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SPEAKERS

Olivia N, Carson, Olivia

Olivia 00:00

Today is January 11 2023. I'm Olivia Newsome interviewing Carson here in New York City. Do I have permission to record this interview?

Carson 00:00

Yes.

Olivia 00:00

Do you know you can stop recording at any time?

Carson 00:00

Yes.

Olivia 00:00

Can you say your name, age, and pronouns?

Carson 00:00

I'm Kirsten soutra. I'm 21, and I use they/them pronouns.

Olivia 00:00

Can you tell me where you're from, where you grew up, and what your childhood was like?

00:23

So I'm from Annapolis, Maryland, that's where I grew up before leaving for New York for college. Annapolis was a weird place to grow up. I didn't have much exposure to queers, or really any kind. A lot of my mentors were mentors using that word loosely. We're a woman in the creative scene at Annapolis. So there is like a very small arts district, but it's really very much override it by the fact that the Naval Academy is there. So there's like, definitely a very heavy, liberal, but like pro military, I mean, obviously, those things are intertwined. kind of vibe to it. But yeah, I went to Catholic school for 12

years. So that influenced a lot of my perspective on Annapolis. My parents, my dad, specifically, he went to Catholic school in Baltimore, that's where he's from. And he was just like, Yeah, let's, let's fucking fool Sunday, I'm gonna send you to Catholic school to, it's like the best kind of education you can get because of how disciplinary it is. Like, it's gonna set you straight kind of vibe. So yeah, like, I think, despite having a really tumultuous experience in Catholic school, and like, communicating that to my parents being like, hey, like, even before I was really out, I came out at like 14, as a lesbian, and was really grappling with that for, I don't know, like three or four years afterwards. So with Catholic schools sort of set as my backdrop for my coming out and feeling really fucked up over the fact that I couldn't be out in these environments, and that it wasn't safe for me to really express myself whatsoever. That sort of created a tension with my family for a long time. And I'm finding that that's sort of still true as I am self actualizing. My transness a bit more so my relationship to Maryland is home has really shifted a lot in the past few months. So that's sort of like a very broad overview of my relationship to my home. My former home, I guess. And my growing up,

Olivia 02:45

do you have any siblings?

Carson 02:48

I have four step-siblings

Olivia 02:48

Are you close to them?

Carson 02:49

who are all in their thirties. One of them is actually self proclaimed TERF.

Olivia 02:54

Like out loud?

Carson 02:54

Yes. Like in her Instagram bio.

Olivia 02:56

Says TERF?

Carson 02:57

Yes.

Olivia 02:58

TERF?

Carson 02:58

TERF.

Olivia 02:59

Wow.

Carson 03:00

I have another sister Rachel, who is genderqueer.

Olivia 03:03

Okay.

Carson 03:03

She uses she/her pronouns. She was like the first person I ever smoked weed with. When I was like a teenager in high school, she showed me a lot of really informative music took me to a bunch of concerts. We talk like almost every day, so she's someone who I can really confide in. I have a brother Peter, who's just like, fucking strange. Like, He's the eldest. He's just like a weird guy. He has like two kids now, I think whatever. And then I have a brother Nick, who's just like, incredible. Also took me to my first concerts. has made me feel really like seeing without having a really like out myself and familial situations. So that's always appreciated, but ya no like biological siblings, all step-siblings. They've been in my family since I was three.

Olivia 03:57

Okay.

Carson 03:59

So there Yeah, for all intents and purposes, like the ones that I claim, you know, like Sarah, or Sarah excluded. Rachel and Nick and like, yes, my siblings.

Olivia 04:09

So you briefly mentioned your relationship with your parents, and how it was strange, because they wanted to send you to Catholic school to straighten you out?

Carson 04:19

Right.

Olivia 04:20

Were you like a disruptive child?

Carson 04:22

Not at all. I was like, so fucking polite. And like, I don't know, like, well behaved overall, it was really just like a cautionary things, a lot of projection from my dad, where he he was like a disruptive child, right. So like he, he would always kind of like walk out of line. He had issues with his own parents. And then he was like, why? I turned out all right, you know, despite like all of the internalized bullshit that he's carried with him and the production, what-not. So he was just like, yeah, Catholic school is a move.

Olivia 04:54

And what about your mom?

Carson 04:55

my mom and I have a better relationship. So both of them My parents are remarried, which I feel like it's an important piece of info. So with my mom, that's where my step siblings come in. And she's, our relationship has also fluctuated a lot. She grew up Mennonite, and actually, like, kind of did this whole Breaking Amish moment. For real. So she grew up in rural Oregon, that kind of put a twist on my relationship to religion, I think in our family, because she understood how suffocating it could be, or limiting in certain ways, but also how expansive it could be for the better. So she's been a big sort of like inspiration in the way that I approach my work. My photographic work in relation to Catholicism. Just because she's she's taught me that I can see it in a different perspective, I think. And see it as something that can be generative, or like reapplied, because that's really what she did with her own experiences as an ex-Mennonite. But in terms of like our relationship currently, or in the past few years, we have a we have an interesting dynamic when it comes to trust. Where I really I like make often the choice to trust her with like, you know, in terms of my process of self actualizing for my transness. And it just takes time. It just takes time with her. But at the end of the day, I know that she's really she really does see me for who I am, I think on a deeper level than a lot of my family members do.

Olivia N 06:40

Can you talk about going to Catholic school a bit more?

Carson 06:43

Yeah.

Olivia N 06:44

What was it? Like? How did it impact your queerness? And your lesbianism?

Carson 06:50

Yeah.

Olivia 06:50

and your relationship with your parents, too?

Carson 06:52

Absolutely. Absolutely. Um, so I went to the same K through eight school for that entire duration. There were like 60 Kids in every grade. So it was fucking tiny. It was so small, and it was a same 60 kids for that entire time. It was also it was run by nuns. Yeah, Sister Linda was my principal. And I was like, I was really the teacher's pet. I was also like, othered a lot for being like an overweight little kid. Which I think set a precedent down the line when I was kind of grappling with my own queerness in terms of the space that I could take up, like, physically and sort of like, metaphorically speaking. So between feeling, I don't know, I guess, I think a thread and Catholic school or Catholicism in general is that like discipline brings you closer to salvation, and adding kind of form. And the way that I see that kind of manifesting is in the form of like, self denial. So, for me, it was always like, I'm not sure if I really had a trajectory of my queerness where I was like, oh, like, I feel so guilty about this. Or like, Excuse me, like, I knew I was

queer ever since I was like, seven, I just didn't let myself come out. It wasn't really like that I just didn't know it was an option, because of how small my town was because of how small the church community was, and how much kind of like censorship there was around that. And high school, because that was also a Catholic school. It was like kind of Catholic l-i-t-e like LITE, you know, so not quite as hardcore as the other Catholic school that I had attended. But still super conservative, super, super conservative. I joined like the fucking like IB program, and my, my junior year, because it was a smaller community. And I, I was really feeling such a profound tension at that point between like, I don't know, continuing to be closeted, and all of my circles and, you know, protecting the kind of like, I guess, an ease to navigate socially that I had had, versus just like this burning urge to, to again to use this word repeatedly self actualize, in terms of my queerness but because Catholic schools fucking suck so much, and IB despite it being so small and kind of continuing there, were only like, 10 kids in our program. So Max, I would have the same classes with like, the, the, you know, repeating 10 to 20 people. So like, I felt more I felt a little bit safer in that situation, because it wasn't my entire school at large. But that brought me to really engaging with like the DC DIY community. So I would go to a lot of house shows, I would connect with a ton of people on Instagram who I thought were cool. That was really how I met like the first queers in Maryland, who I really connected with. I met my, still a good friend of mine, Chloe Sanders working at this like coffee shop. And I think it was like a battle of the bands situation at Maryland Hall, which was like our Art Center in downtown Annapolis. And yeah, they were working the coffee shop and I was like, damn, this person is really cool. I found them on Instagram a few days later, through mutual friends on like, we just connected did photoshoots together, which is how a lot of my friendships sort of blossomed. And that was really how I like built a little queer community in DC, or like even Annapolis, just meeting people through Instagram whose kind of styles resonated with me. Most of the time, like, we were all sort of connected either peripherally or immediately. And we weren't out as queer or trans but there was just this kind of like sense of belonging with each other that I think was really salient. But yeah, I would say that being able to build community in that way just in like people's basements at these shows and like meeting new people and seeing the same people and I don't know like trying to find a ride to DC on like a Wednesday night in the summer, because your parents wouldn't take you or you were like too weirded out to ask them to like, hey, yeah, can you bring me to the stranger's basement on like, like East whatever Street in DC? So yeah, we we definitely made it work. Despite there being just a lot of fucked up nonsense in Annapolis around people's queerness.

Olivia N 11:50

How did you find this DIY scene? What led you to it first?

11:54

I'm trying to think. I...There was one person in particular who I really were actually just photographed a few weeks ago, my friend [NAME] who was in a band. And she would play a lot of shows in the DC DIY scene, and invite me and my friends, we would all just kind of like pull up and hang out for the evenings. Trying to think but yeah, it was really just like friend group leading to friend group leading to friend group. Everybody kind of knew each other in this broader network. Most of those people did music in some capacity. And then we would just dive right in and like go to shows and exploring music together. Yeah, I look back on those years really fondly. And I think also being able to photograph during that period in time was really important for me. I actually have a zine that I would love to look at

with you that I produced during those years called PAST-TENSE. I can grab it right now if you'd want, or I can grab it later

Olivia 12:54

Yeah, afterwards.

