

# 'Creative Gatekeeping & Accessibility' with Lu Williams

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## SPEAKERS

Lu Williams, Isabelle Gray (Iszy), Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester

### Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 00:00

Welcome to Bite My Tongue, the podcast where we invite our fave people from the creative industries to tell all on the topics we're so used to biting our tongue on.

### Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 00:08

This week on Bite My Tongue, we're joined by Lu Williams, who is, I mean, they're gonna give that little intro bit, but they're the person behind the Grrl Zine Fair. They're an artist and creative in their own right, have done some writing. Also starting a new venture which I got very excited about, which I won't spoil now. But me and Iszy loved this convo, didn't we?

### Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 00:34

We did yeah, it was honestly so great. Like, they just have so much going for themselves, like they've doing so much. And I'm just like, when they were introing, and they were like, yeah, I'll do this and this and this. And I'll just say, Oh, my God. When do you sleep? That all sounds so cool. And yeah, I thought it was just such an eloquent conversation. And like, from the get go, we'll like from the first answer. We're just like, obsessed. Like, yeah, brains expanding. loving life. Yeah.

### Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 01:03

Yeah cause we're talking about creative gatekeeping sort of convos. Which, you know, I was, I was ready for some, like, you know, more in depth, heavy chat. But like, the level that it went to have like really looking from a wider perspective, I was just like, wow, yeah, honestly, big galaxy brain time.

### Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 01:30

Yeah. I felt like it was really affirming as well. Because I thought like, gatekeeping is something we all know happens in this industry, but I don't know. It's not something I've like, consciously realised yet. If you're not, I mean, like, it's something I've been aware of, but I have never really deeped it. So that like, the conversation was like really rewarding in that sense, was just like, damn. Wow. And it was really

great to hear about, like trying to combat that kind of stuff. And just Yeah, like that, that there is hope. Yeah, for the newer generations that hopefully things will start to change because we're so sick of it that we wouldn't dare do it to our younger people in the industry if that makes sense.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 02:07

Yeah, the things of like, the structures that they're working and participating in it's just like it's very affirming and like we can imagine a new way and a better way so.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 02:20

Yeah, like it's something I feel like would come up like theorised in a book like oh, maybe we should do this, but the fact that it's like actually, like existing and happening is pretty nice.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 02:29

Yeah. And thriving from the sounds of it. But yeah, have a listen now and we hope that you guys enjoyed the convo. Hi, everybody, and welcome back to another episode of Bite My Yongue it is Fozz speaking here and I am joined by the glorious Iszy Gray. Hi, Iszy.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 02:49

Hello, how are you?

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 02:51

I'm grand. Thank you. How are you?

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 02:53

Yeah, I'm good. Thank you. Good. Very excited for this episode.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 02:57

Yes, because we're joined by another wonderful guest as well. We're joined by Lu. Hi Lu.

**Lu Williams** 03:04

Hello. It's nice to see both.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 03:07

Yeah, see, virtually. But it is nice to meet you. And for anyone who doesn't know who you are, though. Would you mind giving a little introduction bit for everyone?

**Lu Williams** 03:19

Yeah, of course. So I'm Lu Williams. I'm an artist and founder of Grrl Zine Fair, and also a new dog toy company called dog ear. Which is also publishing based, actually. So yeah, I'm an artist who also writes and publishes, I guess, simply put.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 03:41

I am so excited about the dog toy company.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 03:47**

Wow, that sounds amazing.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 03:49**

I had to like stifle a squeal there. I was like, Oh, my God. That's an amazing.

**Lu Williams 03:55**

Yeah, I think that's the fun thing about being an artist is you have an idea. And then you just kind of first off ask your friends. You're like, I have this idea, guys. Is it any good? And then obviously, your family like, yeah, it's amazing. But I applied with my friend Emma to a grant recently, which as we'll probably discuss is how artists make money. And they were just like, this is a great idea. I love dogs here. Here's some money to make your dog toy sculpture company. Yeah, that happened. I was I was very shocked. Actually.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 04:32**

Yeah we're no stranger to grants. This is how this podcast is happening.

**Lu Williams 04:38**

There we go, who's sponsored you? I want to know all the sponnies.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 04:43**

We were helped by City Ventures, which is through City University, which is where Iszy studied. So it was Yeah, very much. She was our way in.

**Lu Williams 04:57**

Yeah, got all those education grants for you.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 05:00**

Absolutely Yeah, we'll miss you. I wanna run to you.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 05:06**

Well, yeah, rinse them dry. But as you sort of touched on there of like, what we're going to touch on, in this episode about the idea of like, accessibility with the arts and with creative industries sort of thing. And the idea of gatekeeping, and the different forms of that. And I feel like gatekeeping is very much a buzzword in online discourse sort of thing. But I don't know whether many people could sort of actually explain the idea of it. So what do we actually mean by gatekeeping? in the arts, and what different forms does that take?

