

Visual Arts Panel Meeting Minutes

6 August 2020 / 1-3pm Zoom

Attending: Rebecca Maddox(SCC), David McLeavy (Bloc Projects), Emma Harnett (Artworks), Penny McCarthy (SHU), Yuen Fong Ling (Artist), Tyler Mellins (Yorkshire Artspace), Alison Morten (Museums Sheffield), Janet Jennings (Museums Sheffield).

Apologies: Sara Unwin (University of Sheffield), Karen Sherwood (Cupola Gallery), James Green (Artist), Laura Clarke (Art Catalyst), Angelica Sule (Site Gallery), Cat Powell (Artfelt)

Kirstie Hamilton (Museums Sheffield) - Alison Morten attending in Kirstie's place
Georgina Kettlewell (YAS) - Tyler Mellins attending in Georgina's place

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Minutes

Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed. Rebecca went through these to highlight discussions and cover any actions. - Yuen has been invited to attend SCC meetings to consider addressing historic statues and/or street names which have imperial or slavery overtones in the city. A Racial Equality Commission has been set up in Sheffield to take this forward, broaden the discussion and implement changes which address the Black Lives Matter agenda.

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Terms of Reference

The proposed length and duration of the Visual Art Panel meetings were discussed. It was agreed that for the foreseeable future meetings will happen regularly - every month/ six weeks - but duration of meetings will be shorter at 1-1.5hrs.

It was felt that it is important to meet regularly so people who were unable to attend one meeting didn't fall out of the loop and that the development of the next phase of activity can be taken forward more rapidly. There is a need to be responsive to the current situation and dynamic as a group.

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Discussion Theme: Communication and Collaboration.

It was agreed that each of the 12 points in the 'We Plan To' section of the theme identified in the Making Our Way Visual Art Statement (page 18/19) would be discussed, one by one, to help identify priorities, gaps and initiatives to take forward.

See - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pURo2ZngTn7IDWsmKOEXRjFrhRv1jNlp/view>

In this meeting the first six were discussed. The next meeting will consider the second half of this list.

ACTION - everyone to read and consider the second six of the 'we plan to' items under this theme to prepare for the next meeting. These are listed at the end of these minutes.

If you are unable to attend, you can email thoughts through to Janet in advance.

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We plan to...

1. Develop a new visual arts panel charged with supporting the implementation of this vision.

- These meetings form this group.

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2. Champion artist-led involvement in decision making to ensure collaborations are not just institutionally driven.

- The importance of involving artists in decision making was highlighted - involving artists allows for artists concerns to be directly voiced, more direct impact for the community and the development of skills for those involved.

- There are two paid artists positions on the panel - James and Yuen. In addition to this, attendees such as Penny, Tyler, Emma and Karen, whilst representing organisations, are artists too. This means we have a good proportion of artist's voice on the panel.

- Organisations such as YAS also provide a connection with the panel - reporting back to/from artists - and can voice/identify artists concerns and priorities.

- it was recognised that in future we may want to engage with different artists outside the existing group to address different aspects of the visual arts or access specific skills.

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3. Explore the possibility of a new visual art festival (informed by learning from Art Sheffield), creating a new vehicle that combines multiple offers and platforms to artists and audiences.

- It was recognised that whilst we can learn from the Art Sheffield model, any new festival/event would need to have its own agenda and address the current visual arts landscape in Sheffield rather than resurrecting this. The Social Arts Summit might also be a model to research or potentially grow.

- The panel were keen to emphasise the importance of any new event being artist-led, more democratic and inclusive than the Art Sheffield model and move away from an outside curator being brought in.

- the need for outside 'headline' exhibitions/artists to attract publicity and audiences was also considered important however, as parallel DIY events/activity can benefit from the publicity and audiences these bring to the city.

- The City of Makers is seen as a good model for localised listings - being a centralised core with extra fringe programming and considered more fluid and non-hierarchical. It was considered important that any funding raised for activity should be spread widely to support fringe, artist-led and more experimental activity.

- It was agreed that before embarking on developing any new event we need to question 'why' we are doing it and who is it for? Would this be about artists development? Attracting new audiences? Or both? Be seen as an Economic driver? Aimed at raising the profile of Sheffield?

- it was agreed that exploring a new event needs to be pro-active and taken forward.

Ideas for this included:

- i) set up a sub-committee to develop a manifesto for this event. (Invite a representative from Art Sheffield to feed into this?)
- ii) consider what is right for Sheffield now - helping to identify Sheffield as a city that is taking on new agendas brought about by the current Covid-9 situation, that supports and listens to its artists.
- iii) consider a 'Making Ways' Festival which maps the legacy of the project – profiling artists involved and potentially launching MW #2 with new commissions/funding.
- iv) Identify/audit strengths of MW legacy (Feature Walls etc) as well as activity in the city, such as Open Studios, which could be built on.

ACTION: Call out to VAP members to ask who would want to be on a sub-group and set this up. This will be in the agenda for the next meeting.

