that research, it's just paused. But I took it even. I took it further by trying to do that, by doing some formal research on that space, which was cool.

Shake: That's really cool. I love the way you put that. I've had some psychedelic experiences too, so I can relate with what you're saying. I don't know, this is really cool.

Sleepr: Tell me about your experience.

Shake: I'm sober now, but I am a drug addict. So I went crazy with it at some points where it just wasn't that deep with LSD and stuff. But the first time I ever did, I never done DMT, but I did mushrooms, and it's hard to put into words. That's why it really stuck with me. I had this one moment during that day, though, where I felt this. At the time, I didn't really believe in God or anything. I would have considered myself an atheist. And I had this experience where we're listening to, I don't know if the song ***"Breathe"*** by Pink Floyd off the dark side of the Moon album. I didn't really know that song at the time. I'd heard it, but my friend put it on in the car, and I felt myself go through this tunnel of light or something, into the

space. And then I felt this being embrace me. And it was the warmest comforting embrace. It's really weird to say. And then I remember after that thing that was some God or something. It was something, but that one wasn't as much of a visual experience. If I do remember, when it first kicked in, I remember looking at, they were walls like this with a little bit of texture on them, but they're just white. And I remember seeing what looked like these Aztec ruins start to come out of the little creases in the walls and stuff. That was my first psychedelics trip ever, and that was the first thing that happened. And then throughout the rest of the day, I remember thinking it felt like my eyes were like a DSLR. I remember thinking. It seems so high definition, and you can see things that you can't really see. I felt like I could see things that I couldn't see a more sober state. But they were real. It wasn't like I was necessarily hallucinating. It's like they are there, but I'm looking at it through a different lens or something.

Sleepr: Oh, really? That's so interesting to hear. That's so cool. I'm so glad that they were positive experiences for you. It's bold to say, I had these weird experiences. And, actually, they were amazing. And, actually, I felt like I got touched by God in a car listening to Pink Floyd. The cliche is really risky that it sounds meaningless, but it's very meaningful and it's very hard to communicate to others. This is why only the experience can talk about it. If you're not experienced, it's very hard to cast opinions in on it.

Shake: It doesn't sound cliche. That's why I was laughing while I was saying it.

Sleepr: Exactly.

Shake: Because it just sounds like I'm a hippie. It's easy to dismiss someone saying that. I dismissed people saying that before I had that experience.

Sleepr: Why wouldn't you? It sounds ridiculous.

Shake: It sounds like Cheech and Chong or something.

Sleepr: It's funny, though, the Aztec ruins. Even this piece on screen, that's a really common trait, these Incan and Aztec and Egyptian coming out of a coke can or something really innocuous in the real world and it's far out. Why are those patterns always coming out? And is that why those guys back then were doing those patterns? Or is it because I've seen those patterns before? There's many unanswered questions. And it's really hard to capture. But, inch by inch, everyone contributing and it's a big puzzle to put together.

Shake: Something else I'll say, why it changed my life, which I think you'll find interesting. I majored in psychology. I got my Bachelor's, and I always had really bad social anxiety. I still do a little bit, but really bad before college and first year of college. When I had that psychedelic experience on mushrooms, I remember I felt like I could see tension or some type of energy between people. So me talking to my friends. I actually went to an art museum, and I remember talking to the person at the front desk and feeling like I could feel this and see this energy. But that experience of me seeing it and then realizing, I can just act differently. I can be friendly to anyone, and that changes energy. Like, that's me and that's my control that I can just be friendly. That itself was such a deep experience for me. And I swear, ever since that, I've been a lot less anxious. And then I remember studying in psychology and just even after graduating college learning about. Because now they're doing psychedelics trials for people that have PTSD or depression and stuff. And I remember reading about just scheming over some of that stuff and be like, ***"Oh, that makes a lot of sense"*** because that's literally what happened to me is it made me less afraid to just talk to random people.

Sleepr: You totally got it. It's hard. I feel really identical. I've had many experience. It's not even, like because I could see the tension that I would do it. There's just this awareness that you realize of how every moment and every interaction that you have is such an option that you've got on how you engage with that other person. And every action that you have has a reaction out there in the world and with another person and taking the time to be conscious of how you make others feel, how you interact with them. I think everyone who has those experiences and go deeper than they wanted to probably end up becoming perhaps kinder or perhaps more thoughtful in their interactions.

Shake: That's so well said. You had this experience prior to your undergraduate. So you have your Master's and you did part of your PhD. Trying to get the timeline of when you started, when you had that experience and when you started art?

Sleepr: I had that experience when I was 15. Very, very like just a bolt out of the blue. And then I was continuing on those experiences, because I was very interested in what happened. And then I'd say, maybe about 16, 17, I start making art and just trying really hard. There's a lot of work that I've made that has just been scrapped because it's sketchbook work. So I'd say from about 17 till about maybe 25, that's when I've made a really prolific period of stuff. And then just abandoned all the artwork due to there being no means for digital artists to really sell my work. I was put in a few galleries and represented locally in galleries in Australia. But people were a bit iffy about buying prints. I was trying to

do one of one prints as well, but it just didn't take off. So then there was a really long period of not producing much work. And then only in the past, maybe year or so, I've come back in. I've always been working. I just haven't been doing this super flat style. That's the timeline for the super flat. I've been doing 3D, doing after effects, animation stuff, doing a bunch of client work. So trying to keep everything moving along, doing unreal engine stuff, and trying to do real time 3D. I was building a laser show with real physical lasers shooting shit. So I've just been moving around mediums for a while, but this super flat stuff is a really interesting and just off enough from most other work that's out there, it's a nice little lane to run in. So that's that timeline. And my degree, I did when I was 18 and I just went straight on one after another. So I did the degree, Master's, then PhD, all straight after each other. So maybe 25, 26 or something. I was closing out the PhD. That's for timeline's sake anyway.

