**Ep. 24 Monya Riachi**

Introduction

**Nina Davies**

You're listening to Future Artefacts FM , a bi-monthly podcast/broadcast featuring speculative fiction audio works by artists and writers produced and presented by Nina Davies,

**Rebecca Edwards**

Rebecca Edwards

**Niamh Schmidtke**

and Niamh Schmidtke, on RTM

**ND**

and also available on podcast channels.

**NS**

The programme focuses on fictional works intended for broadcast to carve out a better understanding of the now by exploring various interpretations of the future.

**RE**

Together with guests we discuss the mechanics of different types of storytelling to reveal the complexities of contemporary culture. Let’s get started.

All

Let’s get started.

**Artist Introduction**

**ND**

Welcome back to Future Artefacts FM. Today, we've got a really exciting episode, which is falling a little bit outside of our usual format. And you'll probably notice that, because the episode will sound completely different because we're not recording in a studio. This is actually the sort of recording of a live event that was performed on the 8th of February 2025 with artist Monya Riachi performing her newest work, although it might not be that new by the time you're listening to this called *concerning geographies entangled histories*. So this will have been a performance that was performed at Taco. And you'll be hearing a sound version of it.

**NS**

Yeah, welcome to the show, Monya, nice to have you here.

**Monya Riachi**

Thank you. Great to be here.

**NS**

So we're really delighted to have Monya Riachi on this episode of Future Artefacts FM, and as part of this live performance. Monya Riachi is an interdisciplinary artist. Her practice is material driven and research led and is realised through installation, sculpture, writing, sound and performance. Her work centers matter as a site of narrative and archive, and engages with themes around loss, ecological transformation, the politics of land and time and the entanglement of histories of her home and adopted countries, Lebanon and Britain.

Riachi is the 2024 Lewisham art house graduate awardee. The one year residency resulted in her solo show *safe waters*, which is currently on, the culmination of a body of research that entangles the history of Deptford central library with the unfolding political, social and ecological reality along the eastern Mediterranean coast, the Levant. Before we go into the piece, and I pass you on to Rebecca, is there anything that Monya you would like listeners to know about the work before they hear it?

**MR**

So this is a letter written to a British diplomat who is no longer alive, who I've never met, and whose name has been with me since we read about a political treatise in geography books when we were kids.

**RE**

So this episode with Monya follows on in our mini series on the *new weird* that we've been exploring in the last few episodes, which asks what kind of anarchy, activism or being the other might create for an emancipatory place to build new worlds from. So we're looking at tools of weirding and asking, Who gets to make worlds, what kind of worlds they are, and who do they serve? So, yeah, welcome again, Monya. This is the third time you've been welcomed...

**MR**

[laughs] I want one more welcome please.

**RE**

Yeah, we'll see you in about 10 minutes.

**ND**

Yep, enjoy! Bye.

**Work: Concerning Geographies Entangled Histories**

[sounds of cars, water and muffled rain]

Dear Mark.

Dear Mark,

I am writing to you from a building that heralds Your Big Year.

1914.

1914.

1914, the year your career fantasies met fruition.

I am writing to you from a building that heralds your big year, Mark. I am writing to you from a building that heralds your big year. 1914, the year your career fantasies met fruition.

A few years ago, I thought of you again. Who has the last laugh now? I asked you in my head, I believed I was triumphant. I had won my round at your game.

Before then, in that long slog of biding time, on one of my rabbit holes on the internet - you have quite the internet presence, did you know that? - I read that your parents' marriage was conflicted, that you grew up in the shadow of this and your annual summer holidays to Egypt were times of solitude. This is how your relationship with my side of the world developed, the internet page said.

I must admit, I felt some sympathy reading this for you and I lived similar shadows. I understood the desire to leave your country. But, my sympathy quickly dissolved. I've learned there is no emotion in this game.

You came to my land on your yacht with your pipe and your suit with your pen and no knowledge of my tongue to draw your lazy lines. I came to your land, no suit nor pipe, but your language occupying my mouth since the beginning, to extract from your kingdom what I am rightfully owed. If you can board a boat and sail freely, why cannot I?

