

Articulate: Talking art and ideas

Episode 1: Anne O'Hehir on Nan Goldin

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In this episode, Anne O'Hehir, National Gallery Curator, Photography, joins Dr Belinda Howden, Senior Curator at Flinders University Museum of Art, for an in-depth conversation exploring Nan Goldin's life, legacy, art and activism, and the enduring cultural impact of Goldin's magnum opus *The ballad of sexual dependency*.

FUMA Listeners are advised, this episode captures details of Nan Goldin's life and makes reference to themes of sex, the impacts of violence against women, and suicide. Welcome to the podcast *Articulate: Talking art and ideas with FUMA*. Flinders University Museum of Art acknowledges the Kurna people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we stand, work and share knowledge. We pay our respects to Kurna elders, past and present, and extend this respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples listening in from all nations of Australia.

Belinda Howden We are here with Anne O'Hehir as Fiona introduced and is the curator of photography at the National Gallery of Australia and also the curator of the exhibition we're sitting in, *Nan Goldin: The ballad of sexual dependency*. It's such an honour to have this body of work here at FUMA. This exhibition is a touring exhibition by the National Gallery of Australia. It's supported by the Bowness Family Foundation as part of their photography touring program, and FUMA is the last venue on this exclusive national tour. And as I said, we feel incredibly, incredibly privileged to have worked with the NGA team and Anne, but also to have it here for you and to have it here in Adelaide. We are, you know, it's the first time this body of work has been seen in South Australia, I believe.

Annie O'Hehir Yes, in fact it's on a Gagosian in London at the moment. And in fact, we're worried about- like it's a lot of photographs in a small room. There's no way around that. And, you know, there's a lot of grids and you have to have like tiny moments of, you know, a little rest. But it's a lot. And I sent Belinda, the picture of it in Gagosian. And it's like sort of seven deep, like completely across all the walls. But we, we were actually it's the first time that the whole of *The ballad* has been shown in its entirety in England, so we in fact beat the UK to it. So, it is exciting.

Belinda Howden Yeah. Part of that would be because, you know, 2026 is actually it's marks 40 years. So, this body of work has created between 1976 and 1986, and it's 40 years since the publication of *The ballad of sexual dependency*.

Annie O'Hehir Yes, Belinda said to me, why do you think it's on at Gagosian London at the moment? I'm like, I don't know. And she was like, maybe it's the 40th anniversary of the book. And I was like, yeah, yeah, I guess it is. So, yeah. So, it's really so. But the thing about that is in a sense too, it's, you know, modern prints like digital sort of produced prints of the books and what's of the book and these images. I guess what's extraordinarily exciting for me, I guess, as a curator, and that historicity of processes, these are Cibachromes. Very beautiful and luscious and divine process. Quite deadly, quite toxic, that's now historical. We got some prints done by Sandy Barnard, one of the great printers in Australia. She printed out a couple of sets for us a few years ago. Julie Rrap and she brought up the last paper and the last chemicals. And then we tried to do it again last year and everything had gone. So, this process is now no longer possible. There's one machine in LA or something, but even that sort of starting to make strange sounds and things are whizzing through it or going too slowly and so on. So, you know, you know, like that thing about photographs, I guess it's the thing about photos that's so great is that it's endlessly reproducible. The fact that it can be used by anything, by any regime, anything to say anything. It does everything

