

In Proximity
Season 3 Episode 36
Shirley Kurata
Final Transcript

Shirley Kurata: I've always been a fan of Boots Riley's work and he put together a little PDF of how he saw the film. Pretty amazing because it was like a hand drawing and it was like there's a store, it's going to be all in yellow. And then there's another store that's all in green. All those years of working on music videos and you have two days to find outfits and you had a budget of nothing and trying to be creative and make it look cool using that and what I learned from that and applying it into everything everywhere and I think it was also carried on into I love boosters too. I mean both of them were indie budgets. There's sort of this charm that you get from a little bit of the scrappiness.

Paola Mardo: Yeah, the constraints make it a bit more creative.

Shirley Kurata: Yeah.

[0:47 - "In Proximity Theme" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: You're watching and listening to In Proximity. I'm Paola Mardo and today I'm talking costume design and style with Shirley Kurata. Shirley Kurata is a costume designer born and raised in Los Angeles—Monterey Park, California, to be exact. She started her career on film sets as a costumer before moving on to music videos, commercial work, and styling. Her work on the Daniels Everything Everywhere All at Once earned her an Oscar nomination for best costume design, solidifying her reputation for creative, colorful storytelling and clothing and costumes. Shirley is an acclaimed stylist. She's worked with the likes of Billie Eilish, Pharrell Williams, and Mindy Kaling, and she's collaborated with fashion brands such as Rodarte, Kenzo, Prada, and Miu Miu. She even owns her own boutique in LA called Virgil Normal. Shirley's latest film is Boots Riley's I Love Boosters about a gang of professional boosters or shoplifters that includes Corvette played by Keke Palmer, Sade, Naomi Ackie, and Mariah Taylour Page.

Corvette's dreams of becoming a fashion designer are stifled by the realities of her situation and the system. So instead, she and her crew target a cutthroat fashion Maven, Christie Smith, played by Demi Moore, by stealing clothes from her stores and reselling them at a lower price. They call it fashion forward philanthropy. It's a wild adventure set in the Bay Area Streets of Oakland and San Francisco with an ensemble cast that includes LaKeith Stanfield, Poppy Liu, Don Cheadle, Eiza González, Will Poulter, and more. As with any Boots Riley film, I Love Boosters has a lot to say about culture, consumerism, capitalism, and workers' rights amid a bonker's whimsical surrealist tale. Plus the costume aren't just part of the story. They are the story with everyone wearing bold, bright colors and boosting them too. So I talked to Shirley about how she designed the maximalist surrealist costumes of the film, her process for designing costumes, how styling and working on music video sets helped prepare her for this career and working on Everything Everywhere All at Once.

The difference between Bay Area and LA style and how growing up Japanese American in the diverse Asian and Latino neighborhoods of the San Gabriel Valley and East LA helped shaped her perspective on fashion, style and storytelling. Here's my conversation with Shirley Kurata.

[03:16 - "KN 9 to 5" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: Well, welcome to In Proximity, Shirley Kurata.

Shirley Kurata: Well, thanks so much for having me.

Paola Mardo: Thank you so much for being here to talk about your new film. Very excited to dive into all things I Love Boosters with you. It's a wild ride.

Shirley Kurata: Yes, definitely.

Paola Mardo: It says a lot about capitalism, consumerism, and it's also just so enjoyable and visually just so fun to even look at. And I think the costumes are, it's not just part of the story, it's the story in a lot of ways. So I guess my first question is, how did you even get involved with this project?

Shirley Kurata: Well, I've always been a fan of Boots Riley's work. I mean, sorry to bother you with such an amazing film and I'm a Virgo and he was always on my radar, but I was introduced to him by a first AD that I worked with prior. So I don't know what conversation Boots and our AD had, but he asked if I wanted to work on this film and do the costumes for it. And without even reading the script, I was like, well, yeah, duh. But then when I actually got the script, I was like, well, this is even a hundred times the icing on the cake because it involves so much amazing fashion and I could really have fun with the costume design. And for me, I love integrating the costumes with the set and I felt like the two were really important and this film was like the perfect way to sort of like flex my muscles when it came to that.

