

Z: She's recording. Sync clap!

G: One. Two. Three.

Z: That was in sync!

G: It was way better than normal.

{jingle: funky keyboard to the tune of 'it's ladies night' with someone in a deep voice saying 'the white pube}

G: Hello and welcome to the latest episode of The White Pube podcast. My name is Gabrielle de la Puente.

Z: And I'm Zarina Muhammad.

G: And we're together. Oh my God. It's like the olden days.

Z: I know, you love to see it.

G: This is just such a, hopefully, a special treat for the people who listen to the podcast. We're going to record a Q&A today, basically because I had a text planned for this Sunday, but the book I'm reviewing is -- I'm only halfway through, and I don't really want to rush it. I feel like I would normally rush it, but this one I don't want to rush. I'm enjoying it too much.

Z: I do think sometimes that, like the two week turnaround is a bit -- it can feel very rapid. I don't think on that pace, like regularly. As regularly as you think.

G: I'm thinking on that pace less and less so this is good timing. So if you're not familiar The White Pube is a website that we share together. Every Sunday -- normally -- we post a review or a text about a cultural thing we are thinking about. Sometimes it's a book, sometimes it's an exhibition. Games, films, TV. That kind of thing. And we have a lovely audience, and I feel like these types of episodes are chances where we just, like, give the audience what they want specifically, because the rest of the year we're doing what we want.

Z: It's like an AMA. A get to know the critics. It's useful I think because if someone's sat there telling you their opinion, it's just useful to know where that opinion comes from. The person that spouts those spurious opinions. You know what I mean? That's useful.

G: So we asked people for their questions, and I've grouped them thematically, and we're going to just start with it all. The first section is just like a few questions about Poor Artists. So me and Zarina released a book last October, in hardback, e-book and podcast -- not podcast, audiobook. And the paperback is coming out in October. How's it gone? How's it gone?

Z: I think well? Do you think well? How do you think it's gone? I

find that's such a hard question to answer.

G: I also find it hard to answer, to be honest. Because it feels like, incredible when we're in a book event and we're talking about it with people, and we've had people come up to us in tears, and we've had people come up to us and give us hugs, and we've had people come up to us and give us presents and things like that. Like, there is the moment of like pure celebration of like, oh my God, we did this achievement. We've created this book. We get these messages and we get tagged in things most days about people reading it. But one of the questions someone asked is like, how much money have you made from the book? And...

Z: (Makes a zero figure to the camera). Well, it's not zero.

G: It's not zero, but it's a funny question because I think, like so much of the story of Poor Artists is about someone who wants to make art and hopefully make a living from their art and has to recalibrate not only their answer to that question, but maybe the question itself. And I just feel like I'm living the truth of the book where I'm like... when we were in the writing process for it, I kept thinking, oh my God. Hopefully when this comes out, we sell enough copies that, you know, maybe we'll earn enough to have a deposit to put down on a house. And then for me, that will be like the measure of success. And you know, when people say, how's it gone? How's it been releasing a book? I can be like, 'I'm a homeowner!' And that's just not happened at all. And I don't think it's going to happen because actually what we've written is a book in the art criticism -- art section of the shop, and that's not a very popular section.

Z: I mean, to be fair, I don't know if this is just like hardback process. But whenever I'm out and about in shops and I do go out and about in shops to specifically look for the book because of my technically illegal mission to secretly sign as many copies as possible. Deface -- vandalism, basically. So I feel like in my shops, sometimes it is in new fiction, sometimes it's in new nonfiction.

G: Sometimes it's in the window.

Z: Sometimes it's in the window. So, like, it's not always in the art section. Sometimes it is. And sometimes that's fine because that's what it is. But sometimes it's like right at the front. So I don't -- I don't know how to gauge it in terms of like the nicheness of it, because I think for an art book it's pretty un-niche. Yeah. It's making an attempt to be un-niche and it's being received as un-niche, but like un-niche for an art book is still pretty niche.

G: Exactly. But let's give the people what they want. How many copies have we sold? That was another question. We have sold 8000 copies of the hardback. We have sold 147 ebooks, and 713 audiobooks. What that means in practice, to go back to the earlier question of how much money have you made from the book is: when we were going

through the process of getting a book deal back in 2022? 23? One of those years, I think it was 2022. Wow. That's actually so long ago.

Z: It's a very long time, really, actually.

G: We learnt that, you know, we can get an advance to write the book, which in our case was 37,000 pounds from Penguin. That 37,000 -- 15% of it would go to our agent. A smaller section of it would be given to us upfront so that we could get on writing the book. Then when we handed, you know, the full 'the book's done,' and we gave that to Penguin, they would give us some more of that money. And then when the hardback came out, you know, 6 or 7 months later, we would get another chunk. And then a year later, when the paperback came out, we would get another chunk. On paper, that sounds amazing. And, you know, it's the only way we could have written this book, but we will not see any more money unless we sell 37,000 pounds worth of books. And then, like, give Penguin that money back? So the advance is essentially like a loan that we --

Z: It's also like -- sorry to interrupt -- it's also like bonkers maths because if the hardback sells for 20 pounds, all 20 of those pounds don't go towards paying back that advance. It's, I believe, just over £2.

G: £2.50. Yeah. That's a lot of books. And I just don't know if we will earn out our advance and pay Penguin back. We're not going to book jail but it's fine! It's okay. I'm happy. The book exists.

Z: I don't think we ever will pay it back. But most authors don't earn back their advances. I am not internalising this as a personal, professional failure.

