

Claude Schryer: Immersion in Hope



Canadian Claude Schryer is a Zen practitioner who believes in the power of art to shape a better future & dedicates much of his life to this pursuit. He has been a sound & media artist, having released several electroacoustic soundscape CDs in the 90s. for 20 years, He served as an arts administrator with the Canada Council for the Arts in Inter-Arts after creating that department.

He is currently an environmental activist and in 2020 launched his bilingual 'radical listening' Conscient podcast, which explores art and the ecological crisis. He also offers workshops on art and sound & the climate emergency.

When I heard Schryer's podcast with Hildegard Westerkamp, I was moved as much by the interviewer as by his inspiring guest. Thoughtful dialogue and warm atmosphere. I reached out to Schryer and came away with this interview. He is enthusiastic and engaged. He welcomed the opportunity to discuss immersion and the moderating of a podcast. Midway through our interview, he turned the tables and began interviewing me and, in the end, we each came away with our own podcast – one for immerse!, a second for Conscient.

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"The world's a bad place and there are those who are raising awareness. And there are those who say: Here's what you can do about it. That sort of action-oriented activist, engagé art. And then there's a third category of escapists and dreamers, also very important ... so somewhere between those who are raising awareness, those who are inciting us into action and those who are helping us escape from it."

Charlie Morrow: Nice to see you, Claude, and, glad that you set this beautiful SquadCast up. This is my first, my virgin run on SquadCast, and it looks terrific.

Claude Schryer: Yeah, it works well.

Charlie Morrow: I wanted to discuss a little of what happens in your mind when you interview a lot of people for these kind of projects. It seems like we've both earned that spot now.

We've done lots of communication prior to the current podcast series, but as longtime interviewers, I think certain kinds of things come through one's mind. I found, for example, in exploring the notion of immersivity, which we'll touch on because, that's what my series is about. I found that I got to understand my subject a lot, lot better through conversations with the folks who have been my collaborators and even people I've done huge projects with have taught me new things.

When we addressed it straight ahead. You have an agenda in your interviews as well and that was very interesting for me to see how you'd come up with your agenda and how it was manifest through the folks you were talking with.

Claude Schryer: Well, let's start at the beginning. I was trained as a composer, so I've always been working in the sound arts one way or another. And I worked with Murray Schaeffer and Hildegard Westerkamp and others on the acoustic ecology movement in the nineties. And then I got a job. I worked at Canada Council for the Arts for 21 years, running their interdisciplinary programs. And I kind of stopped doing production then, but about six years ago I started a thing called Simple Soundscapes because I was feeling the urge to record again, so I wasn't doing interviews at first, I was doing either monologues or field recording, linked to my Zen practice because I'm a Zen practitioner.

So I haven't really done the interview thing until about last year when I decided to do the Conscient podcast, which is in a way an extension of my Simple Soundscapes project, but it's all around, an essay I wrote, which is on the very first episode called "Terrified" cuz my at-the-time, 17-year-old daughter was, concerned about what field she would study at McGill or whatever university she went to.

She ended up going to McGill. And, that was a real traumatic experience because she was concerned about climate change, of course. Mm-hmm, and she wanted to know what she could do. And I decided to become much more active in the art and climate change movement. And because as an audio artist, why not use that medium that I know well to record conversations with people who I either know well, and I know they have good things to say, or people I don't know at all. And I have to learn more about. So I became a kind of a podcaster, but not a journalist in the sense that my intention is not journalistic, It's more anecdotal, but it's knowledge based. I need to know more. I share my knowledge. If it works, people like it. Great. I do it in French and in English. So it's about learning.

I call it a shared learning journey because I didn't know enough about some of the technical aspects. And a good example is eco-grief. And today, actually there's a panel in the US that's talking about eco-grief, and I've connected to those different communities. The activist community, the ecological anxiety and ecological grief communities, the music and art community, and I'm trying to pull together enough knowledge to make a difference for those who are interested.

So, for instance, I mentioned I'm doing a workshop next week at The Beast in Birmingham. So that's an example of reaching out, but very few people are registering because quite frankly, people are scared of the topic. When you talk about climate change or even worse, the climate emergency, which it really is, there isn't a lot of engagement outside of the specialists or the truly curious.

