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FLC: Can you please tell us a bit about where you grew up and how you became an artist?

KL: I grew up mainly in Johannesburg. I had a three year spurt from when I was three 'till I was six living in Israel. In one year, me and my family went to America. And my parents put us in school. And we basically traveled across America. We traveled around, and then we came back to South Africa. And that was halfway through grade one. What did you say— that where I grew up and?

FLC: How you became an artist.

KL: How I became an artist? Okay. So I think I was always on the artists track. And I loved to make work when I was a child. And I was— it was a thing like my mother says, I was always kneeling by table drawing. I never really wasn't doing that, it was always part of my life. And then, you know, I did art for matric. One of the things that I did, which is more typical for kids now but very untypical then, I went to extra art lessons after school, and you know, at the... what's it called the art... the Art Foundation. When I was a kid, where a lot of the artists... Kentridge and various different artists went to, what was it called? That art school? Yeah. In Parktown.

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Anyway, it was like an after school thing. And I would go to private art lessons. And then I actually studied graphic design. So basically, what happened was after school I thought, okay, I'll study art. But let me see how I can do art in a sort of more commercial like a money way. And that seemed to be graphic design at Wits Tech. And so I did that. I loved the course but never was I going to be going to advertising, it just wasn't the way that my mind was going to work but I wanted to— I was never going to think about products and how to sell them and consumerism – it wasn't gonna entertain me. Anyway, so I traveled one year after school then I did graphic design and then I traveled for two years. I went to South America for eight months. And it was quite a wild time. And really like intense radical traveling, opening my mind. And then I went to Europe for eight months and I came home. When I was in South America my travel was more like going to the jungle doing things like hiking, ayahuasca and meeting shamans and shamen/shamans. It was much more nature and you could say a spiritual kind of thing. And then I came home for a while, then I went to Europe and that was going to Greece and France and Italy and Spain, and it was more— it was still like nature in a beachy kind of way, but also art and museums. Whatever country I was in, we'd go to museums, look at the art, be it Spain, going to Dali's house or his Museum, or looking at Gaudi's work, or in Amsterdam I went to all the different museums when I was there. But when I was in Italy at the Uffizy, this was sort of nearing the end— the last part of the trip. I was standing in front of this, I think it was a Bellini or Venini, a painting, I can't remember, and— I need to look that up, the correct one... And for some reason there was like these wooden paths that they'd make you like shuffle along, you weren't allowed to stand off them. Now there I was shuffling along with a whole bunch of tourists and the woman who was a friend of mine who I was traveling with, and I just started crying. And I said to her, I'm going home to be an artist. It was like that pivotal moment. And I don't think I really knew what that meant. I probably thought about it far more traditionally: a painter, sculptor, something like that. And you know like doing drawing, but not what actually landed up happening. So anyway, after that, I basically tracked my way. The rest of that trip was knowing that I'll be back in January and going to do fine art. And I went for interviews at both Wits and Wits Tech, who both said that because I'd studied the graphic design, I could go, I could skip first year, I could go into second year. And for some reason, even though Wits Tech at the time wasn't a degree, I think that was just like a gut feel. And I was being interviewed by Greg Kerr, Marc Edwards was standing watching the interview, sort of like halfway outside the room. He wasn't really involved. But something must have made me realise that how important Marc was going to be and he became my mentor.

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I mean, I was also taught by Willem Boshoff and Alan Alborough, who were also amazing to be taught by and then Diane Victor was one of the drawing teachers, but Mark was a very core mentor in the way he talked, where he sort of like respected anything you brought to him and he managed to draw like incredible things out of the students, and I responded very well to that like, soft, not definite ahhh this is brilliant! ahhh this is terrible!, you know, it's just like, let's talk about everything seriously. And what landed up happening is one side understood what conceptual art was – that was my element, it was where I could swim, you know, like, painting, you know, all the sculpture, which I absolutely loved— sculpture— 3D—, working with drilling, working with my hands and that kind of a way of building was my thing. But conceptual art was something that I understood very severely, like, it was oh wow! this could take all the different parts of me and put them together. You know, like, being able to philosophise and think what's important and, you know, like, having a commentary on life as an artist. So that for me was what, ironically— was exactly— not what I thought when I was at the Uffizi, having this moment, I was not thinking oh! conceptual art. Oh, by the way, when I was coming back to South Africa, my ticket was from Amsterdam, and I went into the— what museum was it in? It probably was the Rijksmuseum, I think it was. And there was an exhibition... William Kentridge, Penny Siopis and various other artists that I knew, I studied Penny in matric, and she did her own talk. And so like I knew her and I sat there in front of this little TV of William's like a little animation, but all it was— was one chair and one TV. And I remember thinking, oh, wow, this is the South African art world and I mean, not that I ever thought I'd be, you know at that sort of point in your life, these are famous artists and you don't actually realise that the art world is also a real place with real people. It was just sort of like wow, look— I felt such pride in like— this is the important South African exhibition... it was in '93. Okay, so it's like before '94, and so it was an amazing thing to see that South African artists were relevant out there in Europe, you know, I would be interested to see who was actually on that show, because I knew quite a lot of the artists. Anyway, so then I came back and I studied— started studying at Wits Tech which had a massive impact on me. That's where, you know, where I feel like I was guided. All the stuff that I learnt when I was out there, I was guided into how to put it into a language. And then after that, I did a master's at Wits with Colin Richards which was my supervisor. And then to finish my master's dissertation, Walter Oltmann. And yeah, that was also like, ironically, quite pivotal for me in that even though I thought like the hardcore academic side that Wits was more interested in, wasn't in some ways something that I was so interested in, I was more interested in the actual art and art-making and how it communicates. But my dissertation was on Alighiero Boetti, do you know him— Alighiero Boetti's postal art.

