

[Image description: four people meet via video chat, livestreamed on Youtube. Each individual is in one of the four squares. Going clockwise, Ethan Weinstock is on the top left, Lumi Tan is on the top right, Baseera Khan is on the bottom right, and Christina (Chris) Wairegi is on the bottom left.]

Lumi Tan [LT]: Hi, everyone, I'm Lumi Tan. I'm curator at The Kitchen and I'm really excited you could all join us for this virtual wrap party for a Baseera Khan's "By Faith". For those of you who don't know, though I'm sure most of you know, "By Faith" is a television pilot created by Baseera in residency with The Kitchen at Queenslab, over the past month. In collaboration with a community of close friends, scenes based on intimate, real life conversations were shot on a modular film set that replicates Baseera's apartment.

Filming was done over three weeks, with rehearsals and shoots live streamed on The Kitchen's Twitch account, and this footage is now archived on our website for our online programming, onscreen.thekitchen.org. And the work on the pilot will continue on at the Wexner Center for the Arts in a residency for post-production. Tonight, we're lucky to have Baseera here with us, along with director producer Ethan Weinstock and cinematographer Christina (Chris) Wairegi, to celebrate the end of filming, talk about the process, and premiere footage that hasn't yet been shared with anybody.

We'll open up to the audience for Q&A later, at the end of the event, but feel free to drop any questions into the chat you might have along the way or, you know, feel free to just chat. That's also fine. I also want to give a shout out to the rest of the crew who are not here on screen with us tonight but I hope is in the audience or will be in the chat. Our lighting designer, Abby Hoke-Brady, Lighting Assistant S. Stolnack, Audio Supervisor Drew Weinstein, Boom Operator Nico Manogalas. I'm sorry for anyone whose name I'm butchering right now. Camera Operators Sofia Tasa and Omar Guinier, Stagehand Joe Wakeman, and Associate Producer Akshay Jain.

So to start things off Baseera, when I invited you to the Queenslab space, which [you] may not have been able to tell from the footage, but if you've been there before for our previous events or shows, it's an 8000 square foot warehouse space with 40-foot ceilings in Ridgewood, Queens. Baseera, you had a few different ideas, there were raves, recording an album, a talk show. And I know of your work in sculpture and installation, photography, performance and so "By Faith" is all of these things and much, much more. It is a completely new direction for your work. How did this television pilot come out of this moment in your practice and your life?

Baseera Khan [BK]: I'm definitely a storyteller, give me a subject and I'll run it into the ground. And I think that a lot of ideas that I had with you, I was excited about, but I didn't get the little chills on the back of my neck. And I think that when I do receive that sensation is when I know I have it right. So I was really depressed about it. And then on top of that, there was COVID and everything. And I was in bed and I was watching a lot of TV, and I do watch a lot of TV—watched a lot of TV ever since I was a child. But, at some point I was like, what's the thing that everyone in the world can relate to? And I was like, "oh TV. OK, so how do I do this?" Then I would watch a lot of really awful, "how to make TV" clips on YouTube and stuff.

Ethan and I have been friends for a really long time, not a really long time, but, you know, a healthy amount of time. And I know that Ethan's been doing production stuff and does a lot. And we just would always talk. He was there for me when I was 'little sick girl' in bed and just, I don't know, you just got invested in it Ethan—you tell me. But, at some point [it

went from] this kind of Proustian idea of being in bed and writing seven volumes of chatter from a fever to, “let me do this. How do I do this?” So I started creating mood boards. And luckily I was able to meet Chris. And Ethan and I, when we reviewed the tapes and checked her out, I was like, “please, please let her like us.” And then we met and it was magic!

LT: Ethan and Chris, have you worked on a project like this before, or did you feel like this was a completely new direction for both of you?

Ethan Weinstock [EW]: Never. Never, ever before but hopefully, many times again.

BK: Did you say never ever before and hopefully never again?

EW: No, “and hopefully many times again.” [laughter]

BK: Well we're not done yet! [laughter]

Christina Wairegi [CW]: I think it's safe to say this is unlike anything I've ever participated in. But I was bred and broken by an experimental filmmaker in my very first film job. It was really spectacular to return to a magical place. I think the reason anyone falls in love with cinema is, you know, it's about [the] limitlessness of it, not the limitations. And I feel like everything Baseera brought to us was about breaking ideas, experimenting and playing with everything, making everything feel like a question instead of, you know, assigning answers to our work. So everything was very collaborative and really fun.

And while we were shooting, we'd go into everything with an idea about how it would work and everything that would happen would change. Someone would get a new idea, or something would be special, or we'd see a shadow someplace, that would inspire a different take on something we planned. It just was really organic and collaborative and totally unique. Completely unique experience.

EW: Yeah, it was really amazing. Baseera and I talked about how [the] conception of almost all of her projects starts from like a place of limitless potential. She's not a person who self edits in that way that like, “oh, I could never do something like that. I don't have the resources or I don't have whatever.”

Baseera always starts with a place of magical thinking, then zeroes in as she goes in this amazing way that's like, “this [is this] part of reality makes this work,” and “this is this part of reality that makes it work.” It was a really inspiring process to get to be with Baseera from basically the genesis of this version to completion. And we're not even done yet. We haven't even started post[-production].

