Interviewee Name: Sofya Gollan

Interviewer Name: Annie Rolfe

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Transcript

Annie: Okay. Sofya, thank you so much for joining me today. Can you tell us a bit about yourself? What do you think we need to know about who you are, where you are from, and what experiences have helped you, uh, to become the person you are today in order for us to understand your work as a film actor and writer and director?

Sofya: Okay. So that's a three-pronged question. I might just start with who I am.

Annie: Sure.

Sofya: My name is Sofya Gollan, and I'm an actor. I'm what you call a slashy. I act, I write, I direct, and I produce, but I work across a variety of mediums, theatre, writing prose, and film and television. Where did I come from was the other one? Yeah.

Annie: Yeah. In order to understand how you are, who you are today, you know, what, what has formed you to really, you know, affect your artwork.

Sofya: Well, I think first, before I can even get to my artwork, I came from a middle-class family, white Australian family, who, both my parents had the ability to teach. So my mother is a teacher of English as a second language so when she had me, there was no, there's no Deafness in the family, so she was able to teach me how to read, so I got a good grasp of language in a way that many Deaf children in hearing families didn't. This is prior to having a cochlear implant so I hear a lot better with the machine on than I, now, than I did then. So in a way, that set up enabled me to take advantage of opportunities that have led to me to where I am now, but I think, I mean, I think in terms of life changing path, pathways were joining the Australian Theatre of the Deaf when I was 17, so I yeah, I became an actor with them and I worked with them for four years, but I started as a trainee actor for six months. And then after that, I was made a contracted actor with the company, and we worked a lot

in the theatre for young people as well as mainstage productions. We generated our own work, so I was a contributing playwright to the content that we created, as well as acting and prior to that, I went to - so once I hit the four year mark, I was actually getting quite bored with it. So, you know, I'm 20 something and I'm already bored with acting with that. So, I applied to get into NIDA, to do the acting course there, and then I was accepted and became part of the cohort so I'm part of the same cohort that had Cate Blanchett, Essie Davis, some of the amazing theatre actors that we've got now.

Annie: Wow. Mm.

Sofya: So after that I worked with the Sydney Theatre Company, went back to Theatre of the Deaf, went to the National Theatre of the Deaf in the States, and worked there as part of the troupe for a year.

Annie: Right.

Sofya: Yeah, but I think I became an actor because I wanted to be in the movies and after about eight years of being in the theatre, ten years, I was no closer to being in film than I had been when I started, and I was also being asked to play roles that were not reflective of the Deaf experience or Deaf people I knew. I was asked to play roles - I was asked to play young women who were backward, who were not given opportunity to, I mean, a memorable role was playing a young woman who'd been locked in the back shed by her father, her family, because they were so ashamed of having a Deaf person in the family and I just thought that was so not reflective of my experience or the Deaf community, but it was being perpetuated on national TV shows and soapies.

Annie: Yeah.

Sofya: And I think at that point I realised there's nobody writing, there's nobody directing, there's no core creatives actually creating this content. So I started making short films while I was in the States. I went to the NYU Tisch Film School and did the summer program over there for a month, and that gave me the basic skills to make a short film. So coming back I, I applied to get into the Australian Film Television Radio School three times before I got in, and by then I'd made a body of work of about maybe six or seven short films that convinced them that, that, you know, I had the

confidence to undertake the course. You know, going to NIDA and going to AFTRS that was some of the best formative years. I think just being able to be part of an elite training institution and be accepted and be part of the cohort.

Annie: Yes.

Sofya: Yeah. It was just an experience that wasn't ever afforded me at school or in the general industry.

Annie: I was going to ask you that, whether you had the experience at school of, of acting or being part of musicals or something to, in order for you to, to gain this love of acting and, and film. Were there any childhood experiences? No?

Sofya: No, not at all. No, not at all because the school, the school system didn't know what to do with me. They literally saw me as a problem and the idea of me being part of the drama review or any of it would be laughable, so I didn't even bother with it. Yeah. What I did was I kind of retreated from school and went to the movies as much as I could.

