

Autistic cultures: A Konversation

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#CorvidDrawingJon

Global warning: This talk may contain
the following:

Metaphor	Humour
Sarcasm	Empathy
Irony	Heresy

Plus a very honest account of an older
xNeurodivergent person living with
imposed mental health issues such as
PTSD & Trauma

What do I do?

**Artistic director:
Flow Observatory**

**I Champion: Mental Health Autism
Nottingham University + Is Belonging
Coventry university**

Artist: Whatever that may mean

XNeurodivergent person:

Who am I?

I am **Autistic Dyslexic probably ADHD synaesthete & definitely human**

Mostly In my eyes I feel I have **skills** not deficits often society feels differently

And these skills have been perfect for my careers as an **artist** and **palaeontologist**

As Flow OBSERVATORIUM

Kongress Research, surveys and Report
to find out the barriers ND creatives
faced as both makers, participants and
audience makers

3 surveys

Zoom meetings

Commissioned artwork

Reported back to ACE

My school pen

A letter in mind

Raven dinosaur head

Abstract image

UCL Trellis project 2021

Democracy Street

Look About

Games with the waterhorse

Hidden voices in Portsmouth

Quick Definitions

"NeuroDiversity isn't a political stance or a movement it's a living fact"

Steve Silberman

"Neurodiversity is about
the many not the few

In the same way that
biodiversity is the
variety & variability of life
on this planet

How long have I been
autistic/ND?

How long have I known I
was different?

When was my official DX?

2013 was my DX

How much Post DX
support do you think I've
had from official sources

A. None

B. Some

C. Lots and lots

2013 was my DX

How much Post DX
support do you think I've
had from autistic people

A. Lots and lots

B. Some

C. None

So where do I belong

Do autistic/ ND people
have their own identity
narrative and culture ?

And if they do can they
create and own it?

Shared cultural Characteristics

Language

Knowledge

Patterns of behaviour

Social constructs

Identity

Habits

Creativity

Shared Cultural Characteristics

create a

Unique Narrative informed owned
& shared by the particular group of
people who created it & so retains
an innate implied authenticity

"Neurodiversity is made of
many cultures

In the same way that
biodiversity is made of
many species and clades

So where do I belong?

Do I feel a sense of
inclusion and community in
society?

Have I found a space in my
community?

Conversation round the campfire

Quick Definitions: for example

Autism Culture - The autism industry
- most research - most experts -
treatments etc

Is not **Autistic** led

Autistic people seem replaced &
excluded from evolving this narrative

Autsplainng

Autblaming

Autwashing

Autism mythology

Quick Definitions e.g

Autistic Culture

Is **Autistic** led

Involves **Autistic** people informing
evolving and owning their
narratives

When accepted & enabled
Autistic/ND people are able
to not only play an equal role
in society but often an
extraordinary and necessary
one

The Imposter syndrome

Challenges to our belonging

Systemic attitudes to autistic/
ND people can't change unless
we are recognised as **a part** of
the system & **not apart** from
the system

Challenges to our identity and belonging from wider society and system towards autistic people

1: Language - Disorder or condition

Language engender attitudes
Attitudes engender language

2: Always the autistic persons fault

Challenges to our identity

I don't live 'with autism'

I live with my wife and cats

I do live with PTSD because
people because of the
stereotypes imposed on me

Challenges to our identity

I don't fight 'with autism'

I fight poor attitudes to me

Challenges to our identity

I don't live 'on' the **spectrum**

I live in a house

Challenges to our identity

Don't do things for **autism**

Do things for **autistic** people

Challenges to our identity

“You don’t speak for all autistic people”

As an artist do I speak for all artists when I make a comment

Challenges to our identity

What's your special gift?

“Surviving”

Challenges: Barriers to ND people

Barriers before attending

Physical environments

Funding

Networking

Engaging with organisations

Misunderstanding of Neurodiversity

Assumptions

Time

Recovery time

Mental Health

Executive functioning issues

Representation by and in the media

Depression stones

Challenges to our belonging

#EndAutismNow

Autism free brain
Preventing autism
Autism deficits

Challenges to our belonging

Others deciding what's in the
autistic person's best interest
vs understanding what interests
autistic people

Challenges to belonging

Words used by the autism and wider community that degrade or dehumanise us

“Your not like my child”

“We’re all a little bit autistic”

Disappointment

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition, characterised by marked, pervasive and persistent impairments in communication, social skill and relations, accompanied by restrictive and repetitive behaviours and interests'

‘Why do so many autistic people have mental health issues?’

Expert 1: because you have social communication issues

Expert 2: because it goes with autism accept it

Expert 3: because you have a deficit in understanding your sensitivity

Me: No Were mostly treated like s***

Trauma

Trauma

Trauma does not make you
stronger

trauma makes you
traumatised

Trauma definition

**‘Our bodies response to our
boundaries being broken’**

Jamie Knight

The Chair RA

Do I belong?

**If you don't actively
include autistic/ND
people then your
actively excluding ND
people**

You know it's not up to
autistic/ND people to
justify why we should be
included its up to others to
justify why we are not
included

Don't try to make us
conform to another **cultures**
measures standards or
identity

You will damage us

Autistic people need
asking what they need
because if you
assume or guess

You will damage us

Autistic people need
involving on their terms
because if you apply
your rules

You will damage us

**AutisticND people need
talking with not for
because if you don't learn
authentically from us**

You will damage us

Stone on my head

Help us belong

That organisations will
Involve **autistic** people
and not just include
autistic people

Help us belong

That society will learn to
accept and respect the
autistic voice identity and
narrative & that we are
'experts by experience' in
being **autistic**

I Hope

we autistic/ND people will be
given the space to cultivate,
grow and nurture our own
narrative & identity without
interference

If you want to see work that
is **different** commission
people who view the world
differently but you then
have to think **differently**
about how you work with
them.

To fully belong

We need to create a positive
social chain reaction

You can help initiate this

To fully belong

We need a **Cultural climate
change**

You can bring this about

Tear everything up you know

Pants to awareness

More **Understanding & acceptance** are needed for all Neurodivergent cultures

We're an innate part of the human landscape we're not a deficit.

Logos

arts Council England
Art Space Portsmouth
Flow Observatorium

Autism

I am not the word
or the letters
& the spaces in-between
or the person in your
imagination
U think I should have been

I am human