On an October day in 2013, the seventh, to be precise, I began scratching at the gates of your empire. It was not a straightforward, Mark, as you holding a pen, drawing unimaginative straight lines, but eventually I made the capital of this empire lower its fucking drawbridge. I crossed it, Mark, and I clutched that passport, an object as emotionless and uninspiring as your line, now unearthed in a draw somewhere, an afterthought.

And so I thought I had the last laugh. But this game is not only about me. It is now October again, and I see it is you and your Empire who are having the last laugh. For now, at least.

[crackling sounds, deep reverberations, clanging and monotonous drones]

**Conversation**

**NS**

Usually for anyone who knows Taco well, there's a recording space inside that's quite cozy and intimate, and it's just four or three of us, so we might be a little bit nervous... performing to a crowd, and our voices may sound a bit strange because we're talking to each other, but also to a room.

But maybe, to kick it off. Thank you, Monya, for your performance. Some of the main feedback I got from people was they wanted it to be longer. We want more, basically, but part of our introduction to you is also this residency at Lewisham Art House, and the show that you have there currently, *safe waters*, which is open until next weekend. And I wanted to ask, how does this work sit alongside the themes within your show at Lewisham Art House?

**MR**

So this performance, this performative mapping was born throughout my research during my year long residency at Lewisham Art House, where I've been looking at the entanglement of the histories of Britain and Levant, specifically Palestine and Lebanon. I'm from Lebanon, and while being situated in this colonial-era heritage building - so Lewishan Art house was the Deptford central library built in 1914 - and being on this residency throughout the time of great turbulence back home making work in the shadow of a genocide. So it was only natural to be thinking about these two places and wanting to sort of collapse two geographies and two timescales. And I suppose one form and one output of that research was the map, which is what we are kind of looking at right now.

**NS**

We meet Mark Sykes, or Mark. Who is Mark, and kind of, what's his relationship to the map? So

**MR**

So Mark is a British diplomat. He is one of the two behind the Sykes Picot map. This is a 1916 treatise of dividing what was once part of the Ottoman Empire into British and French mandates. So Lebanon was splitting a land that was once one land into several protectorates and dividing that up to kind of, this is now under French control / this is now under British control.

And the reason why this has come up in the research is again, kind of harking back to Deptford Central Library, and connecting the two geographies. So a key date from one of the key threads that I began to tug at is the year of the foundation of Deptford Central Library, which is 1914 and there's a plaque on the facade that proudly pronounces this. And I saw 1914 as the beginning of a series of events that sort of catapulted the Levant into the political reality that we see today. It's kind of the product of several years and several political events.

So from 1914 the start of the First World War, which then kicked off the Sykes Picot declaration of 1916, which then leads to, or paved the way for the Balfour Declaration, which then leads to the Nakba of the Palestinian people, of which began in 1948 and is arguably still ongoing. And being able to reflect on these dates while being in this building has been something that probably I wouldn't have been able to do if I were still living in Lebanon, and that's kind of due to also the contested history between Lebanon and Palestine. So I wanted to acknowledge that, and a way of doing that was by addressing letters to this British diplomat whose name we study from a very early age, but we know it through the Sykes Picot map.

So when I moved to the United Kingdom - and I did that for purposes of wanting a form of, let's say, migratory freedom, wanting to be able to travel through the world without the impediments caused by visas - I was reflecting as to why and how did I come to be part of the system and to be on the, let's say, the unfortunate end, while being in the United Kingdom, having come here to sort of pursue a certain passport route, let's say. And so I made that link with Mark Sykes from several years back. And so it was… he's been a figure that has been at the back of my mind, and being situated in Deptford Central Library and seeing the 1914 date and linking that to the series of events that came after, I suppose that then opened the way for Mark to come into a work. And he represents power, he represents patriarchy, these two notions that, for me, have very much dictated how maps are made, or how the maps that we have access to are made.

And the the way I've decided to address Mark is through a letter, I suppose wanting to bring in a certain intimacy that I would assume is very far from what he represents, from this kind of the patriarchal and the sort of the top down, “I'm going to determine who gets which land”, and “I'm going to draw this line in this land”, being completely unaware of the social fabric and social makeup of the region.

