



## Telling Our Stories, Finding Our Roots

### Interview with Anna Georghiou

Q.

...great so I'm starting recording now. Um this is an oral history on the 1st of September 2020. Um, could I ask you to start by telling me your full name and where you are today. 0.13

A.

Yes. Thank you. Um my name is Anna *Magdelini* Georghiou um and I'm currently in Okehampton in Devon.

Q.

Thank you. Um so Anna I think you've got an object which you wanted to share with us.

A.

So part of your project which I think is a really super project and thank you very much for the opportunity to share to share my story. Um so the objects I've bought that I have is um is this and it is a my grandfather's um traditional shepherd bag. It's called a 'Vourka' and he is from Cyprus Greek Greek Cypriot from Cyprus and he used to be a shepherd and they're made out of it's made out of goat's skin so um so I have I'm lucky enough to have this and I think it also had some sort of like pattern thing on it. It's very faded but you can't um can't quite see it that well at the moment but you can make out a bit that had had pattern and things like that. My mum gave it to me cos she thought out of the three of us, I would be the one to appreciate it the most, and maybe she's right (chuckle). And also um when I lived in Cyprus from 2004 to 2007 I was given sort like a shepherd's flute. It doesn't work and I would like to try and get it fixed some day soon so I could play it because I'm I'm a flute player um so I would like to get that fixed and play that too. So I put the two together. It's sort of become like a like a thing for me. It's my heritage.

Q 1.55

And do, you just mentioned that the objects sort of feel like a thing from your heritage so um can you say a bit more about that, what they represent, what they mean to you?

A. 2.04

Yeah. I think I mean I think it's like many families, don't really know our history no matter where we come from it's sometimes we don't, we might not even know who our grandparents are or our great grandparents are so I think it's a bit a bit um a lot of time I find a lot of people in my family don't like to talk about their history so much um in their past but my grandfather as far as I am aware was is a shepherd was a shepherd. Um he moved from Cyprus with my grandmother my *ya ya* we call them - *ya ya* ... - grandma and granddad. We moved from Cyprus just before 1974, before just before the invasion occurred in Cyprus um by Turkey. And they came they moved to London and he was a builder and he did work and things over there and then um sometime on they moved down to Torquay. Um at the they left my father in Cyprus while they came to England. My father they didn't send for my father until he was about 2 or 3 years old. So they left him with his grandmother in Cyprus and I think when they had another when they heard about their other child um they decided then to send for my dad so he came over then, by which time they'd they'd



started running restaurants and um building up a business in Torquay in um in restaurants and catering. mm.

Q. 3.30

And do you know very much about what motivated their decision to come to the UK?

A.

Yeah I think I think it's it's money I think it's sort of changing the way their lifestyle a very different lifestyle. I think um I get the impression that someone like me in hindsight that as you said as a second generation of a of a Greek Cypriot coming coming from - like I was born in England but I think it's looking for um a a better way of life, or a more comfortable way of life. In some ways in hindsight you can say that um being like being like living in Cyprus at that time um working the land I suppose and and shepherding eating beans and and things like that it's not they wanted to aspire to you know I think a different different lifestyle which I think England um in terms of money and and that kind of thing what people even now I think people are still very much geared up towards that kind of kind of life. I think that was the motivator.

Q. 4.37

And did they ever tell you about the journey which they took to come here. How did they travel, what that was like?

A.

No, um they haven't they haven't told me but in the future if I get the opportunity I I feel like I'd like to ask. When I ask a lot about my heritage it sort of it's not often talked about or it's not it doesn't seem to be um to be a, open open for questions and answers. It's kind of yeah that's the impression I get but I could be wrong. Yeah.

Q. 5.12

And is that something that you would like to know more about? That that closedness that you get when you ask questions um how does it make you feel?

A.

Well I think I think as I get older now it's like ooooh I've got I'm starting to get different questions about my heritage like you know just just and about my family and about about our roots and um yes I would like to know more if um if if possible. So while I've still got the opportunity I think it's a good time to um, and doing this project as well, brings it up doesn't it to the brings it up to the surface a bit more - and it's like oh yeah that's right because once once you lose that opportunity to know, you can never know for your life and then I guess it's lost again for another generation and then, history, it's a big part of who you are whether you know it or not, isn't it, it's like your, it's in your blood, it's in your genes, it's in your, it's in your, it's in your inheritance, genetically, and spiritually, whatever.

Q. 6.16

Um. So, thinking about, going back to to when they arrived, do you know um anything about how that transition was for them. You know how you said they came to London originally and then Torquay um yep do you know much about that?

A.

No, I don't know I don't know how it was but I think um I think there's a big in London there's a big Greek Cypriot community and I mean I really don't know how it was (chuckle) so but I just imagine that they were you know a big community of of Greek Cypriot people together and um so's trying to



make their way in a in a foreign country, learning the language and and finding finding their path I suppose. But I really don't know how it was for them.

Q. 7.07

And did they keep, have they kept any uh elements of their Cypriot culture which were part of your growing up that you inherited from them or that were part of how your family um operated

A.

Yeah I think so. Um. I think it was lovely to visit my grand my Greek grandparents *ma ya ya an...* The food - just absolutely amazing I love the food um. The Greek language, the talk like, out, you see cos I'm half half English half Greek Cypriot, my father never really spoke to me in the in Greek. It I think, we lived in England they said he said it was just embarrassing for him so um maybe it was because I don't look Greek Cypriot or maybe it's because you're in a different country and um so he never spoke, so I never learnt it and neither have my brother or my sister. My sister looks very Cypriot, and me and my brother probably don't so um but my other cousins they all speak they all speak um, so what was the question, as well?

