

Transcript: Something From There

Mark Canton, Dragana Jurisic, Lelo Mary Thebe, Leo Snygans.

Mark: Welcome to the National Gallery of Ireland podcast. This episode is a special edition focusing on Something From There, our exhibition created with people living or formerly living in Direct Provision. Exploring the idea of home and the meaning of objects, Something From There marks the end of an ambitious long-term community project coordinated by the gallery. Here, in conversation, the project facilitator, artist Dragana Jurisic, with two of the project's participants, Lelo Mary Thebe and Leo Snygans about their experiences of the project and where they are now.

Dragana: So, I was contacted in 2019 by National Gallery about the project they were hoping to do. And the idea for the project was brought to them by Evgeny Shtorn who worked with I think Maeve Stone from Change of Address and they were pitching an exhibition to different venues, that was kind of based on the objects that people who have come to Ireland, and are maybe now in the process of claiming asylum or have refugee status, brought with them to signify home or some kind of memory of home. So I think originally it was supposed to be quite, uh, straight on project just to display these objects. But, uh, once the project was brought to the Educational Department of National Gallery, Sinead Rice and Brina Casey, they basically kind of started looking into possibility of expanding the idea and making a more long-term project. Something that had, um, I guess more layers than just an exhibition. So they contacted me and asked me would I be interested in doing this project? And I guess, I mean, I can't really say why they contacted me, but I have my, um, I presume it's because I kind of have shared experience as a immigrant and a refugee at one point in my life, and an artist. So maybe they anticipated that would have better understanding of the themes we would be working around, which were the themes around the ideas of home, and what is home and what represents home when you're kind of in this very unstable situation. And then, um, that is Direct Provision because most of the people who were a part of the group, were in the system of Direct Provision.

And, I think the next step was basically putting out an open call, um, in different Direct Provision centres. And I'm not sure, I think Lelo and Leo can fill you up, explain better that part of the project. And I think people sent applications where they talked briefly about the object and what it meant to them, and they were basically selected based on that. And when I say selected based on that, there was not really, you know, it wasn't like an application for some kind of a board. Most of the people that applied were selected. Uh, so, uh, yeah. And then I guess the call when it went out, maybe Leo and Layla can tell us more about how it worked on your side, and why did you decide to apply. Lelo, do you want to go first?

Lelo: Yeah, I can, I can go first. Um, my name is Lelo Mary Thebe. When I first heard about the project, actually it was posted on, uh, on Sanctuary Runners group, when I was still in, uh, in Dublin. There was a Direct Provision called Hatch Hall, um, it was in Dublin 2. It's closed now. I was in a, in a very difficult place. I was in living in a very small room and when I saw this project, I applied. I came with a stone for scrubbing my feet, so I felt that was like the only thing that I was holding on to because I took it with me everywhere. I wanted something that represented home, something that had roots to my home, to, to back home for me. So the process of, um, of applying to get in, to be part of Something From There, actually when I first heard about it, I thought it was just going to be, um, a one day project, a one day thing. So I sent send my, my, the pictures of my stone and Dragana and Brina and Casey got back to me saying, okay, we have a meeting on this day and actually I didn't make my first meeting. I wanted to be part of it but when I asked the say, because I had, I have a child, she was almost three by then, and I didn't have any friends or any family to mind my child while I attended the, the project, which was going to be like three to four hour, in a day, you know, almost the whole day, you spent the whole day in the Gallery and the Gallery doesn't have, they didn't have any space or facilities where they could keep the children for the day while you attend this project. So it was, um, I was, heartbroken and I thought that was the end of it for me. I was like, oh, you know, I'd have missed it. I don't have anyone to mind my child, so I just, I had given up. And then the following month by the end of June, when the Hatch Hall Direct Provision was closing, I moved to Co. Mayo another Direct Provision where I had my friends. Actually, I had applied and requested that I want to move to the Old Convent in Ballyhaunis in Co. Mayo, and by luck, by chance, I got approved. By end of June, I was in Ballyhaunis and the July date of another meeting for the project, I received an email saying that, um, we actually have another meeting for Something From There and you can join us. So I let them know I'm not in Dublin anymore, I'm now living in Co. Mayo. And they said, "Oh, that's perfect. We actually have another candidate who lives there, so we're going to get you train tickets and you, you can come up

to Dublin for the day, if you have anyone to mind your child". And luckily, my friend is down here and she had offered that, you know, I can stay with her, you can go on and do your project.

