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[Excerpt]

Bianca Mavrack *I have so many objects which I feel like there's something about the materiality of that object that just really speaks to me. And then I see the materiality of the jewellery reflected back in the object...There's this playful utility to them and they're really tactile and they're really versatile in the sense that we've done some really fun carabiner clips for this collection that is rooted in all the coloured enamels. Because colour is such a big part of my work and I just can't bring myself to wear black. And I feel like colour is so tied to emotion as well.*

Mariam Arcilla You're listening to Interno, a podcast profiling artists situated in different parts of the world who are recalibrating their internal lives and perspectives of home, longing and connection adjacent to a global pandemic.

I'm your host, Mariam Arcilla, and I've produced Interno with support from the Institute of Modern Art in Australia. My guest for episode 4 is Bianca Mavrack, a Brisbane-based jewellery designer of Greek heritage. During her time at the Queensland College of Art, Bianca majored in Jewellery and Small Objects, after studying Industrial Design. In 2014, she launched her eponymous label, Bianca Mavrack, stocking her crisp-shaped, exuberant-hued jewellery and accoutrements at galleries and stores in Australia, including the NGV Design Store, Pieces of Eight,

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and Craft Victoria, and internationally through Anthropologie, United Arrows, Shopbop and Lane Crawford. In this episode, I talk with Bianca about her childhood as the daughter of a car mechanic and a hairdresser, and how the artist often creates utilitarian-inspired works that are primed by personal narratives and familial memories. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge Traditional Owners of the Lands on which we live and create work, and note that our conversation takes place between Sydney/Gadigal Land and Brisbane/Meenjin. We hope you enjoy this episode.

Mariam Arcilla Hi Bianca, thanks for joining me on Interno.

Bianca Mavricks Hi, Mariam, how are you?

Mariam Arcilla I'm good, thank you. I'd like to start our conversation by talking about the symbolisms behind your jewellery. How you often imbue your objects with cultural signifiers that conjure up notions of place and heritage - you're well known for that. And I remember seeing your early work, where you were paying homage to things like Greek pillars, hair combs and greenery. Can you talk about history behind these motifs?

Bianca Mavricks Yeah, sure! I guess one of the collections that really put the [Bianca Mavricks] label on the map was one called Tropical Wave, and it was really about the celebration of living in Queensland and the amazing tropical colour palette, but also a lot of the symbolism in the jewellery. Those sort of abstracted shapes came from memories or emotion and in Greek culture, we have an evil eye that is a blue eye. That's in a lot of jewellery and it's, you know, symbolic of something for protection. And I just always grew up seeing jewellery with the eye in it. And it's not particularly something that I wanted to wear because we'd always worry about having this jewellery that had a little 'glass' eye. I think I wanted to take the concept of that and transform it into something that felt more contemporary.

Bianca Mavricks And that was how it turned into the idea of this magnet and repelling sort of this negative energy and attracting good luck and positive energy. And that became a replacement. So that's probably one of the most iconic motifs.

Mariam Arcilla Like a talisman.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah, like this talisman magnet. Recently I had a customer email me who was a Greek-Australian as well, and she bought the earrings, particularly for that motif because she was giving them to her niece for her 21st birthday. And lovely to know that the symbolism behind the jewellery is, I guess, something that —

Mariam Arcilla — that can be passed down through generations.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah. And it's something that people understand and appreciate.

Mariam Arcilla Well, your Greek motif just reminded me of something I appreciate from my own childhood in the Philippines. In my family, we have a similar folklore

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with pineapples. When you see a pineapple in a room or in a dinner party or a relative's house, there is most likely a folkloric reason for that. When I was a kid, my grandmother told me that the eyes of a pineapple actually represent the thousand eyes of dead souls. It's like a portal to another world so that your ancestors can keep an eye on you.

Bianca Mavricks Oh, right!

Mariam Arcilla So when I'm in a room and there's a pineapple in the room with me, I have to be at my best behaviour because I don't want to attract negative energy and I want to go in to make these spirits world proud of me. So when I left Quezon City to move to Queensland, Australia, I was in shock because everything and everywhere around me had pineapples: pineapple jewellery, pineapple earrings, pineapple tea towels, pineapple in burgers, pineapple-pineapples decorated around the house. And I just thought, oh my god, living in Queensland, I can't go anywhere without being at my best behaviour. And it's something that I think about today.

Bianca Mavricks My gosh, I should've given you a new pair of earrings with an abstract pineapple motif on them actually [laughs].