G: Oh no, no. When I learnt that most people don't, I was like, fine then, fine. I'm not going to try win books.

Z: It's like a student loan. They're never getting it back. That's how I'm conceptualising in my mind. Like it's just nice. It's nice to have done this thing. But I remember when -- I remember when, like, final draft of the proposal we like, we were tidying up, aligning everything on the page. I sent it off to our agent, and I cried because I was like, this is it. We've made it. This is the big time. I'm going to own a home. I can't believe it. Yes, Oprah, my life has changed. It felt like a monumental moment. And it was because it was like a huge achievement. Not minimising that by any means. But it was not -- this was not a life changing thing to do, you know? Financially speaking.

G: Because I think like, ironically or not so ironically, it's just like a self-fulfilling prophecy, like the art that we put out still exists within like the capitalist structure of the publishing industry. I think I need to reconfigure what I think success looks like. So for me, money aside, industries aside, all these numbers aside, it's like, I'm just really glad we wrote it because there are parts of it that I'm just so happy with. We wrote like a weird

story. And people have said things like, you know, 'this is unlike anything I've ever read before.' And that comment, I fucking love. I love that comment! That's like the best thing people say about it. So one of the questions we got asked on our discord was, 'I loved Poor Artists. What's your favourite moment in the book?'

Z: For me, my favourite moment is the chapter with Gustav Courbet.

G: I knew you were going to say that.

Z: It's the one I think about all the time. It's the one I think I spent the most time on as well. So, like, I kind of -- like I spent months researching. You spent months before I spent months researching as well. So I think so much went into that and we didn't actually interview anyone for it.

G: It was a bit of a different one.

Z: Yeah, it felt like a different mode. And I think the entire story flips on its head at that point. I just kind of fuck it that so much after the fact. That chapter and the chapter with Mo. You know which one. The chunky one, yes. Those two, I think are my two favourites, because Gustave is number one. Mo's number two. What about you?

G: I think the reader's favourite is The Jupiter Residency. So that's the one that I just -- I see the most written about and I see the most like -- you know, someone came up to me recently at the end of a talk and said that they have a form of narcolepsy and that a lot of what we've written about in The Jupiter Residency is stuff that they feel represented by. And I think we both got quite emotional. I feel like, you know, when you're like, oh God, I feel like I'm going to cry in public when you start speaking to a pure stranger. It's really nice that art has been able to do that. And actually, my neighbour -- I've got a neighbour who, we've become quite close and we speak a lot about disability. And she said to me, she went, 'oh, I'll have to tell you something. For my last therapy session, I used The Jupiter Residency chapter as a framework for the therapy,' and I was like, what? And she said she went through the chapter, she highlighted little bits raised about, you know, the things that you want to do versus the things that your body allows you to do; the way that disability is perceived by others, the way that you perceive it; the way that it's never quite the same and it's always changing, like that instability. She pulled out those points and she spoke about them with her therapist over the course of an hour. I was like, oh my God. Because in a way I felt like the whole book was that for me. And I hope it can do it for others. So, you know, it's just like the sort of emotional impact that that's had means it's a favourite. And it was the first one that I wrote. So yeah, it's like the one that has existed the longest in my brain.

Z: And it was the first chapter that emerged because as well, like the two practice chapters, we both wrote, I wrote mine after you -- there have been so many versions of that chapter. That's really emotional.

G: It's really nice. Someone said 'if we loved Poor Artists, are there any other books you'd recommend?' Ooh. Well, the problem is when you write a book that's unlike anything everyone's ever read before, what do you even have to say? I don't know.

Z: I actually do have one. And I read this after Poor Artists. It's not about like the art world-art world in the same way, but it has a similar approach to... I thought this book has a similar approach to like, is this real? Is this not? And as I was reading through, I probably felt like a similar kind of, 'oh my God, is this...? Are you making this up? And it was Lote by Shola von Reinhold.

G: I've not read that yet.

Z: Oh, my God, you got to read it. Like it's so good. It is about an artist that's like, kind of not an artist, but, like, kind of pretending to be an artist, going on a residency in this vague, mysterious, maybe fictional Central European city. And like, there is this push and pull like between, I think, aesthetic theory. I think it's like something going on with aesthetic theory, like the idea of, like, opulence and decadence and decoration and then like very hard-edged, minimal abstraction and like the way maybe abstraction and the idea of minimalism is like kind of fascist and like obliterates the decorative, which is like maybe coming from a place of like otherness? I'm describing it badly. It's so good. And reading through, I'm like, how many of these people are real? Because it's dealing with like mid-century, 1920s, that kind of -- that's not mid-century -- it's dealing with like early 20th century Black modernist figures. I don't know how many of them are real, and I don't want to Google to find out if they are real.

G: Yeah, that's the worst. Yeah, don't Google it. Never know. I struggle to answer this when we get asked it at book events because, I didn't read a book properly -- maybe I read, like, 3 or 4 books in the ten years prior to writing Poor Artists but since then, I've read shitloads. It's like I needed to write a book first before I could read them. And then the book that I keep thinking about afterwards is Woman on the Edge of Time by Marge Piercy. I'm not really sure why. I just feel like there's some connection between, like, anarchy, prioritising community and like, realising that everything is malleable and we don't have to live this way, and we can just fuck it up. Just fuck it all up, and I -- I can't stop thinking about the book. I cannot believe that there isn't a film of it. I think about this all the time. Like a TV show. Urgh. Can I write the script? Like, oh, I would well do it. It's amazing. Because it's a book that came out in, I want to say, in 1976? Around the same time that, like Ursula K Le Guin wrote The Dispossessed and that heyday of like -- what do people call it? Not dystopia, utopia. Feminist utopias. And, you know, Ursula K Le Guin gets all her roses and Marge Piercy... she needs a few more. Because I think like, they're both great at describing ideas, but I think Marge Piercy is a bit of a better writer? Ooh. So more people should read her. And then -- I mean, I'll name and shame who asked this -- Kim from Geeks

For Social Change said have either of you pulled because of a book event?