Carson 12:55

Totally. Um,

Olivia 12:57

You should donate it.

Carson 12:57

Yeah, I would be down, I have extra copies.

Olivia 12:59

Yeah. Okay, cool.

Carson 13:01

Um, but I feel like that really captures like an essence of sort of my like coming-of-age.

Olivia N 13:07

So can you talk a little bit more about the Annapolis art scene in your environment as a teen?

Carson 13:14

Yeah, I worked at this like art gallery slash workshop space called Art Farm that used to be right off West Street, which is sort of in the central downtown area. By downtown area. I mean, it's probably like, I don't know, a half mile of like, of like, happening. Shit. I don't know. But yeah, so I worked with this woman, Allison and her business partner, Darren, who were fucking incredible. Like Darren went to school upstate. And she would tell me about her nightlife experiences in the city when she was a college student. And she was partying at like Limelight in the early 2000s. She was partying at like, Fuck, what is it called? Tunnel. But she would like she would she would glue her own flip flops together and like make rave platforms and like, Give them to me. Oh, yeah. Like she would give me her old rave clothes, but she would DIY herself and like, tell me about partying with like [NAME] who later I would party with. But yeah, it was like going to New York then to see friends who are in college with a fake ID and a prayer like going into these like crazy. Like Lady fag parties and like Suzanne bar shows. And just like, yeah, kind of putting on a new persona and meeting people and dancing together. And I remember coming back after like, one weekend in New York to Darren to my boss at the time, and I was like, Yeah, I feel like this was really a big step forward and like, realizing that I need to be in New York like nightlife is, I was like 17 at this point. Also, I was like, nightlife feels really like a special expressive place for me that I don't think I've had access to ever, and New York is a place to be for that. Just the different kind of like fabulous people who I would engage with, in these, like parties because that's what they were. I think helped me realize that I, I could reinvent myself in a way that wasn't accessible to me just staying in Maryland. Or not being in a big city.

Olivia 15:23

Where there were lots of young people at these raves or could you not tell?

Carson 15:27

I honestly couldn't tell, didn't think about it, didn't even cross my mind. That makes sense. Yeah, that was like a horrible I'll show you my old fake ID's too I still have all them found.

Olivia 15:38

Oh I'll be getting pictures of them.

Carson 15:40

They were so bad.

Olivia 15:41

I'll be getting pictures of that. Yeah, that's being documented.

Carson 15:44

That's like, like, truly I've had them since I was like, 15. Yeah, exactly. I hadn't even been getting like that feral. I just wanted to get in. Yeah, I just wanted to like experience music in this new way. And like dancing and like-

Olivia N 15:59

Were you out as queer in these spaces?

Carson 16:02

Yeah, I was.

Olivia 16:03

You're out as a lesbian.

Carson 16:04

Yeah.

Olivia 16:05

How did that feel?

Carson 16:06

Liberating, like so exciting and refreshing, honestly, like, it felt like a place where I could just kind of like, Huh, let down my guard a little bit and feel safer. Because in Catholic school, it was like, I didn't know if I could even confide in like a close teacher or like, and, you know, if some fuck-shit were to happen, which it did, you know, if I were to tell someone like, I felt really uncomfortable in the space on campus,

Olivia 16:34

Like homophobic stuff?

Carson 16:35

Yes. Yeah. Like,

Olivia 16:37

from classmates?

Carson 16:38

Yes. Like would it even be received from like an administrator? Probably not. Most of the time it wasn't from other people. You know,

Olivia N 16:44

were these classmates who knew you were gay? Or they were just saying homophobic stuff?

Carson 16:49

both. Yeah, yeah. Really, really fucked up.

Olivia 16:53

Trigger warning.

Olivia 16:56

Every morning. fatphobia.

16:57

True. True. Yeah.

Olivia 17:01

You mentioned the DC DIY scene, the Annapolis art scene and then dipping your toe into New York City raves as a team, right? What's bases? What were the raves? Like, how did you experience rave life as a teenager? And what were Do you remember any of the party names? Or what locations these were at? So in the early in the mid 20, the late 2010s. Yeah, it was like 2017. Yeah, me

17:30

tn. They weren't really like raves, necessarily. They were more so just kind of like queer party. Party, like Lady flag is a producer who's still throwing parties. Now. I actually, like, used to have posters of her on my wall that I ripped out of ID magazine. And then I would like, there was this one instance, which I feel like because were they for the sake of this interview, just to bring up where I went to a party at the box. Before it was like kind of cool or like, it's cool. Yeah.

Olivia 17:59

debatably cool. Yeah. I don't go yes. But

18:05

um, but yeah, I was like, I like to have my foot on the shoulder. And I was like, That's lady fag. And she was wearing this like, corset with this long tool kind of skirt and these like, insane pumps. And she just glided across the dance floor and looked at me and smiled. And I was like, losing it. Yeah. So that was that was a moment for me where I was just like, Yeah, this is totally accessible. Like this kind of creative essence. Like just give it to me. It's here. Um, but yeah, that party. Fuck, I forgot what it was called. Cuz she there's different iterations of them. The first actual rave that I went to was that this building called the coffee cart in Baltimore. It was like an artist's warehouse and I was maybe 17. A lot of my friends live there in these like loft style kind of rooms, and it was like cockroach infested. Oh, sure. It was gnarly. Like I was sleeping on this futon that like, I got sleeping there. Why was I said Yeah, because I would just be getting fucked up on the week. Yeah. The night yeah, okay. Okay. Okay. Yeah, um, but like TLDR this like futon? I was sleeping on. roach infested. Yeah, I would just passed out. Absolutely. Not a care in the world had nothing to do with you. Right. Um, but yeah, I saw that was the first time I ever saw like, industrial techno Industrial Tech. And I was like, holy shit. This goes really? This is so cool. This is so cool.

Olivia 19:39

What drew you to like, did you like how did you end up with the raise?

19:43

How did I end up with a raise? I mean, my friends were living at the building and they knew other people were like, I'm gonna go to the rain. Yeah, they were just party like, you should come I was like, Okay, sure. Whatever. Yeah, we're gonna put on a cute little outfit and they take some mushrooms and just Yeah, yeah. And then

Olivia 20:00

when and then you were like, oh my god, I love industrial music. Yes. Yeah. Gosh, this is awesome. I love raves. What was different from the rave?

20:11

Like, first? Yeah, a lot of the parties that I went to or that I had exposure to, I think from like, traditionally, like, queer spaces were really just like gay, like, it was a lot of like, sis gay. But that was really all I had exposure to initially. And then I kind of like, stepped into the room scene in Baltimore a slight bit. And I was like, wow, people here really are so much more expansive, I think, and the way that they interact with other people, they're, like, friendlier. For starters, there's not really this, like, preoccupation with who looks the most conventionally attractive. At first felt a lot less hierarchical, I think in a lot of ways. And I still find that to be true in New York with the rave scene here. But yeah, like time just kind of like stops for a little bit. And that's what I like about it, it feels like you're really fucking with different timelines, when you're out the Riv substances aside, it's really just like, if you let your body kind of respond to the music in a way that feels organic to you. Time just kind of glides by in this way that feels really reflective, almost like, I really think that dancing at these spaces now, it helps me learn a how to take up more space in my body, which is a trans person I've really grappled with and also somebody who's experienced a lot of fat phobia growing up. And be, it's also just like, I think the experience of a communal dance is really special and again, generative to be around parties that are all moving kind of like to the same rhythm and just expressing themselves in such different disparate, but

yet, like incredibly cohesive ways. There's like a really tangible kind of like energy that I think like fills me up in a way. Like, yeah, I'll be fucking exhausted after I'm like dancing for eight hours, but then I'm like, I'll like sleep for a day or two. I'll wake up and I'll be like, down. Yeah, that was really what I think I need it. Like, my cup is filling, like fully gone.

Olivia 22:31

So can you talk a little bit about gender? Yeah, and gender going up? And how you're thinking about gender? Maybe gender norms that were enforced on? Being like at a Catholic school? Yeah. Was your Catholic school like single gender mono gender Catholic school? It was it was co your co Ed Catholic school.

22:53

And we had uniforms. We have little sports sports sports with a long No, there were sure we would roll them? Of course he was. Yeah. Yeah. So like, I don't know, I didn't think much about gender. In high school, or even as like a younger kid. I had always just kind of like felt this like really like deep seated awkwardness that I could never articulate it. And come to realize now I'm just like, Damn, I'm trans as it's always been what it is. It wasn't until like, I think 2020 During the throes of the pandemic, where I was actually asked by someone, like, how do you feel about your gender, and I was like, I haven't felt anything about it. So that definitely prompted me to like, dig my heels in and look a lot deeper. But yeah, for a long time, even in high school, I just kind of identified gender wise as a diet, which still feels really good to me. But I think having the knee the, the ability to really like hone in on what makes me feel dysphoric. And what makes me feel euphoric, on the other hand, feels like a superpower. Honestly, like, I don't know, I it's, it's crazy to think about how fast comparatively my transition has sort of occurred in terms of like, thinking about top surgery and march or so. And then realizing that like, damn, this is really feasible, and it's something that I seriously want and can make happen by the end of 2022. Right? So I don't know, it's, it's, I feel really lucky. Of course, to be able to, like, have the support systems that I do to help me realize that in terms of like therapy, and Ezra, my partner like friend groups, etc. Mentors too. But yeah, I don't know my my gender journey has been very convoluted in a lot of ways.

