Françoise Verges ([00:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9oasZnGo7aA5bm5KiB7kMbVwR8RQjm2qhCZnoT1TMk_pQQnlQnVdy_wYEK9EUAuUV140_pS7uA0J9omQLHilgnzhXYc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=0.67)):

We are not forgotten chapter of their history. They are a little chapter in our history.

Laurent John ([00:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Zsy4LPUu2guuh-WL1b6e7wBrzWtHjajPfFTEYgfueyW2Cg30vSUeC5NyPPvg6W_6PxqCaY-g9KzwduBa-RnMuWRFe-o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=17.13)):

Welcome to the third episode of The Process, where we follow one artist through a work-in-progress to see where it lands. My name is Laurent John, and I'm the Studio's Coordinator here at Somerset House. In this episode, we are moving out of the studios to follow the artist, Shiraz Bayjoo, as he works on a new commission for an exhibition here called We Are History, looking at the legacy of colonialism on the climate crisis.

Laurent John ([00:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=34RJB2LV60jqZlago3JTlpKIgk_NqEX5Vor7D5ExKbFeNPOOD0eN8rTeiiykUxFj0IilC_xrC50iYsMZ21LHGiTKbrg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=46.23)):

Shiraz was born in Mauritius and lives between there and London. He works across several mediums, bringing lots of different elements into dialogue with one another. For this exhibition, he was commissioned to make a new work exploring different perspectives on the plantation system and its structures of extraction and subjugation. Here, he looks at strategies of survival and resistance in the Indian Ocean region with the activist and theorist, Françoise Verges, to consider how language can be decolonized. A warning, there is some sensitive content here about race and slavery.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([01:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=hd3GBrWiDuEFlkpx3cVSsMoYxWNtt-Ef7E4I3IQGB2wnEPFnIPnaLIcBPiA-J_-5lTDIU_pAHwy2H4eWLial2BFqYSI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=83.42)):

In the late '60s and early '70s, the questions of decolonisation were not academic pursuits. Countries were having to build themselves out. They had to figure out, "Well, how do we define ourselves now? What is the language that we start to imagine ourselves through?" Obviously, so much of that is in language that has been created through empire, through the colonial project, so these are often also ideas that we've come to realise are ideas of ourselves that we have inherited from outside voices.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([01:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=nRZgIY5eZcCZkpRbm7QWeRBfzC858me32wU3WrmPD4vTLSXH7xRLA4vgPry0WLI7MyFbCQxAbigVXkuadpzyTjwWN2U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=117.56)):

Places like Mauritius, for me, are very important in helping us to understand the nature of that language, the nature of how patriarchal language has embedded itself in so many ways that we imagine ourselves, but also our civic institutions, which is why this language is important, and important that it's authored by communities themselves. We've got to sand off this filler to wet the wood. The sculpture is made from Sapele wood, which is a two-meter-tall post, very dark kind of mahogany wood, and coming out of that are two flag or sail posts which will have these Kanga fabrics hanging from them.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([02:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=R4MMvoO7oKahsAoE5NYMdkDBKzRwQ0ndXnVYuPqn2pLml49uydsDzzrZikgzcrCKJUWF5xQp5uRoKhW09x64VQUVdaA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=172.52)):

Then, on these little shelves, you've got these pieces of white coral, and old archive photographs, and little bits of ceramic and gold chain, so not actually that dissimilar to my painting; adding layers, removing them, adding them back. The broader focus of my work, it's very much focused on the western Indian Ocean region, partly because it is a place that I've come from, but also because in terms of the Mascarene Islands, these are islands that they were uninhabited before European colonisation. They are really extreme experiments, you could almost call them, of the slave system, because Mauritius was certainly a site of major French plantations.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([03:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zxnwjDJr2Qr6DC3Xe8fw0igXKy5Fi99thyYccx_79k60U1065kXUzp37aQxLiRhxGYq7bznFTcvmxDEOvs_IE3Fq4nc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=226.45)):