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And I was making postal art at the time, and when I was making this work called ‘Pushing the Envelope’ that was in 1996 that I started that work, and 1997, a month before I was going to show it at a solo show at the Mark Coetzee Fine Art Cabinet in Cape Town— And I was in Europe and had never even heard of Boetti, and there I walked up to this little work, little postal work. It looked very similar to mine, mine was out of blue and red envelopes and this was out of green and yellow envelopes and I was like, I felt a kinship. It wasn't like— I could have felt threatened, but I felt a kinship. Because here was somebody else exhibiting in an incredible show in Venice, and it wasn't actually— it was a sideshow for the Biennale and, but I felt this, like this amazing connection. But Boetti had actually died in '94 and now this is '97, and then anyway, I started writing about his postal work plus his work being so similar to mine in some ways, the opposite influenced me – I had to push off and become more original. Because originality for me has had a huge currency. I mean, I think, I just assume that for most artists, I actually now know that that's not true for everyone. But you think that most artists feel that they're trying to cut out a space where they're being original. So then when I saw that Boetti's postal works, even though they looked like mine on the surface, and even if you have to see what drove him to do them was similar to mine. There's no way I could have ever been influenced by those works because my work was— the actual underpinning of context of my own life was too strong. And in fact, it was quite interesting ’cause I actually woke up with the idea for ‘Pushing the Envelope’ that I would write every place that ever slept a night, which had to do with my radical traveling, and needing to pull myself back to myself because I had— I felt like I needed like a psychological artwork, where I made a list of every place I'd ever slept a night and then I posted to poste restante that would be like: Kim Lieberman, poste restante, Cusco, Peru, which is like a system where you could go and collect your letters before the time of email. In any little town, you could go to the post office and collect your letters that somebody has posted you. So I knew about this and if you don't collect them, they send them back to the return address. So I based this work out of that experience of travel, knowing that things come back and ja, so I pulled myself back to myself with touching all the places I've ever slept a night. Okay and yeah, so Boetti's work, like some of them played— and I only actually found this out when I met his wife, we were going to do a two man exhibition, hopefully one day it'll happen. But I met his wife in Italy. And I didn't actually know this even though I'd studied his works in such detail and written a whole master’s on that specific, the specific works he had gone and posted works to, in France, to all the post boxes that were at the furthest edges of France, like to outline France.

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So you can see how this play of how we were engaging with post, his artwork, was quite similar. And then actually what what I did— I mean, just while I'm on this, are you interested in this Boetti track? I guess. Ok. So one of the things that I did 20 years after Boetti had died, they still hadn't taken his ashes to Afghanistan where he was very connected to. He lived in Afghanistan for seven or eight years. He had a hotel called the One Hotel, and because Afghanistan is such dangerous territory with the Taliban and everything, they've never taken his ashes to the Band-e Amir Lakes to scatter them, and when I read this, he had a show at the Tate Museum in London, and when I read— a friend of mine sent me the catalogue— then I read about the... that he hadn't had his ashes scattered— I thought, I can do amazing artwork exactly to that, where I took a map, because I was also very interested in Afghanistan. My own other path. I'd read a book about it and I had met a woman who lived there for eight years. So I've made artworks about Afghanistan already. So my engagement was there, and I took a map of Afghanistan and I took a silhouette of Boetti. And everywhere where a silhouette intersected a village or a town or a city, I posted an envelope there. So I drew Boetti over Afghanistan and then, ironically, in the middle, where his heart could be with Band-e Amir Lake. So I did another, it was the silhouette and then just that one to where he wanted to have his ashes... and it was quite interesting, because the one person who actually— I mean, I haven't even shown that work, yet, ever— and the one person who actually saw when I told what I did, she said, "That's so nice of you!" So they helped to get his ashes essentially, it was my sister, who was like, she got the ‘not art’ side of it, if you know what I'm saying, like the side where I was doing a gesture to him. Anyway, those envelopes were a drawing of Afghanistan, but some went, like, by mistake to Kenya first and then to Afghanistan or to India. So in a way if you think of a drawing where you've got pencil marks that are like sort of loose and scattered, it's that same kind of thing where on the world where before it even got to travel to Afghanistan, I started getting the envelopes back with Arabic, you know, return to sender on and everything, and as soon as you get the first envelope back you've made the work, there's proof that you actually did the work. When I first started doing these drawings over the world, I'd get back about 85% of the post. Now it's— when I did the Boetti one I probably got about 30% back.

There was another amazing one, while I'm telling you about these works, I was telling, I never knew this radical coincidence what happened, until I was telling, I was sitting in Boetti's bedroom with his wife telling him, talking about not... not yet saying “definitely are we going to have the show together”, but just connecting as human beings. And I was showing her this heart that I did over South Africa. So I took 36 envelopes, and I posted them in a heart shape over South Africa.

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To, like, places like Champagne Castle and Stella, anything that I could squash into having something to do with love, romantic love, commitment, any like, any of the places that I could find, what were the other places? Anyway, I posted that work over South Africa in 1998, at 3:33pm on the 19th of June, okay. At the end of that year, in 1998, nice with a heart, you could say I cast a little spell. But it was over South Africa. I met my husband. So a few months later, I met my husband in October. And that was it, I didn't really think much, actually, about the work, until I was reading from the catalogue to Boetti's wife trying to explain it to her. And I saw that exactly seven years later at 4:44pm, my son was born on the 19th of June, 2005. So like, it was just like, first of all, what made me like record the time that I actually dropped it into the postbox and then, like it was just like, “Whoa, this is quite—”

FLC:... Everything's connected.

KL: Ja, ja. Anyway, so. Oh, actually, that wasn't when I realised it. I was actually talking to somebody else when I realised it, and I told her the realisation. And when I told her that realisation of the time, she clicked, and she said, "I want you to have a show with Boetti" like, "I want to do a two man show". Like, it was a thing. Anyway, lots of things have changed since then. And we'll see if that ever happens.