**RE**

Yeah, there was kind of no regard for people at that time, right? I mean in terms of people in the Ottoman Empire or the Levant like it was very much Mark Sykes and George Picot who were kind of divvying up this land really based on how much oil there was in each of these areas. So I'm not surprised that your letter was very kind of… you're angry at him. You can, you can get a sense of that in your voice, like there is an anger there, and there's a kind of F.U vibe to that letter, I suppose.

But I want to, kind of, I want to talk a little bit more about the map that you've made for us during the performance, and how it obviously is a very personal thing, but it's also very tied up in politics. So I was wondering if you can share with us some of the things that you were writing on that map and drawing on that map. What are they and what are their relationship to you and to the broader context?

**MR**

Sure. So as was introduced earlier, that this is an additive map, so there has been a version of this made a few months back, and at the time there was a slightly different set of dates. Some of those have come back again today. The first iteration of the map was very much tracking the series of events and the series of dates in history that have led to the 2023 genocide on Gaza. Whereas today it was more of a… there was an inclusion of personal dates that relate to how I have come into the United Kingdom, which is really the reason, or the way, into which I've been able to reflect on the history of Palestine and the very charged and conflicted history between Palestine and Lebanon, which is where I'm from.

But I always start the map with 1884 which is when the Prime Meridian was established. And this was a really main exercise in colonial world building, where Britain and other colonial powers basically determined we are now going to set the world into this time standard. This is going to be the line. It's another line. It's actually also a physical line in Greenwich, which is in the kind of broader geographical context of Lewisham Art House, where I've been situated. And because a map is essentially a space-time collapse…. So the Greenwich meridian line setting this, the reference point. And from that sort of three longitude lines that get us to Lebanon and Palestine, as they are on the Mercator map at the moment.

And the second date that follows is 1914 so the date of the founding of Deptford Central Library, the start of the First World War. Then 1916 for the Sykes Picot map. 1936 for the Balfour Declaration. 1948 for the Nakba. And in this version of the map where I've begun to bring in my own personal history and my own personal link to these dates, and to sort of as a way to flesh out why they are making their way into my own map, I've put in 1975 which is the start of the Lebanese civil war. And then I've jumped to 1990 which was the year of my birth, and then 2013 which is the year I came to the United Kingdom and began what I call, in the audio piece, that *long slog of biding time*, because it really did feel that way of just putting in the years in order to get the passport, in order to have the same freedom of movement that Mark Sykes did.

[taken from audio work]

…before then in that long slog of biding time on one of my rabbit holes on the internet - you have quite the internet presence, did you know that?

**MR**

And from 2013 to 2020 which was the kind of the milestone moment, and then 2023 and 2023 made its way on the map several times. So that was a date that was mapped out three or four times. I suppose I'm also thinking about duration of dates, some years, some months, some events can feel endless, and perhaps are even after they have ended in terms of in dates, their effects extend way beyond the year.

**RE**

There's also, I mean, you mentioned to me earlier that that bowl that you use to contain the material is your grandmother's

**MR**

So that bowl comes from Lebanon. Yes, it's… I wanted to bring in through materials, physical materials themselves, the places that I'm invoking. And the enamel cup is from London, some charity shop, but dates back to like 1970 something. So a very British thing.

And the salt is Mediterranean sea salt. So, yeah, and bringing in these materials that are a citation of the geographies that I'm working with, I suppose they also make their way into the map in some way.

**ND**

I'm going to go on to a question about the materials you use, but actually, just before I go on to that, you said something about a phrase that I've just been thinking about just since you said it, of access, having access to maps, like certain maps. And I was, I don't know, I think I just thought that was interesting, like that implies that there are maps that one doesn't have access to, and so I guess - sorry, this is not a pre-arranged question, I'm kind of making it up as I go - but yeah, I was sort of wondering whether, when you said that, if there's… if you had something in mind of maps that we don't have access to, and what those look like, or what they might be.

**MR**

I think for me, it's been about launching myself into this place of taking agency, of creating your own map. So breaking away from “these are the only maps that are possible”, these geographical, political maps that have drawn these lines that tell us this is this country, and that's another and there's a clear border between the two, and oh, we can't cross from one to the other without all of this kind of arrangements.