Annie: Right. Yes. Yeah. That's so interesting and amazing to consider where you have come to today when you, you know, you had that inkling that, that that's what you wanted to do. And, yeah, it's been an incredible journey. Are there experiences, events or people that stand out in your memory as really formative in terms of getting you interested and involved? In film?

Sofya: Well, when I joined the Theatre of the Deaf, we had a female Deaf Artistic Director so I was working in a company that was absolutely innovative and ahead of its time, even though I didn't know it. I mean, I was 16, 17, 18 working for people who were creative, creatively inspiring. The Carol-Lee Aquiline is an American actor who'd worked with the National Theatre of the Deaf, and she came to Australia to act and then subsequently become the artistic director of the company and I just thought it was a completely normal state of affairs that she would be the artistic director. And that, you know, it would be disability led. She had a really strong support system, and we were just creating the most amazing theatre content for young people and for mainstage, but, you know, over the years and years and years, I have come to see that that was a moment in time where it was not normal at all for a disability led company to have that vote of confidence and prestige. Now it's all led by able-bodied

people, you'll have actors or who represent the community or diversity of disability that they're supposed to come from. It's much, much harder to be disability led now, and I still fail to see why given 30 years ago, we had it. And it was a successful model.

Annie: Yes.

Sofya: With film, I mean, I think film was such a harder, harder nut to crack. I mean, for most of my early years as a filmmaker, I never got the encouragement that I saw my peers getting, so if I said to people, if I said to my peers or people who are slightly ahead of me, that I'm talking about, "I want to be in this writer's room or I want to direct this thing", the response invariably would be, "it's so hard to have a career, and it's so hard to be a director, and it's so hard to be a filmmaker, it's so hard to make films" and yet they would turn and talk to the person next to me, same age, same kind of person wanting the same kind of deal and they would literally say, "oh, that sounds great. You need to get in touch with so and so. I'll introduce you" and that happened so many times that I just got this feeling of there really is no place for me in this industry. So when I started, there was, nobody could see me a place for me, nobody carved out a pathway for me to try and follow to, to accumulate networks and contacts and, you know, to move from one thing to the next. And I created a lot of the projects myself. I would write them, I would pull together seed funding, I would get a producer on board, and we would make the thing and it would go to international festivals, but those producers never brought me on to their projects. So often what you have, what you have happening is if you form together to become a crew or make a film, the producer will generally bring you on to other projects that are actually paying you.

Annie: Right.

Sofya: And you kind of build a career together but I was elevating a lot of people. I was giving them their first credit, and then they would just not think to do the same, because of the perception of it's just too hard to elevate a Deaf, female director.

Annie: So it's been, it's been a challenging journey to get to where you are at now.

Sofya: Yeah, very.

Annie: Yeah. And do you feel that you would have had or you'd be in a different place now if you didn't have a disability?

Sofya: Oh, totally. Every single one of my peers at film school in the year below, in my year and the year above me, every single one of them have made their first feature film, have made their first TV series. They have all elevated and escalated in their career, in their careers, and I just know for a fact that if I didn't have a disability, I would be where they are now. I would be the Cate Shortland directing The Marvels. I would be making multiple television serial episodes like, you know, Catriona McKenzie and Damien Power. You know, I'm the only one in the cohort and you did kind of go, well maybe some of these people in the cohort is not particularly more talented than I am.

Annie: Yeah.

Sofya: But they've been afforded opportunity and growth, and they've been backed by people in a way that I never was.

Annie: Yes.

Sofya: Yeah. And some of them aren't actually very good at networking. So it's not some particular talent for networking or brilliance that managed to get them, you know, keeping going. It's the actual fact that disability is supremely scary.

Annie: Mhm.

Sofya: Mhm.

Annie: And so do you think that's going to change for people coming through now who have a disability?

