

Anders Kreuger 37

Charlie Morrow: Can you hear me?

Anders Kreuger: Can you hear me now?

Charlie Morrow: Now I hear you. Yep. Well, good to see you.

I'm happy that we'll have a chat for our audience of *Immerse*, and so I would ask you a question, what was the first time in your life that you had a sense of being someplace else, a new immersion that made that step?

Anders Kreuger: I think I'll have to say that when the first time I read a book, probably, and I was five years old, and the book was by Tove Jansson actually this Finnish writer. I am not entirely sure what is the English title of the of book. It might be *The Comet*. In the original, it is *Muminrollet på Kometjak*, which means, *The Moomin Hunts for a Comet*.

I still have that book in my bookshelf. I stole it from my parents' house, because I want to remember that that was the first book I read, and I remember, it was just a process of slowly understanding how you read a book as you go along with it. In the beginning you're just trying to put the words together and then suddenly you are flying and you're completely immersed in the story. I think that's my first experience of this.

Charlie Morrow: Thank you for sharing that. I'm curious now, that based on that, looking at your work now as a curator and as an appreciator and lover of artistic experiences, I was wondering how you would connect that initial experience with what you're doing now. Is there something once that door opened that led to where you...?

Anders Kreuger: Once that door opened, it continued to open. It's that door that continues to always, not just stay open, but open, I think. And the imagination is something that needs probably some stimulation and you need to keep it alive. And you also need to practice letting go and practice immersion in a sense, I suppose. It is a skill that you need to entertain one way or another.

By entertaining it in the literal sense, but also by challenging yourself into territory that it may not be entertaining on the surface of it, but actually trains you, a bit like you train AI today, trains you into further immersion and further exploration and written language is just one way in which we replace telepathy, right?

So we have, at some point in our evolution, decided that telepathy wasn't enough for us. So, the animals have it, I suppose. They understand each other

pretty well and we decided that we wanted to do something else. And then language is handy because it actually allows you to do quite well what telepathy allows you to do, which is to read other people's minds.

If you can talk to each other, if you can exchange messages through language, you have more control over how the recipient receives your message. And it can be used for different purposes. But immersive states, inducing immersive states, I suppose is one of the ways in which you can use this replacement for telepathy. And then there are others as well, and they were invented also, maybe even before language, which one knows.

Years ago, here at the Kunsthalle where I am sitting now, during the pandemic we decided to do an exhibition based on the two earliest forms of visual art that we know about.

The first one is approximately 3 million years old, and that is the idea of picking up an object from the ground and seeing an image in that object. And then we don't know if these early humanoids who did that in south Africa. If they saw the face in the stone if they enhanced it a little by cutting a little part of the stone away or, or sanding it a little bit or, just improving it a little bit. We don't know that/ But we know from the archeological evidence that they carried it around because it was found somewhere else than where it first originally occurred. So the manuport, the handheld object is a very early and the earliest evidence of humans seeing images and responding to them and wanting to keep them and carry them around and share them with others.

And the other is the cave painting. We do not know how early that happened but the cave paintings that have been preserved are something all over the world. In the beginning, when they were first discovered, they were discovered in Europe. So they were considered a European thing. But that is not true. Obviously, I don't want to be too precise because I don't remember exactly, but I would say 50, 60, 70,000 years ago.

So those are visual means of expression. And then you can always argue, can you have these visual forms of expression before you have language? Are you able to organize yourself well enough with. What is left of telepathy in order to actually make these things happen? And could the early humans spread across the world crossing borders of water in a collective without being able to speak to each other?

That is an interesting question that has been asked by an American linguist. His last name is Everett, who actually comes from a sort of unusual background for a linguist because he was a missionary. So he grew up in the religious environment, in the United States, and then he was posted to Brazil and he

befriended the Pirahã people in the Amazonas. They call themselves something else. I forget now. He studied their language and he found that their language lacks a lot of features that the guru of American Linguistics, Noam Chomsky, had postulated to be absolutely crucial for any human language and universal features. He challenged Mr. Chomsky. and Mr. Chomsky doesn't like to be challenged. Mr. Everett has written a book about this controversy and where he says that Homo Erectus, the predecessor of modern humans, must have had some kind of language because how could they otherwise have crossed over into the archipelago of what now is Indonesia, which already then was separated by water, without being able to organize themselves into building a raft.

And how do you do that without ... only with telepathy. I'm thinking about a raft. You are thinking about a raft here. Here are some pieces of wood. Here's some twine that we have made from other pieces of wood. Let's put a raft together. Doesn't really happen without communication through language, he postulates

It's an open question. So it is not a coincidence that immersion for me started with reading because it's a little bit how other theories of the origin of language have thought about how humans acquired language. It's a bit like the conditions may have been there in the construction of the human brain and the environment and then suddenly as if out nowhere the airplane lifts and there is language you can speak, you can read each other's mind language and be understood. No one knows when that happened and how, but there are many theories about it. And the interesting with this is that today it is a very lively field of inquiry and debate. It has been so for the last 20 30 years, not more. And the reason for that is that in the 19th century when there was, in the 1860s, I believe it was, when there was a lively debate between creationists and evolutionists in the natural sciences, of course, caused by Charles Darwin's theories, the linguists in France, the French Linguistic Association, they decided to stop discussing the origin of language.