brilliantly from advertising to fashion. But I guess so within that, when things start to come into the museum environment, is there something special about the prints we've got as opposed to what MoMA's got or Whitney's got or, you know, and we'd already bought some prints from this series in the early nineties, which was very early to buy Nan. Some extraordinary collecting done in Australia through the years. We've got five big, quite big prints, probably bigger even than the whole frame size of some of the major key works from *The ballad*. And they're really beautiful. And so we sort of we thought we were done. And then in 2021, my senior curator at gallery Shaune Lakin was in discussion with Marian Goodman, the gallery that Nan was with at the time about getting the slide show, which is the first way that this body of work was seen quite famously, you know, in the underground clubs in New York. And those sort of felt that those discussions, you know, after about twelve months of all this discussion, it sort of fell through. And Nan was like, oh yeah, but, you know, you could have the you could have the prints, you know. And so this was the last set. Ten prints were done when the book came out. And this luscious, gorgeous Cibachrome and she'd kept the last set back for herself. Because this isn't just a body of work for Nan, you know, this is the body of work that's the defining work of her life in a career of great work. It's not like this is the only work, but this is maybe the work that she kept close to her. She reworked it, reworked it, reworked it through to about 2018 when it sort of it becomes digital, becomes it's sort of in a sense, final form. But she kept one set back for herself because it's so precious, you know. And she kept it safe. And so that's the set that she releases to us, which is quite extraordinary. So, we've got that set that had been kept so close to Nan all those years.

Belinda Howden Yeah. You've mentioned that, you know, it's her life's work. This is the magnum opus of her life, and it's a life full of great work. What I really want you to do is to just take people back. So, let's go right back to the beginning and find out more about Nan Goldin and why this particular body of work is the magnum opus. What is it about this work? You know, she grew up off the back of the kind of Cold War nuclear family structure, very, very kind of conservative, intellectual Jewish household. So, take us back to that and the sort of defining story about Barbara, her sister, which, you know, we were speaking earlier, is kind of- is the through line for a lot of her work and a lot of her life and a lot of her activism.

Annie O'Hehir Yeah, it's interesting, isn't it? Often, you know, when you want to talk about that thing with the artist and the body of work. You know, famously, a lot of artists are difficult people, not very nice people, you know, and it's that, you know, and, you know, if they get cancelled, does the work get cancelled? All those really defining sort of ethical questions and we can all- I think we're all thinking of some male artists. You know, we know we weren't we know basically great guys, but made amazing work. But I guess the thing with Nan and the clever thing about this work, don't be confused for a sec that this isn't a very sophisticated and very critically and very thought about body of work that Nan's put together and the way that she and the way that she wants you to read it. You know, Nan's very you know, in the preface to *The ballad*, she tells you exactly what the work's about and how you're going to... And if you try to sort of in interviews, people try to go against that story, it's sort of immediately sort of squashed down by Nan. It's you've sort of got to go with her with, yeah, where she takes you. I mean, you don't have to, but, you know, you're probably going to enjoy it more if you do. So, she's growing up and maybe a lot of you have many of you guys seen the beautiful documentary that was made a couple of years ago that won Best Film? So, you'll know some of this story. And then, you know, Nan talks really beautifully about it. So, she's growing up in Boston. Her dad, um, you know, the great story of his life is that he got to Harvard at a time when there was real quota on Jewish men, you know, attending and- don't even worry about women- but Jewish men are going to those sort of big Ivy League schools. So, he goes to Harvard and, you know, she always talks about the fact that- and, you know, understandable, I guess, we maybe still even do it. But, you know, her mother was always, you know, don't let the neighbours hear fights, you know, like, it's always about appearances and, you know, and this, this appearance of, you know, how you know, I guess, in a sense, in the 50s or 60s, these are people who've sort of come out of that trauma of the Second World War and being Jewish, you know, if you made it through, in a sense, there was a pact that, you know, you sort of- you were the one survivors. You were the ones who were living this American dream. You were the ones who were living this great life, this great life possibility. And in a sense, that's true, you know, the great sort of prosperity after the war and everything. And the difficulty is Nan's got two older brothers and an older sister called Barbara, and Barbara starts to become uncontrollable as a teenager. They react in a very sort of 50s and 60s way. They, they, you know, she's very, she's, you know, she's going out a lot, she's sleeping around and so on. So, they, they can't control her. They put her in and out of institutions until trigger warning at eighteen, you know, Nan says Barbara saw knew no other way out but to lie

down on the tracks of a, you know, train came and she and she and she and she's killed. And understandably, I mean, but the great betrayal for Nan is that, understandably, the parents went into sort of denial. And we won't talk about it, tell the kids it was just an accident. It's a great moment in Nan's life of what she knew to happen wasn't, you know, being wasn't... was being denied. Her truth was being denied.