Paola Mardo: Yeah. Because there's production design and then there's costume design, but so much of the film is set in like clothing stores, for example, where it feels like those two kind of blend together. Can you talk a bit how you worked with ... I guess we'll start with Boots Riley. Yes. I mean, how did you work with the director to even come up with a design for costumes?

Shirley Kurata: Yeah. Well, Boots kind of gave a little introduction. He put together a little PDF of how he saw the film. So he did have like a little drawing that he did. It was pretty amazing because it was like a hand drawing and it was like, okay, there's a store, it's going to be all in yellow and then there's another store that's all in green and he kind of like laid that out, but then he also had this music that you had to listen to while you were reading the script and then just like a little video that he made that was inspiration for certain segments of the film.

Paola Mardo: Wow. Yes. But what was it? Can you talk about what was in the video?

Shirley Kurata: Well, it involved a little toy car kind of like moving in place and the sort of like stop motion feel to it, which you'll see later on in the film.

Paola Mardo: Yes, exactly. I love that. I mean, the film is such, it's like an experience, very experiential. So I can see why with a script he would give you all these materials. So how do you kind of take that and then translate it to what the characters actually wear?

Shirley Kurata: Well, with that then I have a conversation with him about like what his thoughts were with each character, but then it helps to sort of have a conversation with the actor too and to see what they had in mind and kind of create this sort of mood board pulling inspiration from

runway looks. From designers that I've been following and I've liked pinned some of their looks because it's like really interesting and sometimes it's like, "Oh, I don't know when I'll want to use this, but I want to use it at some point in my career." So there's some of those pieces.

There's a lot of sort of like research in where the characters are from. So for me, because they're from Oakland, I thought it would be really important to sort of research what people, creatives in Oakland would dress like. And I feel like that's very much a part of Boots's world too, because his style is so amazing with his tall hats and he wears a lot of color and there's definitely sort of like this artsy cool aesthetic to the way he dresses and I felt like the people around him, it's the same. And so I wanted to sort of like study the San Francisco/Oakland art scene and the people that were a part of that and I put them in my little mood board and sort of just you put that for each character and then present it to Boots, but also to the actors too, to see like, "This is what I was thinking. Let me know your thoughts. If you want to add anything to it, let me know." And so it's definitely a very collaborative process.

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

[08:45 - "Good Times" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: Can you talk a little bit about the characters? So you said you worked with the actors as well, because what I loved is number one, Christie Smith, Demi Moore's character, her stores are each a different color. So every time we're in a different store, it's like bright yellow, bright blue, primary colors, and it's very distinct. And then you have the actors in those colors, but they all have their own personal sense of style. Can you talk about how you worked with Keke Palmer, Naomi Ackey, Taylour Page even, and kind of creating their looks and making them individual, but also kind of cohesive?

Shirley Kurata: Well, I mean with this script it was kind of interesting because I had to create like a sort of wardrobe for their actual characters, right? And then their disguises or their booster looks because they don't want to be recognized, right? So each time they boosted, they would have a sort of different persona or disguise. And so I had to sort of kind of create two closets for them. So then I had to just kind of figure out like, okay, well, what personality are they? And so like with Keke Palmer, she goes in and it's scripted that she's kind of bookish and a little bit nerdy. And so she's wearing this like really cute sort of like tweed Anna Sui look with glasses. And so I kind of wanted to keep a little bit of that sort of like bookish, I guess, bookish vibe with her and Taylour's character, Mariah, I think she's a little more edgy, a little more cool and so I kind of thought she would be in pieces that were a little bit more like fun.

She's wearing this like pom pom like-

Paola Mardo: Yeah, the off the shoulder thing.

Shirley Kurata: Off the shoulder. Yeah. And so it was really fun just coming up with these like bright monochromatic looks for each girl, but trying to make it distinctive and make sense with the sort of like character that they wanted to portray. It was sort of like a character within the character.

Paola Mardo: And then for Naomi Ackey, she plays Sade.

Shirley Kurata: Yes.

Paola Mardo: But what was her character like and how did you dress her? What was your approach?