Q. 8.14

No no that was brilliant so whether there were elements of their Cypriot culture or their Cypriot identity which they brought with them um because you mentioned how they uh haven't been receptive to questions about their heritage and uh is almost like they wanted to leave it behind and get on with life here, so, I wonder if there are anything which they did bring. You mentioned the food um and

A.

And the music, the Greek music, I loved it and I still do um it sort, it's fire, and the passion and and the and the instruments, the Greek *bouzouki* um and the singing and the rhythms and um yeah so on on which is I think the music um and the food um and and obviously family traditions where sort of the boys are, as opposed to the females, sort of used to be like the women would do all the work in the kitchen, and clean the potatoes, get the food ready. The men would go in another room and there would be drinking their whisky, playing their *tavoli* and having conversations like that. So, um that kind of thing as well (laughter).

Q. 9.28

Um and you mentioned your dad being a bit embarrassed. Um was that particularly about speaking the language or about anything to do with showing his kind of Cypriot identity?

A.

Yeah, I'm not actually sure because he like doesn't talk a lot about it but um I think when I, I did ask him not so long um he said he it just, I don't know, just, just, he was just embarrassed so, um but I've noticed now like in Okehampton we're getting a much more diverse culture and you've got people from Poland and and different places and they are speaking with their children in their native tongues and I just think that's really important really special that they're not they're not ashamed or afraid or you know to um to to carry on and to hand down the language to their to their children.

Q. 10.21

And is there anything which from from your culture from your heritage which you would want to pass on to the next generation in any way

A.



For my, yeah, I would, I'd like, I mean I'm still, I'm still finding out about it and still and still want, I want to be of it if that makes sense. It's very much about the land and the and the connection and spirit with that the land and with the atmosphere (breathing in) with the smell with the plants um and I think I think if anyone has mixed heritage I always urge them to go if they're born in the UK and to urge them to go to the other half of who they are and and and to experience spending valuable time in that that country, in that place. 11.13

Q.  
And..sorry..do carry on

A.  
That's ok yeah

Q. 11.18  
Um and I know from our our our conversation prior to your interview that you you went by yourself to Cyprus when you were quite young. Do you remember very much about that? About that journey.

A.11.30  
I remember I was I was nine years old and I went to Cyprus on my own. So my parents put me on the plane probably Heathrow or something, and then, the, with the stewardess (chuckle) and then then the air stewardess took me off the plane at the other end and I was able to find and to help me find my family. Yeah. we did that. It's good fun (laughter)

Q. 12.02  
And was that the first time that you'd visited?

A.  
No I think I went when I was about 3 as well, 3 or 4, but it was only it was only the second time I'd visited and then when I was in my last year of University in Northampton we went as a family to Cyprus and spent a really nice good time there as well as a family, seeing family meeting family and um things like that.

Q.  
And then I believe you yourself moved to Cyprus to study Art at the Cyprus College of Art and when you were a bit older you..what was that like?

A.  
Oh it was a life changer, was a life changer Nicole (chuckle). It was just the best. It was um so in two, I, in 2004 I moved to Cyprus by myself to study Arts um at the Cyprus College of Art and before that time I spent a month in the village that my grandmother grew up in and I was sort of chatting to the, chatting as far as I could with the local people. Some of them remembered my grandmother so it was really nice to hear about, then, a language barrier quite but they knew my grandmother when she was so high, and, um, just being in that village, just felt its warming to the soul, it was just like, and it was obviously warm anyway, but the dust and the warmth um so then I started, after a month in the village I went to Cyprus College of Art in Limassol to study foundation um in Art and Design.

But that was after I used I used to live in Edinburgh and then I went there. Yeah. I also did a degree before that in um Northampton um in psychology and philosophy. So it sort of led on.

## Telling our stories Finding our roots

So during my time in the College as a student um I used to work, so I used to live off £20 a week (laughter) um what could um. I lived I lived in a shed I mean you have to be a particular type to be able to cope with these conditions um and it's not for everyone and lots of people came to the College and it wasn't for them and they left but lots of people went to the College it was more than perfect for them and um they just grow into into into into artists, I suppose and and people um. So I lived in sheds for probably about three, two or three years washing my clothes in a bucket um. It was just very much..I grew vegetables just outside my shed. Um I taught myself the flute in those times. It was quality quality time to be it wasn't like uh um an English Art education and that's not what I was looking for and I and I don't I don't, I'm so pleased that I didn't study Art in England. It was a place where you could, you're free. You've got these years to to to develop who you are, to find your voice as an artist, as a creative person. Um or just as a person and so I was able to experiment with um. I messed about with science. I did a lot of reading. I taught myself the flute um started developing new music and and painting. Um I began to show my work at galleries and met some wonderful people and then later on, after a few years, um in 2007, I became tutor there at the College, um, teaching on um the foundation courses in art and design and their um their like degree programmes and postgraduate programmes. I also ran my own adult education programme as well called painting for fun. And that was big um, a creative, interesting time, self development and growth, discovery.

Q. 16.00

And can you tell us a little bit about the work that you were making then and you continue to make now.

A.

