

## Dialogues: The David Zwirner Podcast

Flavin Judd & Eileen Myles

**Lucas Zwirner:** From David Zwirner, this is *Dialogues*, a podcast about artists and the way they think.

**Flavin Judd:** Don always said to see the work, you have to really live with it. Just going into a museum and seeing it for three seconds doesn't count. So in essence, Marfa is Don saying, "Okay, here's the work. Here's a chair. Just live with it for awhile."

**Eileen Myles:** So, I just found a way to make my own way of speaking and my own way of learning become one stream of language. And so my poem sounds like me, so that you don't know I'm trying to say something intelligent.

**LZ:** I'm Lucas Zwirner, and every episode features a conversation. We're taking artists, writers, philosophers, designers, and musicians and putting them in conversation with each other to explore what it means to make things today.

This episode's features the curator Flavin Judd and the writer and poet Eileen Myles.

I thought that maybe you guys could just talk a little bit about how you know each other before we dive into anything else. I'm always curious to hear how people meet.

**FJ:** When I was in college, I bought a whole handful of Semiotext(e) books, and so amongst the Virilio and the Baudrillard and all these French theory people, there was Eileen's book. That's the first poetry book I ever bought, and my first introduction to Eileen.

**EM:** Yeah. I had the really good fortune of having a poetry book that I couldn't get published for years, and Semiotext(e) did it, who had never done a poetry book. It was like a great weird context, and that was the tendril.

**FJ:** Right, a total accident.

**EM:** But literally, it was just... Marfa is a tiny town, and there tends to be... If you're in town, you go to events, and you tend to meet.

**FJ:** You drink coffee, and that's what happened.

**LZ:** This was something that I wanted to ask about later, but it may be a natural moment, is the way Marfa has changed in the public imagination, which is just a fact, and it's not something that necessarily needs to be dwelled on. I'm just curious, having been there a long time, how you feel about that. I mean, how have

you seen it actually change, and how has it changed in the way people are thinking about it, talking about it, interacting with it?

**FJ:** In my case, since I've been there my whole life, it's kind of like two towns. Underneath you have the old Marfa and its ranching community, and people have been there for generations. Then there's a layer on top, which is kind of like the Hamptons. And there's twenty different kinds of coffee, but you still can't buy batteries when you need them and stuff like that. It's a schizophrenic town, but then we have positive things like Eileen and Honey, her dog, moved to town, and it's great.

**EM:** Yeah. I mean, my long history, which is five years, is kind of like New York in a way, that New York in five years really changed fast. It's like suddenly the thing that used to happen over decades seems to happen really swiftly. I would say that about what I know of Marfa, which is that... And people always say to me, "Oh, you came in 2014. You didn't see Marfa." I feel that there was obviously a place that was constructed for me in my imagination, where I wanted to go and do a reading and visit.

All my art-world friends were always going to Marfa, and I was like, "I want to go to Marfa." I was waiting for the invitation, and then happily I got it from Lannan, and I was like, "Oh, my God, this is the place." And I did the thing that everybody does, but I actually did it, which was, "I'm going to buy a house." Then I think I found supposedly the last cheap house in Marfa and began to live there. But in those five years, it really has...

**FJ:** It's changed even more.

**EM:** There's a hotel. There's a bookstore that moved. Just like places have closed. Prices have gone up. The great place where you walk your dog is no longer open to the public, because so many assholes have come and invaded the backyard of the people who kind of take care of the land.

**LZ:** When you got there the first time, what was it? One hears this from different artists, obviously Don Judd most of all, but what is it... what was it about Marfa—you've been all over America— that made you think, "Okay, this is the place, and I'm going to find the last cheap house and buy it"?

**EM:** I mean, I think for me a lot of it is... well, there's a number of things, but one is the past presentness of it, because it's like the bank, the library. There's a whole strata of little small-town institutions that remind me

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exactly of where I grew up in Massachusetts in the '50s and '60s. It's like it's just it's analog on a certain level, and I find it very comforting.