Z: I saw this on the chat and I was like, that's a good question. Have you? No, neither of us have/

G: But also because we've both got boyfriends. I asked Michael, I said -- I told him about the question and he said, no one has ever pulled at a book event.

Z: If you have, I would like to hear from you. You know on Spotify you can like, add comments. Please add comment if you have pulled, just alert the audience. Alert us of your presence.

G: A few people asked about book two. Will you guys be writing another book? I love Poor Artists and all your texts, are their talks of book two yet? You can't lie, I dare. Basically we've spoken about book two on earlier podcasts. So you're all showing that you don't -- you're not faithful, you're not faithful people. You should listen to every word we say!

Z: Maybe this is an accountability check as well.

G: It also could be that. Basically in short we do have book two in the works. We finished the first draft of it last year, and then sort of thought we'd be way past the point of talking about drafts now and then I was really, really ill over like January, February and March. And in that time, I spoke to our agent and we've put book two on pause for now so that I can sort of come back to life, which is like a huge relief, to be honest, massively relieving. Because I feel like I can't write it if I continue to be as sick as I was in those months and I already feel better and like, you know -- for now, I feel like my job is my health. And that's never been my priority. And it probably fucking should have been. I love Poor Artists. Don't get me wrong. I love our little silly pink book and I love talking to people about it. But I do have this sort of weird, great shame that, like, I should have been skiving off work to get better or to see, like, if I could get better or whatever, you know, whatever it means for chronic illness. And instead I was like, no, I'm gonna work really hard. I'm gonna write a whole book and then I'm gonna go on a book tour. And I think that has made me a lot sicker, unsurprisingly, so, yeah... Book two on pause for now.

Z: TBC. I think also -- are we allowed to say? I don't know. Maybe this might not make it through into the edit. Double check. But I think as well like, I also have the feeling that like it's -- because of the nature of book two, I feel like we have to push it through a filter to kind of figure out some kind of device or mechanism with which to finish it off. Like it can't just be what it is right now. We need to, like, do something to it. Some transformational writerly magic has to happen where we think of something. And whatever that thing is, it has just not occurred to us. It might not even exist. We might just have to, like, put it away. But I think between the two of us, neither of us have had what

feels like the idea for that filter, and that has been like looming over my head. So like for me, it's not just a question of like, we just need to both do the work and like, figure it out. Like just work on it. Because I think the work has happened, we're now waiting for like, something to land. The penny hasn't dropped, and whatever that is, it stresses me out. Do you know what I mean?

G: It doesn't stress me out anymore because I think it's on pause. And actually, I feel like I'm having more ideas now that I'm resting more. I'm less worried about it but yeah, we'll say more when we can.

Z: This might not make it into the edit. I encourage you to cut this. This is just a word between us two.

G: We're gonna move on to some White Pube general questions, that I thought were --

Z: Has someone asked if we've ever argued before because --

G: Oh, there's like a thousand questions about whether we've argued before. So they include: Have you and Zarina ever fell out over a text? No, I don't think so.

Z: I don't think so. I can't think of one.

G: And then there's a more general, have you ever been in an argument or disagreement with each other? And then there's a third one. We've joked before on the podcast about like a vague, sort of tired, slow-motion disagreement we had in Norway about whether or not you should use conditioner. But like, it's so dumb it doesn't even need to be brought back up/

Z: It's just not that deep. But my follow up question to that is do you use conditioner, like do you still not use conditioner?

G: Honestly now sometimes, if I've got enough energy in the shower or the bath. Like yeah, if I'm like, I'm here, I've got legs, there's 20 more minutes in me. I'll use conditioner. And do you know what?

Z: Which conditioner do you use?

G: Oh, I don't know if it's John Frieda? Is that the name? Because when I went to Tesco there was like a three for two on -- that's the right name John Frieda isn't it? -- and I was like okay, well I'll buy a shampoo. What else is there? I'll have to buy conditioner. And I bought two shampoos and a conditioner. So that's my ratio, I would say one in every three showers. And my hair's fine. Who cares. Okay. And then third related question to this is what do you secretly find annoying about each other? And also what do you look up to? That's cute.

Z: I like the follow up to that, because the first half of that

question is secretly malicious.

G: But also if I was listening to a Q&A, that's the shit I would want.

Z: That's what you wanna know.

G: Tell me how I annoy you.

Z: You genuinely don't. And I'm not even saying not to be like -- because I'm sure there are things about me that annoy you. I'm absolutely sure there is, but I genuinely, if I'm being really honest with myself, I'm not annoyed by you.

G: That's good.

Z: There's nothing, which is quite good, but I don't think you're like -- there isn't like, anything about your personality that would. You know what I mean? You're not abrasive in the way that I can be quite abrasive.

G: I actively try not to annoy people all the time. Okay. Yeah. That's nice.

Z: Do you want me to do my 'what I look up to'?

G: Yeah. What do you look up to?

Z: I think that I think you're very good at speaking to people you've never met before. You're very good at being open and curious about the world, which I really admire. I really admire it. And it has taught me a lot about, like, I've learned a lot from you about how to be a person.