So, I'm finding that it's not difficult to find guests or people to talk to. I know who to talk to, but to get the people, the audience, to listen to what people have to say, it's like a vicious circle, right? Where you put the information out there and people aren't ready to receive it. And if it wasn't Covid I would be on the road with as little a carbon footprint as possible, talking to people, engaging them, and it would work much better. But now we can talk to anybody at any time yourself. You're in Finland. I'm here. No problem. So it's a really great time to record conversations, and I just did one this morning with a woman in Spain who wrote a wonderful essay, a woman named Carmen Salas, who's brilliant.

And tomorrow. there are others. And then there's young people and all kinds of voices that I'm curious about. And when I interview them, I tend not to edit because there's a flow. And then I say, we're gonna talk about 25 minutes and we'll get somewhere. I'll put some links on my website, and then the person listening will appreciate that it's authentic.

It was a conversation prepared in the sense that took it it seriously, but not orchestrated to the point of being like the CBC – everything's under control here. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, that's fine. They're great journalists, but I'm in another beat. I'm an artist, cultural worker activist, recently retired, so, free from any burden of having to work full-time who is dedicating himself totally outta passion and outta instinct on a series of conversations about something that's critically important to us all. And therefore we need to do what we can. And because I'm an audio artist, I decided to do this. So that's the short version of, of why I'm doing this. What about you?

Charlie Morrow: We'll start out with some similarities. First of all, my home is on the Canadian border of Vermont.

Claude Schryer: Oh, yeah.

Charlie Morrow: The nearest city to me is Montreal. My father was a McGill graduate, a Francophone and English speaker. He graduated in medicine and surgery.

He was born in the States, but he went to Canada because he was poor and he could be on a sports scholarship. As an athlete, you could play football on a football scholarship at McGill back in the thirties, almost 90 years ago. So, we're both creatures of the North and I have a connection to Canada for sure.

In Barton, Vermont where I live, I have an archive. I've been a composer all my life, and a sound artist and also a publisher. I published Ear Magazine and I had the New Wilderness Foundation, which published New Wilderness Audiographics, over 40 titles of experimental arts that were mainly interdisciplinary that had no place in the normal spectrum of publication in those days.

It wasn't just that it was artistic, it was that it worked across the lines. Cuz I saw an affinity between first First Nation artists and experimental artists in my own particular community who were basically conceptualists. So one thing led to another. I earned my living as a producer and as a jingle writer.

And also I was able to build a studio in order to support the label. And that was also a studio for my business and I was able to do large international cooperative events. I did a precursor to what people are doing now, you know, back in the seventies. So, that was a kind of interesting journey, so to speak, to the present.

And, my interest in immersion is based on a specific commitment, as you are thinking, in terms of relationship to ethics and spiritual orientation. I woke up before I was born. I did a regressive trip in my early twenties and I was able to make contact with and always go back to that moment when I heard and felt while still in the womb and that kind of experience pre-birth. Then the birthing itself was seminal to everything I did. And in fact, having developed 3D immersive sound, it brought me back to that experience in the womb where I was, so to speak, all ear, couldn't see a thing, little flashes of light, but everything was determined through the ears and in that way being totally immersed. So when I finally did create immersive media in collaboration with people, it was in many ways, over and over again, recovering in the present world of objects, what I'd experienced in pre-birth and that's what my book is about.

Claude Schryer: I didn't know that. But then a lot of things I don't know.

Charlie Morrow: Well, you've got that somewhere in your memory bank.

Claude Schryer: I bet.

Charlie Morrow: If you can get there. I found that it was not a hard journey. It took, you know, a year or two, but by remembering milestones, feeling secure about what the perceptual spec was at a milestone and then working back. So that's how that journey took place. And that led to my eventually doing this large study of my collaborators who collaborated on immersive projects. And that's who these more than 40 folks are; they share that journey with me.

Claude Schryer: And when you say immersive, you mean when the artwork invites the listener or participant into some kind of interactive experience, is that how you define it? What are the boundaries?

Charlie Morrow: I would say enveloping.

Claude Schryer: Yeah.