So that's how it began for me, uh, from a point of giving up to a very good place of hope. This project, from the day I attended I have found my place of healing, I have made friends, I have found a safe space. I have found, um, a place to call home and it was something that I looked forward to every month, to attend, you know, to go to meet people, to have nice sandwiches and, you know, once in a while, go out for a drink. It wasn't just the project from something from home for me. This was, uh, this is home to me. This project has been so much more than just my object.

Dragana: Thank you. Thank you so much. Um, we can come back to some of the points you made earlier, but I wanted to ask Leo about how you came to be a part of the project?

Leo: I was in a Galway, so Direct Provision, yeah, and then Evgeny was in the same Direct Provision as me, and me and him used to talk a couple of times because he's an activist, I'm an activist and he just mentioned me one time and he said, there's this project we're going to do, and I want you to apply for the project, and then I applied for it and then, uh, I think I waited about a month. I heard from Dragana and Casey and Brina, and then I think our first meeting was that May or something. And my object was a cross. It's something my grandfather gave me. And then just, I mean, I went into Direct Provision, I'm not even gonna go into the details, the chaos you have to live in and all the things. But for me, it is like, I remember Saturday mornings, it's a three hour trip. You go from Galway on the bus to the Gallery and I remember the first time I met everybody I was so petrified. Some people were talking a lot. I didn't talk much. I just like looked at everybody, but the experience has been great, I must say. Paula Meehan, Dragana, the photographer Cian and everybody and, uh, I mean, the people you're all together with a separate, it was just, I don't know. It's just. I am, I actually miss it. I wish we can get together again. We've missed a lot out with the pandemic and the things changing and, uh, but, uh, the project was, it was hard sometimes. There was like times where it was hard to talk about stuff, but what I loved was the diversity. We were, I mean, I'm LGBTQI and I was sitting amongst people with strict religions and people from this background and there was no judgment in art, there was no... It was just everybody together speaking their truth.

And, uh, we did a little project. We did poetry writings. We did things about the archives. It was just, I felt really special and especially it's a National Gallery, so you feel really important and sandwiches and coffee always too, yeah, but I loved the company and uh, yeah, anyway. It's a deep project., it's

like, even now, I read over my project the other day and I went through everybody's things and it's just, there's not even words to describe the meaning of the project and I have just feeling it's still going to grow, there's more going to come out of this. And, uh, for me, the positive part about this project is people always have a negative about asylum seekers and refugees. They always think the worst. And when you see a project like this it actually shows that everybody is the same, and look at the talent, look at the art, it's just, yeah, it's amazing. Anyway, I talked too much. Let me slow down.

Dragana: Thank you, Leo. Yeah, I find that it was interesting because around the time lots of people were on the cusp of changes, like in the case of Lelo, you were moving from Dublin to Co. Mayo and trying to navigate the new place with a little child and also be a part of this because I mean, this, coming to do Something From Their workshops, really, was a great time sacrifice in many ways, you know, like, I mean, you were traveling three, four hours the two of you from the west coast. People who were coming from Kerry were travelling eight hours a day to spend like four or five hours in the Gallery. But I think the idea behind it was really to, not so much to talk about our traumatic experiences and how we ended up here, but how we can actually make this place our home. And also try to, as I said before, to engage with the idea of what home is and can it be embodied in an object or in a memory.

And so we did a number of different workshops, as Leo said, we were kind of investigating National Gallery as our host institution, our home for the period of six months. And we looked into the archives, it was connected to the objects as well because this object became something that is being displayed in the National Gallery so we wanted to treat it with respect the artefacts are treated in the museums and institutions like this. We have done a poetry workshop with Paula Meehan, which was very, uh, for me emotional. But I think we were also emotional because of what happened, we had visited Henrietta Street museum and I think that was quite triggering for a lot of people, because when you live in the system of Direct Provision, I mean, as Lelo was saying, you live in these tiny rooms on top of each other, and then you realize that this was a kind of reality for people who lived in tenement buildings in Dublin and how disappointing is that the history is not changing, that the same mistakes are being repeated. That this kind of way of treating people does not result, it doesn't bring positive results really and it's very difficult. So, I... were there any particular moments for you Lelo, that you remember that were important?