G: Oh my god. I don't feel like that is true about myself.

Z: Really? No. Yeah. You're very friendly.

G: That's good.

Z: You've got, like, this impish quality in public when we are doing, like, in-person events. I think sometimes I feel quite overwhelmed by the publicness of whatever this like creative practice is. Like whenever this becomes a public thing, I feel like it can be quite an overwhelming experience for me. And you deal with it quite well. Or, like, you embrace it with a kind of mischievousness that I really admire.

G: That's so nice. Thank you. That bit I feel is true. I get it now. I get what you're saying.

Z: Yeah, that's a better way of saying what I mean. And I think you do. You do a lot of community-building within like this little world that we have between us and all the other people that are involved



in the world that we have. And I think whenever, like -- I think a lot about 2019, when we were like White Pube on tour there was a way that you'd go about interacting with the world outside that I felt like I learned a lot from.

G: That's so nice.

Z: Oh my god, have it.

G: Aw, I will, thanks.

Z: Okay, what annoys you about me?

G: Okay. I feel like... more broadly and maybe seriously, there were there were points writing Poor Artists where I felt like I was going to lose my mind. But you know this already. Because at the end of Poor Artists, once we'd handed in, Zarina was like, I've got all these ideas for books three and I was like, I'm never writing a book again with someone else (laughing). It was just like -- it was just a hard balancing act. And I sort of feel like the process that we created between us was the annoying thing, less so than you or me. It was just like, often what we would do to write is like, Zarina would write 10,000 words and then I would fix them. But it was like, oh, it was just a difficult rhythm. But then I sort of don't really believe what I'm saying because you needed to do that so that we could write it. But it was just a hard cycle at points, especially when I was like really fatigued. I was like, oh my God. It was like an onslaught of all your thoughts in the form of YA.

Z: That's book three. YA. Let's go.

G: That's book three. Zarina Solo. You can do it on your own.

Z: Quest as Romantasy.

G: Yeah.

Z: But I think if I was going to predict what would annoy you about me is -- I am deeply disorganised, very scatty. And I think that like writing process was --

G: Hmm, you've gotten a lot better.

Z: I've had to and I've also thought about it constantly.

G: But I think you didn't realise it for a long time, and now you do. So now it's so different. That was my other -- my other thought when I saw that question pop up was like another point which I'll say out loud, but I also don't fully back. I don't really feel like I'm annoyed by it. I think it's like a funny quirk.

Z: {Laughing}

G: Which is like -- this happened when you were in a relationship

years ago, and it's happened again now that you're in a relationship where like Friday, Saturday, Sunday, you are unreachable. You are off the internet. And for a while I was like, why? Is she getting kidnaped? What's going on? But then at the same time, it's nice that like, you're like, okay, that's my relationship time, I'm off work. And I don't go off work. I don't have weekends or evenings like I just never have, even before. Just ever since the beginning of this, I was like, time means nothing, hehehe, I'll just do all of this stuff. So sometimes it's annoying because sometimes things happen in our calendar that like, don't suit that. And then other times I think like, good, good, run away. Run the fuck away! Go on a date!

Z: Get out of here. I think there is like a real scheduling difference. Like, you kind of exist in this quite fluid place where it's like anything can happen at any time of day. I keep quite conventional working hours. Like, I've come into an office at 10 a.m. To be fair, I do work until like seven, eight, nine, depending on what's on. But like then I leave my laptop in my locker at the office and I go home.

G: That's amazing. That is like unbelievable to me. But I also admire it. I admire it.

Z: I mean I also admire the like, the inverse because like there are limits to the way that I work. Like the thinking doesn't stop, but like it itches, you know?

G: It's so funny to me that you leave your laptop in the office. I'm literally sat here with a two screen set up. And then I've got a third screen in the corner on my phone, and I'm like, I've got my laptop downstairs for when I want to do Spanish on the couch later. I'm like, whoa.

Z: And then like, I come in, I have a little coffee from Pret, I do my art history maxxng. I look at my emails, I can like -- it's a very subjective personal difference. Like the two screen -- I can't think across two screens. That's amazing to me that people do it. I'm like, how do you know what to look at? I need a smaller screen, actually, probably, like this is too much space.

G: God, once you go to like multiple screens, you can never go back, I don't think. Incredible, incredible. I'm in the matrix, baby.

Z: I used to have a big screen when I was working from home during the pandemic. Yeah, like during the lockdowns. I just felt like I was like swimming. Like the pages were too big.

G: I want to swim. I want to swim! Okay. Someone asked, has anyone ever give you shit over The White Pube IRL? And then it also says rudest reader slash fan interaction. I've got something in mind, but I want to know where your head goes to because it's probably different.

Z: I have one that I'm not willing to discuss publicly on the

podcast because I don't want to --

G: Can you hint at it?

Z: Well it was just like an IRL moment with someone I was friends with was like, oh -- it was actually something you said as well, which is like nuts.

G: Oh you've got to say it now.

Z: No, I can't -- it's not 'I can't' but like, I don't think it's fair. It was something you said about... I can't even remember what it was. It was a tweet, but it was about digital -- loads of institutions favouring digital artists because it felt new and fresh and young. But like, all of these digital artists were like relatively new and they were privileging the newness over --

G: Quality.

Z: -- something that was maybe more refined and considered. And someone gave me shit about it, and I was kind of like, okay? I remember like, they brought it up and I was like, I actually haven't seen the tweet, but Gab makes a fair point. And it's so unfair because I was like, you could just message her. You know both of us. You could just message her. But, like, you're bringing it up to me because I'm nearby. Someone was venting to me about something you said, and I was like --

G: Interesting. I can fill in the blanks.