**FJ:** Right. It has a generalness, that it still has. That's the rare thing about Marfa, and that's one of the reasons Don chose it, is that since its economy collapsed right after World War II, it got stuck in the '50s. And so it retained all these elements that usually get erased in towns where there is a lot of, still, economic activity. It really has this format that little towns all over the country used to have and don't anymore, necessarily.

**EM:** Yeah, so it's very moving. And then literally for me, it was like I was looking for a place to get away. I live in a tiny rent-stabilized apartment in New York, so it's just like I need space, and there's always...

And so I was wanting to find a place where I went to, and the weird combination of... there's a social art life in Marfa, but happily, nobody really gives a shit if you go to anything. You could be there for weeks, and nobody knows you're in town, so you can both hole up in your space and get work done. And then there's the big landscape and the incredible—I don't know—the romance of the land, which to my East Coast eyes is so far out and so exciting and so not about me that the impersonality makes it a really great place to work.

Then the fact that you won't die of loneliness, because I was single when I first came there. And I was like, "Okay, I won't freak out here, and yet I can hole up." And that's an amazing combo.

**FJ:** We'll take care of you, Eileen.

**EM:** That's true.

**LZ:** The impersonality I thought was interesting—that that makes it easier for you to work.

**EM:** Yeah.

**LZ:** Would you say something more, because, of course, your personal life comes into your work.

**EM:** But it's like I grew up in Boston, and I probably couldn't... there would be a very particular thing I would write in Boston. Even New York is too laden with meaning and resonance and sentimentality.

**FJ:** There's a blankness to it.

**EM:** Yeah, and a landscape that really is not yours, that is so not New England. It is so not New York. It's this other scale of existence.

**FJ:** And it's not taking your symbolism, right? It's just not going to accept it. It really gives you space to think about other things.

**LZ:** Will you talk a little bit about... I mean, you were there really young, right? I mean, do you have early memories of Marfa, early experiences there?

**FJ:** Lots. Lots, yeah. I mean we went there the first time when I was four or something, so yeah.

**EM:** Actually what age did you move there?

**FJ:** Well, we moved in chunks. First it was Don just rented a really small house within town.

**EM:** Which my girlfriend now owns.

**FJ:** Yes, exactly. Exactly.

**EM:** I'm proud to say. She has a name, but we don't have to say that.

**FJ:** Right. The house was called the de Anda House. Anyway, and so that was just a summer place, and it was a substitute for Baja California. We couldn't go to Baja California anymore, because you couldn't bring art back and forth and you couldn't buy property. It was impossible. Marfa was the Baja substitute.

**EM:** Did you go to high school in Marfa?

**FJ:** I went to elementary school but not high school. High school was in New York.

**LZ:** Looking back and thinking about *Donald Judd Writings*, the volume from 2016, and then this new book, *Judd Interviews*, do you see that his work shifted in a significant way once Marfa became part of, or the center of, his life?

**FJ:** The things that started happening—and you don't want to attribute the work to circumstances, really—but the thing that did change was Don started working on the large-scale plywood pieces at around the time that we started going to Marfa. And there might be a connection and there might not, but certainly they came out at the same time. For instance, moving all the old works into the block and setting up the block so that those pieces could be seen.

**LZ:** What about the outdoor works, the COR-TEN works? Were those happening before? That was also very much a...

**FJ:** That's later. The COR-TEN works were kind of late '70s and '80s, so that's much later.

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**LZ:** Right. But I imagine that that's something that would have been more difficult to pull off without the kind of Marfa environment.

**FJ:** Yeah. The COR-TEN is the only material that Don actually hired fabricators within walking distance to consistently make. And unfortunately, he died before that could keep going. In a weird way, he was on his second wind or whatever you want to call it when he died, because there was really a lot going on. The work was changing a lot, and the architecture was really happening.

**LZ:** Right. As an artist, for you was Don someone who is on your radar, obviously, pre-Marfa? But in what way was he part of your imagination or inner life as a New York artist, which he also was, I mean yourself as a New York writer?

**EM:** I mean, I came to New York in the '70s, and work... the kind of work that he was doing in a world that embraces that kind of work was what was kind of happening in New York in the '70s. And actually, I didn't quite get it. I just thought, "How is this art?"