Because they didn't want to be embroiled in the discussion between creationists and evolutionists. So they said, let's put a moratorium on this discussion for at least a hundred years. Let's simply stop thinking about how language appeared, which is crazy because it's one of the most interesting and important questions you can ask about this thing.

There's lively debate now about this and just to connect to my own practice, it's very visual what I'm doing. It's very spatial, it's very intuitive in many ways, but it is also very much based on the obligation to find the right word, drive and discuss what you're doing because the worst thing you can do as

somebody who tries to help artists to find their way to the viewer is to say, “I like what you do, but I can’t tell you why, or this is interesting, but art is bigger than language. It operates in the spheres that language cannot reach, so I actually cannot say anything about it.”

That is not just irresponsible in terms of your own function in this system of trying to connect the viewer to the maker, but it is also, you are abdicating. You’re abdicating your own role if you do that. I think my role is probably to connect the immersivity of language with other forms of immersivity in order to be able to do what I do as a curator, which is to always work with, for and through other people in this order. You cannot do this alone if you’re not an artist. You cannot do it for yourself, for your own career, for your own satisfaction because there is always a viewer – hopefully many viewers at the other end. But you also cannot do it without yourself, without your own ideas, without your own passions, without your own convictions. So you need to be a little bit manipulative as well and work through other people. And this is the controversial part and the dangerous part.

In fact, it’s also the part that turns what I do into an art form. To be a curator is not to be a facilitator or a communicator or an organizer. It is all of that. Of course, but it can never just be that because it’s also a way of being an artist through other people, which means that you don’t have to work with yourself as material.

That is an important distinction because in art education, particularly perhaps of the higher levels in the universities and art academies, students are implicitly or explicitly told to work with themselves, their own experiences, their own thoughts and their own personal development as material whether that is correct or not, whether that is a good approach or not, I’m not sure.

Not always, and not for everybody. But as a curator, you’re sort of exempt from that. You don’t have to dip into your own life. You can use other people’s lives as your material. And to some people that is a good way. And I think I’m one of those, I’m trying sometimes to do other things.

Occasionally, I have also appeared as an artist in exhibitions. Always prompted by other artists who have taken on the role as curator. It’s always been a back and forth that an artist is appointed curator of a big exhibition. And then they want to play with that by inviting curators to pose as artists. And that’s how I have been included in these things and in my writing practice, of course, it’s also always a take. because I use own experience. I use my own thoughts, but then I always graph them onto someone else’s project. And sometimes I feel a bit restrained by that, but I always have to portray someone else’s work faithfully and efficiently. And that sort of retrains me as a writer. But more

often than not, I am quite happy to be triggered by someone else's practice and someone else's immersion, and just take that as my signal and then go off on a tangent, and then hopefully in the end, this becomes something that expresses me and the other person at the same time. So working with, for and through other people is my way of creating a situation where the viewer, the visitor, the audience, the public can have immersion. But it needs to be setup. The conditions need to be there.

Charlie Morrow: So it is a beautiful panorama of, let's say, the workshop in your mind. A couple, a few thoughts just to share with you, because I've thought along the lines that you have about the development of language and I've had experiences with many cultures. Perhaps the most powerful anecdote I can tell is when I was having coffee in New York with Wallace Black Elk, Junior who was Leonard Crow Dog's bodyguard, one of two. Leonard had just come out of the Wounded Knee event. Richard Erdoes, Austrian artist displaced to America by Austrian Nazis (in the 1940s), brilliant photographer and author, brought Leonard Crow Dog to my studio. I had the opportunity of working with Crow Dog, his family, and his bodyguards, doing the recordings for New Wilderness, which are unique in the way that he was his own producer rather than as if an anthropologist might come in with a microphone and record the practice of the American Indian as an object. They were all deeply involved and so it opened up a dialogue with every one of the group.

Black Elk said to me, "I learned telepathy in a flash. I was walking with a medicine man from my tribe as a kid, and there was a flash from a stone on the ground, and it opened up my mind to telepathy."

Your story about telepathy preceding language seems to me very true. I know my own experiences were that I didn't want to learn to speak because I had such a rich dialogue going on with the people around me. Learning to speak seemed to me a way to dilute what was the original experience, but I got kind of tricked into talking by my mother.

Anders Kreuger: There is a whole literature about thought before language. They look at children, how children pick up language before language and they look at people who lose it, aphasia and how brain damage makes language disappear, what disappears first and what stays longer with you and all these things. And I actually had the... It's very interesting, this, the flash that you talk about from the stone.