Shirley Kurata: Well, I think with her, I kind of wanted to mix an element of like a little bit more laid back streetwear vibes, but then also being really good friends with Corvette, she would probably wear something that Corvette designed, maybe mixed in with some of the things that she boosted that she liked. But she was a single mom. I kind of wanted to make sure that it felt like real, not like too overly dressed up or like I think that her style kind of for me felt like maybe the closest to what I researched for people from Oakland to wear. It's sort of like this like cool mix of different styles, but like in this sort of like more relaxed streetwear kind of way.

Paola Mardo: I can see that. Can we talk about Demi Moore's character, Christie Smith, who's she's like high end fashion designer. I felt like her look was more simple and I'm remembering her in like black and white looks, but maybe she wore something else.

Shirley Kurata: Well, yeah, I thought with her, because we have so much color going on throughout the film that it would just make sense that she would be devoid of color. So her color palette was basically black, white, and gray. And if you go to like fashion shows, you'll see a lot of people kind of dress like Christie.

It's like, there's a lot of black going on, but it's like designer black. They're designer pieces that she's wearing, but if you look up close, there's something a little bit off kilter about it, which is kind of like in line with her apartment. And so like she might have a jacket but it's got three sleeves on it or the shirt's asymmetrical or there's this like weird three dimensional effects to it, but it's not so in your face, but there is sort of like a uniform that you'll see fashion designers. It's sort of a little bit utilitarian, but very considered.

Paola Mardo: That's cool. I also want to bring up, I feel like this is not a spoiler because she's in the trailer. So Poppy Liu's character, a friend they meet along the way, a comrade and she also sort of has her own style and look that sort of blends in with the others but like doesn't because they all do boosting together. What was your approach to her style?

Shirley Kurata: Well, I mean her character lived in China and without giving away too much, she ends up in Oakland in their world. So for me, I kind of did what I did on Everything Everywhere All at Once was like I shopped in Chinatown and found this amazing track suit for her and I knew that she would have a work uniform because she worked in the factory and so just based off of like reference photos that we had of factories and usually they had some sort of like lab coat and like hat and so it was sort of like a mix of that. And then for her non-uniform look, it was things I found in Chinatown.

[15:13 - "Good Times" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: So you mentioned you like to incorporate your costumes into production design or into the set as much as possible. You worked with Christopher Glass, the production designer on this film. Yes. Can you talk about how you guys collaborated?

Shirley Kurata: Yeah. I mean, I think that it was so important that my costumes worked well on his sets and color, like even though you could say the store is all yellow, there's so many different shades of yellow. And so early on he sent me, because he was working out of Atlanta

and I was working out of LA. So he sent me paint chips, like just painted on a bigger sheet so that I could have it. And so I was able to sort of like hold it up with like all the yellow pieces that I could find and same with all the other colors and it was really helpful because there were definitely shades that did not work well with his shade of yellow that he had for the sets. And even when he had the sets built and I was able to like hold up clothes, I did that because it was helpful for me to just hold it up, take photos and see which shades worked the best because some of it might be a little bit too, it would like blendy and wouldn't stand out. Others would be a little bit too like maybe strong against the set. So it was really important for me to sort of like have his colors work well with the colors of all the costumes that I found.

Paola Mardo: Amazing. Where did you find all the yellow pieces? Is it all from one store or did you go to different ... There's so many.

Shirley Kurata: So I mean basically you name it, like we looked, we dug through all the costume houses because we were shooting kind of in the fall winter time, which is predominantly not a bright, colorful shopping time. It's usually like grays and blacks and autumnal colors. They really didn't have a lot of the colors in the stores. We went to so many thrift stores in Atlanta, which was great though because I'm all for also just like kind of being mindful about using wardrobe that isn't wasteful and harmful to the environment. I'm all for thrifting. I think it's also just like fun because there's also like pieces from different eras and it kind of adds to sort of the wardrobe because I really don't like just going to like the mall and just like shopping off the rack. I do love mixing different eras. I love mixing from vintage places and then mixing from costume houses and putting women's clothing on men and vice versa.

Paola Mardo: So fun. You wouldn't shop at Christie Smith's store for any of this.