But it's also the place where the British experimented the indentured labour system, which was then rolled out across the British Empire. These sites have witnessed some of the biggest parts of our social and economic history of the last 200 years. One of the series that's going into the exhibition is this ceramic series called Coral Island. This is made up of these classical, French-framed ceramic pieces and these Dutch etchings by the sailors who were arriving in the Mascarene Islands at the end of the 1600s, beginning of the 17th century.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([04:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9dEmp1BK6lpliIjiNEjQudVnlQNdIG_d1JyzzrqeOe4PUZaS1ju1pAa30VRu3Ea6chfFT5kNEG7qYcAs6mmLySW4-1M&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=269.39)):

They were describing these islands of paradise, where they knew that they were uninhabited because the birds used to fly into their hands. In these drawings, you've often seen these depictions of men clubbing birds. We start to see, perhaps in some of these early drawings, some of the psyche and thinking of this relationship of extraction. They start to bring together and line this idea of mastery over nature and the environment, rather than perhaps, as we find with lots of Indigenous, First Nations communities, the language of actually living in harmony and in balance with the resources that are available to you.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([05:27](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=IW1Q7888wb7mGA53XB8Py_6EsUTUUf0iMKyAwtvNKLbs-dHizOEqpGdEML3rGFm-kba9dOIw9xFAYOmvV6gwtSbSSp4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=327.61)):

For me, it's about bringing these different types of things into an orbit or a kind of constellation with each other. Together, it starts to kind of create these cross sections of what the plantation experience is from different positions, and in different kind of ways, the works hopefully show how identities have also grown, resisted, and survived through these processes. It's the relationship and bonds between women that have actually created the matriarchy that has created the spaces of survival and, I guess in that sense, Creole identities being born in a way that sort of denote that kind of survival.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([06:10](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=68kRUgoZVuSYWIj2x43OhrlJtHVIlbGuKuHy6I7S8yVEg25hGhsochqpaGL-cmMz__KbndoEGYfLAv0XXoghhS7sErk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=370)):

What does art bring to these questions that are often perceived as very political and perhaps exist in other spheres of society? Well, I guess being able experience and think about these questions in a way that is not just literal, factual lines, but allows us to enter spaces where we can connect to things in terms of emotional landscapes. That's what starts to bring us towards these questions about the language of resilience and survival, and how does one imagine yourself as being anything other than what you were told you are? How do you do that in an environment where there is no escape? There is only a reductionist narrative for you. The world of slavery, the world of the plantation, how does one grow out of that? Because, I guess in a sense, we are the proof of survival, because we are here.

Françoise Verges ([07:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=WO75NgsMqJq_OiPZSaWeo4J9FxBZOJXrBFQcL3ywpnDFyEuIepNdv4Lbnh4whgi7g10qMYCF_Gkdkft_Hasi3dv6QPE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=449.26)):

We have to fight for also our own philosophy of visibility.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([07:36](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=iNgC_yOagudSM4fMzMY1YRri4tzR2pRphbCKsKwz5ZO2OhraLvNBiu_DSkjKdBbrbAqRbjNu1N8Vs4qPvfk5l69Rjmk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=456.44)):

Someone who's writing, and research has particularly pertinent to my work for many, many years, is Françoise Verges, who is an academic curator, theorist and activist. Françoise's work is particularly inspirational to me, because she overlaps the same area that my work resonates with, that my work has picked up upon, so she has been and continues to be almost exclusively the source of inspiration to my work, theoretically.

Françoise Verges ([08:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=S-rmRVo7jqNIaMZCx177SW_sj-zS-0lbcIx4OC1z0l8gZsunKsTecgM8RyXG3Rhfxfkczce9uKX19tf3Qj7VQrdQ0As&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=489.91)):

What make this story of the Indian Ocean interesting and different from the Atlantic, first, the ocean as a cultural space is not defined by European. It's not a white space neither, like The Black Atlantic of Paul Gilroy. It's something already, from the beginning, a space of encounter and exchange between Africa and Asia. Long before the European arrived, there was a millinery history of exchange. Therefore, of pilgrims, of traders, of merchants, of soldiers, and slaves, or sailors, and captain who circulate from the African continent, from the South African continent to Asia, and of course from Madagascar as well, which is quite often forgotten also in history of the global story of enslavement and colonialism. That's the beginning.

