May 2025

Screening Room No. 18 with Anna Howard and Steph Linn in conversation with 11:11's Alex & Giulia

Giulia 00:01
Hi Anna, hi Steph. It's so great to be chatting to you as part of this month's screening room with Landline. Landline was a radio broadcast and live publication that you kind of developed and experimented with as part of our Hosting, A Practice of Care weekend at the start of March. I also think it was the first time that you collaborated together, and we thought it'd be really nice to get you back and show a recording of that event, publication, broadcast, and have the opportunity to kind of reflect back on the project.

Anna 00:40
Yeah, we're super excited to be chatting to you.

Anna & Steph 00:43
Super excited too. Thanks for having us. Yeah. Thanks for having us, yeah. I

Giulia 00:47
We always think it's good to start with a little bit about yourself, like Steph, can you introduce yourself and your work? And Anna, could you introduce yourself and your work?

Steph 00:57
Yeah, I can go first. Yeah. I'm a North American artist based in London. I do a lot of work that is based around research, historical research, and kind of combining it with textile, metal working, bit of sound, bit of video, bit of whatever. And, yeah, a lot of it is just about processing historical information and trying to find new connections and using this material to figure out my place within the world and all that jazz. So yeah...

Anna 01:36
I am also based in London. My practice is kind of formed off of a background of, like collecting, sourcing and selling, kind of archival material and ephemera. And then it's kind of grown to encompass more sorts of, like vernacular material and ready made objects that I use within print and also in sculptures. I'm really interested in ideas to do with, like taste and value and questioning aesthetic systems that we've inherited. So, yeah, it's a growing and developing practice.

Alex 02:16
I guess maybe if we can talk a little bit about where this kind of project for the weekend started, dive straight into that. Like Giulia said in March, weinvited you to contribute to

this weekend of that 11:11 put on—Hosting, a practice of care—and you were both sat in Our bathtub in our bathroom doing this live broadcast of Landline, and maybe if you could kind of briefly outline the way that the different elements existed within it and how that kind of took shape and informed kind of what happened.

Anna 03:01
Yeah. Steph, do you want to answer or, shall I

Steph 03:04
maybe you go for this one?

Anna 03:06
I'm gonna go for quite a descriptive, actual quality of what the setup was. And then, Steph, if there's anything I've missed because you were like, yeah, definitely more of, like, the tech team than I am. I'm, you know, I'm purely vibes.... No, so like, in terms of the actual setup, like we were literally in a bathtub, in your bathtub, and we had a mixing decks, we had two laptops on either side of us connected to a mic headphones, and then a fax machine outside the door, which was linked up to a phone that had been hacked so that we could communicate—send texts to the fax machine, and trying to remember how we kind of came to this idea. And both of us were kind of at a place in our practice where we were reflecting on, like, what an artistic practice means. And both of us inherently have, like, hosted within our practices. So when you came to us with this, we were starting to think about how we could build a space for us to think critically about our own interests and to carve space for ourselves. So I think this is where for both of us, this idea of kind of storytelling came from, and this idea of connecting it with Steph's interest in Jurassic technology.

Steph 04:18
I would say both of our interests. Yeah, we spent a lot of time brainstorming about the word hosting, because it has so many connotations and different meanings. So we were thinking..... I thought about web hosting, host like a parasite, host like all these different... Because, I think we were both a bit burntout at that time, and wanted to find a way to host without necessarily having to, like, bring people in and talk at their faces. We wanted to find a way to play on a different meaning of hosting.

Giulia 04:57
Yeah, that's great. Oh, just to be clear. You were sitting in our bathtub, but no one was electrocuted because there was no water

Anna & Steph 05:03
No one was electrocuted. No running water.

Anna 05:10

I liked the threat, yeah, kept us on edge, yeah.And there was also no one around like so it wasn't like a performance so anyone could see us. It was just us.

Steph 05:21
It was literally that we had the door closed, I think, just to make sure that we didn't get any background noise. So it was literally me and Anna, facing each other in the bathtub. Headphones on, basically talking to each other, which I love. I felt like I was just talking to Anna.