BK: Nowhere near.

LT: I'm curious to know how the, kind of, structure of the process came about. There was the mood board and the references and then situations—the structure and situations where your performers came before the script. And so much happened once the performers entered into the space that you had created. So could you just walk us through the steps that got us to this place where it's like, part documentary, part experimental film, part sitcom, part performance art?

BK: So in May, I think I was chatting with you kind of like, “can we have a secret phone call before our Monday meeting? Because I'm having a lot of anxiety.” I was trying to write a script, and every time I was writing the script, it felt like it was like a young adult novel or something. Too much detail. I needed an editor. And so, you know, I was confessing all of my issues to Ethan, and Ethan actually suggested a kind of strategy for script writing, which is something that Mike, um—

EW: Mike Lee.

BK: ...is something that Mike Lee would employ. And, you know, coming from Austin, Texas and having worked a little bit with film, not TV, but with film, I kind of understood the whole mumblecore genre. And I'd seen it happen before. So I came in with a little understanding of that. Everything changed when Ethan came up with that idea because all of a sudden, I was like, “oh, that's a great way to find consent, this is a great way to create rehearsals, this is a great way to create a performance, this is a great way to ease into something to make it feel staged but real at the same time.”

And because we only had six weeks and a very small budget, there was another kind of genesis, an idea where we wanted Chris to shoot everything. But you know, the reality hits home sometimes when you're doing these projects and you just need people to trust your vision, and that requires a lot. It requires monetary support and active support on every other level. So we decided to weave the documentation, “pseudo Twitch feeding,” that you can still access on the Twitch feed for The Kitchen, in with the final beautiful, 4k cameras that Chris staged and choreographed with some of her buddies. Like Omar for example, who did the Steadicam, and Sofia your camera assistant. So, yeah. That's how things started rolling.

Then it was really about, instead of thinking about a script, inviting people, I was thinking about curation, something that I can do and I will do if I'm afforded the right opportunity. And I started thinking about a 10 year genesis of knowledge and weaving people and subject and the nature of objecthood, not only just artwork or like what people do for a living. That's what led me to invite the people that I did invite. And at that point, it was just logistics, it was just setting things up. Making sure people knew what car to take. And Akshay Jain helped us out with so much of that. And in fact, Akshay was another coup at the beginning because his generosity, support and willingness to kind of do whatever. Whatever it took was also something that I needed. I needed a cheerleader, I needed somebody who was like, “you're amazing, you got this.” So that's the beginning.

LT: Well, I'm just thinking too, about all of the material that you amassed during these rehearsals where you're drawing from these really intimate moments with people. Right? Like you're making them feel like they're alone with you in your apartment. Then how that translates to this very public forum of the television show. How did that get balanced and how did your scripts develop in this way? And the way that you shot things also influenced extremely private, hyper-public moments.

BK: Well, I can say some of that some of that comes from the directing. Some of it comes from the directing and the camera work and the work that Chris and Ethan did together, so it might be also a question for them. But on my end, I was focusing on the activities that my friend group and I do and do often and also the energy that was reciprocated during this weird time of lockdown, pandemic, uprising and complete transparency of what the government's role has been. It brought certain people together. That core group of friends

that we curated together, it was evident that for whatever reason, I'm kind of this focal point and all these people are weaving through me.

There were activities, such as eating dinners, watching specific films, and thinking about specific kinds of art genres, just gossiping about love or just random, magical thinking. And those are just things I always do. And so it was easy to script and it was really easy to remember the steps in front of the camera. And I think even for the non-actor it was really easy because they were like, "oh this is Baseera, this is her home." And, like I said again, the work that Ethan and Chris did to make everyone feel comfortable was kind of, like—that was magical. And I'm still trying to figure out how you did that. [laughter]

EW: Yeah, I think that all of the scenes that ended up making it, making it all the way through the process, they all started out as these seeds of moments from Baseera's life. So starting from that point of truth, it was easy to just be like, "oh, well, what happened when me, Logan, and Baseera, went to the beach?" like, "oh we were trying to put together this huge tent." We were really struggling with it.

LT: I love that clip.

CW: And all of the footage is still raw for everyone out there who is tech savvy, so you're seeing a color space that's more like a grayscale. It's not saturated, it's not final.

Video Clip 1

[Image description: three actors are at a dream-like interpretation of the beach. Video footage of a beach, the waves, sand and sky, is projected on a concrete wall, and the actors are working together to pitch a tent.]

Ethan Weinstock [EW]: This end's good.

Logan Jardine [LJ]: All right. We're halfway done.

EW: Are you enjoying yourself?

Baseera Khan [BK]: I'm just trying to fix my glasses.

LJ: [laughter] You're stepping on the tent.

EW: Here.

LJ: It's really windy out. Baseera, can you hold that?

[End of clip]

LT: Amazing scene.

BK: I mean, that was a good example of just three people being really comfortable with themselves and allowing for each person to perform [them]elves. And I've always had problems with sunglasses. There's a little plastic thing that always pops out of it. And so once I stepped on it, I knew that the plastic thing had completely become dysfunctional. And knowing that going into this, I knew that adding that extra element would cause more chaos. Anyone who knows me, knows me as somebody who could potentially be an agent of chaos. [laughter] So, that kinda just helped, kept it going. Kept it like a very *I Love Lucy* kind of slapstick moment.