Breaking away from that notion of the map as a prescribed thing. And actually, one thing that has been really essential for me in getting here is being able to experience maps drawn by during the time of the Incas, and how mapmaking was a form of telling the story of a place and telling the story of the movement of people through a place, rather than this kind of top down way of dividing resources and clearing out, imagining the land as a blank slate that you will then just draw onto your fantasies.

So your question about what are the maps that we don't have access to, I think maybe these are, they're the maps that we have to create. We have to, sort of, in a way, find access within ourselves to create.

**ND**

Well, back to my prearranged question. So it's very obviously there's sort of two main materials that you're using here, which is salt and water, and you've, sort of, based on some previous conversations that we've had, you've spoken about salt as a political material. And I was wondering whether you could just expand a little bit more, and then we can move on to talking about water and how you use water.

**MR**

So I've been working with salt in my practice for over two years. And in fact, I was drawn to this material, I would say, after the Beirut blast of August 2020, when 2750 tons of ammonium nitrate exploded in the port, improperly stored. Ammonium nitrate is classified as a salt. So it's a chemical salt, obviously. And then a couple of years after that, let's say, I visited these incredible historic ponds in a seaside village in northern Lebanon, where salt has been mined traditionally for centuries.

So it's a material of the land. It's a natural material. It's harvested from the sea. So it is really a product, at least working with sea salt in this and with this kind of consciousness of it as a product, of a really close and sort of intimate relationship with the sea within wider reflections on what else salt does.

And so it's destructive properties. And then, on a very immediate level, salt causes corrosion. Salt destroys. Salt can be harmful. Well, without it, also, there is no life, but kind of this duality of the property and its relationship to time. So one thing that I sort of still constantly find rewarding with salt is how it extends time. So you can pickle things in salt. You kind of give them a longer time.

But to come back to your question, which was the political significance and political meanings in salt? Well, it has been among the earliest currencies. Roman soldiers were paid in blocks of salt. Wars were fought over salt empires have fallen, and it's been used as a weapon with, for example, the flooding of Carthage. And also, very recently, we see that again, with Israel threatening to flood Gaza with sea water to make it uninhabitable. So this natural material that is essential to life being co opted as a weapon, that's all there for me in the background, these kind of dual properties of this mineral.

And I work with salt in tandem with water, so alongside water, and I am very fascinated by their relationship, and their relationship of constant entanglement. They're sort of constantly making and remaking each other. Water dissolves salt, and we think that salt has disappeared, but once water evaporates, salt returns. So something about that cyclicality and about that dynamic and sort of open ended relationship.

**RE**

I also think about, I mean, we spoke before about the maybe the commercialisation of salt, and I think I was, I mentioned to you about the Dead Sea and how that's become kind of like a tourist destination to get your photo of you floating in the largest sort of salted body of water that there is. But I'm also thinking about how when we cry, when we sweat, in these times of emotion, or these times of energy, salt is released from us. And I'm thinking about the metaphors that you use in your work about water, and how this salt can maybe represent some of that fraught tension that you're talking about as well.

**MR**

Yeah, I think yeah, you've picked up on that sort of, on the tension. And I think because it can go really both ways, and it has this kind of, this dual properties that I like to stay and work with salt. In my previous work, in the installation *Where Bougainvilleas Bloom Ceaselessly* the salt of the sea was what protected the village from threat and from destruction. Whereas the way I've been working with and thinking about salt now in my current show, *safe waters*, which is on at Lewisham Art House, or the reason why this material is in the work is because it is being used as a threat right now. And, yeah, it's kind of been in the broader political, social research level. But there's, of course, definitely lots to say and think about on a physical, bodily level.

NS

I'm also thinking about how you spoke before, about, you know, kind of giving salt, this sort of agency to carve out its own roots, or to design or to feel out where it wants to go, even kind of taking these blocks of salt and then pouring water over to let it create its own sense. And I'm thinking also about the series of maps that you had behind and particularly the 1150s map, the Al-Idrisi of the Mediterranean Sea, but not the view, let's say, in the West, at least, we're used to seeing, if you see the map, it's of the Mediterranean Sea, but what is Spain, which we would expect to be at the top of the map, is at the bottom.