FLC: Thank you for the rich answer. I'm going to go straight over to the next question. Can you tell us more about how, when and why 'Constellations' and 'Connected' were made? To which individual or collective historical or current day themes would you say these artworks speak to? It might be related to what you've said already, but specifically these works.

KL: So ja, so, Ann Patchett, who is a brilliant author, basically, she says that every author has their one story and they just write it and write and write again in different ways. So in a way, it's the same with artwork, so that no matter what artworks I'm doing, I'm interested in human influence on each other, human impact, human responsibility, why we should have the responsibility because we're constantly impacting on each other and so even no matter where I drive my conceptual car, it's... all of it comes back to that same topic. So I'll make a work like 'Constellations': we've got all the different judges, the tea lady, the car guard, and then they're all on postage stamp paper. The postage stamp paper is very specific: it's for post, and post is about reaching out, crossing boundaries, going into different cultures. Post is the one system that can travel anywhere, you know, it's an agreed upon system on our whole planet that you can post an envelope to an address and it will get there.

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FLC: Without a visa.

KL: So in the postage stamps, you've got your perforations, that are the grid, that are the connectors, and then you've got the idea of what post actually is. So, in the 'Constellations', there's, you've got your postage stamp as your base, then you've got the blood red figures. Now, blood red is the colour of our blood, of everybody's blood. Red is the colour of blood. So it takes us onto a same plane, all people from different cultures, from different backgrounds, okay, so it's a fair plane. It's not skin deep, or— and beyond the fact that I love the colour of blood red, and I also think like when I made those works, people responded so severely, I mean, those works... like people just loved them. And I thought it's such an interesting thing. Because it's so primal for people, it's about birth, it's about death, it's about life. The colour is inside us, so in a way it's hidden, but it's something that people react to, which I thought that it must be a connection with being connected somehow to our blood, to the colour of our blood. And then, on 'Constellations', the blood red thread which is color 26, which has got a whole gematria which is like a kabbalistic system of, of numbers. I'll explain it to you in a minute, but the blood red thread also connects all the people. So the rule was; it couldn't go over a person, it couldn't go over the paint, but any person that it could, it could connect with that it could see, so the silhouette, if it could basically see whatever other silhouette that it could go without going over another silhouette and it could, there if you go look at it, there's a strand to all the other silhouettes. But even the ones that you're not connected to because it would not be a straight path to get to them, you are still connected because everybody's connected to each other somehow. So that's a topic that I'm very interested in, like, because even somebody who does something quietly, not in a famous way, silently, who doesn't even know that they're doing something can without anybody ever knowing be completely invisible impact on the whole in quite a severe way. But everybody impacts all the time quietly. So that's— Did I... have I told you the other interesting thing about that work? Okay, with the strands of thread. In 2008 I made that work. In 2013, way when the work was here for ages, I found Albie's 'Free Diary of Albie Sachs' in a bookshop, I bought it, and I was reading it and it was... it was 2004... published in 2004, and in it there is a little bit, it should really be next to the work. It says— he wishes that he could tell the story of the court, I've actually— can I read it to you? I've actually sent it to somebody.

I've sent it to Anne.

I'll tell you exactly what it says. Yeah, he says:

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"I reflect to myself that relationships on the court are so intricate that each individual profoundly affects the total dynamic. This is the story I would love to write one day, capturing the way that ideas emerge like strands of silk from the bodies and minds and personalities of each one of us. But the more intimate and exciting our intellectual and emotional exchanges, the more confidential they must be." It's on page 177. When you look it up. ‘Free Diary of Albie Sachs’. I mean, it looks like I saw that and responded to that does it not?

FLC: Or if you saw your artwork and wrote that?

KL: Yes exactly, but his was published in 2004. I read it in 2013. My work was made in the middle of that, but I'm just promising you that it was that anyway. Well, my work from before was silk and even before he wrote this, I was already doing that in the works and the silk— the thread is silk in that work. So the gematria on that is it's colour 26, and Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh, which are the Hebrew letters. Now in Hebrew, every Hebrew letter has a number attached to it, numerical value. And so when you write words, you can add up words, so words and maths. Okay? And so let's say you are philosophising about a concept, you can say, oh, this one, and this one, this number and this number. Oh, wow! It matches, they actually match because they're the same number, or divided in two, or multiply, and that's how like, mathematical philosophy can take place. So, but, 26, Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh is like one of God's names, okay. So my birthday is on the 26th of July. So, I was always aware of that, and I exhibited in New York and went to 26th Street and there was a whole bunch of things that happened with the red thread on 26th Street in New York. That was where it was exhibited and, and so I'm just interested in numbers, and I'm interested... that particular one might have like a, I don't think of it at all like in religious terms at all, I think of it as in a... like in important energetic pathways or something like that. But that colour of a life force, and I use that colour 26 in huge amount of works, you know.

So, what was the question?

FLC: You spoke about 'Constellations', but not 'Connected'.

KL: Oh, 'Connected'. I actually did two different colours of 'Connected'. So I wanted to do a man and a woman, it's very hard to decide which man and a woman. So I went to the artist's thing of doing a self-portrait and since I have a husband it made it easy to find the man to do it. But it's not actually, I didn't call it 'Self-portrait with husband' or something like that, because it was just meant to be a man and a woman. I don't believe in archetypes.

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I did a lot of archetype work at the beginning, when I first— and I think that's highly problematic, because first of all different cultures would have different archetypes, but I don't believe there is an archetype because I think every single person in the world is different. So there's not one force, kind of thing. And so, ja, so and then all the lines inside that come from a specific pattern, which was actually a pattern like a colouring book from my childhood, but it had very intricate mathematical patterns and I just related to it and when I started to make lace, it was the kind of pattern that influenced me; lots of triangles all connected together, because that's what it says what I'm interested in saying. A lot of my lace works, the chaotic ground ones is that pattern, but the pattern that I used was from this childhood colouring book and it is about how every decision we make, how all our pathways and how all our relationships, how all our the travels, how everything we do is a pathway in our life and is and it connects us to who we are, to all the other people. And this was on postage stamp.