[LAUGHTER]

[18:42 - "In Proximity '90s" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: I'm glad you brought up Everything Everywhere All at Once. I did want to ask about that as well. I mean, completely different film, but stylistically and creatively I feel like there's similarities here in terms of the world and outrageousness and absurdity, I guess, of it all.

Shirley Kurata: And both are just maximalist films. There's just a lot going on.

Paola Mardo: Exactly. Yeah, what draws you to these kinds of projects?

Shirley Kurata: I think that just because it opens up the creative side of me, I feel like just I like the challenge of creating these worlds and these looks and they're worlds that are unique to me. And so for me, it's just things that I'm drawn to. It's just like, I just love that sort of like maximalist surreal outside of the box worlds, even as a kid it's like if everyone wanted to wear red, I would be the one that wanted to wear yellow. It's like I kind of always wanted to sort of like be this sort of like rebel or outsider and stray from the sort of like expected norms and maybe it's because like I growing up, I always had to wear a school uniform so I couldn't really like show off my personal style until I was like in college. I mean, I could do it when I wasn't at school, but I think I spent my spare time sort of exploring that and it was like so important to me. Yeah.

Paola Mardo: I love that. Well, you're born and raised in Monterey Park, which is a suburb of Los Angeles in the San Gabriel Valley.

Shirley Kurata: Yes.

Paola Mardo: Can you talk about what it was like growing up there and how you found your way to fashion?

Shirley Kurata: I know it's really interesting how it's almost like sometimes you're kind of born with this predilection towards something because I definitely was not raised in a sort of like artistic environment. It was very suburban and Monterey Park is not known for being a fashionable like part of LA but-

Paola Mardo: Great food though.

Shirley Kurata: Great food. But what I did love and I think is really important is that there was such a great mix of cultures. There's like a huge Asian presence and there's a huge Latino presence because East LA is just neighboring and I think being around that was really influential and also like because of that, I don't know if that like just allowed me to just be comfortable in sort of like trying to figure out my own personal style and not want to try to fit in all the time, which I know that with like, especially with like Asian Americans, when you're like kind of thrown into an environment where like you're the only Asian around, there's like this desire to sort of conform and try to be more like everyone else around you and I didn't have that as much in my upbringing and like even my sort of grade school was actually predominantly sort of like Asian American so I didn't have that like, oh, I'm bringing a Bento to school and I have rice balls for lunch.

There wasn't any weirdness with that. So I was able to sort of embrace my culture a little bit more too because it was just kind of normal. When I went to high school though, it was a little bit more, because I went to high school in Pasadena, then the dynamics changed a little bit and I sort of like was like, "Oh, okay, people might not understand the rice ball that I brought to school." But I think being raised in a city though that it's so much multicultural has been like, I'm just so grateful to be raised in that sort of environment.

Paola Mardo: Yeah. That's so interesting that you grew up in this very diverse environment and yet still felt the need to rebel through your clothes. So can you talk about like when did you start to get an interest in clothing and style and fashion?

Shirley Kurata: Yeah. I mean, I started like maybe when I was like nine or 10, I asked my mom to teach me how to sew because she used to sew the cutest outfits for my older siblings and so I learned that way. Then like in ninth grade I took a home economics class sewing class and learned how to sew and sort of like kind of felt like I want to somehow be involved in fashion or I want to be a fashion designer. And so there was always that desire and I started to slowly, like maybe when I was more like 16, 17, discover like thrift stores and vintage stores and loved all of that and I just loved just the sort of like fashion from the 50s and 60s and just wanted to sort of take a little bit from all those areas that inspired me and sort of integrate that into my own fashion.

Paola Mardo: Because you were also a stylist.

Shirley Kurata: Yes.

Paola Mardo: And I don't think many costume designers are also stylists. Is that fair to say?

Shirley Kurata: Yes, that's true. Yeah.

Paola Mardo: So did you start in styling first or costume design or did it happen kind of at the same time?

Shirley Kurata: Yeah, it's kind of ...

Paola Mardo: Because maybe being in LA, you're also like the film industry is here. I'm curious if that sort of...

