

Getting Free Together Ep. 1: Collaborating With Chosen Family– Full Transcript

00:00:00:00 - 00:00:35:15

Stas

I love this idea of taking the imaginatory and bringing it into our lived experience, bringing it into something that you can see and experience on a on a daily basis.

♪ Have you vision? Are you this when you fill us in there are wisdom. ♪

Leander

Hi, I'm Leander and I'm here with my co-host and partner Stas. You're listening to the Getting Free Together podcast.

00:00:35:17 - 00:01:16:02

Stas

On this episode, we're in conversation with sha'ina are chosen family co-creator of Spring Up, and we'll be talking about how we met, how we've been collaborating together throughout our entire lives, honestly, as well as what liberatory visioning looks like to us in our daily practice, in our work. It's spring up and in our spiritual practices, culminating in a very robust conversation about the media that's been inspiring us recently, from video games to YouTube videos and TikToks to TV shows, books and the world that we create.

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Stas

So, sha'ina, we're so excited to be here with you, both as a friend and comrade as well as the co-founder of Spring Up and the producer of this podcast, so it feels perfect for us to be in dialog on this first episode. We like to start the show by asking about how we met one another and what it's look like for us to collaborate over the years.

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Stas

So I wonder if you want to start us off by sharing a little bit about, maybe how you met me since we've known each other for quite some time now. Yeah, totally. I'm so excited to be here with y'all and have this conversation. It is always so wild to me to think about the fact that we've known each other for most of our lives.

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sha'ina

So everyone Stas, and I have been friends since we were toddlers, since we were about three years old, we were in Montessori together. And so we have really just been kind of on and off growing through our lives together. And it's been such a wonderful, journey of kind of finding ourselves both individually and doing that together.

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shaïna

And then I've known Lea for pretty much a decade now. I think that's like pretty wild to say. So I've known them ever since they were together with Stas. And so it is more to say that y'all are truly my chosen family. And less of just like my friends or work collaborators. And I think that I am just like, yeah, in all of the ways in which our lives are just kind of, co-mingled together.

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Leander

Yeah. And I think that people often ask, like, how can you work with your spouse? How can you work with your friends? Like, doesn't isn't that really complicated? Or I don't know if I could do that. And I think for us, I'm curious what y'all would say. But there just is a different level of intimacy in collaborating on something that you care about. I know we're privileged and have also made a lot of choices in all of our lives to center doing work that we care about, which, you know, hasn't always been so stable or supported. But just that that's been very important to all three of us. So I think that that's so true because I don't think there's ever been a time in my life where I was creating, in a world building without the people around me.

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Stas

Like, I think that one of my earliest memories is being at shaïna's house with their dad, doing like painting parties where he would like pre outline drawings, mostly of black women specifically, I remember and we would all paint and and listen to music and dance and be creative. And I still remember one that I made that I was so proud of. And I added glitter to the frame and we had it up in the house. And just that, like such a core part of our friendship, is seeing ourselves as people who make things, and that the process of making is stronger when you're doing it in community and with other people. And I think it's similar with you Lea, where we first met in college and we were, I think the first time that we really dug into conversation with one another, we were at the Creating Change conference, in Baltimore in 2012, and we were roommates.

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Stas

And one of the things that's clearest to me, as far as my memories of that weekend, is just getting so caught up in these hours of conversation about what was possible through the lens of queer creativity within family. This idea of chosen family, this idea of rethinking relationship norms, this idea of, once you choose to embrace queerness not just as a form of sexuality, but as a lens of relating to the world, you get to see the infinite possibilities of being the person who makes your reality.

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Stas

And I think that that is so core to what it means for us to be the co-founders of this organization as well. I'm curious if y'all have any particular memories or moments earlier on in our relationships with one another that shape why it feels so natural for us to be collaborators in this way? Yeah, I think that, wow, there's so many great memories.

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shaïna

One of which were when we worked on the Imaginal world, campaign, where when this was back when we were doing bow tie designs, and we were really, like, diving into what it would look like to talk about, you know, liberation through how we adorn ourselves in fashion and also what that meant for, like, how we express ourselves, how we take up space, how that like, allows us to present our gender and our identity in a way that, like, feels empowering, and also allows us to kind of like, combat the violence that we've all experienced in our lives.

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shaïna

And I think that what you were saying about, like, being able to, like, create art with chosen family, I think that a lot of the things that we've been doing, as collaborators super early on, is really seeing each other's vision as something that's like, so possible. So, you know, inspiring and cool and creative, and like, hyping each other up in that way.

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shaïna

And I think that that's the reason why we collaborate so well, because I've worked with family, I've worked with friends. And, you know, I'm not going to say that those experiences are always going to be fruitful and great. And sometimes they, you know, break relationships. But I think that the ways in which we've collaborated with each other has actually really strengthened our bond as chosen family because of the ways in which we encourage each other to, like, use our imagination.