Shake: And so was all this stuff on your site here? This was in the past year and a half.

Sleepr: No, this whole first collection was done about ten years ago.

Shake: I saw the piece that I bought was back then?

Sleepr: Yeah, it was ten years ago.

Shake: That's cool.

Sleepr: I know. It's so crazy because I had this work. I've got a huge bank of stuff, but nothing gets through my filter. So I don't know what 'X' number of works have been approved. And I've looked at this stuff every day. Not every day, but at least once a week or something because I'd be putting it on my own website. I've pulled it all down from there, but I was constantly curating and showcasing this work, and it's so crazy. I've seen flying witches of Vela Cruz at least 10,000 times in my life and stared at it and looked at it, stared at it on stand on my couch and look at it and then go have lunch and come back and look at, that try to get a sense of whether there's a stability to the strangeness because a lot of stuff ends up not landing. It just feels the technique is forefront rather than this stranger composition, this stranger blend of shapes, this stranger group of colors or something like that. And it's really hard to pinpoint what I'm looking for, but I'm looking for this very specific thing. And what the root of it is a complexity of pattern and form that I've experienced in those other states. So it's not really quite a direct representation of it, but it is formed under the hood by those same forms and those same shapes.

Shake: When you use the word stability, are you saying that there's some of them that almost feel too random?

Sleepr: That's right. It's funny what stable means. For me, when I look at this work, I want to roll my eye around and I really want it to be so big that I can't see the edges. I can only see the work where I'm living in it. But I don't land anywhere with my eye. I follow waves, I follow these lines and curves and then land in an interesting different spot. And then I move up, and then I bounce over, and everything gets a bit thinner, and then there's a big swoosh, and I'm pushed back up to the left. So the engagement of the user or the audience to not just look at something and go, ***"Oh, that's a bicycle, that's a panda."*** My engagement with work is immediately over. Because I get it. And then maybe I look at the details, but I already gotten to the end of the song where I'd rather be dancing and grooving for a few minutes, so I'm trying to have longer experiences with the work in terms of enjoyment, and I think that stability is probably like, ***"Am I still having fun if I listen to this song again this week? Do I have fun again if I listen when I'm tired?"*** One of my worst things is I'll make work at night till 03:00 a.m. In the morning and then think, ***"Oh my God, I made a masterpiece."*** This is going to change the world. And then I wake up at 09:00 a.m. And I think that's not a masterpiece. That looks like trash.

Shake: I know that feeling really well. I've never thought about that. Like, keeping the viewers, it's not even keeping their attention. Like you said, taking them along for this ride. Is it fun? Is there depth to the experience of it? Do you think about that when you're making the work, or is that more you make the work? And you go through that process and then you look at it and decide, is that the cases that have this.

Sleepr: Definitely while I'm making it. Because I know that's the game that's about to happen as soon as I say it's the end or I'm going to leave it there. I'm constantly, and I can probably just do that simultaneously because I've been practicing that same process for a while. I can tell, I'm going to get bored in this one really soon or not. It needs more this, it needs more that, it needs more variation, it needs less variation, needs whatever it needs. So one of the other things with Sleepr is, I'm really trying to just be really. Each work is like a whole world. In my head, I've got a Polaroid camera and I'm going through the DMT world and taking these photos of me on a holiday, and they're like all these places, but I don't want it to feel like they're all the same. In fact, want them to be really surprising or delight. Like, each work unique on its own. And so when you look at the collection, you think, ***"Oh, they're really different, even though there's the same signature through them."***

Shake: I'd say you're successful in trying to do that. One of the things I want to ask is I can pull up your Holoplex here. One of the things that drew me to your work was the descriptions on it too. And I just

wanted to ask about those. So, for these older works, did you write those descriptions when you first made them? What's that process?

Sleepr: That's a great question. It's really awesome that you notice those details, because I think no one even reads them sometimes, but it's just because you never really have conversations. It looks quite childlike, but it's a complex work. There's a lot of strange ideas happening, and even though it's just an interior space, but art is a complex snapshot. It's a one image. But how do you describe it? You could a thousand words is an image. So I've got in my head that all these ideas around that work, so this one was actually based on a dream that I had where I was playing hide and go seek in my old house, and I was getting lost in all these rooms. And every time I'd look, there'd be other person sneaking around the corner looking at me, and then I'd notice someone else standing behind the other corner. I don't want to go in this space, but I'm getting pulled to go in this dark room, but I'm actually running to go to the other room, and then I realize I can't even run anywhere. And there's this strange stuck in the cement feeling. And then looking up and seeing some abstract bird rip apart and who am I? I feel like a fucking Picasso painting just tripping and expanding myself out. This feels like a two hour dream, and I'm trying to capture elements and then put it together in a nice piece as well. So they're all swirling around my head. And when I've completed the work, then I'll take some time to try to just formalize. I think Holoplex has limited characters as well, so it's a nice four sentence description of the work. So I try and just capture some of those key ideas that were swirling around in a cleaner paragraph to summarize the work.

Shake: It wasn't actually even this one because I was looking at some of your work before I ever bought one of them, and I don't remember which one I looked at maybe is this or something? Like, I was telling you before we got on live, my mom's a painter, and she would take me to museums all the time as a kid, which I honestly hated going to art museums when I was a kid because you're a kid you want to run around. But I remember reading the descriptions of the work a lot. And even as a kid, sometimes it felt like forced. It was trying to sound deep. But yours isn't like that. I guess what I'm trying to say is refreshing because I don't even know how to explain it because they're all different. Sometimes in art, especially with some abstract art, it is so abstract that sometimes it's hard for just an average person to relate with it. I really like that you have some context for someone to put it into. It's not necessary to have the experience, but it's cool to have this context.