Olivia 24:57

Where did you learn about Like where did you gain this clear? Language, Tumblr, Tumblr, because you said like, is gender? A high schooler? Yeah, so where were you? You said Tumblr,

25:09

truly Tumblr. I was like to Tumblr youth and like the sky Ferreira kind of like, like I'm literally looking to see what kind of like books and

Olivia 25:19

what about like, were you like soft? Grunge? Yes, precisely. Hail gray aesthetic. Yes. Were you like cut for Zane Tumblr?

25:28

Not necessarily cutting Tumblr? No harm Tumblr or not necessarily like your Tumblr, queer Tumblr mixed with like, a little bit of kind of like, burger records. Cheering laser like run? Not necessarily like soft ground. A little bit. cringy or Yeah, yeah.

Olivia 25:46

Okay. I was like, what vibe was your tumbler? Yeah. Did you? Did you experience any toxicity on

Olivia 25:53

oh my god, absolute discourse that

Olivia 25:55

was happening on Tumblr also. What years This?

25:59

This? I mean, I got on Tumblr, I think in like, 20 1350 you were in the trenches. I really was okay. It really was. Yeah, there was a lot of like glamorization of eating disorder. Yeah. Which I think set a really horrible precedent for me and a lot of different ways. This kind of like, like soft femininity, like, I don't even know literally, I don't even know. Like, how to how to articulate necessarily the way that that's fucked me up. No, I get it. Just like so deep. And also, I think, Tumblr and that kind of like, sub sub culture, if you will.

Olivia 26:45

A subculture is

26:49

I think, sort of baseline for the way that I interacted with men negatively, in my my teenage years. But Tumblr simultaneously, it was where I learned about like, compulsive heterosexuality. Yeah. So that gave me the language to articulate what I was sort of, like acting on and feeling. But at the same time, I was also like, yeah, like, I can just like, fuck around with men who are like, kind of older than me and like, still have the upper hand in this dynamic because I'm aware of that. Like, I know why

Olivia 27:23

you're groomed.

27:24

Yeah, that's precisely what yeah. So I think like, I honestly like remember getting son I think that compulsory heterosexuality posed by a straight friend. Yeah, it was like, Cassie was like, you should check this out. It was like, Oh, my God, like this is spot on. And then I came out to my friends and they were like, Yeah, we were kind of just waiting. We kind of knew, like, yeah, Tumblr, Tumblr, I was, like, locked in ready for the ride. You know? Like,

Olivia 28:00

that was really what guided you making Tumblr posts or just observing Tumblr observing in tasing discourse? Yes. Yeah. Like, what kind of discourse were you observing?

28:11

Honestly, I was less engaged with like the discourse. Yeah. And the subcultures that I was with Yeah, it was more so just like the visual aspect of it, because it was so doing photography than Okay, so

Olivia 28:22

did you get like art inspiration from some Lulea?

28:25

mustaches? A little bit past that era? Okay. Yeah, I think seeing the zine will definitely lokay

Olivia 28:30

posting your mustache. So is it like sepia filter?

28:36

Like film photography, and it's like true is like, earliest kind of Tumblr asked. You know what I mean?

Olivia 28:43

Is it like come combat boots pigeon toe combat? Yes. Yes. Like water. Okay, oil spill. Yeah.

Olivia 28:50

Yeah. Okay. That was that was me. Combat this water and you're like, exactly right. See, the funny thing is,

Olivia 28:59

I was never on Tumblr, which is not like I was Tumblr adjacent.

29:04

Okay, yeah, friends. That's real.

Olivia 29:06

I was never on Tumblr, but I was on Wattpad.

29:08

Okay. Definitely adjacent.

Olivia 29:11

I don't know how to explain it. It's like I gained all this knowledge right at the time. But I wasn't on the platform. And to this day, I'm not really sure where I learned this information. Just absorbed. It's gotta because I wasn't ever I only told her now as an adult to read. Tumblr porn. Yeah. Agreed. Yeah, like, because I ran out of them on a oh three. Oh, my God. I love it, but like I didn't also because like someone, I think they go bye for now. I think Finn, someone from my high school they like I found out that they like hated me for some reason. And they posted about it on their Tumblr, but I was like, What did I do?

Olivia 29:47

Screw you though. Yeah. So I downloaded it to check and then I was like, I can't find I don't know.

Olivia 29:55

Anyways, speaking of grooming,

29:58

yes, yeah. have you with us? Were you groans

Olivia 30:02

online?

Olivia 30:03

No, I wasn't. I was just like, yeah. Are you meeting these old men? They weren't really like they were older. They were like, 1718. And I was like, 14.

Olivia 30:13

So it was like, let me go see my child. Like my child in like middle school, essentially ran like the big building,

30:21

right? Yeah.

Olivia 30:22

Did you go to prom?

Olivia 30:24

I with your No, I went

30:26

I didn't. I went to this was a funny story. I went to prom with a friend who is like, a sis woman. Straight sis. But I had a girlfriend at the time. I'm just like, yeah, let me just bring this like, Why did you bring your girlfriend? I was scared. I was so scared. But friends like everybody knows Sophie straight like it'll be totally fine. I can't say to my home, I would love to see let's compare notes. Yeah. afterwards. Yeah, yeah,

Olivia 31:00

I look I dressed very differently. To shaved head and I wore a green suit. Anyway, though, yeah. Bisexual way.

Olivia 31:07

Bisexual. Yes. All those bisexual sewers. Whatever. Can you tell me?

Olivia 31:15

Can you talk a little bit more about your girlfriends? When did you start? Where did you meet each other? Were they also in Catholic school?

31:24

They were not in Catholic school. They were. I had two girlfriends in high school, I think one of which was like three or four years older than me. Okay, who I no longer in contact with. It was like a crazy, crazy couple of years of entanglement. Because it was just a clusterfuck it was a clusterfuck Were

Olivia 31:46

you dating in middle school?

31:47

I wasn't dating in high school. This was all high school. This was like sophomore year of high school up until like, senior year of high school. 2017 27 2017 to 2019. Right. You're younger than Yes. One of my two girlfriends I met at a party we hooked up. Were they your age? No. This was the one who was like four years older than me. Do they know you were a child? Yes. I know. Not a good luck. Really? Hey, look. But yeah, so we kind of like connected on Instagram or whatever. We had a ton of mutual friends. We were in the same friend group. I had a lot of friends who were older than me at this point. So in a good way, or in a really good way. But then there were a few like, yeah, sorry. This was somebody's buzzin there were a few kind of like, I don't want to say like bad apples. Say that Apple about Apple? Yeah. I don't know. Um, but yeah, like I'm still friends with a lot of those friends who I play connected with in high school who are older than me. A few of them are living in the city now. And it's been like an in

Olivia 32:52

person. Yeah. I'm in. Stop.

32:59

Okay, yeah. So no, I just like, like, I can I can pick up where I left off. Yeah. Yeah. So, Grayson, I had a very whirlwind relationship where she was like, on the west coast for a while she was in California, we did this weird long distance thing on and off, it didn't really work. We almost got together. As you know, an official couple one summer she was like really going through a mental health crisis. So that didn't come into fruition. But what that relationship did impart upon me was a real glamorization of drug abuse, which I think perpetuated through a lot of my early college moments. Which I can talk more about shortly. But yeah, that just it really, it really fucked me up, I think for for a while in terms of the way that I navigated queer relationships, because she practiced what I like to call on ethical non monogamy. Yeah, just in a way where like, there was really no prioritization of people's needs, it was more so just like, Yeah, I just like to fuck and I can fuck whoever I want conceptually, and I don't have to give a shit about boundaries or anything like that with my other partners. And that really influenced the way honestly for the worse that I navigated my second relationship in high school, which was with a person who was my age. We met through this like, like sex ed program thing and Baltimore it was like, like teams would like Teach Like, like, inclusive sex

Olivia 34:46

is actually cool. What's cool about lesbian sex?

34:50

I did. Wow. I know it was. It was pretty cool. So we met there. I think at that point after Grace after my first partner, I was just like really hurt, I was really hurt, I was projecting for a long time. And kind of like perpetuating a lot of the shit that I experienced in that relationship, you know, drug use society, etc. But more so just the like interpersonally. And there were a lot of different mental health obstacles. For me, I had my first manic episode then, which was really again, a whirlwind. My partner at the time was also like, really, really depressed. So you can imagine it was just a bit of a clusterfuck. But we broke up the summer before I went to college. And that was really when I think I reflected a bit more about the way that I wanted my relationships to look. And then that summer, that was really when I kind of like dug my heels in and I was hanging out with like queer people who genuinely like resonated with me. I think like it was more intentional about who I surrounded myself with internal years

Olivia 36:04

in high school. I a little bit. Yeah, a little bit identified as that in high school or No,

36:09

not really like in terms of self identification. I did. I was probably for one minute with Ezra. But I'm not sure if I'd be open to talking about that. Talk about that. Okay. Yeah, just because it was super intense. Oh, yeah. Yeah, sure. And I'm realizing that just was not a course of action that I needed to take where I was like in it for not the right reasons, you know, so that aside. Yeah, those were really like my first forays into like, lesbian relationships, I think. But I did have a few lesbian friendships. I had a lot of homoerotic friendships in high school, a lot of deeply intense relationships with one man. A lot of which neither of us, respectively in each of these different situations, because there were like three or four, honestly, like, beginning at like age, like 13 and going on to like 1819 with like, friends in Maryland, or like, wherever the fuck yeah, I we were both just so stifled. And I'm talking about both meaning like each of these respective relationships, and our own queerness and also just like struggling with mental health in different capacities. So yeah, they were kind of just like bombs waiting to explode a lot of the time. But I think what those relationships taught me about or like instilled in me it was a real connection with like, I don't know like building community with women, even though I don't identify as Woman Of course. I think those friendships that I had made me feel really at ease in spaces where you know, trans people are obviously welcomed and encouraged to me and but that are women specific.