Mariam Arcilla I probably would have worn them and it would have caused me to be really hyper aware of my behaviour at all times. But there's definitely an element of folklore in your work that pays ode to your heritage in that you wear these ornaments for protection. But you also want to, as you said, contemporise these beliefs through your fashion choices. So in what other ways has your Greek background informed your creative work or the ideas behind, say, the shapes that you use, and the colour palette as well?

Bianca Mavricks There were a lot of references to ionic columns and architecture. And then my grandmother always grew a giant pot of aloe vera, and whenever she had cooking burns from my oil splattering on her, she was always breaking off this spiky bit of aloe vera and rubbing it on us or on her on her burn.

Mariam Arcilla How soothing!

Bianca Mavricks Yeah, and that was memories from my grandparents, and their house just up the road from me in Dutton Park, in my early collections. A lot of those memories became an abstracted shape that was made through paper cut-outs. And then that was translated into a digital drawing so I could make a mould that became something that were...came from my industrial design process.

Bianca Mavricks I used to have earrings that were a comb motif. My mum's a hairdresser and she collects all these combs. I think I've got combs from all over the place. She'd always get mad if we'd take this one particular comb [laughs]. I think it was a cutting comb, which is meant for hair cutting.

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Mariam Arcilla Yeah now I can definitely see your mother's pick comb and cutting comb manifest themselves and to some of your designs. So, hey, what does your mother think about self isolation haircuts that's happening in homes right now?

Bianca Mavricks She honestly just cuts family and an elderly neighbours hair. Dad's retired and she used to work for dad's business and she stopped her hairdressing. But yeah, she started when she was 16 - she had her own business as well. And my dad had his own business so I did grow up watching my parents have their own businesses and I didn't really know how to get a corporate job, in a way?

Mariam Arcilla What's your dad's profession?

Bianca Mavricks Dad had a mechanical repair workshop. And at one stage I even had my studio in the back of one of his shops.

Mariam Arcilla That would have been cool and very smelly?

Bianca Mavricks Yeah [laughs]. It was great. It was a great space. I made it a great space. It was like a mezzanine level of this workshop that wasn't being used. And the tenant just had you know, there were about four or five of those box 80s kind of TVs that were stored up there, all this junk that they had. And we had to rip up this vomit green carpet and, you know, make the space into a studio. But that was a moment in time. I've moved around a few different studios and wound up in a car garage in Moorooka. Very glamorous! [laughs]

Mariam Arcilla Very very glamorous. And I assume your parents would be supportive of you starting your jewellery business because they ran their own business as well. What do you think drove them to become self-made and independent?

Bianca Mavricks They went to school and English wasn't their first language. And it was a little bit harder, and a trade with something that was really valued. So they did go into a trade quite young. And this is why...I just saw my mum just yesterday because she had this foot operation.

Mariam Arcilla What was she getting surgery on her feet for?

Bianca Mavricks [From] wearing in the 80's. One of those things where I just can't understand how they [fashion trend at the time] can make them do that. And then with your mum being a flight attendant....

Mariam Arcilla Yeah, my mum wore these disasterly-high stilettos for her job whenever she flew for Cathay Pacific in Hong Kong, which she did for over 20 years. And people would come up to her in the streets, because my mum would always look so glamorous and she'd be walking with stride and they would ask her, "what do you do for a living?" And she would tell them, "I walk through the skies across the world."

Bianca Mavrick Love it! [laughs].

Mariam Arcilla But now my mum has arthritis and she has foot problems. But to her, it was just all part of the job at the time. But also because my mom retired, I've inherited some of her jewellery that she used to wear during her time in the skies. And even when I'm looking at you right now, as we're talking through Zoom video, and you have this chain around your neck from your jewellery line, and it makes you think about your dad's mechanic shop and how he probably would have chains all around the shops.

Bianca Mavrick Yeah.

Mariam Arcilla And how that would have informed you creatively as well.

Bianca Mavrick Yeah, the [chain necklace] is really fun. There's this playful utility to them and they're really tactile and they're really versatile in the sense that we've done some really fun carabiner clips for this collection that is rooted in all the coloured enamels. Because colour is such a big part of my work and I just can't bring myself to wear black. And I feel like colour is so tied to emotion as well. When you look at the psychological kind of effects of colour that we don't even realise. I really love creating colour palettes. And I guess that's how I use the materiality of the work. I do love materials where we can bring colour in the work.