Charlie Morrow: And, not all of it is interactive. In the first stages of doing an immersive sound field, you can transmit the field, but it isn't necessarily affected interactively more than your

local sound field. now. You know the atmosphere response to your presence, but it's not like the light when you turn the switch on, the light will go on over your head.

Claude Schryer: Yeah.

Charlie Morrow: And so when we mean interactivity in a gaming sense, gaming the world, Some pieces were like that. Some of them were more like one way transmission.

Claude Schryer: In the early days there were technologies. I did an interactive audio piece in the eighties and George Lewis the trombones was there and it was very advanced, but it was a Commodore 64. Right. That's how old I am. But it was very exciting cuz those were the early, earliest days of AI with music. And, today, of course, systems are much more sophisticated. I'm not sure the music's any better because back then we were trying so hard to make good music with poor tools.

Now it's so easy to create whatever, but I've left it all behind. You know, I found that technology took too much of my brain time. And when I started doing Zen practice and, you know, raising a family and all that, I couldn't keep up with the more sophisticated technologies. I use the simplest possible technologies now, a stereo field recorder, basic editing. And what I try to focus on, especially with the simple soundscape series, was a stagnant camera and interesting sound, like a living sound. So it could be stream, it could be a child crying, it could be whatever. And that stimulated me tremendously because it was so much about being in that moment, but I wouldn't call it immersive because it's more experiential. It's like, do you wanna stare at the same thing as me for three minutes? You know? And a lot of people don't. Well, fine, you don't have to. I don't care. But I put it out there, and I have a history because where I worked at the Canada Council, so much money was put into what's called digital art or media art, or interactive, all those systems.

So, I know about them. I lost my passion for it a long time ago when I moved to other art forms that didn't need to be immersive to be experiential, because you can experience something simply through reading a poem. Now, if you feel the need to illustrate it or to bring it to life within 3D, well I find that could be really exciting. And many of my friends do that. They do these 48-channel sonic installations. I was in Dieburg last, two years ago, the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology that we set up in 93 in Banff was doing its 25th anniversary and there were a whole bunch of installations and multi-microphone things – it's a big thing now.

You record in 16-channel and you disseminate in 32 and I didn't notice the difference that much. Because I don't need that kind of experience. But it is nice to have so many channels all around you that you can play and move sounds around, and tell stories in very sophisticated ways that we can't do in stereo. So I recognize that it's a rich medium. But it's not one that I've been interested in for all kinds of reasons, including time.

Charlie Morrow: Oh, I can understand. My own journey went from more or less storytelling with the immersive sound medium, so that in a museum if you had a locomotive, you could hear the voice of the locomotive engineer from the locomotive, and then you could hear the train virtually move, although it was physically stationary and so it was basically kinetic sound. I find now I've been more focused on creating sonic environments for hospitals and workplaces.

Claude Schryer: Yeah.

Charlie Morrow: In order to help people focus, in order to help people heal, in order to have control over mood. In other words, as mind assistance. Sometimes it's as simple as being able to alter the blend of wanted and unwanted sound in a room just through the use of either added sound or filtration.

Claude Schryer: Well, there you get into acoustic ecology because Murray Schafer's work in the seventies, in Vancouver, the world soundscape project was about noise pollution and designing

a healthier, more balanced, more whatever creative you want, a sonic environment. And that can include today, of course, designing of what you're talking about.

How do people interact with the sound devices around them? How can they be designed ergonomically? How can the content be appropriate to somebody whose, say, healing? And then you get into the healing arts and therapy arts, which is fine. Now I can say whatever I want, but back in my Arts Council days, you know, there was a distinction between what is recognized art and what is that other stuff, you know, like social development or therapy. And, oh, that's fine, but we don't pay attention to that because we're looking at stuff that we might fund because it's art art, and that's fine. You know, there has to be a line drawn, but for me it's all part of the same spectrum. If you are working to help somebody have an aesthetic experience, or at least, a more pleasant experience through sound, then great. And if you call yourself an artist, you might, you might get a grant. You might not, but it's really about intention and quality of experience and who you know, like if you're going into a medical situation, you gotta know what you're doing, right. You can't just go in there and do things for people; you have to have a real sense of purpose and skill and methodology, which I'm sure you have.