FLC: Thank you. Next question. Could you tell us the story of when and why these artworks were donated to the Constitutional Court Trust?

KL: Yes okay. So, I'd obviously, as an artist heard that Con Court was collecting works and the people were donating to them and I knew I wanted to be part of it, but... I'm gonna say it in a way that I've understood myself more lately. For some reason I didn't go and just do it a normal route. I think it was Clive van den Berg who was the curator at the time and just said to Clive, “Hi, I'd like to donate a work”. I just left it. I knew I wanted to the whole time, but I just left it. Like, in a way, my belief system, but I'm only making it an external belief system now and recently, is that many things that happen is just sort of by magic. You just meet somebody, you connect, you bump on the street, and that's how a lot of things come up for me. That's just how my life works and I love it because it's so exciting when something just happens by mistake, like finding Albie's book and finding that paragraph. I was in... so when I was in Cape Town in 2008, in December, and we were staying in a flat in Clifton and I saw Albie on the beach, because he lives on Clifton, so he's often there, and I went up to him and I introduced myself to him. He didn't know me as an artist, but nevertheless, I had catalogues to give him. So I gave him catalogues that have got a lot of my writing, what my works are about and I said to him, I would love to donate an artwork to the court. The first time I met him he said to me, look there really... it's full. There's no more space and ja, I mean it's full the court and where the works hang they hang and there's no more space.

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Anyway I still gave him my catalogues because we were there for a few weeks and I kept seeing him and he said to me, okay, look, he can't just accept it because there's a committee and in the beginning, it was just like, whoever donated he could accept and on the committee was Clive Kellner who I had a very strong connection with. I had exhibited at his gallery, Camouflage: Arts. Culture. Politics, and Karel Nel, who was at Wits and I was already at Wits at that time, actually finished with Wits long before, but I'd done a Master's at Wits. And anyway, he said to me, look, he'll present it to them and let's see what they come back with. Anyway, about a month later, I was back in Joburg and I got a phone call from Jane Lane and she said to me, “Hi, this is who I am. Thank you so much for your offer to donate a work to the court. We accept,” and then she said “...and do you know how lucky you are? There's hardly any wall space left.”

So, I was obviously very thrilled and I thought even if it's just a small work, which was how the two 'Connection' etchings came in. A small work in the library... I would know, you know, it doesn't have to be a— I came to meet with her here and she took me down that whole public gallery section and said, “Look, there really is no room here. But let's walk around and see if we can find you a wall.” And then we came on that one empty wall and I said, “Well, what's this wall?” And she said, “Well, when Bill Clinton came last month, they entertained him here and then there was some royals here, and then this is where Mandela comes to visit.” I said, “Well, what goes on this wall?” She says, “No, you can have this wall.” Okay, and that's why I made that work that size, actually. For then I could go and do it properly. I said to Albie, this is what I want to do. I want to photograph the judges and I want to come— So like some people would just, literally people who walk past and some people were meetings plotted. I had to, you know, wait for the important people to... give, have a few minutes for me to photograph them. I got to meet and have amazing, amazing conversations with a lot of these judges. It was an amazing route to make an artwork, you know, and then like some people like the tea lady, I can't remember what her name was, but she was like a very well-loved person, very pivotal, like she was part of the culture at the court. Other people might have just been moving through like a secretary. There were like Elizabeth Moloto, she was also like a very particular person. I also met her really beautifully, and I've since had different dealings. She moved from one judge, I think she was with Kate O'Regan at the time. And then she was with Edwin, ja, and then the guard outside he's like... nobody knew his name... And I had Catherine Admay from Duke University who lectured on the work and lectured on the court collection. She, initially— I met her over the phone and she asked me, could she use the work? Could she make posters with the work too, for her law students, but she's talking about art, and art and law and art and justice, obviously.

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And then she came here and she was interviewing all the different people who were in the work and she said to me, “But who is this car guard?” And I said, “I don't know, ask somebody…” And nobody knew, and that was quite important, that there was an... when I can say a new relevant person to the court, you know, but that's the part, is that he might be very relevant to his whole family. You know, there's something like that. To put it in a sort of clichéd way, We the People, you know. So it was very important to me. I wanted to be part of South African history and I believe that the court has got such an incredible like power and integrity, certainly how it started and I don't know, I wanted to be linked to that. And luckily, as an artist, you can, you don't have to go and study law and do all of those things to be able to come up here. There is another way you can be part of us. Hey, you know all about that.

FLC: Thank you. Yes, I do. We do.

You've answered this already to an extent, but it's still a question that I want to ask you. What inspired the title of your artworks?

KL: 'Constellations'?

FLC: 'Constellations 'and 'Connected'.

KL: So 'Constellations' is sort of beings moving near each other, connecting, influencing, impacting, pulling on, pushing and going around, you know, like. I mean, even though it's a constellation of stars and stars are more or less fixed, but they actually aren't. It's about that, but my other works that are from the same thing are human constellations, and it is about humans and 'Connected'. So I mean, I think it's quite literal, it's like— but it is a fascinating thing: connection.

FLC: You haven't used the word Ubuntu, but a lot of what you speak about connects to that philosophy of Ubuntu...