Mariam Arcilla So what kind of colour palette have captivated you lately?

Bianca Mavrick Anything that's really soothing at the moment.

Mariam Arcilla I really loved last year's colour. But I think this year is basic...it's Classic Blue.

Bianca Mavrick Oh it is the blue!

Mariam Arcilla The previous one was the [claps hand]...coral! Living Coral!

Bianca Mavrick Yes, that's it!

Mariam Arcilla It was quite eco-conscious and very of the now, Living Coral. Classic Blue just makes me think that it's a very social media vibe.

Bianca Mavrick It's that Facebook logo, almost.

Mariam Arcilla I've heard a rumour that Mark Zuckerberg actually designed his Facebook profile and the Facebook brand in that classic blue because he is colour-blind.

Bianca Mavrick Oh I didn't know that!

Mariam Arcilla Yeah, so that means he can't see green or red. So blue is his visual compass. Speaking of colour spectrums, have you heard f.lux? You install it into your computer and it's a time-based program that lulls you screen with this tungsten yellow glow. It's supposed to, like, lull you into circadian rhythm so that you prepare for bedtime. And I usually work past midnight on a laptop. And I find this program to be a really soothing alternative to the 7-Eleven fluorescence that most computer programmes have.

Bianca Mavricks Oh that's something I should definitely do. I don't know why I can't get into it. I think I need to start doing it. I just like a lot of soothing colours at the moment because I guess in a way you got to do all these subtle things to make yourself feel comfortable in a space, especially when there's a lot of, I guess, especially lockdowns and things like that, you gain a new perspective because things that take...it's a subtractive moments of like taking away like certain elements of like your freedom and, you're limiting your choices. And that makes you centre you to renew your perspective. I guess there's like little subtle things that you can do to make you feel comfortable in a space, like moving your objects around or wearing a certain colour.

Mariam Arcilla Well, speaking of colour psychology, I find the generational shifts towards colour so fascinating. I remember going to a Semi-permanent conference maybe 10 or 12 years ago in Brisbane, when Louise [Bannister] from Frankie had just started Frankie magazine. And she was told by Morrison Media at the beginning to avoid putting the colour green on the front cover, because green front colours were really, really hard to sell at shops. So, you know, "green means spending, so I'm not going to buy this magazine." So that's was the idea. And she was told that green font covers were a no-no because of this. But over a decade later, there's this collective considered effort for everybody to be green, eco-friendly conscious, especially with this growing research into plant intelligence and new materiality and a focus on recycling products and sustainability in fashion. So maybe this has affected the way that some magazine psychologicalise our cover colours. And that said, I'm looking at my bookshelf right now and I can see the Planthunter book, an Eva Hese book, a Hito Steyerl book. And they're all laced in green.

Bianca Mavricks It's like you've got to take it with a grain of salt. When I did, my parents had this book - I don't know where they'd got it from - like maybe a garage or like a car boot sale or something, but it's called Orange Underpants. And apparently, it's all about colour psychology. But apparently in the book, they tell you if you wear orange underpants then you're going to have this great day [laughs]. It's like the colour psychology of being enthused with a sense of inner optimism.

Mariam Arcilla Okay, maybe that is true because I have a lot of terracotta pants, I must say. I have like three orange terracotta pants that I wear on high rotation because they make me feel grounded.

Bianca Mavricks That's interesting what you're saying about terracotta colour, because I feel like that's a colour that I feel really attracted to. Terracotta and also

mint is another grounding colour. Mint is like the chameleon colour that I put in a lot of our collection. It's been like almost in every collection, there's always like some mint component.

Mariam Arcilla Yeah. It's called a complementary colour. And even I noticed your logomark is peppermint.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah it's one of those colours where you can really pair it with everything in it. It changes and it transforms in the way that it looks when it's, you know, next to different colours. I've got this website that I use as well, and you can make colour palettes on the website. It's called Colors.

Bianca Mavricks It's so fun to make a colour palette. You just type Colors.

Mariam Arcilla I'm looking at it now...[types on computer] Colors. Ok, so a colour scheme generator.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah a colour scheme generator! That's something that's really fun. But like I guess in a less digital way is going and taking all the paint chips [samples] from Bunnings.

Mariam Arcilla Well speaking of paint chips, I'm interested in the somewhat unorthodox way that you use your jewellery to inhabit non-bodily environments and your set designs. So whenever I come across your lookbooks or product ranges, I notice that you often serenade your jewellery with everyday objects. I've incorporated things like rocks, fruits, textiles, sand and mesh. What draws you to these intermingling?