**Lu Williams 05:49**

Yeah, well, when I first heard it, heard of it, I had to also Google it. So essentially, I describe it as you have certain industries, you could even have it as a group of friends, where everyone kind of knows what's up apart from you, or people who aren't in the know. So take like journalism, for example, super hard to get into unless you know, people who already work in journalism. And usually those people have quite a big platform or they have like rich families. So if I was gate keeping, keeping journalism, I

would kind of not share my contacts or not pass on email addresses, and kind of keep my references close to home and wouldn't be open to sharing them. And you get that in the arts as well, of course. So yeah, basically not being cool, open, honest people, about getting into certain industries, and keeping it quite selective and quite secretive.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 06:53**

That sounds about right. And why do you like think people do that? Like, is it like, greedy? Like they want it all to themselves? Like, isn't it nice to share?

**Lu Williams 07:04**

I actually think it's because we live in such precarious times. So unless, yeah, you're super well off, I think everyone is kind of unstable, there's no, like, when you're in the 40s and 50s, you would expect to be given a job, which is really well paid or paid enough so that you could get a house, you probably have an idea of your family structure, you'd be quite supported by the state the NHS. And now, I guess, because of the private sector, and because of the recession. And also zero hour contracts, freelancers, a lot more of us are renting as well, it creates the idea of like a very unstable world. And I think that general idea of that general existence really plays into our minds and really gets to us. So as a freelancer, I don't know where my next job is going to come. And therefore I might be more protective over who I'm getting that job from and my contacts there. So it's it is something that's been thought about is something that the kind of government have set up, like, they kind of don't really want to support you. And they'd rather the private sector takeover a bit more. But that does mean that you're in the private sector, and you're competing for work, and competing for these really small grants that are quite few and far between. So I don't blame people for really wanting to gatekeep sometimes, it's kind of the instinct, I think of people existing now in our generation, with like, less work and really unstable opportunities to rent and things like that. But yeah, I am in my circles and how I operate, I'm really anti gatekeeping. And I'm always trying to pass on contacts and link people up together, because I think that's the only way forward right now.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 09:03**

So it's like as a result of vulnerability, and like, it's really interesting that you say like to not to try and not always see it as like an individualistic approach more than like something we need to look on like a state level. Because, yeah, maybe the individual selfishness maybe it's because of Yeah, state inequality. Yeah, that's really interesting.

**Lu Williams 09:25**

It's like a neoliberal existence everyone, like, especially with social media, as well, you're like, what do I post next? It's all very individualist, the 30 under 30, that kind of thing. It's all like, whose hot and now and there's this movement away from communal kind of making and existence existing which is like what humans were born to do, basically. And now we're kind of making ourselves into products to be like sold or consumed or Yeah, brand brands are always looking for new creatives to kind of exploit or work with in order to make their brand seem cool. And that's kind of nice. Like if I've worked with brands before, and I'm like, oh, cool, like, then this, this trainer company care about me or want to help me out. But really, it's about creating that individualism as well and kind of picking and choosing who gets opportunity. Whereas I'm super interested in like a grassroots level of like journalism and making so

who, like as a community can you help each other and like, lift each other up from the grassroots level without relying on big brands and gatekeepers and I don't know Vogue, Elle, one of the traditional like, journalistic institutions.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 10:48**

My mind is already like expanding. It's been like five minutes. I'm like, Oh, my gosh, think about the Neo liberalism think about the state. But it's like, yeah, I think even though we talk about gatekeeping terms, like institutions and industries, that's still not wide enough. Like we have to take into account things like precarity, and that sort of thing. And, yeah, our very narrow, imagined spaces of like, how we think that the wider systems can work sort of thing.

**Lu Williams 11:28**

Exactly. And we live in such a complex world, it's so easy to just be like, Ah, that company didn't give me this thing. And they've chosen this other person and like, get really bogged down in that kind of thing. Or like, why is this person being a bitch, I just wanted the numbers to this. But it is literally just because we're, we're basically in like a frying pan of capitalism. And everyone's kind of like jumping for scraps and just trying to exist. So it is nice to like, be able to be or create, like a really supportive network of creatives around you, because then you don't feel that pressure to kind of be like, Oh, shit, I'm too old now to be on the Dazed 100 list.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 12:11**

And a little earlier, about how we're moving away from like, communal stuff, like we're all like on the individual. And we know that you're part of this really unique community space. And it has quite a unique structure. So do you mind explaining it to us and how it kind of works?