Lelo: I think that the most important part, uh, for me was towards the end, when you had to travel to come to each one of us, to make the video. That, I felt, was the most, because all the time we were the one coming to Dublin to you and when I heard that you'd be coming to each one of us to make that shot,

the videos, and you came down here and we went to Westport, that was... Actually during this project, um, since I came, I moved to Co Mayo in June, July and August, my mother passed. When my mother passed away as I am in Direct Provision, I couldn't go home to bury my mother or be there in any sort of form, I couldn't even help financially. I wasn't working. So it was a very difficult time for me and Dragana reached out and told me, you know, I actually don't have to stay there, you can come out here, you know, we are help you through this. And the day I came out, that we were doing our poetry, and then we went to the tenements. We were down there and I was just, very, it was just at a very emotional day. That too was like, I, I felt that this project doesn't just come with just my object only but I have a family, I have people around me. And when you came out, uh, to Co. May and we went down to Westport, in that place I found, uh, my healing. That's when, when we're doing poetry, that's when you started working with Oana. Oana has been a friend to me, more than anything else out of this project. She has been with me through my grieving; she has been with me through my healing. We did a short video of embodiment communication. It was, it was just beautiful for me to be down there.

Dragana: Can I just maybe jump in and explain that Oana Marian was, uh, one of the people who helped us on a different workshops originally. She was brought in to edit our work, the writing, and then later on, she was a part of the filmmaking crew. And I think after this situation, you and Oana became very good friends and collaborators on different projects, which is actually the wonderful part of what happened after Something From There, is that long term, or lifelong relationships and friendships were developed, and also different ways of how the people started to collaborate with each other and maybe learn about other opportunities as a result of what happened here. Um, yeah, that's wonderful. And actually, uh, that may be something that, I'll come back to Leo in a second, but as a part of making Home | Ireland film, we have travelled to a location where each participant lived and we could draw around the county and maybe went to places of significance or places that kind of represented really Irish landscape, you know, and I think for a lot of us, it was just kind of incredible the beauty of our surroundings. And, um, it became kind of really important experience about what we were doing. And what do you think, Leo? What was your...

Leo: I had a couple because I really, really loved the project. One of mine was when you broke your arm and you didn't show up for the class to one day, and I was like, Dragan's not going to be here and I remember that. And then, uh, I must say when we did the recording in Galway, I was with, I think it was Duna from Syria. And, uh, he was doing his little footage and I was in the other room and you asked him the question about what is home.

Dragan: Diaa.

Leo: Diaa, yeah. I remember he was looking at me and he stopped and he stood up while you were recording as part of the video and it was just so powerful. And when I think about the project, I think about that moment, the purity and the honesty, and when you get asked that question and it's like, I think the main thing is what I've realized in the last few years is home is basically where the heart is and it's just, making connections, building your new family and just being a part, being safe; you don't have to explain yourself that much anymore. Well you still have to, it doesn't matter where you go but, I don't know. I'm still trying to train myself that it's okay now. I can be safe. It will probably take a long time, I don't know, but it takes a long, long time, but yeah. For me overall, yeah, I had a moment with everybody and I remember everybody's faces and, uh, I hope we can get together again after the pandemic and have like a proper reunion or something together everybody.

Dragana: Yeah, I would love that. Have you get the chance to go to the..

Leo: I did, when, before the lockdown in December I made the day they opened, I took the bus in the morning and they were only allowed with a mask to go, but I only spent three hours in Dublin, but I went to see it.

Dragana: And Lelo also came with her daughter Zaza.

Lelo: Yes.

Dragana: Before everything closed up again, and that was a very also beautiful experience to go and see the exhibition with you and your child as well. Um...

Lelo: I think, I think for me, uh, going in, uh, to see the exhibition and not going there alone, having you and Oana and Ryan around, and Zaza too was just so special. What made it so special for me, again, I don't know, this was just like, when I came back home, I'm looking at the project when you enter the door, my object is just right there in front of your face. And it's just like an honour for me and the other biggest thing is that, um, we have, we had these and I think now they're not no longer in the Gallery, the booklets. And when you open the centre page, my poetry and my object is right at the centre page. This actually meant heaven to me because when you open a book or a magazine or anything, you first go to the centre page, it's so easy to find. And I just want to like take it out and put, stick it on the wall, you know, like you do with the magazines, you take out that the centre page and put it up on the walls. When we were kids we used to do that a lot. So this actually meant, I was just, I was sitting at home with it, I'm like, "This is mine. This is what I have done", and the exhibition now is still showing, so I'm still like in awe with everything. Yeah.