Because it, to me, it even seems to predate the methods that shamans use. Shamanism, which is not an ism, is really a code device, right? In the stories about shamanism, you always have initiation, a disembodiment, recomposition of the body disappearance, reappearance.

The different levels of consciousness and existence. The underworld, the earth, and the sky and the travel between them. But those are systematic versions of the experience that Crow Dog described to you.

Charlie Morrow: I suppose so.

Anders Kreuger: Those are already embedded in language because they're stories that the shamans can tell to their congregation.

This idea of what thought is before we acquire language. It's fascinating. It's simply because it's out of reach, you know, out of reach for the tool that we're then used to describe it with.

What was my point? My point I think was that the attempts to find a way back to telepathy, once you have layered language over it, have been curious and sometimes mostly very unsatisfactory.

They have even given a bad name to the whole idea of telepathy. They have brought disrepute and disrespect on the whole idea of reading the mind, which is unfortunate because it's a very central idea and a very central problem to humanity, right? How do you understand things? Languages can perhaps just be a tool and there's an understanding underneath and beyond and around language. For instance, there are books about telepathy from the early 20th century that precisely create a situation of hopelessness and how should I say, ridicule almost around the whole idea of trying to pin down telepathy?

You sit in a room in Bristol or Manchester and you think about something. Then someone else sits in a room in London. Then you try to send that thought to that person so that this person decodes the thought in precisely the same way that you formulated it. But that's just the wrong way of thinking about the whole problem. Because for that we already have a solution. Right? In 1920, you would send a telegram and that's it.

Today we have other technical means. So you're trying to find a solution to something that is not a problem. You basically lower the status of the whole idea of telepathy by doing that. Upton Sinclair, you probably know. him as a novelist who won the Nobel Prize; his wife, came from a very wealthy family, and she was very interested in telepathy.

She funded a lot of this psychic research in the 20s in the United States when there was a lot of money around, and her money was among that money. Upton Sinclair wrote a book that is not so well known, called *Mental Radio*. Have you ever heard of this book?

Charlie Morrow: No, tell me.

Anders Kreuger: It's case studies about telepathy that he sort of tries to prove it. His wife was also one of the funders of Sergei Eisenstein when he went to Mexico. That's an interesting connection as well. You know how cinema comes into this idea of immersion as well, of course. Because I think many people would probably cite cinema television as a first immersive experience rather than a book maybe.

Charlie Morrow: Right.

Anders Kreuger: I'm just randomly trying to connect stuff, but it is, for me, I think a central problem: What is understanding, what does it mean to connect to your environment to other people? How do we do it and why? And are we looking for solutions in the wrong places? And are we inventing problems that don't exist around this?

Charlie Morrow: That's a very clear response. I would agree with you. But I think what they say, if there are two people in the room, there's 10, maybe 10 opinions, if they're the right people. I think the inquiry is perhaps a lot more interesting than the solution. What you're talking about touches on work that I have done with sound and evoking telepathic experience.

I think you know that one of my practices is dream singing, where I watch the images in my head while I sing without listening. My voice acts as a pedal on a bicycle. I'm just aware of making the voice rotate the energy as the images in my head take place. I do this always with at least one witness if not an audience.

I found that this actually works very well. I was doing this on Swedish radio and got a lot of responses from people who said that I tell the imagery and then they sent me notes saying, yes, I saw something similar. I saw something somehow in diagonal relationship to that inner world. Another time I took a group of musicians together.

We had a group called the Ocarina Orchestra. It was a group of amateurs, not musicians, but people who had a musical sensibility. None of them were trained musicians. Most of them were from other fields. Sociology, Jaron Lanier was amongst that group who invented virtual reality. It was an interesting group including a number of political theorists. We found that we could, at times, share imagery while playing and improvising where the improvising was a kind of energy level that activated our awareness of the inner screen. The inner screen, I think is what happens. Some people have said that that inner hooks up when you speak language. You're not even aware. If you understand each other truly it means your language has excited similar resonance in each of our inner screen.

Looking at the word telepathy in its origins in the Greek language, it refers to distance. Pathos in the strongest sense of an intense emotion that was multidimensional and doing that over distance. I think that the word itself reveals that the linguists grabbed that when they made television, which in European languages is even easier to see, like in Fernseh and Fernsprecher.

The whole idea is that an image happens over a distance. While there are gifted individuals that unaided by technology see things at a distance, I think the more personal one-to-one is really what it's about. That telepathy is really something that everyone does all the time, and it needs more awareness and so it can be used as a tool.

Anders Kreuger: But it could also be one of those things where awareness is a two-edged sword that also partly kills when you grasp it, it dies, a bit like cutting up the body to find the hidden organs. Just to realize that this organ that you are looking for dies when it's taken out. You know, it can't be microscoped. That of course is the understanding of Chinese medicine in relation to Western medicine that you can't understand an organ in isolation from other organs because you're just looking at the dead organ and you don't understand how it functions when it's dead. It could be a little bit the same with telepathy.