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shaïna

And I think that that's at the core of what we've been doing since, like the very beginning, where we just had this really cool idea and we just wanted to be fun and creative and get, you know, people in our lives at the time involved in that. And I think almost to the extent of like people around us being like, okay, y'all, what are you doing?

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shaïna

Like that's like so wild. But we believed it, you know, and we believed that it was like, so possible. We believe that it was like gonna, you know, make moves and shake the world and things that we really like saw as part of our, like, world building, as part of our future visioning. And that was like the beginning stages of it.

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shaina

So that's definitely one of my like, core memories of us, like fully collaborating on a project because I was doing the, like, styling of this photo shoot. Y'all were actually, like, sourcing these fabrics for the bow ties and putting together, you know, the actual, like, photo shoot production, getting together all the right people. You know, we really went through almost like, a casting process.

00:08:49:00 - 00:09:27:16

shaina

And this we were like, really young folks just doing it so professionally because we just knew that we could, and we did it based off of, like, the fact that we gave each other confidence. And I think that that was really beautiful.

Leander

Yeah. And I think that there's this queer and trans and also black sense of like community based creative excellence and recognizing that you might not have external resources or validation or buy in, but that you can just make great things with your community.

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Leander

And I know that's something that's always excited me about working with y'all is just, level of creative excellence and being like, this might be a volunteer thing. This might be something that I'm just making for myself. This might be like, unfunded and, like, quote unquote, not a job. I can still make it excellently. And I think that that is why we like to collaborate.

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Leander

You know, we don't want to be perfectionistic. I think we've all done a lot of unlearning of like, how you need to push yourself to and kind of be inauthentic to fit into systems for validation. And that that's why we wanted to build our own thing, is that we love making stuff together. And I think over time, more and more people perceive that.

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Leander

But I don't know, just yeah, ten years ago, I think that we were all non-binary and kind of just felt very outside of systems in the fact that people couldn't even refer to us, you know? And so, like, I think people are much more fluent and familiar with that. Pronouns now. But yeah, the sense of like being outside and needing to create your own thing and having creativity as the basis of it, I think is something that has brought us together again and again, now into being full time collaborators.

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Stas

I think that's such a good point, because when I think of the three of us, I think of this really beautiful liminal space. And when I picture what that actually is like, it makes me think of, oh man, when was it? I'm trying to think of what year it must have been, because it was the first time that we met up in Italy.

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Stas

It wasn't when you were, graduating, which that was so cool to be able to be at your college graduation in Italy when we were living in Italy. But it was the earlier cycle that we were in Italy together, and we went to Luca and my uncle dropped us off at Luca, which is a walled city, and he was just like, I'll be back later.

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Stas

He's like completely vague as to when he would come back to get us. And the three of us were just wandering around Luca all day, like on the swings on this walled city. And like, I just really picture this walled city of Luca as this, like, liminal space outside of time, outside of, like consensus reality, where we get to just be playful with one another.

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Stas

And I think that there, when I think back on my life, I can always find those liminal moments. And yet I think a big part of growing up for me has been how do I make more and more of my life centered around that liminal space, rather than having it be on the margins of my reality? And I think that, like, I think we've been pretty successful in that, that as a maybe it's a larger part of your life as a child, which is almost what we're returning to sha'ina within our relationship.

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Stas

But as you get in school and, all these other systems that kind of take up the majority of your time, there's these kind of pocket moments of infinite possibility. And I think that we've been like, okay, how can we approach our lives in a way that makes that liminal space of infinite possibility the main space that I'm in all day, every day?

00:12:46:11 - 00:13:11:16

Stas

And that's what feels so impossible for, I think, a lot of people who are so caught up in kind of the way that society and capitalism is set up to kind of extract our time. And that's where that sense of like hyping each other up, being confident, believing that it's possible, being like, no matter how hard it is for years to figure out how to sustain ourselves, we're gonna get to this

situation because we know that we are excellent.

00:13:11:16 - 00:13:30:14

Stas

We have each other, we've been in these spaces, and we know that it's possible to make that a bigger part of our lives. And that's where I think a lot about Adrian Marie Brown and pleasure activism, and particularly in this video that's associated with it, where Adrian talks about, like, how radical it is to be a happy black woman.

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Stas

And I think about, like, how radical it is for us to be. Or I can speak for myself, at least to be a happy non-binary, trans black person in this world who I genuinely go to sleep being like, I love my life. Like I am so happy in my relationships. I respect it at work. I get to have channels for my creativity that are actually core to my life, rather than secondary to something that I have to do.

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Stas

And it's because I believe that that was possible and was in community with other people who also believed that it was possible, because if I was doing this on my own, I know that there would have been moments where I would really question myself and I would be like, I don't know if I can keep doing this. And in those moments, y'all have been the ones who have been like, nah, Stas, you're incredible.