Bianca Mavricks I have so many objects which I feel like there's something about the materiality of that object that just really speaks to me. And then I see the materiality of the jewellery reflected back in the object. And it's all about really enjoying that these objects are kind of talking to each other. And all these things I've just collected that are interesting, like composite rock that was like made out of concrete that I found along the side of the road as I was walking or really nice pebbles piece, in fact it's actually a piece of brick that's become like a pebble. Yeah just things like that.

Mariam Arcilla And you're aesthetic somewhat shifted, I noticed, in March when the world started to retreat indoors during the coronavirus lockdown and everybody was quarantined. And that's when you decided to create the 'Everyday Sculptures at home' Instagram activity for your followers, where you invited your friends and followers of your work who were also in isolation to create their own sculptural bodily recipe that felt like "harmony to the eyes." So you asked them to use everyday materials around them, like toilet paper, vegetables, packing tape, often jewellery,.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah, anything that was their favourite objects in the house.

Mariam Arcilla And from there, you received some pretty cool submissions from creative people who foraged through their domestic surroundings to conjure up this

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mishmash sculpture into being. And you can really tell their personalities by the sculptural body that they created. For example, there was an artist Bridie Gillman who used towels and colour pigments and jam jars and almonds to make her sculpture. And there was Hailey Atkins, the artist who used a bunch of umbrellas and a spice tin. And then there was an interior designer, Georgia Cannon, who used ceramic egg and raw spaghetti for her sculpture, which made me pretty hungry. And another artist, Holly Leonardson, who used surf wax and dinnerware. That's pretty fun to see this activity grow while I was stuck at home.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah, everyone was looking through something and looking for a way to connect digitally because we were honestly getting to the point of, like, stir crazy.

Mariam Arcilla And you continued this chain of creation by sharing the submissions that you received on your Instagram channel so that other people would be inspired to make their own body sculpture. And for those who want to see the works, just go to Instagram: @BiancaMavricks. So, Bianca, what propelled you to translate this into an online activity. I know that you were experimenting with some objects you had bought, and that's what made you want to create your own body sculpture in the first place, right?

Bianca Mavricks Yeah this time around I was able to go to Reverse Garbage and I had the best time. I'd walk down there and then I'd bring this really heavy back home and like, break a shoulder on the way home. But yeah, using all those materials and sort of making compositions with them is, I guess, something that I was really - we didn't leave my apartment for twelve days because we're crazy [laughs]. And within those 12 days, I just saw so many friends rushing out to buy art supplies, friends who don't normally make art.

Bianca Mavricks And then I was kind of feeling this really stale energy around my space. And I don't know why. I just thought that it was like a good idea to start sort of making sculptures from things around the house and stacking them up there. And then it started off as this thing where I was just really bored and wanting to sort of make these everyday sculptures that I made in my space. And then next thing you know, it turned into a bit of a thing where I might actually have got to show people this, because the way I did mine was... I was really stacking a lot of these objects. It became just like the precarious balance. And I guess being with the studio, being at home, that there were so many interesting things that I didn't have around, like a roll of leather or, you know, a giant metal ruler that became...

Mariam Arcilla A hand [laughs].

Bianca Mavricks Yeah that was fun. Did you like it? [laughs] I guess, you know, it's that idea that you can disrupt your way of seeing things a certain way and feeling a certain way in a space by just, I guess, looking at things in a new way. And arranging them and rearranging them and just playing until you feel that like harmony the way objects communicate. And I guess that was coming from, you know, the way that we

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do the still-life images from the jewellery. It was informed by that. We were able to start working again and we did do some photography for the new collection. It was feeling like again we were doing one of those 'at home' sculptures [laughs]. Yeah, because I am working at home as well at the moment. I had a head start on that though because I guess I started working from home around October last year when Metro Arts up, where I had had my here for years...

Mariam Arcilla Oh, Metro was sold right?

Bianca Mavricks Yeah it was sold and I moved out.

Mariam Arcilla I loved visiting all the studios at Metro, it was this bustling haven, so many incredible artists came out of that program.