**Lu Williams 12:31**

Yeah, so I'm sat here right now at the Old Waterworks. It's in South End, which isn't the first place you'd think of when you think of like creativity, and art, and culture. But yeah, we've got, we've got a studio here, it's in an old water work. So above my head, we have like the big winch. And underneath my studio is the well that used to water the community around here. And essentially, they've started a way of working, I guess, where everyone's paid the same. So the cleaner is paid the same as the director, obviously, the hours are different. The the director works, I think it's three days a week at the moment. And the clean would work a couple of hours a week. But essentially, the date, the day rate is still the same. It's not quite as high as artists union rates at the moment. It's about 150 a day. But I mean, I wouldn't turn my nose up at 150. So yeah, and we've got we've got a community garden as well. So that's made with a permaculture collective. So they have veg and different flowers. There's a section of flowers, which you can use for medicine. There's a section of flowers, which you can use for dyes and painting as well. And then we have a cinema as well, which you can rent out or host a screening out or have a workshop space. And then the building's mostly used for artists' studios. So I think there's about 15 artists here now. So yeah, it's really nice to be able to work here and also discuss ideas with other people. And we're all because of the the pay structure because everyone pays the same rate for space. It's really levelled the playing field. There's not like, Oh, we've got this really famous artist like around the corner, like you'd be paying the same rate as them. Yeah, does that makes sense, have I explained that well enough?

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 14:35**

Yeah, that sounds amazing. Like I haven't heard, I think about any sort of other structure like that, especially for, you know, like a sort of artist community sort of thing. Especially with the garden. That sounds like a utopia. That's lovely.

**Lu Williams 14:57**

I'm so into that My next zine is actually, queer utopia and fantasy, so imagining what what that could be. And I feel like that's come out of just being here as well. Yeah, it's kind of refreshing we did have. So the director sometimes has to consult and, and go and kind of make money for the space in other ways, so talking to other galleries or arts institutions. And a couple of them, when they've spoken about the pay structure, the directors have said, we couldn't possibly be paid that much like their salaries, I don't know, 100k a year or something. But I think that is potentially like them panicking and holding on to what they know and what, and this idea of hierarchy like to be a director, you have to be paid more, and it's like, more prestigious, but at the end of the day, you're all carrying out some sort of labour. And it's, by doing that you're prioritising like the cleaner's labour is less important than the director who sits and does emails, but like the cleaner's kind of keeping us safe over COVID and looking after us, and doing quite hard, menial tasks like scrubbing toilets, like, that is a hard job. Whereas a job that's probably maybe a bit more stressful, but easier going on the body is like sitting down at a desk and doing emails. So it's really made me think about the value of labour. And these hierarchies when you get into workspaces, which I'm sure you've all come across before. Bosses and managers and stuff.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 16:37**

So do you find that, like, being a part of this community is like a way for you to keep, like motivated from like, turning into a gatekeeper? Because obviously, like, it can be like tempting to be like, no, like, you know, I want these things to myself, because, you know, I've worked really hard for them. And it's hard to like, uncapitalist ourselves, I guess, it's like, pushed on us so much. And so yeah, is that where you kind of stay motivated to like, deal with like gatekeeping in industry? And is there any other reasons that you stay motivated?

**Lu Williams 17:12**

Yeah, this is a great question. Because I was I was in London, actually at a studio. And it was very expensive. I was on Jobseeker's just after leaving uni, and I was like, I'll just use my whole monthly allowance to get a studio in London. And I'll just travel there. But I was like, very stressed, always tired, coming back and forth. Soth End's only 30 minutes from London, but it's like a different world as you can imagine. And the, it was like a lot of fashion people I was in the studio with. And it was kind of weird, like, not everyone came in that much. Opportunities were obviously quite like it's London, it's really competitive. So you kind of just innately had that quite like bitchiness to it. And yeah, there were a few people who I loved and will miss but I decided that for my own mental health and also just like financially to move to get a studio in South End. And through that, I've learned that I think finding your people is really important as well. So not kind of, I think just after I graduated, I was like really conscious of who was cool and who was doing what. And then didn't really allow myself to kind of be myself and actually pursue my own interest. So like being here has kept me motivated because of the people here as well. And like making sure that I've I found my people and that we're on the same kind

of wavelength, which I think comes naturally you'll find that in communities anyway. I think it's a lot easier in London, actually. Because especially being queer. Like, you come out to suburbia, and you're a bit scared of Yeah, how, how straight and boring everyone is. Not everyone but but

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 19:10**

But enough of them.

**Lu Williams 19:12**

Yeah. Yeah, basically, in answer to your question, the longest answer ever. Yeah, just like being here and surrounded by people who just kind of like are quite authentic and want you to do well as well. Keeps you Yeah, keeps you motivated. Definitely.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 19:29**

So when you're looking when you say like, finding your people sort of thing is sort of like you want to be surrounded by like, you know, cheerleaders, hype up people, sort of thing?