Giulia 05:37
We might need to drop a picture of you two in the bathtub that we have at the bottom of the Screening Room page

Anna 05:45
I do think as well. Sorry not to trail, but I think there was also something about that, like, because where the talk goes is a little bit abstract, and it's kind of inventive around what the idea of a home is. And so I think there was something about placing the radio show in an environment that's not very doesn't make sense. Why would you do that? Why could we have just been in your front room?

Steph 06:05
Yeah, I was gonna say it's a reference to DIY recording as well. Always in the bathroom.

Giulia 06:11
Of course, it's interesting that you just touched a bit upon the idea of it not being a performance. I think as a radio broadcast, liveness was a really important element to it, also making it technically really complex. There was quite some time of figuring out how to install everything, and making it work. But it did make me think a lot about the meaning of performance and ritual in publishing, print, broadcasting and this idea of, yeah, hosting things through these different mediums I guess. The broadcast felt to me both ritualistic and performative—that's what I wrote down—which seems to make sense when thinking about your practices. So I'm quite curious to hear your thoughts on this.

Steph 06:57
Yeah, I think because a lot of the process of coming up with this piece was very problem solving based and so both of our writing, like neither of us are trained writers, or would really consider ourselves writers, so both of our writing style, I think, is much more diaristic or personal. So trying to come up with a radio show that was fitting to that had to kind of bring in this personal storytelling aspect. And so I think when we were talking about it, just now, we were saying the word incantation, where we know the feeling we're trying to get, we know where the stories line goes, but we couldn't really

figure out how to conjure it. And so I think we brought together a lot of our like disparate interests and found a way to weave them together.Anna's mentioned one of her inspirations, or something we talked about early on in developing a radio show, was Orson Welles' War of the Worlds and more, the radio as like as a tool for storytelling, rather than the news or kind of chat radio, or even traditional like music radio, and so I feel like we tapped into that kind of more performance aspect of we're trying to take you on this journey. It's a bit abstract. We go to lots of different places, and we leave lots of gaps for people to bring their own interpretation, which was, I think, why we brought in those prompts. And leaving that open, I guess, left space for the listener to imagine the connections, and then also space to be able to contribute their own images to the publication that they were submitting through the fax machine. So it did feel very definitely a bit performative and definitely quite ritualistic. Maybe the conjuring of this story, figuring out what it was together. That makes sense.

Anna 09:13
Yeah, conjuring was totally it.

Alex 09:15
I think the prompts were a really amazing way to kind of bring people into this space as well, also thinking about the broadcast and radio being quite like an intimate like experience for the listener.Especially in this kind of being taken on a journey to then invite people in to kind of partake in where that story is going as well. And from these quite personal—definitely, there's an intimacy there—I think, in the tone of the readings, and also maybe being in a bathroom as well, because it is quite like an intimate, private space. And thinking about that as a kind of research or development space for you, and if that's something that, if that gave you anything through, maybe, like having time to reflect on the broadcast since, or that it brought up during, that you have been kind of thinking about? And is that something maybe you would want to explore further or have any kind of thoughts on for other people.

Anna 10:21
I think when we developed the idea—because it was like a myriad of different technologies—that was going to be whirring all at once, and it was, but we kind of realized that managing the radio show meant that we couldn't operate the fax machine simultaneously. So that happened outside of the room. So many ways, that was kind of a bit of a surprise for us to see what people were contributing and what images were coming through. And that was really wonderful. So it meant that there were these kind of two simultaneous energies of us, this kind of enchantment, us creating this sort of spell which we're within, and then realising what other peoples had contributed to it along the way. So obviously, with the prompts like leaks, tears, dripping. And I think for both of us, we wanted to kind of focus on the idea of like the material and theway that we can use material, and like layers and peeling as like, kind of like a universal language, especially because we start in a home and we end up in a cave, and it's like,