Z: It's not fair for me to bait them out.

G: Okay, mine was different. Mine was more, not so much on the giving us shit in real life, but rudest reader slash fan interaction. Oh boy. Years and fucking years ago, when we were babies and we were being prioritised because of our newness and not so much over our quality. We did like a live review of a Paul Maheke show in Serp -- no, not Serpentine, it was Chisenhale. And the idea was like, you know, we would go into that space and there would be like some people would come with us and we would just like, sort of figure out how we felt about the show and like, write the review live in space. And to do that I thought, okay, well, I'm not going to look up anything about the artist or the artwork, and I'm not going to visit the exhibition before. I'm going to go in raw, I'm going to react and we'll figure this out. But like I found it -- it was just one of those exhibitions where like, I think if I'd have gone to it, maybe I would have struggled to write any review because, you know, nothing was coming to mind. It was a learning lesson. A learning lesson? It was a lesson in what we should say yes to and what we shouldn't say yes to. And we did it and whatever. Like I feel like I really struggled and I was really glad when it was over. And then we got an email afterwards from someone who had like made a fake email address, which was called something, something, 'yokoonoyoudidnt@gmail.com or something. I just thought

like, oh my God, could you be arsed making an email address -- if they did, I don't know if they fucking frequently anonymously emailed people. And they just said to us, like in the email, are you going to address this in public? Because like, that did not go well.

Z: 'And people are speaking about it.'

G: And people are talking about it. And I remember seeing it and then thinking, well, I'm not gonna have a fucking conversation with someone anonymously. Like it made me feel -- it was the first time I think I felt any paranoia between us and our audience, which I didn't think was fair because, yeah, it wasn't great but like anything we critique, we critique publicly with our names to it and our faces and our accents. And I was like, it's not fair for you to be so covert, like, say it with your chest as well and then let's have a conversation. So I didn't address it because that just pissed me off so much. So I felt like there was a rudeness in that anonymity.

Z: Do you want to address it now? Because I have thoughts about this particular job we've done.

G: Go on.

Z: I think my thing is, on my end, I was on antibiotics that were making me feel so nauseous. I remember actually feeling deeply nauseous. We walked into the space and we were like, this is like cold mezze. And I thought about cold mezze and I was like, woozy. And then we did this whole conversation that lasted maybe like 45 minutes. And then the gallery had scheduled the timings and then they went, okay, great, now there's going to be a performance. And we were like, didn't know that was on the roster. We should have done it the other way around, no? Like watched the performance and then had the conversation and I was like, I've not actually been in charge of the timings. You have. Not you personally, the gallery.

G: Also, the issue there is like the artist suddenly appeared in the audience which like, you would never do if you were writing a review. You would never invite the person to sit next to your computer screen. So it was just like... yeah.

Z: Also, writing live like doesn't work. Like the format itself doesn't work.

G: For some people, it might. And you know what? Galleries are good and museums are good at like trying things out and I'm grateful that we had that opportunity. But shit goes wrong all the time. And of course it would go wrong for us as well. So yeah, that's what I feel about that. I just think like fucking say it with your chest. Whoever is -- if that person's listening now, just put your hands up and say it was you, because it's so cringe that you didn't.

Z: I think as well, like, I kind of -- so many of these rude interactions happen in that way, like, well, not necessarily

anonymously, but online. If the question was, what's the rudest interaction you've had with someone full stop, like about the writing, all of my examples would be online. I think in-person, people are only going to come up to you and say hello, and they're only going to say the nice stuff. I'm fine with it being that way round. Like I'm fine with people hating me in silence. What other people think about me is none of my business unless you come and have a chat, in which case, fine, let's have it out. But like what people are thinking about me in private in the privacy of their own heads is none of my business. And like that is an anxious mode of going about it. Like the paranoia of that -- I can't. We're too old. We actually are too old to be concerned with that. I think it's just self-selecting. You're never going to come and say the horrible stuff in person, are ya? That's a good question though.

G: If you both had an endless unrestricted budget, what would The White Pube do? People asked really good questions.

Z: Commission other writers.

G: Commission other writers? I wouldn't...

Z: Would you not? There's so many things that are out there that I'm like, oh, I want to --

G: Not for us. Do you know what I would do maybe is -- should we just do this anyway? Should we just become like The White Pube Publishing? So like when you say commission writers, I mean, we'd have enough money to, like, give people advances to write books. We make a publishing house. And then I would love to be an editor in that sense because editors are just critics, I think, for books.

Z: I don't mean online as well. Like, don't you feel like -- I feel like we come into contact with so many writers who are, like, very, very talented. And I'm like, I just want to think with you in space and in time.

G: Yeah but I just want The White Pube to stay ours. This is for us.

Z: Oh, yeah. No. Like, oh yeah. But like, we could franchise if we had -- if we had like 1 billion pounds, we could franchise and be like, here's a little bit of money. Like make a website, do your own thing. This is your UBI. You can think about things, off you go.

G: When I was falling asleep last night, I was reading the Wikipedia page for AKB48. The J-pop group. It's AK because it's Akihabara in Japan, in Tokyo. But it's so successful that, like the people who created that franchised it so that there's like a Chinese group, there's a Korean group, in south of Japan, there's like a 48 group over there. Anyway. Yes, I understand the urge.

Z: S Club Juniors.