Bianca Mavricks It was amazing. For a while, I think I really missed working with people for—in October, for those first few months. I was severely burnt out. But I was also missing, every day, this ritual of walking to my studio and, you know, being able to see other artists, like jeweller Paula Walden. And we just had so many other others that, you know, were like a family of friends who were together in this one building and really inhabited the space. And I guess I adapted to working from home. So when everyone was feeling the pain of having to work from home during the lockdown, I'd already been through that. And I guess I knew these rituals of like how to sort of, I guess, channel like this energy of, like, ok, I am sitting down to work now, even though I'm in a space I live in, which there's so many little things, like I felt like I always have to go for a walk to get some coffee, or if I'm not, you know, I'm not getting coffee, just going for a walk, listening to a podcast [as if] like I'm walking to work and then come and sit down actually dressed. Like I dressed to leave the house kind of thing and then come back to sit down and so, you know, I guess one of the downsides is I start to work later again.

Bianca Mavricks I think when I did have a space to go to, I would cut it off at 5:00pm or 6:00pm and head home. And then after that, I wouldn't work. But now I like to do like a second shift in the evening where I sneak in later and stay out till like 2:00am with like some TV show on in the background, like the volume literally at 2, so it doesn't just disrupt my partner sleeping. One of the big things is like that, I guess not having all this jewellery and all of these materials and all this stuff bleed all over the apartment.

Mariam Arcilla Yeah, and have boundaries.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah. But I do love what I'm doing. All of these like meditative sort of tasks like piece-working with jewellery and like putting things together in front of the TV.

Mariam Arcilla It made me also think about my Work From Home routine, because I worked in the tech sector for a while and I was quite ready when the lockdown happened. But I go between two different types of personas. There's my copywriting persona, where I do get changed as well to get to work, which is like, you know,

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from the bedroom to the lounge. And I do the Pomodoro technique, which is 20 minutes of hardcore typing and writing. And then you have a break. Pomodoro is quite good. And then I downloaded a Forest App, which is...you put it on your phone and it kicks you out of the Internet and social media. So you actually don't go back on the [phone] for like 50 minutes it grows a tree and you can donate to an actual rainforest to plant a tree. So there's all these little things. And then when I do creative writing, I tend to be really quixotic at 2:00am.

Bianca Mavricks I'm the same! And do you know what, I think it goes back to when I used to have a lot of stuff going on with work and I was having a lot of people email at certain times. I felt like at 2:00am or like at 11:00pm and 2:00am were the hours that no one... I felt like I didn't have to answer to anyone. Like, it was an uninterrupted time that was just sort of, I get what I wanted to do, done. And I just always feel so creative and so productive when I stay up like that to work.

Mariam Arcilla Yeah. I'm the same, like I feel more clarified and creative when it's like around midnight. Maybe it's the pull of the moon. And I tend to do all of my mundane tasks in the morning like, you know, cleaning and washing dishes and vacuum.

Mariam Arcilla So you told me a short while ago that you've taken up a lot of cleaning activities during lockdown, which is something that you do when you have anxiety or unrest. That is, you like to clean around the house as a panacea to quell anxious thoughts. Are you open to talking about this?

Bianca Mavricks I have terrible anxiety, and I think that, yeah, that is really some - I'm just consciously always trying to manage my anxiety in a way. And I guess when you're running your own business as well, it just I guess it...that's a hard thing to do when you have anxiety. How to explain it? I guess in a way, sometimes it's like trying to wield control over your environment. Yeah, I guess I'm also a very visual person, I'm used to having a lot of attention to detail when it comes to my work. So suddenly, you know, where I am feeling anxious and my stock in our apartment, I feel like this might be quite a universal thing for some people that do have anxiety. Next thing you know, I'm seeing every stray hair that me and my partner have shed. And it's on the ground. It's just the satisfaction of vacuuming when you're, like, wiping something away or just cleaning something with some small, little brush...

Mariam Arcilla Because when you're cleaning, you're decluttering your mind.

Bianca Mavricks Yes and then afterwards everything just, just like okay I'm calm now. I can start and I go into my studio and just make a massive mess and just...stuff everywhere [laughs]. But I guess you gotta' start from that place where you feel like there's this, like, tranquillity around you. You sort of wielded your space to sort of be something that's like very calming. But I did love the vacuuming...

Mariam Arcilla So did you end up buying a Dyson vacuum cleaner or do you still have that cheap K-Mart version?

Bianca Mavricks No, I'm still on my K-Mart [laughs].