Françoise Verges ([09:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Q51uzUQEzgCTu1WWvqN_8cFQ4Vs7yRg9N9qhp5Ph9nMWzOF5jOR9ZIiCBiTfaSoVb2TfP4YEF40hb0UUwgHei683Nns&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=551.79)):

Second, in the Indian Ocean, we can say that processes of creolisation precede the arrival of European. There are local regional processes of creolisation. The Swahili civilisation can be seen. The Swahili architecture, the Swahili culture and language are effectively the result of processes of creolisation. Third, there is also from the beginning in the colony, the slave colony of the Indian Ocean, an encounter between very different populations. I mean, the enslaved do not come only from Africa, so you find, in fact, enslaved from Malaysia quite early among the population. You have a very strong, effectively hybridity that will be expressed in the language and culture. Even today, the Indian Ocean is especially very specific and very different from the Atlantic, and there is a marginalisation of the Indian Ocean, some form of blindness in Europe, because it's part of their history. They can say, "We shaped the Atlantic. The Atlantic was born of our presence there." They cannot say that for the Indian Ocean.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([10:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=dXjSE-Heysu0DLTc7igJAwsfacToVveQkhOeaeTqXa-yYqMspdmO0wgOnGhMQyT7ZchYxjk380qxp8TuhgoWjXxBq8Q&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=637.55)):

I suppose we can also understand the Indian Ocean is also as a site of both origin, but also as hybridity in terms of creolisation, and perhaps then also the idea that of creole identity as in itself a form of resistance. In your home of La Réunion, how do you feel that language and the naming or articulation of different histories has manifested, not just perhaps spoken language, but the language of objects, of making, of creativity?

Françoise Verges ([11:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=BgfluA970au6qSxqCa5eNLvxPUTlVkyKp5qgXRk_sUine_kocAJmL4hTmjWcP_hkd4Go250aO-fxPNXaI2dH6TNsyS8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=672.87)):

Yes. Language is not about just spoken word, but also about the rituals, the song, the poetry, the practice around plants, the knowledge about those. This, our language of resistance. I'm sure you know that, Shiraz, the way women use their hands, the gestures that are made with hands, the way of holding one's body, the way of holding children, all this all suggests I'm in a language of resistance of a creation outside of the norm of the white supremacy, of something that even under the eyes of the white supremacists were there.

Françoise Verges ([11:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=XHGgk5g3S7fxgapArFHtdls3WcUTEmAmkCJ6AgD_udNb8wuik7bVCuDHqbUY3r7UtIN7o9g2cbqCMCEifbMfkzZl640&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=718)):

The white supremacists did not see them. They just saw subhuman being, but these were there. All the rituals around birth, around death were also language of resistance, of, "Okay. You don't name us, but we have name for our ancestor, and we will go to their grave." And if they don't have grave, like for instance, for the enslaved who were thrown in mass grave, and there was not a name, we will have ritual all night long. We will talk to them, and we will give them food, and we will give them water. All this are language of resistance. The way you build your house, the way you do the garden, all this aesthetic is also a form of language.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([12:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=TqAO7FUR2JbKkwPgfEwPVYj6rV1_ko-7Y73GvafVxT383R_cpqW1e87NMfN3n08Ebc2FCcVbFW0qQY874mp9kAfTa5Q&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=769.27)):

Yes, absolutely. It's beautiful the way that you also describe the use of plants and the planting and the gardening. In fact, when I first began to shift my practice and my focus of my work many, many, many years ago, it was sitting actually the photograph that you see behind me now, my grandmother's house. It was this site that really made me really think about, "What are the ways that we allow things to be preserved, and the things that we allow to fall away?"

Shiraz Bayjoo ([13:18](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=atmiKxkahXTCqIZcxCWLQVXWHKUn4Qgq1DNXE4KfVQrCOthvVccgv-pD7pD3EonzXXfCJqX7QTZg9zx6NIx4rAwfMAk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=798.57)):

You know how we allow certain parts of the imposed culture that we absorb in and how other parts of it we resist by letting them decay? And seeing this garden at my grandmother's house, which is a terrace garden on top of the old governor Desforges' house, but it is filled with all of these little tin pots from the different foods and things over the years, and every type of plant grows in it. For me, this was so much of the language of how we've had to learn to live with these monoliths of empire.