**Lu Williams 19:42**

Exactly and people aren't like conscious of whether what you're doing is cool or like what you're wearing. They're just like, that's a sick idea. Like, do you want to do you want to work on that together or should we apply for some funding to make this happen? Yeah, people who are your cheerleaders essentially.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 19:59**

I love that. How positive and sweet I rate that. But sort of circling back right to the beginning of the episode.

**Lu Williams 20:10**

Got deep very fast.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 20:14**

It's how it's how I like it. Like if we can talk about the frying pan of capitalism as soon as I am grateful.

**Lu Williams 20:21**

I made that up. I don't even know if that works.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 20:24**

I love it. I yeah. Yeah. Yeah, we're gonna use it in our everyday from now on. Yeah, just whenever I'm tired, I'm gonna be like God it's the frying pan again,

**Lu Williams 20:39**

Don't. I'm just a little bit of water and capitalism's oil. I don't know, taking it too far now.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 20:46**

I feel like there's somewhere to go. But yeah, we won't push it. But, um, yeah, um, we've talked about sort of your space and your artistic work in terms of gatekeeping. But at the beginning, you also mentioned Grrl Zine Fair, which I adore as a thing. But for any listeners who don't know what sort of thing it is, would you mind just explaining it for us, please?

**Lu Williams 21:18**

Um, so Grrl Zine Fair is a platform, I'm always confused as to what it's call it. But Grrl Zine Fair's, essentially, a platform for artists, writers, creatives, anyone who's just interested in in self publishing, to find other queer and feminist themes, be that through coming to a Zine Fair, or to an event, to a gig. And then also I run zine making workshops, which my favourite thing ever because people turn up and they're just like, what the fuck's a zine? Yeah, and then I take them on a wonderful journey. And then they leave wanting to make more zines. Yeah, and then I also have Grrl In Print zine p, which I'm currently working on issue five. And that's, I make my own zinees as well. But that one's something I hold close to my heart, because it's a collaborative zine. So I work with lots of different people who maybe haven't written before or submitted to a magazine before. And then I either pay them to write an article or they can, they can just submit it's up to them. And then I publish them. And I think the last one was about 90 pages, and we had about 60 different people in it. So they're, they're quite big. And often it's someone's first opportunity to be in a publication. And I try quite hard to get them stocked in places where they're really visible as well. So even though a lot of people hate it, the Tate have stocked them before, which is cool, because you're putting artists who might have just finished that a levels or something into a zine, and then putting them in that space. And then I have the Grrl Zine library, which is about 500 zines strong at the moment, and they're all queer and feminist. That's the theme. If you want to submit to the library, that's what they've got to be in some way. And then that travels as well. So it's, it's a portable library. But it also lives here at the old waterworks in between travelling. And that's been to that went to China, Beijing in 2019. It's been to the British Film Institute, as well. And we had a pop up at the V&A museum. So that kind of a building that came from my art background and sculpture, and my interest in print, so essentially an installation of zines. So you come in, and you're in this space, and you're surrounded by 1000s of queer and feminist voices, and you can sit down and you can read and you can chill out and kind of read the stories in your own time. And the reason why I love that part of the project is because you're literally say you're in the British Film Institute, you're walking in, and you're, you were like, met by these voices, and they fit given this physical space as well. So yeah, like, often you won't have all these voices at the BFI. It's quite a old institution, which comes with a lot of old white men. So to create a space for these voices was really nice, even if it was just for a couple of days.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 24:39**

For something like the BFI that it has such a face to it, that to many isn't it is inaccessible. And then to bring in queer and feminist voices, which are often like marginalised voices, it's just like, yeah, again, it's like another sort of reimagining of what like a physical space can sort of hold and sort of represents a lot more sort of idea.

**Lu Williams 25:06**

Yeah, I've never really thought about the link between, like here, the waterwork space and the zine library as well. But it is just like, basically making what we want the world to look like, in a little in a little space.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 25:18**

Yeah, I mean, I think it's, I yeah, I just think it's really charming in that way. But um, what you were saying about like, you know, people who might have just finished their a levels or something and then they get to, you know, see a piece of their work, you know, at the Tate, essentially, like, how does that sort of process happen? Do they come to you? Or do you find them out? Is it very accidental in that sort of thing? Because, you know, for them to have that sort of opportunity would feel so like, out of reach, but you're being able to enable that. So yeah. How does that happen?