I just remember that Robert Filliou, who is one of my favorite artists that I have had the pleasure to work on, has a series of performances and also graphic works called *musique telepathique*: Telepathic music where he gathered crowds in Paris and New York, I think it was or Canada perhaps, which he always called Canadada, by the way, Canadada. He was mostly in Vancouver with his friends there and people were supportive. They were gathering at the same time, singing from the same sheet, but not seeing each other's sheets, singing together across the Ocean.

Musique telepathique: there are several versions of it. Everyone who uses these keywords like futurology, which he also used, which the futurologists don't use themselves because they call themselves futures researchers. They always speak of futures in the plural, but that's a different story or telepathy or astral planes or celestial travel or all these things that people on different relationships to shamanism. Whether its neo shamanism. New Age, shamanism or a more anthropologically based study of shamanism use. The interesting thing with all this, I think, is that it's knowledge that you can access on different levels, and the tradition has already been broken. The tradition of how to hand the knowledge down has, at least in many parts of the world already been uprooted and destroyed, but the desire to reconnect has not been destroyed. People are trying reconnect based on the desire to reconnect to what came

before and the tools are not there anymore because in many cases, shamans were just singled out to be killed. For instance, by Stalin, they were troublemakers because they gathered the local communities around them.

They specifically killed shamans in the 1930s and 40s in Russia. Probably that happened in the Americas too, but I know less about that. So people have a strong desire to reconnect and then the way they do it is through esoteric knowledge that they can access today, which is mostly kinds of knowledge in quotation marks could be valuable, but it's still cheap, you know, like occult television programs or New Age books of different kinds. Or simply rumors that they hear about what used to be there before. And also disconnected pieces of memory, childhood memory of old traditions that somehow managed to survive, like dances, songs, simply ways of gathering how people came together in the 1970s in the Republics of Kalmyk or Udmurtya or something like that in Russia or Siberia.

They have vivid memories of this. And they try to piece them together into practice that approximates shamanism, but there's no one to tell you whether it's actually shamanism or not. Like if it's real or if it's constructed, if it's cheap or if it's expensive or valuable. We don't know. We just have to respond to it as people on so many various levels. I have a friend in Udmurtya who is an artist who's trained as a printmaker, and one of his projects is to give his people their names back.

He has a Russian name in his passport. But then he has a clan name that he has sort of. It's a combination of talking to your elders and finding out things that they have hidden from you and inventing new traditions for yourself, and then entering the dream world and finding your inner screen that you were mentioning.

His artist name is Kuchyran Yuri. That's how he's known. He is performance artist, video artist, organizer of events much like yourself. And one of his projects is, again, something similar to what you mentioned. It is dream singing. So basically he puts himself into a state of trance and then he sings about giving his people their names back.

So he finds names for his friends in his dreams. And then he gives them back. He hands them out as gifts to people. Some of the people started using the names that he has found for them or invented. One in the same.

There's this CD - I think it is from the two thousands - which is called *Kuchyran Yuri Dreams*, where he basically chants for hours and walks through his dreamscapes, and then he finds these names and then he gives, of course, it's

in a certain sense, it's totally unrelated to anything traditional. It's contemporary art.

It's his own practice, but on the other hand, it's deeply connected to his experience as a child, his openness to that world, which was always there. Unfortunately, now it's very hard to keep in touch with these people because of the war and because their weak position within Russian societies, so they, most of them cannot afford to speak up against the war.

And if they don't, it's very hard for me to be in touch with them. I can only be in touch with the people who speak up. It's not a rule that I have that have, that I have written for myself, but it's my own feeling about it that if someone is willing to tell me what they really think about this, then I'm happy to stay in touch and to try to help them with various things such as transferring money and selling work and all these things.

But the people who don't do that, I don't feel comfortable continuing a relationship with now. So my whole line of work that I started was to bring artists from the Finno-Ugric ethnic minorities from inside Russia to Helsinki to work seriously on their practice and present to Western audience through Helsinki, for which there was also funding, because there's funding in Finland for this. There's something called the Castrén Society that funnels money from the Ministry of Culture to these things. I had to stop when the war broke out. That's a pity because it's something that I thought that we here could be good at this point in time and space. We have quite advanced plans for it. Maybe not canceled, but they're completely on ice.

Charlie Morrow: It's quite important work that you're doing because your own awareness is motivating gatherings. I think that's the way that you gather people around you and when ...

Anders Kreuger: Well, but I'm not a very convivial person. I'm quite the bourgeois individualist myself, you know, so it's a bit of a paradox, but I really have a longstanding interest in these practices.

Really since my study years, and my plan for my studies was to write a book about how the human face appeared in visual art and what are the typologies of making the human face as an image and where it comes from and what is the evidence of it and how we can trace that through pre-history.

I was using Siberia as my field of research. but I was much too young. The Soviet Union had not yet opened up properly. So it was very difficult to actually pursue this. I put it on ice indefinitely. Maybe I shouldn't totally kill the idea, but today of course, it's inconceivable that I could go to places like Khanti-Mansiyskn, Russia and look at what I have in the museum.

