

Visual Arts Panel Meeting Minutes

16 December 2020 / 9-10.30am / Zoom

Attending: Rebecca Maddox(SCC), David McLeavy (Bloc Projects), Sunshine Wong (Bloc Projects), Yuen Fong Ling (Artist), Tyler Mellins (Yorkshire Artspace), Kirstie Hamilton (Museums Sheffield), James Green (Artist), Sara Unwin (University of Sheffield), Cat Powell (Artfelt), Penny McCarthy (SHU), Janet Jennings (Museums Sheffield).

Apologies: Emma Harnett (Artworks), Angelica Sule (Site Gallery), Anna Santomauro (Art Catalyst), Georgina Kettlewell (YAS), Karen Sherwood (Cupola Gallery)

1. Minutes

Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

A list of gallery spaces in the city was circulated and amendments suggested to include: Persistence Works and Exchange Place at Yorkshire Artspace and the gallery at Kommune – The Viewing Room. The list is attached again here in case further amendments need to be made. Arts organisations in Sheffield (visual arts and otherwise) are listed on the Making Our Way website here - [Links to all that is Art and Culture in Sheffield - Visual Arts Sheffield \(visual-arts-sheffield.com\)](https://www.makingourway.org.uk/links-to-all-that-is-art-and-culture-in-sheffield-visual-arts-sheffield-visual-arts-sheffield.com)

2. Welcome and intros

Sunshine Wong was welcomed to the group. Sunshine will attend in place of David McLeavy from Bloc going forward, as David will be leaving Bloc to work for Humber Street Gallery in Hull in March. Congratulations to David on his new post.

3. Updates from the last meeting

Studio Groupings – (David, Tyler)

The sub group have not met since the last meeting so no report but emails introductions have been sent through to Womp who are interested in being involved in broader conversations around collaboration. Kiac have reported that although Gage, their gallery space, is closed, the studios are surviving well.

With Richard Bartle being in Turkey for much of the year and Bloc Projects and Bloc Studios being separate organisations, some thought needs to go into how best to represent Bloc Studios. This might be through the gallery or a studio holder.

Bloc will be recruiting for a new director and hoping to appoint at the end of February, with David starting in his new role at Humber Street Gallery in Hull. Sunshine's role will expand to become curator across the whole programme.

Unconscious Bias training / BLM (Angelica)

Angelica sent apologies and will report back at the next meeting.

University Collaboration (Penny, Sara, Janet)

The sub group met to discuss development of existing and new collaborations between both the universities and the visual art sector. The most prominent crossover currently being Off the Shelf.

Penny outlined Mapping Research that has been undertaken recently at SHU in Fine Art and other departments across Design and Media. This feeds into software which automatically shows connections between different things – such as geography, dates, themes – identifying clusters of activity. The meeting discussed how this could be developed more widely to include visual arts activity in the city (artists, events, festivals, research) to usefully provide data allowing people to

identify research strands, collaborative partnerships, event themes but also be used to identify gaps or strengths for funding bids.

It was felt that this approach, rather than revisiting the Art Snapshot Report, allowed for a more collaborative and useful, live/updatable document to be created, pulling everything together in one 'virtual universe' and creating a baseline of where we are now.

It was suggested that a bid to ACE for £10k to develop this could be submitted and that it would result in a platform with shared ownership between the Universities and VAP. Although questions were raised around who hosts the website and manages/updates this and who might submit a bid – as VAP is not a formal entity.

It was agreed that this activity would tie into other priorities and helps to address invisibility, inclusivity and city profiling.

Action: Sara, Penny and Janet to meet again to develop this further in January 2021.

Festival sub-group – Penny, Yuen, James, David, Janet

- **Structure of the group:** After the interest from a lot of other members of the VAP as well as suggestions of other potential members for this group at the last VAP meeting, it was decided that whilst we are still developing the format to keep the structure of the group as it stands.

This is currently a relatively artist-led group – it was felt, until we get more of an idea of where this leads it might be best to keep the group quite small to ensure all voices are heard and it stays focussed. It is important to ensure this is built from the bottom up and we signal the importance of building and championing artists.

Although David is leaving Bloc this may give opportunities for collaboration and learning from Hull, and he has agreed to continue attending at least in the short term.

With these thoughts in mind and the idea that we want the group and festival to be inclusive and non hierarchical the meetings now will explore ideas and set out principals leading to a second period of development with key partners and delivery. General principals of what it could be will be agreed, but then opened up for wider discussion and involvement.

- Festival ideas: Discussions are being developed around:
 - Who gets to be an artist, who gets to be profiled... Think about frameworks and creating visibility. This might be about creating toolkits rather than workshops on how to 'do what I do.'
 - whilst
 - Acknowledge artists potential sense of dissatisfaction with ACE's Let's Create strategy – does this devalue their practice if 'everyone is an artist'... how do we recognise their value and balance with everyone can curate...
This might result in maybe more than one event or distinct strands within it?
 - Recognising the economic needs of artists to generate income... How can we rethink this in-line with ambitions for a festival?
 - Consider who the audience might be – how we attract people who don't normally engage, and how these people might be involved in curation or creating.

- Consider art in new spaces – aim to push audiences to consider new and different spaces
- Ensure any national/international artists aren't parachuted in, but help support activity and artists in the city, sharing skills etc
- Consider appropriateness of what we do post Covid – air of grieving...

It was agreed that whilst we don't want to raise people's expectations too early, as this is something that might take at least 18 months to 2 years to develop, information should be shared on the MoW website to keep the community informed. As things develop people will be invited to feed in and be more involved.

4. **Awareness of VAP**

There is a need to ensure that the visual art sector is aware of what we are doing and that the VAP is now up and running. Details of meetings (agenda and minutes) and introductions to panel members will be listed on the website and this will be signposted from the monthly Newsletter.

Action: Janet - include details in next Newsletter and update website.

Posted information to date is here - [Making Our Way Visual Arts Panel - Visual Arts Sheffield \(visual-arts-sheffield.com\)](http://visual-arts-sheffield.com)

Everyone – Please check your info and send through amendments or missing info ASAP

5. **Artists Survey**

Revisit artists to assess what their priorities are now after/during Covid and how this has changed.

Look at existing University Freelance research, research being undertaken by S1 and YVAN. We don't want to duplicate this – we need to introduce the VAP (give a visibility to who is asking), and clarify why we are asking. What they want to see happen in the city now the landscape has changed.

Action: Develop survey questions. Research other current surveys.

6. **Code of practice**

The next meeting will focus on the Code Of Practice.

This will help with and feed into things happening in the city, such as funds for freelancers (what is best practice? Level of funding?) but also inform the development of the Festival idea.

Action: Recirculate examples for consideration beforehand.