CW: I think it's a hurdle, making a space for everyone to feel comfortable, sometimes more than it was in how we directors shot it. Baseera had a philosophy that we maintained. It is supposed to feel clumsy because that's how life is. And there should be room for improvisation, inclusivity, and people should be who they are naturally. So if that means doing it more times to figure out exactly the words or the actions, you keep doing it. And

the more you do, it feels natural. I think the beauty of the rehearsal was allowing everyone on camera to get acquainted with the space the way you would someone's home and so we made it that. By the time we were filming in the space everything had already fallen into place.

LT: And that's the one scene that kind of happens—I mean, it does happen outside the apartment. I think what's so interesting, the choices that you made to make the artifice—[to] enhance the artifice instead of hide the artifice. And if there are any like, I don't know, challenges in the way that that was shot or lit—or I mean obviously, there's fans that are creating background noise and it seems like actually one of the hardest scenes to shoot in that way.

BK: What do you think, Chris? Ethan?

CW: The beach scene is one of my personal favorites. I loved that in the middle of summer... There's so many things that got so meta with our project. In the middle of summer where so many people are stuck at home and we all are lusting after doing normal things like going to the beach in times where it seems annoying that you can't set up a time. I think for the whole crew, it's almost nostalgic. We were in the middle of a huge concrete space inside. I think most people didn't go to the beach this year and it just felt so appropriate and warming.

And so I think that the way Abby lit it and Stoli [S Stolnack] assisted, we created a really warm feeling of the last days of summer. And the sun's going down. It's windy and you just want to soak up those morsels of summertime. And it just, everything molded around that feeling of immediacy, of fighting wind, fighting elements to get to this place where you can enjoy something beautiful with friends. It was easier to light almost, because we are imitating reality in the sense of sunlight. It's not so much—the artifice comes from the space instead of maybe our lighting or camera. I just really enjoyed making something nostalgic-feeling in a very foreign space in a strange time. But that's entirely true. It's a real experience. Ethan almost went to the beach when we were filming.

LT: Ethan, talk about your turn as director, star, screenwriter. Everything that day.

EW: [laughter] Yeah. The buy-in for me was big for that day of shooting. On our last day, Logan and I, the night before the shoot, just turned to each other. Logan's my partner and also the other person in that scene. And we were looking at each other in the dark, in bed. And we were like, "how did she convince both of us to do this?" [laughter] Because we're both, not—I can barely take a selfie without being like, "no I hate it. Destroy it. Kill it with fire."

So, to put myself in that place of—Baseera really does have magic powers to get people to see her vision and get on board with it. And get out of their comfort zone, too. It was an amazing experience. And both of us afterwards were like, "we're never acting again." [laughter]

[Unintelligible]

BK: Well, I think that earlier you mentioned when to reveal the artifice. I think that when we start post-production, which is happening by the way—we're sending the tapes in November. We're gonna go a little dark in December. I think everybody needs a break. And then starting January to end of February, we'll have the pilot. The rest of 2021

intermittently, we'll continue to make the next nine episodes. So there will be ten episodes total.

I think I told you this earlier on in the months. My idea making process can be clunky. And then towards the end, when everything's starting to make sense is when I start pulling out things. Like, I pull out materials, I pull out anything that just feels like this is clunky. And even to the point of a screen that we could have projected upon to create even more of a realistic vantage point with the projection of the beach.

I love the idea that this person, me, is sitting in bed isolating 'Walden Pond-ing' style and she/they are like, "I'm having all these dreams of being with people this whole time." Then all of a sudden you see a beach scene on a brick wall. Have you ever had that when you're really exhausted? Of course, everyone's had that. And so, this was a moment for us to experiment and see what that felt like. The conceptual thinking of seeing all these architectural, domestic interior spaces, the outdoor space of the apartment. And then when you see that beach scene, you understand that it's projected on brick. I think that conceptually, that just brings it together. It'll work.

LT: Oh, maybe we should talk about one of the scenes that is very intimate. [I'm] thinking about the scene with T and Lia, where that really was a full on. I'm still so impressed that we were able to cook homemade ravioli from scratch. Next level New York. That is 100% next level New York, on a camping stove in Queenslab. Brad, do you want to roll that and then we can talk about it?

Video Clip 2

[Image Description: two actors, Baseera and Lia are sitting down in the staged bedroom area, one actor, T is off screen in the staged kitchen area and walks towards them. They are all wearing skincare facemasks]

Baseera Khan [BK]: I love how in the car you were like, did you bring masks?

T De Long [TDL]: Mine keeps falling off.

Lia Gangitano [LG]: Yours are slugs, you just have slugs on your face! [laughter] It's like, you're drooping.

TDL: I pretended—I realized that's not how you make coff—I just pretended...

BK: Aren't you making coffee?

TDL: I am making coffee

BK: Why are these so sluggish? [laughter] Look in the mirror!

TDL: Where?

BK: That's the mirror right there. [laughter]

LG: Like what are those? You look a little crazy.

