

Culture as a service, and how heritage can give communities a new voice

SPEAKERS

Alina Boyko, James Harrod, Dominique Bouchard

Alina Boyko

Hello, this is For Arts` Sake, a podcast that gives voice to museum people. Here we discover their untold stories, for art`s sake and for your sake. Today we're talking to Dr. Dominique Boucher. Dominique is the head of interpretation and learning at English Heritage, an organisation that manages over 400 historic sites and collections, from stately homes to Stonehenge.

00:01

James Harrod

With more than 15 years of experience in the sector, Dominique has a real wealth of knowledge, from curation to education. Her work has taken her across the globe, doing projects in China, Ireland, and of course, the UK. Central to Dominique's work is community involvement, giving people the chance to tell their own stories. We'd love to learn from Dominique about her diverse experience, the international nature of her work, and how the sector can serve people around the world. Dominique, welcome.

00:23

Dominique Bouchard

Thanks very much for having me.

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Alina Boyko

Thank you for joining us. Dominique, while you've been working in museums and heritage for more than 15 years, your interests weren't always be confined to culture. Tell us a little bit about yourself, where does your interest in culture and communities originate?

00:58

Dominique Bouchard

I guess I've always been interested in the way that things work, like how the world works. And that meant that when I was an undergraduate, I studied for degrees in applied physics and mathematics. I think there was one day when, 15 years makes me sound really old, I guess I'm getting a bit old, I was on holiday with an old boyfriend in Greece, and we were in this cave, and there was kind of Roman pottery scattered all around my feet. I was kind of looking around, I was thinking, gosh, physics and maths are brilliant, but I didn't want to spend my life in a laboratory. I just thought, all of those things, they're wonderful and they tell you lots of things, but culture and society and history, and the way people interact with each other can't be reduced into a series of formula, or modelled using mathematical modelling techniques. I guess I was drawn to culture, and I was drawn to the idea of

becoming an archaeologist, which is a blend of that science and humanities learning. From archaeology, I was introduced to the world of museums, which was captivating and exciting, and offered so many opportunities to bring things together in ways that were surprising, or maybe unconventional. That was really the start of my career and the start of my interest in thinking about communities.

01:11

James Harrod

After that big change of discipline from a more scientific background into the museum sector, you've then gone on to work on several really important international programs. You worked in the UK and in Ireland and Hong Kong. How did you become such a globetrotter? How do you manage that kind of workload?

02:34

Dominique Bouchard

Well, I think workload and globetrotting are sort of two different things. I'd say that we joke that I'm not really a workaholic, that I have hobbies, but my hobbies are other work. So if you put them that way, it makes kind of sense. I haven't really made a lot of, I never really decided, for example, to move to the UK. I'm originally from New York, I grew up just outside of New York City, and went to University of Columbia in Manhattan. And after I found myself in this cave in Greece, I decided that I was going to go off and do a PhD in archaeology. I decided late one night that I would get the Oxford and Cambridge applications for graduate school, I think I was probably studying for one of my maths exams. I got in, and I thought, this is really exciting, I'm going to do that. It was an entirely new world for me, being in the humanities and doing a PhD in a very, very, sort of self-directed ways, it was really different from the experiences that I had as an undergraduate, especially in maths and science, where your courses are very, very clearly laid out and the progression from one part of the discipline, or one level of expertise to the next is really programmed. I love the freedom, I loved being able to sort of sink myself into a black hole of research, and kind of emerge a few days later with possibly nothing that was relevant to my doctorate, but a real enthusiasm and passion for learning.

While I was at Oxford, I started volunteering at the Ashmolean, and because of my engineering background, they actually took me on to work on three-dimensional architectural models of the new museum. This was way back before the Ashmolean redeveloped, and because I had studied three dimensional architectural design and animation as an undergraduate, I was kind of able to do something that was a little bit unique. And it gave me an insight into the way in which objects tell stories, into the way in which curatorial practice or organising exhibitions and organising spaces meant that you could bring ideas together and things that were tangible, but which are ciphers or which are metaphors, representative of things which are intangible. That really was something that I thought was exciting, because that meant that you could deal with ideas. And bringing people together to think about ideas was something I thought was really, probably the most interesting thing you can do. If I'm totally honest, I fell in love and moved to Northern Ireland. My wife was a lecturer in history at Queen's University in Belfast, and I got a job in a museum service called the [Menantra] museum service. And it was the most exciting job description I'd read, it was doing really interesting work, working with ex-prisoners and