**Lu Williams 25:59**

Yeah. Well, it feels out of reach initially. And then, you realise that institutions need young, cool voices. So I think you should, like, yeah, really value what you're making. And that institutions are always going to be on the lookout for something that's not that traditional in regards to that. But I stumble across a lot of people on Instagram, and I'll give them a message and ask them if they want to make something for the zine but also have a public call out, which to be honest, is the most labour intensive thing ever. So I might get about 200 emails, and then I'll have to go through and I answer everyone, I actually applied to a few grants myself when people just don't reply. And you're like I spent three days on this thing. But yeah, I'll reply to everyone and give them some sort of feedback. And I'll probably take like 30, 40%, and put them in the zine. And often, even if people just have an idea, like a pitch, they want to write about something, I'll work with them to make it happen. So given some kind of editorial advice, as well, in kind, and then if I have funding, I'll pay people to make stuff as well. Even if it's not a lot, just like 30 quid from my pocket I'll always try and make sure that everyone's paid if they're creating something new. It's a bit different if they're to been to quite a lot of magazines. And I put in a picture that they mean, two years ago, that's kind of different. But yeah, so a lot of different avenues. And I've actually just closed submissions for issue five, but issue six will be at the start of next year. So not too far away. Yeah. And I'm always looking to kind of work with new people and support other zine makers as well. So.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 27:57**

yeah, that's really incredible. And I guess, I think a lot of people when they talk about, like helping someone else out, it's always a giving an opportunity and that pressure to really give them like a sort of big break. But I think something that can be, you know, sometimes equally as helpful is just like when you give a no giving that feedback, giving that sort of criticism to help them grow. It's a sort of, like mini slice of mentorship sort of idea sort of thing.

**Lu Williams 28:29**

Yeah. I actually love criticism, not not the kind of like your hair sucks online. But I love getting feedback, even if it's negative. Because yes, that's the only way you can grow. And I think we're actually taught in culture, a lot of the time that we take that really, personally, if we get negative feedback. I think it's quite good practice. I think artists are quite good at it in general, is just getting used to crit. So that's something you do in art school is you. You might have heard of it before, but you'll have like a weekly

crit, and you'll present your stuff. And people will be really brutal. I went to Central Saint Martin's for my foundation, which I'm sure you know, is a fashion school in London. And they were very harsh. Like they would rip you to shreds. It wasn't just like, here's a bit of feedback with a pinch of salt. It was like, why have you done this? Like, it doesn't convey what you mean it to it's essentially pointless. And you'd be like, wow, okay, spent three months on that. But going through that training is like put me in quite a good position where I know the kind of feedback that's helpful for people. Yeah, and I think I think people should be more open to it. In general of accepting criticism.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 29:51**

Yeah, definitely. I've had my fair share of that as well. Like I just finished my Master's in journalism. And yeah, we'd have the same thing of like a weekly thing where you'd like present your story and everyone, like reads it and then gives feedback. And it'd be so brutal. It should be like, yeah, so like, let's rewrite the opening to this, because this isn't working and stuff and just being like right. Yeah, I spent like an hour deciding what my first line was gonna be but thanks. But it is true, like it does help you grow and like, you need to hear it. You know, that's the point, like, of going to these schools, I guess is to improve and like, yeah, you're not going to be perfect are you, especially at the beginning of your career. So yeah, I think it as long as it's done in the right way. I think it can be a really important thing. And it is so nice that you reply to all the emails and do that. Like, honestly, that is

**Lu Williams 30:38**

I regret it sometimes. Every now

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 30:42**

I'm sure. Yeah.

**Lu Williams 30:45**

Often they don't yeah doing a real service to journalists. When I yeah, when I submit things, and people don't reply, I'm like, it's just so fucking rude. Like, why? They can't even tell me no, like, really?

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 30:59**

Yeah. Exactly. Yeah, thanks. But no thanks, isn't hard.

**Lu Williams 31:04**

Yeah, exactly, exactly. Just a no, so I don't have to keep checking my emails and like panic every time I see, like,

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 31:10**

I'm hoping though that like, because I feel like it's been a real generation wide thing of us all, you know, having to apply for like, dozens, if not hundreds of jobs and whatever. And not hearing nos that now, when we are in those senior positions, we're going to be so much more giving sort of thing so even though we've been scarred by it, you know, we'll be nicer to the next lot,

**Lu Williams 31:39**

Working through out trauma in quite a positive way.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 31:43**

Exactly. You know, always a silver lining, always a silver lining. But I also loved what you said with Grrrl Zine Fair of the zine making workshops, which I so want to attend one, like, Ah, I'm gonna, I'm gonna make it happen. Because I've like made little zines before of like, I remember, like, during the pandemic, I was so upset that I couldn't, I couldn't attend pride with my friends. But we all got on like a zoom. And I was making a pride zine like with them there and sort of like, our own little pride event. And I think that, you know, for queer people for marginalised genders. That act of like making a zine I think it's got such a history in terms of those groups of people. And so I didn't know whether you could just like whether you had any thoughts about.

