

# Yaniv

[00:00:00] Intro:

I think of us like, sometimes people make it sound like super Berlin or super like special. I mean, we are feeling quite special at what we do and appreciative of this, but I think it's nice also to paint it as it is: like a group of people wanting to work together.

I come to the shop and sometimes I feel like, oh, wow, this is like us building this place. And it's like completely up to us what we are doing with it.

And yeah, I think sometimes on those days I feel like really lucky. And sometimes I feel like it's too much...

You know, Geza goes by them.

Sorry, sorry. Yeah. Thank you for correcting me.

Yeah. All good.

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My name is Yaniv, I go by they/them. We are currently sitting in Other Nature's book room, which is a sex shop collective in Berlin.

[00:01:00] Um, and what else do you use this book room for?

I mean before COVID we used to host workshops in this room sometimes, but right now it's mostly, yeah, a book room, zine room. sometimes we collect donations here for other people, other projects. We also have store copies that people can read here in the shop. Also if people want to leave their flyers or some sort of information from the queer community, or sex ed in general, people leave that on our table.

Um, how I first heard about it. That's a good question. I don't even remember to be honest, probably somebody told me about it.

And I think from the first moment, I just felt like, wow, that's so amazing, what's going on here.

And then I started giving my jealousy workshops, at Other Nature, that's how I got to know Kitty and Sara, because Kitty was back then navigating the [00:02:00] workshop program.

I mean, Sara is the founder or one of the founders of other nature in 2011 and Kitty joined a few years later, I think not long after that. But Sara was doing it alone for years since Anne Schindler left quite early, or they like broke up their business relationship quite early. So Sarah was left alone, for years.

Yeah, that's how I got to know the place, uh, and the people. And then I became friends with Sarah and, um, slowly was part of other projects here too. Like the toy party facilitation, for example. Giving workshops. And then when Kitty left, because she was pregnant, I was offered the place, basically her spot on the team.

And then everything turned out to be quite different, since Kitty didn't come back for two years until January [00:03:00] now. And we turned it into a collective during that time. So now, it's very different.

Yeah, but I officially started working like on a fixed contract three years ago.

Yeah, I think the shop was way smaller in the beginning. Right? There was like no online shop for years. There was barely any customers in the beginning.

It grew immensely in the past 10 years. So the way that we are handling things now is very different from how it was before. But Sarah and Kitty, basically just grew this Other Nature baby into a teenager, you know, and now we are kind of in the middle of puberty I would say, so they kind of navigated this process.

Like in retail business, I think there is like constant change and the bigger the shop becomes the more questions it brings up, how are we dealing with the changes?

What, kind of changes do [00:04:00] we like? Do we want to grow bigger?

I mean, it's a shop, it's evolving, so you just have to see yeah. How it's changing and how, if there's like more interest, like more customers, more clients that's growing, then you have more money to spend, or you can decide to spend the money differently or like all the different things. So it's really interesting.

Because if you look at the history of sex shops, like big sex shops, yeah, they all, at some point, became corporate, people sold their businesses, and it became a franchise or... like good vibrations has like around, I guess, like 60,

70 people. Like, working there. So it's like very different from the atmosphere and how it used to be and what it used to stand for.

So I think in terms of running a retail business in capitalism, it's always critical how you make those decisions and it's definitely a question, [00:05:00] , to navigate.

yeah. We are navigating already this like weird space of wanting to be political , in like making money by selling things.

That's always challenging, but as a collective, now it's even more challenging, to have political values and still be okay selling things because we're not only selling, you know, our knowledge or like a sex educators, going out, giving a workshop and then receiving some payment for that.

We're also selling really expensive stuff and that's difficult to navigate, I think. And that was like, not in the foreground for years. So I think the more political our values become, the more it gets like. Yeah. Tricky.

...You mean changes while we are growing?

Well, I think being able to buy a broader variety of products sometimes and feeling like, [00:06:00] okay, maybe it's okay then to buy more and our budget to grow than it used to be before. I think that was actually fun to think about, like, who else can we buy stuff from? Who is like also small business owner or a local business that maybe before we would've been like more careful.

Like, Our budget is limited, but I think if we grow, it gets a bit easier to, plan more things also maybe donate more things and, look at the way who we support, how we support.

Those are complicated issues. Like who is this shop accessible to and how can we make it more accessible for people who can't afford stuff that they need? like even sex toys, I think would be nice if everyone could afford them if they wanted to try them. But not everyone has like capacities to spend 150 Euro. I mean, they start from 10 Euro. Right. But it's still. 10 Euro can even be a lot of money. And that's like, not even a super high quality thing.

So I think it's, [00:07:00] yeah, it's tricky. We are setting up gender expression fund where people, you know, can donate and it takes us a bit of time because obviously the business gets in the way and you have to navigate everyday life.