Sofya: It's a slow change. I mean there are more writers writing for television who have a disability. So yeah, it is slowly changing, they're actually being in the writer's room but they are still really scared of disabled directors. It's only in the last five

years that we've seen that change and I directly attribute that to Screenability, because, you know, that's elevated 16 people with disability to write and direct their own projects. So that's been really, really meaningful in shifting perceptions of industry and of course, you've got all of the new diversity statements coming out with SBS, ABC, all of that Screen Australia. They are all recognising and looking to the Seeing Ourselves screen report that disability is woefully represented across the spectrum on screen and off screen that we have been really, really remiss in supporting that talent.

Annie: Yeah.

Sofya: So, yeah, slowly changing. I mean, I had to pretend I wasn't disabled and I could not make disabled content when I started out. And the whole point was that if I were to have a place in industry, I had to pretend that I didn't have a disability and that I could pass and mask and minimise any access requirement that I needed. But now"disability is so hot", you know, it's just kind of we've gone from one end of the spectrum to the other.

Annie: Yeah.

Sofya: But it's only hot if you've got able-bodied people directing. You know, it's all about having them (disabled talent) on screen and it's got to be funny. It's got to be about sex. It's got to be young people.

Annie: Yeah.

Sofya: But they're not actually doing the real disability content with disabled directors and writers being in charge of their own ideas but that's still shifting, that's still kind of coming into being and I'm returning to industry at the end of the year. I'll be leaving my executive role at Screen New South Wales to go back to industry.

Annie: Okay. And what will you be doing?

Sofya: Writing, directing and producing.

Annie: Okay, fantastic. It's great to hear. So what is the motivator for doing your work? And you can talk about either your role now or what you have been doing and your future role back in industry.

Sofya: There's still a big gap for representation of Deaf (culture) and Auslan. There's still a lot of people out there who think that sign language is ripe for the picking for them to tell that story. There's a lot of misconceptions around the Deaf community and the language, and that so long as you learn sign language or have Deaf consultants, you can kind of just whack it in and it'll be amazing. ....So I just know I've got to get back out there. I've got to actually and as the executive for Screen New South Wales, I am somewhat curtailed in how opinionated I can be and I just know I need to add my voice to the fray and call people out because, yeah. And it also. Yeah. And there's a few things I want to do, like extending the role of accessibility in the workforce for the screen industry and also writing and directing content that's fun, fresh and, you know, disabled about Deaf people. I've still got that fire, unfortunately (laughs).

Annie: That's great. Great for us. So has your motivation for creating your work changed over time?

Sofya: Yeah, it has a little bit. I mean, when I started out, it was part of the kind of ableism brainwashing that went on where I just thought, I'm not going to write about Deaf content because of my experiences as a Deaf person, because it's just not interesting, you know, who wants to watch that? Whereas now, I know that people are endlessly fascinated by difference, and I just know that I have something really valuable to contribute in that sphere. So I'm really excited to be writing about what I know and presenting that as something that could be viable for TV and film. But then again, I'm kind of like, once I go there, it's going to be really hard to just make anything. But then I just think they wouldn't accept me making anything anyway.

Annie: Mhm. Yeah. It's frustrating to try and break through those, I guess, preconceived notions that you were talking about before.

Sofya: I mean, the industry does tend to pigeonhole people, and if you write horror, then they kind of go, you're always going to do horror. If you do drama, arthouse drama, that's always what you're going to be, especially in, in America and the UK. But here it's a little bit more flexible because it's a smaller industry and a smaller talent pool. You've got people kind of trying lots of different things, lots of different genres.

Annie: Yeah. Okay. So the next question is where are you presenting your work? And you've talked about that a little bit. I'd love to know where you would like to present your work.

Sofya: Well, I've got, in, in the TV, film and TV space, I've got a feature film, two feature films that I'm developing and a couple of web series in order to get into TV. I'm already writing for a couple of productions that have got Deaf characters, so I'm starting to get involved in that and some of the smaller ideas that just don't have the legs for a longer form content. I'm looking to create videos that can be exhibited or as installations. I mean, I've got a lot of ideas that have been kind of held back for the last six years because I haven't been in a position to work on them. So I think that I just have to be careful. I just don't try and bubble them all out at once.