Olivia 37:59

So, what was your first exposure to lesbianism? Was that like, in the party scene? Oh my God, I don't even when do you know you could identify as a lesbian?

38:11

Really through like Instagram and Tumblr? When I was like, 1516 I think if I remember correctly, and like racking my brain, there's so many holes in it

Olivia 38:21

now. Also, you like most people haven't thought about this. Yeah. Okay, cool. I

38:27

appreciate that reassurance, because I'm just like, dealing with like,

Olivia 38:31

people to places right? At all.

38:35

Yeah, totally. Um, yeah, I was looking into like, right girl feminism off Tumblr when I was 1516. I also had a friend who lived in New York, who I connected with through Instagram and mutual friends we both knew in person. And I remember we like went to this record store in downtown Annapolis and she bought me a Sleater Kinney record. And she was like, you've never heard of cider Kenny? And I was like, no, like, Who the fuck is that? And she was like, I was like 14 at this point. I was like, I was baby and she was maybe two she was like 15 Okay, yeah, whatever. So she like taught me how to Mosh in my room to the slider Can you record showed me Bikini Kill? We like made out that night. I think I was even younger I metaphysics 13 And she was 14 when we were we were little babies. But yeah, Taylor was like my first like, gay experience. Honestly. Yeah,

Olivia 39:33

it was a good it was sweet. Okay, it was sweet. Yeah, that experience bad experience sweet experience. Like I don't want to Finger heart if you

39:39

were like, no. We got to keep relationship. But yeah, so it was really just through like friends who honestly for the most part, like didn't live in Maryland or had like, gone off to college that I was still connected to who were like, Yeah, I'm gay as fuck and this is what it looks like and like, you can express your weigh yourself in this way too. And it's we have, you know, will welcome you with open arms and provide you this kind of safety and reassurance that you need. Yeah. So I think between meeting people on Instagram and Tumblr slash real life connections, and also just like the kind of feminism that I was exposed to, or like the deep dives I would had into also the films I would watch for you watching. I mean, now that I'm thinking about it, they weren't necessarily like, queer, they were more so like Tumblr or canon, whatever. Yeah. I don't know. Like I would watch a lot of Sofia Coppola movie is I would watch a lot of Sofia a couple of movies, like, Virgin Suicides type of type of situation. What else? Of course, I watched Blue is the Warmest Color. I actually think the first time I watched it, I turned it off because I was like, lesbians. Like, what's going on? Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I mean, to be fair, I was definitely like, so young where I was just, I don't mean the I don't mean the sex thing. I

Olivia 41:12

like

Olivia 41:14

the fact that Blue is the Warmest Color was one of the first things you saw. I'm

41:17

totally, totally Jabra. A horrible trajectory that I've worked on the and I'm seeing

Olivia 41:27

fine enough now.

41:30

Pass the vibe. Chuck.

Olivia 41:32

Did you ever struggle with identifying as a diaper lesbian?

41:36

Yeah, I mean, like, I remember one of my family members. I can't remember who like lesbian was kind of thrown around is like a dirty word in my family. Like I like had super hairy armpits at like 14 And I remember one year for Christmas. Somebody bought me a pack of razors and was like, You look like a crunch bag. You look like a crunchy lesbian. Literally Robaina razor. Yeah, like the little like blind razors. Yeah,

Olivia 42:09

that's Wow.

42:10

I know. It was wild.

Olivia 42:12

Someone deodorant because yes.

42:13

Right. So it was always like you look like, like crunchy, which I don't really know what that means. Just like queer. Like, you look queer in some capacity, but I don't even think that's an even be. Right. Right. Right. Exactly. Right. Yes. Spot on derogatory though. Yeah. So things are fine, fully. Thank you. Thank you for clarifying. Yes. We're on the same page. Um, but yeah, just like, it felt always super loaded. It felt like a dirty word. It felt like something super, like promiscuous, which, of course, I had a lot of like, sexual guilt around being raised Catholic in ways that were so kind of like, deeply tucked inside of me that I'm, like, still unraveling what the full extent of that kind of like sexual repression looks like, you know, stemming from like, Catholic guilt, and that kind of like self denial. But yeah, I think, really, when I started meeting more like, gender variant people, or people who just like, defied gender norms in whatever capacity in Maryland, I was like, yeah, like I, you know, I feel comfortable identifying Updike. I feel comfortable identifying as a lesbian. And I also felt really connected as I was sort of learning about like, right girl feminism, and all of these different like subcultures, or like movements, rather. I felt really connected to the different histories, I think. And like, even just through like visual representations, like the images that I would see on tumblr and different archives without really like intentionally searching for that I was just like, yeah, like I feel really seen by this. I also watched blood sisters, I think when I

was like 18, or 19. And that was really eye opening. For me. I fell in love with the kind of visuals that I saw. And also just the way that people spoke about kink and fetish and like lesbian community in that way that felt really resonant with me. But the emphasis that I keep placing on like, the visual, I think, has a lot to do with the direction that my photography has gone in. And the connections that I've made through photography, which has really set the precedent for my engagement with like, kink and lesbians, lesbianism and community building in those ways. So it's all very intertwined for me

Olivia 44:56

to talk about Can you talk about clothing, like makeup, jewelry, tattoos, piercings and other body mods? or other forms of gendered expression or art assist with affirming your identities or your lesbianism?

Olivia 45:13

Yes, I fucking love this question. I love this question. I gave myself my first thought to you when I was 14, it's this little Gemini symbol, I guess everyone gives themselves stick and pokes on their feet, because it's where you can hide them. Or you can hide on everybody. It looks like shit. It's just like, whatever it were socks, you know, that's truly my mom couldn't see it, you know, socks around the house, who was the person in the oral history?

Olivia 45:40

They have, like,

45:42

it's not a good tattoo in their own words. And

Olivia 45:45

they like went to graphic design school. And they were like, Why don't

Olivia 45:51

think they were in high

Olivia 45:52

school. They were in art school studying graphic design, and they're like, Why did I Oh, Nina. Love you, Nina.

45:58

They were like, Why did I pick this? Yeah, yeah,

Olivia 46:01

it was it's like a smiley face class. It was like an arrow or something. Okay. It's, it's, it's on their ankle too. And I was like,

Olivia 46:11

graphic. I'm an artist.

46:14

Yo, that is not that bad. Like, yeah, not cover up worthy. No, it's fine. I am a Gemini okay. I was like, I'm like a Scorpio or something. I can never my error sign ups. I could never Stick and poke. Yeah, so that was kind of, I don't know, my, my family was always very, like anti body mod. Yeah, so this was my little form of subversiveness of rebellion. And then, when I turned ATM, I started getting tattoos at different studios, et cetera. That scared the shit out of me because I was like, Holy fuck, my parents are gonna flip out. But then I was like, Wait, like gender. This feels really good. It also feels good in the context of feeling like my body wasn't really mine and Catholic school, like we would lit I've read a lot about this. I've written a lot about this, where like, I can, I don't know, as early as like, first grade, we were kind of taught that, like, our bodies aren't really ours and their gods. And that we need to, like will return to God in some capacity is almost always where matters, right? But also, like, the body does matter. And the body is like so imbued with sand. But like you can't fuck it up. You can't fuck it up. Right? Whole lot of girl. Okay, gotcha. Right. So yeah, getting tattoos as an adult was really exciting. Because I was like, I feel like I can express myself in this external way, while also making these decisions about my body that are so visible an operative word being I'm making these decisions about my body. So that was really exciting. And then yeah, I, I guess like, I don't know, tattoos have always been very euphoric for me, for that reason. A lot of my tattoos are by queer and trans artists, I think. I think if I remember correctly, or they have some kind of like relationship to Catholicism, I have a lot of angels on my arms. I also have like my fucking like Angel numbers tattooed on me, which is a whole different story right here. Okay. Yeah. So that was that's kind of where I, I see my mom's religiosity as a man and I kind of converging with like, religion as a generative sort of function, if you will. Yeah. But yeah, I won't get into that now. So yeah, I love tattoos. piercings are great. I'm excited to get more. It makes me feel very at home in my body.

Olivia 49:01

Same like the first thing I did. Yeah, I can control this.

49:05

Exactly. Less precisely. Yes.

