

Unbox Your Words Course - Session 2

21 June 2026

Materials

Nicole McLaughlin is an upcycling designer known for transforming everyday objects into wearable pieces. <https://nicolemcLaughlin.com/>















The Weird Show: <https://theweirdshow.info>

From their post: [https://www.instagram.com/p/DYXe6yZDJU /?igsh=MWprYXJs bDFldjBxcg%3D%3D](https://www.instagram.com/p/DYXe6yZDJU/?igsh=MWprYXJs bDFldjBxcg%3D%3D)

"Every object is one decision away from meaning something completely different. That decision is context....The material already existed. The only thing missing was a different question about what it could be. Collagists do this with images: take a photograph out of its original context, place it somewhere new, and it means something it never meant before.

McLaughlin does the same thing with objects. The logic is identical — appropriation, recontextualization, new meaning — just three-dimensional and wearable."

The Point of Relation podcast

Host Thomas Huebl interviewing speaker, posthumanist thinker, poet, teacher, and author, Bayo Akomolafe

Listen to podcast and read full transcript: here

<https://pointofrelationpodcast.com/podcast/bayo-akomolafe-mapping-new-realities/>

Watch episode here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7kgPzozjIY>

9:54

Bayo: So speaking about desensitization or resensitization, I often like to speak about doors and cracks.

And maybe the way that I would enter it this time is to say that I am – maybe with regards to the ways that we’re trying to address these problems, these springing up upheavals, these eruptions, the ways that we’re trying to address racial injustice or genocide or climate collapse or pandemics or the decline in democratic trust or the rise of proto-fascist impulses or the prospects of the United States where I’m at right now devolving into a civil war.

The ways that all these address things are addressed is to find a solution, technobureaucratic solution, a new app, a conference. I’m not downplaying these things, but if you can get a handle on it, it’s probably a door. And I’m wary about doors, brother, and doorways, because doors and doorways are architecturally anticipated. They’re already built into the structure. They’re already part of the logic of what already pre-exists or exists. No need to put a pre, they already built into the logic of what exists, right? They grant exits and access, they swing in and out, even leaving the house is still being part of the house. There’s something about doors that preserve the logic of the structures that they’ll built into.

But the thing that isn’t anticipated, cracks are not anticipated. No architect designs cracks. You can’t design a crack. Cracks are designs' ecstasy, they erupt, they’re the excess of architecture. They erupt and they are unanticipated. I feel that most of our solutions preserve the prevailing logic.

So desensitization for me, brother, is having a curious and a cautious suspicion about solutions. There’s some way that all the solutions that we offer seem only to just move the pieces around. But cracks are not guarantees, they’re processional, they’re not recipes. They’re not like this is a guarantee, this is a deeper guarantee or spiritual bypass or something. No, they’re an invitation to stay with the trouble.

13:57 Bayo: So desensitization is a coming to the monstrous and resensitization is playing and experimenting with the body of the monster and allowing the monster to shape shift us. We’re not talking about healing here, we’re talking about mapping new realities, which is my concern.

Thomas: Mm-hmm. Yeah, it's beautiful. Even though I think we were trained a bit differently, but I think we're surfing in a way in the same space because I very much like what you just said. Just to frame it maybe in different words, but when I hear you talk about the cracks, I think what's the capacity of us to be in the discomfort of a changing world when parts of us don't want to change?

Bayo: Yes.

Thomas: Because in fluidity, those cracks don't crack. So when something cracks, so you have cracks in concrete walls, you have cracks in streets, you have cracks in the non-moving aspect of reality, cracks appear as a kind of a disturbance, now I need to fix the road, I need to fix my house to bring it back to normal. But I think the essence of the nature of a crack is also that I am used to a non-changing reality that I get so used to that the crack actually wakes me up to, what just happened? And then I have a chance maybe to rethink if I want to bring my house back to normal or if I want to change my house. And that's lovely.

15:52

17:10

Thomas: I love that. And maybe you can share a little bit about the background, that doesn't want to be backgrounded and what's the skill not to try to fix the reality back to normal, but to be able to allow new realities to emerge. I think that's very, very foundational.

Bayo: It is – I feel that question, beautiful. No, you were going to say something, brother, did you complete that?

Thomas: No, that's it. I want to hear you, mm-hmm.

Bayo: Okay, so maybe I often like to scaffold my responses. When we think about cracks, you think the idea of a crack, especially within our modern sensibility, is to fix it, is to put it back together, right? It's cracked. That's an inadequacy, that's some kind of impoverishment, that is a problem. And so the thing to do is to try to put it back together and my mind immediately is drawn to Kintsugi, this Japanese art form.

I think one apocryphal account of how the art took off was some kind of leader, an authoritarian figure, a chief, of course, in Japan, or was it in China? I can't remember, but I think it was in Japan, broke a precious pot, a teapot. And I don't think he had access to Amazon to just order a new, would have been the easiest thing to do. I don't know why he didn't do that. But he decided to send his underlings to a town to go get it fixed. And the people who brought a solution, just stapled the thing back to, and it was so ugly. He said, "There must be another way of holding space for the brokenness of this precious item."

And then others came up with the art form of applying gold lacquer to it. And it was such a beautiful thing that the art form took off that some artisans, ceramists would take pots and break them intentionally to create cracks. It started to be that it started to feel like the crack was the thing they were after, not the wholeness but the crack. And that almost creates an involution of

expectations. It's a poetic shift that might invite us to notice quite shockingly and surprisingly, that cracks precede the things that are cracked.

That it's the chaos that gives birth to the wholeness. In the refusal to fix, because the gold lacquering is not a fixing. It is more like a mapping of the space." 20:40

22:00

Bayo: You asked this beautiful question then, how do we develop the capacity to stay within this field of experiments that isn't about fixing things, but is about staying with the cracks? I think storytelling is very important, storytelling. And here's what I mean by that. I don't think of capacity as individuated skill like, it's now my capacity. I don't think of capacity in that way. I think of capacity in terms of the scholarly word term affectivity, and affectivity is the capacity to be in response with, right? It's always a relational thing. It's not something that can be reduced to an isolated modern subject.

So when I think of capacity, I'm thinking about a milieu, like a topos, a ground of calling into. And I think calling the insight, the skill sets around libating a space, creating a space that says, "Hold on folks. Don't just rush into the solution yet. Let us hold each other in this trouble together." That takes storytelling. It takes a little bit of eldering, what I'll call eldering. That is, in my tradition, the elders held this sacred space of weirdness. The elder is not just the old person, the elder is the weird person.

It's crazy in a very affectionate way, not crazy in pathological way, but crazy in a sense that the whole village is fighting and the elder is laughing in the background and they come close and the elder slaps everyone's faces and tells them to go fetch a pail of water. And then it nullifies everything that has been going. It doesn't solve the problem, but the elder is always a way out of the binary.

So there's something about eldering and storytelling and the vocation of public intellectualism that adds to the constellation of practices that might help a bubble. And I don't want to think of it as a bubble, but let me think of it as an ecology of practices to emerge that is not about solutions, that is about cultivating a shared response to crisis, that is about staying in those troubles. 24:40