Shirley Kurata: Well, I studied fashion. I went to fashion school and I studied in Paris for three years ideally to be a fashion designer, but then upon graduating, I was like, "Well, I don't know if I want to really get into the fashion world." And I just thought like, "Well, I'm from LA, maybe I'll get into costume design." And so I didn't know anyone, so I just basically like whatever job opening there was for internships, I would just sign up for that and sort of like worked for free on these really low budget movies and sort of learned a little bit about costuming and worked my way up to that.

So I kind of started off more as a costumer, which costumers are the ones that work on set, they work with the costume designer and there's definitely a sort of like learning process with that because you have to learn continuity and all these aspects to it. And so for years I worked as a costumer, worked on the Power Rangers and got in the union that way, which is a whole other thing that's like really difficult to sort of like get into. But then I realized like, well, I don't want to be just on set all the time. I kind of want to do some creative work. And I became friends with photographer Autumn De Wilde, who's an amazing photographer. She shot like Elliott Smith and Beck, and Jenny Lewis and so she saw a lot of like cool musicians and stuff and so we kind of hit it off, but then also like worked together for years and I was sort of styling the people that she photographed and was able to sort of build my portfolio based off of working with her and really learned sort of ...

In a way, like when you're styling musicians, it's kind of a form of costume design because you're creating these looks and a lot of these musicians who are like really creative and they're into also creating these like personas, right? Yeah. Whether it's in a music video or it's like for a still shoot and so for me it was a really great way of sort of exploring different, I guess, personas and styles. And so that sort of evolved where then I began to do more like music videos and commercials, print work, working in fashion. So I kind of was like a little bit of a jack of all trades because I was like dabbling in all the areas. It was like music, fashion, commercial aspects and kind of felt like I was missing the sort of like film side of things.

And so I was grateful when Jonathan Wang, who was the producer for Everything Everywhere, reached out to me and said, "Hey, Daniels are looking for a costume designer for their next film, would you be interested?" And I was like, "Yes, absolutely." Not knowing, I had no idea what ... We're just like, "Oh, this is like a crazy script."

Paola Mardo: Wait, I was going to say, did you say yes before reading the script again or?

Shirley Kurata: I was definitely interested, but I really, because I knew with their movies, they're pretty crazy and I was like, "Okay, well let me see if I can do this film." And And when I read it, I

was a little scared because there was so much going on. I was like, I don't know, can I do this? There's so much going on. But the experience was so great because all those years of working on music videos and you have two days to find outfits and you had a budget of nothing and trying to be creative and make it look cool. It was kind of like using that and what I learned from that and applying it into everything everywhere. I think it was also carried on into I Love Boosters too. Sort of like being resourceful in a way that wasn't going to break the bank.

I mean, both of them were indie budgets, but I think that with that it's almost like there's a charm to it that if I had millions of dollars, I don't know, sometimes things get a little bit diluted when you have put too much money into something, it's almost like too slick. Whereas there's sort of this charm that you get from a little bit of the scrappiness.

Paola Mardo: The constraints make it a bit more creative.

Shirley Kurata: Yeah. And I think even early on Boots had said it's okay if it's a little bit janky. It's okay if there's that element of that because that's what he wanted to sort of like have throughout the filmmaking process in this film, whether it's like using stop motion or like miniature sets. And so I love that aspect. I think some of the things that you create where you're not overthinking and you're just like grabbing what's around you can be some of your best work. And so there's something spontaneous about it that makes it much more interesting and charming.

[32:11 - "Good Times: by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: You are a stylist and we have folks watching who are maybe like, how do I figure out my own personal style, whether it's going to work, being on set, whatever it is. Do you have any recs for styling tips just in everyday life?

Shirley Kurata: I think it's just whatever you feel good in. And I don't want to like force any sort of like style direction on anyone. It's like whatever makes you feel good and also reflects who you are as a person. There are some days when you're just like, "I look good." And then it sort of like carries on with everything else that you do and just try to achieve that on a daily basis where it's like you feel good about yourself. So whatever that is. It might be a tutu. It might be just like jeans and a t-shirt.

Paola Mardo: I love that. Or the tutu on the jeans.

Shirley Kurata: There you go.

Paola Mardo: With the t-shirt.

Shirley Kurata: Yes.