Belinda Howden And a kind of catalyst, I'd say, you know, she sort of, she makes a later body of work, Saint Sisters and Sibyls, and she describes it as a, you know, a dedication to Barbara. So, this through line is there in her whole life. And-

Annie O'Hehir I think it's that combination. It is the big story and the catalyst for this body of work. So, she leaves home, she's in and out of schools. They can't control her. The you know, and you know, she talks a lot about this as she had the psychiatrist saying at the time, I think actually it's Mrs. Goldin who should have been, who should have been the one, you know

Belinda Howden Was institutionalised.

Annie O'Hehir Was institutionalised, and so on. So, she gets out of the home and she ends up the sort of last resort, the school that you can't get thrown out of this Nan calls a hippie school. Such a community college in Lincoln, Massachusetts. And there very importantly, two things happen, I guess. One is that she maybe even less the lesser of the important thing in a way, one of the teachers is trying to get the kids in like they're not going to class or anything. Nothing boring like that. It's a hippie school, but they. But she brings in. She gets hold of Polaroid Corporation, who are very happy to send endless Polaroid cameras. So, they send them to the school. Nan picks up the camera. This is a woman who's not talking anymore. She's basically completely shut down.

Belinda Howden She's been silent for six months.

Annie O'Hehir She's just whispering or not talking. She's completely shut down. She picks up the camera, and she immediately understands that this is going to be the means by which she can record her life. And she sort of talks about the fact that, you know, she uses the camera as a memory tool and that no one, so no one can deny her life anymore. So, that's going to be the sort of the rationale behind taking these photographs. And then, perhaps even more importantly, she meets Suzanne Fletcher, who appears throughout *The ballad*, this 126 images even more than her boyfriend Brian, and she meets a guy called David Armstrong who's not in this body of work, interestingly. There was a big section in the middle of *The ballad* for many years as it as it sort of came as it sort of swung into view into what it was going to be on the sort of the drag queen, sort of the scene in Boston and in black and white, and that's in the slideshow for a long time. And then just as it's just going to the Whitney and so on, and he says, well, it's not really working, Nan. So, she takes it out and it becomes the next body of work. But she starts she becomes a big part of this community of the Queens in Boston. She says she's just completely- it's her whole life, you know, she's going out to this, this club called The Other Side and taking photographs of these kids. And it starts to become that sort of way of seeing the world, she says of these kids who, you know, can't even walk down the street in Boston in the daylight without being bashed up. You know, queer bashing and so on. And she says, I want to have you on the cover of Vogue. She's really influenced by Vogue. They go and steal Vogue- she's sent in to steal the French Vogue magazines from the shops. And that's she's seeing a lot of Guy Bourdin, and she's seeing a lot of Helmut Newton, all that really sexy stuff. They're going to films all the time. That's sort of that Hollywood glamour thing is really important. You know, Marilyn, all those sort of, you know, Marlina, all those sort of people that of course, the, you know, the queens really love. And so she's like, I want, I want you're the superstars in my life. And I basically want to make you look- I want you to see yourself as beautiful as I see you. So, it's that real beautiful gift that she gives back to these beautiful young kids just trying to survive in a world that others them and doesn't want to, you know, acknowledge them.

Belinda Howden Totally. So, she ends up in New York and, you know-

Annie O'Hehir Same year as Madonna, she gets to New York the same year as Madonna.

Belinda Howden Are they friends?

Annie O'Hehir I suspect not. And, you know, interesting sort of thing. Cindy Sherman, the great, you know, post-modern, you know, great sort of photographer, is about one block over in Tribeca making untitled film stills. So,

it's an extraordinary scene that she arrives into. It's the sort of post-punk, great big music scene. Everybody's there trying to make it. Actors, writers, Kathy Acker, you know, the great post-punk poet is there at the same time they work together on a film. So, you know, Robert Mapplethorpe, Patti, all those names, Patti Smith, they're a bit sort of. They're a bit snotty. They're over there somewhere. But there's this, you know, she becomes part of this, this scene, which is grotty and, you know.