I mean, one of the jokes about Marfa right now is that people who are staying in the hotel say, "What is Marfa? What is there to do in Marfa?" And they get sent to Chinati, and then they come back and they were like really mad. They were like, "I thought it was going to be art." I have to say, I was a little bit like that when I got to New York, and I think Judd's work was just part of what I didn't quite get. And that changed over the years.

**EM:** The thing I will say is that the thing that's cool and has been incredible about coming to Marfa is the work actually looks so right there. I would say that a layer of really relishing the work and understanding it and being excited about it has happened in Marfa, by seeing work be outside and it have this kind of changeability and this kind of presentness that is so exciting and real about the work. So in a way, it's like Marfa, for me, explains what Judd is or was.

**FJ:** Don always said to see the work, you have to really live with it. Just going into a museum and seeing it for three seconds doesn't count. So in essence, Marfa is Don saying, "Okay, here's the work. Here's a chair. Just live with it for awhile and come back. Go away, come back, go away, come back." It's against the commodification of art. It's against the museumification of art.

**LZ:** I was always curious how Don picked the artists that he really wanted to have sort of permanent presentations in and around Marfa. Chamberlain, in

a funny way... When I went to Marfa, I drove through the South, and of course, as you're driving, you see all these sort of car cemeteries along the way, or you see many of them—scrapyards, junkyards. And so when you then arrive there and you see Chamberlain, it really made sense to me as a sculptural practice in that context. And Dan Flavin made less sense to me in that context. It was harder for me to be in those dark rooms, and so I'm just curious.

**FJ:** Because the context doesn't matter in that sense. What mattered to Don was the radicality of the artists. In that sense, for instance, Ilya Kabakov is there, who makes no sense aesthetically. He's not a minimalist. Neither is Chamberlain. And that's because that doesn't matter. The categories don't matter. The personalities don't matter. It just matters if the work is really good and radical, and in Don's opinion, these were the radical artists. There were many more, but you just can't use them all.

**LZ:** Don is a writer. What is your feeling? I'm sort of curious always with writers what your feeling about his prose style is, what your feeling about his general approach is, if you're drawn to it, Eileen, or sort of how do you react to him as a writer?

**EM:** I mean, I think the writing is amazing. I mean, I may be more excited about the writing than any of it, in a way.

**FJ:** You're excused.

**EM:** I knew. As I was arcing with that sentence, I was like, "Okay, this is my surrealism moment."

**LZ:** Yeah, exactly. We'll have to cut that one out.

**EM:** Because it's a weird combination of totemic and playful, and it's really careful. I mean it reminds me of a few things, like Warhol's interviews, which I think are so vernacular. And I think that's there, and then Charles Olson, who is so pronouncing, and Stein, who was like, "This is it." It's just like all those things happen in the writing and interfere with each other in a way that's very beautiful.

I mean, weirdly, I think there is a projected permanence to it, which is like, "Wow, really? You believe that?" And yet there's a certain kind of awe in seeing a writer... it's like that's where he's a little bit like Stein, saying like, "We don't really have the balls to say that. That's kind of impossible." Whether it's true or not, it's the desire to present this and say, "This is what I want, this is the thing I imagine," is really kind of inspiring.

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**FJ:** I was trying to think of where the intersection of Eileen and Don is. And okay, one's language, one's three-dimensional objects, and what is the... where does the Venn diagram intersect? Eileen's writing is brutally honest and it's clear. I was like, "That's exactly what it is." It's in the same way that... Don was making art in a certain way, because he couldn't contradict anything that he knew or that was known or that was experienced. He didn't want to add more, necessarily, but it was an attempt to be brutally honest and to care about space and time and being in the present. And there are phrases in Eileen's writings that are very specific and small, about light and about objects and about people, like the gestures of people. It's very much about the here and now. And that's exactly what Don's art is about.

**EM:** I mean, I find it's very American writing, which is a very kind of developing vernacular.

**LZ:** Yeah. I definitely... I read it, too, and I had the same reaction as you, Flavin, that there's a real directness to both of your writing, right? It's not mincing words. There's no sort of fear of coming off the wrong way. It's just a sort of stating what you feel about something.