Yeah It'll be a pleasure to. Um. So I've I've always been interested in painting since a child like 14 um I had my room developed I had my room made into Van Gough's bedroom. He was the one who sort of like inspired me. My grandfather did it for me, my English one. He was a carpenter and he put the floor in and painted yellow and painted sunflowers and had the chair and all that kind of thing. Um. So he's my route into Art is was inspired by Van Gough uh I saw there's a lovely lady my grandmother's friend called Rene and she had these beautiful oil paintings in the home. I'd never really seen before but they were the old, old otherworldly deep dark landscape oil painting which I was just, my heart was just drawn to them. Um so my I love painting um in Cyprus I studied artists like Chagall, he's my choice of artist that I study. Um um. Obviously a lot of Greek Cypriot artists as well um like um Vassili, I can't remember their names. But uh Georghiou Pol all influence the way that I developed as a as a painter. I think I've always been someone who who doesn't, not, I'm not interested in the fashion of art or the or the you know the never been in the commercial side of the.., um yeah so. So uh that's probably about it. It's hard to put it into to words, isn't it. Because it's like a whole its a whole being of who you are that you are exploring exploring art and um and I think I've seen my life in parallel with my painting with my with my with my art. Well I did I did at that time. It's like I grow as my art grows and they both sort of affect each other as one develops and matures as a as a person um so does I feel like your perceptions and your vision for the art. So it's very much um at the moment I love sculpture, I do sculptures, mainly oil on canvas and nowadays we seem to be Phil and I, we seem to be doing quite a few mural projects in Europe painting huge long walls for different organisations and for friends.

Q. 18.47

Thank you um. That's that's really wonderful and I thank you. Um. So thinking about when you when you were in Cyprus other than your development as an artist and that experience of being there, did you learn anything else or gain anything else from being um I guess in the country which



was a huge part of your heritage but which you perhaps didn't know too much about before you were living there.

A.

Yeah. I know. Um. I think that um yes I learnt a little bit more of the language, I could enjoy the food much more frequently, I love (laughter) I love the sea. It's just wonderful and you know again it's very culturally different um, it's culturally different - a lot more laid back, I loved that, I just just loved it. Um. The men are a bit you know troublesome (laughter) at times so that was that was kind of a little bit of an issue um but I didn't really bother too much and um. Also yeah I felt I felt a sense of pride as well came into, I could feel a sense of pride, but it's strange because it's like even though I'm part of that it's like in England it's like I'm part of England but I'm not part of it and I'm part of Cyprus but but I'm not part of it either because um I'm a part I feel like I'm part of this and part of that. But as an identity there's not, I can't say that I'm British or that I'm English or that I'm English and lardy da and likewise I can't say that I'm British or that I'm English, I'm english and la di da because I don't feel that's true at all. And likewise I can't say that I'm a Greek Cypriot and and this and that um because even though at the time I suppose I feel it's like the splits (chuckle) and I belong, I feel like I belong in both places and and um and at the same time none of the places um and also I think I as I think as, in my experience of being in Cyprus and when I when people found out that I was half English or half Greek they'd go oh well you're English really or or they would go um or you're not Cypriot and I feel like well yeah I am so it's it's yeah it's a bit of a diffic, yeah identity so I identify with both with both cultures and I feel that I'm I sometimes feel more Greek Cypriot than I do English or other, I feel like I feel like I'm more Greek Cypriot than British, mostly. But then on other days, I feel like I'm more British than um Greek Cypriot.

Q.21.30

And, now you're thirty years into your life and you've clearly done a lot of thinking about your identity and about that sense of being both. Um. Was it always that easy to reconcile both parts of you, and think about them like that.

A. 21.48

Um. No, and I think no no it's not I don't think I don't think that's easy um to reconcile the the parts. Good questions (laughter) um but when I'm when I'm in England, if I get cross or frustrated with Englishness (laughter) then it's like well well it's like the fire of the Cypriotness will come in. Or or if I get and likewise in Cyprus if I get a bit like like frustrated with the Cypriotness of of something or other then the sort of the sort of more stricter, narrower more sensible Britishness might come in (laughter) so um I,so, yeah so I suppose it's it's easy to reconcile and I suppose on a balanced on a balanced scale kind of tips one way or another. Um. And this is what I hope for the future as well that I can I can I can balance that more out because I spent six years in Cyprus on the trot, when I was there and that was my home I never came to England really. I didn't even know who the prime minister was and I had no interest in knowing and um. And then in um in now I've been in England the longest time I've been in one place England for ten ten years so I feel like I want to readjust that balance a little bit now going forward in the future, to be able to make it so I can spend longer periods of time in Cyprus. Yeah..

Q. 23.35

Thank you. So you, I think you have .. expressed how you would describe yourself. Um how, how do you think your parents or well your dad on that side would have described himself and and your grandparents actually even after they...

A.

## Telling our stories Finding our roots

I don't think I could even begin to imagine or what they would say of, I think it would be um I couldn't even begin I don't I don't know . I think I think I think I think I'd have I think what they've achieved wasn't easy, it's not easy and I think it kind of shows in the kind of people that they are now and um I think they've had to be so strong and um so determined to to to be in a in a foreign country. Um I think throughout the school and, my father's growing up it's like obviously been he's he's . It's been difficult. Even for my sister at school um we she went to school we went to school in Wales. People bully her and I used to get we used to get into lots of fights just because of the colour of the skin and um and Wales don't like English people but they didn't like my sister either because of her the colour of her skin so um it's you always you always fighting you're always pushing you're always I feel like like it's it's not um I couldn't even imagine what they would say about it in their words and what their experience was but I think it it was a difficult journey and in some ways like still is 25.27. Yeah.

Q.25.32

Thank you. Um. So you spoke there a little bit about your experiences as a young person particularly your your sister's. Have you, have there been other instances in which you have kind of been made to feel different and perhaps unwelcome because of something about your identity. So that might be about looking a bit different sounding a bit different or even sometimes behaving a little bit different - other people, cultural practices, in terms of how you might operate.