Belinda Howden Kids on the run.

Annie O'Hehir And cheap and... kids on the run from America. Yeah. So, a lot of these kids have, you know, not everyone, but- and Nan thinks, she says I don't really care about... It wasn't just a queer scene. It was a lot of queer scene, but it was more about people she's interested in who are interested in recreating themselves in what they want to be. That's more important to her, I think, than necessarily the queer thing. But that obviously is a big part of the people who are coming through. And, you know, a lot of them are.

Belinda Howden Absolutely. And it's like there's a real fluidity in *The ballad* as well. But, you know, between queer relationships, hetero relationships, you know, it's really relationships. It's kind of love and sex in the sort of all forms.

Annie O'Hehir One of the things I really love about *The ballad*, the book in this series starts, she tells you in the foreword, it's all about relationships between men and women, the difficulty of relationships that sort of comes, but that sort of becomes a narrative thread that she can use to sort of build this work. So, you really do build to essentially what is the heart, the real the moment when *The ballad* really comes together, when her boyfriend Brian, in a sort of jealous rage- Nan's been sleeping around with too many girls, and he throws- and he goes for her eyes because she's a photographer and he almost blinds her. And she said *The ballad* would have been destroyed. It's just a whole lot of slides. But it was still back at the projection room in Berlin, so it was only saved by chance. And that's what sort of comes together. But the first image, what's the first image? The first image is Greer Lankton, a trans woman, and her boyfriend, queer artist Robert Vitale, and they've come together. And then Robert's found Greer's transition really difficult. So, they still love each other, but they're always fighting. It's that difficulty between them. And that's the image that sort of starts this ballad. So, already it's not quite what it seems. And it's a beautiful image. You've got masks. That whole idea of sort of the way that we create our gender identity through enactment and through, you know, becoming someone. You know, the Queen's putting on their makeup masks and so on and all the way through, you know, this whole beautiful first section of women by themselves. So, it's not chronological. It's done like through themes and, and in the original slideshow, there were really great soundtracks that went with each, each section. It was very theatrical, very moving and, you know, very, you know, sort of cinematic and very, emotive. But there's, you know, there's so many women looking into mirrors and reflections are everywhere. And this idea of creating yourself, you know, enacting gender, that sort of battler sort of idea is really sort of key.

Belinda Howden Yeah. And there's also the sort of inversion with Nan herself. You know, Nan is the subject. She... there's self-portraiture, but there's also portraits of her. You know, they're not necessarily named as, you know, the photographer, so to speak, is not identified in that sense.

Annie O'Hehir Sometimes she's 'Nan', sometimes she's 'Self Portrait', because sometimes other people take the images and she tells you that, of course, theoretically, in the back of the book, Suzanne took this image. I mean, Suzanne took the image of her a month after being bashed up. It was Suzanne who got her to the hospital to save her eye when she got back to New York. So, I mean that that question of, I think myself personally growing up in that time when the nuclear family was the American dream, was what you were meant to be sort of going for, I think. And now maybe, I mean, it was always a part of queer culture and queer communities that you formed those bonds. But I think for Nan to do it on such a big stage, to sort of put that notion of friendship over nuclear family or her found family, I know it's becoming a bit of a cliché, maybe in queer communities, almost. It's almost what you expect. But I think when this came out, at the time it came out, it was, you know, it's still a radical and, you know, extraordinary thing. That's sort of for me, that sort of the great message maybe of, you know, as you go through all these, you know, sort of changing relationships and so on, it's that section that comes after Nan being battered. The next section is the women all looking after each other. It's very beautiful.

Belinda Howden Yeah. And you feel it at the beginning as well. You know, there's a sort of almost a return to the women in her life, the chosen family, you know, to her life.