G: I mean, I think we would pay for people to go to art school. I

think we would like, pay for everyone's gofundmes. I would just be -- I wouldn't have any fucking money left because I would just be like, what do you need? I don't need it. You can have it.

Z: I think I keep thinking about this because I feel that there is a resurgence of print stuff in the art world at the moment, like there are so many new, small run, like first couple of issues, like print journals where people are writing about interesting things. Publishing weird new fiction, like self-publishing is like seeing a resurgence. I'd be quite interested at this point in time in getting a bit of money and seeing what, like The White Pube journal would look like and maybe commissioning other writers and like including other writers in that. I'd love a bit of money to do that. Like not even in a slick way, just making the website printed out.

G: Yeah, okay, I'm going to fly through some more questions. Anything about collaboration process, how you edit each other's work. Do you read each other's Sunday texts before they go live?

Z: Do you know, we don't do that as often as we used to.

G: We used to do it every week.

Z: Yeah. But I think that is a sign of maturity. No, honestly. I think this is a sign of maturity and like, our writing practices feeling more self-assured. Like on my end, I'd send you the Sunday text because I'd be, like, quite paranoid about, like, are there typos? Does this make sense? Like, how could this be better? And I think what I have started doing, and I don't know if this is true, like on the reader's end, but on my end, I think I've internalized your edits. And I think about that myself. I send it through that like, you know, first pass filter and like through some maturity on that end. But also it's a maturity in the sense that I'm like, well, it just kind of is what it is, right? It is what it is I want it is is what it is. And like, I'm kind of -- I've got to a place where I'm like, okay with that. Like last Sunday's text 'On Ugliness.' I'm just not happy with it. And that's because it doesn't meet my own standards for what I want my writing to be. And I know that. I'm okay with that. I understand that the way that we write is an ongoing thing. It's an ongoing conversation. It's a practice that is constantly evolving and shifting, and sometimes you've just gotta take the L. It's not the end of the world.

G: True. Yes. I feel like I used to send my texts to you to check over or like, just because you like a sneak peek, but now I'm in a routine of, like, writing my texts the day before it goes out. So I write on Saturdays now. Just like, sit down, write it, you know, like a 9 to 5. And then I'm like, oh, it's literally too late. No more time. And then I just post it. But maybe it's something we should do more. I don't know. I just can't text it to you on a Saturday because you're with your boyfriend. Just saying. Just saying!

Z: Any time you have sent me your text in advance, I've read it. I

wouldn't dare comment on it, though. Like, it's like --

G: That makes me sound evil.

Z: No! Because it's like, I kind of respect you as a writer. I'm like, who the fuck am I to tell you 'oh, move this paragraph here.' That thought doesn't enter my head.

G: But then I say that to you.

Z: Who cares! Like, I'll take it. If I agree with it, I'll move the paragraph. If I don't agree with it, I'll leave it where it is. And I think this about like -- in these moments where I'm teaching at an art school, like this is kind of what I'm keen to pass on. Pedagogy. Like any moment when you're in a crit and someone gives you a piece of advice or like a piece of critical wisdom that you don't agree with, that's teaching you something. It's teaching you what you think because by disagreeing with it, you're forming an opinion. Informed position, even if it's oppositional. And I think you do have to kind of, as a creative practitioner, know your practice well enough to be able to say 'yes, no, maybe, I'll think about that in future.' Like you've got to be in charge of the doors, right? So, like, I know that even if I say to you, move that paragraph, you can take it or leave it, you don't need me to tell you.

G: Fair enough.

Z: I would still like the sneak peek. And maybe we should start doing that, send me over the sneak peak. Because I read it on Sunday. I listen to it actually.

G: This is a good one. Which Sunday text by the other person are you most jealous of them for having written? That's such a good question.

Z: I know straight away what mine is. What's yours?

G: What is it?

Z: Bingo Review. I loved that text. So good. Like so, so good. I wish I'd written that.

G: I was so happy with The Bingo Review. And then I read over it again recently and I was like -- like, I felt disappointed. I was like, oh, I want another go. I want another pass over this.

Z: Do another go though.

G: Yeah, like, definitely. It's okay.

Z: Do you feel like the thinking with that is done?

G: No, no, no, it's something like if I was to sit down and write like a book of short stories, I would like grab it and I would fix

it and I would put it in the book, but it can sit there and wait for me to need it again. And I'm glad that it was there. And I really enjoyed that summer of writing like fucking weird stories. You're still doing weird stories, but I'm like, back to writing about books and things. The one that came to mind then was -- I'm scrolling down because I can't remember the guy's name. Oh, the Philip Guston review. I really liked that.

Z: I'm proud of that one.

G: And I remember reading it and thinking like, no notes. It's was great. And it was very like -- I'm in such a book phase and you definitely go to exhibitions more so it actually felt for me what people say about our writing in general, which is like, I felt like I got to live vicariously through you. It was the most, like, 'live vicariously through you' in terms of like, what it means to look at a painting, and also I will say like, I do not like Philip Guston's work at all, but I liked the text.

Z: That's saying something.

G: That's saying something.

Z: That's a marker of success in my mind. If I like -- if I manage to transmit some element of the love I feel for something. I'll have it. Do you know that out of all the texts I have written, that is the one that I hear most back about -- I hear back about the most, specifically from painters.

G: That makes sense.

Z: Like, which makes sense.

G: Because they must want that for them. They want to be written about in that way. I think with like that attention.

Z: I think as well, like he's like a painter's painter. Or like, you know, some painters' painter like, I think there's like an insider cult thing going on with Guston. And I feel like because I did that text well (IMO, IMO) I hear back about that one a lot and it makes me really happy. I'm really proud of it. So thank you.