I did a little bit of that work in the 2000s and 10 and 15 years ago but that work was mostly connected with a living artist, a contemporary artist. The actual anthropological art, historical research I abandoned – so that an old thing. It was inspired by an encounter with a very advanced thinker whom I was lucky enough to have as my professor, when I was 19 or 20, from Norway, Helge Rinholm in the United States at Bloomington University. They have a very strong school of semiotics at Bloomington, Indiana.

Charlie Morrow: I do. Who are the principal names for our listeners who might know something about it, who would recognize some of their names?

Anders Kreuger: Well, there was a Hungarian born theorist called Sebeok – or probably he's Sheb in Hungarian – who was one of the leaders there. That's the name I can remember now. But of course, the whole school of thought goes back to Russia and before the revolution with Roman Jakobson and Prince Trubetzkoy who were the first. Prince Trubetzkoy was a complicated figure because she was also one of the Eurasionists in immigration. They basically founded the Prague School of Semiotics in the 1920s when in immigration left Russia.

From there, structuralism, in not only in linguistics but also in anthropology, history, social thought, is one. Another is the anthropologist who hated the Brazilian indigenous peoples and was always carrying a gun and was there because, so suspicious of them, but he made them the foundation of his career. So he piggybacked on their thought and distorted it. One has to say as well, quite brutally, to fit his own theory. That's an interesting story in itself.

Helge who unfortunately passed away very early was I think the only genius that I have known. He spoke something like 30, 40 languages and he did research on many more. His overall line of inquiry, which opened up to me gradually because I was Lithuanian at the University of Stockholm and he was the professor. But that was just one of many languages that he knew inside out. And then after getting to know him better and talking to him more, he started telling me about this project and it also connected to what we started.

The main idea behind structural linguistics was not invented in Russia, but in Switzerland by Ferdinand de Saussure who was a linguist, a Swiss linguist in Geneva in the late 19th century who said that the way to move forward with the study of language, is to think of it as a science and try to divide language into smaller parts that can be studied systemically in relation to each other. One way of doing that was to separate the expression from the content of language. The way, the operation that he undertook in order to make that possible was to say that there is nothing that really combines the combination of sounds that we use to pronounce the French *arbre*, which means of course,

tree. The sound image, *arbre*, is in our minds connected to the mental image of a tree, whether it's visual or has another form, doesn't matter. It's a mental image. They're connected and that's how language works. But there's no reason for the connection. It's arbitrary. So the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign was the foundation of modern structural linguistics.

The idea that there's nothing to prompt us to use a certain combination of sounds. A certain idea. It's convenient because it makes it possible to build a system, but it's counterintuitive to say the least, because we always think, and of course, one reason for adopting this idea is that there's so many different languages that use so many different combinations of sound to mean the same thing.

We think because there's translation between languages, we assume that they mean the same thing. So it's practical. It is a practical idea and it led to many advances in the study of language. But my professor said that it's a false idea that the way language works and then develops, and because it develops, we lose track of how it originally worked because we can't see this at the surface level of languages today. The way it works is that we symbolize the world around us in sound by using the shape of our body.

That forms the sound as images of the concepts and objects that we're trying to express. So for instance, everything connected to the idea of a cave or a hollow space or something hidden from sight, something dark and either menacing or comforting, is connected to the sort of inner recesses of our speech apparatus, the larynx, the deep throat, basically.

So the sounds *ch* and *gh* are very often used in connection with the concept of something in close. That was his thesis. And he set out to prove it by studying a lot of languages and, but not just at surface level, not just how the languages manifest themselves today when you speak them, but how they have been recorded historically, and most importantly, how they have been reconstructed by comparative linguistics in many, many different language groups. Not just in Indo-European, but all the others. So it was an impossible project that obviously broke his back, but he really set out to prove that this idea of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign was misguided from the beginning, that language has a deeply symbolical symbol function. The linguistic image follows the thought image that they're intrinsically connected at a much deeper level than we're aware.

Charlie Morrow: it was in the platonic dialogue, *Cratylus*, that the same discussion emerged. It's a fascinating discussion in this platonic dialogue between Socrates, and Cratylus, and the few others who are getting drunk.

And talking. Cratylus is a very pragmatic person in it. In the discussion, Cratylus says, well, I'm aware that I come from a place and up there we say these sounds for these words, and therefore I have some sense of meaning, at least with my family and the locals. And that's different from place to place and we have to put that together.

And Socrates and the guy says, well, but hey, isn't that just very superficial stuff? And so then Cratylus says, well, then I guess some of these sounds, they relate to the brain, the mouth, the throat, the belly. The rest of me and the meaning lies in the body and that, and there's further discussion and they go down into gesture and implied energy and so forth.

And at the very end of the conversation, Cratylus says, oh, well if I take all of this into consideration, I guess I can understand. And Socrates says, no, no, you have to know what's going on.