Françoise Verges ([13:48](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=3oxo58LCjRuHBMpgdRZSUNkPpXWghHb1KUtHV8SnJSjlfCMgMfoTZ5porcYSFnP8wsy1x7MKwwU-qgCfL_x0QQMLRvA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=828.97)):

Yes, absolutely. In the museum we imagined for La Réunion Island, we wanted to have a garden that would be of exchange, that the garden would be done by the people who will come. All the debate or discussion you can have around one plant, "Oh, I use this for that. Oh, you do that?", and "Yes, I do some tea with it, and this is good for this, and this is good for that," people, there would be that moment of exchange, so it will not be selling. It would be an exchange.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([14:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=RQMl4S7pOQoy_XjgGP24C9qxywLYFW3xH08N04qP0H9O94bYf8mRhSD-wUzapUu84RkCHksgwUWLyTfPScrypH9Oj5Q&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=856.86)):

And I suppose this can perhaps lead us to this interesting question about the plantation as seen in contrast. You know, the idea of the plantation is seen in contrast to the Anthropocene and this history of extractivism. I suppose, in a sense, we're talking about these plants in these little vessels, in these little tin cans, as being almost a resistance towards the wider landscape of which we exist within on the islands, which are completely controlled plantation landscapes in a sense, right? Perhaps there is a kind of relation between those two parts of extractivism.

Françoise Verges ([14:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=MrIvo_k0oK1MH4SB3SxxvuT20YOhSI3cNpdQKjmXRIrerJkekmBzTBIa5wUv-OTLhWnzM71WY5kE3WACgvlJuDONf9U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=892.79)):

Yeah. I mean, when we arrived in Mauritius or in Reunion today, when we see this landscape that appear then on postcard for the tourists, they are not. They are totally fabricated to have sugarcane field or tea plantation. Forests have been destroyed, and of course, in Mauritius you have the famous destruction of the Black Ebony Forest by the Dutch, so it's a landscape fabricated for extractivism. When we look at the road, it's not the road that we would have built that would have connected that village to that village. They absolutely follow from plantation to plantation, to the port from which effectively the sugar or the tea will be leaving. You are forbidden to circulate freely.

Françoise Verges ([15:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=aa6fm_b5tHFQzUpCx2bdwSZdZHytu8caPobw49QCDNNUIiVfJODFpjb1V2D7dJ34zCh73QUUC2xcbCmTrYnyMQDLo4o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=940.04)):

The enslaved cannot leave the plantation or cannot go back and forth, but within that, they were able to take away from the slave owner a small place where they will effectively cultivate their own plants. That's the way they appropriated the small space was effectively there within the master house, the small pace of resistance, and also of knowledge and practice. Within the plantations already, there were carved space on the plantation itself of marooning philosophy and practice. Of course, you had then the Maroon community, the totally sovereign Maroon community of those who left the plantation and carved their own space in the mountain in Mauritius. Yes, the plant erosion was an imposition of extractivism yesterday and today. It has not changed. Today, in Mauritius is still tea plantation, sugarcane, or resort tourism is a form of extractivism. It's cultural extractivism.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([16:50](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ugduo6zkHrLJlpAj5i2myAinmn46yBGSmUKx9YU7pNC8HXWmXESbIaa8lWKOK2kNIOyDbS2-iwxnC6K34_359rwtVrE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1010.68)):

Yes. As you were describing also, for example, the roads that we would not have built for ourselves, the roads that did not connect villages, so in Mauritius we have the Chamarel Valley, that I'm sure you know, and has today become a major site of Maroon patrimony, we could almost say in a strange way. On the other side of the mountain, or to descend down to the West Coast, there is another little village at the bottom of that mountain. I remember often speaking to the villagers of Chamarel, and the other village of which I forget the name, that the young people, when they wanted to go and see the other young people, at night they wanted to go and see the girlfriend or the boyfriends, they would have to descend down the mountain side because, there was never a road that connected these villages.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([17:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=fFAOLZjvQ68srsBdwAh58y7NNZUDapd9RB-bkas-ng6ClCfewZKQ9_2zeZw3Hhc0MwgpMB4efFXOnedR8pYB3WpRAXs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1064.86)):

This is in the post-abolition period as well, so it's not until actually much more recently, in the last 20 years, that a mountain road has been built. Before that, these young people would have to descend down the mountain, perhaps with torches or lanterns, just to try and meet each other, but this became almost a ceremonial practice. It was in itself a form of resistance of not being denied this access to the other half of your community, as it were.