G: Yeah. Nice. Okay, there's two for me that are like, a Long Covid trend in the questions. Someone said, girl, do you ever gaslight yourself that you don't have Long Covid and the answer to that is I wish. I wish there was like that, that breadth of like -- I don't know -- relief so that I could be like, wait, am I okay? But I feel like every day it's shit still. No, I don't and I feel bad that you asked that question because I don't want other people to feel it either. And then the other question was: how has the medication been going, Gabrielle? Did it continue to help after the initial boost? So for anyone who's out the loop maybe, I've been sick with Long Covid stuff for four and a bit years. There are different types of Long Covid. So for some people it affects their energy and it's a



bit more like ME. For some people it affects their lungs and their breathing. And then for other people it's dysautonomic, which means it has like, affected the nervous system. And I'm in that final category. And obviously some people are in 2 or 3 categories at once. But roughly that's what Long Covid is. I have been lucky enough to get two specific conditions off the back of that. So one of them is called Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome, and the other one is called Vasovagal syndrome. And this question is referring to the last text I wrote about how I started a new medication called Midodrine which boosts the blood pressure. And I think I'm on maybe like the fifth week of it now? I don't remember. It has been a fucking game changer. It's not perfect. And I'm like, oh, I wish I could have like a follow up with the cardiologist, like, you know, next week and figure out the dose because sometimes it feels like I'm not taking enough of it and other times it feels like I'm taking too much and maybe that's just what I've got to live with because like with chronic illness and nervous system conditions, like every day is different. You know, I could have the same tests on two days and the results could be different. So it is continuing to help after the initial boost but I'm like cautious still. I had the first two weeks -- I didn't have a single headache and I was like, oh my God. And then in the past two weeks I've had a few. So I'm already like... you can't have it all. But, and I will write about this in the next text, it has made me feel well enough that I have started like a rehabilitation program, which just basically involves me using a rowing machine. So it's like been fucking wild to go into Sports Direct to be like, wow, I need to buy gym clothes. And I'm very cautious. I don't want to be someone who's like, 'I'm going to the gym.' I don't even feel comfortable calling it the gym because what I'm doing is three minutes on a rowing machine, resting for two minutes, I'm doing three more minutes, and then I'm leaving. I'm so early days with movement and just trying to build up a bit of stamina and a bit of like, just leg strength and heart strength again after four years of just absolute fucking hell. So I was like -- I actually wasn't even sure I would mention it in a text or on this, but then it feels too important and like too big of a change not to admit to. But I have to coach when I speak about it because it's so complex and none of this is simple. And honestly like, you know, two months ago, given how sick I was, if I was listening to someone who's art/book criticism I listen to on the regular or I read on the regular say that they're well enough to go to a gym and use a rowing machine, I think I would feel shit about myself if I was like the sick listener. I have found it really difficult over the past few years hearing people with Long Covid say that they've gotten better or just anyone who can do things that I can't do has felt so upsetting and often just gutting and devastating and all those words. So I'm cautious to say it because I don't want to upset anyone. And like, I go into this knowing that it could make me worse and at the same time it could make me better, I don't know. I will explore this fully in a text, but for now, that's the update. So yes, it has been a weird month.

Z: Weird month.

G: Fucking crazy month.

Z: That's why I think it's nice to do that little updates like this because like even the way you update -- the way you write about your life in the texts, it seems like an important thing to document, one. And then it kind of communicates the up and downness of it and like the way it does fluctuate.

G: The fluctuation is something like I can't understand still and I'm four years into living with it every day. So I don't know. Sometimes it's hard because I don't know how much faith I have in the general public when I have seen family members who've known about this the whole time still not understand it. And then maybe I just shouldn't care. Maybe I should just -- whatever. But you do care. Okay, we're nearing the end because this has gone on forever. There's so many questions left.

Z: Can I add in -- I can't add in, if there's so many questions left. I've got questions for you.

G: Oh, no, you can't. {Laughing} One question was like, what is a creative thing you did for yourself recently ie. not writing for the website.

Z: That's a nice question.

G: I came up with that one. {Laughing} That was the only one I added.

Z: That's a nice question. So last year I was rebranding as a ceramicist. I haven't been back to ceramics class this year because I think at the beginning of the year I was like, it'd be nice to take a break, have a little palate cleanser. And then also couldn't find a slot because it's booked out. Everyone in East London wants to be a ceramicist now it seems, which is fine, but then the other weekend I did some painting.

G: Did you?

Z: I was quite pleased with it, like it was soupy, but it's the kind of thing where I'm like, oh, I wouldn't mind doing that again. I think as well, one of my New Year's resolutions was take up knitting. Hate knitting, I'm so sorry. Like as a knitter, I don't want you to feel affronted or offended, but this is like -- you did tell me as well -- you were like, don't start with a scarf. It's Sisyphean. I feel like I'm in Groundhog Day every time I pick up those knitting needles, I just hate it. And it's small needles. Small.

G: Insane. Insane choices. .

Z: So whenever that scarf gets finished, winter 2028, I'll be wearing my scarf but I won't be happy about it. But that was one of my New Year's resolutions. And then another one was to take up

drawing again and I have and I'm enjoying that. It's bad. I'll never show anyone but it's nice. It's a little thing just for me. I used to be really good at drawing, and it is a skill that you can lose and that you can retrain.