how can you connect to these places. And personally, like using the fax machine, the results that it delivered was wonderful, and like, the results it brought were just, like, amazing. And it creates its own filter and its way of working, and it has this little tapping noise as it prints. And all of these things really, like, were really, really special. So for me, in terms of working in that way, I would love to do that again. And I think for both, I can say this, both me and Steph, both of us, in our separate practices, have each held a lot of space for other people, like we often create space for other people's practice. And so it was really nice to be within a space, I guess, with someone that youfeel quite kindred with. And for them to be able to hold you up and you to simultaneously hold them up. And I know that might sound really obvious listening in, but sometimes I think when you're a bit of a facilitator in your practice, it can be hard to findsomeone that matches the same energy. So, I do feel like I would like to do more of that. ie. working with Steph and working in that format, and I'm really interested in sort of storytelling still. Yeah,

Giulia 12:19
Yeah. I also like what you said about being a facilitator in your practice and holding space for others. I think that that really feeds into also.. well, I guess what the overall theme of the residency is, but especially for that weekend, thinking about hosting, but also not just a host. I think Steph, you already kind of touched on this earlier on, like what a host can be and thinking about the host also not just like facilitating people, but what a host is or types of different hosts, basically that we live with. And I think one of the reasons that we invited you to do something for Hosting, A Practice of Care, is that we were really interested in your work in relationship to the idea of publishing as a host and a host that holds and transmits and disseminates information, and perhaps also the role of care and responsibility when hosting or disseminating information, these are maybe two questions in one. So yeah, I'm curious to maybe hear how you think about these things.

Steph 13:23
I can take this one. I think we both take it very seriously, the role of hosting or bringing people together. The disseminating of information is kind of a separate part of it as well. You know, when you're bringing people in and you're telling them a story, you have to think about what information you're giving them and what context there is, and all this stuff. And this book that I worked on for my degree show, I was trying to give across information in a way that wasn't necessarily super academic and still super nuanced and leaving a lot of room for interpretation. And I think with our radio show, we did a similar thing, where we're giving you these snippets of information and kind of telling you the story, but also leaving lots of space for individual interpretation and involving critical thinking for the viewer or the listener. Not just giving them everything and saying this is how it is, but leaving a lot of space for people to maybe try and figure out what the connections are themselves, or even contribute something that could be a connection with like sending it in through the fax machine. So, I think that looking at

information this way takes a lot of consideration, and yeah, always trying to keep this communal aspect of working together to build this information, or build the story, or find the way to represent something really complicated to many people. Yeah, it's a tricky one.

Giulia 15:05
Yeah, I also feel though, that that idea of transmitting information and receiving information is very close to what both of your work thinks about. I guess through collecting archives, but also thinking of these different mediums that transmit information. Like your hacking practice Steph?

Steph 15:25
I love hacking things. I just did a trip where I spent a lot of time in archives. And, yeah, I think people see archives as this, this kind of set in a stone fortress, almost of information. And when you go to an archive, you realise that you're reading, usually one side of a conversation with loads of things taken out, with tons of things lost and omitted, and the reality of these things that are, you know, seen as fact and objective actually have a lot of space for nuance and misinterpretation and misuse by people who would like to use that information in nefarious ways. So I feel like involving the critical, collaborative thinking moments with information is really important.

Giulia 16:18
I guess talking about collaboration, maybe it's nice to talk a bit about how you came to work together. I believe this was your first, maybe more public project that you work on together. But I'm sure you've had a lot of collaboration and interactions previously. So yeah, it might be nice to know a bit about how that experience was for you.

Anna 16:37
We met at Slade, and I think had the opportunity to obviously get to know each other quite intimately, because partly the crit settings you have to kind of share with each other, but we also have a shared friend, which is the Cecile Tulkens. So there's all of these kinds of overlaps, I suppose, where someone you can kind of get an into kind of the culture that someone's maybe part of, and that that definitely helped, I suppose, for us to become faster friends. And then this interest, I think or this kind of a shared belief in creating space for creativity and holding space for people, kind of underpinned how we approached Slade. And then we did a reading afternoon together, which, thankfully, through you, Giulia, you helped to facilitate a Blackhorse Workshop. Which was on the theme of "a jack of all trades, master of none, is oftentimes better than a master of one", and both me and Steph separately wrote texts that were to do with material as a way to talk about the emotional and the personal. And we met up, and we would read our notes to each other and offer feedback. And I think that really started this sort of relationship where we both started to explore the written word. And Steph really kind of ran with that, with their publication, and I didn't. I didn't have the time to write as much,