[End of clip]

LT: I love that scene so much.

BK: Yeah!

EW: A full three course meal and to say, it was on a Coleman camping stove.

BK: Yeah. I mean, that is a scene that due to the limits in terms of the residency and people's scheduling, we are going to work with Chris and potentially Omar, on actually doing the kind of more professional photography and filming in the apartment itself. So that's going to be quite a challenge and we'll have to schedule it out. But it was a three

hour chore. It was a three hour event. We get there, we set up. We'd have a meal in real time. Like that is like—Ethan is like, “no, we're not cooking, we're not drinking on the set. We're not doing these things. This is not industry standard.” And I was like, “yeah. But it's like a performance.” [laughter]

CW: It was delicious.

BK: It was so delicious. I mean, she could just, like, quit the art world and make food and everyone would come running.

CW: But that was the scene [where] it was easy to forget, we're not in a home. It's all of the normal things that we cited, it feels like a dinner party at a friends'. And I remember even being surprised that we could eat everything. Ethan and I are used to the film world where the food isn't really edible. Nothing is really happening. All the tricks to make you feel like these things are happening authentically. But they just did. And they did it, and it's part of the magic. You're expecting it to be fake but it isn't.

LT: Yeah, I love that scene. You're in the kitchen and in the bedroom and you're crossing through all these spaces. I want to compare that to the scene with Amy Sillman, which is intended as where you go into the dream sequence. So, you know, the scene is like—well, you describe the scene and then we'll show the clip.

BK: So the Amy scene. Amy Sillman scene was—we did a whole day of shooting. We had to do the rehearsal and the professional scripted shoot in one day. And the scene we're about to see is a choreographed mental space, where I'm actually on my bed thinking that I'm on a table painting with Amy. We were painting flowers in a vase, and all of a sudden the flowers come alive and they get thrown on us instead. It was like a very strange system of events, but it all came out of... Amy and I, we're talking about master paintings of flowers. And women who were being painted, looking pensively. And so the whole day, we're really trying to capture that pensiveness. I don't know if you can see it but—

Video Clip 3

[Image description: two actors are lying on a bed, in a staged bedroom, and flowers are being thrown at them. Amy is on the left and is drawing on a large sheet of paper. Baseera grabs a flower and plays with it.]

Amy Sillman: And I was like, you know, it's not gonna—it's not how I can—it's not how I pay my rent with.

Baseera Khan: Yeah, I would love a painting.

[End of clip]

LT: Shout out to Joe for his very impressive flower throwing! That scene is so conversation driven. And Amy was almost like a professional performer. Maybe you could talk about the ways that you navigated people's various—you set up the subjects you would talk about, but when you have these extended shoot days—where the conversation went. And then Ethan, you did a really incredible job, being like “let's steer back to this thing!” [laughter] Because it feels so luxurious in the moment, right? You're like, “oh, we're just here and we're just painting.” But then you gotta be like, “oh, wait, this is going to be a part of a larger narrative.”

BK: Yeah, well, I know that I stressed Chris and Ethan out quite a bit that day. I was very in the moment. And I also hadn't painted in years. I think I haven't painted in 10 years. And

so there was this other thing mentally happening to me where I was remembering this life that I for some reason have cut off from myself. I know that Ethan was encouraging [me] to wrap my mind around more of a documentary approach. And so, there was some conversation from Ethan to me like, “can you restrict your body? Don't walk off the plinth that we made.”

All the while he was feeding Amy questions to get through to me. There was a lot of background understanding of what to do, that Ethan was trying to do. While Chris was just like running around with this huge camera that's the size of a cow trying to capture all of it. [laughter] You kind of did, and it was amazing. And then the artifice comes along where the next day, we made choice shots. [unintelligible] Those choice shots happened without Amy. But I think when we start to put it together it will all make sense.

EW: Yeah, I love that moment with the flowers. Amy wanted to have a Jack Smith *Flaming Creatures* moment, and so she was like, “I want flowers.” So we had to give Amy her Jack Smith moment. [It] was amazing to get to cite a work like that, that's so iconic and to see how it could fit in perfectly with that moment. Amy's a real like—Amy is a legit mastermind. The fact that whenever we did want to steer the conversation in a direction, we could say like, “oh, can you talk about this again?” Amy just managed to be like, “oh, what do you think about this?” And it was just the most organic segway ever, back into the conversation. Amy Sillman needs her own TV show. I will watch it every single week. Really!

BK: So I remember the first part of your question, Lumi was, “how do you”—oh, is everybody there? I think I might—

CW: You're very picturesque.

BK: I think the FBI is watching. So there was your one one part of your—

LT: You're good, good.

BK: One, part of your question was, how did I navigate creating something scripted with non-actors. You know, over the course of however many years—what's happening?

CW: You're fine on our end.

[Baseera gets logged off]

EW: We spoke too soon.

CW: Yeah.

EW: She does keep getting frozen in these, like, beautiful gestures though.

LT: OK. [laughter]

CW: All right, I'm sure Baseera's coming back in a moment.

EW Chris, what did you think of shooting that scene, because it was definitely very run and gun. We were trying to catch every angle that day. And it was only you operating [the

camera] which was crazy. If you don't know, to have a single operator who is managing to nail every single angle—Chris is a rock star.