Anders Kreuger: It is a very old discussion. That's exactly why he wanted to reconnect as a linguist with the scientific method. And then after he died, his library got scattered and some of it's in the Stockholm University Library and it's very hard to follow, you know, to trace it now and to see how far he had come is almost impossible. But I recently read, something very interesting about the almost extinct languages or the Andaman Islands. You know, the Andaman Islands between, roughly between Burma and India?

Charlie Morrow: Yes.

Anders Kreuger: They belonged to the British Empire at some point, and now they're in India. And they were actually occupied by the Japanese in the Second World War, so that was the only part of British India that was actually occupied by the Japanese.

But that's not the point. The point is that there's an island there called the Great Sentinel Island that you probably heard of, which has the only uncontacted people in the world because they kill everyone who tries to get there because they know that nothing good comes out of an American missionary.

So they kill him on the beach and then they withdraw to the forest. So no one knows about them. But the Andamanese, the great Andaman language group, is considered to be a window into what languages were when the first modern humans, not the first humanoids, but the first modern humans left. As you know, there's some populations in Asia that are still very dark skinned.

You have the Negritos in the Philippines and you have populations along the Mala Malaysian coastline, and then obviously you have the Aboriginal

Australian people. who came later, but they wandered through. The population of the Andermans is one of those very early populations to come out of Africa.

And this linguist has studied their languages and cracked them retroactively because she wasn't a native speaker, cracked how they're constructed and confirmed that the native speakers, the few native speakers that are still there ... in her theory, the main distinction in their language relating to proverbs and nouns and everything else, is whether something is inside the body or outside the body. Anything that happens inside the body is a particular system in the language. And everything that's outside of your own body is a completely different system.

So that's the main distinction. And apparently, I don't know for sure, but apparently the Andamanese languages are the only languages that have retained this distinction or have [ever] had it. We don't know. It's tempting to assume that they have retained it because there's of that [00:38:00] prehistory of the, all these peoples and how they came, and I'm not sure, I don't think Helge, my professor, knew this because this has been working for the last 10, 15 years, and he died in 1990 ... It's interesting.

Charlie Morrow: It is. It reminds me that there's another very early thread, uh, that comes down through the Navajo, uh, Navajo, which is based on power. A dog cannot kick a horse. A horse can kick a dog because the horse is more powerful. So in the Navajo language, everything would be expressed that way. Let's say the horse allowed the dog to kick him.

Anders Kreuger: Hmm. That's very convenient because the Navajo are also the, Nahuatl. Right? So it's Aztec. Yes, and the Aztec civilization was all based on this.

Charlie Morrow: So power is such a big issue in language altogether. You know, certainly people who are kind of skipping to another view of this power look, looking at, Elias Canetti for example, who's talking about the mesmerization of the crowds and formation of modern fascism or let's say 20th-century fascism. There's, uh obviously other varieties.

Anders Kreuger: There's some new versions.

Charlie Morrow: Yes, exactly. But you keep on because I think the powers are, in fact, in the language. I see a lot of it now in the use of new media in the mesmerization and in the recent revisionist approach to US government that began last week where the turn of a page, where the power structure has decided what language is, and hence, reflects this power shift.

Anders Kreuger: But luckily there seem to be more fingers on the page now turning it in different directions. Right. Did you read the *New York Times* this morning?

Charlie Morrow: Yes.

Anders Kreuger: That's interesting.

Charlie Morrow: Yeah. Would you spell that out if you would, just for [the listeners]?

Anders Kreuger: Yes, what I read this morning, just before coming to work, was that they're actually backtracking on the federal funding freeze because it was challenged in court.

So now they're saying, no, we're not backtracking, but we're not doing this. It doesn't mean we're counseling it, but we're not doing it.

Charlie Morrow: Exactly. Well, the horse has permitted the dog to bite him.

Anders Kreuger: Exactly.

Charlie Morrow: Yeah. Well that's the arrogance of that particular power.

Anders Kreuger: Yeah. But you know, the power of language comes from, it's possible that it actually does come from this body world distinct that we were talking about a moment ago.

Charlie Morrow: Yes.

Anders Kreuger: And that's what you're saying about Navajo, right? It's based on the bodily distinction of the individual and the potential potency of the body to inflict harm on another body. And that's what decides your place in the system.

Charlie Morrow: Exactly. So there's the human beehive.

Anders Kreuger: I don't think that my professor was thinking in those terms. I think he was just at the beginning of ... looking at sounds and language like. basic speech sounds. And because they are produced at different levels that we use in this apparatus for producing sound and how their location in that system would correspond to the location as it were, or the mental image in the outside world. And I'm really curious to know what he would've made of the languages if he had known them.

Charlie Morrow: I think that's an excellent question. Jumping for a moment back to what it is that you do, the power of color, space – it's been intriguing to me, for example. And let me give two examples and then ask you to try to reflect on that. One is that in Kabbala. No matter [whether] living or inanimate

are in touch. The energies and the, materials, the subatomic structures, the whole nature of the universe is an interconnectedness of all things, including thoughts.