Dragana: I mean, uh, there were also, um, quite challenging times during the workshops I found, both you know, personally, you know things that are being brought up, um. I didn't expect when I was setting out to do this, or when I said yes to the project, that it would bring things from the past for me, because I thought like, my experiences of being in a similar situations happened 20 years previously, that, uh, things would be healed by now. So that is something that if Leo would talking about, you know, does it ever stop, that's the question. I think it just spaces out and the intensity is less, but I think the experiences, a traumatic experiences from the past are always there with you and they have in some way shaped, you know, your nervous system and the way you breathe and walk and relate to the world around you. So I think my hope for everybody is that there is more peace and stability, but I, I'm not sure, you know, I don't know the things ever go into the happy land completely. And maybe that's very unrealistic to expect as well. Yeah, but um, yeah... I also found the way that the people in the Gallery, the worked with us like Sinead and Brina and Kate were incredible and really did their best to kind of, um, make everyone feel welcome, which we're very grateful for, because they did kind of provide this kind of experience of home away from home in a safe place to be, and also a safe place to escape to, because I mean, I can't speak for you, but then not that lots of people are looking forward to come and just getting out of the centres, changing the, changing the city, changing the landscape around you, and to be surrounded with all the art in the National Gallery. I think it was, it was special for me personally.

Leo: It made me feel very important. I like it. Yeah. And I mean, it was at the centre of the Gallery. It was like the main room, so everybody was walking past, many people tried to come in and see what was happening there. And you're like, "no, it's a private session". That's, it felt really good. Yeah.

Lelo: Yeah, I think we, we had, um, the best rooms and I remember when you couldn't use, um, that the whole down there, when they were innovating, we had to go just a little bit upstairs there next to the exit door, and we had that beautiful room with the most beautiful furniture, and we had everything exclusive. It was the best time when we could go out and hopefully soon we can go out again. And the challenges that are faced, I mean, there were a lot during the conversations that we had, as a woman, as well as I remember, there was an almost heated argument I can remember with Cian our photographer. He's an amazing person and he's a man as well, so yeah, he always wants to have a, you know, talk, talk over everyone else, is always got an opinion. And I'm always arguing with him, and we are friends right now. I'm always arguing with him now. I'm like, "No, let me have my word first. And then you can, you can maybe suggest or help me out with something else, you know?" So, um, those conversations were, they're the parts where things

are being difficult, where we had to find ways to work with each other, to understand each other, to understand that we all, I am fighting to, to, to be who I am right now. I am not home. So I'm here just to stand up for myself. I'm here to have my own voice, to be heard. I am here like seeking a place, you know, to call home. So, um, I'm not here to fight again. I can fight, but I'm not here to do that. So we, we had there the most beautiful times and the most difficult times as well, uh, confronting situations, uh, that we have faced.

Dragana: Well actually we did quite well considering that there is, uh, that there was like 12 or 13 people and lots of them coming from a very stressed and stressful situations. Uh, it's surprising we didn't have more arguments really.

Leo: So Dragana did my, my colourful shirts helped a lot to calm everybody.

Dragana: Yeah! But, one person that I should really talk is also Cian Brennan, who is a very talented cinematographer and who has been and recorded the project from its very beginnings, and, uh, he did almost everything, all the cinematography in the final film, as well as he partially edited the film with me. Uh, but, uh, that was an interesting part actually, filmmaking as a collaborative practice, which is kind of crazy if you, because you have number of voices and first of all, uh, we had to workshop the questions for the film because we didn't want to, people being, uh, something that there are not a happy with. And that was the point when Diaa walked off the camera because he missed that workshop. So then we were sitting in for the interview and when I asked him what his home, I think, uh, he didn't have time to think about it. He was unprepared then. And I think it was one of the, it's one, it's extremely powerful moment in the film, but to really see the impact this has on all of us. Um, and, um, yeah. It's interesting, but to go back to the collaborative, uh, filmmaking. So like when you are editing film, it's quite difficult practice. I mean, what, when you have to edit the film, thinking that everyone in the movie has to have kind of equal representation, that you can't give someone, you know, five minutes and the other person two minutes, it becomes quite a difficult, uh, terrain to navigate, but I think we managed to do that and make something that was, that is really, really beautiful. Uh, and I sure that you get some feedback too, but you know, sometimes people who go to the National Gallery, tag me on social media posts and, you know, people who saw it found it very touching and beautiful to look at, very powerful experience. And I think that's because there is a little bit of magic from every person in the cauldron of Something From There. Um, is there anything, like, I think most of the people who go and see the exhibition also wondering what has happened to the people in the exhibition or people who made the exhibition. So maybe you want to tell us