So we are kind of slow sometimes in those things, but we are setting it up and that means that people can just get stuff on donation base or for free. And then, , others can donate so other people can buy stuff if they wanna. So I think that's pretty cool that we have that on the radar and we try to be better at communicating with projects which are actually, active. So I think sometimes we just like spontaneously announce something, but then it's like in the middle of our slides on Instagram or just like somewhere hidden on our website and it's like not really accessible. So I think we try to be more like, where can we advertise it? Which NGOs, can we hand this to, as a flyer that they know about it?

And I think just be a bit more connected.[00:08:00]

Yeah.

Like, how would you say that this collective at the shop right now is same or different.

You mean from other sex shops or from other collectives in general?

Mm both.

I think it's very different, because Sarah built this for us and now we took it over one and a half or like one year ago.

From other sex shops that are being funded in the last five years. Just because we have this longer history and like much more resources, to start like that and not start from scratch. Because of Sara, we are more linked to experts and like English speaking people and more like Europe wide. , and maybe sometimes even worldwide, I feel like people in like US and Canada and because of her connections and because she's first language English speaking, , and also worked at Venus envy, you know, in Canada, she brought that here.

So I think we have maybe a broader community of people who's aware of us.

[00:09:00] And generally from other collectives, I'm not sure.

I think we are quite similar from how we work. I mean, we all have different setups. Like we are GmbH. I think others decide for UHG or whatever, or Einzelhandel just like a regular business.

I mean, we've been in exchange with some collectives, but it's difficult to say in details, like what makes us different? I think maybe sometimes we are perceived as like hip because we sell, you know, lots of queer art or stuff that's kind of perceived as like hip queer, and we are not like maybe leftist radicals or not so much communists or I don't know. It's, like, there's different values going on and yeah.

I mean, it all has two sides. I think we all feel too [00:10:00] responsible.

I think like half of the team are my closest friends now because of this process, but also because we are just like an extremely, incredibly cool team and I just love the people that I'm working with. So it's difficult to, you know, let your friends down, but they're also your colleagues and you all share this responsibility.

Because before, obviously if you have a chef, you can just give the responsibility away, like the big responsibility. So I think we all, feel too responsible, but at the same time, I feel like we get a tremendous amount of back up if something happens and we communicate that we are overwhelmed.

We support each other in taking more breaks, support each other in being sick, so I think it's has, it's like downsides, but also it's nice to work with your friends and to feel like you can't really like fail somebody that much: I get annoyed when something goes wrong or somebody forgets something and then I have more work, but we try to communicate that also more and give space to, you know, critique and appreciation, every time we have a meeting per week.

And [00:11:00] we have also supervision now every couple of months, which is like, I think it's really good. We try to be more like we are learning. We are still like, very much in the learning curve.

I come to the shop and sometimes I feel like, oh, wow, this is like us building this place.

And it's like completely up to us what we are doing with it. And yeah, I think sometimes on those days I feel like really lucky. And sometimes I feel like it's too much, for the little money that we give ourselves, because obviously, like we can't give ourselves thousands of Euros, so we are quite minimum wage.

Yeah, I think it has all its downsides, but also exciting parts.

Because of this space, that's kind of teaching us constantly about, lots of things. I think the space is really like teaching us, without being a human being. Somehow it gives us opportunities to, you know, challenge our values when somebody's criticizing something, it gives you an opportunity to phrase and put it into words, what you wanna say and why you think that's important.

And it [00:12:00] also gives us the space where I don't think about what I wear and I think like, how do I actually want to express my gender? I think most of us started feeling way more comfortable in this space to just be like, ah, actually

like my colleague Ali, for example, he's like a gay cis man. And I think he felt so uncomfortable in his other jobs, he's like a very colorful person. You know, he wears like lots of colors and his shoes are always colorful and his laces and he's like such a beautiful person. And I think he felt so uncomfortable in his other jobs,

Like he said, that's the first time he feels comfortable even expressing that and just feeling super comfortable doing that.

And I think this is the space where we, I'm almost never afraid. Sometimes yeah, you get like customers who might... but I feel like they come to your place. Like they come to visit you. Also, if they treat you badly you ask them kindly to leave, which never happened. But if that would happen.