paramilitaries to do community history projects, addressing the legacy of the troubles. And that opened my eyes to the role that museums could have in making real contributions to societies and to their communities. That was something that I felt really passionately about. And ever since then, when I've seen an interesting or exciting opportunity, I haven't really thought very much about where it was going to take me or what the nature of the work was going to be, except for the fact that I was just passionate about it and excited, and I wanted to do it. That meant that I ended up spending five years in Ireland, and then two years in Hong Kong, which was unexpected. When I had my job interview for the role in Hong Kong, the museum director said, why do you want to move to Asia? And I said, well, I don't, but the job seems really interesting, and that was it. And I've been incredibly fortunate to have my family behind me. I've lived apart from my spouse for a really long time, on and off over the years, and that's because we've had a great support network of friends and family. But equally, chasing down the opportunities that make themselves available, also comes with sacrifice, and often comes with a lot of work. So if you're passionate about it, and you have the chance to do something, then I think it's worth doing.

02:54

Alina Boyko

So you've worked in a curatorial capacity. Today, your focus appears to be mostly on learning and education. Could you give our listeners a little bit of an insight into the intersection of learning and curatorial roles in museums and heritage?

07:10

Dominique Bouchard

I think that the line between sort of traditional curatorial roles and education or learning roles in heritage organisations and museums has been blurring a lot. Since I started in the museum sector, 15 years ago, maybe a little more now, they were very, very distinct. You'd often have the education teams tack on to the end of whatever the curatorial product was. So if there was an exhibition, then the curators would sort of work everything up, and it would be very didactic. So you'd have everything that the researchers or the experts wanted people to know, the academic experts on a label or on the exhibition text, and then the education team would often come in and then try to shape something from that or distil something like that into a form that would be usable by schools, or by community groups, or by really non-expert audiences. I've seen a complete transformation in the way that that works in the sector. And of course there are some organisations where that divide is more clearly defined than in others, but in organisations where visitors really come first, then those two groups of people, those groups of specialists bring their expertise together, and that's when really special things can happen in museums and heritage sites, really anywhere. I think we have some stuff to learn from the attraction sector, for example, where I think sometimes they're a little bit less precious about, or maybe we're a little bit overly precious in the museum sector about that kind of expert knowledge. We want there to be some kind of a line between the expertise of the museum staff and the general expertise or the lived experience and lived expertise of the visitors. But where we can, I think we have lots of room to grow, is to try to create space for people to bring their own experiences and their own expertise to bear and have that supplement the materials that we're communicating, that we're providing.

07:25

James Harrod

Talking about that, bringing all the expertise together and learning from one another, are there any special particular lessons you've learned from curation that have shaped your educational practice?

09:37

Dominique Bouchard

I think I have loads, I mean loads. Every time you do a project, you learn from it, and every time you look back on something that you've done, if you can look back and you say oh, I would do that exactly the same way, then that just doesn't happen. You have to think where there are opportunities to expand the work that you've done. So I think one of the most profound experiences I had was fairly early on in my career when I was working in Northern Ireland. I was working with a group of men from a place called Carrickfergus, which is just outside Belfast, and they were from [Birman's] organisation. The organisation was made up of mostly ex paramilitaries, loyalist paramilitaries. So these are people who, during the troubles in particular, were willing to take up arms for the cause of ensuring that Northern Ireland remained part of the Union, part of the United Kingdom. In this project, we explored the history of a person called William Orr, who in 1796 was executed for administering, or supposedly administering the oath of a group called the United Irishman to a British soldier. So the history of Ireland and the United Kingdom is very old, it's very long, and at various points, until 1921, Ireland was part, the entirety of the island was part of the United Kingdom. In the 18th century, before the Act of Union, which was passed in 1801 by Parliament, there was a big revolt. There was a group called the United Irishman who wanted Ireland to be entirely independent. Those moments have happened with that particular political ambition many, many times over the years in Ireland, and in 1798 this culminated in a rebellion by those groups, by these men called the United Irishmen. Many of them or most of them were Presbyterian, which is unusual. I guess, if you don't know the history of Ireland, it may sound unusual, because typically we associate a united Ireland as a political ambition with Catholic communities, and nationalist communities in Ireland today, which tend to be more Catholic, although obviously, it's changed really vastly, especially over the last 10 years, and that complexity is factored in.