Mariam Arcilla Getting a Dyson is definitely worth the investment. I feel like it's the third wheel in my marriage with my husband [laughs] because my Dyson follows me everywhere and I have long hairs so I need to vacuum all the time.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah we both shed so much hair, Pete [my partner] and I. There's hair everywhere all over the house just constantly in the house, whereas normally we'd be out at work and the house wouldn't get as crazy so quickly. And then to see remnants of your own dust and hair everywhere...this is like our small enclosure [laughs].

Mariam Arcilla Funny you say that, because I also live in a small enclosure in Sydney and I have been vacuuming a lot because I've been working from home recently. And last month the Institute of Modern Art invited me to write this essay for their gallery newsletter.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah, I've read it!

Mariam Arcilla So you would have seen the theme was 'new normal.' And so I was pondering what to write about. And so I thought, okay, I'll think of ideas while I vacuum my house.

Bianca Mavricks Yessss [cheers]

Mariam Arcilla As I was sucking things up with my Dyson I was also going, hmm maybe I'll just write about dust. Because I've been interacting with dust way more than I have been during COVID times. And my husband and I are at home, we're shedding hair or shedding skin or shedding energy. And it seems very therapeutic to get rid of that dust because you're physically seeing your cells rejuvenate in such a evidential way as you clean.

Bianca Mavricks Yes, it's very interesting.

Mariam Arcilla And also, Dyson should sponsor this episode [laughs].

Bianca Mavricks Oh totally. But maybe this is a symptom of a larger sense of anxiety for us. You know, it's like it's like I know we're living in this like time. It's like this, I guess, intense collective shake-up. It's just like, I guess in a good way, rattling up, you know, belief systems and power structures for people and our own, like, mental constructs and our egos. And I guess, you know, when we're so conscious of our health and also the environment and the state of the world. I can't I guess, like that fear can be like a real portal for change if you can channel it in a positive way. But it's almost like we build our lives around this whole foundation is suddenly so shaky and it's our way of making meaning. It's like suddenly that the therapeutic nature of like all those there's meditative tasks of making art and it's like repetition like that meditation through repetition or that cleaning kind of where you're like, you know, you're wiping something away and you're sucking something up it like it almost

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becomes like a way for us to sort of recalibrate like our internal anxiety about the world. That's why making art is so important. It's a way for us to share stories of everything that we're living through.

Bianca Mavricks And I guess like we're living through this time where like my uncle - he works at UQ [University of Queensland] as a Science Professor - and we were talking about proverbs. And just talking about how I guess, if you see the Earth as like a dog and us as humans, we are like all the little fleas. And, you know, it's getting to the point now where Earth is starting to scratch back. The dog has this like, intense itch to scratch. In a way, as humans, this is like parasitic. The world needs to recalibrate. To do that, we've got to just change so much about the world. So many of these like, you know, inherent systems and power structures, and I guess it's sort of interesting to be living through that.

Bianca Mavricks It feels like ink when it just suddenly hit the paper. And then it just like the ink blot just...

Mariam Arcilla ...splatters.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah! I think, you know, that sensory deprivation is so focused on something like we're so focused everyday and looking at case numbers and then focused on what we can and can't do because we do need to isolate and we can't do the daily things that we could do. And I guess that makes people look like pull into focus and really in tune with their internal lives.

Mariam Arcilla And there is something about the nimbleness too. It's this era that makes people feel nimble and consequential in the way that they realise what is their purpose in this world? What are they making through their work? Does it contribute? Does it subtract?

Bianca Mavricks Yeah, and it's like I guess in a way you do have to be nourished with the sense of them as much as it can be. And just to be able to keep creating like as artists, you know, to be able to keep moving forward, I guess we gotta' sort of figure out, like, what do we contribute and what are the gifts that we bring and share with the world. What's the message that we bring to people? And I guess at least it's kind of like how that introspection allows us to refocus and like recalibrate and reach like out output what we do. I just have to have this radical period of introspection, connecting into sort of like how I can nourish creativity and refine the message of what I put out into the world. And I think the only thing you can really do is just take some space. And I couldn't make things go faster than what they were. And that's ok for me.

[Interlude music]

Mariam Arcilla Speaking with you now, after having met you in 2014, I feel that there's a sense of introspection and slow making consideredness with how you create things versus when we first met in Brisbane, when you were just starting out. And all these opportunities lunged at you in such a frenzied manner. I can remember soon after you graduated and you were stocked at Craft Victoria and NGV [National Gallery of Victoria]. You experienced international acclaim and your jewellery was being worn by celebrities, and your work was being featured in magazines like Grazia, InStyle and Who, What, Wear. And you've travelled to Paris and Korea for work. How were you able to stay grounded during this short amount of time and manage burnout?