Sleepr: I agree. One of the issues is with being and I'm calling it semi abstract where there's things I know and then there's things I don't know in this. But it's hard sometimes for people, why do you like this work? It's just fucking nothing. There's not an ape or a bicycle or something in there. So you've got

to help guide the viewer a little bit in. But stay present with this work in this moment, in this thing you're looking at. Don't start extrapolating out too much to world and everything else because that's probably not related to this work right here. And I have that same frustration when you read just stuff that feels more philosophy ideas than the exact artwork I'm looking at. And they may have inspired them to make that work, but it doesn't quite land maybe. But I love writing that so much, that little piece, because it helps clarify the idea so much clearer. If I do have these thoughtful ideas before making or while making the work, it's cool that I can formalize it and cement it. It's tough though as well. Because in the past, I was doing these audio voiceovers to each work, describing my ideas and experience and it wasn't vibing with some people. Some other artist's just post good morning, and here's a cool piece, or just made another work and then no description at all. And it was tough. I was wondering, am I being overly descriptive and even saying it, should I not say anything what's the right path or what's the right answer? I don't think it matters. You just do what you really want to do. And I'm glad that's vibing with you.

Shake: Yeah, I could imagine. This is an interesting topic, talking about specifically Solana NFTS and that market. I'd be curious how you look at that because it seems to me, I'd be curious maybe even in traditional art world, like physical art. How is work that has noticeable figures in it that's not abstract? I don't know what you call it. Is that just more popular for collectors to buy? Because it's just easier. You can just point out what it is.

Sleepr: I could really couldn't make a call on it. I do think that abstract art is pretty popular. If you think of some rich guys, sweet hotel room unit, apartment, probably doesn't want a drawing of a horse or something, they're more likely to ponder things. I think there's something about abstract art and rich investors that go hand in hand. So I don't think that's the case. I think once people start appreciating art like a wine, they want to be challenged a little bit rather than the very first level of it might be seeing some really cool drawings that are very talented and realistic. This is a question on what is good art, and it truly just roots back to everyone's own internal makeup before they look at something.

Shake: It's a good point. When you picture some of a couple of the rich people's houses I've been in, you're right. It is abstract art. I wanted to ask about the super flat style, because when I first saw your work, I didn't realize that it was that style. I didn't know that that was even a word. And then I saw it in your bio, so I was like, ***"What is this?"*** And then I looked it up and then I found out, ***"Oh, it's like Takashi Murakami specifically."*** He coined it with that. What constitutes super fly?

Sleepr: It's a great question. It's so cool. That's what really drew me was when you mentioned, ***"I saw your stream. This is super flat."*** And then you started talking about Takashi Murakami and I was like, ***"Oh my God, I love that guy too."*** It's pretty simple. There's nothing too much to it. Anyone can do it. It's an illustration style where there's no gradients. Now, ironically, the one work you've got on screen, I've got a gradient, but that's only the light. It's very, very sparingly done. Most people will shade colors, shadows or have tones that go from blue to dark blue or one block of color, one shape. But with my work, there is only blocks of flat color. I can do shadows. I do shadows a lot, but it's another block of flat color. It's just another drawn dark purple or dark black. So my understanding is that, it's almost like a stained glass window. It's just that every shape is interlocked with each other almost perfectly seam to seam, and they're all just flat color shapes. So all of my work's done in vector. It's just all done in illustrator. And I think Takashi Murakami does the same. But then obviously we'll transfer and paint these works at a really high scale.

Shake: Anyone's watching for, this is Murakami. I think a lot of people will recognize that specific print.

Sleepr: So I don't do any black outlines as well. The black outlines for me indicate a cartoon style. That's a traditional way you'd ink in your black pen, and then you go through and color it. So I just don't have any black outlines. I've just got bought shapes with no outline, whereas Murakami has a number of the key figures and key shapes have black outlines. But that's the only subtle difference.

Shake: It's interesting. I couldn't have ever come up with that, it's no gradient. Now in hindsight, it's obvious. I don't even think your work really looks like Murakami at all. That's why I was surprised by, and then even now just looking at his stuff, I still don't think. Now I can notice that similarity, it sans gradient. That's why it was such a weird moment to me. And then now I can put my finger on what exactly it is. I look at this and there is depth here. So it's like you almost create depth with the shapes instead of the shading, is that an element of it?

Sleepr: I mean, if in this work, it feels like the black at the top, in the middle of the screen is the furthest away. And then the next layer is that big shape. Where your mouse is now, it's really dark shapes, and there's hints of color in there. So the color is actually indicating the depth. And then the middle layer in the middle of the screen at the top where your mouse is about now, that feels like it's maybe layer three or four. And then the foremost one, and with the spotlights on it is the brightest. So when you look at a horizon or a mountain in the distance, it gets less. There is less contrast and less saturation of color

because there's a haze in the sky, there's particles in the sky that make it feel more grayed out. And so you can use that trick with different colors to indicate depth without doing gradient shadows or shading.

Shake: That's so cool. Had you seen that work before? And you said, that reminds me of some of these psychedelic experiences. Did you just start making it? And you're like, ***"Whoa, my work fits into this category."*** What was it?