And so I've always been very open. I remember EAR Magazine, it was similar to Musicworks, right? Because I was involved in Musicworks in Toronto. Musicworks is a clone of Ear. It's a child of Ear, right? Well that makes Conscient the child. But I remember the old EAR Magazines. Paper, Broad Street, Broad Paper. And it was great. You know, I was talking about Philip Glass before he was Philip Glass and all that kind of early days of the music world. And Musicworks came along and it still exists today, which is nice because Gail Young, and the people who kept it going, did a good job, just hanging in there, you know, to

Charlie Morrow: Survived ups ...

Claude Schryer: ... and downs and now it's still relevant. It's not the only magazine, but it's one of the ones, so that's good.

Charlie Morrow: Yeah, I think the new editor [Jennie Punter] is quite interesting. She herself used to be an instrument builder and have a real hands-on experience with sound music and publication. So her energy's very vital.

Claude Schryer: Yeah. And they've hired good people over the years and they've also diversified their content, which is something I was a critic of that, you know, same old, same old, mostly old white guys. You know, let's diversify the content and the occasional old white guy. But you know, you gotta really be relevant to a broad audience and they've done that. So good for them.

Charlie Morrow: Yeah, they certainly have. Well, I had done that with Ear. I created themes. And so once you had themes, it would logically draw a much wider and more diverse community.

Claude Schryer: So, is there anything else you wanted to talk about?

Charlie Morrow: I think that we've covered most of it. I was pleased to hear your comments and I share your opinion about the whole atmosphere, the lines between the art forms. Rather artificial and perhaps just economic and ...

Playlist immerse! Podcast 16 Claude Schryer Playlist

**Canadian soundscape artist, arts council administrator, environmental activist
& host of the podcast Conscient**

Interview by Charlie Morrow, Incidental sound samples used & mangled

Vancouver Soundscape Revisited

• Claude Schryer

Les oiseaux de Bullion

• Claude Schryer

Lettre Sonore II / Sound Letter II

• Claude Schryer

Cricket Voice

• Hildegard Westerkamp

Birds Flying2

• Charlie Morrow

Birds Piggelmee may 2020

• b/art

A Walk Through The City

• Hildegard Westerkamp

Kits Beach Soundwalk

• Hildegard Westerkamp

Spring Helsinki

• Charlie Morrow

Marfa mix

• Stephen Vitiello

Kikker Frog

• b/art

Türen der Wahrnehmung

• Hildegard Westerkamp

Wave Music III - 60 Clarinets & a Boat

• Charlie Morrow

Eastern Ferris Wheel

• Addiss & Crofut

Queen Bee

• Charles Morrow & Alban Bassuet

Train [19th-century narrow gauge]

• Charles Morrow & Hugues de la Plaza

Beneath The Forest Floor

• Hildegard Westerkamp

Train Stn. Alexanderplatz

• Ned Bouhalassa

Stellar By Starlight

• DF Tram & Lina Fouro

Mixed & collaged by bart plantenga, mastered by Sean McCann

Claude Schryer: Well, they're art school. I mean, at the council I was in charge of the inter arts office. In fact, I was the founder of it. We looked at what we call new artistic practice. So, pretty well anything that didn't fit in the regular categories. And that was a lot of fun over the years. There were many projects that were just weird enough to not fit into, you know, visual arts or media arts or whatever. A lot of social engaged arts, some of the site specific environmental art that wouldn't have been recognized as art except had it gone through this special category. Now they've opened up their categories so much that you don't need these specialized boxes. You have a much more fluid recognition of art practice, so that things have evolved. But in the old days, it was necessary to have categories and audio art was interesting the tradition was audio art like the visual artists who work with audio like Robert Racine and people like that who – Hank Bull in Canada – who were visual artists who worked in the audio medium. They did radio and they did crazy performances and audio. And those were fun days because you had performance artists doing audio and all these different practitioners working from a sound source of some kind. Some of it, yeah. Like you say, was immersive, but a lot of it, kind of dirty, dirty sound like raw sound. And I got tired of the raw sound. Because after a while your ears get like, eh ... But you go to the electroacoustic guys and guys mostly, but some women as well. And they're obsessed with clean, you know, super, fancy, synthesized, you know, state of the art, somewhere in between. You know, it is really what the artist trying to

say, you know, and what tools do they need to say something reasonable? I think there's been some indulgence in technology of people who are using tools just for the sake of the tools.