00:14:17:03 - 00:14:47:12

Stas

There are people out there who value this, and we're going to figure out how to make it happen. And kind of being the people who can help each other out to be able to do this really difficult work and get to this place where ten years later, we are actually fully living in that reality. I resonate with that so much because I feel like, you know, like you were saying, there's been so much work that we've done to actually get to this place as being a full time collaborators in a way that's like sustaining our lives.

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Stas

And throughout these ten years of collaborating and doing other things, like on the side of that, every single time I felt myself kind of get too deep into something else, like, I need to take this, like full time job over here. Like I need to, like, go and grind on this over here. I felt myself get further and further away from that joy and that happiness of like, what it means to center these things in my life.

00:15:17:21 - 00:15:39:00

shāina

And every single time we've like, come back together, I'm like, no, this is it. This is, this is what I need more of. And the fact that we, like kept coming back to that in a way that we, you know, really decided that, like, this is foundational, like we need to actually spend time on making this work for us.

00:15:39:16 - 00:16:09:10

shaina

So that we can stop feeding into all of these other systems that we're honestly like, at least I could say for myself, like, completely just tearing my soul away, you know, in a way that, I just started to lose myself in certain, in certain ways. And this idea of going back to how we were as children and finding that, like, liminal space and those pieces of joy is like, that's exactly how I want to live my life as an adult.

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shaina

And like, you know, I don't care what anybody else says about, like, how you should or shouldn't, like, operate, as an adult person. Because I feel like the only time in which I've actually felt like joy is abundant in my life is when I'm absolutely, like, focused in on this kind of energy and allowing myself to be the creative being that I am allowing myself to be like, playful and fun and also make so many mistakes and have people around me that can actually like, help me with that and like, hold me accountable and actually have the like, difficult conversations. And, you know, all of these pieces that I think that we, so often in our society run away from and it's really all about like, liberatory visioning, you know, and so I really love that.

Stas

Such an incredible transition into the next kind of part of our conversation, which is thinking about what our kind of frameworks or movements for liberation that we feel inspired by.

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Stas

And I know that all three of us and our collective are deeply committed to transformative justice. And we talk about the way that transformative justice can look in a lot of different ways, from community accountability to transformative organizing to what I think is sometimes, a less thought of but incredibly critical component of liberatory visioning, of being able to actually imagine another way of being, and kind of source a sense of hopefulness from that.

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Stas

And to practice that, not just is something that we're advocating for in the future, but something that we're actually living into today. And I think that for me, the two of you are such a core pod in my life of practicing liberatory visioning. And so I'm curious, what is maybe a way that that shows up in your life?

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Stas

How do you see yourself participating in liberatory visioning, liberatory artmaking envisioning another way of being, living into that in your day to day life? If that's a movement for liberation that we all are inspired by, we'd love to think about some, like daily examples of what it looks like for us to own those in our in our selves, in our collaboration, and in our separate lives from one another.

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Leander

Well, I think that this might sound like it's going in a different direction. And I also think, what is the basis of us being able to put so much time towards this is the fact that we have created an economic unit. Right? And so when we think about like what makes other possibilities possible living within capitalism, I think that that, we can look up the attribution for this quote, but someone said it's easier for us to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.

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Leander

And I think that's not true for us specifically, because I think a large part of the liberatory visioning that we do is economic right, and rethinking the conditions within which we live and create and I know that we've done a lot of rethinking of relying on the nuclear family. Right. And there is a way in which, you know, I think it's very relevant that y'all's black parents have been a lot more supportive to that than our white parents.

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Leander

Right. And so just naming that, and I think thinking about black and queer traditions of self-reliance and building your own structures in which you can support your community and create a safe space, like the creation of gay bars or just autonomous spaces in which people can practice radical visioning. I think a lot about, yeah, like the creation of that container and choosing to be a worker co-op.

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Leander

Right. Because a lot of people do the work that we've been talking about in informal, grassroots art collectives, which is beautiful and is how we started and also is not economically sustainable without, you know, the support of, let's say, wealthy patrons or partners or parents that enable you to do that. And in rethinking sort of the nuclear family.

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Leander

Yeah. And how that is the basis for people's possibilities in economic mobility within capitalism. I

think forming a space in which we talk about the power dynamics associated with money and how money moving within and to our community allows us to have freedom within capitalism, I think, is an extremely foundational and core liberatory practice that I think makes a lot of people really uncomfortable.

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Leander

You know, just talking about money, explicitly talking about needs. And yet I think that that's so core to interdependence, disability, justice, mutual aid abolition and like sort of DIY, create your own spaces. And to me, I think that's something that's been a really core core reference for all of us.