Sleepr: That's a really cool question. And, actually, it's one of the strange qualities of psychedelic hallucinations is that they feel cartoon like. So there's this strange. And there is an area of the brain in visual processing. I forget what number it is really, but it was v3 or something in the brain where they're beginning to form blocks of flat color. And they describe in this book by David Ma called ***"Vision"***. It's the seminal vision processing book in neuroscience. And he specifically talks about this stained glass window area of the brain that's forming the final image, and it really clicked. There is an area of the brain that's just doing cartoon imagery. It's just pre cognitive, so you don't see it, but it's happening. Right at the start, all we're seeing is angles of lines, and that will trigger another. And that will combine into the next layer that will then form outlines, and then there will be shades of color, and then all cascade on each other until finally just in my head pops up beautiful big head. But at some point in my brain, there is this stained glass window cartoon look. And the DMT hallucinations are really, really very 3D, but at the same time, very cartoon like, very hyper flat, sheen surfaces and colors. It doesn't feel like real life where there's no flat colors in when you're looking at the external world, it's like everything is just morphing and blending in into different colors, which if you're doing realism painting, you'd never do super flat because nothing looks like that strangely. And so that's why I really vibed with this style. 3D is great as well. And I've tried with procreate and Photoshop to do blending and gradients and draw and shade everything in, but it doesn't quite feel like the medium reflects one of the detailed qualities of these hallucinations. So it's felt a bit arbitrary which one you choose, but I've just chosen super flat to reflect one of those details. So it has been conscious. A long answer to it.

Shake: That's one of my impressions from talking to you is how much thought is behind some of this stuff. I didn't know what you just said about the part of the brain that visualizes things as cartoonish for. That's so interesting. Did you learn that while you were getting your Master's or PhD?

Sleepr: I really felt like I broke through a number of layers of understanding about the hallucinations in the PhD research because I was just forced there was a gun to my head to map and document everything and find every square inch of research that had been done in that field. And that was

definitely one of the key breakthroughs was. Vision is everyone's most important sense, and we know that it's an illusory construction. The world you're seeing is really your brain's reconstruction of the external world, but no one really lives in that. Everyone just knows it and then forgets it immediately and just goes back to thinking that the outside world is what you see. You're always truthfully seeing the external world. And when you really, really, really realize that every single moment is this construction in your brain and how you see the outside world is through this construction, it's very empowering as well. If you're having a really bad day, everyone looks miserable and the birds aren't chirping and everything's dark, and then if you're having a great day and crypto's up, sun is smiling and the birds are chirping and it's not true. That's because something else is changing your perspective on the world. We all know those things. But then when you go look at the mechanics of it just even look at how the brain makes up an image, it doesn't just come in as one thing. It gets translated into all these waves. It helps to ground your ideas of maybe psychology or in a more mechanical sense for those who don't want to just jump into a belief system. For me, seeing mechanics of things helps ground it in art, it is just a little computer machine in my head that's converting something into something else. And that middle area can go a bit skew or adjust or change based on how I'm feeling.

Shake: You said that was a big breakthrough. I wanted to get understand do you go through periods now? Let's say with your work where you have periods where you feel less creative and maybe you're less pleased with your work or you're working less. And how do you deal with those periods?

Sleepr: It's the most consistent feeling I have is frustration or un-satisfiedness or difficulty with producing. That's just the most consistent thing I feel with. It's such a pulling out this stuff of me. It's hard work, and it's mostly failure. It just make stuff, and it just won't feel inspiring. It won't feel relevant, it won't feel cool. It won't feel you love it. But the thing that keeps you going is, like, if you keep persistent on it, if you really do keep persistently trying, then every now and then this thing gets captured that's like, ***"Wow. That's sweet."*** I'm so thrilled to that I've captured this, and now it's in the real world forever. That's the coolest thing that you're manifesting. You're making this thing that's in your mind's eye, or you just make it come true. Now you're playing God. It's a really, really cool feeling and it's rare. When it does come, it's worth all that frustration and lack of production and lack of quality and all the bad times. And even now, I've got work that's in this discern collection on the site and I'm really, really happy with all the work that's come out. Actually, I'm so thrilled where it's gotten up to that. I want to make sure each of the next works are up that same quality as well. I'm really, really pushing the edge on making sure the next piece I release is really, really the best work I've done. And

that's an arbitrary goal just to make sure that I'm happy and feeling good about the quality. When you make work, are you in a slump or do you still make work?

Shake: I don't make art. For our NFT project, I design it, but we have an artist who actually draws it. So she does some of the characters that I've been posting lately and then the comic, so I just outline it. But I do feel like that sometimes for sure. I don't want to act like it's so hard or something because she's one who actually is drawing these really good images. But I do feel like that sometimes or even just with making YouTube videos. It sounds silly, but doing live streams about crypto and NFTs stuff. Some days I'm like, ***"Oh my God, there's so many things I want to tell people about, and I just feel in a flow state."*** And then some days I'm like, ***"I really don't want to do this at all. How did I even do this yesterday?"***

Sleepr: That's wild. But I see when you write down all your ideas for the show, that you actually feel more structured and that you're going to go through more content and it felt like it zipped through and flowed through when you had a really clear vision of that day's work.

Shake: That's been helpful to me because I have ADD, so that's something to keep me on track and get some type of finished product across. I've heard a lot of people who were watching my channel for months. I just started doing that maybe within the past month. And some guys are like, ***"Wow, it's so much better now."*** So it's such a simple thing. I relate a lot with that. I used to get all the time when I was writing. I used to have this blog about fashion and music and stuff. And when you were talking to me earlier about these pieces you just throw away, how to do that all the time. I would write this whole article and research it and put all the images and hyperlinks and stuff. And then I would read it. And she's like, this is so bad, and throw it away, and it was just the most tormenting thing do. And I'm sure if I read it now, I'd be like, ***"This wasn't bad. This was good. What are you talking about?"*** But it's just a state of mind.

Sleepr: You're the producer and the boss, so you're the quality control. And I think it's better for you to have done that. That filter is really, really important. I don't know if you've ever seen this movie ***"Whiplash"*** where the guy's a drummer and he's in these jazz bands and. But the teacher is a real psychopath for quality control and striving for greatness. How do you only 0.001% of artists break through to this really stratospheric, not just fame, but historical point. And regardless of what you're doing, you've got to have this really obsessed with someone who has a quality control. If you don't have that, there's nothing left. It's way better to throw out the work and do it again, then release it just to get that extra inch.