Annie O'Hehir It took months. The. So, she starts showing it. So, she goes to art school. She does go to art school. You know, she's really interesting talking about. I don't want to talk about, you know, she hates men with- I hope nobody I won't say that. But, you know, men with their cameras, men with their cameras, you know, men who are obsessed with. And we were talking how you aren't. So, it's good. But, you know, men who are just completely obsessed with, you know, Ansel Adams is the big thing, you know, bore me into a coma. But, you know, I'm sorry if you like Ansel Adams, but, like, you know, that perfect print. I've got the biggest Hasselblad in the world, like, the most expensive gold-plated Hasselblad, you know. And yeah, and she hates that. And she doesn't really like theory even though she knows exactly what's going on. You know, it's so constructed, but it's sort of true and it's sort of not always with Nan, you know, of course she's you know, she still manages to get into a little polka dotted dress and go uptown to Leo Castelli Gallery to show Marvin Heiferman the work, like she's not so sort of out of it that she can't, you know, get up in there and show somebody important the work. But that story about she was only living at night. It was a chaotic she was just making ends meet. She was working in the bars. All of the photographic equipment is just bought in stolen stuff, that she just uses whatever is sort of is, is true. I mean, it's, you know, you can tell she is living this life and that's why she's in it. She always says as she starts to stalk people into the bathroom and into their bedrooms. And, you know, that's she's sort of like, I'm not I can't it's not voyeuristic.

Belinda Howden Yeah.

Annie O'Hehir I mean, it is voyeuristic. It's not voyeuristic, but you can probably come down on either side of that.

Belinda Howden Yeah, but putting yourself in it.

Annie O'Hehir She puts herself. To sort of mitigate that because she knows that it'll probably come. People are like, oh, she's taking advantage of these people. And there are people in, in, in *The ballad* who aren't that happy about being in *The ballad* now. I guess it's that different thing with Nan, but you're both out of it. You're at the bar. She's like, I'm just going to take your photo and you know, that's fine. And then 30 years later you're in. You want, you want, you want you like you're the druggie, like, you know, misfits at the at MoMA and so on. And you've grown up and you've got, you've either not made it. So, Nan's is super famous head of the bloody arts, you know, the whole art world sort of thing. And you're still scrabbling around, you know, being an independent artist, you know, in the, you know, on the Lower East Side or something and you're like, oh, you know, screw that for a joke. And, you know, Nan's made, you know, all this sort of like great sort of, you know.

Belinda Howden International.

Annie O'Hehir International thing out of, out of your thing. So, there is always that thing. But I think also, you know, there is there is, you know, she always talks about the work as being her way of connecting, her way of getting to, you know, like a caress. This idea, I think it's I don't think you can dismiss the authenticity and the genuineness of the project in that way. It's life and death for Nan. Yeah, it's life and death.

Belinda Howden On that, though, you know, in a lot of ways, you know, photography is that kind of medium that, you know, stems forgetting it also kind of stems remembering actually, you know, you know, because now we sort of, as you say, remember Brian as this figure, like there was probably other sides to Brian, but what we know of him is that...

Annie O'Hehir The fact that he bashed up Nan Goldin is the only thing he'll ever be remembered for. Suzanne. I mean, there's Cookie Mueller in it. Who is the great John Waters Dreamlanders actress who, you know, at art school, Nan's not really bothering to go to art school either. So, she's sort of in Boston going she got into RISD to the Rhode Island School of Design, but because David was going to the Boston Museum of Art, blah, blah, blah school, she goes to Boston there, and there's Philip-Lorca diCorcia in the in the thing. There's amazing people. Mark Morrisroe it's an amazing sort of cohort that goes through. But Nan's just going off to Provincetown to sort of the queer community up there. So, she's sort of back and forth. So, they sort of go, Nan, Nan, it's the end of term, come back and show us what you've done. And she hasn't got access to a darkroom, but she has. She can get

down to the drugstore to- and she goes into colour quite early, '73, which is pretty early still there's Eggleston and so on. But that idea of colour is still- and she's been looking at all the fashion magazines. So, working in colour, she loves the films of Douglas Sirk with that very cinematic... what's it called, you know, really like really saturated.... Is it Kodak colour in Sirk and so on, anyone? But that really saturated, beautiful, extraordinary palette that he has. And she also, I think I always love about Nan too. She talks about the fact that she doesn't see very well and you see her in glasses. It's really cute, isn't it, in the doco. I love her in the glasses, but she of course never wears them because she's too vain. But she doesn't see very well. And I love that shimmering, that bleeding colour that goes into some of the works.