Annie: Yeah. Okay. So what do you think spectators think of your work?

Sofya: It's a bit hard to separate my own self-critical eye from audiences, but I think audiences tend to find my work relatable and funny. I would call it dramedy with a dark heart or a dark underlying core. Yeah, dark humour.

Annie: Is it important to you? Responses from spectators and what the public think?

Sofya: Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean I want to get, I mean, one of the things that really hard to get is, um, critical analysis or acclaim. I mean, it's so hard. I've worked on productions where we could not get a critic in the room. We could not get a review in the paper because we just weren't deemed important enough to garner a critical review.

Annie: Mhm.

Sofya: Um, I mean, I have had a review of one of my films where it was so bad nobody should watch it. No one. Oh okay.

Annie: Oh my God.

Sofya: Fine. And there were other people who absolutely loved it.

Annie: Mhm.

Sofya: But um yeah I think. Um, I think it's so important. I do need to that dialogue between the artist and the audience, because with film and television, you're making a content for a specific audience, and you need to meet those expectations.

Annie: Yeah.

Sofya: So that dialogue is really important.

Annie: Yeah, yeah. So do you think that people in the past, when you first started were aware of your work and of, um, Disability Art?

Sofya: Um, well, people didn't call it Disability Art back then. It just simply wasn't even a thing. Um, diversity wasn't the thing. Um. Good old fashioned patriarchy and misogyny was rife. Women struggled to get a voice. Um, people definitely knew who I was, but I was seen as an oddity, so I wasn't particularly respected, and people just thought I was a bit crazy for insisting on pursuing a career in film and TV or even as an actor. And I mean, my parents reflected that too, but they did that out of a sense of care because they wanted to see me have income, a stable future, and all of it. And they just they knew that it would be extremely tough because it is anyway for actors and filmmakers to, um, have that stable income. So I was getting it from everywhere, my family, from the industry, from society. And at that time when I was starting, Marlee Matlin had just won her first Oscar. I think she's only got one Oscar. Yeah. And so it was an exciting time, but that kind of tend to come and go in cycles. I was nominated for three AFI Awards, AACTA Awards for my film, four awards. So people do know who I am. And I do have a lot of respect now. And that's been hard

won, slowly accrued. Just by that. Just by, um, sticking in the game. Being nice to everybody. As you do.

Annie: Sounds exhausting. Um, so what, besides your work, uh, is the best example of, um, Deaf film, do you think? If that's the right term.

Sofya: Um, some of the best films I've seen have been made by Deaf people. There's, um, there's a beautiful Israelian film documentary called “Sign for Love”, where he talks about his experience as being a queer Deaf man in Israel with a child.

Annie: Right.

Sofya: Yeah. There's another film I saw that was an independent, um, American film that was probably made about 20 years ago, and it just showed this plucky, um, Deaf woman being able to evade killers in a building. And she was so inventive and resourceful that I have never forgotten it. And I keep meaning to look up the film because I just want to see that film again, because it was just so incredibly refreshing at the time to see a positive representation of a Deaf, uh, woman who signed only no voice. So that was amazing. Some of the films coming out of the UK are really interesting because they've got a really strong cohort that is now being supported by the BFI and the BBC Deaf channel. So there's some really interesting Deaf filmmakers coming out there too.

Annie: Mhm. Mhm. Um. So, uh, do you think the profile, the visibility of your work, um, has improved and you've kind of answered that anyway, you you think it's slowly improving?

Sofya: Well, I mean, I just I just made a half hour documentary called “Imagined Touch”, which came out, um, a month or so a couple of months ago. We got a showing at ACMI, but it had been phenomenally difficult to get festivals to take it on. And it's just been really, really difficult. And it really surprises me because the content is absolutely rare. It’s about two Deaf, blind women putting on a show. And it just, um.