Stas

And that is world building. That is like taking the concept of world building from the realm of fiction into the realm of lifestyle design and into the realm of economic design. And I think that that's an incredibly empowering lens to look at, liberatory visioning as what what does it take to enact that vision within today's conditions and a big kind of taboo topic that is related to that is funny. So I think that's incredible example of shaïna, do you want to speak to some examples from your life as well?

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shaïna

Yeah, I think that, I really love that take because I feel like one of the pieces that kind of sparked for me was this idea that, like, or like black parents, being supportive to us in this kind of, like, liberated, liberatory visioning, particularly because for me, a really like, important practice that I've been trying to get a lot deeper in, in my life right now is, like ancestral work.

And I think that that shows up a lot in like, my, like, art making right now, particularly like my painting. I've been really like, diving into translating what that work looks like into abstract painting. But I think this idea of like connecting with my ancestors, who, absolutely had such creative visions of world building and they were existing in, you know, a lot harsher conditions than we are now.

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shaïna

But they were trying to create a community of support in which they could actually realize their dreams and realize their visions. And I think that it was really hard for me as a young person as a, like, you know, that transition into no longer being a kid and having that, like, imagination flowing and starting to feel the like, crushing weight of like, you must fit into this, societal thinking that I lost what is like, possibilities.

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shaïna

And once I started kind of cracking through, I understood that a lot of the things that I'm doing right now that feels really, probably so out of this world for so many people to think about are like things that my ancestors were absolutely, like, already thinking about, absolutely already practicing. And I feel like tapping into that in a way that is like really spiritual, you know, and it's, it feels like very connected to like what is actually within, like the threads of my DNA.

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Like **ashaïna** lot of the times, I like, feel it almost like viscerally, that's something that I then end up going into this very intense process of, like painting, and I think that also I started to do abstract painting as a way to break away from like, I'm not trying to create something that I feel like people can understand in terms of, like, this is a picture that we have a reference from, or like this is something I've seen before, but rather this is something that elicits a feeling in me that I need to then confront and then bring that to the people around me for conversation.

00:25:10:19 - 00:25:53:02

shaïna

The things that are like bubbling up, those emotions that you're like, wow, I didn't realize a lot of that comes from shadow work, particularly for me. And those have been the places in which I've found myself really actually creating the most, like, liberatory visioning moments, because I realize that it's outside of the, you know, prescribed way of, you know, creating something, you know, especially for me, as someone who went to art school, was taught very classically how to create art, and for many years decided, you know, that I was celebrated for like, how, you know, good.

00:25:53:02 - 00:26:37:19

shaïna

I was, creating something that looked like, you know, it existed in the world. And then I lost touch with my art because it didn't feel like anything. And so this idea that I can actually, like, create something that one feels new but also feels old, like something that I'm envisioning for the future, but is so rooted and tapped into the feelings in which I get from my ancestors, and the feelings in which I feel like are, adorned on me, are gifted to me through the energy of like my ancestors spirits within my own, like, spiritual body.

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shaïna

So yeah, I think that that's a place for me that really feels relevant when talking about, like, liberatory visioning.

Leander

Yeah. And I'm glad that you named, like sort of shadow work and a personal healing practice that also then comes into community, like in the present and reaching back into the past. I think that that sort of like archetype work is something that's always been really important to me

personally as well.

00:27:04:01 - 00:28:00:02

Leander

And I think between the three of us, we probably have like 50 decks of sort of just different types of cards and things to prompt, you know, creative reflection or inner work. But I think that's also something that's really important to me.

Stas

Yeah, I love that connection point around time Magic that when we talk about liberatory visioning, it gives this idea of the future. And yet we are talking about enacting that in the present moment and bringing in the people from the past as people who are able to experience that now alongside us. I think there's also I really appreciate hearing more about the process behind your artwork, sha'ina, because it's it's interesting to see something so abstract and yet have it evoke such strong emotions, like there's such a sense of feeling associated with your work.

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Stas

And I think that that's true in your digital design as well. I think a lot about spring up as, virtual collective as an online space. Right. And that you've done so much work particularly and I think we've collaborated on really creating a sense of immersion in the digital space around a feeling that is liberatory. And that when you come into a spring up space, whether it's our website, our online school, our social media presence, our, presentations, our slide deck, the just the way that we hold space with one another, there's such a through line in the feeling of freedom from the visuals to the conversation to the way that we reflect.

00:28:46:22 - 00:29:21:01

Stas

And part of what makes that possible is the presence of, honestly, a lot of abstract art that you've created digitally that is present across, the digital space and then that is made real when you get a package from spring up. And so much of the time sha'ina or sha'ina and their wife Sylvia have like done the personal physical work of putting that together into this box that is made of art that you created, that is, you know, put together with love to really bring that sense of freedom to you wherever you are.