Belinda Howden They're absolutely luminous.

Annie O'Hehir Emotive sort of colour, that that red is such a particular Nan sort of colour and the blues. But before that, you know, she, when she starts to take this work and, you know, she goes to see occurs to a few sort of like little photography places before she ends up at the art school and they're like, oh, do you know, you know, and she's like, oh, do you want to take all my friends and stuff? But there's nothing, nothing for me, you know, in the art world and stuff. And they say, well, do you know Larry Clark? Do you guys know Larry Clark's work? He sort of goes back to small town America and photographs all his, you know, drop out friends taking drugs and being violent and stuff. She's like, oh, I love that. So, that's sort of one sort of thing. But you know, a lot of it, you know. And then Nan becomes... she redefines this way maybe like she's like the work is a diary. It's my it's my diary that I let you read, you know, I'll let you see. So, and then it becomes, you know, it's such a huge influence on everything that comes after it that you think it was always like this. But I think she talks when she goes up to Marvin Heiferman and says, oh, I've got this stuff and starts taking it out of, you know, like probably a plastic bag she's got with her little slides, I guess, on a slide thing, or she got some prints and he's just like, oh my God, what is this? I remember the first time I saw *The ballad*, I was down in Melbourne. I think I bought the book in about maybe '89, I don't know.

Belinda Howden And there is the anecdote that I told you that my first year of university undergraduate, we were taught *The ballad of sexual dependency*, and this is actually the first time I've seen it in person. So, I.

Annie O'Hehir Know it's exciting, isn't it?

Belinda Howden And I have to say, it's I mean, it's 126 photographs. So, it's an incredible body of work and, and a sort of narrative suite, but it's also just the luminosity of the images themselves.

Annie O'Hehir Metallic, slightly metallic paper is just exquisite. And it is nice to be sitting weirdly for me in front of a wall of gorgeous guys...

Belinda Howden Who are the muse, you know.

Annie O'Hehir So, that's Brian, but just, I mean, chooses the snapshot aesthetic deliberately is that idea. I've just stumbled. There's nothing I ever moved, you know, and she's flashing. She's using lens flare, you know, so that she's using weird dark shadows behind bodies that you're not meant to do, you know, in proper, you know, proper stuff. It's true, isn't it? You know, that sort of you get, like, through those really dark black shadows and so on. That wonderful one of Vivien in the green dress may be my favourite work from *The ballad*. It's hard to pick. Cookie. Okay, I love about half the are my favourites, but that's okay. But just that. So, she's using that thing because she says the snapshot aesthetic comes out of love. We, you know, amateur photography, family albums, that whole idea of the slideshow, that sort of thing, that dad bores you to death, you know, let's have a slide night. Everybody's, like, asleep before he even gets to the end of the sentence. But it's that idea about family often, isn't it? It's that, you know, it's the moments in that family. So, this is her family. So, it's that sort of family album idea and that idea that, you know, we might just it doesn't matter what the photo looks like because it's the moment, the feeling, she says. I never photograph until I feel something, you know, and it's and it's and she says, like she when she met cookie up in Provincetown, she's like, God, this girl's super cute and super cool. I really want to know her. So, she's like, she's making little buttons, which is cute, isn't it? Making little, little buttons of everybody to make some money. But she's like, and John Waters is there and Divine and all of them. And she's like, and it's Cookie, particularly because she's so beautiful and she's like, oh, so she's a photographer was my way into Cookie. That was how you connect. So, that thing she sort of talks about that beautiful- God, she does have some

great lines. It's sort of like the photographer is often the last person invited to the party, but she's like, but this and you're gate crashing, but this is my party, you know, this is my story. But these wonderful, you know, there's so many references, really subtle. She's so good at it. She's grown up looking at art, so intellectual Jewish family, you know, beautiful French Chris on the bonnet of the car is a rip off of a Pre-Raphaelite painting by Henry Wallis. All those little things you're going to pick up. But it's subtle. Yeah. It's not like, oh. It's really beautifully done. And that colour palette.