**Lu Williams 32:46**

I have got history. I have got history. Like the make, the making. So when you're sat around making together as a group, like, that's the best feeling ever, and you're kind of like, these conversations just flow from you. And I always say it's a bit like, like witches around the cauldron, you kind of like brewing something, and you leave it feeling quite magical. But even if you've got like a shitty zine that you don't really care about, and you've just kind of knocked together, just like the process is quite magical. But yeah, zines have a really long history in terms of activism. So pamphlets came from or zines come from a history of pamphlets. And it's always been about giving information to people who might not have that information. So really democratic. Yeah, and like holding space for stories that you don't see mainstream media as well. So some of my favourite zines are talking about issues that people would be like, well, that's kind of embarrassing, like or I don't want to publish that or even kind of boring things like to get published. Now you have to have like a proper story. And it has to be like relevant something in the news media. Whereas sometimes you just want to read about how someone also gets headaches, when they like, do this thing or that and this is how you might make yourself feel better or something. And that's how I discovered I had autism actually was through reading a zine and being like, Oh, that's why I get migraines and sensory overload when I'm in like a restaurant with loads of smells. So that boring stuff is like something you wouldn't see in mainstream newspapers or media. But also at the studio here we have a risograph machine, which is basically looks like a photocopier. But the colours are in massive barrels, and they're neon, a lot of them the really vibrant colours, and that is from a history of pamphleting and leafletting in so our risograph printer. It used to be a Tory printer. So it's diverted to us. And there's a few in London house work press have a old Labour printer. And when you often get these, they come with the barrels of colour that are already made up. So they have like the Labour red and footprint workers cooperative in Leeds, I've been told that they have the old Ukip purple from the UK machine they were given. And so yeah, coming back to riso, and like the leading into zines is that it's a really fast way to print things that's quite good for the environment. So if you think about making a book, for example, that takes a long time, and even the binding is quite hard. Whereas making a zine, as you say, you can just fold it really quickly, you can make a few pages, and staple it and print it out on a risograph in a couple of minutes. So that that way of like ease and access of information is the same as political information half the time or getting information out quite quickly, which you wouldn't really get from a really expensive medium like, like bookbinding or something.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 36:11**

No for sure. And like what you were saying about with your autism. So I think only like being able to work through that with a zine like, I've had a lot of my friends who have worked out their politics also like, their gender identity through a zine, because it sort of talks about these hush hush topics that, you know, in the mainstream, they're done in such horribly cruel ways of like debate pieces, but in a zine, it's a very sort of much more gentle exploration of something that can, you know, start off a journey for you. They just touched on a lot of these topics often to do with like, you know, LGBTQ+, or Yeah, as I said, like your understanding of socio politics or a different part of yourself.

**Lu Williams** 37:04

Yeah, there was the best example I have of a zine workshop been both cathartic for the person doing it. And also, adding a really great narrative to the zine library is an older woman came to a workshop. And she made a little A16. And it was called, 'What did my womb look like?' And the story was, she had a hysterectomy. And she asked the doctors to see it. Because she was like, this, this womb, it's had two kids like it's been with me my whole life, like I'm in my 60s now. I just kind of wanted to, like, know what it looked like. And then it was this like, beautiful, really funny zine, where she was like, was it fluffy, like a cloud? Was it bouncy, like a ball, and you go through this like journey with her through the zine, and it kind of like made me tear up when I first read it, because this was her processing something really intimate, and quite monumental to her. And you just, you just wouldn't get that in, in mainstream publishing at all, you wouldn't have that closeness of narrative and picking up that zine as well. And like, reading a zine is quite an intimate experience, I guess, much like a book where you kind of hold it and you go on that journey with that viewer. And you have like, the tactileness as well, like where we scanned it in, and she's added collage elements and like hand drawn things. So yeah, it's like a direct direct into your veins, the information in like a really, a really like human way. There's also actually a really good one as well, which I recommend called yoga with big boobs as well.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 38:51

What?

**Lu Williams** 38:53

I unfortunately, don't have big boobs, so can't relate. But yeah, whenever I've shown people that like, Oh my God, why haven't I found that zine before?

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 39:03

That's my, I'm gonna have to find that.

**Lu Williams** 39:05

I'll send you a copy of a copy of you.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 39:08

When you said that I was like, wait, what did they just say? I was like, sounds like wow, yeah, I'm gonna, I want to check that out. So bad.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 39:22

It's great. You're right, you would never get that in your major publications.