And now with the climate emergency and the issues for the planet, all artists have to look at what they're doing and how they do it, including, you know, use of electricity for a conversation like this. I think it's justified, you know, I'm using a little bit of hard space, data space somewhere, but I'm trying to be like totally aware of the impact of everything I do. Because why not? You know, you might be able to reduce it and if everybody reduces, reduces, reduces carbon footprint, unnecessary purchases, unnecessary indulgences, all that, it will help with the effort.

Charlie Morrow: It does. I think I mentioned to you here in Finland, when you apply for travel money or you're doing a project that involves any travel, you have to identify the euro value of your carbon footprint for that, and you calculate it and you have to build that into your budget. Finns are very conscious of that, and, of course, people are very aware of climate here. One of the amazing aspects of Finnish life is the cleanness of life and the cleanness of water, the sauna tradition. There are more lake fish varieties in Finland lakes than in most places on Earth. So you get a variety of really local fish. It's a country the size of California or France, and so, therefore, there's many, many lakes.

Claude Schryer: Yeah. So do we.

Charlie Morrow: I know. And so there's a real similarity between Canada and Finland in this valuing of clean water and clean, clean habits and just the feeling of how important it is. It is in some respects like Japan, in that people always take shoes off to go in the house. Although in Japan, you would also wear different shoes in order to go from in the house into the bathroom, the toilet. But bathing is very important to Finns and to Japanese both and the far north with the Sami people, you have the circumpolar traditions of what you'd call schvitz bad or Russian baths or whatever. But that whole cleanliness thing is very important. As a result, people take care of the street, they take care of the garbage. There's nothing goes out that isn't segregated into various, um. And there's always a discussion about the relationship to climate.

Claude Schryer: Well, good. That's a, a good start. And I know that artists are doing a lot of work about the climate emergency. My problem is that so much of it is baked in already, that we have to start thinking about adaptation as much as anything else because there's things that we can't change now. It's unfortunate and that breaks my heart, you know, for my children and their children. But it's still, you have to do what you can immediately and within your control. And you know, I don't know what my podcast will do, but I'm getting some feedback now that some people are listening and enjoy listening to a sort of slow listening experience, you know, the use of silence and interviews and just not being in a mad rush, you know, like in radio, you have to be exciting. Yeah. I can't have any silence, but in a slower conversation, where there's silence and there might be occasional sound, the person's mind can kind of just wrap their head around the words and have a, I think, a more interesting experience. So that's what I try to do. Speak slowly and bring in occasional sound. Lots of silence. I mean, I'm really sad I never met John Cage. Did you meet him? Did you have any?

Charlie Morrow: Yes, I worked with him. I knew him. I met him. After I got out of Columbia College – I graduated in 1961 from Columbia – and I met him that year.

Claude Schryer: Ahh.

Charlie Morrow: Philip Corner and I had met at that point; he was a student there and he's a close friend of Cage's and he introduced me to Cage, to Allison Knowles and Dick Higgins. My place in Vermont is the former place of Allison and Dick's publishing company up there. You know, Something Else Press.

Claude Schryer: Well, that's fascinating. Cage died the year he was gonna come to Banff. I think it was '91 or '92. So it's unfortunate that we never connected. But anyway, His legacy, his legacy is there, right?

Charlie Morrow: It certainly is. I wanted to show you something. I did an exhibit in New York and in London called "The History of Sound on Earth." 200 million years ago to the present with predictions for the future. And this is a map of what the climate change was like.

Climate change is a big part of the earth. I showed this in New York and in London. I mean, once you understand how big these differences are, you understand that the Earth has had to adapt over and over again. The fact that we may have tweaked it or pushed it along I think is irrelevant. I think the earth just keeps changing the way it keeps, you know, circling the sun until it falls in.