Paola Mardo: Can you talk a little bit, because you are originally from Los Angeles. Yes. I grew up partially in the Bay. We were talking about this just before we started recording. Yeah. As an Angelino, what did you learn about Bay Area's style and how it differs I guess from down here and how you incorporated that into your work?

Shirley Kurata: Well, I think that A, it's not as hot as it is. There's definitely with the climate, I think there's a lot more layering involved and then you can have more fun with that. And I think

there's sort of like a strong mix of streetwear, but then also it's very unique. I don't know. It's hard to explain because there's definitely a cool art and subculture world that's happening. I know that there's also a very tech component to the Bay Area and for me, I see that as the people who are rebelling against the sort of like boring techy Bay Area looks. And so it's sort of a mix of like vintage and just different aesthetics, I think. And so I found it really interesting. I feel like with LA it's a little bit more outdoorsy and I kind of connected more with the sort of like Oakland way of dress because it's like definitely like a good sort of mix of just different inspirations, I guess.

Paola Mardo: Maybe not so trend forward.

Shirley Kurata: It's not so trend forward. It's definitely more individualistic, I think.

Paola Mardo: I can see that.

Shirley Kurata: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: I remember just in high school going to places like Berkeley and going to vintage shopping and like Haight Street and the stuff you find there, you can't really find anywhere else. It's just old school, Bohemian, San Francisco, Bay Area.

Shirley Kurata: Exactly.

Paola Mardo: That kind of vibe.

Shirley Kurata: And also just a fun note is that I know a lot of people in the fashion world that are very successful in the fashion world that studied in Berkeley, even though there's no fashion program there, but like my good friends, Kate and Laura Mulleavy from Rodarte, they studied at Berkeley and then Humberto Leon who was like owned Opening Ceremony, he's from Berkeley. So there's like several other fashion people that came out of there.

Paola Mardo: So interesting.

Shirley Kurata: Yeah. I think it's also just sort of like this desire to also learn just all aspects of the arts and being around people that have that same interest even if it's like not part of the sort of like fashion world. I think you kind of like through osmosis just get inspiration from that.

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

Shirley Kurata: Which I think is really cool.

[36:17 - "Good Times" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: Well, I wanted to ask about, you were just talking about being scrappy, sort of helped in the creative process. Everything Everywhere we read that you had about a month and a half to prepare for that film. Is that right?

Shirley Kurata: I mean, I almost want to say even less, but around that.

Paola Mardo: Was it the same for this film or did you have a bit more

Shirley Kurata: Time? I think it was about the same.

Paola Mardo: Oh, wow.

Shirley Kurata: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: So as the costume designer, what does your process even look like to prepare for yourself, for your team? Are you making mood boards?

Shirley Kurata: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: What are you doing in the month and a half-ish of time?

Shirley Kurata: Yeah. I mean the first part is making the mood boards, right? But then it's also then outreach to people to collaborate with. You think about the things that you have to get made, custom made first, because that's what takes the longest. So I had to make sure that I got sketches done for the custom work and then sourcing those fabrics, figuring out who's going to make it. And at the same time, reaching out to all the sort of like cool indie designers that I've always wanted to borrow their piece for, basically casting this like wide net out and seeing who's going to be down to sort of like work and either loan us pieces or collaborate with. And so the sort of gray three dimensional suit that Demi wears and as Christie, we borrowed that from a designer named Victoria Yujin Kwon that I saw on Instagram and there's those websites that sort of feature like upcoming designers and like I just thought her work was great. I also was a mentor at SCAD Atlanta for like a couple of years and so because I had the relationship with them, I thought it would be great to sort of like reach out to some of the students there. They were able to create some pieces for the runway.

Paola Mardo: That's so cool.

Shirley Kurata: Yeah, for the fashion show and also borrowed some runway looks from some of the professors there. So having that collaboration was great. And I'm always up for supporting up and coming aspiring designers. I mean, that's who Corvette was, right? She was an aspiring designer and given her situation, it's much harder to sort of like be seen, right? And so because I have the sort of like power to put a spotlight on some of these designers, I try to do that as much as I can. Whether it's like featuring a look on like a prominent actor or have them create a custom piece, I think it's like such a fulfilling part of costume design for me.