**FJ:** There's no fear.

**LZ:** There's no fear—deeply fearless writing—and, I think, real conviction. And I think that that kind of conviction is very...

**FJ:** That's not easy to do. **LZ:** No. That's really hard. **FJ:** Yeah.

**EM:** Yeah. But I think it comes with the kind of redundancy that is in the work, too: things like restating things and making sure.

**FJ:** It's practice.

**EM:** Yeah. I mean, a funny comparison, too, that I have to make is that I just am a devotee of twelve-step programs, and they have tomes. Bill W. or somebody, a bunch of people, wrote these books that were like how it works and explaining this institution, which creates a state in which people participate. It's deeply an American vernacular. I think, weirdly, there's a whole funny... I mean, nobody's written that piece—and I don't want to write it either—but nobody's written a relationship between the twelve-step program and Judd.

**LZ:** I think I might commission that one. That'll be the next book in the series.

**FJ:** Go for it. There you go, Lucas.

**LZ:** Yeah. I guess, speaking about style, I'm curious to hear a little bit how you feel your approach to writing developed. I mean, Don gives a lot of credit to philosophy in many of the interviews...

**FJ:** It's very much in there.

**LZ:** He talks about his training as a philosopher, the language of philosophers, the kind of real direct ...

**FJ:** It's about logic.

**LZ:** Yes, and syntactic.

**FJ:** The whole work is based on *Symbolic Logic*, the book he gave Rainer when she was like ten years old and couldn't read it at all. But it was important to him that if A, then B, and maybe not C. I mean, this was all like, "Okay, that's how you think." That's what he applied to everything, and the writing came from that.

**LZ:** That's really what I'm asking, sort of if there is a philosophical underpinning to the way you are... and I mean that in the broadest way possible. I would just be curious to hear about that.

**EM:** Well, I bet... though I have to say one of the books that I've never read, or one of the writers I've ever read, is William James, but I've read Gertrude Stein, and she was his student. And her whole thing about... I mean, she was almost a doctor, and she was very involved with the circulation of blood and the body. And then she was trying to establish a kind of presentness in language. And so all her repetition is about that, and her explaining the now, and writing being a kind of voice print, and so there was a way...

I mean, I found Gertrude Stein's *Lectures in America* in a used bookstore in Harvard Square when I was in my twenties. I didn't know what it was. I thought somehow like, Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Lawrence? It was just like, "Who is this Gertrude?" And I bought the book, and it just became important for me.

Also because she was doing this kind of stating her own value, her own genius, and explaining language. And a lot of it was explaining how language changes from the people and from the masses. And the underclass changes the language. It's not from the top. So I... just early on, there was a philosophy of synthesis and received philosophy. And then by the time I was reading... Warhol's interviews are really important and his just totally great way of talking, which was very New York school poetry. I just found

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a way to make my own way of speaking and my own way of learning become one stream of language My poem sounds like me, so that you don't know I'm trying to say something intelligent. I just am...

**FJ:** That is such an achievement.

**LZ:** Yes. I mean, absolutely. And I have to say, what you're saying about conventions of language is something that I noticed in Don's writing too. He's not concerned with conventional syntax, with conventional spelling even in some cases. I mean, we've left the orthography the same, I think, in part to prove that when he says "anyplace," one word, he means "anyplace," one word. That is what he's trying to... whatever he's trying to communicate with that unit, he is communicating.

And I certainly felt that, and one feels that in your writing too. There's less of an interest in meeting the conventional norms of whatever it is, pronouncement, whatever it is. I think about the I and me. You're not concerned about having the subject always speak of him or her themselves as I, but it can be me or her. There's subverting that.

**FJ:** I think, in both cases—sorry to speak for Eileen. But I think, in both cases, to build oneself up as an individual in the way that Eileen just mentioned, that is to be against the convention.