G: I've also been drawing a little bit this year. Yeah. Because Michael has some really nice Blackwing pencils and I just like to use them. And then the reason I asked this is because, you know, sometimes you do something, you're like, oh, I didn't know I was going to do this today and you, like, surprise yourself. Months and years and whoever knows how long ago, I saw a video of someone who had taken, like, loads and loads of old sweatshirts that they picked up on, like -- I don't know, like tours across America or something. Like just, I don't know what it was. And they had cut them all out and like stitched them together and made like a big blanket out of them. And I think that idea just been like in the back of my mind. And then maybe more recently, you know, seeing people with those quilted jackets that are like old lady jackets, but like, everyone's wearing them with the little bows on. And I like the quilted aesthetic, but I run too hot because of the heart stuff that I couldn't wear a quilted jacket. But yeah, those two things have been on my mind. And then I was having a clearout and I was like, I've got a thousand tote bags. You know, like all of the trips that we've been on and every time we go to a museum, the people are like, take a tote bag. Like everyone's just fucking throwing tote bags at us. I was like, I've got too many, got too many. What can I do with them? So I cut them all out and I arranged them and I stitched them together. And I'm like halfway through making like a quilted tote bag blanket.

Z: Nuts.

G: And it's so cool. But the only thing is, you know, I've got this, like, heart monitor on so I can, like, keep an eye on how much energy things take me. Sewing burns energy out of me. I don't know what it was. It was like -- it was harder than the six minutes on the rowing machine. I was like, oh fuck me. I had chest pains. I was like, really struggling with it. So I I've gotten halfway through and I'm like, I need to take a break or next time I do it, I need to go really slowly or something. But yeah. Gonna learn how to quilt.

Z: Do you leave the little pockets still in?

G: No, no, no, what I did is I like I cut them and I cut the handles off. So essentially each tote bag became like two squares on the quilt. And then I have to buy wadding to make it like, you know, squishy inside and then put something on the back side and then give it a nice border. And then that's like -- that's a quilt.

Z: That's a quilt, baby. Well, I look forward to the update.

G: Tote bag quilt. It's got like Oslo Biennale. It's got Berwick film and media arts festival. No offence to all these people. I just thought the tote bags were good, but not good enough.

Z: Do you have enough tote bags in stock? Do you need people to send you new tote bags?

G: No, no, no, please don't. No, no, no. I was reading about how -- it's something like -- there are enough clothes on the planet and enough fabrics and stuff that like if we stopped production today, there would be enough for like, seven generations of people or something to have, like a full wardrobe. Whatever that statistic is, has freaked me the fuck out. It made me feel ill. Because it's not going to stop and there'll just be more and more and then the number of generation's worth of clothes we've got will increase. Anyway, I just, I was like, what have I got? I don't want to go the fabric shop. I want to like make it. I want to -- oh, stressful.

Z: I have a half way question for this, which is: I wonder if this person (you) was also asking about -- because like, this is like making which is very different to the writing we do -- writing for ourselves, not just for the website.

G: Have you done that?

Z: Well, do you remember a couple of years ago I wrote a short story called Timothee Chalamet?

G: Of course.

Z: I keep thinking about that because it's like -- I don't think -- I've never showed anyone, but I think I remember saying it to you and you were like, nuts, cool. And then it just disappeared from my mind. It came back a couple months ago and I was like, I want to finish that up or like do it again differently. I want to run it through an edit. I haven't had the idea. The other penny -- the other shoe hasn't dropped on what that edit it would be. Just because we write so many things, all my writing time is taken up by the website. It's like I have little headspace left to write my own things. I know for you, this has been different.

G: Yeah, I started another book, a solo book with a whole idea. And then I think that when I had the really big like January, February, March crash, I just stopped everything and went into like survival mode for a bit. I think maybe my problem with it is like, I think I know exactly what it is and I just need to sit down and do it. And like, that feels so daunting. Whereas like when we sat down to do Poor Artists, it was so much about discovery and we didn't know what was around the corner. And, you know, we never thought we would put Gustave Courbet in a Uber seat.

Z: We didn't know who Gustave Courbet was.

G: (Laughing).

Z: It was informed by the process, by the research. Yeah.

G: I think I need to, like, go back a step and tell myself that I don't actually know what this book is because it almost feels like I've written it in my head, so why would I bother writing it? If you know what I mean? It's like Jackie Kennedy saying, like, why would I tell you my thoughts, they won't be my thoughts anymore. I'm saying this because of someone on Real Housewives of Beverly Hills quoted it. This is a second hand quote. But yeah, that's how I feel about the book. And I need to chill out and let it out, I think. Yeah. Shall we leave it there? There's so many more questions. Oh my God, I feel really bad. No no no. But we could do part two. We could do a part two.

Z: But I wanna -- I love this. I wanna answer more questions.

G: There's a whole art section that I didn't even get to, but we can do that on another episode.

Z: Thank you for sending in those questions. That's nice that people want to ask us things. That's really nice.

G: It's also like, thanks for letting us have a little writing break. We needed a little writing break and this is very indulgent. And like, who cares? You know, like, ultimately no one should care. But it's nice that people care. But I don't want to presume people do, at the same time.

Z: Yeah, I know what you mean, thank you for listening is the other one. Thank you for listening to this particular episode.

G: What we should say is that we have book called Poor Artists. You know how well it's doing or not doing if you want to support us. We also have a Patreon if you want to subscribe, you can give us a pound a month. We've got a discord server that I love, that you should join. And you can join if you sign up to our Patreon.

Z: And then you can answer these questions yourself because I'm actually interested in hearing them, and other people's responses.

G: Thank you for listening.

Z: Thank you for listening.

Both: Bye