Claude Schryer: Hmm hmm. But don't you think that the amount of carbon we put into the atmosphere and the amount of pollutants and transformation of natural spaces is moving towards the extinction of humanity.

Charlie Morrow: Not anymore, than the great extinction. There's been several great extinctions historically, which were much more serious cuz they were catastrophic. This is relatively slow, but for example, the comet that extinguished the dinosaurs changed history because it wiped out giant reptiles and made room for, at the time, very small mammals to become dominant species.

And the same with the various species of plants. You know, forests changed a lot after that. And I did an installation up in Joggins Fossil Cliffs on the St. Lawrence. On the fossil hills there are huge cliffs with lots of living creatures from the Carboniferous period. To do that project, which was a film with a 3D sound environment I did a day in the life of the Carboniferous and it's amazing what they know about that. I mean, there were constant, huge forest fires. The trees were giant like the sequoias, but there were therefore lots of stumps cuz they got burnt down. And the sky had a different color to it, the chemistry of the sky was different.

There were these giant flies that were 12 feet long, 4-meter-long dragon flies. You can see a fossil of it in a number of museums. So it was a different place. And the main reason it was interesting to me was that was when life crawled up from living under sea throughout all history to living on land.

In which case we developed the oral world of an airborne life. So sounds that could be transmitted in air were made by new organs. Ears developed. Before that, [everything] was heard under underwater and different kinds of, you know, motions created them, tail thrashing and all of what would make an underwater vibration.

I think that was a really fascinating study to realize how, how different it was. Until we crawled out and then, and that was particularly poignant to me because I remembered being born, coming into the world of air, how different it was to smell. The doctor that had birthed me had a heavy sweat scent to him, and I'd never smelled anything before except this was going through my olfactory membranes as they evolved.

Claude Schryer: Well, you know, I regret not setting this up as a Conscient podcast interview because you're saying so many interesting things. You probably could use some of it. I don't know how you'd feel about that.

Charlie Morrow: It's fine with me to use it any way you like. I'm finding the conversation very stimulating. We've been through so many of the same paths, you know. We we're both doing the work we do totally out of conscience and interest and are moved by the people who wanna make life on Earth better.

And having noticed acoustic ecology, I mean, that's my work right now in my business, my sound business. I talk about Sonic Health. I'll send you, if you like, a little, a speech I gave with, with some architects and we talked about the new children's hospital with sound here in Helsinki and some of the ways that people are building cities differently.

One of the chief architects of Helsinki, she was talking about that she's doing things in London now and had worked with. Architects in Paris where they're trying to develop a way that neighborhoods are built around walking distances. And it's really fascinating to, I'll send this to you. I think you'll get a kick outta it.

Claude Schryer: Oh yeah. I think this is fun to make this into an episode because I like serendipity, right? Because you sometimes you converse for the joy of conversing and then you realize, oh, maybe it's worth sharing parts of it. Let me just do it this way. This is a special version of the Conscient podcast.

I'm with Charles Morrow, who contacted me to have a conversation about immersion and our shared journey as people doing a lot of conversations with artists, in particular audio artists. So, I'm gonna edit our conversation, but I wanna ask you the question that I've asked everybody, which is, I wrote a piece called reality. And the idea of reality interests me in part because of the notion of denial, because we spend a lot of our time in our society denying the truth of the fact that we're abusing nature and I think we're taking ourselves to the brink of extinction. One can argue that, but just start, how do you relate to the notion of reality as a concept, both artistically and sort of philosophically?

Charlie Morrow: For me, breath is my strongest reality. I was an asthmatic kid and I became a trumpet player as a remediation to that and I've had allergies all my life and so I've been trying to fix everything by learning to breathe right. And my wife is similarly an allergic person, although she became a string player and she's a translator, but she was an avid violist.

We've all felt that reality is what we can hear and breathe. And touch. And so our senses create the reality that we have and our minds then synthesize what it is that's coming in. But I guess we are both very aware of our sensory systems and what it means to connect with another person. I heard your interviews and I wanted to connect with you cuz I felt immediately like we were on what, in the old days you'd say: we're on the same wave, but truly, I felt well, gee whiz, that kind of perception is what's guided my entire life. So reality for me was to try to find a balance around all the information I was receiving and trying to process it in terms of what it is that I was doing. So, I guess reality is that particular process for me. My earliest memories, which I went back to grab as I described this regression to the first sounds and the first experiences as a living form were to hear sound outside of my mother. And hear her heartbeat.