CW: It was great because I had the support of a fantastic team. We had a discussion about, it's this scene that we're gonna play fluidly and we'll shoot it, like as if it's a documentary. So the whole time I'm thinking through where both cameras are, 'cause we had two cameras, even if there's only myself operating. I'm thinking through the action of the scene, if Amy and Baseera move. I want to make sure I see some paintbrushes. I wanna see hands, faces depending on the conversation, pick up on the most important element, and also make sure the other shot's complementary so that they can give the editor something that matches.

It was having a documentary approach for a very whimsical idea, of something that exists in a dream space. The dream was starting to devolve and unfold with the beach scene being projected on a wall. So how do you honor something—how do you approach something from a documentary standpoint, but honor it in terms of a very artistic, creative, un-reality? So that was a challenge throughout. The beauty of Amy and Baseera's—their relationship is so natural. And the conversation is so natural that it is easy to play in the moment.

[Baseera is logged back on]

LT: Baseera, did you want to follow up on what you were saying before you cut out?

BK: Yeah, I think I forgot to pay my cable bill. Well, there's that!

Going back to your earlier question about, how do you navigate understanding if someone is capable of being normal on/in front of a camera and the artifice? Over the course of ten plus years of knowing some of these people, I've learned that they're capable of just that. There [are] these really interesting animations that Amy was doing years ago and the candor and candidness and the vulnerability of her just being like "blah blah blah," telling these stories was what I was looking for. And also, all the lectures that an artist has to do, all the kinds of, like preparation and presenting that an artist has to do and like over time. Amy is like, "I've been doing this for so long."

So I kind of knew that it would be a little difficult at first. And then eventually she would just ignore the camera, because I think someone like Amy or someone like Lia or me, we're doing things in front of people all the time. The learning curve is so doable. When I saw the cameras and I saw the setup, I was like, "OK, I can do this. I can ignore it all." Because you have to ignore your audience to make art and you have to ignore your audience to do performance. Otherwise you'll never get it done.

LT: Yeah, I think that says so much about the expectations of artists and their ability to perform and be public figures. That really reminds me of the last scene we have to show, which is with Rico Gatson, an artist who has also been in your life for a long time as a mentor and guide. I think you had to do some reassurance around how he would feel in front of a camera.

BK: But it ends up being my favorite moment, actually, that book scene. OK. Let me just say really quickly, before we see it, it's my favorite scene. And I remember Chris was like, "I didn't get it. Let's do it again!" And Ethan was like, "do it again." And I was like "OK, we'll do it again." This was the scene that was so amazing. Rico was so good on/in front of the

camera. He, too, could have his own TV show. Leading up to the day of rehearsals, it was like, "I can't do this, I'm really shy. I don't know, I'm not going to be scripted. I can't do this." But it was really perfect.

Video Clip 4

[Image description: two actors are standing in a staged living room near a bookshelf. Rico is on the left and Baseera is on the right, near each other.]

Baseera Khan [BK]: And all of a sudden all the books came crashing down. It was just like it was almost like. It's like, take these books and throw them on the ground.

Rico Gatson [RG]: Just throw these—you just want me to throw these books on the ground?

BK: Just throw them on the ground. [book drops] That's how loud it was. I mean, it was like it was more it was more. Let me throw this. It was like. [book drops]

RG: Here. Maybe it was even louder than that.

BK: OK, you wanna try it again? It was like. [book drops] That was a rental.

RG: For extra effect, this is by Phaidon. [book drops]

BK: Oh, yeah. Screw you, Phaidon. [book drops] Screw you, I can't see—I can't read Farsi. [book drops]

RG: All the books fell down.

BK: Screw you, Thames Hudson. [book drops] Yale. OK, you wanna throw this one?

RG: No you throw it. [book drops] [laughter] Through you, uh, black and white checkered concrete cover. [book drops]

BK: You just said "through you."

RG: Oh, screw you.

BK: Don't throw the bowl.

RG: So that's what happened.

BK: That's what happened.

RG: The books fell down.

[End of clip. Note: the streaming video feed accidentally had audio echo towards the end of the clip.]

BK: Did you guys see it double up at the end? There was a little echo.

LT: Yeah. I thought that was just you. I thought that was just Baseera, screaming out, "screw you Phaidon." [laughter]

BK: No. That must have just been technology. But the double. Other than the double sound thing... It was like the best. So amazing. Actually today, Rico—I sent him a clip and Rico called me and was like, he couldn't even say anything he was just laughing the whole time. "This is so amazing, man. So funny." It's so great to hear your friends laugh.

LT: We all need a lot more of that right now. I'm going to ask the audience for questions starting now. But I also think—maybe if you want to give a little bit of background on the book throwing, because [it] was also based on a real life experience.

BK: Well, in March, before New York City had a lockdown, I asked Lumi to come over for dinner so we could talk about the logistics and so she could look through materials. Like a studio visit because this was a big deal and we wanted to be on the same page. And usually, for those who don't understand the nature of these projects, a lot of that stuff happens over dinner at a restaurant. And you're trying to focus on the curator or the artist, amongst the crowd of people who are dating, having business meetings or whatever.