**LZ:** At the risk of it becoming too abstract, maybe it's—for me, it might be worth it, and maybe you guys agree or not—thinking a little bit about how that happens, meaning how one crafts a life where a degree of individuality becomes the staple, because it's not the case for most people, I would say. That's a hard state. How does that, call it strength or whatever it is, develop, or what does it look like in development?

**EM:** I mean, I think just to be is to be a combination of will and luck, because I think you can want things and imagine things and dream things and it still doesn't work, you know? And yet, I think if you have something, a unique mix, then there's a courage of asserting things. And they will... I mean, like when I ran for president.

**LZ:** Let's talk about that.

**FJ:** Can you please do that again? We desperately need that.

**EM:** I just realized this thing about being... you could put certain things out in public and you think, "Okay, this is ludicrous." And you discover that. I've made

books like this. I think, "How could this book possibly work?" And then you quickly find out who it does work for, so that when you make yourself public, you become this kind of sticky thing and you see what does adhere to that.

**FJ:** I mean, there are a lot of, for instance, Judd works that he thought up, and then they were made, and then he saw them. So in his case, it's like some worked and some didn't. He didn't know ahead of time. It was a total jump into the unknown. And you have to make all these decisions. And either you make all these decisions—the thousands of decisions you make every day—either you're making them or they're made for you. And you just have to figure out which ones are important.

**LZ:** Being deliberate about all those decisions?

**FJ:** It's paying attention. I mean, Don's artwork is about paying attention.

**LZ:** That's interesting. And that's probably also, when you said "presentness" a couple times... but that's really what you're talking about in some ways. If you really pay attention to something, you are present with the object.

**FJ:** I mean, one of the things about Don is that his complete lack of religion or/and the whole schools of philosophy was that, "Well, this is all we get, and this is the most amazing thing we'll ever see by far. The thing that is seemingly so banal to us is actually the most amazing thing we can experience, so we should pay attention to it."

**LZ:** Right.

**EM:** I just want to comment on a thing I actually also enjoy about the writing of Judd and probably something I'm excited about in my own: the courage to talk badly in public about other artists and curators and institutions. It's just like people... I mean, I think, especially now there's a sense that publicly we don't shit-talk, because it'll come back to you and it'll take something away. I mean, one of my favorite writers, Roberto Bolaño, was really willing to talk about certain icons of Latin American literature and say, "Oh, their work is horrible."

**FJ:** Yeah. That's so important.

**EM:** It's so important to have this critical society.

**FJ:** Yeah. You can do it politely, but it's still really important.

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**LZ:** Yeah. I think that's also where Don is quite good, that he's good at not holding someone accountable for only one specific body. Like he'll go in and look at a body of work and say, "This is bad. This work is bad."

**FJ:** He has definite reasons why work is bad, yes.

**LZ:** Exactly, but it doesn't mean that you're not capable of making something good later or that... you know what I mean? It's not totalizing.

**FJ:** And he's also clearly stating many, many, many times it's his own personal opinion, and everybody should have their own.

**LZ:** Yeah. Except he does say in that last interview, "I believe I have a perfect eye." Pretty amazing. They're talking about investing in art and Chase developing this art investment fund at that last interview. He's like, "I just have to say, if it were me, it would be successful, but Chase will fail because they're just bad at investing money too. They've lost so much money."

**FJ:** Well, he was right, wasn't he?

**LZ:** He said, "If I'd had a little bit of cash ten years ago, I would have had a great Reinhardt painting, I would've had this, I would have that. I have a perfect eye."

**EM:** That was pretty incredible.

**FJ:** He's right.

**LZ:** One thing that I like about these last interviews is they start to show another side, I think, to Don than the one that is in the public imagination, which is quite austere. And I'm wondering if that's.. I'm just curious to hear a little bit more about that other side from you, whether it's him talking more loosely about whatever. He talks very freely about a lot of things, and I don't think we experience him that way or most audiences experience him that way.

**FJ:** One of the things you can get, if you have the misfortune to read the entire book all the way through...

**LZ:** Which you've done a few times?

**FJ:** Yes, which I've done now a couple of times. One of the things you get is he's constantly asked the same questions, over and over and over and over. So that means whatever public is out there, they get the same answers over and over and over again.