Annie: I saw a short for it. It looks incredible. I tried to get on to the ACMI website. Couldn't quite get the link to work, but, um. Yeah, it it it looks amazing.

Sofya: And it is, it is an amazing story and it's just a really well constructed, solid short film. But, um, we have been struggling to get people to take it on to program it. And I don't know why is that because it's Deaf filmmakers. Whereas with hearing filmmakers they don't seem to have any problems appropriating disability content and getting it seen - able bodied filmmakers. I mean, so long as they're in front of the screen and front of the camera, um, it's cool, but the minute it's disabled filmmakers, it seemed so - it seems like such a different elevation of talent.

Annie: Yeah.

Sofya: Do you find that?

Annie: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Um, yeah. And and. Yes. And I don't know why either, because the talent is obviously absolutely there. Um, there's no question of that. I think it it's those preconceived ideas of what disability is and the capabilities. And, um, as soon as there is disability associated with it, um, uh, it just seems to be written off.

Sofya: Yeah. Written off is a good way to describe it. I mean, it's like people kind of think a film director or TV director looks like a middle, um, a 30 year old man. Um. Yeah. That's what people think when they think director.

Annie: Yes. Yeah. So what do you think the public would say are the key milestones or big major happenings in the history of Disability Arts in Australia?

Sofya: The public. Marlee Matlin winning an Oscar. Troy Kotsur winning an Oscar. Um, only by virtue of the fact that they're actually Deaf. Um, and they played deaf characters, but I think for the public milestone would be able bodied actors playing disabled characters and getting Oscars for them. Eddie. Eddie Redmayne, all of them. Hilary Swank. They're the milestones that people look at.

Annie: Yeah.

Sofya: Yeah.

Annie: And what would you say are the key milestones? In the history of Disability Arts in Australia?

Sofya: Theatre of the Deaf having a, um, Deaf, uh, Deaf director for, I think, five years. Um. NDIS coming in even though that's quite late. Uh, but because that support for some had been quite groundbreaking, it had for me anyway, because I finally have an interpreter, or having had the choice of having an interpreter at a major event.

Annie: Yes.

Sofya: But, um, other milestone, I think, you know, the the formation of the major state access bodies AAV, Arts Access Australia, Access2Art. Um, I think they're all kind of the quiet milestones that people don't really think about, but they have been essential to the ground. Um, the groundswell of people being able to make inroads with their career. I think they are milestones that people never really talk about. Um, the introduction of the disability fellowships. Um, the introduction of Screenability. I think any public scheme or funding scheme, it becomes a flash point for talent and attention for, uh, disabled creatives. And it’s a validation from the greater infrastructures, you know, so I think they are milestones as well. I think Stella being on TedX was a milestone, but I think it tends to be collaborative or institutional change that tend to be the milestones rather than particular individuals.

Annie: Yes. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. That's that's great. Thank you for that. Um, is your art political and do you think art should be political, um, in that it creates change in how people think and act and treat each other? Um, and is that how we should define success or is it about aesthetics or is it both?

Sofya: Um, well, I think my work is inherently political because I'm still here and I'm still making stuff in spite of people saying that, you know, “you should not”. I think any time someone says to a disabled artist, um, you know, you should exhibit. You know you'd be a winner if you just (entered) in the rotary art competition. They set

the bar so low. And then when that artist decides, “no, no, I'm going to enter The Archibald”. That’s political. It's a political act of defiance. I think sometimes just standing is a political act. Being seen and demanded to be seen and assessed on the same basis as other people. With the acknowledgement that we don't get the same opportunity is political. But I also believe that with appropriate training, the aesthetic will always be there with the appropriate networks and referencing to other peers. And, um, the aesthetic will be there.

Annie: Yes.