And so I have a question about, in what way does salt make its own maps in your work? But also, how do you think about that in terms of these narratives of colonial mapping, of carving out lines. What changes for you in terms of your role of maybe giving space to the for the material to speak for itself, or does that feel like a way you think about this type of performance work?

**MR**

The relationship with salt has to be one that includes time, because salt speaks with time. So new crystals come up with allowing time to do its work. In the more immediate unfolding with salt, which is when I use… I work with water, and the water and salt interact together to create their own sort of forms and landscapes. I can't see them…. I can't, kind of think about a map with one material without the other, let's say, and they are really key to one another to create this kind of mapping.

So water flows and sort of pulls at the mounds of salt, or at the little salt clusters, and then water finds its way to connect to other bodies of water on the map. And while doing so, it pulls the salt and the pigment with it, and then salt will capture the form, the trace of this water, and create that form, that kind of landscape, geographic form.

And approaching this… approaching this map, one thing that has been crucial for me to approach this map in this way is coming across the phenomenon of the Mediterranean Salinity Crisis, 5.3 million years ago, when the water of the Mediterranean evaporated and there was an excess of salt in the Mediterranean basin. But essentially the map, or the recreation of the map of that time, that area that land, looked very, very different. And essentially all of the land that is currently under the sea came to the fore. And so this is, again, another sort of learning for myself, and the sort of reminder that all of these maps that we see that are prescribing borders and land and territory, they may all be redundant at some point when water and natural materials decide to do what they decide to do. So it's these notions that I'm wanting to invoke by working with salt and water and these in this performative mapping.

**RE**

I mean that reminds me of part of your research that you sent us, but we'd all read before, which was the Borges story *on exactitude in science*, this idea that the only real trust, trustable map, if that's the word… truthful map, is one that is a scale of one to one, so one that is as exact as the place that it's representing. So I was kind of wondering, from this, I want to maybe unpack your connection to speculation and map making a little bit more, and ask what you think this parallel worlding, being careful not to use the word worldbuilding here, what this parallel worlding speaks to in terms of the fluidity of borders or the resistance of colonial powers

**MR**

I suppose for me, there's a lot about not only using materials, but learning what they are telling us. And here I'll invoke a little bit of the new materialist approach that kind of is really central to my practice, and this flat ontology, so not thinking of ourselves, the maker, the artist or the human as superior to materials and they are at our command for us to kind of move and place and manifest into certain things. It's kind of, “what can this material do?” and I will follow what it can do.

And so in this flat ontology, this non-hylomorphic approach to materials in my practice, but also potentially more broadly, how we can connect to the natural world. This is where I see possibly like a divergence or a resistance to the colonial approach of making maps, but also of worlding, the world.

**ND**

Taking it a little bit, I guess, when you were talking about maps and how they kind of exist in a sort of static, like stuck in a period of time, and how materials, like this example of the Mediterranean Sea evaporating, and how materials, at the end of the day kind of create the maps that we're living in.

I sort of want to kind of almost fast forward to today, and where the maps that we use are kind of constantly being updated. And I guess also sort of, maybe not quite one to one, but also with, like GPS systems, we're sort of placed in that map when we're reading it like we are the dot on the map, and or I think about ways drivers are constantly updating the map.

And so I wonder what I know that you're not necessarily looking at maps in a sort of digital form, but I guess I want to sort of open up the conversation to what maps are today and how we use them. And obviously there's still, even though this example of ways where people are updating it, it still belongs and is monitored by a sort of larger corporation. It's not us, but we're kind of still using it and updating it, so sort of like a… the relationship between the map and the user is completely different.

**MR**

That makes me think about, you know, what is the intention behind maps? I mean, of course, for navigation, maps need to be effective and efficient. But again, there is an entity in the background determining what is efficient and what is effective. So there is that shot being called. But perhaps, if we think of maps as a way of telling a story, or of a way of tracing a past and tracing a history, is a digital map the best way to do that? Is the fact that now digital maps are so easy to use and are literally at our fingertips, they're in our hands, is that taking us away from considering other more analogue but alternative forms of making maps could be more specific or more suitable for what we are wanting to navigate and where we are wanting to navigate towards.