I also did a piece about this where you had the child heart and mother heart together for West Deutsche Rundfunk. So, my first experience of being alive was all sensory, and my mind was just simply there. But that there in that moment, as I go back to it with you now, and as I describe it each time, instantly transported back to that first perception.

Claude Schryer: I was there in a way, I've only felt that in certain types of meditation and in certain types of music making. It's a sense of reality and a sense of being. That is, I can only say, clear. It's like crystal clear. It's like having no fog on your, on your eyeball. And then, how then does art practice enhance or enrich one's life?

And then really my question though is I know Art does that because I've been doing it all my life, but in facing the climate emergency and, and you've given me some good leads on arts practices and things that you've done, where do you see the role of art specifically in dealing with the challenge as complex as climate change and, and the climate crisis?

Charlie Morrow: Well, I think that artists are, for the most part, in tune with what's going on in the world. We're all reporters, somehow journalists who translate our message into our art. A read out, a digested or raw read-out of what it is that we're experiencing and our wish to be an artist is in fact in order to be able to spend our lives doing that process.

So I'd say then, since climate change is a reality, I mean for me it meant finding out as much about it as possible. For example, my show that I did in New York, and then again in London, I found out what the local city area was doing about climate change? In order to be able to present that information, let people know locally where they could get more information and follow it from a civic point of view.

Because, I mean, New York for example, it had to do with what would the city permit the foundations of new buildings to be. Where would the water level be? I mean, after all, Manhattan is an island. And so I found that there were real processes, in fact, at work. And then there were hugely negligent areas so that, for example, drainage, which is one of the hugest problems for climate change that we as humans have created by paving over the earth.

Claude Schryer: Mm-hmm.

Charlie Morrow: we've really screwed that up. I don't think that very many transformations of the Earth were much more than convenience for human technology because, in Manhattan, when there is a really serious storm, even back 20 years ago, 30 years ago, it'd have floods. Parts of the streets would be flooded and the drains wouldn't work.

Getting rid of sewage, getting rid of rainwater. Just the very basics of living in a world of climate every day. The everydayness of it was what struck me. As an artist. I, in the earliest point I would be making artworks that had a beginning, middle, and an end, or a gathering of people in order to examine ideas in art concerning those things. In the meantime, I've learned to make art, making sound installations that are never off, that are constantly on, because the ear – I felt it for at least certain experiences – the ear does not blink, so therefore, to create environments that are ever changing, but that you can live in. Because basically its way of modulating reality to bring us back to the first point.

Claude Schryer: Right. Well, while talking, I've been poking away on the notion of hope because, there are a number of books that talk about hope and the lack thereof in the current situation. How do you sort of wrestle with the notion of hope and the hopefulness for our world?

And when I say our world, I don't mean necessarily the survival of humanity because the planet will continue without us we know. But, looking at the hopefulness that correcting some of our behaviors might give, do you feel hopeful?

Charlie Morrow: I always feel hopeful. It hasn't been that I haven't been swatted in the face by life or swatted myself in the face and have to deal with the usual problem that something happens and then you have to shake it off.

I was born with, I think what Cage often says his mother told him that he was born with a sunny disposition. And I certainly, have that sunny disposition and I think that hope in this sense is the ability to focus on what's at hand and to handle it as masterfully. Because at every moment you can make a huge change.

And it is the belief in your power, in every, every millisecond of life to make a change that makes it important. Because without that you're not really recognizing the present. I mean, we don't live in the future. We don't live in the past. We live inextricably in the present. And the present, I think, should be dealt with like a samurai or any other warrior in that sense, being able to be clear and present and in balance and to take away anything that would cloud your

mind about your reaction to others and your resonance with others. So I'm hopeful because I think the equipment is already here in this human form.

Claude Schryer: Well, it sounds like a Buddhist approach, whether you are practicing Buddhist, I don't know. But, to be in that moment, I was talking to a Zen master, just a few days ago about his view of hope and he says, "It's not, it's not a concept that I need. I need to be present. I need other things." But, so one can contest the very notion of hope because it depends how you live your life. And, and it comes back to reality and denial.