Sofya: Yes. I mean, Studio A, they're all people with intellectual delay, but their work is so it's, um, the merit, the creative aesthetic is extraordinary, and that's being developed over a period of time. So I think it’s apples with pears, you can't you can't compare emerging artists with established one. Um, I mean, when you talk about merit, that always refers to funding who should be funded and who shouldn't be, uh, should it be people with, um, education opportunity and training, or should it be people who just want to be an artist and they get the funding because they're disabled? So my view is, if you're going to be an artist or a filmmaker, you need to demonstrate that you want to be that you have a practice behind you. Um, you can't expect to be funded or supported just because you have a disability, you need to demonstrate that you want to have that. You have something to say.

Annie: Yes.

Sofya: Yeah.

Annie: So do you want to be identified as Deaf or disabled? Or, um, is it about just being another artist? Same as everybody else?

Sofya: Well, I'm definitely in one of those category of people that, um, I'm inextricable from my disability. I just have to open my mouth, start talking or start signing, and people know that I am disabled. Um, so it's not really a question that feels relevant to me. Whereas if I had a hidden disability then it becomes a very relevant and deep and thought provoking question. Because the option is there.

Annie: Mhm.

Sofya: But I think for people who have disability. Uh, the identification is there no matter what you say.

Annie: Yeah.

Sofya: But it's up to you to create and contextualise your work in a disability context or within the mainstream.

Annie: Mhm.

Sofya: Mhm.

Annie: Do you think that, um, there's a commonality in that, um, view in that other artists with disabilities would say the same thing?

Sofya: Um. I think that the perception of hierarchy of disability in that, um, some people get more support than others because they kind of they're easier to deal with in many ways. Um, there is the sense of hierarchy, uh, in terms of the one to appear to be least disabled or mask, the best tend to be supported more and elevated more. And I think there is a common thread of acknowledgement around that, especially from people who have sensory disability or who are severely immobile. I'm not saying that there's resentment, but I think it's more about how do we address that and how do we make that a thing that can be spoken about. Because often what happens is when you have people with invisible disability, they become defensive. They they feel like they're being attacked for not being disabled enough. But it's not really about them being disabled enough. It's about the fact that the people of the the world around them will always go for the easiest option always. Which is why we have barriers in the first place. It's easier to ostracise, um, to, you know, consign us to the rubbish heap. Because them they will always be loved people to look after us. They will always be a family member or someone to pick up the burden. And if there isn't, then we die. Simple. Easy.

Annie: Yeah.

Sofya: Problem solved. We are a problem as opposed to a contributing member of society. So I think I mean, I don't think I'm answering it very well, but I think. Merit, merit and disabled art. It's quite a privileged position, you know, to be able to explore whether your art can fit within that paradigm when often the people who are the most severely disabled just don't get a look in.

Annie: Yeah.

Sofya: Mhm.

Annie: Yeah. And um, do you think, um, that there are differences in the way that artists who have intersectional identities such as First Nation artists or LGBTQI[A] plus artists, do you think they think differently about um disability identity?

Sofya: Absolutely. Especially in the case of First Nations. I mean, I think disability is viewed quite differently in that culture.

Annie: Mhm.

Sofya: And, yeah, I mean, I think it’s depending on where you come from and it's always going to be slightly different expression of the fabric of your life and your worldview. LGBTQ[IA+] is such a strong, close knit community.

Annie: Mhm.

Sofya: Um, sometimes I envy how people can just kind of weave in and out of that.

Annie: Mhm.

Sofya: Mhm. And then there are some cultural. And culturally, linguistically diverse people with disabilities. And of course, they're coming from their own cultural preset conditional views.

Annie: Yes. Yeah. So is there something we haven't asked about that we should have? To know about you and your work?