I felt kind of weird about going to a restaurant because I was starting to feel like—I'm a little bit of a germaphobe anyway. Let me just make this cute dinner for Lumi. I think that earlier in the week Lumi was like, "we'll see if we can get together, we might be quarantining." I made fun of her, I was like, "you're [so] paranoid."

There was a bookshelf with all these books, in my apartment, and right when we were going to sit down to eat this meal, everything crashed down. It was embarrassing, but also ominous. It was like something in my apartment was telling us to be very careful. And then Lumi looks at [me] and she says, "that's a bad omen." I got scared after that, I was like, mask up, not leaving my apartment after that. That was just a little bit of conversation excerpt from a longer script that, either it works or it doesn't work. It'll work.

LT: Maybe you could talk about how you're starting, all of you, to imagine this coming together into the pilot and all the different directions it takes throughout this. In the end, it's like 20 minutes, right? So, maybe where it starts and ends or how you're going to thread it together.

BK: We have a ton of footage. I would like to focus on a few topics that kind of refer to faith and the presence of spirits in the like homes that we occupy—am I getting cut out again? OK. And just in terms of the nature of connecting everything, it would be me in my bed.

There is this scene that we chose to withhold from everyone, which is me on this bed and the vantage point is heavily artistically done. So I think that the switchbacks of all of these moments, when I'm talking to people in my space, will be augmented by those scenes of me alone in bed. I do think that once we have all the tapes and we start making timelines and parsing out moments for each one of the episodes, I know that there's going to be a laundry list of shots that I'll have to create. Hopefully Ethan and Chris and the team will be available for that, and it will happen in this apartment.

As you can see in my kitchen, I do think the weird reality of these screens that were at The Kitchen, that's woven into the actual space, pushes even further into that frame of reference. When you're having a lucid dream, your body's in a few different places at the same time. Things are flat, become ultra-dimensional, and I'm just really excited about that potential. What do you guys think?

EW: Yeah, the process is going to be really exciting and also difficult because there's so many good moments and to have to pick among your babies, what's going to be the favorite for the first episode. I just like seeing that Amy scene again. There's a whole episode there. And with Rico too, every single one of the scenes could just be its own show. So I'm really excited to revisit those.

After it's cut together, we'll work with the colorist who's gonna make it pop as much as it did in person. If you guys could have seen this set, it was just like *Pee-wee's Playhouse* plus *Twin Peaks* plus all of these different moments. You really did feel like you were transported to a dream world, walking onto the set every day. It was incredible. And I can't wait for that to be apparent, it's gonna be amazing.

CW: Yeah, I think there's—I think we successfully captured so many different experiences that all of us feel in our sleep. Especially those of us who feel lucid dreaming, it's playing with the startling moments. Like throwing flowers, that you accept in a dream and seem

perfectly normal when you're asleep versus things that are so real that when you wake up, you don't know if they actually happened and you can't remember if it's a memory or if it's a dream.

I think there's so much room in the edit to weave in the scenes where we shot them, as if you're truly in this space. And it does look like Baseera's apartment. It'll cut so nicely with scenes we will shoot at Baseera's [actual] apartment to scenes where we reveal the artifice of everything. I just see the whole thing playing in the same way you have a fever dream or a lucid dream. I think that so well reflects the time period that it's referring to—the feelings that all of us, I think have lived within the last several months, especially New Yorkers. It's just been claustrophobic and strange and changing. And even within that, there's something beautiful. So I think, there's fact in what we made.

BK: OK, I'm gonna start crying. [playfully] Don't cry, my make-up will run.

LT: Well, it seems like the audience is being a little shy. No questions. But in the last few minutes, I know that, just to touch on this moment—I think one of the incredible things about this project is how it tackles this moment head on. But we also wanted to address the practical parts of it and just talk a little bit about the safety so that it can be kind of a resource in a sense. I think just the fact that we are, as The Kitchen, a small art space that is able to work through this moment has been really incredible and it becomes a really emotional experience to share with all of you.

And, people you know really well, people you get to know really well through this time. Queenslab is an enormous space. We were able to work in it through the generosity of our collaborators there, Jim Hodges' studio. And we were working in masks the entire time other than the shoots. You know, we had incredible—oh, my gosh. I forgot to give a shout out to Mariana Catalina, who is our incredible stage manager, COVID supervisor. I'm so sorry I forgot to give a shout-out before.

BK: It was the perfect moment to bring her up because she was the shepherd of making sure we were all safe.

LT: Yeah, making sure we had all our PPE and N95s when unmasked performers were shooting. Lots and lots of hand sanitizer.

EW: Those giant air filters.

LT: And air filters which drove Drew, our audio supervisor, crazy.

EW: [laughter] Oh! Shout out to Drew too.

LT: It's a labor of love and we wanted to make sure that everyone was very comfortable. And, you know, communication. Communication is key in this situation. I don't know if anyone else has anything to add to that.

BK: Yeah. Sorry, I'm trying to screenshot us.

EW: Maybe while you're doing that, I was thinking about how the—what really came through to me was the emotional experience that came with having to navigate COVID. Not just people's level of comfort, but the feelings that came up through that and being present for those. And also validating everyone's feelings around fears, expectations and

the realities of, "OK, we have to switch gears. This isn't going to work because safety is the most important thing."

