Everyday Climate Champions Podcast:

Transcript Episode 3: Art as Climate Activism

Dalya Massachi (host): Thank you for joining me, Dalya Massachi, your host for this episode of “Every-day Climate Champions.” Today’s topic is Art as Climate Activism.

Dalya: You may not have realized that art – in its many forms – can be a powerful way to relate to climate change and climate solutions. Climate art can spark a meaningful conversation and inspire us to become more active in the climate movement.

Dalya: Today I’m talking to two amazing women involved in the new Climate Gallery. You’ll hear about how they work with art and artists that address the climate crisis.

Dalya: Logan Evasco is the Climate Gallery’s Program Director. She’s also a graphic designer and director of Climate Creative.

Dalya: Mira Musank is a garment refashioner and textile waste upcycler. She’s one of the first 5 featured artists in the Climate Gallery.

Dalya: Logan and Mira, thank you so much for joining us today.

Logan Evasco (guest): Oh, we're so happy to be here.

Mira Musank (guest): Thank you for having us.

Dalya: So Logan, can you introduce me to the Climate Gallery?

Logan: The Climate Gallery is an accessible venue to display and engage with climate art. Currently we're producing the Climate -allery as a virtual reality gallery, so an online gallery that can be accessed through VR or any device that has a browser.

Logan: The long-term vision for this Climate Gallery is to become a physical space that can serve as a hub and a place to display artwork from artists who are engaging with climate change.

Logan: We need to figure out ways to show people's experience in a clear way. What better venue is there than art?

Dalya: Is there anything unique that you think art can contribute to the climate

movement?
Logan: Yeah, definitely. Art touches people in a different way than listing statistics. Like 75% of animals have gone extinct in the last 50 years… that's a meaningful statistic, but an artist can take that same concept and convey it in a more meaningful way to a different audience.

Logan: So, for people whose statistics don't move them, maybe art

will. **Dalya:** Did you want to add anything, Mira?

Mira: Yeah. You cannot really solve problems by working on things by yourself. So there's a lot of challenges in the climate crisis, and they are all interconnected. So it's very important that we as a community of people gather together and solve challenges from various perspectives.

Logan: I found myself in 2019 being very concerned about climate change and I was already a professional graphic designer . And I started saying ‘what if I use the skills that I have?’ So I started engaging in that way. And I found a ton of other people who were also saying ‘how can I help?’. And that's when I realized: Oh, this needs to be tackled from many different angles and we should utilize the skills we already have to do that.

Dalya: Well, I like the idea about using art to reach a wider audience.

Logan: Yes. And that's actually part of why we're also doing our first gallery as this virtual reality gallery, using Mozilla hubs, which is a free platform. We might get people who don't usually engage in climate conversations, who are interested in new technology.

Dalya: Mm-hmm. Well, speaking of that, I was wondering if you could explain what virtual reality is, especially for those of us who may not have experienced it.

Mira: People who have been gaming a lot, the environments in the game itself are made in 3D, right? So you are moving your character into a 3D world, like beyond a screen, outside of your physical embodiment of space.

Mira: So a virtual reality gallery is gonna be like that as well. Like you go, you click on a link on your web browser, you enter a room, and then you assign yourself a digital, avatar, and then you move with your keypads. or mouse clicks to go around a 3D space in your screen.

Dalya: Okay, so it's very similar to a robust video game.

Mira: Mm-hmm.

Logan: It is like a physical space that you can walk around, on your computer or phone or VR headset. But the best thing is that there are proximity microphones,
meaning as you move your character around, if you're near someone else, you can hear and talk to them. You can actually walk away from the main group and go have a little side conversation, like in the real world.

Logan: Every day I see a new group of people who are interested in using their art skills, and applying it to climate. We had an open art submission thing at the beginning of this to find our featured artists, and we only had it open for three weeks and we got 50 submissions. And we were like, 'Oh, we gotta stop. We're only able to choose five!' You know? So because of the success of that and the extraordinary caliber of the art that was submitted, our second version of the gallery is going to be a more open submission where people just submit one or two of their own works so that we can actually be more inclusive and have more people featured.

Dalya: Well, speaking of that, the first exhibit of the Climate Gallery, I know that exhibit is called Artivism: a combination of art and activism. Can you tell me about those five artists?

Logan: Yes. We're so excited about these five artists and we're excited also for them to be able to continue to use their galleries after this time.

Logan: There is Klara Maisch. She bounces around from Alaska, California, Washington, Hawaii. And she does scientific research, so she will physically be out on glaciers, and then she will paint those glaciers or she'll show the advancing of tree lines in her paintings. She is documenting, but also making something really beautiful. So, combining the science and art pieces together.