but I still, like produced a small publication for my degree show, which underpinned this idea of wanting to, like, share my research—but I think that's how both of us think about things, that we both don't feel particularly guarded about thingsSo yeah, I think luckily, we had that experience. So when you asked us, we kind of fell back to that, knowing certain ways that we like to work and how we can support each other and guide each other.

Steph 18:20
Yeah. And we also ended up working on this thing called "pub club" together, which was the publication club at Slade. Where we all would meet up once a week and work on our publications together. And we did go to a pub once, but yeah, and I think through that I think we both really like trying to organise people. And I think we both find ourselves in places of organising and, like logistics often. Yeah, we match each other's energy in that sense.

Anna 18:53
I guess it's something also with, like print culture, where it's got, like early.... like tech utopianism, like the early Internet has so many possibilities to do stuff that's transgressive and interesting. And I think that's maybe where our interest in print has, like, a really similar energy. And I think that's probably connects with the tech utopianism.

Steph 19:12
Yes, the sort of like DIY, just get it done, make it happen. Everyone can do it. There's like, no sense of like, necessarily, ownership. It's all about sharing information and, like, sharing resources and all that. Very utopian!

Anna 19:27
Exactly. But like, "Whole Earth" Is it Whole Earth? I'm thinking about early publications that were also able to do that and then create networks.

Alex 19:36
I think this is the perfect time to talk more about the fax machine that I feel like was the third performer in..

Steph 19:42
oh my God..

Alex 19:43
..in the broadcast.

Giulia 19:45
Are you ready (LOL)?

Alex 19:46
Yes, maybe if we could talk a little bit more about the fax machine, kind of maybe where that idea came from, to bring fax machine back into the 21st century. And maybe the kind of the relationship that had to the kind of thinking around like the publication, but also the live broadcast, the liveness of it. Also this kind of hacking and subverting technology, yeah, just really would like to hear some more, some of your thoughts around that,

Steph 20:17
Oh, the fax machine. I think we came to it because also the the title of the show is "landline". So me and Anna were talking about the fact that landlines, I think, like physical landlines with the cables, are being phased out in the UK. this year. Is it this year, Anna?

Anna 20:38
can't remember this year or next year. Very, very soon. They're swapping the cables over, but some of them might just stay buried in the ground, which is interesting!

Steph 20:46
The likelihood is that they'll just stay in the walls, you know? I Yeah, they'll just be in the walls of your house, rotting away. And I think we were both really interested in the idea that this technology is literally—we're witnessing its obsolescence. And we both, I think, grew up using landlines, and I didn't ever use a fax machine as a child, but I remember, you know, the tone of dial up. And we kind of, we've witnessed many technologies go obsolete. And so thinking about that, thinking about the fax machine as a way of receiving something and instantly printing it out. There, not being this like an intermediary of curation or anything like that. You know, a true publication where someone can just literally submit something and immediately you witness the printing out of it. Obviously, with Bluetooth nowadays, that's pretty common, but the process of the role of paper and the sound and the digital kind of noise you get in the print quality, I found really appealing. And then also a lot of the work I do is using these like obsolete, I say obsolete, but they're not obsolete machines. And fighting against this idea that, you know, technology is this ever forward, moving like a crushing wheel that we can't stop or ponder, or, you know, fight back against. It's actually you can use technology that's considered obsolete. And oftentimes, as artists, you know, we can find ways to use these machines and, you know, hack them in ways that kind of subvert their original use, subvert the original technology that is behind them, and kind of bring them out of obsolescence. And think share with other people how to do this. I mean, for me, finding out how to hack my knitting machine, and also with hacking this—my girlfriend Valentina, helped a lot—but we were just on forums and YouTube videos and just all of these online resources, where people have dedicated a lot of time to sharing information in a way, where people can basically utilise these technologies in creative

ways and fight against the idea that things just get thrown away or left behind or forgotten.