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4. Explore joint publicity initiatives including online visual art listings for audiences to access.

- several initiatives exist in the city which target different audiences and share different information: listings aimed at attracting audiences, profiling artists work, sharing funding opportunities, jobs, artists information/resources, arts news etc...

These include:

i) Our Favourite Places - Website and newsletter covering all artistic activity in the city, not just visual arts. Aimed at attracting audiences for events but also has profiles of artists and organisations as well as things like best places to get good coffee etc. Concern that submissions can take 2 weeks or so to appear as they need to be rewritten in OFP style. Rebecca suggested that OFP might develop to have less of a 'listing' function in the future.

ii) Making Ways Newsletter / Website - specifically targeted at visual artists, not general audiences. monthly newsletter including opportunities, exhibitions, arts news etc. The website listed MW events and is now more or less dormant. It is being updated to become a more useful portal for sharing resources, opportunities, listings etc. This might include things like available exhibition space in the city, for example. In the past the City of Makers website allowed organisations to list their own activity/ events, but after the end of Yr of Makers this facility has been unused.

iii) Welcome to Sheffield - this is changing, but currently allows people to submit their own events/listings - aimed at attracting arts, sports or other event audiences as well as funding hotels, conference venues etc.

iv) Creative Guild - only available to paying members - newsletter/Website lists opportunities and events submitted by members or CG for artists, makers, designers etc in the city.

- it was agreed that the platforms that exist already are great and we need to think about how we nurture these and not aim to recreate them.

- Penny suggested having a centralised Digital repository of artists in the city - with images, contact details and links to their website. Several organisations offer different types of artist pages/listings already which identify members or studio holders - Creative Guild offer members pages; S1, Trafalgar Works, Bloc + YAS studio holders for example, and OFP have 'Meet the locals' - so how do we bring these together? could this be the starting point of the festival (see p.4 above). Links to

examples of existing artists portals in Sheffield: OFP - <https://www.ourfaveplaces.co.uk/meet-the-locals/> YAS <http://artspace.org.uk/our-artists-makers/> Creative Guild - <https://sheffieldcreativeguild.com/members/> example in New York - <https://registry.whitecolumns.org>

- things to consider:

- . do we need to develop 'writing for arts audiences' workshops to build writing skills?
- . how to make visual arts a priority for promotion in the city
- . Who accesses OFP? Are these new or returning audiences?
- . how do we get new people - audiences and artists - to know about and sign up to newsletters?
- . Look at Corridor 8 model of funding and sharing news - this might be something for OFP?

ACTION: Rebecca to ask Claire to share information on audience data for OFP.

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5. Develop a support structure for artists offering advice, guidance and fundraising workshops to ensure a wider demographic of artists develop new skills.

6. Create a forum between studio complexes to encourage co-operation including encouraging them to widen engagement with artists working from home.

Note: these two 'we plan to' items were discussed in parallel.

- It was agreed that there is quite a lot of CPD supporting visual artists in the city including Bloc talks and workshops; Creative Guild mentoring; YAS starter studios, crit groups and Ways of Making programme, Site Gallery's Platform Programme, FABS amongst others, as well as self-initiated artist-led crit groups.

- thoughts/questions.

things to do...

- i) audit what is currently happening so we can identify the gaps.
- ii) are there ways to grow the offer through organisations working together?
- iii) how to engage emergent artists and those not in studio spaces?
- iv) Can we form a Visual art register which can help link people up?
- v) how to address both 'makers' and 'artists' - with tailored and bespoke CPD
- vi) can we create a 'communal studio space' which could exist in one or more studios across the city - allowing cheap/free, flexible access for emergent artists or those currently based at home.
- vi) we need advocacy... who is the 'bridge' / first port of call for emergent artists? Where do they go for support and advice?

ACTION: Tyler and David to talk about shared communal studio initiatives. David to discuss with Richard Bartle.

Note: Research into CPD in the city was undertaken at the beginning of MW. The landscape has changed significantly since then, but I will find this and circulate as it might be a starting point for an updated audit of activity.

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Next meeting

'We plan to' objectives / Communication and Collaboration theme / No. 7-12

To discuss next meeting

- Working collaboratively to create a set of standards for the visual arts that provide an ethical position on pay, protect intellectual property and develop guidelines in internships and supporting the mental health of arts professionals.
- Seek funding for a centralised database and notice board to enable more opportunities to be shared. - Encourage dialogue with universities to consider research collaborations and initiatives.
- Support organisations, such as CADS, to find, negotiate, secure and sustain affordable creative spaces in empty buildings, providing permanent, non-permanent and pop-up spaces for the visual arts sector.
- Seek to broker a university workshop access system on behalf of artists that goes beyond what's in offer with the Artists Access to Art Schools (AA2A) programme.
- Develop an equipment library for arts professionals to access and share.

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Dates

Janet to send through a doodle poll identifying dates for the next meeting mid/late September