Then coming forward, the color theory, let's say, as it's expressed with Kandinsky who said that. Color expressed emotion. There were concentric and, uh, nonconcentric motions and flat colors that the colors themselves reflected their trajectories in space. And so the color not only had a hue, but, since it's motion over time, and of course, everything has a time factor.

So I'm just curious because in your installation – so now I'm speaking as a visitor to a number of your shows and your designs you create within the walls of your gallery, a shape and a color and light, and then all of the art within it has a chance to have a dialogue because of the way you've set it up.

So the almost kabbalistic sense that these paintings or sculptors or diagrammatic work or photos, they're all somehow in dialogue with each other because of the universe that you build for them. Say for example, the extraordinary universe you just built out of a small room filled with owls.

Anders Kreuger: Yeah, well that wasn't me; it was the artist, but Oscar Eriksson Furunes from Norway.

Okay, interesting. I first of all, Kandinsky, just a sidetrack, which is important. If you look at pictures of Kandinsky, you see that he clearly has facial features. That is because his family was from Western Siberia and Mongolia, the Mongols on the Russian side of the border across from Mongolia Lake. So that was his ancestry and his formative experience as a person, but also as an artist.

He was a law student at the University of Moscow in 1889. He spent a year in a place called ... it's not Siberia, but it's Northern Russia. And the Komi are a very interesting and once powerful people. The oldest written evidence of a pheno language is actually not Hungarian or Finnish, but Komi. And he spent some time there and he was very inspired. He studied their customs and some of his first paintings, which are not abstract but colorful, [were] inspired by his stay there.

And then, of course, before the first World War [he had already] moved to Germany and then he started his career as an abstract artist and, and theories stuff, color and art, and spirituality in art. As you know, I think there's a connection in Kandinsky between his cultural interests, maybe more than his cultural background. But I think they're both connected, but more his cultural interest, before leaving Russia, and his sensitivity to color and his connections he makes between color and spirituality and the spiritual, the physiological and spiritual characteristics of color. I am not specifically following any system ...

Goethe or Kandinsky or any other color theory ... I do two things. One is more pragmatic and it has to do with the fact that we have an exhibition space that's not very large, but it's well proportioned and designed by an artist, Martti Aihla, who was a mutual friend and passed away a couple of years ago. So it's designed by an artist, not by an architect, and I'm very lucky to work in a space that is not made to be photographed empty, but is made to be a recipient of [all] new content.

Which is exactly how he projected it. So I want the viewers to always have a new experience when they come. I don't want them to recognize themselves. I want them to feel, oh, it looks different every time you come. And then you come back and you look for new experiences. That's one thing. The other thing is that I want a medium to connect the works that we're showing and sometimes the different artists that we're showing.

At the same time, I want something that provides a link between their thoughts. The thought and work of the other artists that we show at the same time, and quite often it's the wall color. So I've been experimenting with different kinds of wall colors. In your exhibition a few years ago, the wall color was red, as you remember.

Quite, not absolutely, but more like an architect's version of Bright Red. That was what you got. And then we reused that for Michelle O, who is the filmmaker from New York in his 80s now, and textile artists from here also. That was the following show and we used all kinds of color from bright yellow to muted purple, from different shades of gray to sharp green and light blues and purples.

I mean more like a picture gallery red, more muted shades of red and all these things. We do it not to play museum. That's not the point. The point is not to sort of borrow from the practice of exhibiting historical art and use that in contemporary art, although sometimes that's the outcome.

That's how people see it, and it's okay, but that's not really the reason. The reason is that the exhibitions require or crave a sort of medium. An emotional and perhaps even telepathic medium in which to float, in which to live. And, and that's part of the practice of making a program, not just individual exhibitions, but programming is key to running a space like this.

What follows off of what? What connects back to what and what comes forward ...

Charlie Morrow: Well, thank you for explaining.

I think it works. And it's not so much aesthetic, it's more to do with expanding the context for every exhibition and connecting the context to something else. I think it helps.

I hope it helps because if everything was white or gray, then the focus would be on the work. Which is what you want with that. You know, you want the work to stand out and be alone, but sometimes that's not the best way, you know, to treat the work. The work also needs companionship quite often, and the wall color helps to provide that.

Charlie Morrow: It is a marvelous approach. And, thank you for explaining it.

Anders Kreuger: Sure. Well, immersion can have different phases and something that we do quite often, to round off here, is that we do create dialogue between two artists, who may not know each other. I already mentioned Michel Auder and Outi Martikainen, two artists who have probably never heard of each other even before we put them together. Textile and video worked from the 1970s mostly in one exhibition. Also with furniture kindly provided by I studio, the legendary 90 years old or even more than 90 years old furniture designer. But then also quite recently, we had measure of showing.