Olivia 49:08

I was like, Oh, this is just fine, right? Like no, I'm neutral and everything's good. Yeah, yeah, that was the first thing I did was get tattoos and so I don't think I'll ever regret the ones that I got. No,

49:18

I feel the exact same way I don't care that much about that. You don't like to care that much the tattoo

Olivia 49:23

itself right with the act of getting a tattoo and then the final permanent product is what I care about it not the design. I don't think I'll ever be mad about

49:33

momentos to they like kind of catalog different areas of your life or different

Olivia 49:38

inclinations. You had always get them well done. Yes. Only well done tattoos. Because then I will give a shit

49:44

right? Like crazy blowout or like any kind of fall out or whatever. It's just like yeah, and oh my gosh. Yes. Always fun to take a little pee.

50:00

This is the worst tattoo I ever got.

Olivia 50:02

It's not bad. It's just it's just a Stick and poke type loss. It's because I got it by like the Stick and poke artist. And she charged a crazy amount of money, like ridiculous amount of money, because it was at like an event. Okay, and I was like you've literally

50:17

lost your flash or was it? Or you were just like, give it to me. It was flash. Okay.

Olivia 50:23

I also hate sticking pokes. I don't like them. Give me a dominantly prefer machine give me all machine. Unless they were hot. I would consider it.

50:34

This one is also to compose. I don't know if I'm gonna be able to. Yeah,

Olivia 50:38

I fucking hate receiving sick and folks. It was like I was saying

50:41

my music playing like two and a half hours. I was sick. I was. It has

Olivia 50:49

to be machine for me. Yeah. Unless they're super hot. Or I'm feeling like very I need to like, poke me. Yeah. It would have to be incredibly hot. In a weird way. Anyway, exactly. Hot. And I'd have to be like, self flagellation by Yes, I would never do it unless those things were met. And it was free for really cheap. True. I'm not paying for that shit. No, because I can poke artists for their time. And it takes longer ages. I don't want to spend like a billion dollars on a tiny tattoo.

51:22

No, it's ridiculous. I don't even like it that much.

Olivia 51:25

Anyway, let

51:26

me learn sex. Let's get into a nice be in sex

Olivia 51:30

first encounters you having it and then maybe like porn or like, here's sex?

51:45

Let me say

Olivia 51:45

yeah, you have time to think.

51:53

Yeah. I'm like, racking my brain through different timelines. And like I was, you know. I don't know. I was really like, into having silly little casual hookups with other with other lesbians

Olivia 52:10

and lesbian sex.

52:12

How did I learn probably through like Tumblr porn, honestly. Like Tumblr gifts? Yeah, yeah. Like, fluids.

Olivia 52:22

How you had sex, though?

52:25

Like, I don't know, learning how to give had from Tumblr forum. Yeah, yeah. I'm glad.

Olivia 52:35

Like, it was good information.

52:36

I haven't say so. I would say so. I mean, at that point, like, you know, I didn't know any older queers who would really like, hit me with thank God for the internet. Dude, thank God for Tumblr

Olivia 52:51

nervous before you had sex for the first time.

52:56

I actually, not necessarily, I hooked up with like a straight dude, for the first time that I ever really, like, had sex. And I was like, wow, this is so fall. I was like, wow, this is literally repulsive. Like, I feel physically again,

Olivia 53:12

my first boyfriend when I was 18. Yes. From in high school. He wasn't gonna go to my high school because that would never happen. Yeah. Anyways, and then I gave him a blow job. And then he was like, done. And then like, done like, yeah, yeah. And then this is when I broke his nose, but I didn't know that at the time. It's a long story, I'll tell you afterwards. Part is, is that he was just sitting there like finished on my bed and then I just looked back at him and I felt this intense deep pit yes of the void. Yeah, like I was just like, this is not it for me. It was just the madness. Yeah, nothing to do with the organs. Really good. genitals Yeah. at all actually. Yeah, but it was more like Wow, you're really a man? Yes. That I know personally, right. And we just got sex pacity Oh, yeah. Yuck for like a month anyway had it didn't feel nervous.

54:25

I didn't feel nervous. I was just like, you know, I after that experience with a sis out dude, I was just like, I'm on the right path. I'm on the right path. It feels good to you know, act act on my desires to feel like seen in this way. So if anything, I was just like, I was like, pretty worn you you were mourning. Yeah, I was. I really was. But yeah, like it was really? Because like, obviously we're too young and like get on dating apps. Yes. Just like

Olivia 55:06

not did you get on Tinder? I

55:07

did. Okay, I did the ion.

Olivia 55:09

Did you? Were you 18? You got on like?

55:12

Yeah, I think yeah. Okay, that's Yes. Yes. So it was a lot of like mutual friends connecting, being like, oh, like, I think I have a cute lesbian friend. Like, maybe you got like, let me give you their number like their Instagram handle. I really like had some guts, like reaching out to people back in the day

55:39

but yeah, like, I don't know, as her and I were just talking about how No, I would be getting ahead of myself, because I'm sure we're, we're probably gonna get to

Olivia 55:47

that. Yeah, probably. Is it about okay.

55:50

No, it's about just having game on like dating apps because we met through Tinder. Oh, you're done talking about this, man. Yeah,

Olivia 55:56

we'll get to it.

55:57

Okay. Um, yeah, so I basically, I got to college. I was like, Fairless five. I was like, oh my god, I'm in New York. I made it. I fought fucking tooth and nail to get here and I'm gonna be a little free. Yeah. And I, I was, it was bad. Like, I was really on. I was really addicted to stimulants. Like, like, seriously. I was like drinking on them, which wasn't a good idea. So it's just a lot of a lot of compounding hot messes. But anyway, I was like, chronically on dating apps, because it was like, Oh, my God, I need to meet all the lesbians and even the all the queers. And I came into contact with this, this French girl whose name I will omit for anonymous purposes. But I was like obsessed with her. We did access to you together. It was the first time I ever did it. She was an experienced ecstasy user. And I was like, oh my god, I'm in love with her. Like, I'm in love with her like the first lesbian. I need a New York. I'm in love with her. Like, you did ecstasy for the first time. Like what? What was it? Nobody told me? Nobody told me I went, but I knew like I knew deep down that it would happen. I was obsessed. I was infatuated. Yeah. She was in love with this girl in France and Victoire. And she was pretty mean to me to not Victoire the actual girlfriend

Olivia 57:27

a hot way or in a bad way. Like boss. Did you think it was hot? Kinda.

57:31

But my feelings were also hurt. Yeah, and not in a sexy way. Yeah, like we would be. We would go to raves together. I went to my first raves in the city with her. And we'd be like, on whatever kind of cocktail of like, I don't know, ecstasy pills that she had found. Found. Yeah. Acquired whatnot. And yeah, like we would be sitting up these clubs and she'd be like, taught like talking and talking and talking about her like lovers. While you should work together on drugs, yeah. Like this Now is not the police nor time my love. So after some very hurtful incidences of that, I was like, okay, back in the game, like what's up? Went to Charlie sex concert. It was super fun. The next day, I'm scrolling on Tinder. And I'm like, to him who has a super mask cutie like, with Charlie axiata song in their bio. And I'm like, okay, like, swipe right? We match and I'm like, I literally will never forget this. I was sitting in like, one of the rooms of Burdell like one of the classrooms with two of my friends. And I was like, Guys, should I go have sex with the Cooper Union tonight? And like, they were like, I guess like it was a final or friends.

Olivia 59:01

Okay, yeah, I was no longer I wasn't like I need to go. Yeah.

59:10

So yeah, like I had a midterm the next day got the midterm done. It was like a Tuesday afternoon I walked my ass with the Cooper Union get off at the eighth the eighth streets with Yes, you guys. Okay, so um, there's like this little hottie like leaning against the lamppost. And I like saunter up to them and I'm like, Hey, um, they are as Ra is like, yeah, do you want to like lunch on St Mark's because the Cooper Union dorm rooms are like right on the corner of St. Mark's Yeah. And I was like, No, we can

just go back to your room. Oh, I know. I am I am they freaked out to and in the Oh my god. No, just the how do you

Olivia 59:56

as far as next door y'all

59:59

better be the best. bunk beds on the top bunk bed the

Olivia 1:00:01

top your bunk bed.

1:00:06

Room, it didn't matter. Okay, I was in

Olivia 1:00:10

the brackets

1:00:14

they absolutely they fuck you so good. I fell in love. But what's crazy is that I was actually in front of them at the Charlie sex concert. I mean, just found out like a few months ago, we were looking back at videos and I was like, That's my head telling me

Olivia 1:00:33

your concert

Olivia 1:00:39

for myself, because you have to worry about staying with another person. True.

1:00:43

It makes so much more sense. Yeah, people should be on this way.

Olivia 1:00:47

So I was like at the concert, like when I was like, Oh my God. I was wearing a wool

1:00:54

sweater. That's so fabulous and dark jeans, tool sweater and dark jeans with the hedgehog concept. Like, what else was I going to wear? It's folk music, or whatever, you know.

Olivia 1:01:07

Anyways, so they freaked it. So

1:01:09

they freaked in the fall, and I fell in love. Yeah, we had like a crazy kind of open relationship era. Which again, I won't get into deep into details. But yeah, we, um, our trajectory of our relationship has taught me a fuck ton not like a Megan Fox way. You know what I mean? Like, not, not in that type of way. But like, the exchanged like, exactly. Exactly.

Olivia 1:01:44

Not like that. Yeah. real practical way.

1:01:47

Yeah. So like a beautiful, like, you know, gender alignment t for t. We didn't realize it when we met. But we're like

Olivia 1:01:55

both so.