Bianca Mavricks It's a lot about ritual and discipline in a way. I guess it's so easy to just feel like you can do the creative work that you need to do, but you can not care for yourself. It's so easy to just get into the zone, but then to realise that you're not really *really* resting and being idle to be productive and be creative. I didn't realise how things were so important until I burned out. But also I think that when the work is so tantalising because there's a lot of jobs that are just so easy to do, like the work comes—it's work, but it comes easily in the sense it's something that you want to do. That's when it gets hard. All the lines blur and it gets harder to actually stop and the rest and disconnect. And it's just sometimes it's taken me like until I was like I hit my 30s to realise how you actually have to have rituals just to be able to perform at your optimum and how you would be conscious of how you think about things.

Mariam Arcilla And how you recognise burnout as well.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah and how you figure your time to do things and how important it is to sort of like, you know, reconnect in nature or like have some time to literally like sit out in a chair, like out in the sunlight, just kind of like, you know, lying there and not only are not looking at anything on me, like listen to a podcast or read just to just to meditate.

Mariam Arcilla And it's like you have to give your brain a lunch break. And many times we tend to skip that lunch break. And while you were talking, it made me think about the Serpentine Galleries podcast episode on 'playbour', which is this term that describes exactly what you are experiencing, which is like, you know, the fusing of labour and play. Because you know, you are so laser focused on the work or the enjoyment or dedication towards it, that it muddies up the time between work and pleasure to a point where the 9-5 routine is replaced with a 24/7 lifestyle. And this is a division that many artists and artworkers fallen into.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah. The work that I do for the brand is like playbour. And then I mean, I worked like you just wouldn't believe - I thought it was normal. And I still feel this way because it doesn't feel it's work. It is sometimes, it didn't feel like work, because it was working towards this greater overarching sort of like vision for what I wanted it to become. But it meant I was in my studio, I guess constantly like pushing to design and I guess evolve ideas. And then I'd stay there at such late nights. I'd sleep on a foldout chair.

Mariam Arcilla I remember you told me about having back aches because you used to sleep with a beach chair at nights in this studio. But on top of late studio nights, you also had a lot of late networking nights in terms of, you know, being a creative practitioner who toggles between art and fashion. I assume that you would be constantly out at fashion events and art openings because you needed to be visible and you are your brand essentially. So you have to network with people and you have to liaise with people and say, you know, you have a drink, you have a good time. But, you know, that's playbour. And that's essentially work. You know, you are *playing your work*.

Bianca Mavricks Yeah. That's the other thing about this. It's like there's another layer of the onion stripped back. The socialness becomes like something where I've got a really good friend, artists Holly Leonardson...we DM [Direct Message] each other the work-in-progress kind of thing because, you know, she lives interstate and we haven't lived for years in the same city and maintaining your relationships in a digital way. And you need those people to bounce ideas off at the same time when all of this has happened and we all lockdown and.... I didn't feel like this urge to be really social. I wasn't one of those people who were on the Zoom parties and things like that. I was just being a really introspective video and just making the work and then coming home to my partner and I. It sounds sad, but it's not. It's just my nature of being. And some people crave connection with people more. And then like, I think...for me it was always something that was like a by-product of work.

There's always something to do to support a friend and to go to a show and to see all these people that you've known since art school and. But yeah, I feel like that having social social aspects stripped away from you. It's another way that helped me to like, really get introspective and really focus on my work and like re generate myself in a way. So yeah, there's a good and bad. Like everything like this, like, you know, can't keep going on like this forever. But as humans we need to be around people. It's amazing how adaptive we are, I guess, in a way.

Mariam Arcilla We're very resilient in the arts because we're constantly taking blows...

Bianca Mavricks ...and when you run your own business, when you're an artist, and you're having to present to people. These are the people that validate whether the work is good or whether though you sell your work or buy your work, that makes you really resilient. But yeah, it's that big, heavy load to carry it. Sometimes it is nice — in moments like this — it's nice not to care about anyone's opinion about your work. And to make work for you. To not have to think about it, you're making up for. That is freeing as well.

Mariam Arcilla Well I thought I'd leave you with one last question. What are the things that you're most looking excited about as we slowly edge out of quarantine - and hopefully we don't go into a second lockdown. What are the things that you're excited to do again or to discover?