And I think that's... all you have to do is ask different questions and you'll get different answers. But journalists are as lazy as anybody else, so they ask the same questions. So I'm not surprised that he's a nice, fuzzy, warm person with lots of different angles. It's normal to me. It may be news to other people.

**LZ:** Yeah. A weird question, but since we have you here, what was he like in a kind of interpersonal... in moments of downtime, private? What were those interactions like? I guess I'm saying, "What was he like as a person?"

**FJ:** I don't know how to answer that. He was a normal guy.

**LZ:** Warm? Distant?

**FJ:** Let's put it this way. He was very warm, had a really good sense of humor, but very serious about working. And he liked what he liked. And he was not going to waste his time, I don't know, going to openings and stuff like that, because he knew if he didn't like the work—what for?.

**LZ:** Is that something, Eileen, that you think about, just in terms of the persona that is constructed for someone from the outside based on whatever it is, interviews, perceptions, constructions? And the kind of inner life that you perceive in yourself?

**EM:** I think at a certain point, when you start to have a body of work, people start to talk to it all the time, and you happen to be there. It's a weird experience.

**FJ:** Yeah. You just happen to be there. That's a good way to say it.

**EM:** Yeah. I think, yeah, that is awkward. Then I think all you can do is try and perform what it is that's actually going on now, and not worry about fulfilling that, or feeling compelled to be that.

**LZ:** I mean, what was interesting in your case, of course, is that it's not a secret that of course now, with Amazon shows, there's sort of a whole mainstream kind of whatever: not assumption of whatever you've been doing for a very long time but a renewed appreciation and a kind of taking on in the mainstream of that. I'm curious. I mean, are you happy about that or are you not? I mean, do you even think about it?

**EM:** Well, I mean, I think it's cool. I think it's really funny if a young person comes up to you and sort of tells you that they know your work because of a TV show. I mean, I feel like that's success as an American poet, I think.

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**LZ:** You're one of very few, I would say.

**EM:** Yeah. No, I mean because growing up, it's like TV was the most informing art form of my generation. I was just like... I grew up in that first generation of television. And that it's evolved as a form means that we can evolve to some extent with it, which I think is... I mean not all.... I mean, obviously I think, if we want to go to like when TV came to Marfa, it was a weird collision and one that didn't actually take.

**LZ:** What do you mean by that, when TV came to Marfa?

**EM:** Well, you know. I mean, shall we talk about *I Love Dick*? Why not? Which I think was so much about Judd, which is really funny.

**FJ:** I just read the book.

**EM:** The book, I love the book. I think the book is a masterpiece, and I think one episode of the show was really good. But I think the thing that was so funny was that there was this compulsion to do Judd out of this male character in the book, Dick. They just thought the only way to do it was to kind of...

**LZ:** Conflate the two of them, right?

**EM:** Yeah, which was interesting but not successful.

**LZ:** I certainly feel, having not been someone who grew up watching much TV, or movies for that matter, that what is being made... there's a lot of bad things being made, but there is also some really interesting stuff being made.

**EM:** Sure.

**LZ:** I mean, is that a medium that you pay attention to in your own work or in your creative life?

**EM:** I mean, I've even written a couple of pilots. I mean, it's kind of a... it's the fact of that world.

I mean, I can't help. I'm very excited about the existence of it. Of course, I watch shows obsessively, *Succession*, most recently. It's kind of an amazing critique of our moment. And it's funny, and it's horrifying and so on. But I think that there just is this kind of Dickensian thing, where we really have the serial novel occurring on television.

**LZ:** Yes. That's exactly right.

**EM:** I mean, everybody I know, every writer, every artist I know, struggles with it. They go through periods

where they're reading a lot, and then you go through periods where you're just obsessing on some show and you're just like, "I'm jonesing for it. I'm getting up in the morning and I'm watching that." And it's crazy. So the result is that I've even been invited in halfway to that. One of my books got optioned. I became a member of the Writers Guild. I wrote a screenplay. I've written a couple of pilots.

**LZ:** What was Don's—I mean, he talks about it a little bit—but Don's relationship to TV? I mean, was there TV out in Marfa?