Françoise Verges ([18:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=yyLU-kVACr9hEtXmtu310cWx1EDJFKnsfxLFR41M5ytRRC-s7-6c9DkwfoGM5pIYF5dXQD-gzvLZ8kh9O1R3XiiIUOU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1092.72)):

Yeah. Contrary to what usually we think, the enslaved during the night, they were going to meet other people on the implantation, either a man who had been separated from his wife, to meet his children or woman. There were separation and separation of ideas and news.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([18:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=5tVmGNX7NgIqb0jshLW4TP15IzkL3z50siB7LUV5FhTvgX0Fb3_ckVT-IFe_Hu468FCXLg0wzNCMU3ciTZjGy1krjUg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1114.97)):

Yes.

Françoise Verges ([18:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=28uxMfvaiObjnKZ6Vz4A88TQGiUQNBRCATMEnVSq-fQZTwuTtt-iM7BI5fYEKYGyok0NMjI3XCcN5zp6PVhb0S92nEA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1115.43)):

In fact, the news about insurrection or someone who has marooned from the other plantation circulated very fast. People knew. Also, the slave who were domestic slave, and they were listening to the conversation during dinner, because the whites were talking in front of them, because for the white, they were object. They were like a piece of furniture, but they were listening carefully and bringing back the news to the community of the enslaved. This is also how one says, "Oh, there is a revolution in France. There have been declaring that all men, these men, are born equal. Then okay, let's take that seriously. Then, we are equal. Then, we are free."

Françoise Verges ([19:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=h3OoC9b_pxYxmt3xz5BKf9OKa-Wbkd4qSv9MTCOtz9-77EndMngR65JReroGkMn2HrqI4owaLcRFdxeSNyYTCgqzCrY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1159.61)):

That sometimes surprised the white, because the white thought that these people were too stupid, that this is the way they had to justify also enslavement, and the circulation from plantation to plantation of information. I think it was also, "Oh. That person got married to that person," or "That person got a kid," or "That person died," were part of this form of circulation of information that totally escaped the white supremacist world.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([19:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=xOrKjw_h_dyo8CJgilZI76BwsRaL8Z43C6Rx8h0XqlBzFMFX2SJjTkhfyBFpnhpNEDouzAjPjR9cs1bxSU-Fvhxl4j8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1187.33)):

Yes, absolutely. I can completely imagine, to a certain degree, that for example, when the revolution is taking place in what is now Haiti, how that news, when it arrives in L'île Maurice, actually the plantation owners of L'île Maurice, they petitioned Napoleon to return the system of slavery. They were one of the major voices to persuade him to bring it back, because they were then saying that what happens in Haiti will now take place in all of your colonies, and the money that is paying for your armies, as it were, to continue on their crusades through Europe will lose its funding.

Françoise Verges ([20:25](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=_aNp5Jh9Xj5ygvGbQB-kDC7kHXNCCr5fbQcBQhvg8diXr3cYaqCrmq2JmuBJnatOjKG-HZn-jh8k9Y2JcwujTzdnXd4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1225.79)):

And let's remember, Shiraz, that the abolition of 1794 was refused by the slave owner of what was Île-de-France at the time, whereas in Guadalupe and Guyana, Martinique was under the English domination, but that says something about the kind of slave ownership we had on these two islands of absolutely very reactionary, very white supremacists.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([20:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=qOGnbPn9DvUgZbq0xmkLGKD_4_E8CmcXcAsy8rXB7pE36YstqTwRvK4cRCj_0HhhBJuKH8TOcaukY9wUthlJzkjsXew&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1253.93)):

Yes. Yes. As we've spoken about the landscape as an archive in itself, and how the land and the region bears witness both to the history and to the trauma, one of the things that we have often come back to is how to develop a language of resistance while still being situated within this colonial reality, which I know that some people like to call it the post-colonial presence, but actually we know that we are still within the same colonial system really as we always have been.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([21:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=6ztM_e9_2Gy0ljkYKf6oPS2VvurxVYpYVZWh8kM3TYGNtPvfSxcOWkCsp07kS6g2nYpkLzmemsn3aW2WA9w5mZGDOn4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1289.8)):

Perhaps we can talk a little bit, as this final point, about how your own ideas in developing this politic of visibility and invisibility, and to counter this continuous racist gaze, and perhaps also what I really enjoyed reading was your essay that you did for Documenta14, which was about people who perhaps, those of us who are left that have to continue to fight regardless of how these conversations shift in the global focus, that for us who were not left behind, but continue to have to push for this.