Sofya: Um, yes, actually. I mean, I think it's about the interaction between artists with disability. I'm finding at the moment there's a lack of generosity towards one another. There's a lot of, um, collaboration when it comes to fighting against, you know, the outside world fighting for equal rights and access and opportunity. But within the community itself, I'm starting to see and have been the recipient of lateral violence in terms of the community turning on one of their own in order to either cut them down or to remove them from the picture, or to remove them from competition because it's becoming increasingly competitive as, um, you know, because the outer world is now realising we need to include we need to provide opportunity. And when I started out, there were so few people with disability in the industry that you literally all you had to do was walk in the door. Now, it's so competitive. I assessed the last fellowship, um, disability fellowship for Australia Council, or one of the funding grants for disabled creatives. And the quality of work was so high. There were so many applications, 200 applications. You could only fund eight, and there were 15 that were just excellent. So...I think artists with disability are struggling with that now. And I think that, um, there's a lack of generosity towards one another, there's a lack of recognition around. We need to lift each other up. And I think the best artist in the mainstream, able bodied community, they lift each other up because they recognise that one opportunity is not necessarily going to work for them as it would for the other. I mean, maybe I'm being naive and they I'm sure there's a lot of backbiting and competition in the mainstream. But my view is that some of those great, enduring artists have a generosity to them, to their quality, their interactions with other artists. And I find that that concept is not at all considered.

Annie: Mhm.

Sofya: Mhm. Annie: And so the do you feel that there the lack of funding plays a part in that? The lack of opportunity?

Sofya: Um, well, there is more opportunity now. I mean, definitely way more than there was 20 years ago. But, you know, in, uh, in tandem with that, there are so many more artists now who are, uh, excellent. But it's not only that, it's also about artists who identify as being disabled after a successful career, and they're now entering into the mix. And, you know, taking those, um, grants and opportunity from people who have not had that choice.

Annie: Yes.

Sofya: So, um. Um.

Annie: Hmm. It's very interesting.

Sofya: And it’s also, how do you support yourself, um, financially? In a way that other artists can, you know, there's a lot of, um, the there's a lot there are a lot of people who are accountants or have a part time job as a dental technician, or they have those opportunities. But for a lot of people with disability, there’s not even the opportunity to forge networks and, um, you know, and alternative money making career that they can do three months of the year to support their practice. Um, I mean, I've always been of the view that I'm going to be discriminated against no matter what profession I'm in, so I may as well be discriminated against in the profession I love doing.

Annie: Yes, yeah. So, um, what do you think needs to change? What would make a difference?

Sofya: Um, well I think disability funding needs to stay. I mean, targeted disability support and funding and quotas need to stay until there's recognition and there’s some support and creation of talent who can just come into any old round and be competitive. It, um, you know, a Deaf painter can easily be up for a prize like any other painter because they are at a level and an expertise because they have been supported in that fashion to reach that level of, um, excellence. And point of view. Yeah. So that needs to stay in my view, until, you know, we are represented adequately.

Annie: Mhm. Mhm. Absolutely. Yeah. Sofya, thank you so much for your time today.

Sofya: No, no. You're welcome. I love talking about myself.

Annie: Well I loved hearing about it. So um it's fascinating. Mhm. And I look forward to um seeing more of your work.

Sofya: Yeah, I'm looking forward to going back to it. I feel, um, it's been hard work keeping the pilot flame alive.

Annie: Yeah.

Sofya: I mean, I loved being an executive. I absolutely loved being part of Screenability and elevating other people. And it taught me a lot about which is where I come from, about that concept of generosity and giving back to the community. And it’s definitely something that will be informing my work going forward and mentoring people and just ensuring that, you know. Teaching, not teaching, but showing young artists that they don't need to fight.

Annie: Mhm. Yes. Yeah. Well. Thank you.

Sofya: No worries, thank you. I look forward to seeing what the what what are the outcomes of this?

Annie: So, um. We are going to be creating a disability archive with these interviews embedded into the archive. Uh, and then we'll be also looking at the different contexts around not just um or not, not only the the disability artists videos, but also, um, materials that we collect from different disability organisations, art organisations. So it will just be interesting to see it all weave together, um, and be accessible by the public. Yeah.

Sofya: Great. Sounds great.

Annie: Thank you.

Sofya: No worries. Thanks so much.