So these men who were themselves Protestant, and who identified as loyalists, found this story actually very interesting and surprising that there were these Presbyterian Protestants who wanted United Ireland, they found that really they didn't know that. So William Orr was the person who we started investigating, and he himself was Presbyterian, and was hanged in Carrickfergus in 1797. The phrase remember Orr became a phrase used by the United Irishman as a kind of a battle cry. Soon after that, the rebellion was crushed, and the major turning point of this was the defeat of the United Irishman at Vinegar Hill, which is in County Wexford by the British Army. I took these guys as part of this project to understand the history of the United Irishmen to Vinegar Hill. It was a really profound experience for many of them, they told me that they hadn't realised this incredible story, this sort of inspiring story of rebellion, and from men that they related to in a lot of ways, even though politically they were in different places, also separated by, like 200 years. It was really profound for them. So for me, what I learned, it is a really long story, so apologies if you have to cut it, but I guess one of the things I learned was just the power of history to create a sense of belonging. But actually, it wasn't just history that did that, it was these people with their

experiences, and the challenges that they faced in their lives, and what they brought to the story, is really what made it rich and relevant. It wasn't that this battle happened at this, kind of on this windswept Hill, and they were looking at this memorial, it's not the stone of the memorial in particular, which was profound. It was the way in which that story resonated with them and with their experience. So I view that as sort of an equal partnership between past and present and between the expertise of historians who write so that we know about these things, and the people whose stories, whose lives that really resonate with.

09:49

James Harrod

I think that's a really fascinating insight, actually, into the way that history can resonate with people across generations, particularly those lesser known stories, the things that aren't part of a public consciousness, it can often resonate with people more because they're more part of a personal story. You have continued that journey of telling people stories, or finding out stories, of bringing history to life. So in your current role at English Heritage, obviously, you're still trying to find ways to bring heritage and history into people's consciousness and tell their stories and get people involved. How did you get into this role? Again, there are so many twists and turns to your professional journey, you've kind of done everything. How did you end up here?

14:27

Dominique Bouchard

Before I was at English Heritage, I was working at the National Army Museum. That was a really incredible experience as well. The army story is one that's really challenging also, especially with sort of my hat on related to Northern Ireland, it's a very, very complex story. That's one that I think obviously really deserves a lot more work and attention. The role came up at English Heritage, and I thought that looks really interesting, it seems like a really big job, I don't know if I could do it, but I think I feel really passionately about heritage. I'd worked in single organisation museums, and in some ways, the English Heritage allowed me to draw on all of the expertise and experience that I built up over the years. The museum I worked in in Ireland is called the Hunt Museum, and it's a decorative art museum based on a private collection that's now in public ownership, and it's full of really weird and wonderful stuff. In Hong Kong, I was working in a Maritime Museum. The Army Museum, obviously, it is a military museum. And what I felt like the English Heritage job really allowed me to do was to bring together all of my experience as a trained archaeologist, also with my maritime history and the decorative art and the military history, and just think about how do we explore, what does English Heritage mean? As an organisation, it's very descriptive in the sense that we are English Heritage, meaning we are bound by the geography of England and we look at heritage, and particularly what's called the National Heritage collection, which are, again, those 400 odd sites that you mentioned, and some gardens and landscapes and around, I think, 600,000 objects or so, lots of them are architectural fragments and sort of bits of archaeology. So how do we think about this material in some kind of cohesive way? How do we create access for people to engage with and encounter these stories that are, I guess, infused with these objects, or it can be ciphers for. I was really inspired by that opportunity, and I'm grateful, I'm grateful that I was given the chance to have a go at it.