00:29:21:01 - 00:29:49:04

Stas

And I think that that's something that even though we live in different cities, it doesn't feel like we're in different places. So much of the time it feels like maybe it's through the internet, maybe it's through the mycelial mushroom ecosystem below the ground that we're connected through. Maybe it's through the artwork, but there's this, like consistent feeling of connection that is present not only through the literal visuals, but the emotion of the process behind the visuals.

00:29:49:09 - 00:30:12:17

Stas

And I think that that's very connected to my own liberatory visioning practices. We were watching this hilarious and ridiculous for our YouTube video about the Star Wars hotel in Disney. And I mean, don't tell me how we get caught up in these different things. I think it was mentioned, Lost Culture does or something. And we were like, what is that?

00:30:12:19 - 00:30:52:15

Stas

And in the beginning of this for our video, the creator is like clipping it together, all the ways that Disney is using the word immersive that like every, every layer from the hotel, the you know, theme park, everything. It's like it's immersive, immersive, immersive, and it just keeps using that word, which I think is hilarious. And yet it kind of helped me to realize that that idea of immersion, that idea of like a sensory experience, is really tied to my own creative practice and really tied to, like, what I see is the through line, across the many things that I do.

00:30:52:17 - 00:31:17:07

Stas

I think that I love this idea of taking the imagine a story and bringing it into our lived experience, bringing it into something that you can see an experience on a on a daily basis. And I think I embrace that through my style. I love kind of this queering process of taking something that has been a site of pain or oppression.

00:31:17:09 - 00:31:47:15

Stas

I think being someone who is of size, and for whom many clothes have not been made for historically, and seeing that process of adorning my body, someone who is non-binary, there's a very charged dynamic of my gender presentation and my makeup. And what am I presenting to the world, connected to my gender and idea of being able to take things and put them together in a creative way that inspires people to believe that another way of living in the world is possible.

00:31:48:03 - 00:32:08:10

Stas

That's something that I've really appreciated as feedback from my friends is just that there's this feeling that like when I arrive in this space, it brings this energy of possibility and playfulness. I love to play with textures and colors and, do that in a way that I, as a young person, would not have thought was possible if I was the size that I am today.

00:32:08:20 - 00:32:29:13

Stas

In the 90s, you know, and I think that I could obviously have made my own clothes, but I think

this experience of really like sourcing and curating really particular things that I feel amazing in that I feel like I love my body and that I feel like I'm, a presence in, really aligns with this idea of immersion.

00:32:29:13 - 00:32:58:04

Stas

I also, I love world building. I think maybe in a little bit less literal sense. I do love system design as well, but I'm thinking about I write mythology and fairy tales, and one way that that's been showing up more recently is with some of my friends where in, tabletop role playing group, where I am the one of the two gay masters, which is like the version of game master for the game that we play, which is called Thirsty Sword Lesbians.

00:32:58:06 - 00:33:25:02

Stas

And that means that I create the worlds that my friends and I step into and, and play characters with it. And something that I've been thinking about. I was describing this to one of the newer people in the group is that often RPGs or these kind of like role playing groups are kind of oriented around some ominous enemy or, I think this game is specifically designed around like, how are you pursuing liberation?

00:33:25:02 - 00:34:00:19

Stas

But a lot of the examples that are included in the book are about you're defending liberation from an oppressive force that's outside, that's like a villain, or you're trying to bring a sense of liberation into a world that practices oppression. And what I think is kind of the core organizing principle, the way that I design the worlds for our RPG, is that there's just as much drama and intrigue and creativity within a liberated world, within people who are not advocating for some abstract, liberated future, but they're living in that liberated future.

00:34:00:19 - 00:34:27:09

Stas

There's still so much to do around navigating interpersonal conflicts, around making decisions, around the very real possibility that we are different enough, that what we envision liberation to be can feel friction with each other. That doesn't mean that it's oppression versus liberation, but it's just different. Interpret interpretations of liberation, working with one another to create what is consensual for everyone.

00:34:27:09 - 00:34:50:22

Stas

I think there's so much excitement and possibility in that, and that's what I try to decide by role play, scenarios the world around. And right now we're in, kind of an anamorphic world where we're surrounded by these, animal kingdoms that all have different dynamics of how they are free together, that are tied to the way that their culture is.

00:34:50:22 - 00:35:17:07

Stas

As cats, for example, we have, ballroom voguing cats, and they have more hierarchy than other spaces, but are still free or underwater kind of worlds. And I think that that is this kind of immersive, opportunity to not just read about that in a book, but to actually step into it and make your character be in that character, interact with one another, and work through some of those questions alongside the people that you're in.

00:35:17:07 - 00:35:56:19

Stas

This conservative consensus reality with.

Leander

Yeah. And I think that makes me think about, how all of us have more recently had a gaming renaissance and sort of gotten back into, you know, video games. Right? And how fun that feels to sort of rediscover as an adult. And I think there were a lot of, you know, negative scripts about video games not being, supportive or like, being dangerous or being for a certain type of person in the 90s when we were younger.

