

28. 01. 2024
– 24. 03. 2024

CURATED BY CARMEN MERCEDES GAGO SCHIEB AND LEVENT CAN KAYA

JUS DIDDIT

A COMMUNITY ARCHIVE UNFURLING

Curated by Carmen Mercedes Gago Schieb and Levent Can Kaya

CURATORS CONVO



Listen to Carmen Mercedes Gago Schieb and Levent Can Kaya talk about Jus Diddit: A Community Archive Unfurling by following the QR code link above.

CMGC: This audio piece was recorded as a part of Jus Diddit: A Community Archive Unfurling held at PARI in Parramatta from the 28th of January 2024 until the 24th of March 2024. 200+ BPM IS MY SAFE SPACE interview, Peter Curnovic of Beatdisc Records interview, Beverly Buttercup interview are powered by Lupa Media Player.

LCK: This audio piece is being recorded on Bidjigal Land . This land has been site for knowledge sharing and communing for thousands of years prior to British colonisation. We want to pay our respects to First Nations elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations people who are listening today. This land always was and always, always, always will be Aboriginal land.

CMGS: My name is Carmen Mercedes Gago Schieb.

LCK: And I'm Levent Can Kaya.

CMGS: We are the curators of Jus Diddit: A Community Archive Unfurling. Lev and I have a long collaborative history. Hopping between art school in the East to shisha joints, janky pubs, baklava houses and glimmering lakes in the West. Our collaborative relationship is grounded in kb-ing in the area and yarning about what needs to change in the world. This is how Jus Diddit emerged.

LCK: Jus Diddit is a love letter to Western Sydney's DIY cultural history, an ongoing expansive archival community collaboration concerned with memories, long lost venues, stories and friendships of chance. Jus Diddit uplifts what has always made the area special: community.

CMGS: The show remembers backyard shows, underground raves, ARIs and drag shows in long lost venues to uplift community leaders, celebrate our creative communal histories and inspire hope about what the cultural future could mean in our changing half of the city.

LCK: This project was only made possible through the generous donations of images, posters, videos and stories of community leaders. Initially highlighting the Western Sydney icons of Blacktown Masonic centre, Beatdisc Records, Doonside House and the organising of Beverly Buttercup and the 200+ BPM crew Jus Diddit is an ongoing celebration of us.

Carmen, a big part of the curation of this exhibition emerged through your relationship to DIY punk communities in Western Sydney. I want to know what the first DIY show you ever went to was?

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CMGC: Well, I believe it was— it was kind of freaky to find this out— but I actually think it was June 2014, which would mean that it was almost 10 years ago now. Hannah Band, Burlap, Oslo and Lucy Wilson played that evening. And I remember— for those of you that have not been to Beatdisc Records, please rectify that immediately— however, Beatdisc Records is a magical place that is no bigger than the podcast studio we are recording in now. And an incredible result of that fact is that it is a highly social space. I remember going to Beatdisc and I didn't know anybody. And I actually remember, I recall, walking into the venue and then promptly walking out of the venue. I sat in the the laneway, as we like to call it, outside Beatdisc. And I was extremely anxious and nervous to go in there because I thought everyone there was really cool like I didn't belong there because everyone was so cool. But I came to learn that that was not the case. And it actually really quickly became the place I would spend every single afternoon after school for the next five years and I still do.

Lev, can you recount how we found out about Beverly Buttercup?

LCK: So I believe the year was 2021. And because of the way COVID Had it impacted Mardi Gras celebrations I think New South Wales State Government was pumping all this money into random pubs everywhere. We have a really soft spot for Club Parramatta and I remember there was Mardi Gras celebrations happening at Club Parramatta so we decided we need to go to that. And we went to it and we got a bit wasted and we're in the smoking section and I think somehow we knew that there was an old queen in the smoking section and we started talking to her and, like really wasted being like "we want to start a nightclub we want to... we want to start a nightclub... what what was happening in Western Sydney like for queer people back in the day." And she schooled us. She sat us down and she said "hey, like this is how you start a nightclub. This is what we would do back in the day. And if you want to know about what was happening back in the day in Western Sydney in queer communities, you need to find Beverly Buttercup, you need to find Beverly Buttercup." And from there I remember I went home and I Googled Beverly Buttercup, and Beverly has this amazing website that has quite an extensive archive of photographs, videos, old posters, and also a written timeline of when these things were happening. And we were immediately inspired by it and remembered it when this show started coming together curatorially.