A.

Yeah um I, I've never really thought about it before because I've always been someone that just goes like, you know, you got you want to do something like off you go and have a go. Um probably, yeah, I think, probably, could you repeat the question for me?

Q.26.33

Sure yes, so um I was just responding to your sister's experience when you were young or both of you but particularly your sister's experience when you were young in Wales um when you said that she was bullied because she was quite different, that the colour of her skin was quite different, and and that the children in Wales weren't necessarily receptive to English people and then again with an extra layer someone who looked different to them and so I was wondering whether in your experience either as a young person or as an adult you've er been made to feel um perhaps er sort of out there as an outsider or unwelcome because of anything about the way you sound or the way you look or the way um you just are as a person.

A.

The way, yeah er I think I think it was a big, when I came to England I was I think I was 29 so um I came back (interruption for cat) and um it and it was a big it was a big change (laughter) like as I mentioned briefly um like cos I'm a creative person, I come from a creative school I worked in a school and we we organised events music events at that school, exhibitions. It was a whole community of activity. Um when I came to Okehampton um I felt like a big part of that life the cultural life has doesn't isn't there for me so I thought well I can I can maybe we can create it maybe we can create this um this cultural life this like what we want like music and the arts um so as a as a result of that I started a few initiatives. We started Okehampton Acoustic Cub music club um which was an open platform really for people to come and play music poetry juggle, and do magic tricks. We had, it was a lovely evenings that we had um candlelights um for young and old and people would come and dance and things. I think I think people, I think a lot of some of the organisations that were already here that were doing other things musically um became a bit defensive about about us coming newcomers I guess and um setting up projects so we found that quite difficult um yeah. And also the arts, the level of like art appreciation there's lots of um lots of like, the arts is, I don't, I suppose it's because I come from going to lots of exhibitions, painting,



being part of exhibitions, and then coming into England where there's or Okehampton where there isn't really an art scene going on at the moment. And if it is it's like a local level art (laughter) which is which is which I then became uh yeah so, yeah um sorry Nicole

Q.29.37

No No apologies, that's wonderful. So, let's just take you back a couple of steps to think about that move to Okehampton. How did that come about? How did you find yourself um in Okehampton.

A.

So it was all happened, it happened quite fast really and it wasn't really a planned thing. Um like um in Cyprus the art college where I used to work, Cyprus College of Art, um star, the Director was trying to get it more into um an English way of Arts School, he was he was an academic. Um he was trying to make the college something that it that it wasn't really, trying to do courses like architecture um things like that which the college was a basic college for painting, sculpture, things like that, it wasn't really geared up for for a British kind of system so um I think then decided that it wasn't really for me to be there anymore. So we both sort of we left and and we could have gone anywhere in the world in England - it was like where shall we go. Um I was doing my masters degree in fine art at the time in in Northampton and, at the same time, I had my first solo show in Cyprus at *Kypriaki Gonia* and it sort of, so so we had all this going on um. So, and Phil's got his guitars made by um um Luthiers guitar makers, guitars Simon and we were able to stay with him in Okehampton um and we both thought yeah we like it here and see if we can um see if we can find some where to rent.

So we found somewhere to rent and they wanted like six months' rent in advance (laughter) ok so we so we managed to do, we did it anyway so um so we we moved to Okehampton. But it's beautiful land, love it so much um and I think I just love it more and more. It took me, I was quite, I didn't like it at first, I never liked, I never liked Okehampton. I was annoyed by the narrowness of the people and um and sort of lots of lots of walls and barriers with, I suppose, English personality. I don't know - that culture, all the culture of of Britishness um I found it I found it um like it was like a like brick walls um not very open um not free flowing. It was it was a bumpy a bumpy ride, um, even from crossing the road, the idea that one presses a button and hears a noise beep beep beep and then you kind of then you're allowed to cross the road. Um. Swimming in swimming pools: I used to swim in the sea anyway in Cyprus. But I love swimming so I tried swimming in a swimming pool but they have you swimming mostly in in lanes going up and down. You can't just do a freeform swim, it's it's very robotic robotic and that really that that frustrated me as well um. And I see I saw it recently as well before um we had there was people in the swimming swimming but they I think they were from from Spain or Catalonia and they just, they just jumped in the swimming pool, started playing volley ball, and ball, just swimming, having a good time and then a whistle would blow and the the person would like you know take confiscate the ball off them and I thought oh my goodness (laugh) the poor, the poor lads and I felt so embarrassed about it and I was going (laughter)

Yeah. See. I think the freedom I think culturally I think um Mediterranean have got a free spirit, they're spirited free spirited and and playful and and have less cares in some ways and then being in England it was like more I don't like to say it but it's not I don't know how to say it I'm not sure if it's even the right words but sort of stricter on their selves. I suppose it's stricter in their behaviour and sort of maybe more narrow and more sort of thick. So I found that a big cultural um change. Like, and and it's taken me ten years to um become comfortable with um to fit in to fit in I think um in that kind of way.

Q.34.18

And with that process of becoming comfortable and fitting in, what what has helped that happen?





A.

Yeah. Thank you. Um. I think well looking back actually, I never really realised it, but a lot of the friends I've met in Okehampton that we get on good with um and have good good songs and whatnot um how are are German and they're Greek and they're Brazilian, so a lot of my friends aren't actually um um British. Although there are, I do have some, but my main friends are are not. Um and also I think during my time, ten years here um I've I've I've I've found another another path, another way. Um. I've followed another passion of mine I suppose which is um complementary therapies. So I've been studying aromatherapy, and reflexology, and reiki and Indian head massage and and just sort of following, and learning and and reading a lot around that and and incorporating it into my my music and into my um into my art and into my work as a as a as a person.