1:01:57

Yeah. type of way.

Olivia 1:02:01

For T. Yes.

1:02:07

But yeah, like we've done long distance we have, like, actually, yeah, where I was in Maryland. They were in New York. We've been through, I feel like we live lifetimes together. Honestly. I've been dating three and a half years.

Olivia 1:02:25

They also have a cat together, y'all. Yeah.

1:02:28

Thank you. But yeah, like, I think this iteration of us has been the absolute best. Like living together, really establishing a family together, curating a space together. I talked, I wrote and I talked a lot about this and like my thesis project. But um, yeah, don't eat that too. I would love to be able to, like really curate a home and like, establish that. And also kind of have this space function is like, a favorite spot for our friends to gather. And you know, as when I sleep together, so we have this extra room we have people come over a lot and stay with us when they need housing. So that's been a really gratifying experience for us. We love cooking, we love hosting. But yeah, this is all to say that like really establishing a home together has made me kind of feel okay, taking up space, physically, and also in my own body in a way. Yeah, and I'm happy to talk more about that, too. But I'll just leave that there for now. Yes.

Olivia 1:03:34

So you mentioned that you're doing a thesis. Yes. You're you go to Barnard and you go to Warner

1:03:41

and I can't remember

Olivia 1:03:42

if I was allowed to say that or not. Which is why

Olivia 1:03:46

but I yeah, you just like

Olivia 1:03:55

go because I don't like editing the audio. So if you say shit, it's just gonna be said, Okay. I mean, I can take it out if you really want me to, but I don't.

1:04:05

Like, you know, yeah, it's like,

Olivia 1:04:07

a lot of people do that. Yeah. So it's not like that identifying. Right. It's also gonna be your face, but they're just like a face. There's like, yeah, faces true. I don't think it's that exposing anyways.

1:04:19

Yes, Bernard.

Olivia 1:04:22

So how has your lesbianism been influenced by few your academics? Because you know, you do like women and gender studies? Yeah.

1:04:31

Um, I would say it's fluctuated a lot. I took in my first semester like an introductory it's a Women's and Gender Studies class. And it was a fucking nightmare. I hated it. I absolutely hated I was I'd never encountered theory before. Yeah, I had never engaged with these kinds of readings that we were assigned. I was like, What the actual fuck is going on? And I think the way that the class was set up, that sort of introduced me to this like weird, gay hierarchy. at Barnard in a way that I think transcends outside of the classroom, but definitely begins there. So it was the people who could really grasp the theory and, like, apply their, their, like queer experiences to what we were reading about. I was like, What the fuck are they talking about? Like, I

Olivia 1:05:17

been gay for a long.

1:05:23

Exactly. Um, so yeah, that was kind of a head fuck for sure. But then I was like, No, you know what, because I started out as poli sci, I thought I wanted to do poli sci. Because I had done a bunch of like, local political shit and Annapolis, because that's Maryland's capital. So it was like, right there, you

know. So that was sort of the path that I was originally on. And then I realized that poli sci was very much antithetical to my values. And what I actually wanted to learn about that being like systems of power and how they operated. Sorry, I had like a little coffee burger. But yeah, so we switched my major in. It was like second semester, and then just do a ride on a wgsn S, because I was like, my, you know, Women's Gender Studies. So I would say, it was more so about like, I don't know, really, not. It wasn't so much about what I have learned in class in regards to like, how I would understand my own transmis and lesbianism. But it was more so like, meeting people outside of those classes, whose commentaries or whose takes or whatever you want to call, it really resonated with me, and kind of resisted that, that hierarchical bullshit. And I think the conversations that I've had informally with friends ever since, you know, that first semester at Barnard, that first semester at Barnard College, yes, yeah. have really been more informative than anything. So like, yes, there is an application of what we're learning in classes, and these conversations, of course, but like, it's really more, so it's just like getting high and shooting the shit and like, just just chatting about being queer and trans being lesbian and trans.

Olivia 1:07:28

So you mentioned a little bit, maybe it was off? Not camera. The record? Thank you.

Olivia 1:07:39

Yes. Off the

Olivia 1:07:41

record, I can't remember what we recorded it. And

Olivia 1:07:47

it was just like you mentioned, talking about your gender identity and trans. And then can you talk a little about about, well talk a little bit about how that informs your interactions with lesbian community? What it's like being a non binary lesbian, especially being trans at historically women's college?

1:08:05

Oh, I have a lot to say about that. Yeah, um, yeah, Barnard is like really not a great place for trans people, trans non binary people to be. The reason why I say that is because we as the Seven Sisters College, historically, women, seven sisters College, we have the most conservative terms policies out of all of the Seven Sisters, meaning that we only started accepting trans women in 2015. And we still require all applicants to sign a fucking checkbox at the time of applying that states that they consistently identify and live as a woman. So that's literally what it says yes. It's crazy. It's crazy. So I was actually just having a conversation with one of my friends, like two days ago, about how there's really a more profound sense of kind of like trans non binary community at Columbia, because I think a lot of people get bogged down for good reason. And also in terms of just like turf Enos, with the women's college self identification, like really having that resonate with them and not grappling with it in a conducive kind of expansive way. So yeah, I think a lot of kind of, like, in my experiences, the way that transition is read at Barnard is in a really damaging way. Like, it's kind of this like, at least in my experiences and what I've observed and what I've talked to you with other people there's the hierarchy is sort of predicated on like how like looks and of course with that goes like class, your ability to like style yourself, your ability

to like, you know, fit into these constructions of androgyny, that everyone sort of androgynous pretty much yeah,

Olivia 1:10:01

like you have to be like purely androgynous in presentation. Yeah. Okay. Yeah that's what I've encountered a lot like you can't be dressed poorly when you

1:10:11

look a certain way you do have to look a certain way trans Yeah, Bernard. And I think like I've tried to disengage with that a lot so I can't speak too much about like community at Barnard also living off campus just connects me with it to a really intense degree like, I'm this definitely comes from like a very privileged place but I don't rely on Barnard I don't have to rely on Barnard for like, meals, housing. A lot of like community engagement shit, like all of these little kind of interactions that one would have living on campus throughout the day. And like, you know, like dining hall, you know, who am I going to sit with type of situation, if I'm going to like hang out with any like, all of these sort of like quintessential college moments, I feel like I don't necessarily have in the context of like lesbian community at Barnard just because of, of my specific positionality, living off campus and like, etc, etc.

Olivia 1:11:04

Can you talk a little bit about a little bit more about your earlier interactions with lesbianism and transmis? I partnered when you were, I don't know if you were in it or not. Yeah, talk more about it and your experiences and why you left?

1:11:22

Yeah, um, I mean, I was really just like, fed up with a hierarchy, a hierarchical shit, that I had encountered a lot. It felt really Clicky. You know, other people noticed this as well. Absolutely. Talking about it. Yeah, we would talk about it. There was also like,

Olivia 1:11:38

they leave or do they just talk about how they hated it. And we're still in it

1:11:41

kind of both? It depends. I would say it's kind of like a 5050 split. Okay. Yeah. But yeah, just like the power dynamics in classrooms became really uncomfortable. There was like, definitely a really like, tangible tension. I feel like also just the way that people presented themselves on social media versus kind of the commentaries they'd make in class. Yeah, there was sort of an issue of like, okay, you're not really applying. Yeah, you know, what you preach and either like a to b, b to a correlation, you know, and that was really frustrating to me I feel like I'm I'm the kind of person to be very tapped into that kind of like critical illness Yeah. And that's when it really hard to connect with people at Barnard because a lot of people I think here are really preoccupied with status and a lot of different ways. And I think that's also the case for like my experiences with like, being a creative in New York at large Yeah, it's really fucking hard. It's really fucking hard. Yeah. Like, I don't know, I I don't want to compromise sort of, like my integrity around my, like creative and personal values. And I think those are, those really go hand in hand. But just the way that I see people social climb in the creative world here and at Barnard is

incredibly frustrating. And I just don't want to do that. I don't want to do that. I would rather go to slower pace with my work and the trajectory of my I don't know, like artmaking Yeah. Then have to, you know, skip over that shit. Yeah, and then just like accelerate my career under gross pretences.

Olivia 1:13:35

Can you talk about maybe how your transness informs your lesbianism in general? Outside of a Barnard context, because you live mostly outside of that content? Yeah. Yeah. I'm big question. Yeah, I could talk about your experience as a non binary lesbian.

1:13:56

Yeah, totally. Um, I mean, as I mentioned this briefly earlier, but I really do feel a sense of resonance with like, lesbian organizing, and I did mention that earlier, talking Oh, okay. Well, I'm glad

Olivia 1:14:14

I just know this about you. Nothing. Okay, perfect. Because I know you and it's just like you, everything gets like

1:14:21

yeah, um, yeah, that feels really resonant to me. Also, just like going back to the way that I sort of, like encountered feminism for the first time through right girl and through like, like, a lot of honestly, like, kink communities, like watching blood sisters. Diving into like, that whole realm. Really, also just like seeing like butch lesbians. Like seeing like, yeah, unifies Butch. No, I don't, but it's like seeing them. Yeah, yeah. Seeing people like Express gender variance as lesbian isms and a lot of different ways was like, incredibly eye opening to me. Because in Maryland, like, even just like in the circles that I was in outside of Maryland, I guess. I feel like there was a very, like, fun for them. Orientation were like, Yeah, I guess orientation is the right word around, around like lesbianism as a whole.