KL: So, Usha Seejarim, she curated an exhibition... I want to say it was last year, maybe it was last year, last feels so long ago, but 2019 or 2018. I think it was last year, for the Standard Bank Gallery. And she used one of the works of mine that is in their collection and another one that wasn't, as a starting point, you can actually ask her about it. There was a whole catalogue and everything. And Karel Nel spoke about it, and they video'd, they did video it, there is a Standard Bank video... I can tell you who to ask. But it was very much, I think it was called Ubuntu or something like... it was like that. It was very much about that and they, and they, and I was ecstatic that she used my work as a... like as you walk in, there were the two works and the one going this

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way was all about like internal Ubuntu and then the other one, which was more about— because I had one that had the, the lines inside it drawn, like 'Connected' the etchings, and the other one that was a painting and she used the other side of— the exhibition was all... it must have had hundreds of artists, 50 or 60. There was lots of artists. And it was all like external... Ubuntu to things, but you should look at that. I'll let you know what the catalogue was called, and you could just ask Usha about it, but it's very interesting. But yes, I mean, obviously refers to that.

FLC: Thank you. Next question. How do you feel about having your work part of the Constitutional Court Art Collection today? Additionally, what does the CCAC represent to you?

KL: So one of the interesting things, just a little aside but relating to that, one of the interesting things is when I made the work, I came here, I photographed the judges that worked here, and Arthur Chaskalson wasn't actually in the work and it was so hard to get a image of him because he'd already died, and so I couldn't take it. But it was a very alive work, I didn't take all the pictures, I didn't take the one of Albie, I didn't take the one of what's the architect's name? Ja...

FLC: Janina.

KL: Janina. Hard to track down a photo of her. But, I came here and I had a very visceral connection and then when I did it, a lot of the people that were in the work was still here. It's interesting to see... even Edwin who's now recently left, it moved historically, it moved from being an actual performance work, per se, to being a historical work. I'm very interested... I mean, I'm aware of that stuff, some works move faster, like here... you're in front of it, and then like sort of you sway away from it and it becomes a little bit more distant and it will keep changing until people will say, well, who are these people in the work? And how they, and the only way they'll find their relevance is in history books or not, you know? It won't be, like “Oh look, I got left out of this work!” You know, like, “How come I didn't get in the work?” It won't even have that conversation around it anymore, because that was a bit of a conversation or being, saying to people “Look, I'm in the work!” or whatever. So… I understand it's a changing experience of having an artwork here. I think, as I've told you before, when, when I, when I donated the work, they... the court came and they had this beautiful legal document, which was all fair to the artist saying, “You have your wall, you won't be changed, we'll never store your work…” I don't think that they thought about well, what about the fairness, for other artists to be, to, you know, in time, so I think...

FLC: And conservation…

TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING: 00:45:34

KL: ...even though like, like for my own selfish purposes, I always want to be hung and I never want to be stored and, but I do think that it is important... And for your conservation... sorry, I'm not as interested in that part, but I know it's the responsible thing to do. But, I think it's important that it collects in different times of history to reflect South Africa as a changing place and to include more artists that you know... if you didn't get in early doesn't mean that you're never going to get in, you know. Look at all these walls that could have art hanging, just as storage and your enjoyment ja, exactly. So, yeah, I mean, I'm so happy that you are all here, guiding it, keeping it... I think it's essential and important, because you know what happens with an art collection when it doesn't have somebody who feels like it's their baby and passionate about it, you know, becomes, there's no freshness to it. There's no, I think it's important to be on social media showing what people... what's going on here. It's very, very important because, obviously, I believe, art and the commentary of art from all artists are... it's an important dynamic to have alive, so which social media also gives and that's what you're also doing, not just the conservation.

FLC: Also part of the question: I don't know if you have something specific to say about this, but what does the CCAC as a collective collection represent to you, perhaps in the, in a South African context, or in a worldly context? What do you think of the collection, what's the message that it conveys out to the world?

KL: So I've got a question for you: are most of the works that are on it thematically, have they got something or conceptually, they've got something to do—

FLC: The overarching theme, I would say is the intersection of art and justice, and we... on social media we use the hashtags #ArtForJustice and #ArtForHumanity. So I would say that's the overarching theme, but there are some loose works that don't neatly fit into that.

KL: Okay, so I'll talk about the grander things. I think, one of the things that South Africa has got that is pivotal and core in the world is, was Mandela and apartheid, and after apartheid, and that lesson of our radical crazy, insane success to have come through something so vicious and so— I mean just a radical, radical concept— does it stop the recording when that happens [phone buzzing]? And to come through... I mean it was nothing short of magic or a miracle that, I mean, I've thought about it a lot the Truth and Reconciliation. I mean, having like those evil deeds being able to be let go of and sorry, let me just, also—

FLC: All the phones are ringing… [KL's phone rings]

TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING: 00:48:45

KL: Yeah, I'm just saying sorry, I can't talk right now. Oh, can I answer this?

FLC: Oh, it's fine.

KL: Sorry I'm in such a stream. [Recording paused]

FLC: [Recording resumed at 00:49:00] You were speaking about Mandela and the TRC.

KL: So, in a way, what was made. Just tell me the questions so I can just—

FLC: The representation of the collection to the world outside of it.

KL: So in a way what became concrete, like literally and figuratively was the court, the architecture of the court, the art collection, the conversation that it brings to the fore, like historically and now and what it represents to the world and saying what we care for in South Africa, okay. It's artists, but artists... it's not just one category artists, artists are part of the people. It's part of different economic, cultural, colour, race backgrounds, and it's an art, artists usually does what's very important in their art is the conversation, and so you have this conversation going on with all these artworks that are representative of South Africa, where we came from, where we came to. And I mean, I think that, that's, I mean, we're so lucky, and it's so, I mean, it's really a... it was a brilliant, it was brilliant luck. I mean, as far as I understand, Albie was very pivotal in making the art collection and the architecture and the court being such an incredible place for people to come visit. Because I also think that I think the court can be important and can have integrity and can have incredible judges and minds. But to get people, to pull it here, it has to be beautiful and it has to be a place that people want to go to architecturally and just this whole environment is incredible. And then it's got its own history, obviously with the jail and everything here. I came to rave here many years ago, people were freaking out, people were absolutely freaking out because it hadn't cleaned its energy into becoming a good space. It was way before, it was just when it wasn't a jail anymore...