And it comes back to, you know, the process of living. And I find art helps my life because it just opens doors to perception. You know, like you said, it's like we're like a big ear. I don't know, you might have said that, but you said that our senses inform the artist being in tune and then reporting out to the world.

I like that. You know, because in a way we are antennae that report out and provide information and knowledge and one of the things I thought you might ask about is different categories of our practice in around immersion. So I was going to say, and I'll say it now, that there are those who are looking at raising awareness.

So, look, the world's a bad place, or here's an issue. And there are those who are saying: Here's what you can do about it. That sort of action-oriented activist, engagé art. That's great. And then there's a third category of escapists and dreamers. We're really also very important in part because we can't deal with issues all the time. Right? And so somewhere between those who are raising awareness, those who are inciting us into action and those who are helping us escape from it – a bit of a trilogy there. I'm sure there's other categories, but I've been thinking about that because sometimes categories are useful in sort of general terms.

Does that make sense to you? That sort: of aware, the active, and the dreamer?

Charlie Morrow: I do believe that's a marvelous taxonomy. It reminds me of the taxonomy from Yiddish Theater of the schlomieli and the schlomozele.

Claude Schryer: And what is schlomieli and the schlomozele?

Charlie Morrow: Um, let's see. The, schlomozele means that you're unlucky from the Hebrew and schlomieli means that you got no brains

So the brainless waiter drops the soup on the Schmozele. Who is unlucky? Unlucky patron.

Claude Schryer: Well, I remind my listeners that this began as a conversation, out of curiosity because we do, we are in a similar place in our lives, paying attention to what others are saying. And, and here we are talking to each other about a free flow of ideas. And the thing about conversation is that I saw you think like we can see each other through video here, and I really enjoy that because you can tell that an idea is forming in somebody's mind. You can almost feel it. Right? In real time. And then the words come out and you can see where the hesitancy of the word or the excitement of the word – it's so beautiful. The word, the spoken word is such a beautiful gift we have, to speak to each other and to sense each other's moods and intentions. I think that's also what I enjoy in conversation is listening of course, but also just experiencing that in real time. Interaction of ideas. It's like all these brain functions are happening simultaneously and then they connect a little bit and then all of a sudden we go on a tangent and the listener might not join for all of it, but they'll get something out of it because they're also feeling somewhat involved.

They're listening to us and then their own mind is of course saying: Oh, I'm really interested in that. And they stop listening and they're thinking about something. Anyway, it's a lot of fun to speak. So anyway, I think we'll stop there just so that we don't run out of tape, so to speak. Is there anything else you wanted to say before I turn the OFF button here?

Charlie Morrow: Let's see, Uh, no, I just want to thank you very much for being open to having a freeform conversation. You've covered everything I wanna do here concerning both conversation and art making and immersivity. So thank you very much.

Claude Schryer: You're welcome. We'll talk again.

Charlie Morrow: and I hope we'll get to meet in person. Where do you live physically?

Claude Schryer: In Ottawa, so just a couple of hours west of Montreal. I'm off in Montreal, but yeah, the head office of the Canada Council was here in Ottawa. So that's, that's where I live.

Charlie Morrow: Oh, that's fantastic.

Claude Schryer: yeah.

Charlie Morrow: Yeah I'm in Barton Vermont which is like 30 kilometers from the border.

Claude Schryer: Yeah, that's five hours from here. So, Yeah. Well, when Covid allows us to travel again, I'd be happy to jump in my car and come visit you.

Charlie Morrow: Oh, you're certainly welcome. I have an archive and I'd love to share it with you, take a walk in the woods. I have a maple forest. Cage just walked in this forest. I can tell you stories about Cage and Pauline Oliveros and Dick Higgins and Allison Knowles. It was a magical place. It's, up there. So, I'm thinking now to make it a study center, so maybe we can figure out some way to make all that happen. But thank you so much and looking forward ...

Claude Schryer: Take care.

Charlie Morrow: Bye bye.

Charlie Morrow: Cheers.