Françoise Verges ([22:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YbEuqN4lAfmP-kqLW1oeDgkFK00yufmet4S4yowthYkVHlm1-yScLHump47TM8CEn4ZvI3f-TNzcLLhuZ5K11or2KVs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1328.78)):

Yeah. We have to push for this, and we have to invent. We say that, and there has been a historical theory about that. Our ancestors did it. We have to fight for also our own philosophy of visibility, because what is visible has been the art of white supremacy and Western hegemony. They show, through images, the hierarchy of race so that the white were on the top. It's not just that we have to undo that. We have also to invent, to go beyond the frame of our presentation that is imposed by the West.

Françoise Verges ([22:51](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=d2zoqZVF3itdkoDAhkSLrHwZGYodR2FDgeG1LcN9siCsmSazdDXDA76fCJM0nFSMwKdBlbpjEXKBYc4zpusa53AclIk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1371.54)):

It's not just to say, "Oh, you have forgotten that, and we are there," because we are not forgotten chapter of their history. They are a little chapter in our history. Europe is a little chapter in the history of the world and a little chapter in the history of the Indian Ocean, so we have to reverse. We have to start from our history. We don't also look for the same frame of representation that has been imposed by the West. Also, about invisibility, there are also moments we still have to become invisible again. We have to hide. In this art is that everything has to be visible, everything has to be shown, everything has to become a commodity.

Françoise Verges ([23:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Sgo2IYbQZBfozbyKxS_EuBJ7SFQA-jyS7z7h-8rlWStITOBhNo84vTvuCzT_r0bW11X2QBg9EqqucQ7yKAmMIBC-zsk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1415.96)):

That's also neoliberalism, capitalism. So no, there are things that you don't show, that they are private, that there are things like that. The wave and even the rituals that are so intimate has to be filmed and shown for consumption. "Oh. That's so exotic," or "That's fantastic," and we get caught in that sometime, so how do we even represent this ritual? How do we try to say something without effectively using the same tools? That's a work that artists have been doing, but also literature, poetry, songs, or what is called nonfiction narrative, so I think we have to continue to do that, to explore that, but we have really to unlearn, to learn again.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([24:27](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=yy_jKDpOC4VLbpYk2_ehzG0onWvlMPxkwuRVFCgNmMtXZRYeagjyHjUo5pALKJFQUpRNvPsKWvpCljHOL5CVNu33Rro&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1467.09)):

My grandmother, she definitely taught me how to survive. She taught me so many deep, little conversations about how to carry parts of my identity visually and how to keep parts of it secret, she said; to carry parts of it just inside your sleeve, that not everybody needs to know everything about you, but that you carry yourself in certain ways. I knew there was so much, really very special sort of knowledge, wisdom that she was passing down. One of our more ancestral grandmothers. Her name was Charmante. She was, as we know, under the British registration of slaves just before abolition in the earlier part of 19th century.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([25:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=C3bUmZkLVai6YB0gvWcIs4kpVBQfULXg4FpSEXb5y02G74tsQBc7PJUFHPOkwFGSZu1BeZ043tfEIGV93AgoUC7Uouw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1516.7)):

They were directing all of the French plantation owners to name their slaves, as they were doing in the Caribbean. Unlike in the Caribbean, where most of the slaves were given the names of their slave masters or the plantations, people in Moris have names like cooking pot or lazy, or all of these different words that actually related to the job they were doing. The fact that the names that these individuals were calling themselves were not known by their owners says a lot about the dehumanisation and objectification as you describe. But this grandmother of mine, she was called Charmante, so we know that she was a house slave, because this was the name that was given to her, charming.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([25:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9Aegq2cGR0jN-s7vHA1UqTsO4PIQNrDMQ0g87MK9tAQce95KtkkOezzrjEq_FOUuMkO8MWj9AJJXn_9fa9--P-EnXYI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1558.22)):

I continuously arrive back at these points of what that world that she had to stand in. She marries an Indian immigrant who has arrived in Port Louis, and this is where she converts from Catholicism, and the family becomes an Islamic family. It's quite interesting to see that in this period, the fluidity of identity is changing. People are not necessarily changing their spiritual beliefs, but they are perhaps changing the identity or the name, the way that they're visually connected in communities, in order to try and reposition, to manoeuvre themselves through the colonial society within these very, very small corridors that are allowed.