Anna 23:20
I think as well, something really nice for us to think about is the tech being the central player. The quality of its print is really marvelous. The paper is really thin. It's like a thermal printer. And as I mentioned before, it creates these little noises as it prints. But I think we're always both interested in the idea that the mechanics of what makes the object is like embedded in the final outcome. So kind of relinquishes quite a lot of the control as well.

Steph 23:48
Yeah, it's not like a Xerox or any, any kind of—I mean, Xerox are quite good—but, you know, traditional printers nowadays, their whole thing is about, you want it to be exactly like the image that you've got on your phone. There's not any collaboration between you and the machine. And with the fax, the fax is basically in control. Some images it just decided it didn't like and would not print out. And we just had to accept it at a point and just be like "that,one's just not going to go through". Don't know why, but it's decided it doesn't want to do that, and so the machine itself had quite a lot of input into what you know, the publication looked like, because it would just say no to things.

Giulia 24:31
yeah, a real collaboration between you and the machine. And sometimes you don't agree, like, in all collaborations. That is the compromise.

Anna 24:42
It was pretty hard to predict as well, you know. When you're like "this is going to do it" and then it just wouldn't, and you're like "I don't understand" but it's just got tired. It just wanted a smoking break or something.

Alex 24:54
And then there were, like, the testing pages as well that came through at certain points.

Steph 25:00
And the way we got it to work was quite convoluted. And, yeah, it was like the opposite of UX or whatever that phrase is. Now with user experience, we were working so hard just to get this fax machine to print out one little image. But it felt worth it. When it works, you're ecstatic because you've had to work so hard for it.

Alex 25:26
Well, I think printers and a lot of tech is like, "Oh, they've got a temperamental nature", as if, like, they have this kind of inherent personality. And if you treat them well, talk to

them enough, maybe they'll like, work with you rather than against you. Which I do kind of believe in, but I don't...

Steph 25:43
I believe, I fully believe it

Anna 25:46
I think that also is weird, because there was something I was thinking about early on when we were recording about, like kibble and like mess and waste, and essentially, also the idea that all systems will eventually fall apart. And I think the fax machine was, like, a really nice instrument too, kind of, like... We created all of these systems and these ways of working, and they just didn't want to, but it also kind of proved our own theory correct.

Alex 26:11
But also, I think something that's quite interesting is the hardware of it all, which I think is so present with a fax machine, because it's, like, it's heavier, you know, it hasn't been through the process of, like various versions to make it lighter again. There were all these kinds of cables with the ethernet cables that were running around with everything. It was all like, quite that network of like, words and things, relationships together and things like that, quite visually present in the space when it was all happening. And I think it's also quite interesting how the fax machine was kind of live streamed visually back what was coming out of the printer at the time. Which is now the film on the website, which is being screened and screened in the screening room. But also now there's a publication as well. So it's kind of existing in lots of these different spaces as well. So it's also not being kind of pinned down in any one way. Which I also think it's nice to be able to encounter lots of these different elements in lots of different ways. I guess I wanted to now that it's been a little bit of time since, since it all occurred, and you've had some time to kind of sit with those images that came through the fax machines—maybe the ones that made it out, and some of them you will never, never even know—has your relationship to those images changed at all since the actual event. And do you feel like those images, you can kind of pinpoint maybe some of them more directly to the prompts that were given?Does that matter to you? I guess it is a question.