15:15

Alina Boyko

As you've mentioned, English Heritage manages over 400 historical sites, more than 600 objects, bits of archaeology, and with such a large portfolio, English Heritage must have a pretty wide range of audiences. Who are those audiences? And how do you make sure that your educational content meets their needs?

17:35

Dominique Bouchard

From an education perspective, we're very focused on schools, although more recently, through our national Shout Out Loud program, which is a partnership with some other cultural organisations, we're focused on young people as well. So we try to address the broadest range of young people that we can through both, formal education and the informal youth sector. I think that we're constantly revisiting, reworking, updating, revising, and innovating in relation to our educational materials, just as the curriculum and students learning is utterly transformed as technology transforms, as people understand more about the past, and as parts of the past become more interesting, because people have discovered them, so many people for the first time. We want to make sure that we're meeting their needs. I think that we serve around 360,000 schoolchildren a year, although, of course, over the last 12 months, that's been disrupted, really substantially. So our focus has really been trying to meet the needs as best we can and serve as many young people as we can during the pandemic. We know that young people are amongst those who have been most adversely affected, whose education has been disrupted, and we really want to make sure that, as much as we can, we're doing our bit to try to help support them in their learning. For us, that also meant providing, at the moment at least, resources for parents, many of whom are teaching their children for the first time and discovering what it actually means to teach a child something, which is really hard. So we want to be doing that. And of course, I don't know if this is selfish of us, but if young people today don't really care about these sites or these collections or these places, then they're not going to be interested in preserving them and conserving them. Places like Stonehenge, for example, only have value because we value them. We value them for good reasons, because they're really interesting, because they tell us about the past. Of course, history itself is only important if you think it's important. So we have a secondary mission which I guess is to try to explain why we think people should care about history.

17:56

James Harrod

On the topic of getting people to kind of care about the collections, care about the sites that English Heritage manages, are there any particular favourites of yours? Any hidden gems that people might not visit or might not know about that stick in your mind?

20:27

Dominique Bouchard

I feel like I have so many favourites, and equally I also feel like if I say something as a favourite, then I feel bad that I'm saying something else isn't a favourite. But I'll give you some that I just think are amazing. I think Stonehenge is incredible, and I know that's sort of a cheap answer, because it's Stonehenge and it is incredible, and picking a World Heritage

Site feels like cheating. But if you haven't been to Stonehenge, go. At the moment, there really aren't any foreign tourists and you can have this incredible experience. It's just incredible. Just standing by the stones and looking at them, it connects you with something that's very old. I think one of the reasons why we find history and heritage sites so compelling is that they help us bridge our own selves to people in the past. There's something inherently compelling about that if you're a person that's interested in people. I won't say Stonehenge, because that's cheating. I guess my favourite site to drive to is called Lindisfarne, Lindisfarne Priory. It's on Holy Island, and you have to drive across this, I'm sure there's a proper word in geography for it, but there's a road and then at high tide, the road is completely covered with water and it's impassable, so the island gets cut off during different tidal moments during the day. It's also one of the places where the first Viking invasions landed in England. So it's a place of incredible violence and also incredible serenity, because it's a priory and it has enormous religious significance for many, many people. It's also really cute as a sort of a tourist location, it's a really lovely village. So it's all of these things that come together at Lindisfarne that make it just incredibly special. I also really love Tintagel. Again, that feels like cheating, because it's one of our most famous sites. We just created a footbridge, which means that it's much more accessible than it was before. And it's, again, a really magical place and standing on the headland and looking out over the water at this sort of windswept landscape, you really do feel like you could step into some kind of Arthurian legend. The place I spend the most time at, or I feel like I spend the most time at is called Portchester Castle, which is on the south coast. Originally it was a Roman fort, and then over the years, by years, I mean centuries, it was used and reused and refortified by the Normans, and then in the 18th century, it was used as a prisoner of war depot during the Napoleonic Wars. I've been doing a lot of work at Portchester with colleagues and also our partners at the National Youth Theatre, Hampshire Cultural Trust, and other organisations, the University of Warwick as well, around the history of the prisoner of war theatre, and the stories of the black Caribbean prisoners of war that were held at Portchester in the 18th century. It's an incredible place, and I'd say it's one of our less visited sites, so that means that your experience there again if you go, it's really very special indeed.