00:35:56:21 - 00:36:24:06

Leander

And now as adults, just sort of like reclaim that and be like, wait, is this just like a really high level of like narrative collaborative art and how exciting that is and just how, like the things that people are making? Yeah. I'm curious. shaïna, what that felt like for you. Yeah. No, I, I resonate with so much of what you're saying that there's was this, like, really weird narrative in the 90s.

00:36:24:06 - 00:36:49:12

shaïna

I know, particularly for me, like the adults in my life really definitely believed that the like, video games were, like, going to like your brain. Which is strange because, like, I was so into, like, computer games, as a pretty young person. And that was something that was like very early on adopted in my household as, like my dad being into, like, technology.

00:36:49:17 - 00:37:13:10

shaïna

And we even, like, had an Xbox in the house when I was like a little bit older, but I was not allowed to like, play the video games that like you would typically see on an Xbox. And like the only games that I had were things like karaoke and like dancing games, you know, like it wasn't the actual, kind of like holding that, like controller type, games.

00:37:13:10 - 00:37:38:00

shaïna

And so now getting into video games as an adult has been something that honestly, like, brings me so much joy and it feels so tied to this idea of like, worldbuilding and like imagination. And, I have been playing a lot of games that have just been like, expanding my mind on like, what it means to like, create these like, little, you know, worlds.

00:37:38:00 - 00:38:02:08

shāina

And it feels very relevant to, like, my personal life, which is wild to say, but it also feels really supportive as a creative outlet, in a way that I don't think that I knew video games could be because of that, like kind of how video games are going to be so bad for your kids, like, you know, mental health and everything.

00:38:02:08 - 00:38:32:04

shāina

And so right now I've been playing particularly my, like, one game that I'm kind of tunnel vision in is called Cozy Grove. And it's just this, like, kind of like little haunted island where I am this, like, little camp scout, and I'm helping bring back all of these, like, bear spirits and helping them remember things that they forgot, since they're spirits now and they're no longer and they're, like, all haunting this island.

00:38:32:18 - 00:39:01:08

shāina

And I'm, like, helping them remember things from their life so that they can then have, like, this really colorful, afterlife. So every time I'm, like, bringing back a memory to one of these bears, the island, like, adds more color to it. And like, different things start growing, different plants start growing. And I think that it's so funny to me because I got this game thinking like, yeah, I just want to do something cute and fun.

00:39:01:12 - 00:39:27:21

shāina

And then it's absolutely the same thing as what I was talking about with my like, very serious, you know, abstract painting where I'm like connecting to my ancestors and bringing back from the past, and, you know, like coloring up the, like, present and future. And that's existing in my like, little switch game. And that feels like so supportive to the way in which, like, my creative brain works.

00:39:28:13 - 00:39:52:02

shāina

It also like, allows me, I feel like to connect with, like, y'all and other people in my life in a different, like, capacity right now, too. And so, yeah, I've been playing a lot of different games. I think there's also one that, I thought about to as you were talking, where I think it's called something like I was a teenage exo colonist.

00:39:53:05 - 00:40:28:06

shāina

And it's this, like, really strange story around, you know, these people kind of like making it on to a different planet, almost. But it just feels like a lot of the same things that I've actually was in a similar, like, RPG type game called Dream Rescue with some friends over the like, spring. And we completely like created this world where there were like bioluminescent mushrooms and like, you know, psychic, plants that we like connected with.

00:40:28:12 - 00:41:02:23

shāina

And then I started playing this game and they're like bioluminescent mushrooms. And you have to, like, connect with these, like, weird psychic creatures and, like, figure out how to, you know, like, live in harmony with this, like, new environment that you're part of and, you know, thinking about how can we create, you know, this kind of harmonious, environment, but in a way that there was like, there is hierarchy still there are like places where only certain, you know, certain things can exist.

00:41:02:23 - 00:41:27:22

shāina

You know, we can't breathe there, you know, how do we adapt in that way without, like, actually, like ruining that area. All while you're, like, little character who you're, like, playing. Role playing is going through their, like, developmental, like, time in their life. So you start at like seven years old, and then you like, get to like 11 and like 14.

00:41:27:22 - 00:41:46:22

shāina

And so you're dealing with, like, what it means to like, grow up, but also at the same time as, like the adults in this world are also trying to just like, start from scratch, build a new. But like in a way that's not going to be, you know, like extractive of this new, like planet that they're living on.

00:41:47:09 - 00:42:18:17

shāina

So it's really like really cool. I think that a lot of these pieces feel so connected. And I think that it's, it feels to me, like, so important to actually have conversations around, like, what games are you playing? And, like, what media are you like, into? As we're talking about like liberatory visioning because, you know, if we're really talking about getting free together, like we have to be, you know, we're we're always talking about like, how can we be free together now, right?