Q.35.41

Thank you. Um so you mentioned that you've got lots of friends from different who who whose heritage is from different places, um, thinking about Okehampton the town is there ...one particular community or lots of different communities and um of those which ones are you a part of?

A.

Oh gosh um I've never really been, I'm not someone who is part of anything, if that makes sense, I'm sort of always on the edge, I never want to, I don't know if it's a choice or the way I am. I never fully get involved too much in in groups. Um but I have, my friend, she's Greek, she's from Greece, Christiana. She started um sort of cultural feast, multicultural feast in Okehampton um and I went to one of them and we played, Phil and I played played some music for them and it was it was it was really nice and like culture, multiculture coming together sharing food and conversation and that was really nice, um, but I'm not, I'm not really part of, I don't distinguish myself in terms of my culture or anything cos I I feel I feel like it's more, it's like, we're all, I try I try and be whole as a person, not not identify with certain groups because I can I can identify a little bit with each different group, be it multicultural, be it music, be it be it art, be it complementary therapists - be it, um, you know, um just people that you meet down the pub and have a good time with and and the bikers, the bikers, there's always, I can always identify and be with different groups of people um yeah.

Q. 37.47

Thanks Anna. Um let's shall we take a short break there.

A.

Yeah

Q.

A break from the screen. So, I'm going to pause the recording there

A.

OK. Thank you

Q.

OK. We are now returning to our recording and so if we can just go back a couple of steps, thinking about when you first arrived in Okehampton. Um. What was that first day like? What do you remember about it?

A.

## Telling our stories Finding our roots

It was a big, well we were living in Northampton at the time because um I was just finishing off I had finished my MA . So we got got we'd done all our packing in Cyprus. I had my exhibition and it was wonderful. It was great. We packed up our house, got it shipped over. We had no address to um ship it to because we didn't know where we were going to live (chuckle) um. So but we moved because I was in Northampton, we just took the stuff that we had on a National Express bus and we came dragging it all on the bus and we came to Okehampton. We arrived, we were really tired and whatnot and the person we were staying with was still at work so really, really, um, we took all our stuff and just collapsed in a heap in the Plymouth Inn pub which is now closed (laughter). So we just we sat in there for crikey where are we and what have we done. Um so we ordered our drinks and we met the bikers and now the monkey blues boys blues band boys, the monkey band blues, can't remember their name, but they are not together anymore but we just had we just met some good people and had a few drinks and putting the world to right, and good conversation and it felt like ah yeah this is ok, this is ok. It's nice to meet like minds and and um and talk.

Q.

And

A.

Yeah

Q.

No. Go ahead

A.

And then, and then, we we went to um we went to Simon's house and the beginning beginning of finding somewhere to live, like we found somewhere to live that we could afford and stuff.

Q.40.00

And and what was what was that first home that you had in Okehampton like?

A.

(laughter) It was er, well to be honest it was it was a little, it was a, I didn't realise you know, cos it was done so fast and it looked so different. It was actually above a funeral directors', but I didn't know and I we I thought it was a restaurant like we didn't know. So obviously we realised when that sunk in it was like crikey, you know, um it was it was interesting cos people you know they would they would have funerals services coming out of it and people would go in at night (laughter) and and it was like Goth and we would be sleeping right above that . And and so that was a whole thing, but um it was yeah so that was our first place in um (laughter).

Q.40.52

So it sounds like you might have moved on fairly quickly and where did you move to after that?

A.

And then after that um I thought it would be a good idea to um. A friend I met in Cyprus um was living in Cornwall Devon and I thought that we could like house share together and maybe do projects and things together so we rented a house then in Church Street in Okehampton. So we were there for a while and our friend moved in but that didn't really quite work out because I think it was like they used to laugh at us. It would be, it would be like Gaugin and um and Van Gogh living together it was just like (roar) no. So that we so we Phil and I we stayed in the house and then my friend um we are still friends now and and we sorted these things out, which is good. Um so if two



creative people living together could be a bit of an explosion I think. Um so yeah, so we did that and then we were there for about five or six years and then our landlord decided that he wanted to sell the house and so we were given a few months to try and find somewhere else. And um then he decided he didn't want to sell the house but then we decided we were leaving anyway. So we came we came here to station road. And had our studio above, above the Plume and Feathers pub for a while which was really useful. It was good fun. So we used to paint up there but due to Covid 19, cos that's where we are at at the moment, um they wanted to to had to change all their plans that they had for the for the place so um we moved we had to move our studio out. So we are all in the living room with our music studio and our painting studio and everything at the moment. It's nice having it back in one place, cos it just means I can get up and paint or I can do the music or um stuff like that.

Q.42.59

Um and were or are there uh many other artists living in Okehampton?

A.

Um. Yes there's there's there are lots of artists living in Okehampton um and creative people. Yeah. Yep. I think they yep yep (laughter).

Q.

Because I was wondering when you were speaking about your studio being above being above above the Plume and Feathers pub and whether people knew that you were painting in there and if so, was there curiosity, did people want to come and see what you were doing, that sort of thing.

A.