Belinda Howden I'm going to throw out one last question because we're coming up against the time. But and we could talk forever.

Annie O'Hehir We haven't talked about. Well, I mean, like, we've got Barbara here tonight to talk about the...

Belinda Howden Nan's profound activism.

Annie O'Hehir Activism in the, you know, comes out at a time when, you know, the guy who designs the Aperture book, Keith Davis dies two years after *The ballad* comes out. Cookie...

Belinda Howden Cookie.

Annie O'Hehir Cookie is dead by the end of the decade. Vittorio, who she marries, is, you know, so I think it's really important that it comes out at this time when through Reagan sort of politics and.... just general, you know, societal sort of prejudice that these kids are just being asked to go into hospitals and they just want them to disappear. But we'll talk further about the activism. It's so, you know, she's equally important as an activist, as an artist, and so important, so brave, so courageous. Really, really.

Belinda Howden Yeah. So, as a sort of final question then, and a final prompt, what do you think it means for this generation of artists, this body of work? If we're to keep finding it, you know, Nan has said herself, you know, every generation finds a new story and this body of work.

Annie O'Hehir Well, I can't really talk for the new generation because I'm as old as sin. But, what can I... I mean, I think, I think the, I mean, let's, I mean, in terms of the, the influence on...

Belinda Howden Yeah, the enduring influence

Annie O'Hehir Yeah. I mean, there's, you know, there's you can think of Wolfgang Tillmans, Corrina Day like Paul Knight here in like endless. It's probably no photographer as much as they'd like to not like look at Nan or be influenced by Nan. And it is 40 years old now, so it's, you know, it's had its own lineages and so on. But I'd say the influence in that way is enormous. But I guess, you know, in terms there's, you know, like this way of Nan asking you to look at, you know, it's a cliché, but that humanist question of our relationship with other people and to look at this group of people who at the time were being vilified and othered. Nan said we weren't othered. We were just doing ourselves, you know, ourselves. So, they're the superstars in her life. But I think that fact that she's also photographing them, having kids and, you know, hanging out and, you know, just doing ordinary stuff. So, they're extraordinary and ordinary and just like us. So, you know, you'd hope by now questions of domestic violence had been completely sorted out by now. Questions of, you know, being scared of other people who weren't exactly like you and that you were afraid of. You think that would be all sorted out by now, but I... Sorry, correct me if I'm wrong, but I suspect that might not be the case. So, Nan, when she started to do this activism work recently to, make the try to make the Sackler family be responsible for the work that they've done in addicting millions of people in America to, you know, opioids. People said to her, this could end your career. The Sacklers give money to every university and, an institution in this country. This might be it. I'm sorry. People who've seen the documentary. I'm not making this up, but, I mean, it's in that. But, you know, she's sort of saying that, and she's like, well, I don't care. You know, you have to stand up for what you believe in. You have to believe you know, your truth. And I, I mean, I certainly am no Nan Goldin, that's for bloody sure, I think to see somebody in and particularly in this world, it's getting more and more divisive, more and more difficult to have somebody to make such beautiful, engaging work to, you know... more flies, you know, is what's the expression? More flies with honey. You know that you know that these flies, isn't it? Yes. That that idea that you know, you can you can work within this art world that maybe you always think, does art really make any bloody difference? Really, really. Is there anything ever changed? And maybe bodies of work like this work their magic, you know, that people

somebody did come to these shows who you know, whose mind got changed a little bit and a little bit more open a little bit more, you know, accepting.

Belinda Howden Totally.

Annie O'Hehir Fingers crossed.

Belinda Howden Well, on that note, we might just say thank you to Ann for coming and visiting and curating and speaking.

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[*Nan Goldin: The ballad of sexual dependency*](#) on display at FUMA from 16 February – 10 April 2026. The exhibition is a National Gallery Touring Exhibition, presented as part of the Bowness Family Foundation Photography Touring Program.

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