Shake: I'd be curious your thoughts on. It seems clear to me, you will create art, but then there's a point where there's the quality control. How do you stop the quality control getting in the way of the creation in the first place?

Sleepr: It's because you're playing two roles. You're trying to make something, and then as you're making it in that same moment, the boss is like, smack in the back of your head saying, ***"This isn't good enough."*** And it's the inner critic. So you've got to be kind to yourself. Creators are really the most tormented. They're the ones who are the most critical of themselves, and they will always be the first to tell you every problem that's wrong with all of the things. And everyone else just maybe says, ***"I think it's really cool."*** The first thing is to at least make something so you can't short circuit. The very first step is just making something. Then we can decide whether or not we'll keep it. But if you decide before you've made it, we're not going to keep this. So then there's nothing out there. So the first is just to be very kind to yourself and to make lots of things and not be critical. So many times I've tried really hard to make something, and then it looks really try hardy, it looks forced and just not flowing. And then sometimes I relax all my rules or all my critic stuff and I capture there's something about that that's just really nice. And actually, that was an easier process than me trying really hard and the critic being at the forefront of the maker process. And I think it's the energy thing. When you said, you could see this energy between people, this tension in the work or in the writing or on your YouTube streams. If you sense there's this tightness, it's the most off putting thing. And that tightness is usually a fear based reaction about criticism. So when you relax and you flow, even if criticism comes to you, it just like water off a ducks back and flows back and there's no problems. I think that's probably the best state to just make work, make YouTube write whatever it is. And then right at the end, do a little bit of critical fine tuning or even reflecting. Most of my critical stuff is just after it's all been made. I can then filter through and pick out the ones I want. But it's a tough game, because we're both of them. When you're the boss for your illustrator to just to do the comics, there's a different role relationship there, because I'm sure she is offsetting that critical evaluation onto you to be a final filter of the quality. She's got to make sure that she's doing the best work she can, and she's drawing beautiful drawings. So she's doing a critical evaluation, but there's a separation of roles to help maybe everyone do their little part a bit easier. But when you're the one person, it can often get confused and muddy maybe.

Shake: You're right. As I was talking about how she draws it as instructor. In some ways, it's easier for both of us because it is separated.

Sleepr: Absolutely. That's why working a job is much easier than being an entrepreneur. Because someone else has taken the heat. The boss has taken the heat. I just go and do my hours, and then I come out and I can turn off and switch. I'm not doing 100 roles at once. And that's what artists or all creators get who are trying to make it in this space is struggling with.

Shake: My friend told me this thing that stuck with me, and I'm going to remind everyone right now. When I first quit my job, I went to go see one of my best friends a couple months into it, and I have been for years talking about, I want to work for myself, and I want more freedom. It's never about money. I just want freedom. And then I went to him, and I have way more freedom now. I'm so overworked. I'm just working a very unhealthy amount. And he said, ***"You're your own boss. You're being hard as fuck on yourself."*** None of your other bosses were ever that hard on you, and that's why you're overworking is because you're the boss. I don't know the way he put it that way. I just have to be the boss and go ***"Take a day off".*** There's also this thing that it's reminding me of this conversation. I forget what the books called, but my dad had me read it. I was really into growing American football. And my dad had me read this book, and it was about a tennis coach. But he talked about the two people inside you, and it was about flow state. You probably have heard that buzzword, and I don't even remember what the conclusion of the book was, but it was just about how in every moment the creator and the critic. And to make peace with those two split personality, but there's two people, two character and two figures inside you. In the moments where they're at peace with each other is when you can have that flow state.

Sleepr: That resonates perfect. That's a great description of the thing. And when you say two people, it feels a bit nervous to say, ***"There's two people inside me."*** But it's just two areas of the brain. Like, interacting, and it feels like they're different areas, but they're unified in the one system. When they make peace and they shake hands and they let each other do their roles, that's it giving permission for each other to do their roles and that the other will support where the other fails. So the critic will be too tight and not free enough. The creator will end up being too free and maybe having less critical evaluation, but they will cycle through each other. That's a great description. That's perfect.

Shake: I just found that book. It's called the ***"Inner Game of Tennis"***. It's sounds so funny, but that's about the state of relaxed concentration that allows you to play at your best. It applies to pretty much everything whether someone would consider. It's literally about tennis. It's not even about art at all, but it's interesting how that applies. I gotta say, I'm really enjoying talking with you. Like I said, anytime if

you want to hop off, I won't be offended, but one other thing I wanted to touch on was specifically this world that we met through of Solana and Indie art on Solana and NFT. So there's two parts here. What do you think about the technology of an NFT? And I'd be interested also your history with that. When did you hear about it?