Yeah. I think um there was curiosity and but we didn't we didn't tell many people about it. Um. It was it was um a derelict pub and it was, that part was out of use um at the time. But it was actually quite interesting because we did a project, I started a project called we called it Ocmundtune Creative Arts and I was working with um um the *commune* like a little bit, work with the council um um and to try and develop an Arts Centre in the town of Okehampton and at the time that pub we had a look round it, the Plume and Feathers to see if it was possible um to turn it into an Arts Centre for the town. But it turned out it would be like a million pounds plus project and it it didn't come to *fruition*. Um we also um, but doing that project I found that something really interesting as well about like Ocmundtune is the old Saxon name for Okehampton and so that really really inspired me because what it actually means is its its Ocmundtune is a place by the river where slaves were set free to choose their own destiny. And and for me that was just like wow um fabulous um, so me at that time you know was I liked the idea that were we're we're are slaves we're we're we're slaves and and this this historic town is is known for a place where you can you're set free and you you choose your own destiny and and matching and pairing that with idea of arts and the creative arts, so the two go hand in hand to towards freedom of individuals and I kind of see that now as well in my life, I just feel like I've been here for ten years and and maybe Ocmundtune or Okehampton um in my own slavery um there slowly slowly it's taken this time to become more free. So now I'm reaching another point in my life where it's like, we all come to these crossroads or these choices, decisions that we can make um so now do I choose freedom now and and and and and go on from there so um that was so that was Ocmundtune Creative Arts, that project (laughter) I've passed it on now. I gave it to the ex mayor of um of Okehampton Paul Vachon um cos he he he he'd studied art and um yeah so I thought yeah so I could carry on doing my own work (cough) cos it didn't quite go how I wanted planned it um it didn't quite it wasn't quite wasn't quite right so. But now they still do exhibitions and things but not necessarily in the way that that I thought it it could go, the potential could go. But again we had good support from from the community for the event that we had and we got funded for it um but it was it was a lot of



work and um yep it it was good, really good artists we bought to the town and different workshops and um yeah it was good.

Q. 47.15

Anna, is more creativity, more cultural life something which you would like to see in Okehampton or do you feel over the time you've been here that it's developed to the point at which you now feel (words unclear) reached.

A. 47.36

I think um I think it's developing a lot. I mean um I feel like obviously there's lots more that that that that can that we can do, that people can share like share share open perceptions and um but definitely over the ten years I've been here for it's I, you can see it in the shops the little shops that people are starting to open up, and little art shops, and antique-y shops and um interesting cafes and things. It's definitely starting to come - I don't like the word alternative, but more more diverse and more less less more growth like growth. I think I think um despite the town council and despite (laughter) despite you know that's one of the things I found I went to so many meetings and I just thought like they just have meetings about meetings and they don't, in my opinion, don't really get anything done. And if they want something doing they have to write a paper about it and then his paper costs so much money and and it's just the same pattern that seems to be going on and on and on. With the same people doing it with the same mind with the same thinking and um um um so that sort of thing like - I learned I enjoyed, I didn't enjoy my time there. It was an experience I learnt. Um I could see what it was kind of like at town council level and the kind of language they used and and how what just the sort of things they thought about and the way they thought about doing them um. But um after a while I just I decided to um leave that (chuckle) behind but more more recently I set up a project with two friends um one's from Greece and one's from Brazil, two therapist we set up um Okehampton Community Wellbeing for All and that was about um offering um complementary therapies to people who may not ordinarily be able to have access to the benefits of them due to affordability and things and we set that up at the um Okehampton Medical Centre and that's been going for a couple of years and um it's really good. It's a big project but now there's just two of us doing it, just me and Eve the other lady so I need to let go. mm yeah.

Q. 50.09

And and so now, thinking about your daily life, um, what does daily life look like for you in and around Okehampton

Mmm daily life. Um well um to be honest daily life it can be a bit, it's a bit I find it but it's my it's me isn't it. So I find it can be a bit frustrating and quite limiting daily life but I'm somebody who who who who is a I'm a creative person. I would like there to be more of the things that I am interested in like exhibitions openings um music but not just pub music but music, people creating their own music and sharing their their their songs and what they do with people but I suppose we did do Okehampton Acoustic Club which catered for that aspect but um um yeah so daily but but it sort of I spend we've also so. A lot of the time I use for planning. I like to plan, I like I love starting projects I just love it I love I love um working with communities and supporting supporting individuals develop their life . Maybe creating opportunities for people. Um so daily life at the moment is um I work as a complementary therapist which I love and I give people treatments in reflexology and aromatherapy and things. I'm working towards teaching more. I've just finished my qualification to be able to teach and develop my own workshops. So and um I'd like to do that more and also in art and in complementary therapies in terms of self care and um things like that. Um and also planning for the future. Like thinking about um my next project in Europe but which is going to be interesting as well because obviously England is leaving Europe but our projects, all our creative



projects are in Cyprus and and Catalonia and and Barcelona and places like that so that kind of avenue is I suppose I'm not quite sure, it's probably going to go isn't it because they can't fund us anymore to do projects because we are not England is not in Europe so then I need to question like do I wanna stay in England now or do I need to move or you know just as a person living my life, living in England restricts it a lot, restricts restricts, so um at the moment my days are thinking about you know what what work can I do now. What can we do now, where can we go where shall we live. That sort of thing. Yeah.

Q.53.22

And I know that you have over over the years since you moved back from Cyprus spent um at least some time every year in Cyprus. Roughly

A.  
yeah

Q.  
Roughly how much time of each year would you spend there.

A.  
Not too much like maybe one or two months of the year like in different times but um doing projects and seeing friends and family in Cyprus um. I would and also in Catalonia and we've been working doing playing music at festivals there (words unclear) and um little talks as well like the odd talk about um you know sedge oils and and plants and rosemary different the qualities of of things like that um but I do I feel like I feel like my I love being where I am but again I suppose you become I dunno do you become a refugee of of your of your own country because you can't be who you are any more due to the way it's changing. So if I want to have an exhibition in Cyprus now because that's where my galleries are um I suppose like customs and export and customs and the faff and the not and the cost that's involved in that is not is going to be conducive to um to live to to living um I don't know how it's going to work. So part of me just feels like it's easier just to move to a European country so that I can continue my work but that's something, that's my problem or thing to solve as I haven't got the answers to that yet.Yeah.