**ND**

I think that, and we sort of spoke about this in one of our last conversations about… I apologise, to sort of bring my own research into it, but I'm sort of looking at the moment, at the concept death byy GPS, and how it's being considered of being included as a legal cause of death, and sort of like what that might mean. But there's something about also this, and I guess there's with that there's these questions of liability, which is why you would have a legal like, why there would be a need for that classification of a legal cause of death, and GPS is like neither a service nor a product.

And so I think there's something here also about… I guess maybe where I'm going with this, I'm kind of getting to it in a weird route, but I guess the sort of like violence of these maps, or like the danger of using maps and where - going back to this sort of like idea of this static map - we sort of have always understood maps to sort of be these static things, and actually now we have these, like real world examples of where the map has remained static, and it has not been updated, where like to say that this bridge is under construction and it's directing you to drive off of it, but there's actually the bridge is not a full bridge yet. We're kind of almost seeing like an increase in this sort of danger in how maps are used. And I'm sure there's, I'm sure there's many more examples.

**NS**

I guess one thing I've been thinking about a lot with your maps. I mean, Rebecca and I were talking earlier about geography and sort of thinking about geography as defining points of connection, such as in navigation, but more specifically, that sense of orientating yourself through a map as an aerial view, so kind of like a God's eye, or like a colonizers view, a view that's separate from the reality of being in a place. And thinking about how you know, oftentimes, when you first perhaps, let's say, learn how to navigate, or thinking about it as a Child, you know, you give yourself place markers. You know this person lives on this street corner. I see this tree or this footpath looks like this. And now, more and more, as we get used to digital maps, rather than very material ones, it feels like there's more of a separation, because your understanding of a place is “Oh, this road curves up in this way”, rather than, “Oh, this is a hill that goes up in a steep”, and so, I guess maybe there's a question here in thinking about, you know, how maps are operating, both in terms of a historical violence, but also in terms of a contemporary, I don't know, kind of disembodied feeling. I don't know if this is something that you think about as well in terms of, you know, you're from above making a map, but what does that also mean to sort of step inside of it, let's say, or these peaks becoming things that you move through, rather than view from up above.

**MR**

Yeah. This makes me think of a really great text called *inclining to the view,* because essentially, we never experience the world from this kind of top down, like perpendicular horizontal axis. We are always at an angle to everything that we are experiencing.

And I suppose there's something about enabling you to connect materially. I think what I'm picking up on, what you said is, yeah, that disjunction from the material world, from anything physical, tangibly material, when you're navigating solely through a digital map. For me, I think there's something about almost a humility of I am a small, tiny, tiny speck in this world, and working with materials that are abundant and that exist, but they're also unpredictable, that can be threatening to life. I mean, we haven't talked about that yet, but water is sort of a positive force, let's say, or it's harnessed for its positive properties in my map making, and for it, you know, it naturally connects and wants to connect and create connections. But also we are threatened. We are all threatened by water right now. So there's sort of our desire for humility and for acknowledging that these materials, which are agents, it is so essential to have a consciousness and then acknowledgement of the power they hold over our lives, and to aim to perhaps negotiate with them in a good way, whether through artistic practice or or be or outside of that.

**RE**

I think coming back to Niamh’s point about the disembodied map, what you were doing when you were making this map was very embodied. You were using your hands, you were standing over it. And it makes me think about the maps that were produced, you know, like the Al Idrisi map that's very old and and these kind of old ways of making maps where you're on the ground and you're surveying the ground as you're walking it, as opposed to GPS, the Global Positioning System, which is a very top down view. I mean, GPS is kind of from satellites that are not even on the earth, you know. So it's kind of a very strange way to see the world by using something that has never been on the earth, if that makes sense. But, also thinking about paper maps and how they hold the story, you know, they're creased and they have fingerprints, whereas digital maps are very clean, they're very… they're always perfect, except when they're not perfect.