FLC: Before the court was here.

KL: Ja, ja. And it was bad, bad radical energy and I mean, it was just the worst thing like it didn't really match like people coming, trying to be free of mind and really, I mean and so, yeah, I mean I think, I think art and artists and the full dynamic of conversation that goes into it is very important and it makes it also alive and also people will come and engage in a specific way with the court. I mean, it was a brilliant idea to bring art and architecture together with— Do you agree?

TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING: 00:52:01

FLC: Yes. The next question which is kind of connected to that, is how do you, how do you see your art as being connected to justice, or human rights in South Africa or more universally?

KL: So obviously, the work that's here is directly connected because I deal with people who have been directly connected to our Constitution, to the way that our country was shaped in, the after-1994 effects, okay. So I think that that's very important to me that obviously each person, Albie having his whole experience, Edwin having his whole— that all these people have lived through it. Today the figures bring through the dark history, but I made it with— talking about responsibility and more of a positive thing. So, it's just, I'm very interested in that, like if people understood responsibility, what their actions did, and how their actions affect others, people would be responsible in general, like whether you're just giving, giving to charity, giving of your time, like or your, you know, being fair, all of that it's all sort of like power of that into the arts. You can actually see it there as well. But yeah, it's important for me, I mean there— just tell me that question again, just to see if I—

FLC: How do you see your art as being connected to justice or human rights in South Africa or more universally?

KL: So can I talk about a work that's not here? We should actually have some of them here.

FLC: Sure.

KL: The work is called 'Softening the Edges', where I've taken— I collaborate with people on it where people give me R1000, then I give them R1000 back in a hundred R10 notes and I've cut a tiny little bit of the corners to round the edges of the note to soften the edges of the note, and so that notes are literally softened. Okay? And then people have to take their pile of a hundred notes and hand them out one at a time to soften the edges of someone's day, because it also softens the edges of your day 'cause giving is as lovely as receiving. It's probably, the giver is even feeling much better than the receiver. But basically that work is about, like, I mean, I remember when I was young artist somebody would buy like an artwork of mine and how lucky I'd be and my natural response to getting a bit of money would be like to give, to buy something from somebody who's making something on the pavement, a wire sculpture, a wire this or something so that they'd also feel good, and like that they've sold something and this whole thing of putting out money over and over, you make, you relief, you relieve the person's day. And I know it's giving a man a fish, not teaching a man to fish. Lots of people don't have time to teach a man to fish and even if they do, you can still teach a man to fish and give a man a fish, you can do both.

TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING: 00:55:18

If you get a lot of people to do this work, and I've done over a hundred so far, now I'm trying to get permission or partnership from the Reserve Bank to come in with me and do, now, because it's like more urgent that this work gets done. Do maybe half a million Rands' worth – get a lot more people involved in it of giving over money and having these rounded corner note as like an addition of South African money. This is actually, I just got a WhatsApp from the person who in the Reserve Bank I have been trying to get hold of. So basically, that work is about— So I take the corners, and I make an artwork, like a more traditional artwork, which is a the documentation of the work, but it's like a green line if it's green tens and it's all the corners of one person's collaboration, and that work sort of... as an artwork it's supposed to engage people on people below the breadline. What happened with this artwork, it's just a documentation of the real artwork which was an action of giving away the money. And the, softening the edges artwork. So I know that somebody who had to work in London, they had a whole debate about capitalism and charity, that's what the whole art is about. Well, all conceptual art, all art that I think is important these days is when the... as Mark Edwards would say... a concerned participant in society is what an artist is. Getting a discussion, becoming aware of people who are below the breadline who... R10 is actually going to make a difference to their life that day. Who, they will then be able to afford a drink, that drink or that half a loaf of bread or whatever it is that they want. And I think that, that's important like getting, getting that into human, into the man in the street, who needs that little bit of money. We went to Kliptown in Soweto with food packages and we put a R10 into all of the food packages, there were like 56 of them. So everybody had donated groceries, they just dropped off whatever groceries they had in their cupboard or whatever they happened to buy. And then you sort of try and make the food parcels even and then I went with my, with the group who organised it and my children to hand out the food parcels and I realised like, okay, so we put a R10 note in each one, okay? But that R10 note is gonna go... nobody's gonna save their R10 note and it's gonna, they're going to be able to spend it at their neighbour... And so that R560 had a knock on effect, like this, this person got it in this spaza shop, and then they had an extra R10, and then they... and so it went, do you know what I'm saying? And, I'm trying to explain this to the people at the Reserve Bank so that they would understand how... just all I want them to do is partner with me. They don't have to give any money. I will go round it up from whoever. But we'll be able to get into the informal sector a lot of cash that people desperately need, you know?

FLC: I look forward to getting a R10 note one day where the corners are cut off. I'll send you a picture.

Do you have any recommendations on the preservation and presentation of the artworks?

TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING: 00:59:01

KL: Of my works? I mean I've been making them for a long time, that paper is unbelievable quality - it's H-S-8 phosphorised quality that I got from the philatelic services in the government. They imported proper stamp paper. If it goes through the postal system it goes, it gets, you know, recognised as a stamp. So it's very, very good quality. The silk thread, brilliant quality, it's from Germany, I bought it in New York, it's really, really unbelievable quality. The colour doesn't go out of it so that's also fine. And then the oil paint on the paper, I've had, well, I think it was Ernest actually, like an archivalist look at it and say to me it actually makes the paper stronger, not weaker, the oil in it. So I'm quite, I think that the only times that it's ever come back to me when there was a problem with the work is when it was torn. If it got dropped and it fell or you know it was in transport and the glass broke – those are the— with somebody just pinned it to the wall without framing it, those are the times that these works have got damaged, but they haven't been damaged in other ways.