Q. 55.16

Thanks Anna. Um so I guess, it sounds like this is in process and is changing but if you were to think about the two places and anywhere else you spend time, do you think of any of them as home, when you think of the word home.

A.  
Home. Yeah I I I feel like for me my home is is with my partner, like he's, I feel in myself like they are my homes. Um the land is very much to me, I love nature, I feel deep connection with with earth, like with the land and I feel that connection physically, energetically if you like. And musically. Um It's like you tune in to the land that you are in so at the moment I'm tuned in to Britain, like the nature of Okehampton, the moors, um so so so that I feel like that is my home as well. And so and also my home is also when I when I go to Cyprus I feel different, I'm a different person. I'm I'm I'm home there as well, so it's like the concept of home as free free forms, as but I think you know if e are going to you know as an artist or even as an ordinary person to to forge your own physical home is is another is something else entirely (laughter). And sort of how do we live. How I'd love it if I could have a home one day, that I could have a home that I don't have to rent it's like it's my home. And I'm sure like you know in Britain with with with hundreds of thousands of us that have that kind of you know yearning,. It's almost like it's been denied the people, like you can't have a home um sort of outpriced and I've just come across some



interesting projects actually but I don't know if they're there for me or not. But um there's like there's a one planet project in Wales I think which is about you can um if you can live and sustain yourself off the land for, you're going to be five years to do that mission then you can live in another way and then I think you can. There's another project that's happening in England um, community land trust where can um go in with other people. But I don't know if that's really the way I want to go but umm yeah. So home is like - I don't know. Are we can be like sometimes I'm I'm not a refugee in any sense of what it comes to mean to be a refugee what the people the poor people in Syria but um sort of um a bit, just sometimes it feels like you're homeless or or you don't belong anywhere or you know that kind of thing (laughter).

Q.

You know that one of your paintings is entitled "In between places"

A.

Ah yeah

Q.58.43

Do you have it, do you have it here that you could show to us?

A.

Yeah I do thank you Nicole yeah. So I've got two. So the "In Between Places" painting is also the front cover of our Troubadour's Garden album titled "In Between Places" and it's actually as big as this one there behind me.

Q.

Anna, Anna, could you um both describe the image and also the size of the pictures um just for people who might be listening rather than watching

A. 59.20

So this is "In between places". Um I can't I can't remember, it's about - is it about 2 metres or 2 and a half metres by I can't remember now but one and a half metres it's quite it's quite a large one. Um and I started it in Cyprus cos these things take a few years to to manifest and to develop to grow um . So I started it in Cyprus and finished it in Okehampton in Church Street there. And I saw so you can see that it's got it's a combination of the places I felt like the houses I've painted like the village house in Cyprus but it's all green instead of yellow and ochre because the Cyprus colours- yeah - I think with my paintings the way I work um is is a lot of the time it's like unconscious so I don't quite know what they are, what they are about and each person that looks at them brings something like it means something to them so they can um they can put their own meaning and um some ideas in it so cos I'm somebody who doesn't you now I try I suppose studying philosophy and things, gives me the ideas that um you know um our human brain is very much limited and um I don't want my art to be limited to be limited by my own head. It's more my art is spirit it's free it's unconscious but at the same time it's it's like a vision I suppose. And during my studies, my own study, I come to learn that people like um you know Turner also worked in that way. You're not working with your head, you're not working with a set of ideas that you're trying to draw. You're the way it's sort of like you you it's it's we do a project about it, I do, it's called Vision in Imagination. We do a day's workshop or a week's workshop and it's sharing with people the way that both Phil and I work. So it's like you're looking into and bringing out. So the first part of it is like fun and you're making mess and then like looking into it and and seeing what you see. I suppose it's like reading the tea leaves, or looking at the clouds and sometimes might suggest like um er a figure in the clouds in the sky. Or, it's called simulcra in in nature. You can see faces and things in trees and um so I sort of work that way um with with paint. Um Leonardo Da Vinci worked



that way. He describes it like with moss covered walls and he says do not despise my opinion um about if how beautiful it can be to work with a moss moss covered wall and dream into that into that landscape. And also Salvador Dali used to look at mouldy cheese and um and see see fields um you know looking into dreaming into into random marks and it's a bit like order out of chaos. So, that that's that that's how I work. Um.

Q.1.02.49

And other particular things nowadays which um you find yourself dreaming into or looking into which inspire your paintings or your music

A.

Um well, yeah. Recently, it's during this time obviously like with the Covid virus and things. We've had to be still because we were supposed to be going to Cyprus in March to do a project but we couldn't because of what has happened so it's kind of like sort of everything on on hold but it's it's a good time I felt I felt it was a good time just to um reflect and and appreciate the things that that we've done up until now in our time and and to make those connections that I may not have made before. So like another painting is is is this is on the album "A woman the rainbow" but it was just it was just at the weekend, actually, was at Scorhill Stone circle when and I just realised that this this painting is is Scorhill. It's it's of that land it's of that nature with with a hidden dimension to it or with um with my with my figures and things in it. And that little stone there, it's sort of like the stone that um like the fertility stone that you go into that that that, if you ever get a chance to go there, go there it's fab um yeah. So. Yeah music (laughter).