a little bit. Leo, tell us where you are? What are you up to? What are your plans?

Leo: Um, well, I left by myself Direct Provision about a month ago. I moved out. I'm staying in another small room, but you know what, I'm safer here than I was before. It's a step up and, uh, I'm starting university in September, so I'm going to study and I still do my, you know, all my crazy volunteer work. I do my radio show on the community radio now. And, uh, I'm part of a few panels of diversity and, uh, but yeah, just in general integrating. Oh, and I did my Irish, my first diploma in Irish. I just did my exam last week.

Dragana: You did a Irish exam?

Leo: Is mise Leo, as Aifric me. Ta me i mo chonai i Galliamh. Uh, yeah, so I'm starting to learn the Irish language. So just integrating into society and just getting used to people leaving doors open and, uh, feeling safe. The pandemic, I think, took away a lot from us. You don't really get a chance to meet a lot of people directly, but I've met at zoom meetings and stuff, but luckily now everything is opening up again. And, uh, I'm very blessed. The west of the country Galway is really beautiful. It's very Irish. So it's a, it's a very authentic experience being here and, uh, yeah, I hope I see everybody again soon. I would love to meet up with everybody, but I'm just blessed. I'm alive. And I'm out of the Direct Provision. My heart goes out to everybody. I have a few friends, I stay in contact and I motivate them and give them ideas how to move out and things to do. So...

Dragana: And what are you going to study?

Leo: Um, journalism.

Dragana: Oh, excellent.

Leo: I got my, yeah, so writing,

Dragana: Brilliant, well done.

Leo: I did my CEO last year, but, uh, I deferred, I didn't tell you guys. I went through skin cancer treatment the last nine months.

Dragana: No you didn't, oh my God. Oh, sorry.

Leo: No, no sorry needed. Um, I was supposed to go on Monday, but because of the hacking of the HSE system, we have to wait now, so I'm going to go through another treatment, but it looks good. So it's not a, it's not a death penalty when you get news and things like that. And you know, me, I just, I kept on working and everything through the treatment and stuff. I just stay busy. So...

Dragana: That's good. Thank you. And Leo, what are you up to?

Lelo: I'm still in the asylum seeking process. I'm still in Direct Provision and, um, the Direct Provision that I'm in, they call it the five staff of Direct Provision. So we, we, yeah, we get, we get houses, but we get, we get to share them. There's still, there's now peace still. We're still in the spaces where, where we are sharing our space with other people, uh, but positively, um, I'm working, um, I'm working in a nursing home now as a carer, um, which has been eye opening for me and, um, a really difficult, but at the same time, satisfying job. And, um, I think I have found more for myself, more of a direction that I want to take towards starting because I've been struggling what to do, what do I want to study? And, um, I think of, I have, uh, some sort of balance at this moment. I'm still in the process of doing, um, my, my CEO. I'm still waiting to hear from them, which, I've been getting positive response from them as well. And, uh, everything else has been good. I'm running, I'm running with Oana. Now, we are doing, yeah, now we I'm really good. I'm like doing 10 kilometres. So she has been as well encouraging me to, to keep on running, keep on exercising and, um, I'm reading. I'm doing, I'm doing, um, a reading with the group. So I've been, I've been more active during the pandemic and, uh, with Oana we're doing a project together and, uh, the project now is in the UK. So we got in, we got approved to go to the UK, but, um, I cannot go there because I still don't have my document.

Dragana: And can you tell us what the project is about?

