

INTRO

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Jess Brough: Welcome to Before the Applause - an audio programme for hybrid arts festival Fringe of Colour Films. We are going to be hearing from the filmmakers and artists who are behind the films in this year's festival programme. Some of these films will make you laugh, many will challenge you, and others will be thoroughly dismantling in their ability to find their way straight to your heart. Please enjoy hearing from the people behind these remarkable films and this continuation of their stories.

DIALOGUE

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Madeline Shann: I'm Madeline Shann and I made the film The Spring. The film begins with some shots that we took out in Dartmoor, and some of them are these really lovely, kind of really close up shots of things like moss and cobwebs. And we also managed to go to this area called Wisms Wood, which is this incredibly special, really tiny, like, tragically tiny area of temperate rainforest, of surviving ancient temperate rainforest. And so there's this incredible lichen and ferns and all kinds of plants that are growing on the trees. These trees are really kind of like gnawed and they're really beautiful shapes, and they're kind of dressed in this lovely, fuzzy, incredible plant life. So it's like plant life on plant life. So you get a lot of kind of worms, eye view, close up, looking around, kind of as if you're an animal, and some more kind of human views of natural habitat and of, like, rocks and things like that. So I really wanted to make a film that was really grounded in nature and really kind of bound into the natural world, because I'm an environmentalist and an environmental activist and political activist in other ways as well. And I think for such a long time, my work had been very driven by kind of, like, fear and kind of wanting to galvanise people. And often that meant kind of being kind of focusing on the stakes in quite a negative way, which I think is also necessary. But yeah, and then it was locked down and it was sort of still early, uh, in the pandemic, and I was spending so much more time in nature, and I just started thinking about, yeah, what if this was the kind of, like, leading light of how I galvanise people for this project? What if it's not about fear of how terrible it will be, but about inspiring people with regards to how wonderful the natural world is and how worth protecting and how much it is a part of us and we are a part of it. And all the divisions that we make between ourselves and the natural world are false, and they really rob us of a really rich and joyous lived experience. Yeah, it was my attempt to kind of delve deep into kind of, like, joy and awe and wonder and a sense of connection to try and make people feel invested with filmmaking. It has this really particular power that I wasn't really able to access either through other artwork, because I previously had mainly been working for stage or with activism, which obviously reaches you on lots of really incredible levels and can. Yeah, whether it's getting out of the streets or organizing in your community, all of those things, uh, are potent and have their own applications and things. But with film, this is the first film I've ever had proper funding for and done properly. So I was really new to it and I was just so interested in how much it can draw you right into the absolute specificity of what you're trying to show your audience. Yeah, I mean, you literally can just be staring at moth or just be looking at the movement of kelp in a tired pool, or just be looking at the dragonfly and really, really being immersed in that moment. And I think specifically with this film, it deliberately becomes kind of quite strange and quite psychedelic. I think that was because I was really interested in emotional and

psychological states that we can enter that make us much more receptive. I feel like film and cinema can really take you into that. You don't really have to suspend your disbelief. You can be kind of quite passive and you can really just sit there and be drawn into something quite deeply and quite immediately. And I thought that that was incredibly powerful. And then you also have this control of the soundtrack and what people are hearing and how that structure posed with the action. And it just felt really powerful, uh, in that way for me.

[FILM CLIP]

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So the soundtrack came together over zoom, basically. I was working with a sound designer called Xavier Velastín, who is incredible and makes sound for live work. And also they make sound for things like games and also performance and things like that. Xavier really understood how to draw you into this world, and he's also a massive geek about kind of like, found sound and manipulating sound and really experimenting and playing around. So I was really excited about that. And we were also collaborating with Becky Wilkie, who is a really amazing vocalist and composer. So I'd made sort of like a prototype. We'd done an R and D of the film previously, where I was learning how to use a camera, basically, and learning how to make instinct software. So we kind of had like a prototype film to work from. Yeah, it was really funny. I think I just got really, really lucky with that collaboration because, like, a lot of the conversations that we were having sounded like this incredibly rich world that I very quickly find I don't have very specific language for us. So a lot of it was just chatting about vibes. I was really lucky that they just got that. Um, we were all working remotely and kind of just batting drafts between each other. Becky recorded lots of layers separately, and some layers that worked in loops and some layers that worked together. And then Xavier kind of, like, took them and reorganised them and was also playing with effects on fan sound and field recordings and things like that. We were able to have quite clear conversations about the dramaticity, about how it kind of begins quite naturally and then gets a bit more trippy and also a bit more human. And I knew that I wanted it to have quite a lovely climactic moment, which where you just hear Becky's voice, and that is really, really yeah, I really like that. It's really powerful. She did a really gorgeous job with that. Yes, I was really lucky to have such great collaborators on it, really. It would have been extremely hard if that communication hadn't just happened to work so well. I was really grateful to have an opportunity to make the film, and it was really important for me to have a black performer. And that was kind of because there's just one performer in the film. They kind of become like the avatar, I guess. The kind of like link between like, you know. Yeah, they're they're like our kind of like agent in the field. They're the human body that we relate to and that we see sort of like, intertwining with these non-human bodies. And I think several years ago, I was assistant director on, uh, *Black Men Walking*, uh, which was a play that was written about a Black man's walking group. And we met the original group and it felt really like black people were very underrepresented. Well, people of colour were very underrepresented in outdoor spaces. And things like hiking and bird watching and spending time in nature are seen as kind of, like very, I don't know, like white activities or the British countryside. When people talk about the British countryside and Britain, and there's sometimes this kind of like, yeah, well, basically, like racist nothing that it's kind of like, consciously or not, like, coupled with that with the idea of tradition and ancestry and all of that kind of stuff. So I don't know, every time I see it, or every time I see, like, an Instagram post from Black girls hiking group, or I'm just really glad

that I was able to have the opportunity to make something that could also kind of contribute to the Black people in nature, the cinematic universe.

OUTRO

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Jess Brough: Fringe of Colour Films 2023 takes place from the 23rd to the 29th June, but this audio programme will be available in perpetuity. If you are listening to this before the festival, we hope you can join us either online or in-person in Edinburgh, and if you are listening after the festival, you can stay up-to-date with our work at fringeofcolour.co.uk. This podcast was brought to you by Fringe of Colour Films, a hybrid arts festival for Black people and People of Colour. This series is presented by me Jess Brough, produced by Halina Rifai and Fringe of Colour, theme music by Xavier LaCroix and is supported by Creative Scotland. Thank you for listening.