**MR**

That makes me think about accuracy. If you were to present someone with an embodied map of, oh, this person has gone and treaded through this land and drawn a recreation of what they have experienced today. Or to present someone with a paper map today, would there not be doubt, as in, how accurate is this map? I can get a way more accurate…

RE

It’s true, but it's also not true because of what Nina's talking about. I remember when a few years ago, when there were people driving into the sea, because that's what their SatNav told them to do. So these maps aren't necessarily true…

**MR**

infallible,

**RE**

yeah, yeah,

**NS**

but I think even it depends where the maps are, so kind of digital maps or GPS, of like London and different parts of North America are really accurate. Like, I really notice when I go to Ireland, especially if I go somewhere more rural, the map has no idea where I'm supposed to go. It's just like, what? Why would you… Why are you here? Why would you know it's like, it gets confused anything that is on any kind of periphery, let's say. So, even though there might be this accuracy, if you're in London, like even Citymapper recalculates its route based on the most common route people take on the app, so it's constantly updating itself to be the most efficient, and that's because of mass, right? Mass of people. But when you go outside of those mass centers… like Citymapper in Dublin is shit, yeah.

**ND**

Well, actually, I kind of just realised that actually, we didn't really, when we were talking about the materials that you use, we didn't actually come back to water necessarily as a material that's like, a really important part of your practice. So I'm kind of like rewinding a little bit. But yeah, I was wondering because water functions as both a sort of material and a metaphor within your practice. And yeah, I was wondering whether you could kind of talk just a little bit more…. We've got minutes left. So, yeah.

**MR**

Yeah, I think… I watch water. That's what I do to begin with.

**NS**

It's dripping right here, for anyone who can hear.

**MR**

I mean, so much has been theorised about water, posthuman feminist methodology and the thinking of like hydrofeminism. But it is again, an inherently political material. Colonial powers, occupying powers, determine who has access to water. But what I can do is work with it on a scale that is accessible to me, and then perhaps extrapolate from these observations towards broader and wider thematics.

So in the way that I work with water, it's to allow its flow and allow its movement on surfaces, and think of it in the cyclical again, the cyclical way of an element that does not last eternally in the state that we know it - so it is liquid, it evaporates, humidity remains somewhere and can then remanifest. And wanting to think of maps as potentially stubbornly aqueous and stubbornly material, and so bringing in this material onto a map, and working with the notion of time of the non fixity of the map, because through using these materials that are themselves non permanent in the state that we know them. So the map that we see right now is going to look differently in a few hours after the water has evaporated, and then new forms will take… or forms will trace the shape of the water now, as it is now. So yeah, something about that kind of cyclicality and fluidity.

**NS**

Maybe then to end to kind of close up, you know, because part of this mini series, kind of thinking about these tools within the new, weird and, you know, I guess a question is like, what types of emancipatory places might emerge? There's something around, if you know, a future of maps that we've been discussing through, like using materials to define their own roots, you know, versus GPS as a satellite that feels quite disembodied, even though, let's say, there's a sort of perfection in how it's capturing.

I guess I'm thinking about, you know, what types of futures of maps that move past borders, et's say, you know, there can be these natural borders of, you know, mountain ranges or rivers or islands, but you know, is there, you know, not asking you to kind of give us definitive answers, but you know, is there kind of a future of of mapping that you're thinking about in your practice that isn't defined by this border, but maybe this fluidity?

**ND**

Yeah, or even like the use of maps, like whether it's whether it's not map making, but what the use of maps might be going forward.

**MR**

I think… well, the work of Bouchra Khalili and the map making migration project is very inspiring for me. The use of maps as telling the telling migratory stories, black quantum futurisms map making, is also like a touch point in my research to think beyond maps as a political tool, but perhaps towards a narrative tool. And approaching maps in that way, to think of borders as places that are being constantly negotiated and constantly reconsidered. I think this open ended process, while probably more challenging than asserting and then saying, this is the assertion and the truth, and now we move on, is probably the real, the only way to do it in order to survive along with everyone else in this world.

**ND**

Perfect. We're exactly at 45 minutes. So yeah, we'll finish. We'll finish there with the recording, and I'll turn off the recording. And if anyone has any questions, feel free to ask and know that your question remains only in this room. So thank you for your time.

And that was our conversation, which took place as part of a live event at Taco on February 8, 2025.

**NS**

Until next time, we'll see you soon. Yeah, Thanks for Thanks for joining us. Thanks, guys. Bye.