Olivia 1:15:29

And like a kind of palatable feminists. Yes. I know exactly what you're talking like the kind of friends that the fan for fans they you see on like,

1:15:39

TVs? Yes, exactly, exactly what you mean. That's totally what it is. Yeah. So I think the more that I leaned into my lesbianism, the more that I leaned into lesbian community altogether, the more that I was just like, Yeah, I can, I can fuck around with my presentation to my gender presentation. And explore that further. So I would say that I'm still kind of like, untangling that. But I'm, I'm also really excited to start working in all Ha, yeah. I'm going to be doing I'm not sure if I told you this, but I'm like, specifically working in photo. So I'm really excited to have these like, beautiful visual representations of history in front of me. In here in

Olivia 1:16:30

T shirts to I'm not sure if I'm doing T

1:16:32

shirts. Okay. I think okay, okay. Exciting. Yeah. Yeah. We'll talk more Yes. Um, but yeah, like, I, I feel like I've been alluding to this this entire interview, but I'm, like, so deeply visual and the way that I interpret the world, yeah. And to be able to, like, see other people's queerness expressed, not so much as like, a readability or like, a in a readable way. Like, it's not, you know, I don't want it to be like, like I'm very conscious of. I read a lot my thesis about like photographing trans people, and how I want to do that in a really nuanced conceptual way. Yeah. Because, yeah, the way that trans is has been represented gender variants as a whole. Yeah, through photography. Since its inception, exactly. It's like transmis becomes readable in this like diagnostic, kind of, like clinical way. So I think like, learning about the archive as a whole and get high as high. Like, being able to tap into these, like visual histories has been really cool for me. Just in the way of like, I don't know, kind of creating an archive of my own photographs. Yeah. And seeing the ways that like, my friends and I have evolved and self actualized in our own gender presentations. And how, like, I just, I see, like a connection between those two. I'm having trouble, like really fleshing out my ideas.

Olivia 1:18:15

Your ideas are very fleshed out like, it's really important to me is that people don't feel the need to over explain themselves. And like a lot of like, queer people and multiple marginalized people feel the need to over explain. You don't have to the people don't get it. We'll get it. Yeah. And you're making sense to the people who need to

1:18:32

who understand this. I appreciate that. Yeah, I

Olivia 1:18:34

was like, doubt that you're making sense. Yeah. So you mentioned briefly, your interests in lesbian community, and you your interest in kink in lesbianism in that form of community. So what are your thoughts about that, especially in relation to your or if you could talk about in relation to your transness? I don't know if that's what you were implying or not?

Olivia 1:18:55

Yeah, totally talk about it. Um,

1:18:57

the way that I've seen it really manifest so far, obviously, like, in playing with Ezra, of course, but also in my photography, I photographed I guess, like, kind of, like, I photographed a lot of people who are doing like fetish play, specifically within the context of like, Catholic fetish play. Yeah. So that was really, really fucking cool to make work around. I can show you some more of those photographs at the end when we wrap up, but um, for me, it was like writing a lot about that for classes. I was obviously photographing a lot of that content. I was talking about it with people a lot. And it just became a way for me to like explore my own body that felt so off limits to me, in a way that was like, not necessarily contrived, but just like it was, like carving out a new application of Catholicism. It didn't feel like I had a compromise My history is in a way, my personal history is like, I could own all of these parts of myself and make it work for me in a really tangible way. And simultaneously by like, applying kink, and like BDSM practices to that. I mean, I do see a lot of parallels between like Catholicism and BDSM, of

course, which I'm happy to get into. But, um, yeah, like, it's, it's been a way for me to really physically ground myself in terms of the way that I think about my experiences, and how I'm like consistently feeling in my body when I when I practice BDSM.

Olivia 1:20:40

You can if you want. So you talked about how you're an incredibly visual person. And kink Yeah, isn't incredibly visual. Totally can be very sensory. Sensory full.

Olivia 1:20:54

Yeah, a very sensitive, yes, full

Olivia 1:20:59

experience. And you talk about feeling connections to your body feeling connection, or transmits feeling more grounded, especially when you're practicing kink. And then you also talk about being really visual and then combining Catholicism in with your kink, or at least like Catholic aesthetics, into kink and into your photography. How did you end up getting there? Like, how did you find out about kink? How are you thinking about what it means to be a dyke who who's kinky and thinking about Catholicism cat?

1:21:35

In that way, yeah. Um, I mean, I honestly, I started pursuing a religion minor at Barnard. I do. It's like, completed now. It's like, fully locked and loaded. But this was like, in 2020, when I started really diving into the religion department. And for me, it was kind of just like an exploratory thing. I'm just like, Yeah, I'll give it a try. Like, that was that was one form for me to really, you know, again, take ownership of my, my Catholic past and try to make sense of it, rather than just sort of closing it off and being identified as Catholic. So no, I don't. Yeah, I didn't like ex Catholic. Yes, yeah. Yeah. So yeah, having having the ability to sort of like apply what we were talking about in classes to my own personal experiences as an ex Catholic, was really eye opening. And that sort of led me to think about the connections between BDSM fetishism and Catholicism altogether. So it was really like, my coursework that I think put me on that path to start making those connections and really, intentionally reflect. Also, like, I'll show you these things, too. I'm sure you're familiar with them. But as I knew that I was into this and fuck, I can't remember what it was called. As a baby. Do you remember what the jeans were that you gave me?

Olivia 1:23:05

Like fifth or something? Yes.

1:23:06

It was new. It was. It was first. Yeah. So I was like, damn, okay.

Olivia 1:23:12

About this.

Olivia 1:23:15

That's okay. Yeah, yeah. The biggest one you were talking about kink. You're always implicating yourself because you also know this information. So like, what do you like? Oh, oh. Anyways, no, I love it. Um,

Olivia 1:23:34

so fetishism BDSM Catholicism courseware coursework you saw? Yes. Because your partner showed you this.

1:23:41

Right. Yeah. It was also just like really being intentional like us about the people who I was interacting with on Instagram. Yeah, like a fuse of, I don't know. Trying to really think

Olivia 1:23:55

it's hard to think about how you get places. It really is.

1:23:57

Yeah, during the pandemic, as ran I was sort of like exploring rope together. Oh, I would really love to get back into it. Yeah, you were really?

Olivia 1:24:07

Your rope, socials. Yes. Yeah. Well,

1:24:11

I don't know. Well, I know the library and I know temple.

Olivia 1:24:15

This isn't the village okay. I could be lying. I don't think so.

Olivia 1:24:21

Okay, okay. I will

1:24:24

dive into it all. Wherever we

Olivia 1:24:29

have to figure it out. And you said Instagram you're talking to people on Instagram. About King Oh, I

1:24:33

just got him in fucking remember. I was on legs for a while and I was Oh, okay. I actually have a cute story about this. I connected with someone on lax who was doing kind of like meditative rope practices like rope topping, but like you'll have to frame Instagrams then it's no longer active. Okay? They're like I think they work in like

1:24:57

a school okay today like

Olivia 1:24:59

no Usually public Yeah, it's likely person to person.

1:25:02

Totally, totally. But they were like, they like reusing really like beautiful colored what's the kind of rope? I guess just like rope whatever was a nylon was No, it wasn't it was how it was hum. And like talking little like dried flowers into it. Like it was a very like intentional sort of like space that they said it was a really intentional practice. And that was my first time being tied by someone other than Ezra and like a kind of bottom. Yes. I would like to lean more into that this year, because I've really gotten out of it. But it was so fun. And I really liked the sensory experience of it. You've been suspended? No, I haven't. And I really want to be I really want to be. That's on my, my goals list for 2023 To be honest. But yeah, so I would just like posts little left sides about like photographing people who did rope. Okay. That's a great and then also just like rope bottoming and whatever capacity people felt comfortable engaging with. And that connected me to a few people. But yeah, it was really just like a lot of kind of like networking. I feel like how networking using that loosely. Yeah. Yeah, but I'm having like a public photography account. And I think like, you're like a real person

Olivia 1:26:22

who's not afraid.

1:26:24

Yeah. Yeah. I'm just like, you know, I feel like

Olivia 1:26:31

Genie. Yes. She looks so cute. Your cat is such an interesting color.

1:26:36

She's like strawberry blonde,

Olivia 1:26:37

strawberry. What a cat just like no bones. Just love. Just know. So you know, public Instagram.

1:26:48

Yeah. Which I sold. And like a website and I would really like drive home that I was a photographer looking for like new faces to photograph new queer people to photograph. Yeah. Really, like underscoring that connecting with fellow queers was important to me about the way that I photographed. Yeah, and that sort of set a precedent for just like, what I photograph now, who I photograph now, my thesis, which was a photo project, in part was really primarily dark, aside from like, old friends who are queer, but who identify the service. It was it was primarily trans people. Yeah, who I'd either just connected with or who I'd known for a long time. And in a few interviews I've done about my photography, I've talked about like, how it's my work, like,

Olivia 1:27:36

interviewing you will talk about it later. Famous era No, um,

1:27:49

I talked about how my, my photography is sort of like redefining the queer trans portrait, and what I mean by that is just like, moving it away from trans photography, whatever the fuck that means. Away from just like this really like clinical kind of like gross fetishistic description, which is where it's historically situated. And, and a lot of my coursework has also revolved around that. So I feel like I'm well versed enough in that history. Yeah, to like, really understand the practices that undergird trans photography, again, using that term really loosely. And what it needs to move into to be more affirming. Yeah, yeah.