FLC: Thank you. Moving on to 'Landscape of the Court'. Please tell us a bit about your artwork 'Landscape of the Court'. How did it come to be and what does the artwork speak to?

KL: Okay, so after I did that initial artwork 'Constellations', I started doing sculptures and bigger work and so I thought, I'd love to do like a big sculpture of Yvonne Mokgoro and Albie and maybe one or two other people and have this lace draped around this area because it's such a stunning area, and then you can have big public art... you know, and I was doing—

FLC: The area being the larger Constitution Hill?

KL: Ja. And I was doing... the works... I started in 2011 with the idea for the works for Maboneng. So I just wanted to do a similar thing here, but there's the pioneers and the visionaries of that area and so that work feeds into that concept, and here... and then, I think after that work, I made certain works that were like big sculptural works and then I made for Nirox, for an exhibition there, a work with a very thin cut out metal, laser cut metal, that had an incredible amount of detail and if you look at my oil painting works, I loved that level of detail. And these very thin metal works look much more like me and my work, than the big sculptures. Beyond, and then also, I don't know, I just... I think I like them better. They look, and then so... so it changed into being... into having. Sort of like, technically it changed visually and practically into something that I felt was more me. And also when people read those works, they don't read “Oh, laser cut-out metal” like those other ones. I think that they're just, I mean, I'm making a work for the Sarah Baartman museum and when people have seen when I started to make it, people said, “Oh, is it paper?”.

TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING: 01:02:31

I love that, because that's what I sort of want it to look like: paper. Which, paper feeds into a whole bunch of other historic, interesting things. And so basically, to make a work... also, practically, to make a work that can be moved, that if the sun isn't working for it, which I know that the sun doesn't work for this cable, for the cable now. It can be outside. So, finding the right space, which was the space at Con Hill, where there's shade but it's still outside - that was interesting to me. And, just tell me the question again so I can just see if I'm being too—

FLC: How did it come to be and what does the artwork speak to?

KL: So the work also, one of the things that the lace, the cable lace is about: making this pattern that's definitely a pattern, is about like an event, a big event that happened either in your life or historically, and then how it ripples and how it goes out and how it ties everything together. So it was quite important that some was lace and very patent, and the rest of it was sort of like quite messy lines. That's sort of people's paths that when they go through the different figures, link to other figures, go to the trees, go to the bird, how we're all sort of like in this pool together. Bound in the bond, you know bound in the bond of life.

And... ja, so that was what it was about and then obviously, it was an offshoot of 'Constellations'. I hadn't included Arthur Chaskalson as I said, and I thought that was quite a missing element, being the first Chief Justice. And so it took me longer to track that down. I wanted to include Yvonne Mokgoro. It also took me ages to find, to get a photograph of her, she wasn't so easy, easy to reach. And... I sort of wanted to say... so what I said in 'Constellations' but even more visceral, more viscerally in a sculpture. Which, sort of when people go and feel a sculpture, they feel it with their whole body, you know, it's because it's in your space. And also you can travel through a sculpture in a different way. Because it's called 'Landscape', which obviously is a play on traditional landscapes. But, it's a work that you sort of... if you... I mean, obviously in a photograph you can be back from it. But if you're standing next to it, you can travel through it, you can look at it in, in a way that's very engaging and so ja. So the lace was very symbolic of big events that happened and how they tie us all together. And then the clouds I took, I came to the court, and I took photos of the clouds, as you know I showed you from over there. So it was a bit tongue in cheek like, cloud, landscape of the court and the clouds, and they were all, okay, over Joburg. But I took it from the court. I took the birds while I was standing there, like just birds flying past above, and so then it also taps into all the history of all artists who do landscapes or self-portraits or whatever it is. It's nice to tap into that sort of classic art history, and then, but obviously it isn't a classic landscape, but it also is because it's got clouds and trees.

TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING: 01:06:12

The tree, okay, and the other thing is the trees are... is one tree. I've repeated it in the work three times because I wanted to get that line of trees that you've got outside the court. But to ask somebody to draw that tree for me, two different trees, like they... it's so hard to draw that tree and I thought it's quite nice to have the repetition. But then the shadows of the trees, which are real shadows, and you can see there's that dustbin, that very heavy cement dustbin outside, and then there's the shadow of it... like the minus the shadow because I was only doing the tree shadows. So I took out the dustbin, but you can still see the outline of the dustbin there. So it was quite important that all the parts referred to the experience of coming to the court.

FLC: Thank you. 'Landscape of the Court' is a very large sculpture; are there any challenges when working with a work of this scale?

KL: Ja, it took a very long time. Firstly, the research to get all the people, then to draw it up, to have it cut out, to convince the laser, the laser place that their machines can do something, because it's not a very usual— It's like you're pushing people to do something that's unusual for them. So all of that research and getting the actual physical made took so long. And then the lace, the cable lace is literally back-breaking. I mean, I didn't do it all, I taught somebody to do it, but anytime that I did it, I was going for like physio once a week because it has to be done on the floor and a massive, like with lace it's called a pricking, where you put your pins in as you make it. So I made a huge pricking and the pins would, are actually little dowel sticks and metal dowel sticks as well, and so that takes a long time, it's very, very difficult. It took us ages to actually find the right material to work with, the cable, I mean I've tried different things on the way. And then, thinking that I had it all done because the frame, which was also very, very specific, it had to have the holes every now and again. So very, very neat, beautiful holes, you know, very regular - which also refers to the postage stamps. If you think about it, the postage stamps with the perforations - it's a similar kind of stamp-ish look. And then, you know I had it all ready, and I was like “Ah! I'm ready to go whenever”. But then actually sewing it together... now that it's finished it looks all neat and all, like quite simple and quite... It's quite light to look at. Okay, it looks like there's not that much cable, but you saw the level of intensity to get those pieces of lace into position that actually looked nice and that worked. It was... the one, the one lace that looks a bit like a collar, because now I'm quite interested in collars, and I'll tell you about the whole collar thing. So that was quite important that one piece looked like a collar. But another piece shouldn't, it should just look like the event that I'm telling you about - a wave, it looks sort of like a wave. We're in the wave of our life, you know, and you're on... in a current. And I've used all those words, I had a show called 'Human Currents'. The currents that flow between us.

TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING: 01:09:33

But the thing about the lace collars, which also links into Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and she wears lace collars, for political feminist statement. But initially when I started working with lace, and I was even attaching them to the little sculptures, to their necks because they were headless little sculptures, and I was like, “It's not a collar!” Like, even though it was around the neck, I would think why would people connect it to a collar? It's a full circle. But now that I learnt the history of lace and that in the 16, 1700s it was illegal in Europe for peasants to wear, to wear lace. It was called the sumptuary laws, and it was supposed to protect peasants from spending their money on things that were not responsible, you know, like not daily, but actually, it's like treating the person like they can't be an adult and think for themselves what they want to spend their money on. But I'm saying, look at these European laws, and I'm saying but what is— only royalty and aristocracy could wear lace. And I'm saying but what, what is royalty? Break that down. To me, true royalty would mean true leadership, which would mean true values, true morals, true ethics. If you have to have it in utopia what is true royalty, and then that could come from anywhere. That's not a bloodline, necessarily. You hope, you hope that people in royal positions would be royal. But it can come from anywhere, it can come from somebody who's born into, per se, nothing, you know, like, no financial, but you can still have a mind that is great and that can work for the world. So that's what I'm into. So then I started collecting antique or handmade lace collars. And saying, it was called 'Why the Collar' because I was interested in the bigger question, like why would we frame, why would we frame our heads? And then it was like, but whose head are we framing now, here in Africa? And I saw Yvonne Mokoro one, I mean I saw Thuli Madonsela one night and asked her “I'm an artist, can I take a picture for an artwork?” I've done one of Albie, I've done one of Given who works at Arts on Main just because he's such a person with integrity, but he's the building manager, and I've done various different people in fact, Mpumi Shabalala, who I met nothing to do with law, nothing to do with art, and she just seemed like a person of such integrity and she was working at the Constitutional Court, 25-year-old at the time, Zulu woman, and she's in this, in the work, she's that one figure of the woman that you don't recognise. And she's also, I've done a work with her where I painted her in 'Why the Collar'. People of integrity, people of... that's what that theme has in the work. So this, so now, when I come back to this, and I probably wouldn't have done it so collarish if when I made the work in 2017 and it got made immediately. But now I wanted it to look like a collar, because what a collar represents.

FLC: The next question you kind of already answered. So I'm still going to ask it, just so we make sure we go through everything. But you can say if you think you've already answered it enough.

TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING: 01:12:56

Please tell us a bit more about the materials you have selected for the making of this work? But I think you have been speaking about that. I don't know if there's something you'd like to add?

KL: Ja, so I mean, it's about... so I needed to find materials that would fit for, for like a public sculpture that were big and then, also it was quite interesting that the cable, because I started to work with like, metal, like, like a steel wire, just like wire, like thick, good quality wire, but it wasn't lace. You have to... so you can weave that but you can't lace it, which is a different kind of a weave. And so, it had to have, the cable had to have some kind of a memory so that it can actually bend and stay like that. But it had to also be flexible, and ja, so then it's PVC covered wire rope is what it's actually called and it is supposed to be UV protected, but I know when it's in the sun for too long it goes brittle, that's why it's much better if it's not. And ja, the actual figures are stainless steel so that they don't rust. And then the paint I used was as close to being, to looking like smooth and matte like paper. Also, I mean, imagine doing a projection onto that work, you know, or parts of that work. It would be interesting to do. I think ja, so…

FLC: Or even just having a sharp light shining at and working with the shadows.

KL: Beautiful. And also, if it is ever outside like just the natural shadows, the shadows in Maboneng on the floor, of all those works. Ja, ja. And also the colour, the white is because, I mean, the place that I initially picked for it, is... it gets very industrial as well. The white will just look really... it won't... you know, it'll look really... It takes out... also, on some ways it takes out anything but the concept of who are these people? What is this lace? How are they tied together? I haven't made it colourful.

FLC: Thank you. [To CM: You can take a few more pictures because we're getting to the end.]

KL: I was getting involved in the—

FLC: The installation process of 'Landscape of the Court' is being documented. How does this add value to the interpretation of the work?

KL: Say that again.

FLC: The installation process of 'Landscape of the Court' is being documented through the TV crew and us doing the interviews and taking the photos... How does this add value to the interpretation of the work?

TIME ON AUDIO RECORDING: 01:15:46

KL: Okay, so while it's being installed, I'm thinking about it quite a lot. So basically, as they're documenting it, they've sort of got a live version of my feelings about it and in fact, their own... also their own interpretation and the history. So I think that the documentation is quite, it's important. Also, it's interesting for people.

FLC: Thank you.

Is 'Landscape of the Court' in some way connected to 'Constellations' and 'Connected'? If so, how do these works speak to each other?

KL: Yes. It's all about the thread, and the line that connects us and how we are not separate from each other, from the whole, from the world, from the planet, as Corona will tell you.

FLC: Is there anything you would like to add to be recorded in this interview? Maybe something we didn't ask you.

KL: I think I told you quite a lot. I don't think so. Okay. I'm happy to look at it.

FLC: Thank you very much for taking the time. I'm gonna have fun with transcribing this and I'll probably ask you for a few names and spellings.

END OF AUDIO RECORDING: 01:17:03