20:43

Alina Boyko

Wow, I have a solid list of places to visit right now. So Dominique, going back to education, moving forward, what is your vision for the future? How do you see learning and interpretation develop in the context of English National Heritage?

24:04

Dominique Bouchard

I think we always want our sites to be places that people can enjoy going. I think that as an organisation, we're a charity, so our charitable income is based largely on, both our membership and site visits. So we need people to come to our sites in order for us to keep doing the work that we do. I think a visit to an English Heritage site or a visit to any heritage site is about the connection that you form and the memories that you make in that place, and the sense of connectedness that you can feel with people who've stood in the same place that you stood, and their lives would have been very, very different than our lives today. I mean, especially if you go, if you're looking at a site like Portchester, or you are

looking at a site like Lindisfarne, the monks in the 10th century in Lindisfarne, I'd say that our existence isn't particularly close to what they experienced. All of these places that we see were built by people, and they were built by people for reasons and people had their lives there. I think from a learning perspective, the more we can help young people understand and feel connected to the past, the more confidence that they'll feel, the greater sense of belonging. We've been doing a lot of work in the heritage sector to address enormous gaps in the stories that we've been telling. As a sector, we haven't done a very good job, particularly telling stories of Black History, of Asian history, LGBTQ history, history of women, there are enormous gaps, and we're working to fill them. But the partnerships that we build with the communities around those sites and with the communities that are most connected to those stories are also really important. So from schools and from learning, we want to show people the complexity of the past, because I think there can be a little bit of a sense that the past was really simple, and it wasn't. I think I learned that lesson definitely, it became very apparent to me on Vinegar Hill in Ireland, back in 2008. I think it's something that you need to relearn and relearn all the time. And the more that we know about the black Caribbean prisoners of war in Portchester, the more all of our lives and all of our sense of history is enriched.

24:17

James Harrod

So if your kind of goal for the future of the sector is getting young people involved, telling stories that haven't been told, then I think Shout Out Loud, obviously, is something we need to talk about quite extensively. So perhaps for our listeners who might not be 100% aware of the Shout Out Loud programme or initiative, I'm not quite sure what the best term for it is, if you could maybe tell us a little bit about what Shout Out Loud is and how it works, how young people can get involved, that'd be really great. Thank you.

26:47

Dominique Bouchard

Absolutely. So Shout Out Loud is our National Youth Engagement Program. It's led by English heritage, but we deliver it as part of a consortium. So we have partners, and those partners are the Council for British Archaeology and their young archaeologists club, Photo Works, which is based in Brighton, but as a photography organisation, is the leading photography gallery in Ireland, they do the Jerwood photo prize and have a wonderful festival as well. The National Youth Theatre who I've mentioned before, their programs are just incredible, I'm just totally in awe of the work that they do. The BBC are advisors to the program, and another organisation called Sound Connections, which is a youth voice organisation primarily. So as a team of organisations, and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we have some new partnerships, for example, with Google recently, Google Arts and Culture, the Google Cultural Institute. We've been working with groups of young people to, I guess, retell history through their eyes, or reflect history through their lens. I think that that's what that's about. It's not about rewriting history, it's not about replacing one story with another story. It's showing young people how they can take control of and take ownership of their own relationship with the past. As a heritage organisation, our role is always to be supporting that kind of engagement and supporting people in engaging with the past and learning about the past, and also understanding how they can frame it for themselves. So Shout Out Loud is our main, our primary mechanism for doing that. We've

worked with thousands of young people around the country, through digital projects during lockdown, and we've got another good whack of activity to come, which I'm really excited about. So one of the main key ways for young people to get involved with Shout Out Loud, is as a young producer, and that's sort of the Youth Leadership scheme that Shout Out Loud has. So young people aged 16 to 25 can become young producers on the program, if they go to our website, which is theshoutoutloud.org.uk, there's information on that there. The young producers do everything, from participating and contributing to kind of key strategic decision making within English Heritage, so they have a voice within our organisation. They also do research. They also help shape and determine what future years of the Shout Out Loud program will look like, so they sort of tell us what they think is important and then we go off and do it. We work with other young people to shape those activities, for young people to be the beneficiary of those activities.