CMGS: Shout out Porsche Turbo.

LCK: Yeah, shout out Porsche Turbo.

CMGS: Lev, having been in these communities, what was something that you discovered about DIY organising through the process of curating this exhibition?

LCK: I think in hindsight, looking at the exhibition we've put together and looking at all of these conversations we've had with these amazing community organisers, one thing that really stuck out to me was the way that there were never actually any venues involved in a lot of these communities. You know, Pete was putting on shows in the Beatdisc store, Beverly was literally repurposing pub function rooms. The 200+ BPM crew, they were, you know, doing stuff in, you know, random caverns and caves in the Blue

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Mountains. And then of course, Blacktown Masonic Centre is a Masonic centre and Doonside House is someone's backyard, like there was no pub or bar and I think there's something quite poetic there about firstly, the way Western Sydney as this kind of endless suburbia that like everything is captured into, allowed for people to create things in these interesting spaces. But of course, what was undercutting that was really this very anti capitalist, anti commercial spirit. I mean, everyone who we spoke to, had this spirit. Bev gives away all profits from her social dances to charity. Pete said something along the lines of like, "we would only get enough money to you know, pay for dinner for our vollies and for us at the end of the night and at the end of the day, we just did it because like we wanted to, and we we needed it, there was nowhere else doing live music and Parramatta." The 200+ rave crew is doing all of their raves free and kind of helping other crews get stuff up and running. And I think that was the most beautiful part. There was never anything to do with clout or fame. It was really about being together in this way that was so radically anti capitalist. Yeah, so I think that's kind of what I really discovered and what came about through this process of research.

CMGS: I also think it really speaks to, what is in my mind, the resilience of the area, which is, you know, just because something that we want doesn't exist doesn't mean that we can't and won't have access to it

LCK: Carmen, can you speak to some of the challenges of putting on an exhibition composed of the archival materials of subcultures?

CMGS: Yes, so what I think is extremely interesting about this is that we were essentially trying to kind of control or capture something that is, in essence, messy and completely tied to memory. You know, we kind of spoke early on about what they call "blowing up the spot" and recognising that DIY culture is really rooted in rebellion and in the undercurrent. We didn't want anyone to be put at risk by being part of the show. We also kind of realised through the process that archival work in itself is an incomplete practice, I kind of look at it, like you're trying to, you know, piece all these threads together to create, to create a tapestry or to create something solid. Especially when you think about the gallery context, we're kind of bringing these people in and what I thought was so interesting when we were speaking to the contributors, I think a lot of them kind of said that they weren't quote unquote, "art people". And I thought that was so interesting, because, you know, I think PARI as a space, does focus on community and bringing in people who maybe feel disconnected or not even able to relate to the arts. And also what I felt like as a curator, and I guess as a researcher in that context was someone who could speak to the contributors and say, you know, what you did or are doing is really valuable and you should be recognised for that work. However, like you were saying earlier, you know, all the people that we spoke to didn't do it because they wanted to be recognised, they did it because they wanted to be together. And I think that is, you can see the heart in every single item, image and video in the show. It comes from such a pure place of, of resilience and of love.

LCK: We've both borne witness to the changing face of this side of the city. Gentrification undercuts all of the stories in this exhibition, do you think DIY culture will continue to exist in the face of gentrification in Western Sydney?