Sleepr: I still feel really, really new to the space. So I am careful with just really overextending what my knowledge is. Basically, I had all my art up on my side, and early-ish adopter reached out and said, ***"I love these works. You should be on Solana."*** At that time, I been really, really interested in moving over, until there's someone who's maybe interested or just someone you can bounce and ask questions off, it's really hard to just jump into that feel blind, endlessly thankful for him and his support and reaching out to make that transition over. Like I said, I'd been printing works because it's all digital. I've been printing works and putting them in galleries and saying it's a one of one print. So I'd realize the main problem is reproducibility and rarity of a single work is the key to value. That's why an oil painting will go 100,000 times more than a digital print. So I'd understood that concept. I think the NFT thing is awesome. It's incredibly beneficial. I also think it's going to create an absolute explosion of creators and Creatives and creative art. We'll truly see a real shift in the quality and innovation within art because there's an incentive for artists to actually try their best. There's a competitive space, so people are clamoring to try to produce the best or the most interesting work because there's money up for grabs. There seems to be enough money up for grabs that can sustain lot of artists. It's not just like a competition or something where there's one winner. I think there's every indication, the good thing about the ecosystem is it feels like collectors can make money, the artists can make money, and there's a real flow that's happening. It doesn't feel really stagnant. So I think cross chain stuff is really important. I don't really know the tech enough about cross chain, but I could imagine that in the future that these chains will become one whether it is many different Blockchains, but there's a binding that happens between them all, because right now we're all sitting in these pockets with ETH and Solana and all these other ones that they're all sitting in their own individual silos. And it feels like early web where websites accessed on a PC were different than a Mac or a mobile website, looked really radically different, really poor, seamless, bridging across all these devices. I think that has to happen or that will happen as well. So it was just a real shot out of the blue. One day a message came through and I was like, ***"I've been really, really wanting to move in."*** I don't know how. I don't know what. And then having a look at Solana and being like, it seems to be enough movement and traction with it. Why not take a plunge? So moved over and just backing it all the way right now.

Shake: That's so cool. So, George, he just found your art. I think he's from Australia too. He just found it completely. You weren't in NFT's or on no Twitter or anything?

Sleepr: No. I thought Twitter was dead.

Shake: Me too.

Sleepr: I thought it was like WikiLeaks and Trump, but then he just reached out. I was pretty skeptical, to be honest, I didn't know anything about him. And then he was like, ***"No, I'll buy one."*** I'll buy midnight guests, which I think is on my side as well. And he was like, I'll buy it for 5 Sol. And Sol was at 200 US. I was like, ***"Oh my God, are you kidding me?"*** This is incredible. I can't believe someone's actually going to buy my work and it was just so meaningful. I'd said, I've been doing this stuff for ten years. I've been making my website rebuilding every year. Keep scrolling down, all the way down.

Shake: I didn't even realize this was down here. That's cool.

Sleepr: And then down that one there, this one I know, up to the left.

Shake: Actually, if I pulled up his twitter, this is how I found out about you. So this is pretty interesting.

Sleepr: I think he's just changed his head up.

Shake: He just changed it. But it used to be this. That's cool. I just thought it was the coolest thing ever. He has good taste too, because this is one of my favorites, actually. I liked a lot of the same stuff that he does. That's really awesome. I don't really know him besides just following him on Twitter. That's so cool. I'm thankful to him for reaching out to you.

Sleepr: He's a really genuine dude, and he's been really supportive of whatever I wanted to do and trying things out and then being like, ***"Oh, maybe that didn't work. It's all good. No worries. Let's keep trying."*** Having someone supportive is even just encouragement. It's been everything. Like I said, the inner critic, I thought all this stuff was no one loves it. No one would ever like it. It's useless. I'm useless. Just a whole spiral of feeling because there's no validation and you think, it's public. I've got a website. It's live. Everyone's looking. You'd lucky to get five people in a month to randomly go through your site because of a page 110 on Google. So who's really judging? Not really anyone. He's the man. I always see him supporting other artists. I think he just really genuinely loves the art. I think I've got really heavy defense layers of thinking, ***"Someone's about to scare me".*** Everyone's out to just help themselves. But, actually, some people are really just wanting to boost others up and I get that vibe from you as well.

You're just a good guy, and good people make it to the end. It's really easy to just take inches and take things from people, but integrity and kindness is the two most important traits in the world.

Shake: I agree. And it's funny because I always joke with people, I'm in it for the art. It's like poking fun at myself. Because, honestly, I don't even know it's a lot less but I've made definitely less money than I could. I do trade these profile pics a lot. And I try to flip shit and I've had some good wins on it, but I feel I do a lot worse. I told you before we got on any of the art. If I told my girlfriend how much I've spent, she'd be like, ***"Damn."*** She'd probably be pissed. What's his name? Nicholas kid on the Phoenix, some of those pieces are going to go for 100k in the future. And it's funny because I literally don't even think about it. I just want this picture and I want to support this person and know have this exchange of value. I think this is worth that much. I'm excited to said, ***"Have this image on the Blockchain or whatever?"*** So it's cool. It makes sense to me that George is like that. Because I do see him supporting a lot of one on one artists and it's to comment on Solana NFT's for a while. Early on Solana had this image of being a knockoff, derivative, scammy NFT scene. And there's definitely been a lot of momentum from what I can see. I know some people have been collecting one of our art for a while for few months. Recently, I'd say in the past four to six weeks, I've seen a lot of momentum with it and it makes me really excited. It's way cooler to me than the other stuff really. It's actual art and getting to have these conversations and getting to share this stuff with people. I've never met George. I've never even talked to him in the DM's. But to know that him and I both are drawn to something in your work. That's a cool connection that I have with him. And when I post it on Twitter and people go, ***"Hell"***. I post on my Instagram too. And some people comment, ***"That's awesome."*** And some of the pieces I show my girlfriend, she loves it. Some of them she doesn't. To me, there's something like that's way cooler than just being like what's the floor price on this pixel monkey derivative? This is not that interesting. So it's really cool to see the one on one stuff.