So I'll give you a little bit of an example. One of the things that the young producers said was important, that was interesting to them, was supporting young people around England during the pandemic. So we partnered, again with Sound Connections, and did a project called Reverberate, which supported grassroots youth organisations around the country to develop and then deliver a local heritage project of their design. We gave them money to deliver those projects, but we also gave them training and mentorship so that they understood how to do it, we made sure that they were set up for success. But we also gave some training to the youth leaders, so that they would, again, have greater skills to be able to engage with other heritage organisations in their local area, with us again, and that program wrapped up in December, and we had a big online sharing, and I'm sure you're going to find out more about that program soon. It was just wonderful. The projects included music projects, there were film projects, we funded 14 projects across England, and I say across England, rather than across the UK, because as I mentioned before, our geographic remit is England wide. So the Shout Out Loud programme is England wide. And we're looking to expand on that in subsequent years and build on what we've learned and try to support more young people and try to introduce more training.

27:16

Alina Boyko

So you've mentioned a number of partnerships, can you tell us a little bit about your personal highlights and achievements in the context of this program? Are there any projects that really stand out for you?

31:39

Dominique Bouchard

This is my favourite program, not just because it's working with young people, and not just because the level of creativity and the openness that the organisation has had towards their ideas has meant that they've really been able to explore things and take risks that you wouldn't necessarily see a large national organisation being able to do. So one of the highlights, absolutely for me, was a project that we did with the National Youth Theatre. It culminated in September 2019, and that was an LGBTQ inspired play called Our House, which was devised by young people, performed by young people, I mean, the cast were groups of young people from the National Youth Theatre and a London based charity called Metro Charity. It was led by a queer creative team and the director was a black man, a black

queer man, which is really important, so that the young people could see themselves reflected at every level in the leadership of that group. The play won a UK Heritage Award last year for best event exhibition or festival, which we're incredibly proud of. We've been really taking every opportunity we can to talk about it.

What I think is great about the project isn't that it won an award, or that it was really profoundly moving, it's really the effect that it had on the young people. And to hear them in their own words talk about the way it gave them a sense of belonging, for some of them, it was the only safe space that they had, you know, they weren't accepted, some of the young people weren't accepted for who they were in their homes. So coming to this project really meant a lot for them.

So from sort of the organisational perspective, or from the organisers perspective, we were supporting, putting on a play about history and about a history that hasn't really been told very much, or really at all, especially at Eltham. From the participant perspective, I don't really think that the creation of the play was the primary thing that they were experiencing. I think what they experienced was a profound sense of belonging, and the sense of community making and friendships that they were able to forge with their colleagues on the project. And the art kind of came second, which is why it's even more impressive that it was this incredible piece of art. I guess I shouldn't be surprised by that because it was profoundly meaningful, and when art comes from something which is profoundly meaningful, then it often has that resonance for loads of people. I mean, the reason why art is meaningful is because it allows people to feel something, and the Our House project was really meaningful.

31:51

James Harrod

So you touched on this idea of allowing people to create connections and develop communities and friendships between one another through culture, which I think is a really, really lovely idea. Do you have any tips for people trying to get into the sector or professionals who already work in the sector to sort of build on your ideas of cultural heritage in service of people?

34:56

Dominique Bouchard

I believe very deeply - I think we had this conversation early on in this idea of culture and service. I think that we are a service sector, we may have a lot of knowledge about a bunch of old stuff, but we need to be using that to try to make things a little bit better for people. I think for people starting out in their career, it's an incredibly difficult journey, it's more difficult now than it was when I started my career, there are more people interested in heritage, there is sort of more competition for jobs, the pay has not really increased at the level of other sectors and with the cost of living. This is a career, I think of it as a lifestyle, unfortunately, but it means that everyone really loves this work and is really dedicated. I'd say that every organisation, no matter how big or small, there are opportunities to think about reaching out to people. It's not about, I think, the number of people that you reach. In English Heritage, I can talk about big numbers, because we have 400 something sites, and we're a big organisation. When I was at the Hunt Museum, there were four members of

staff, a really healthy volunteer cohort, and a giant city with enormous problems. We weren't going to ever solve the problems of Limerick, in any job that you have, you're never going to completely solve all of the problems that you can engage with, but find something that you feel like is helpful and try to help, even if it's one person. I think that older people are sort of also often left behind, so even if you're in a small museum in a rural community, there could be old people, older people who would enjoy doing a reminiscence project. It doesn't have to be about contested history, or it doesn't have to be about a challenging subject matter in order for it to be profoundly meaningful. I think that it's about finding the people that you want to serve, and then working with them to figure out what interests them.