Olivia 1:28:37

So we've talked about lesbians, lesbian community, very. Like we talked around it, which is dipping your toes in lesbian community. So can you talk a little bit about your lesbian community? And what are you Where Yeah, and what you guys do totally don't like to hang

1:28:59

totally honestly. Like, I, it's complicated. It's shifted a lot over the past few years, because I feel like a lot of the friends who have had who identified as lesbians are leaning more into their transmis. And thinking less about like, lesbian community is sort of like a, a tangible sort of like thing, like, in other words, I feel like it shifted more from lesbian community to trans community. And in terms of the folks, the folks, the people who I would talk about, specific to that, like in in this present moment. Yeah, if that makes sense. But when that was really like, I guess like, it's hard, it's really hard. Um, yeah. Because I think like, in my experience, and my age group, specifically, as somebody who's currently in college, like, so much of our identities are shifting and it's people are still figuring shit out. A lot of people are still tethered to like familial relationships that can feel super hindering when it comes to like articulating their queerness are you thinking about gender? I'm really identifying with communities specifically, but in my experiences today,

Olivia 1:30:23

you're just gonna eat the ham raw? Green. It's frozen. It's frozen. Oh, it's herbal. It's herbal. Oh herbal I think it's a frozen sick don't eat that.

1:30:39

Um, so yeah, like I leaning more into lesbian community, and like a very palpable sense is something that I'm looking forward to more in the new year. I wouldn't say that I've like, fully engaged with it or really found like, like, not fully engaged with it in that sense, but more so just like I haven't really like found Yeah.

Olivia 1:30:56

Is that because of transphobia?

1:30:59

I would say yeah, like, it's really I don't really resonate with a lot of the, or like, feel comfortable in a lot of the lesbian spaces on campus. Yeah. Which is really like where I would have access to them. Yeah. So that's a huge part of you know why I'm not like super tapped in. But

Olivia 1:31:21

you have any lesbian friends?

1:31:23

I do. Yeah.

Olivia 1:31:24

What is it like when you guys hang out?

1:31:26

So fun, so fun. Like it's just I'm thinking as I'm thinking about Khloe, Khloe? Sanders. Yeah. One of the first like lesbians I have ever met in Maryland. We come to stay with us. Yeah. You mentioned Khloe. Yeah, yeah. The first like, self identified decade ever. So yeah, when they come up, it's like always really fun to like, look back on how far we've come. Like, it's really what I'll say about the lesbian friendships that I have. Chloe, kind of like, my example of Chloe, grounded and all of this is that I think it attests to how much like self reinvention we evolved engaged with. And like, I don't know how important it is to like, feel grounded in the histories that were that were a part of into, like, really center ourselves in that, but to also remember that like, or to like, not even remember, but just like fully experience in a really embodied way. Like, that's all pretty much all that I was talking about. That was what I wanted to say.

Olivia 1:32:42

So your connections to lesbian community and your lesbian friends is very focused on self reinvention. Yeah. But also maintaining a connection to like a lesbian pass.

1:32:52

Absolutely. Yes. Totally.

Olivia 1:32:54

Okay. So your New York City lesbian? Not that much.

1:33:00

I wouldn't say most people like really resonate with.

Olivia 1:33:05

Okay, okay. Okay. Yeah.

1:33:06

So, um,

Olivia 1:33:10

have you been to a lesbian place? Yeah. What was the first place you've ever been to?

1:33:16

Honestly, like cubby hole,

Olivia 1:33:18

what was it like? wasn't what I expected?

1:33:21

I think I went for the first time for like, their Christmas party. And like 29, TN. Yeah, it was fun. We went with a big group of people who we had already known. So it wasn't so much about like meeting new people. It's kind of just like being silly and socializing and running around and you know, having a good time in that sense, but um, yeah, it was it was nice to like, have that kind of space. Where we didn't have to worry about like leering man or like any of that shit that I feel like I encountered so much and like gay spaces, spaces specifically in the city. Yeah. But I do find that there's like, I don't know I would love for there to be like a lesbian rave, like in like a kind of intentional space, but like for like techno or house music, you know, and

Olivia 1:34:22

other lesbian communities do you wish existed? So lesbian raves? Lesbian techno lesbian raised? What else?

1:34:30

I think like, I see a lot of really fabulous organizations around the city that are specific to like, queer women. Nothing but I would love for that to be like, specifically a lesbian and be trans inclusive.

Olivia 1:34:44

Yeah. Lesbian, trans, inclusive, like, photography collective.

1:34:50

Like wow, honestly, honestly. Yeah.

Olivia 1:34:53

Lesbian photography Collective is something that you're like, I would love it. This existed. Yeah,

1:34:58

because I see people doing these super cute Like photo meetups, they do workshops together, they have talks and shit like, I would love for that to

Olivia 1:35:05

be a queer woman space is not a lesbian one true, very obviously true. Yeah, speaking about queer spaces versus lesbian spaces. Have you felt any disconnection from maybe like the broader queer

community as a lesbian or as like as a trans state? Or do you feel pretty ingratiated into like, a queer space? That isn't a lesbian one? Not a trick question. genuinely curious? Yeah,

1:35:29

I'm just thinking about it. Yeah. Um, I feel like I can navigate a queer space with with ease. Yeah. Can you know, compared to like other? I don't know, I think about nightlife spaces specific. There's

Olivia 1:35:44

certain parts of your identity that you emphasize or de emphasize when you're in a queer space versus a lesbian one, or assist space versus a trans one.

1:35:53

I mean, definitely with a safe space. I'm very. I don't want to be misgendered. I will introduce myself with my pronouns. I want to make that really clear when I'm meeting new people in safe space.

Olivia 1:36:07

queer spaces, trans spaces, like are you in any spaces? No. Not so operating queer spaces? Yeah, but if you're in like a clear, general broad space, like the queerness in question is a queer gender identity. Yeah. Okay. Uh huh. Okay, so it's clear trans students won't water something.

1:36:26

I love someone.

Olivia 1:36:27

I hate water. Okay. Some juice. You'll have juice we do. Offering

1:36:37

as there isn't a juice mood today

Olivia 1:36:38

to drink. I'll drink raw from a cup.

1:36:41

Fabulous. Well, please let us let us provide later. We have some green juice, which is a little bit and I believe. Yeah,

Olivia 1:36:50

it's like bitter, right? Just like something

Olivia 1:36:51

tasty like grass. Like beautiful eyelashes.

1:36:57

I'm just so handsome. I'm just

Olivia 1:37:00

like to him. Like watches like no

1:37:15

all day. No, you're just cute me shy.

1:37:21

Yeah, I would love some water

Olivia 1:37:31

fuck we're talking about I'm mesmerized by the lashes. Yes, your faces and what you emphasize and if you like a you always emphasize your transness and when you're in a tizzy wanna be misgendered? No?

1:37:46

Yeah, obviously. Oh, so I told him they misunderstood what you were saying.

Olivia 1:37:50

Yeah, no, I realize like, I was thinking about it. And I was like, I don't mean to emphasize that. I mean, sighs

1:37:55

Yes, yes. Yes. Yeah, the same page, because I

Olivia 1:37:59

was always so curious and thinking about how like multiple marginalized lesbians like move through certain spaces? And what parts of themselves that they emphasize or de emphasize or totally, like, like, if you're at work, right? Or, like, if you're at school, or if you're like, in a group of different people, like what parts of yourself do you keep to yourself and what rights do you show?

1:38:21

Right? Yeah, I would say that, like gender identity really comes to the forefront. Yes, the space is something that you show, right? Yes. Yeah.

Olivia 1:38:30

Did you ever feel any hesitation?

1:38:32

Worse, it's fucking terrifying to people about my pronouns. Yeah, especially in the kind of context that I am from. Yeah, you know, religiously speaking and just familial speaking familial Lee speaking. I am constantly and still grappling with this idea that like taking up space in terms of asserting your gender identity is like burden burdensome in a way and I also think a lot about how Barnard sort of provides

this like I don't know, I don't even know if I want to get into this. Like yeah, this I don't know. Yeah, whatever. skipping past that. Yeah. Yeah.

Olivia 1:39:21

So what makes you happiest as a lesbian?

1:39:25

I like this question. Would say like I don't know I'm thinking about this is yummy, juicy. Yeah.

Olivia 1:39:40

Oh, don't you want to call yourself some too? Yeah.

Olivia 1:39:46

For yourself. Do you want some? Yes, of course.

1:39:49

Were you just like showing the Jews? Oh, yeah. I was like I think like communal moving with other lesbians. like dance. I think that's yeah, exactly. Like thinking about the trans inclusive lesbian rave. That sounds like could exist, right? Yes. Like that. That would. That brings me so much like it's all of my favorite things kind of like compounded into one setting then that would be really beautiful.

Olivia 1:40:22

Is there anything else you

Olivia 1:40:23

want to talk about before we end?

1:40:25

Let me think. I don't know. But if we end up going through photos and you want to record Yeah, that's totally an option. I think I'm good off the top of my head right now. But if we want to like continue the recording later, once we're looking at visual shit, that sounds fabulous. Okay, bye. Good.