Logan: We have David Solnit who is a carpenter, puppeteer. He does screen printing. He's the person that all the climate orgs go to when they need signs for protests or street murals.

Logan: He does his own work, but also he gets other people to do their work. And then he facilitates, making it on a large scale. So he'll take one person's design and then he'll get 50 people together to come screen print it in a weekend, and then we'll have hundreds of copies of that design.

Logan: And we have Minori Murata, who is a Japanese artist based in Tokyo. She is an art director, visual artist, does a lot of different mediums, especially VR and AR. And so she's done things that are about climate and waste in Japan.

Logan: And Rose McAdoo. She's also a scientist, works with, the NASA Atmospheric Research, camp in Antarctica.

Logan: She forages different things from the environment and makes cakes out of them. And the cakes are shaped like. different things -- like she's trying to express scientific or, natural perspectives through making these extraordinary cakes.
Logan: The last one is, of course, Mira -- who's a textile upcycling artist and fiber artist.

Mira: I am creating mostly one-of-a-kind garments using fabric cutoffs, textile samples, remnants, scraps, and pre-owned clothes. And sometimes they are things like used linens or curtains that are just no longer used. Sometimes we have clothes that have nothing wrong with them, but you have associated bad memories with them or the owner passed away.

Mira: Many people consider these materials as textile waste. So I'm glad to give this material extra chance on extending their lifespan and keeping them away from landfill for as long as possible.

Dalya: Yeah. And I know that there's something called ‘fast fashion’.

Mira: It focuses on instant gratification of getting trendy clothes at a fraction of the price. But the biggest thing about fast fashion is that it has a planned obsolescence. You like it when you wear it once, but then you realize the materials are so cheap and they easily deteriorate.

Dalya: So we end up with loads and loads of textile waste.

Mira: And we artists, we like to talk about this kind of stuff. For those folks who want to repurpose the fabrics at home try to talk to your neighbors, your local artists, your tailors. A lot of us have been working with fabrics and repurposing materials a lot, and therefore many of us will definitely have some ideas on what to do with them.

Logan: She made, out of these tiny little pieces of waste fabric, she's made these kind of beautiful, unique, colorful pattern textured ruffles.

Logan: And she assembles them into different types of clothing. So dresses and jackets and gowns. She's showing through creativity that waste. Doesn't have to be waste.

Logan: So every artist is quite different, but all of them use their art to engage in particular topics, engage specific people.

Dalya: Wow. It sounds like it's gonna be a new, amazing experience for… anyone. You mentioned that one of the challenges is there's so much good art out there. What are some of the other challenges?

Mira: Especially with this first iteration of the gallery, we are specifically looking for artists who are encouraging direct action in the climate crisis. When we asked ‘how does your art help further the fight in the,climate crisis?’ quite a few of them were having difficulties answering that question. And I personally don't blame them because there is that perspective of: you either do art or you do work in climate. So there's that challenge to connect, why climate and art should be considered together.
Dalya: You really wanted to combine the two.

Mira: Yes.

Mira: We are bombarded with so many informations every single day, and, and there are so many bleak news so there's that whole vibe of despair or hopelessness oftentimes so it's important for us to also recognize that part. That there is that heartbreak, and not so much that we want to lean heavily on that, but we also want to embrace that, hey, that is part of our struggle as well and we are here to help each other, to sort through that.

Logan: We wanted to do more than just have conversations. So we've created a side pot of money that we're doing environmental justice micro grants for small projects or individual organizers.

Logan: We have engaged with Black Millennials for Flint as one of those grantees, and we're building our other environmental partnerships as well, like 350 Bay area – it’s an organization that works on fossil fuel resistance.

Mira: I'm excited to see what kind of solutions or ideas we can conceptualize and realize together.

Dalya: Yeah. This art is hopefully leading to a larger community of climate

activists. **Mira:** Yes, absolutely.

Logan: I hope other people see this and go, ‘I could do that.’ The more we have people talking about it, the better. Right? So let's do it!

Dalya: Yeah! People who want to either participate in the climate gallery as an artist or just experience it, how can they do that?

Logan: Go to our website, it's climate.gallery. We have lots of different ways to get involved and you'll be able to get tickets and experience past Climate Galleries, or go host your own meeting in the Climate Gallery.

Dalya: Great. Thank you very much, Logan and Mira, for telling us about the Climate Gallery. and your specific work in textiles, Mira.

… And thanks for illustrating how art can offer an important way to get involved in climate solutions!

Logan: Thank you so much for having us, Dalya.

Mira: Thank you so much, Dalya. This was great.
Dalya: Listeners, Logan and Mira have shared some great resources on how to engage with the Climate Gallery and climate art. Please check out the show notes below to follow the links.