Anna 28:03
I think for most of the images, for me, I found it hard to locate them interestingly, because I didn't see when they came through. Couldn't quite place where in the story or what could prompt they were connecting to. And I saw people afterwards, and they'd say "Oh yeah, you know, you said tear" and I sent that, and I was like, "Oh", but I like that. I liked the abstract nature of it, and my tendency to completely fetishise prints means that I'm, like, totally enamored by them every time I look at them, because it's like a baby born. So yeah, they haven't lost their um, sparkle to me, I think I like the fact

that a lot of them aren't so literal, which I really like. And I feel like because the pages are loose, so we haven't yet put them online, but they will be scanned online. And so I guess there's this question of, like, you have to create a sequence, like a book normally has a sequence. Even a portfolio, there's an order. So I think that's going to be a bit of an interesting question of, like, how we create that order when, quite excitingly, there wasn't one.

Steph 29:02
No, it was. It was very much like a pile of loose pages. And the paper is really slippy, and it's always like sliding around. But I think looking at the images, it was like playing a fun word association game for all of your friends. And I think for me, it was fun seeing people I knew send stuff in. And I think some people sent stuff in for kind of the novelty of seeing something come out of a fax machine that you've sent in. And I think some people sent in things quite related to the prompt. A lot of the images just felt very intimate I think. Because we were sharing things that were quite intimate, people wanted to send something back that was like a small little snapshot of either what they were doing. I don't know, and a lot of it was from people we didn't know. So it did feel really like a mutual sharing between us and the listeners. It didn't feel so so strict on the prompts of, oh, you know, we say this, you have to send in this. It felt more like because we were telling these stories, people were kind of adding in their own little, you know, interjections of narrative back to us. Which felt, to me, really exciting, because it just added more layers of imagination and interpretation between how they connect.

Alex
Yeah, I'm thinking a lot about the relationship between digital spaces, where there's this possibility of, like, not everything having to be linear. And then that compared to kind of like physical spaces that, like, you know, there's a beginning in the middle of an end, usually. And like, how can you subvert that in a physical sense, is a kind of always ongoing question in my mind. But I think this really interesting, that so many of these different elements have come together in one space, and that, I guess they also ask questions of each other as well.

Giulia
Yeah, this notion of time is really interesting, because also, like, the fax machine, is kind of a responsive thing, right? It's like a prompt and an answer. Whether it's in your like, literally in your radio show, but also as the technology and what its function is, it's like a phone call, right?

Steph
Yeah, it has the phone call on it.

Giulia

And the technology, when your broadcast was happening, it was also kind of disrupting this kind of usual function of the thing. You already spoke about that quite a bit. So, yeah, I don't know, I'm just thinking out loud at this idea of the construction of time. But also that is really something that publishing, whether physically or digitally, has the ability to do right? Disrupt the linearity of time, but also how we read and perceive things. I guess

Steph
yeah, it feels like it opens up this possibility of correspondence. You know, it's like you're sending something out, you know, you're broadcasting into the world, and through doing that, what, to me, felt quite a scary thing. You then get back these, like very thoughtful—people kind of match that back at you. And having, like, a lot of experience on the internet, growing up on the internet, you kind of sometimes feel like you're just like throwing things into the void. And I think with publishing it opens up the possibility of a back and forth, where, whereas a lot of you know modern technology shuts it down, cuts it off, yeah.

Giulia
I think that's a nice place to end. I guess you're not really 100% sure yet what exactly the format will be but we will have some kind of digital representation of the publication, whether it's conclusive or open, we shall see. But there will be a link to this.

Anna
Should be very exciting. And I think, also, I think it's fair for me to say, Steph. There is just one sort of physical copy, and the digital copy that will be online, we really welcome people to print out if they feel to. So it's this idea that it's open source, free publication. So people can do as they wish.

Steph
Print it out on your own fax machine. Yeah.

Anna & Steph
Good luck. Good luck.

Giulia
If you could install an open source fax machine somewhere that people can access and print out

Anna
...the local corner shop.

Steph
Yeah, it would be great.

Anna
Thank you so much for offering your sort of mental, emotional capacity and your home to like hosting us in the bathtub. Say thanks to the bathtub. We appreciate it.

Steph
It was lovely. It was an opportunity to do something very new. And, yeah, yeah. Felt really good.

Giulia
It feels like the start of something that can grow and develop. So I can't wait for that. Thanks a lot!

Anna & Steph
Thank you so much.