35:21

Alina Boyko

Dominique, we have some general questions we ask. If you had unlimited funding, what museum or cultural space would you build before and after COVID?

37:36

Dominique Bouchard

I don't know. I think I probably wouldn't build anything. I think we have a lot of museums, and a lot of cultural spaces, and I'd probably try to give money to the ones that are there, especially after COVID. I mean, after COVID, the theatre and performing arts sector has just been absolutely smashed. So if I could I'd probably just cut cheques to as many different organisations and people as I could. The arts and the culture sector are so important, they're just so important. Artists and their ability to speak freely about the things that they're passionate about, the things that bother them, the things that they think are great, that's the bedrock of a healthy democracy. I think that we need a vibrant culture sector in order to, is almost like a test for how healthy a democracy is, when artists can say things when, you know, there's never going to be enough money for all the artists who are around to make the artwork that they want to make. But we need to be supporting that sector, and we need to be supporting those people, to say things that we disagree with, to say things that we do agree with, to say things that are just weird, all of it is required, all of it. The richness of our heritage institutions, of our museums is only rich because of the collections. If you see the collections that we have, that's just the stuff that people kept. There's a lot of stuff that we have no idea about because it wasn't stored for whatever reason, and we need people to be producing all kinds of things, so that people in the future can have all kinds of things, but also so that our democracy can hear all the different ideas and people can make up their minds for themselves.

37:44

James Harrod

And, Dominique, if there's one thing that you'd like people to go away from this interview thinking about, what is it?

39:42

Dominique Bouchard

I don't know, I don't think I have anything. I mean, it's not for me to say what I think people should think about or not think about. I think that, I guess on that basis, follow your heart. If you feel passionately about your work, then you're not going to mind all the hours. But also, if you think something is right, then I think that's worth exploring, that's worth expressing. I guess I have one other thing, which is I think the pandemic has been, we've all become a little bit normalised to this situation, and it's really difficult. There are hundreds of thousands of people that have died, 100,000 in this country. I think about the US, where there were over a half a million people. We need to have a look at our society and think about what we value. I think that knowing what's important to you is really important, and that's really hard to do. I don't know if I know what's important to me, so I don't really feel like I'm in a position to tell anybody else what they should be thinking about or not thinking about. But I guess I think they should listen to the podcast. You should get more subscribers.

39:49

Alina Boyko

Dominique, thank you so much.

41:09

James Harrod

Where can our listeners find you and find more of your work?

41:11

Dominique Bouchard

Well, I'm hoping to be able to publish a little bit more, especially the work that I did in Northern Ireland, because I think, especially at the moment there is a lot of discussion about this whole sort of issues brewing around a culture war, there's issues around contested past, who owns history, things like that. I'm really hoping to get some of that work out. I don't know if someone will find it interesting, but I think that those people from Carrickfergus deserve to have their story told. I guess I'm on Twitter, unfortunately, LinkedIn. I'm very googleable, so if you just put in Dominique Bouchard and museums you'll probably find me, wherever I happen to be hanging out at the moment. Thank you very much. I think it's really been a wonderful opportunity to share some of these experiences with your listeners.

41:16

James Harrod

Thank you so much.

42:04

Alina Boyko

Thank you so much for joining us.

42:06

Dominique Bouchard

My pleasure.

42:08

James Harrod

We hope you've enjoyed this week's episode of For Art's Sake. If you'd like to learn more about who we are and what we do, find us online at forartssake.co.uk, on Twitter at [sake_arts](https://twitter.com/sake_arts), or on Instagram at [forartassake.uk](https://www.instagram.com/forartassake.uk).