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Bianca Mavricks I'm excited to, again, be in a room with friends viewing artwork. I'm excited for that. I'm excited to have friends over to come to my studio to see my work in person. I'm excited to go back down to the farmer's market and feel a little bit safer in a crowd to be out to buy my fruit and veg every Saturday and, you know, in open-air run. I think those things were a big part of my routine.

It's nice to be able to just not feel like you have to go out on air and graces for how you want to represent your life, like: 'my life is like this.' I'm tired. I feel like social media makes us...even if we don't realise we're doing it, we are like curating how we're presenting ourselves to the world. It is exhausting. Sometimes I'm worried. I'm like, oh, man, I should not have said that [because] it's not good for the business. Like, 'you shouldn't tell people that!' Do you know what I mean?

Mariam Arcilla I do know what you mean. And the reason why I started this podcast was to have these frank and introspective conversations with artists like you about the multiple ways in which we deal with the arts process during these highly wavering times. But to also normalise things like vulnerability and anxiety, which many of us in the creative sector live with. And I was thinking the other day about this time many years ago, when you and I were both heading to an art event together I remember we were getting ready and you decided to put red lipstick on your lips. And as you looked into the mirror you said nonchalantly, "I need to put colour to hide my lips because my lips look like Batman. I have Batman-shaped lips."

Bianca Mavricks Terrible curse [laughs].

Mariam Arcilla I remembered, wow, what a bright way...what a bright, visual way to lean into that vulnerability. It was a gorgeous and incandescent memory.

Bianca Mavricks Awww thank you so much. Because I think, through our anxiety, these [moments] make us more human.

Mariam Arcilla Yes it's good to remember that. On that note, thanks so much for sharing your story with me today, Bianca.

Bianca Mavricks It's always good to catch up! Big voice hug!

Mariam Arcilla Back atcha! Bye.

Mariam Arcilla I'd like to close out this episode by reading some words by Dylan Coleman, a Kokatha-Greek woman who teaches Indigenous health to medical, dentistry and health science students at the University of Adelaide. For two decades, Dylan has worked across Aboriginal education, land rights, arts and health, with a spotlight on Aboriginal community engagement and social justice.

In 2011, her book, *Mazin' Grace* was awarded the Arts Queensland David Unaipon Award for an unpublished Indigenous writer. This opening paragraph is from a short story by Dylan called *Walbia Gu Burru*, in *The Body: An Anthology*, published in 2004 by Wakefield Press.

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My mother's skin smells like rain-drenched mallee scrub, earth breaking drought.

I cling to the bow of her leg, arms tightly wrapped, face nuzzled into her thigh.

She's strong and grounded.

Her roots run deep into this land, golden with its skin of dry waving, wheat, beckoning harvest in a good year.

And her fringes of wild mallee, as defiant in the knowledge of being as I have always been, will always be.

Knowledge that no harvest can reap because it belongs to something more, something far beyond skin deep.

Her layers of sandstorms wash away from my mind in thundering resonance and her memories fall upon me like rain touching dry lips.

This is the last episode of the Interno podcast series as part of the Making Art Work project. Interno is created and produced by myself, Mariam Arcilla, and commissioned by the Institute of Modern Art. Special shout out to Sarah Thomson, Tulleah Pierce, Alex Holt and Liz Nowell at the IMA for cheerleading this project.

Each Interno episode is accompanied by a transcript and reading notes covering the topics I discuss with my guests. You can find this on the website [MakingArt.Work](https://www.makingartwork.com.au). Thank you for listening to Interno, I hope these conversations have given you warmth and brightness.

// END OF TRANSCRIPT //

INTERNO EP 4: ONLINE READING NOTES

BBC: The strange power of the 'evil eye'

Roe Rosen: The Dust Channel

Forest Young on the future impacted by coronavirus

Debbie Millman: Spotify Playlist Color Wheel

Serpentine Galleries: On Work / Playbour

Interno // Ep 4: Bianca Mavrick

About Bianca Mavrick

Bianca Mavrick Jewellery

Bianca Mavrick Jewellery (@biancamavrick)

CREDITS

Interno episode 4

Guest: Bianca Mavrick

Creator, producer & host: Mariam Arcilla

Soundtrack Music: 'Step Inside' by Paper Plane Project

Commissioned by the Institute of Modern Art

as part of the Making Art Work initiative.

Image courtesy Bianca Mavrick. Photo: Savannah van der Niet.