00:42:18:17 - 00:42:44:13

shāina

Like we're not just trying to build something for like, the next generations of peoples that are going to be living here. And, you know, we have to then like self-sacrifice. Everything in this

moment to like, build that, like we have to live that liberation now. And that also exists in I think I saw a video on like TikTok or something where someone was like, your abolition has to include fun, like it has to include play.

00:42:44:18 - 00:43:21:15

shaina

It has to include joy, because how else are we going to like, you know, build what we're talking about if we're not acting it now, if we're not like, you know, it's it's, it's not going to exist if we're not, like, practicing that with each other now.

Leander

Absolutely. No, I really appreciate you speaking to that. And it is interesting how many games that aren't directly about combat are about healing and healing the climate and sort of gardening or rescuing an ecosystem.

00:43:23:06 - 00:44:04:06

Leander

Working to release dark spirits that have taken over an area, kind of rescuing creatures. And so I think there's like an element in a lot of games, where that's like, you know, Zelda or I think you could really, you know, go on and on. And then a game like Spiritfarer, which is really about like grief and transition and, you know, I just think that, yeah, there's so much work for liberation being done in making video games, and it's just this enormous creative sector that somehow just gets talked about, as I think, different from the rest of media or different than the rest of life, maybe because it still is working back

00:44:04:06 - 00:44:28:00

Leander

from the stigma of being like an unpressed Egis or like non educational, space in the 90s. So yeah, I'm happy that we all and a lot of the people that we're close to are working through that and I know yeah, I feel like I do so much like grief work, healing work just like, through through playing games, which is really fun.

00:44:28:02 - 00:44:49:22

Stas

Yeah. I think that that idea of play is so critical. And I think that what's cool about video games is that the play is something that you're engaging in, and not just something that you're watching. And yet I also think that what you watch can inspire what you do in your day to day life. I have been really into RuPaul's Drag Race recently, and we got to meet Eve oddly yesterday, which is one of my favorite queens.

00:44:50:03 - 00:45:17:01

Stas

And of course, because, I mean, I go dressed up to the nines and my mushroom platforms and

my twill skirt and it makes real. This idea that what I'm watching on the television is not just something that I can be in or from afar, but I can also play that role in my own life and kind of embrace the transformation that I see that I'm having as something that's possible in myself, on my body and therefore in the world.

00:45:17:03 - 00:45:40:07

Leander

Yeah, I think drag is absolutely similar to some of these things that we're talking about, where people are exploring that through their own culture and esthetics and life experiences, and then it's like once you get into it, there's, you know, you're not necessarily just fighting against the repressive part of you. That's like, maybe I shouldn't be doing drag.

00:45:40:09 - 00:46:02:15

Leander

Once you get into it, you can go so deep in that practice. And yeah, we're going to see nympho win tonight. You know, I'm so excited. And Willow Pill and Willow Pill. Right. And so yeah just like bringing these people that represent freedom and taking things to the next level in their craft and, and creating pathways for other people to follow.

00:46:03:10 - 00:46:21:20

Leander

I think, yeah, that's very much the world that the three of us live in. Yeah. Yeah. I think it's not just about this, like immersion play creativity. I think that media can also really support us in doing that time magic that we were talking about before, that work of bridging with the past and building into the future.

00:46:22:01 - 00:46:43:18

Stas

I'm thinking about Lea, and I just finished reading the three Body Problem series, and it's so interesting that these very long books, but over the span of them, it ends up going over millions of years. Right? And it just keeps skipping these generations of going from, okay, you're in this time period, all of a sudden you're a hundred years in the future.

00:46:43:20 - 00:47:05:21

Stas

And I feel like so few things really give you the possibility of like relating to time in that way. And like really, we can feel so stuck in the moment to moment. I'm really thinking about, like, how different things truly can be and also how similar they are underneath things I think is so inspiring. Yeah, I love the book.

00:47:06:07 - 00:47:43:06

Leander

The Book of Rice and Salt by Kim Stanley Robinson. It goes through just like millennia of

human history. You're sort of reincarnating as these different characters that keep finding each other. And that really struck me because, you know, it's kind of like simulating samsara or this sense that you get really caught up in the waking dream of your current life and then practicing non-attachment of just, you know, in that book there was a character that I was getting really attached to, and then they just died and were reborn as someone else in like a totally different context.

00:47:43:06 - 00:48:18:04

Leander

And it really made me think, like, wow. Like on what timescale is this story of liberation or oppression unfolding? Right? And so, yeah, I think thinking about like time magic, as you said, and thinking about like the very large scale and then the very small scale, because just going to like one party or drag show or playing one game that feels very free, like experiencing liberation on that, you know, daily scale, like hourly scale.