**Lu Williams** 39:27

So it's so affirming as well, like.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 39:32

So as like, I feel like scenes are becoming more popular and are becoming like, yeah, just like less underground as as like, as they were originated in and more people know about it. So do you think that as a result of that there is this issue of there being threat of gatekeeping in in zines, or do you think because of its origins, it's kind of less likely to have that issue.

**Lu Williams** 40:01

I mean, I think it's great that more people know about them like I goal would be that everyone's made a zine once in their life at least like that would be amazing. I feel like everyone's got at least one zine in them. Even my dad has come to a workshop and he's like, I didn't know I could do this. But yeah, like, I feel like it gets really weird when you have like Kanye West making zine or Kim Kardashian for her Skims. I think she did zine, and yeah, it is random. Yeah, I think because they have like that undergroundness. People just like, this is a cool club tick. Like, I'll just make a zine and it'll be a cool thing. So yeah, kind of like loses that authenticity of the handmade and things if you've got like a product management team making it for you. But then maybe that's not a zine like, it's really hard to define. And that is actually kind of interesting, because someone said to me recently that the zines that I were making looked too professional to be zines but because the medium's changing at the same time people are getting interested in you get these weird riffs. So, I use InDesign to make my zines. Now. I taught myself on that. And it was just me kind of sat down putting it together. So I'd still say it's DIY, but it's not really that cut and paste. So sometimes you get really hardcore zine makers who are like, it must be analogue, it must become cut and paste, it must kind of be shit. And I'm like, you don't have to be shit in order to be DIY. Yeah, like, the last big Grrrl Zine festival I did. I did it on some Arts Council funding, and it was like 10 grand that we made. three stages had, like 40 different artists there. And it was very DIY, I was like, up till 3am hand painting signs with the car headlights in the dark trying to illuminate them. And yeah, we made a lot happen for like, not very much money. But even then people were like, that's not DIY. And I'm like, what, just because I didn't make it look shit. DIY, like, everyone here is kind of independent, just trying to make it happen for the sake of it. But yeah, you do get a few people kind of a bit gatekeeperry about what is a zine and what isn't a zine which I can slip into when it comes to brands. But overall, I think as long as people are making them and kind of feel empowered by them, and the right people that need them are still able to access them and make them I think it's cool.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 42:51

Yeah, that's such a, like, weird, like, Is it a compliment that are you saying like, I'm too good to make them like I you know, I'm too like, far along to do them. Yeah, that's so weird. Yeah, literally just like not that deep. Is it?

**Lu Williams** 43:06

Yeah, exactly. It's just a sans serif font.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 43:12**

Love it. And, and, okay, we're coming to the end of our episode now, which is sad. We do have a couple more questions before we finish off. And in all your zine knowledge, what would be your top three zines that you would recommend for people to check out? Feel free to say your own.

**Lu Williams 43:35**

Yeah, so issue five which is coming out in October. I don't even know what's going to be in it yet. Yeah. Okay, real talk. Um, I would say one of the best zines that I've read as a White person and learnt so much from is a zine called 'Dear White People'. And it talks about allyship as opposed to being an accomplice, they call it so that just like really changed my whole idea. And especially I read it over when everyone was posting their bloody black squares, and releasing the statements. It can I read it at that time when I was looking at optical allyships. So saying you are for something versus you're actually doing something. So being there on the front line with people. And yeah, demanding racial justice. So that is a great one, especially if you're White, I would highly recommend that one. Another favourite of mine is actually probably all of her work is Rachel House. You should look her up. She risograph prints a lot of her zines. And they're, they're always like, kind of funny, but also quite political. So one's called there's already a word for that. And it's basically about like, here's a man bag, or like a mansteriser, unlike let man moisturiser and just like basically the ridiculousness of masculinising things so that men can have them if they're traditionally female. But all of her work is great. Um, yeah, I'm trying to think of the last one. I want it to be a good one. Look at my collection of my favourite ones ever. Oh, and this isn't a zine, but Bricks magazine, I would definitely check out. Do you know them? Bricks magazine? Yeah. My friend Tori runs that one. And I would sign up to their newsletter if you want to get into journalism because they always put in grant opportunities. Which yeah, and also people's email addresses like this person is looking for pitches, email them, like no one ever shares email addresses. So yeah, that's also a good shout, I think.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy) 46:00**

Nice.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester 46:00**

What a choice. Yeah, I love the range there. Thank you for those recommendations. And our final question, which we ask all of our guests, which is, is there anything you've bitten your tongue on in the past? And what would you like to bite your tongue on less in the future?