CW: We were always in conversation about the smartest way to do things. We never rushed our schedule. [unintelligible] We had a nice cadence and we kept crew limited and we made spaces for everyone. When people didn't need to be on set they weren't on set, but they were always nearby and at hand and we had wireless communication. [unintelligible] We would make sure the space was regularly ventilated. There was plenty of air. People had time to walk outside.

Talent would always be in masks right before rolling, during the takes. And we just—I think we all were very receptive to the gamut of interaction. Some of our crew had COVID already. Some people have not. Some people were quarantined. Some of us have been on larger sets with crews. [unintelligible] Some of the people had been around for most of the year. So I, for one, was very grateful to The Kitchen for facilitating all the logistics and always prioritizing the safety of the crew and cast.

LT: We're all really grateful for each other through the process in that. It looks like we have a question from Benny, "as you're still working through this production, have any new seeds of inspiration for future projects come out of this process?" I would apply that to all three of you too.

BK: Yeah, I have. I learned something about myself and my ability through the process. And I know I had an amazing team with me that encouraged my intuition. I was really good at carrying out a narrative and performing in a way that was much more scripted than spontaneous. That's really not something that I knew I could do, quite in the way in which we did. So it opens up possibilities with new projects. But in terms of the next year or two, I think I'm at a cap for the work and the projects that I will do.

CW: So for me, it absolutely has inspired me in thinking differently about everything. I'm a 'lush', so I'm going to keep making all the great things I can make. It was freeing. Baseera and I had a conversation early on in terms of: Ethan and I serve a role more like technicians to the project, and her being the more fluid creative side, and us translating that vision to a medium that he and I are familiar with.

But that being said, Baseera broke every rule of filmmaking constantly. We were constantly reinventing our plans and ideas we had around it. So I think it also challenged us and reminded us about not feeling married to ideas. Filmmakers are familiar with the saying, "kill your darlings." That's basically, you go into any situation and recognize that if something is not working you, you change it and you should always lean into being creative. If there's a better way to do something, you do it. So in terms of how we work together as a team, how we thought of making the piece and creatively and just being as free as we could with the resources at hand—yeah. I want to make a hundred more things like this.

EW: Same, 100%. I walked away from this being like, "wow, this is possible." You can take a crew of fifteen people and a budget that's nowhere, maybe one percent of what a studio spends on a regular TV pilot. And you can make something truly magical and you can do it over and over and over again. And that's what that was—is what's inspiring me. I feel like I want to go out and do like eight more of these. [laughter]

CW: And we're not done with it yet. I mean, I think about it all the time.

BK: I have—this is really good fear. Like, sometimes fear is a good thing, at least it is for me. And there's so much more filming that we're gonna have to do.

OK. So everybody has this—we're finished with the shoot. I have to admit, this past week I've been in a lull, kinda just like, hmmm. And that led me to watch some trashy TV. I started watching *Pretty Little Liars*. I would just sit with my potato chips and watch these shows. And then as we were working the sound editor, Colin [Fitzpatrick], and scrubbing through the clips. Actually seeing this really beautiful footage that Chris was able to create, got me completely in this space again.

I have this like—it's like getting a runner's high. I have a runner's high. I'm so excited. And almost—it's obnoxious, like I want us—when we get off of this call I want to run over to Ethan and Chris' house and be like OK lets plot. [laughter] But I do!

I don't know how much time we have left in this space. But I do want to make sure that anyone who's watching, or anyone who watches this recorded in the next couple days. I just want you to know that your support has been everything to us. And there have been people who are so far beyond being able to give us anything, they gave us really generous amounts of money to make sure that everyone on the team was supported.

The Kitchen also was so generous about giving me this amazing artist fee and then producing all of this work. And at times when we didn't quite have the budget we rented things just to make sure that everything we needed to do and everything that I desired came through. We do have a little bit more work to do for that budget and so stay tuned. I usually use my Instagram as a newsfeed. I'll make sure that I post about it.

LT: Hearing everyone's thoughts for the future is really inspiring because that's what we really need, right now, [laughter] to think of a time beyond this chaotic moment. I think maybe just to wrap, I would love to hear from everyone. And I'll be part of this, too. I always love a blooper reel. [laughter] Like, if you had one moment to throw into a blooper reel, what would it be? I know. I'll go first because my blooper reel moment is when Baseera was doing that, like dancing and scene with the tableau wall. It's Baseera dancing in her kitchen and we told Baseera to stop, and she just kept dancing! [laughter]

CW: She was wearing noise canceling headphones. I was like, "cut! Cut!"

BK: I didn't hear it. [laughter] That was embarrassing, that whole day was just like—the tableau wall was the most, a sticking point where... I always say a healthy relationship is—there has to be arguments. If there aren't arguments, something is wrong in the relationship. That's my personal experience. So the tableau wall created a lot of friction, because we all kind of were like, we don't know what's going on here. We all were assuming this very specific thing.