Françoise Verges ([26:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ScrvdkRhZfyDIWJD5qW8fU4MCmEv3bjsiLJl-kZxoddU18RdWjGobNu0SugzuRhYbTcMlxKyStM71HXMcoJP5x-9Q68&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1603.84)):

And what you say also, it's a circulation even of the possibility of circulation without feeling that you are betraying whatever. Because there is a form of arrangement that the white cannot understand, and they want to categorise people. Here, the Hindu. In there, Muslim. Here, the Catholic. But people circulate also. They circulate. You will address that God for dancing, and we'll go to the goddess here.

Françoise Verges ([27:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=D4HHZ4FnHUTf2pKk3ivXr-mXQge1dYq1BPq099w5wTQha_XuSnOdVnJxvKaKFcf5daCFtHobKRbUXw9Yv51G7DeKkw4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1632.05)):

By doing that, you're not renouncing the spiritual education or formation to which you identify. It's not lived as a conflict. It's lived as a possibility. The Creole philosophy of life is not just to speak Creole or whatever. It's effectively an incredible, terrible circumstances which was not of our choosing. We nonetheless built a humanity, a decency, a possibility of you know, a party, and solidarity.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([27:51](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=P9JDCQmXjKRl1_dxQ0tVopb9NFCbPX3vfON___UEqstjxZZRwmJFhNo05W5-jMPamD73_weJDfI__W9bgb2hYSFl55g&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1671.59)):

Thank you so much, Françoise. So inspiring and so generous as always.

Françoise Verges ([28:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zsgizXtg4SbuPzaYPx6Ic0JotzDGGUPJbnkJDIqZ43R31krrEc78EmAVodUItQ_koPidAm838CELocnMVnO0wvw9KOc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1680.08)):

Thank you, Shiraz.

Shiraz Bayjoo ([28:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=_2W9VpAOLG9LXo843vglmIMzKN_GlX28ENKjz2bcwahpKGO0ZC7sq7ILTBc_Tq8yuZyUvzzYDbIt1D3bUi0CoK_OFHU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1685.76)):

After speaking with Françoise, what I find, there is nobody else out of the region that speaks in this way. Every time I speak to her, it just affirms all these things that I've been looking at or thinking about over the years. It's really, really amazing. It's such a privilege to talk to her. As an artist, it is also really quite extraordinary to be able to connect with a theorist, a writer, whose work is so poignant for this moment, and really does exactly exemplify what motivates me as an artist.

Laurent John ([28:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=4llhCcYMl3cy5VfDhjw8bX1eq2kcK8yjREkgcqkNCOXUw1oxiCyAzw4Q0es8iipO4F6Xe55AQ01FrXde7dI4bnIhAbk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1733.11)):

I'm of Caribbean heritage. I grew up in Antigua and Barbuda, which is also a former plantation colony, so the questions raised here by Shiraz and Françoise feel very urgent to me, not least because these islands are already feeling the effects of the climate crisis. I think it's important that we continue having these conversations in a space like Somerset House, which of course has its own specific history in relation to colonialism.

Laurent John ([29:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=XldHXgP4ytmtnzzuRv58ssCAePVKMVT5t7r4nvX4JbkabNFR5hka9oriDBVqMfDNcW9zW8scmyO2VrYQS1eFCv2RJiQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1760.7)):

Thanks to Shiraz Bayjoo and Françoise Verges. The theme music is by Ka Baird with additional music by Alain Peters, Menwar and Roger George. This series is produced by Alannah Chance and presented by me, Laurent John. The exec producer is Eleanor Scott. Next episode will be Taking Fun Seriously with composer and resident artist here, Anna Meredith.