**Lu Williams 46:09**

Definitely, when brands don't pay you, I think you should share that online. Air that out. And there's Yeah, I've read I've written articles for brands that I've paid more for someone to write in my zine and they've paid me to put in a mainstream publication. So yeah, like fuck not getting paid by corporations. I always ask for money always ask what you're owed. Yeah, and if they don't give it to you tell Twitter or write them a very angry email and tell no one to work with them again. I think that is the thing that people should share information on more is like who pays and who doesn't? Because I reckon if you looked at it it would be really surprising the kind of massive brands are actually like oh we we don't pay for this kind of content or I've had we don't pay for marketing before asking me to post for things so yeah, none of that none of that shit please.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 47:26

None of that shit please yeah, I do find it really shocking when you consider how much like smaller organisations whatever like we with like gals in journalism really try and you know, pay people what we can as you said before, like you sometimes you know, taking 30 quid out your pocket sort of thing. Even if it is like okay, we don't have the means but there's a sort of you know, token in that or we're going to really push to you know, with grant funding or whatever and yet these massive companies just like no fuck you.

**Lu Williams** 48:06

I wonder if it's because of their they're on the payroll and they just don't get it like it's really weird. I think everyone should be on jobseekers slash on Zero Hour contracts slash freelance for at least a year of their life just to like level them out.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 48:24

There we go, pitch that as a policy I don't think it'd be popular that much but but yeah, I think there's definitely an ignorance issued to it. Which doesn't make them exempt from blame. But also maybe that's too kind maybe these companies are just a bit evil. Maybe they just love being a bit cruel. Yeah,

**Lu Williams** 48:50

Profit margins man they just really matter over paying people apparently I think yeah Universal Credit or having we should just get the old waterworks system of payment and just push it out across across the UK and then people would only do the things that they actually want to do because yeah, they wouldn't be doing it just for job would they might care about.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 49:15

Honestly I would love for yeah. Old waterworks to sort of expand out if that could be nation wide

**Lu Williams** 49:23

Can we hire you all. No. All key workers here.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 49:28

Yeah, I'm in.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 49:29

Yeah, we'll get we'll campaign. We'll make a zine for it and we'll hand it out.

**Lu Williams** 49:35

The Tories won't know because they don't read zines.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 49:40

Our secret.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 49:41

Yet again one of our episodes have turned into right how can we slam a Tory real quick?

**Lu Williams** 49:48

I'm surprised it got to this point you know, I was I was ready like five seconds in but

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 49:54

I feel like we were all getting get of like, okay, fuck the capitalist.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 49:58

We were flirting with it.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 50:00

Yeah, but I think it's a good note to end on of like, okay, yeah, and the Tories too.

**Lu Williams** 50:05

Just an ending flirt with anarchy. To anyone still listening, a little flirt with anarchy. That's what we're having.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 50:14

Full on seduction with anarchy, please. But thank you so much for joining us.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 50:21

Thank you.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 50:24

And that was our episode with Lu and I for one loved it lots of giggles but also Yeah, some very like interesting deep points to get into.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 50:35

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I really enjoyed this one. Yeah, good times.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 50:41

Although I did get sad when Lu said that they got like, have had comments of like, people trolling their hair.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 50:49

Yes. Thinking that the whole time. I was like you have great hair.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 50:53

Literally, I'm so sad that the listeners couldn't see but they have this so cool like pink orangey mixture of hair colour sun. And yeah, I should have come I was gutted. I love that we both clocked it.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 51:08

We both know literally, I've been dying to say that. So true.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 51:11

Yeah, so I was fuming at that. But the rest of it.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 51:14

This is our shout out. We love your hair.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 51:18

Yeah, we love your hair. And we love your chat.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 51:23

Good chat good hair.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 51:25

And we also hope that like, I think that a lot of a lot of our listeners will be like young journos or young creatives. And I think when we talk about like accessibility and gatekeeping it's usually a very downhearted, yeah. conversation, but we hope that this even though like it recognises that side of it. Also, hopefully, you guys like feel some hope and optimism about like the future sort of thing. And that there are spaces that like Lu has created and supports that, you know, means that the issues that we kind of face are going to be at least mitigated in the wider scale of things. So we love the convo and we will see you guys next week.

**Isabelle Gray (Iszy)** 52:16

Yeah, see you then.

**Charlotte 'Fozz' Forrester** 52:19

This episode was brought to you by Gals in journalism and you can find us on Instagram and Facebook. Our transcriptions are available on our website. This episode was produced by Isabelle and edited by Fozz. Our music is an instrumental version of 'Sertraline Gang' by Trannieboi. Trannieboi is the abolitionist queer Afro futurist hyper pop brainchild of Jolliffe Seville. As Trannieboi, he celebrates the multiplicity of Black, queer disabled existence by transforming what is frightening - mania, trans homelessness, trauma, the immense difficulty of being a Black working artist - and making it an expression of joy. Our logo was designed by Megan Shepherd, who also designed the Gals in Journalism logo. We'd also like to shout out to City Ventures for supporting this podcast.