**EM:** That's a good question. It's a really good question.

**FJ:** We didn't have a TV until Nixon was getting impeached, and that's when we got a TV.

**LZ:** Got it.

**EM:** Was it because it was bad? Were you one of those households where children are not allowed to watch?

**FJ:** Yeah.

**LZ:** Mine was like that.

**FJ:** It was just like the box that you didn't need, and so we didn't have one.

**EM:** Did you later become one of those people who couldn't stop watching television?

**FJ:** Yes. I watched monster movies after school religiously, like the 3:00 Creature Feature or whatever it was.

**EM:** Yeah, because every kid who was not allowed to watch television...

**FJ:** It became their main drug.

**EM:** Yeah. I've dated them. It's just like...

**LZ:** Yeah, because I wasn't... and I have to say I never really...

**FJ:** You missed it. You missed it.

**LZ:** Yeah. Maybe I missed it.

**FJ:** Now there's too many, too much stuff.

**LZ:** Now you just tune it out.

**FJ:** It's weird now, yeah.

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**LZ:** I think it's weird, but in a funny way, there's so much that you can actually find something that speaks to you.

**EM:** Yes. Oh, yeah.

**LZ:** Typically you can find one thing, because there's such a diversity. There's so much being made that eventually you find something interesting. There's going to be highbrow stuff, lowbrow stuff. There's just so much more.

**EM:** But what's weird, or I can't help thinking of this thought, is that it somehow replaces the city.

**FJ:** I think you're right.

**EM:** Because when you say that, exactly what you said is the way I felt about New York when I came to it... and I still feel it to some extent that it's like whatever I want, it's here. I think that people don't necessarily... I don't want to get all generational. I hate that, when people are like, "Young people today," because I think there are young people who love the city, you know? But I think that there also is a sense that people turn towards their machine.

**LZ:** I think about this a lot, and I wonder... ironically, poetry is coming back again hugely. I think it's in part because—and this sounds silly—that the digestibility of poetry, as opposed to long-form prose, meaning it's just easier to interact with a bunch of short poems and feel something immediate and feel it powerfully. I think, weirdly enough, that this new generation of readers will be real readers and writers of poetry, but maybe less of long-form novels, things like that.

**EM:** Right, because people are texting and people are tweeting, and those are like poems. I think when novels become more like accumulations of smaller things, it's like stylistically we just have to think of different ways to construct.

**LZ:** Yeah. What are you working on? What's been occupying you?

**EM:** Well, now I just finished... I won't even talk about it. I just finished giving a talk that made me completely crazy. So I won't talk about that. But I'm writing a new novel. I'm starting a new novel, and the only thing I can say about it is that I want it to be mammoth. Because I have not read Knausgaard, and I feel like I've heard too many... it's just there's so many works of giant male genius. I just think I'm

really interested in writing a thousand-page book. So whether I can do that or not, I don't know. That's my task this year, so I'm sort of not writing. I'm officially...

**FJ:** You're sticking to the mammoth project?

**EM:** Yeah. I'm officially... I mean, I did it for the first time. I write for different magazines and stuff and I was offered a little gig the other day. And I tried to turn it over to three amazing female sci-fi writers I met in Germany. I said, "They might like to do this, but I'm taking a year off." I said that for the first time, and I'm kind of excited.

**FJ:** All right, so you have a year to write the mammoth project?

**EM:** Well, I figure three pages a day. That's a thousand.

**FJ:** I haven't read Knausgaard either.

**LZ:** Three pages a day is a high clip, though. I mean, that's like... do you write quickly?

**EM:** Yeah. But it could be ugly too.

**FJ:** Well, I look forward to that when it comes out.

**LZ:** Yeah. All right. Thanks so much, guys. Thanks for doing this.

*Dialogues* is produced by David Zwirner. You can find out more about the artists on this series by going to [davidzwirner.com/dialogues](http://davidzwirner.com/dialogues). And if you like what you heard, please rate and review us on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen. It really does help other people discover the show. I'm Lucas Zwirner. Thanks so much for listening, and I hope you join us again next time.