Q. 1.04.24

Thank you. Um so let's just think about a few more questions before we finish up. Um so you have sort of touched on this a little bit already but I'll just ask you again about how in the ten years you've been living here you've seen Okehampton change. Does it feel like a different place to the one that you arrived in?

A.

Um yeah. I think it does and I think um I'm not sure if that's because I've changed as well or if it's probably a mixture of both. Like different, like new people coming into the town and and contributing to it um community-wise, and culturally. It's changed, it's definitely changing a lot. Um in the community, I think. I don't know whether the Council and those kind of sort of medieval (chuckle) set ups are changing. Um I'm not sure cos I've not been involved with them for a long time and that's a personal choice. Um but definitely community-wise and um definitely lovely change is happening and um and a really good sense of of community community spirit and helping each other and togetherness. And just more just more varied more varied outlooks on life and more varied experiences being um being shared being hared and being created. Um yeah definitely it's a lovely it's taken, I really like Okehampton it's a really lovely place to be in. I feel really lucky and privileged to be to be living here now which at the ti which um which I never always felt like that about being here. So..

Q.1.06.24

And do you have any sort of um hopes or fears or um dreams about the next sort of ten, twenty fifty years, um either for yourself, or for the town?

A.

For the town?



I think my hopes will be to to look after the nature that we have around here like to to care for it and not to just hack it down and litter it as I've. But um I hope that my hope is that people wake up and see um the magic of of of of where we live and the rivers, the nature. Um, and when I came to Okehampton I could not believe that the town allowed um three supermarkets to be built by the most beautiful place of outstanding beauty and nature. And and Lidl's is now covering an important um an important point which is where where the rivers meet - where the two rivers meet or three rivers meet . Um you know it's it's just got Lidl's there so I I hope that going forward um things like that become less and that people respect cherish look after and love the beautiful magical environment which is um which is nature in Okehampton. Going forward

Q. 1.08.10

Thanks. Um you've mentioned that you think there might be a bit of a turning point for you and you're not sure if you will stay here in Okehampton. Do you have anything else to say about that.

A.

I think ideally it would be nice if I could be and spend time in both places but um, it depends obviously it's finances isn't it and and and things like that. I think if if if money was no object I I would stay here and continue with with what I am doing and develop what I'm doing, as well as spending more time in Cyprus. Yeah Um.. I do I love it here but I love it here very much but it is it is mainly the land and it's mainly the nature the river and the the trees (laughter) the horses the, yeah.

Q.1.09.26

Thank you. And so looking right back um to when your grandparents decided to come to Britain, how do you feel now about their decision to move?

A.

Well, if they hadn't of moved then I wouldn't exist (laughter) because my mum is English and I was born in Torquay in 1981 and my mum like worked for my dad as a waitress in one his cafes so that's how I came about - from that - so um I dunno I don't mind not being born I guess (laughter)

Q.1.10.10

OK so a bit of a rephrase of that one so if you could if you could go back and speak to them um around the time that they were choosing to move is there anything that you would either say to them or perhaps that you would like to ask them

A.1.10.34

Maybe I would ask them why they wanted to move and maybe why they're not happy with their side of life with the life that they had. And why we think money is the answer to everything but, you know, it's interesting cos I could put myself in that position again like can't you put yourself in that position yeah maybe I think it's because I'm a bit of I dunno if I'm an idealist a dreamer a bit of an idealist sort of person um but when it comes down to it the reality of of things are very different to the um to the dream idea of something isn't it so yeah and yeah makes us who we are. I guess our decisions and our perceptions about life and what we want for ourselves and what we strive for but I guess like we try there comes a time that maybe you realise you don't need to strive or strive to be or to do anything. Um and then then what (laughter)

Q.1.12.00

Thanks Anna. Er so we've spent lots of time talking about the journey that's brought you to where you are today. Is there anything else which you would like to share with us.





A.

Um. I'm got, sort of I love music I can play flute and we normally play um Troubadour's Garden with Phil. I wrote in a poem many years ago in my twenties called fisherman. Um and then later I developed it into a song and maybe I could share a verse of that song with you. It's about fishermen.

Q. 1.12.43

Yes, Please do. Is there a story about the song that you'd like to tell us before you before you perform it for us.

A.

So Um. I think I was I was living in Cyprus and I came to England to to work and to to create more funds for my year. I was visiting my grandmother who lives in Shaldon and during that time as well I did some sketches of the houses of the village and of the sea and of the boats and um I sat on this bench and just there was this symbol, there was this man on a boat paddling with one oar and um so that sort of set me up. It's like I'm a fisherman combing the sea, I am a man in a small boat standing with my freedom and one oar. But the best like, and this is not part of the verse but it's like would you one day choose to take your life's (word unclear) standing with your freedom and one oar rather than two. Or so so it was kind of like asking to reflect. I think it's an interesting song for now actually that I did in my twenties. So um you know that's the story behind it. OK we'll give it a go.

1.13.58

I am a fisherman, I'm combing the sea

I am a man in a small boat standing ....

with my freedom oh my freedom wa ho

te ee um na na ny yo

na um na na ny yo

um nynyny ho

hy hy yo

hy yo

Singing um nono ay nononana ah ay oh

um nananana

ay ay ho (1.15.07)

So I just want to say thank you to Nicole for your interview and a big thank you to Greta and um thank you to Devon Education and Development. It's a really its a really good project and um I feel really privileged to be part of it. Thank you for having me. Bye.

END

Date of transcription: 28 September 2020

transcriber: Linda Luckhaus