Sleepr: You are so right. When you trust and guard on something maybe that is what others are doing as well. So if you're picking up cool works, I'm sure that they will. It's hard to tell, but it feels like that's also an investment strategy because others are doing the same thing. So if you're picking up works that you love, then actually that's what the floor price in terms of coolness is. You're actually trying to purchase cool things. And if you were into fashion, it's the same sort of area. Because what we're really trading is something very, very intangible. And then you can economically and financially look at prices and growth and charts and stuff. But how are you going to describe how cool a work is? And actually, that's the currency that's getting traded at some level. Some of the artists maybe they get boosted and

they get really popular some other way or some other artists get famous because maybe another collector is like, ***"That's where it gets shown in the museum of modern art or something."*** There are other reasons why art is collectible, but at the core of it, people are getting the cool thing that they really like. So just trusting your gut is probably a legit strategy. And as we go on, it will be about taste. So who has the coolest taste? I see Soltoshi always in spaces, and he's always picking up really sweet works like Ceylon as well. I see him picking up. I know their taste is refined, and they're like, ***"I really love that one. That's cool".*** Those guys will do well because they're just trusting their taste. I think at some level, that's what's got to happen is you get your taste in and then you back the ones that you really love.

Shake: I'm glad you're saying that. It makes me feel better about spending five figures on this stuff, but I do look at it the same way. What you just said made me realize it too. There is this something else I wanted to ask you about is, I've only heard on the periphery about traditional art world and the gatekeepers of it and galleries and people representing you and taking money and you don't get the resale value. There's all these things that I've heard gripes from some of my artist friends who paint or make some physical work. And what you just said, it really clicked for me. Assuming that people, at least some of the collectors know about an artist who's making one of one art on Solana or Tezos or Ethereum or whatever, some of the collectors know about them. It is such a fair, open market, and that's pretty fucking cool. To be honest, I never thought of it that way. Like you said, in this moment, it's bidding so it's weird. Someone might miss the auction or something, but they can go on the secondaries and make offers. So I can say in this moment, this is worth that much to me. And, at any point, any guy or girl that I never met can offer me money instantly before that. That is crazy. Because I forget why crypto is cool sometimes because I get so in, it starts to feel like a Ponzi or something. I know I struggled that all the time. But when you just said that, I'm like, that is so powerful. Just this free market forces to allow that to happen with artists and collectors.

Sleepr: Exactly, 24/7 store, international collectors. So doesn't matter what time zone, doesn't matter where they are, soon they can be on their phone, on a bus buying fine art. Compared to a gallery that has the radius of an ant that can go in and purchase the work, the options are 0.00001% or potential of artists to make it. And then what happens is it just kills the artists off. They can't be bothered going into the galleries, and then there's only very few artists actually making work and getting into local galleries, and then the art gets less quality. There's less cool things. There's less risk. So art is really about risk. That's the taste thing, whatever your taste is. But if you've seen it before, you're probably not incentivized to grab it. If it looks really cool and I've never really seen that one before. I really love that

innovation component and crypto is incentivizing a truly beyond economics. The impact is so great in making it tough and potentially successful for artists to potentially be able to make money and then to also make it a clean competition that's only going to breed incredible cool work that we've never seen before. They'll write about this in history books. You think of Renaissance for real. And we'll look back and there'll be a quality jump an emergence of many new art approaches and artistic styles and artistic decision making.

Shake: I'm so excited about to watch this space more. And something that you said and mentioned before that I had never thought about too is that the financial incentive is there, and so therefore, they can make a living off it, which is also equally as awesome. They can continue to challenge themselves and make better and better art. They're like, ***"If I keep making my next best piece, next best piece, there's a reason to do it outside of just the pursuit."*** That's so awesome. I'm more excited now about NFT's than I've been in a really long time because you're bringing up a lot of things as an artist of reasons that weren't obvious to me of why it's so powerful technology.

Sleepr: And the other missing piece is that it has to be incentivized for collectors. The idea that you can buy a rupture painting for 30 Sol a month ago and then now it's 70 Sol or 100 Sol, that's a really worthwhile investment. And even if you're just reselling on for 5% or 10%, it's really important that there's a marketplace, that there's demand, that there's secondary sales, that collectors can make money as well because that's the ecosystem. Is that the collector needs to be able to buy cool work, the artist has to be incentivized to make cool work, and that the collector makes money, the artist make money, and it just keeps flowing and really strong ecosystem of flow. I'm so excited that collectors can make money as well because without that, the whole thing actually falls down. If there's a secret feeling, like our collectors just hold the bags, it's going to die.

Shake: It's a really good point.

Sleepr: I don't think that's the case. The first secondary sale was the one that you got. So that's the only one that someone has released. But as soon as someone feels that, what they need to, what they want to, I'm sure that there'll be a market for it. So they're collector or their investment early was worthwhile, it's a longer flip.

Shake: Now I get because you DM me after that. And honestly, I was surprised why does he care that I bought it from someone else? I thought it would actually matter less, but you DM me after that and

you're like, ***"Thank you so much,"*** because that means a lot. And now I'm realizing maybe some of the thought behind that.

Sleepr: I guess everything's an unknown. Will it be a secondary market? Will someone actually buy it on the secondary? And it's like, ***"Actually someone does."*** So it's great. The system is continuing on how it should be. I'm sure if the other works were put on secondary that they would be picked up as well. It's so much bigger than any one of the roles. You got to have this really global perspective on the thing. And I certainly don't understand all of it or have my pulse on everything, but there's certainly positive sign. They feels like there's more positive signs than negatives, and that's enough to make a gut instinct decision on it.

Shake: I agree. I had never thought about. I always felt all the collectors feel like we aren't special. We're just some guys who have some money but it's all symbiotic.

Sleepr: This is a little mini drip release, but I'm going to start a little podcast. I'm going to call it ***"Edgy"***. But I'm going to have collectors and artists. On every episode there will be a collector or an artist, and they just talk through their five favorite works. So the five favorite works that an artist made or the five favorite works that a collector has got. And they both are so important. They both complement each other. They're both actually interested in the taste thing. I'd love to have you on an episode, and hear about your five favorite works that you picked up and why you liked them and what your taste is all about? Both of those are really important to this ecosystem.