I'm kind of a person who has a hyperactive imagination by trade, and then I can be spontaneous. And when I'm in the moment, I'm like, "oh, our idea to do this is not quite there. Let's add this other thing." And I think that the wall, already, is very abstract and pared down. Yeah. There's a lot of bloopers that came out of the tableau wall, let's just say.

CW: I'm stealing my favorite and Ethan already knows what it is. But let's say, Baseera found a way to make the beach scene a lot "beachier" than anyone could have foreseen.

[laughter] Well, part of the beach scene is that whoever loses in a game has to jump in the water. And we're in a studio space, and so there's no water... Unless someone is resourceful enough to have water to enable whoever has to jump in, said water, to be doused with a whole water bottle... in the face. [laughter] So that would be my favorite moment. I really think that scene only improved from there.

BK: Yeah, because I think that Ethan was so—so basically, guys, the five of you that are watching, including Ethan's mom. [laughter] Like, basically the scene was the beach, right? And we would go off camera to this little, like wet pad, where there were bottled waters of Poland Springs water. And we would put it on ourselves a little bit so that it would look like we got into the water and got back to our towels. But, I don't know—I just kind of was like, this is a moment to loosen it up and get rid of some of that anxiety of me wanting to kill Ethan 'cause like that was the day of the tableau wall. So I dumped all of the water on him. And he's just like, "oh!" I mean, it was also really cold water.

EW: It was really cold water! [laughter]

CW: It sounded very—like it was very cold.

BK: And then when we got back to the towels, Logan and I were kind of—

EW: Bone dry!

BK: We were wet. But you were just like, soaking water. [laughter] And then when we were—the camera was rolling, I was like, "why are you so wet?" [laughter]

CW: Baseera couldn't stop laughing.

EW: Could not stop. [laughter]

LT: That whole rehearsal was just like laughter. I couldn't hear any dialog.

BK: I feel really bad for Drew because when I'm excited and I laugh the octaves go up to like 12. Ugh, I'm really tired of hearing my voice and I have a lot of weird kicks in my language where I say 'like' a lot or I say, 'wait', or I say, 'I don't know'. There's a lot of anxiety in my speech patterns.

EW: Yeah, that was my blooper reel moment, too—was getting offstage and Baseera just having a bottle of water and just dumping it on to my head. [laughter] Then walking back and having to be like, "hey, hi." [laughter]

BK: Well, the script for that beach scene was spontaneous. So Logan, during rehearsal, Logan suggested to play, Never Have I Ever. And I didn't quite know how to play it. I thought it was more like Truth or Dare. So when the first question came about, I was like, "oh, yeah, I've done that before once." And I made up for the moral sin that it was, by overexplaining. Then I got into the water.

But, I wouldn't have over-explained had I known I didn't have to do anything. I could have just gone to the water. So then the next question was, "have you ever been in an exhibition?" And so I was like, I just got out of the water. And then when we got back, I was like, the one thing I know that none of these motherfuckers have ever done is like—I've

never eaten pork. And so they, being good old fashioned Americans, of course they eat pork. And then they were able to get in the water.

So that was really just thinking—it was about familiarity, right, Ethan? It was about people really knowing each other and having a lot of history. We were able to really think in a precise way, on the spot.

EW: Yeah.

LT: OK, Baseera, end with your blooper. Your favorite blooper out of all the bloopers.

BK: My favorite blooper was—OK, so I think that my favorite blooper was—actually, can I say two? One was a Twitch thing where I was like, “I needed to use the restroom,” and I didn't realize I was on Twitch. Then Lumi just tears down the hallway and she tears open the door and she goes, “you're on Twitch!” And I was all like, “oh!” I was about to really like, you know, have my moment with the toilet. And then the on camera moment is, actually on the acrylic bed.

CW: Oh, yeah.

BK: Yeah. It was on the acrylic bed. And as as any femme identifying person who bleeds knows, there's like one moment in the month where you just kind of have to let Aunt Flow take over. And I had my unit on, let's just say. And I forgot because I was up there performing. I had taken my pants down to get set up for the scene. And then Chris was just like—you know, she has this vantage point of me and I was just like, “I'm so sorry.”

CW: I was like, “Baseera, Baseera. We should—we should probably move some things in this scene.”

BK: So, yeah, that for me was—I'm sorry. It wasn't a funny moment.

CW: Oh, it was hilarious!

BK: Now in the after, yeah, of course it was funny. And in fact, you know, something like that, I could see it getting put in the final because it was so natural. Like, duh, people have periods you know. Why are we pretending like that's not a part of this?

CW: We just had to bring her down on the scissor lift with a couple guys on the crew.

BK: Yeah. Zack going up and down on the scissor with me was one of my favorite moments. I was like... [laughter]

CW: That's one of mine too.

LT: Well, that just shows how intimate we all got on set in Baseera's world. [laughter] I'm really glad you ended with that. Thanks so much, Baseera, Ethan, Chris, for participating in this talk. And I am so excited to see what happens next—everyone is. And it was such an incredible experience to work with all of you. I hope it's not the last time.

BK: Yeah, me too! I hope all of you want to continue working with me because I'm in love with all of you.

CW: Feeling's mutual.

LT: All right. Thanks so much, everyone. Have a good night.

EW: Thank you!

BK: Bye everybody. We love you.

CW: Bye!