Yeah.[00:13:00]

This is why this place is kind of a combination of all of us in a way. So you can see, uh, yeah, those products I know that somebody researched, and we have them now and they're super beautiful or. This is the person I've been in touch with who I was super excited about and I met at a festival and now their cards are being sold here. And I had this really nice interaction with them. Or Geza's, beautiful sex toy cardboards, that they were cutting out and painting, or the display in the window that Kitty made the other day or the workshop that Zee's going to give next week I know it's gonna be amazing. Or Maja's photos on Instagram or Lucas' organizing skills like ordering stuff or how he sorts things. It's just his brain is like so amazing. So I think it's like a combination of small things that I see around the shop that I love seeing every day, because I know we work together as a team, and I know that [00:14:00] everyone brings in their ideas on what they find important and our anti-racism value basically that we are now like prioritizing more and more because our business is very racist and very misogynist. And it's like super important for us because half of our team is BiPoC. So, in case nobody knows like black indigenous person of color, that's the acronym.

Yeah, so half of our team is queer and BiPoC, so it's important for us to prioritize that more .

so I think you can see in lots of different things that this is us and it's a combination of us.

I liked it when you pointed out things that you like about the people? Would it be possible if we just like walk along and you point them out?

Yeah, sure. Yeah.

We're just like getting up and I'll just take this with you.

We can do that. uh, yeah.

So I guess in the book room, you can see Maja is doing the book ordering and right now, because they're doing an amazing [00:15:00] job at doing that, we are quite sold out. So this is like not a lot of books for us.

Um, like over there, you can see that's something that Geza made, um.

Which one?

This one.

Okay.

That little butt plug. Yeah. Uh, and then you can see more of them in the window actually. Okay. Let's have yeah. So everything you see, like is the cardboard the little floating dicks and then the cock ring, like vibrating one. Yeah, the bullet. And I think this is also pretty amazing. Like that's pretty cute.

And then, that's our workshop program. So those are.

You know, those are workshops that are coming up in the next few months.

When we [00:16:00] like became a collective friend of mine made us this, you deserve to take up space. And I think that's really, really cute. And I thought, yeah, gender expression gear is the right area for that to grow into.

what else can I show you? I don't know. I think that's maybe it.

The things you look at and then you're like have a smile on your face.

That's yeah, exactly. It's like, it's so cute. Yeah.

Um, any things that you would like to see in the future, any like future plans where you're like, oh yeah.

Um, we are actually thinking about moving, so we might actually move at some point. Um, but that's still in the open because we've been here for 10 years. So it's very difficult. Like if you built already this spot as, an important spot, you know,

You know, Geza goes by them.

Sorry, sorry. Yeah. Thank you for correcting me.

Yeah. All good.

Uh, what was I saying? Yeah. Like plans for the future, but the moving. Yes, exactly. Yeah. So because , it's not very wheelchair accessible, as you saw, it's very difficult for. Uh, electro wheelchairs to come inside. So that's almost impossible because it's too steep. Um, and it's also very small space, , the more people come, the smaller it gets. And that's very exhausting sometimes, but of course this has been our space for 10 years. So our contract is ending this year. So we might either renegotiate or actually move to another place, but rent is really expensive, so lots of factors to it. Um, so we'll have to see..

Yeah.

Yeah. I wrote a book about polyamory.

I was writing [00:18:00] a blog for years and then part of that went into the book and then I wrote some new essays for that. And it's like a collection of basically my experiences on different topics. And it was published like one and a half years ago.

I think we are sold out of the books that I like the most. Hmm. I think we are not so well stocked right now. I think all the nice, like my favorite ones are sold out right now. I like come as you are. I mean, we have a German copy of that one. That's like not new.



There was one that's called Bang. It's about masturbation. It's really short, but has some just like nice overview about queerness ability, masturbation in general. Those are pretty nice.

I'm not really sure to be honest.

[00:19:00] I think it's a challenging, but nice process. So we've been interviewed a couple of times already about the collective, so I think it's always nice because it gives me the opportunity to appreciate my work more. So I think it's nice actually.

I think the best interview turned out to be the Neues Deutschland interview.

It was a really, really beautiful interview. And I think they painted a nice picture like an authentic one. I think of us like, sometimes people make it sound like super Berlin or super like special. I mean, we are feeling quite special at what we do and appreciative of this, but I think it's nice also too paint it as it is: like a group of people wanting to work together.

Just like seeing us more as like people who yeah. Try to do something nice out of this place would be great, but I know that that's not how journalism works sometimes. And how, you know, you wanna paint a bigger [00:20:00] funner, like Berlin picture of things that Berlin is like super exciting and fun and cool. And yes, outgoing and everyone has sex all the time and yeah.

It's a good one.

Well, I think sometimes people think that we are super cool just for working in this space as like personalities. And I think we are amazing because I like everyone, but we are also quite boring and nerdy and boring in terms of, we don't have super exciting "I go partying every week" lives. Like, people project lots of things onto us. I think. or sometimes that's my perception when people come to the shop and speak about us as like a group that I find it a bit overwhelming, and yeah, I think, we are just regular people from the community. Or communities, cause there's not really one. Yeah.[00:21:00]