Lelo: Oh right so, this is the project, uh, about, uh, embodiment, grief embodiment weaving grief. Let me just, um, uh, put into there so that I can have more tell you more about it. (Hi) This is the project that we applied for, um, last year, but, uh, we couldn't go ahead with it because they were planning to have it online and, um, most people would prefer to have it in person. So it's been pushed into this year.

Dragana: It that the project that you did with Oana?

Lelo: Yes, it's, it's the project that, uh, we wanted to get involved with together. Uh, this is about, uh, about healing. Um, as, as, as I am in Direct Provision, I was telling her like the way that my mother has passed on, but I don't know how to grieve. I don't know how to go about my grieving. So this project, um, that is a, that is going to happen. It's about, uh, the embodiment, grieving, finding ways to grieve, especially for the people in my community that lose parents, losing friends in their home countries and they cannot be there, they cannot be with it with their families. So it's just too, when, when we attend this project, we're are going to learn how and practice embodiment grief. You know, finding ways to approach it, uh, to approach this grief when you cannot be with your families. So, um, Oana, was really looking forward to doing the project with me, Um, but, uh, as, uh, I don't have my documents yet, she has been trying to find ways on how we can get me documents, but,

uh, I couldn't think of anything that we can do. Maybe we can protest or write letters. We have written letters, um, to the Department of Justice, but still nothing yet, which has been a very difficult time, uh, three years in there in the system still waiting.

Dragana: I'm so, I'm sorry, and I hope it moves fast for you. So you are, are, you are planning to study something in a care system?

Lelo: Yeah. I'm planning, uh, I'm planning to do a social worker, social care, applied social care, with GMIT. They've been sending me, um, positive responses lately, uh, asking me for, you know, like, what am I involved in, whatever I've been doing. So, um, I'm hopeful that they'll come through for me.

Dragana: Me too. And are you, are you running alone or are you running with other women from the centre?

Lelo: So from the centre I have another four ladies that are running with me and at work now, I have another lady that there that is interested as well in joining me this morning she had said that we should go out for a run. So yeah, tomorrow we will be, she'll be joining us as well, to go for a run. So yeah, I do encourage other women here in the, in the Direct Provision centre to, to join me running, you know, to keep healthy. And that is something that you can do for yourself. And if you work on yourself, I mean, no one else can take that away from you. Yeah. So I have. I encourage and push other people as well, too, to keep healthy. And...

Dragana: That's great. And is there anything else that you would like to say that I didn'tt ask, or...

Mark: Can I ask a question? Is there, um, any of, any of the other, uh, participants pieces that particularly touched you, that you saw, that you were like, oh, this one means a lot to me?

Lelo: I think, uh, for me it was, um, Ola. Ola's object was, um, a material from, from her mother and, uh, she has a great relationship with her mom and they're really close.

Dragana: Yeah, it's a kind of material what you wrap up a child in.

Lelo: Yes, an iro, I think that's what she calls it here.

Dragana: And I loved the way it was presented in the Gallery.

Lelo: Beautiful!

Dragana: It was like a sculptural piece. It was very, very beautiful. Um, how about you, Leo? What was your...

Leo: I think everything, like Miriam's cross. I've thought about a computer, Evgeny's shirt, Mary's stone, everybody. When I go through it, even the booklet I read through it, it's everything is so powerful. It's just, yeah, so I don't have a specific, I think everybody in the project, it was just so, so different, different stories from different angles, from technology to material piece, to the stone to money, it was just, it was just, yes, spectacular.

Dragana: It was very Funny the, you know how, uh, Theo's computer is presented by polaroid. I mean, because we did have, uh, the real practical things in, in relation to this exhibition where, uh, he needs his personal computer and that's the really most important thing in his life that he managed to take with him from Congo, so, uh, we couldn't like, just take it and put it on display for six months in the National Gallery, um...

Leo: You can't save emails for six months! You have to wait.

Dragana: Yeah!

Lelo: I was. I remember when I was telling you Dragana that you have my, um, my stone in the gallery. We should do pedicures because my, my feet now are cracked. That's my exfoliating stone, that's my pedicure stone.

Dragana: Yeah. Next time you come to Dublin!