An extraordinary painter from Manila, from the Philippines, Maria Panucci. She's not Japanese at all. It's just a stepfather's name. And Amelia Tanner, who is another extraordinary artist from Finland, who is a bit younger than Maria and works in paper. So she cuts paper with a laser beam that doesn't quite cut all the way through the paper.

So she creates ripples, moirés. All kinds of distressed responses in the paper, fiber to the light, and then she also punches the paper with a bookbinder needle, but all her works are on paper or through paper with paper. Then Maria's work is extraordinary because she's one of those painters who managed to always paint the same painting and never paint the same painting.

So all her paintings are brick walls. Usually black, but not always, which are made in a very elaborate way. And they function a bit as a, I call them motherboards. You know, in my writing about them, I call them motherboards because they're basically like computer circuitry. When she paints them, she spends a lot of time doing it, and she's basically coding all the things that she thinks about or listens to or reads into the practice of painting these bricks.

And then she doesn't know. And again, we're back to the. She doesn't know whether the viewer can decode the same information that she coded into them, but she hopes that some of it might, communicate through the painting to the viewer. So that was an exhibition last year that we called "Figure" because of the fact that both artists worked very consistently with a method,

with process. But they become figures because [they] become very identifiable as images, but also playing with something that I think is extremely important, connecting back to Kandinsky, which is the word that English doesn't have, and English doesn't have a lot of things. I mean there are many very important concepts and objects and phenomena that English doesn't have a good word for.

The most annoying lack in English for me as a curator is that you don't have – which we have in Sweden. ... We don't have a good way in English to make a distinction between articulating something on ... giving it concrete shape and form and that's something that in my native language in Swedish, we can immediately tell by using the word *gestalta*, if an artist has [done] her homework or not [or] if an artist has transcended just putting things together that she has read about or tries to emulate because they're fashionable, or whether she has actually amalgamated them into something that becomes a new form or a new image. So the word *gestalta* does that for us. It is something on a higher level immediately and we know that the whole idea of giving form and shape to things is not a design.

It's not utilitarian. It is not form-giving which literally means to give form. But that's very specific that is giving form to a use object. whereas *gestalta* is formatting. It's the closest you can get in English, but formatting in English is too technical as well. So maybe let's end there on the idea that the tools that you need in order to create immersion presuppose something that we don't have a word for in English, which is the deeper meaning of "giving form to."

So, because only when you've done that, can the viewer decode it as total immersion shapeless, boundless, boundaryless immersion, but you need a prompt, and that's why I said that my first immersive experience was reading a book.

Charlie Morrow: Anders, thank you so much for sharing so much of yourself and of your thought and your practice.

It's been an honor to have you on Immerse because I think you have a total vision of it. I think that you, in your descriptions using the Swedish word to bring forth something from what it is, that you've gathered in all of your practices. So I appreciate sharing your inquiry and I hope you continue to have doors open for you because I know you share what you've learned at every step.

Anders Kreuger: Well, yeah, as you get older, doors tend to be sort of half closed rather than half open. But that's life. And, you have to make the most of the space that you inhabit, basically, which is what I'm trying.

Charlie Morrow: Thank you for being in this interview and,

Anders Kreuger: Uh, thank you for inviting me. And I appreciate your feedback because you have such deep experience of these things from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. I also know of your very long-standing connection to an indigenous culture in North America, which I think is very meaningful for anyone who wants to understand your practice, perhaps mostly your individual practice, but also I think your organizational practice because it also comes from that philosophy of doing things together that native Americans have preserved better than many other people. And I think that has informed you as well as your career.

Charlie Morrow: I learned of a certain kindness and community love that is very rare from these indigenous communities in North America. There's a sweetness and a very special thread.

Anders Kreuger: I have a little bit of experience working with people from those communities as well, and something that I learned was that you're not supposed to ask questions because questioning is interrogation, and interrogation is a colonial practice. It's the inquisition all over again. So what you do instead is that you start telling something and then you elicit a response, and then you make a little joke about what the other person chooses to tell you and then she or he might choose to tell you more.

That's basically how it's done there. I understood. I tried it and it works much better with those people.

Charlie Morrow: It's very polite and very respectful. I think respect is a huge part of these cultures. I think that the broad world culture have lost a lot of the sense of respect, respect for the nature of the world.

Anders Kreuger: True. But it doesn't work in Europe, if the most common complaint about somebody is that he was so rude. He didn't ask a single question.

Charlie Morrow: Thank you for sharing that.

Anders Kreuger: He was not interested in me at all. He just spoke about himself. That's what people say here in Europe, in New York. You have to ask questions in order to be polite and show respect. So it's completely the opposite, actually.

Charlie Morrow: Fantastic.

Anders Kreuger: Interesting to realize that, late in life which I did.

Charlie Morrow: And me late in life too. Even later.

Anders Kreuger: Okay, Charlie, maybe this is it for now and thank you again.

Charlie Morrow: Pleasure to be together. Have a good day.

Anders Kreuger: You too.