00:48:18:06 - 00:49:13:23

Leander

And then on that like millennial scale, I think really helps me feel a lot more centered around being able to witness some of the really painful things happening in the world right now. Not that it makes those things any more okay or any less traumatic. But thinking about how much trauma and how much visioning has gotten us to the present moment, I think it's helpful, at least for me, to have some perspective of getting out of the urgency cycle. shaïna do you have things that you've been watching or reading.

shaïna

Yeah. Well, man, I feel like I've been very strangely watching a lot of like, old, old shows that I'm like, revisiting. I'm like, into the second season of charmed right now, which is so hilarious because that was like my, show. So I love shows like magic.

00:49:14:11 - 00:49:34:22

shaïna

Because that has been since I was younger, you know, like something that I felt like, so connected to, and then also just feels very present in my, like, adult life. But I also, Sylvia and I just finished, the last season of Star Trek Discovery. And I know that y'all have been watching that, too.

00:49:35:09 - 00:50:15:00

shaïna

And so that felt like definitely one show for me that was, like, so, so, like, transformative in the way that I was, like, thinking about, like, the future and how we like, you know, are like interacting with not only just other, like, planets and species, like across the, like, universe. But then also thinking about, like even within this, like, expansive, like, you know, future world where we are, able to travel across the galaxy that there is still, like, too much that we can't live with.

00:50:15:01 - 00:50:43:12

shāina

There's so much that we can't, like, ever access, like we only have. It's it's expansive, sure, but also, we won't ever get to, like, experiencing what is the entirety of like, the universe. And so that feels really related to this idea of like, yeah, like thinking about millennia of, you know, things happening, not only in, like, our world.

00:50:43:12 - 00:51:11:13

shāina

Right. And I think that that also feels like this idea of what is possible and thinking about, you know, what is like, what can we think about that is feels really like doesn't exist on this, like, plane. And then, you know, we're thinking about different, different dimensions and like, parallel timelines. And how does that, like, affect where we are right now?

00:51:11:13 - 00:51:43:01

shāina

And, you know, I, I really love getting into that, like, really deep, abstract thinking of, yeah. Like multiple timelines, multiple universes and multiple things like existing all at the same time. All like within that same like place, but like layered on top of each other. And I think that that also, like, definitely informs how I relate to the world because so often I'm like, this isn't, you know, the way that I'm like relating to time.

00:51:43:01 - 00:52:13:17

shāina

I'm like, this is so abstract, you know, like it's like not real. And also this is so very real at the same time. And I think that, yeah, that feels really great to be able to like, see that within like my media because then I feel so excited to like, talk about what's happening in these episodes and talk about, like, the ways in which they are, you know, traveling like on the mycelial plane and like, how interesting that is to me.

00:52:13:17 - 00:52:40:16

shāina

Because, you know, we talk about mushrooms a lot, obviously, and we talk about the mycelial, network a lot. And then also thinking like this feels very much like something that would exist, outside of just what is within, like the confines of, like, the Earth. You know, especially because it feels like it predates us and will exist after us to, yeah.

00:52:40:16 - 00:53:20:08

shāina

I'm curious if y'all have any thoughts about, like, that show and how that, like, relates to everything.

Leander

Yeah, I know we were all so excited when the mycelial hyperdrive came in a few seasons ago. With Anthony Rapp character in that and just being like, what? You know, I think just like using that in a sci fi concept, I think Star Trek, but also Doctor Who, are just shows that use that almost short story like episodic format where every episode they're kind of going to a different planet, experiencing something different, moving through time and space.

00:53:21:07 - 00:53:53:09

Leander

All of that just creating so much possibility. And then I think out of the whole Marvel verse, I would say that my favorite shows are Loki and One Division, kind of the like newer era of that, like trying to be more prestige TV, type of show. And I just thought that those were like, so well-made and so deep in what they were trying to say about choice and trauma and cycles, and the acting was also incredible.

00:53:53:11 - 00:54:31:17

Stas

I think that calls back from the beginning of this conversation, the idea of the liminal space. And if all of these different dimensions and versions of reality are happening concurrently, it feels almost like together we've made this choice to jump to mentions from the dimension of this kind of oppressive capitalist framework into this liminal, creative, playful, gender bending space and so much of what we do at spring up is kind of sending little messages and care packages from our dimension to the dimension that we came from being like, look at what it's like over here.

00:54:31:17 - 00:54:49:09

Stas

Join us over here. We want to help you. How can we support you? And, you know, reducing the harm of the reality that you're kind of continuing to exist within. And what I can say is that it's been the true honor and joy of my life to be in that dimension, in that space with the two of you.

00:54:49:13 - 00:55:23:02

Stas

And I'm so excited to see what is to come. Yay! And, you know, stay tuned to see what else comes up on getting free together. And who else is in this dimension with us. Let's find out here.