Lelo: It was very difficult for me to let it go, I mean, I had to find ways on how I'm going to exfoliate my feet but, yes, it's. it has been my important for me to, to have it in the Gallery then just to keep it with me, sharing it with, you know, with the world has been the most wonderful thing. And I was telling my young brother as well back home, uh, he is in South Africa. I was telling him that, "Do you remember the stone that we used to share, like to scrape our feet with at home back in Zimbabwe?" Well I'm like, "Do you know that stone is in the National Gallery of Ireland". He says, "Oh no, you're joking!" So I sent him the poem. I sent him the link, say, if you get wifi just go and view it. He says, "No, no, no, that's not our stone!" I'm like, "Yes, that's our stone from home". And it was just so unbelievable, someone else too, to see it being that.

Dragana: Do you think that your mother ever imagined that when she pulled the stone out to the water? Uh, out of the river that it's going to end up in Ireland.

Lelo: I wouldn't, I wouldn't even have imagined it. Like I carried the stone with me for my feet, and now it's at the National Gallery of Ireland, people are wondering, "What is this? Why do you use it for?" So it's been, um, an amazing project.

Dragana: That's lovely. Did you miss your cross Leo?

Leo: I miss it a lot actually, the other day when I went through, cause I have the chain here. It's always been in my pocket, so this is the first time, it's now been almost more than a year, that I don't have it on me and I had it with me since I was 12 years old. So, yeah, I miss it, but I know it will come back to me again.

Dragana: Yeah, I mean I'm very grateful that they have decided to extend the exhibition until 20th of June, because, um, you know, I think it's very powerful experience for people to witness and start asking themselves questions and be more active, uh, when thinking about Direct Provision, um, so yeah, I hope it brings something good, to all of us, or all of you really.

Leo: I think to everybody in society has just, I said to somebody the other day, too, as we create so much boxes and regulations, and, but it's just simple things we need to change our way of thinking. And it's quite sad that people restrict himself and people don't realize. And what I love about this whole project was, is like, It just shows the diversity and we're all just normal humans, that's it. You're not a, you don't become something else if you're in an institution or that, and we should stop. I looked the other day, I went through some of the history files and just it's like you said, earlier, Dragana, we repeat the same things over and over and over somewhere, there needs to come a point now it's like, "Hey, open up your eyes. We cannot keep doing this to each other." But yeah, I miss it, I must say it was, it was one of the best experiences of my life.

Dragana: Thank you. That's beautiful thing to hear because when I started, I was so petrified actually to, you know, um, I just, the first meeting we had and sitting in the room with everyone, the immensity of the responsibility, it really, uh, really hit me strong and I'm just so happy, uh, how it all materialized and also for all the friends I made in the last year and a half, really because that's...

Leo: I think the main thing for me was to, uh, you know, when you're always being judged and you, you're different. And I remember the first time, and sorry to interrupt you Dragana but, I felt like, are they going to accept me? Am I going to be okay here? Cause it's like, but I'm just going to be me. And if they don't it's their business. So that's fear yeah? But I felt after the second session, it felt wonderful. It was just like, we were just names, it wasn't like a specific something. We were just our names and who we are.

Lelo: Yeah, I think, I think that's true. I think when I, when, when I came in on my first day, I just had a serious face on, I didn't want to smile at anyone. I didn't want it to be happy, just in case this doesn't go well. So it's like, I came in with my poker face so that I don't get attached to anything and then the next day turns out it's actually an awful place. But everything turned out so beautiful and, till this day and forever, I am grateful for, for all the people that I've met,

especially this beautiful lady Dragana, she's amazing! Yeah, she's amazing, and she finds the most beautiful places in Ireland and, yeah, just follow her on Instagram, you see the most beautiful pictures that you have ever seen.

Dragana: Thanks, well I hope you come and visit so I can show you here. Yes. Um, I want to thank, uh, Leo and Lelo for being with us today. And I also want to thank National Gallery for, uh, giving us the space and the resources and time to do this project, and when we decided to go a little bit more ambitious than the original budget allowed, they really did their best to accommodate us. So I'm really grateful for this, but, uh, more than that, I'm grateful for the friendships we have made working on the project and all the doors that, um, and possibilities, this opened for the people who participated and also, hopefully this will, this is going to carry on. And I'm really glad to see that both, um, Leo is kind of working in community-based projects, with his radio show and Lelo with her running groups with the ladies in Direct Provision. And I think just this carrying of a safe space or space of activity where something happens, it helps people to get them out of the situation where they are in. So, thank you both so much.

Leo: Thank you.

Lelo: Thank you for having us.