[39:47 - "In Proximity '90s" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: Well, we have a lot of folks who watch this podcast or listen, who are also up and coming folks in the film industry, some of them maybe costume designers as well. I mean, you talked a little bit about your paths and there are probably different ways to get into this, but do you have any advice for folks trying to get in now?

Shirley Kurata: Yeah. I think it's funny because it's sort of like my advice is a little bit changing now because I feel like as a society we've gotten so insular, like it's sort of like we're on our phones in front of our laptops or we're kind of not having that like human interaction as much and I just want to stress how important that is to get yourself out there and have the human interaction because you learn so much more by having this sort of like physical interaction and

to be able to sort of like discover people without ... Because there's so many things that happen too just like by chance just from like you go to an art show and you just see someone that's like dressed so cool. And you would never really see that if you were just like at home on your computer, right?

So I want to say like embrace the arts, embrace the artists, embrace the sort of creatives and try to get yourself out there to just gatherings where you could find more people like that. And it doesn't have to be in the field that you want to get into, but I feel like that interaction is just so important for feeding your creativity and so that's key. And then my other suggestion is if you don't have the connections to sort of like get into whatever you want to get into. So if it's like costume design is to just sort of reach out and offer to intern whatever in your capacity that you can because it is a great way to sort of like learn the trade, but to also meet people and that's how I did it. And so I think that's a great way to do it and to also show the world through, whether it's through like a website or whatnot, just to show like maybe some of your work and your creative projects. I think that's also really helpful so that people can sort of like see the sort of like interesting work that you are doing

Paola Mardo: Right.

Shirley Kurata: And I think that will also help you sort of like make connections and meet people and find the sort of like the cool collaborators in your life.

Paola Mardo: Is there a costume design that you can talk about that you saw in a script that gave you that feeling like, how am I going to pull this off? And then you did?

Shirley Kurata: Yeah. Well, I mean, I think like Corvette's turquoise dress, I think the only sort of prompts in the script was that she's wearing this turquoise dress that she designed herself, but that she was inspired by the oldsmobile that her parents drove when she was a kid. So I knew that I would have to have some sort of like interior of a car kind of like vibe to the dress and so I just sort of like sourced upholstery fabrics, vinyls and sort of the techniques involved in sort of car interiors, so like the sort of quilting. And so we incorporated that into her dress, but she's also doing kind of this crazy stunt in it. And so I knew I had to create something where she was able to pull that off.

[44:10 - "Prox Recs Theme" by Ken Nana and Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: So we've come to the part of the show where we ask for your prox rec and essentially it is a recommendation given by our guests to our audience and it can be honestly anything, but usually it's something that has to do with what you do. So as a costume designer, is there a book or a movie or something you'd recommend to folks that they can sort of continue the learning that they took from this episode into their everyday life.

Shirley Kurata: Okay. Well, this weekend I was just at the Los Angeles Public Library and the library really is such important resource because there's so many amazing books that you can look at for inspiration. Growing up, my library had a really great video selection. So I learned about a lot of art house films like Spike Lee, She's Gotta Have It, all these films that I probably would not have had shown at the local movie theater. So I feel like your local library probably has a lot of great resources. I know that they also have a great video archive that you can access and there's a lot of great art house films and so that's my suggestion is check out your local public library.

Paola Mardo: I love that. That's an amazing, excellent rec. Well, thank you so much, Shirley. It was such a pleasure to have you on the show.

Shirley Kurata: Thanks so much for having me.

[45:59 - In Proximity Theme Music by Ludwig Göransson]

[VOICEOVER]

Paola Mardo: In Proximity is a production of Proximity Media.

The show is hosted, directed and produced by Paola Mardo.

Executive producers are Ryan Coogler, Zinzi Coogler, and Sev Ohanian.

Theme song and additional music is by Ludwig Göransson.

Patrick Epino is our co-director and director of photography.

Ken Nana is our sound designer and mix engineer.

Our editors are Patrick Epino, Ken Nana, and Ben Caloza

The production team includes Celine Mendiola, Joy Woo, and Alexandria Santana.

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[VOICEOVER ENDS]