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CMGS: I truly, truly believe and I've always felt this way, because of my personal connection to DIY culture in the area. But through doing this show, I believe it even more that creative communities will literally always exist, regardless of, you know, societal pressures or changes, because, essentially, you know, I think there's so, there's so much to be said about subcultural politics, and, you know, ethics within scenes, but really what connects all of them is the fact that they just want to be together. And I think that it's really, it's actually quite human. I think that Western Sydney also, as an area, obviously, is going through so many changes now and, you know, there's no way to know what every single community member is thinking or feeling. But we always find a way to, to just do it, and to make it happen. And that's totally what we, what we see, feel, and love about the area, I think, personally, and what we wanted to really connect to, to this show. And honestly, for me, personally, it was also, part of it was looking at these people that I grew up with, and people I consider friends, family members, and honestly, like role models and looking at them and saying, what you did change my life, and that should be celebrated.

LCK: I love what you said about how it's fundamentally human. And I always think about this thing that we wrote for the room sheet for this exhibition, where we spoke to subculture as something that might always be hidden, and we don't know what we don't know, really. And it just reminds me of what my mum's main criticism of the exhibition was. When my mum came to the exhibition, she was like, "well, you didn't talk about this subculture that I'm involved in." And she has a point we didn't. And that's the beauty of it. And I think that's partially why this is an archive unfurling, because there is so much that hasn't been touched on, there is so much happening in the four walls of these red brick walls that we don't know. And that's the beauty of it, is the way it's concealed and disclosed in these ways.

CMGS: Can you maybe expand upon why we felt it was so important to subtitle this exhibition 'an archive unfurling'? Why did you feel connected to that phrase, specifically?

LCK: Yeah, I remember the moment where we came up with that subtitle and we were kind of passing these words to each other being like expanding or you know, reemerging. And then we said unfurling. And it was like, yes, it's unfurling. And, of course, as I just mentioned, it speaks to the way there's so much happening beneath the surface of, you know, the culture, like common culture that we don't know about. But I also think like we were really intentionally trying to invite new ideas into the conversation as well. And maybe I can speak to something that we were very conscious about the lack of in the exhibition, which is like the huge hip hop scene that exists in Western Sydney, like a deeply rooted hip hop history. And I guess the idea of calling it 'an archive unfurling' was to imagine that this archive could go on and on and on. And I think the most beautiful part about this exhibition so far has been that there have been so many people who have reached out and have said, "Oh, like I was going to these shows in 2003 at this place, like I have so many photos can I send them to you, like this, It reminded me of this, I've been doing my own research into this and like really wanting to share it." Because Western Sydney is imagined as a cultural wasteland and it's not, absolutely it's not. So it's been so wonderful to hear all these responses that hopefully can contribute to a future iteration of whatever we've just done.

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CMGS: And I think that unfurling to me, it has momentum. You know, I, to me, unfurling is like, it's like rumbling. It's like coming towards you with force and with an uncompromising passion. And I think that speaks to what I truly feel is the essence of Western Sydney. We are a lot of things, but we're not boring. And we're certainly not a cultural wasteland. I think, you know, we're really responding to and I feel like the punk, the punk and anti-colonial side of me, you know, was like, felt like this was such a moment to stand up and say that to say, you know, we've always been here, and we've always been doing it, and we will always do it. Because we Jus Diddit.

LCK: How does Jus Diddit speak to the future of Western Sydney?

CMGS: Jus Diddit speaks to the future of Western Sydney in the sense that it is undefined and up in the air. You know, like you said, you know, we don't know what we don't know and that excites me. Because that means that there's so much more to discover and to love and to be scandalised by and hopefully, that can kind of speak to the future of Western Sydney, which I feel like is so is so undefined right now. Especially, you know, where PARI is situated in Parra really is the heart of such a big developmental process. And, you know, no one knows what the future holds. But all we can do is celebrate what has happened and celebrate what can, and I think that's what Jus Diddit speaks to.

Pari is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.
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Jus Diddit is powered by Lupa Media Player.
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