Shake: I think that's such an awesome idea. I actually did this thing with Magic Eden.. It's like this thing they're starting where they tour someone's Metaverse gallery. It was the coolest thing. It made me feel special. Because people asking me questions and showing interest. It was so cool. And they thought it was cool too. They learned about me through it and then the artist do the little I know about different artists. So I love that idea. Long story short, I just did that yesterday with them and it was so fun. So I think that's an awesome idea. That was actually bringing me to one of the other questions I had written here, ***"What's your experience been with marketing in the NFT space? How is it different from marketing when you were marketing with galleries or having representation?"*** So this is the piece that someone won a bid for 8.5 and then they listed it for 20. And I have this in my gallery for those who might be wondering. While he's away, I'll show you guys my gallery. I have two Sleepr pieces in here. So there's the first one.

Sleepr: It's so sweet to walk around in a 3D gallery.

Shake: It's the coolest thing ever to me. It's this one NFT since I bought this, the price has gone up. What to me is a good amount of money? And I was like, ***"I don't know if I can ever sell this because I love to go in here."*** It's so fun. If it got too crazy, I might sell it. It's so cool. It's just something that I love. I think stuff like this is important for the whole. Because honestly, having this makes me probably more likely to collect more one of one art.

Sleepr: I totally get that. And it's got to be wallet connected, so you're showing the real NFT in there. And I could imagine, I remember the guy who bought BPool was talking about, ***"Oh no, this is a billion dollar NFT."*** It's not a $69 million because I'm going to put ticket prices to come into my gallery. So you could imagine someone with a really cool, sweet collection ending up a couple of dollars or something to walk through and enjoy the art in a different way. I can imagine a whole bunch of different interesting things happening in this space with the art that people have collected. It's so crazy for a JPEG to end up, what can you do with a JPEG? It feels pretty limited on your screen. It's just this flat image. But in a big wall you get the scale and dimension and they feel huge, even though it's much smaller than that work on screen feels huge rather than it being actually much smaller than full screen on your window.

Shake: That's such a good point. I never thought about that. It does feel way bigger. How has it been different from with marketing and just getting your name out there in the NFT space specifically? Tell me about that.

Sleepr: It's really tough. I think the thing I've learned the most is just about consistency. And the cool thing is your tweets or your Twitter page or whatever, work overnight for you as well, so you can wake up sometimes and maybe someone's retweeted your shit or there's a few more people who followed. For me, that nothing has blown up. It's just been a real consistent grind a consistent push and the drip release. So only a couple of auctions, and then we take a break for a week, only a couple of pieces per auction. And I've had amazing support from Holoplex. They'll retweet out the auction stuff. So, every interaction, every bit of notification is helpful, but there's really no plan. And what actually it is that the work either sinks or floats because it's this open market. At the same time, you've got to make sure that people are really sinking seeing it. But after you realize that, I'm sure people have seen the work. And if they vibe with it, they do, and if they don't, they don't. It's just really objective and really transparent and neutral that the only marketing piece I have is really the work. I don't do photoshopped auction this week with big headline text like a YouTube thumbnail or music poster or something. There's no other marketing collateral. It's just that the work speak for itself. Not that they're bad things at all. It's just

probably feels unnecessary in this space as the one of one artist. If you're maybe a bigger brand, it'd probably be more necessary because you don't have enough content to keep posting to keep relevant per week but it's certainly a murky area. What do you do? You just sit still and tweet and connect with the community and try to follow people and try to engage in some conversations. I'm a pretty shy guy as well. I don't really pop in spaces and talk but I'm always watching. I want to be involved, but it's hard to get in to when it feels like there's a click or there's a group of people enjoying something, you don't want to just butt in. It's also hard because I'm shilling. I had such a hard internal battle with marketing my art. I really dread being like, ***"There's an auction on. It's 24 hours to go."*** But this is actually what enables me to keep making cool work. That's a cool thing. And also, George has been so supportive. He's like, ***"Nah, no one cares. No worries. Don't stress yourself out about"***. It's really just marketing yourself and telling people information. So I try to be limited with too much of that, that's all I can really do. That's why it's really cool to get in these combos, where there's always other stuff I want to talk about and talk with someone and connect with people, but you end up playing brand manager and then marketing manager and then artist.

Shake: It makes sense to me. It's not that I don't like spaces, but I don't seem to like them as much as other people at least. And I don't really like talking on them either, because I always feel I can't actually get an idea across for some reason. It feels like I have to be more. I'm not very good at saying something short and really hitting it home in one set succinctly.

Sleepr: This hot stakes.

Shake: It's like, I can't ramble about, and I can't really talk this idea through. I love doing stuff like this, and actually I want to do more of it. I want to interview. I love interviewing people. It's funny because I still have a podcast. I don't do it as much anymore, but I have two. It sounds funny, but I have one with my girlfriend we haven't done in a while where we would interview, we'd interview our friends to do cool things. And then I've one with two of my friends about crypto, and I love that because I listen to long form content. I will listen to one podcast while I fall asleep every night, and I like making it too. When you appreciate something, you always want to try your hand at it. I'm really looking forward to seeing what you do with yours and the collector side too.

Sleepr: We should work together on it. It'd be really cool. We should chat more about. Because you really vibe with the one on one art and it'd be great and I love this combo. There's a connectedness, and

it's so cool that you've done your psychology degree. There's a real thoughtfulness that with everything you've said and asked. I didn't know what to expect. It's cool.

Shake: I'm glad, because I love interviewing people.

Sleepr: It comes through.

Shake: Cool. It seems like a good place to wrap up. I can't even believe it's been an hour and a half. That's insane now.

Sleepr: I totally agree. Well, thank you so much. Good luck. Hopefully we get to chat and do this again sometime.

Shake: Definitely. I really appreciate your time. It’s good to meet you and talk.

Sleepr: Thanks. I’ll see you soon. Bye.