

Visual Arts Panel Meeting Minutes 9 September 2020 / 10-11.30am Zoom

Attending: Rebecca Maddox(SCC), David McLeavy (Bloc Projects), Penny McCarthy (SHU), Yuen Fong Ling (Artist), Tyler Mellins (Yorkshire Artspace), Kirstie Hamilton (Museums Sheffield), Karen Sherwood (Cupola Gallery), James Green (Artist), Cat Powell (Artfelt), Angelica Sule (Site Gallery), Anna Santomauro (Art Catalyst), Janet Jennings (Museums Sheffield).

Apologies: Sara Unwin (University of Sheffield), Emma Harnett (Artworks)

Laura Clarke (Art Catalyst) – Anna Santomauro attending in Laura’s place

Georgina Kettlewell (YAS) - Tyler Mellins attending in Georgina’s place

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Minutes

Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

Agreed that we need to continually renew review things as we go forward.

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Actions

- 1.** Call out to VAP members to ask who would want to be on a sub-group to discuss a visual art festival. Penny, James and David agree to be part of this group.
Action – Janet to set up a meeting.
- 2.** Rebecca to follow up on OFP statistics re circulation at the next meeting
- 3.** David and Tyler arranging to meet to discuss shared studio groupings and how a forum might function.

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Discussion on 2nd six ‘we plan to’ items from Communication & Collaboration theme.

- 1. 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.**

The aim of this is to create a shared resource which is useful for arts organisations across the city, informs artists on policy but also helps to identify Sheffield as a creative city with a code of conduct for culture and visual arts. It will also be useful as a document to help with advocacy – highlighting what is ‘best practice’ to non-arts collaborators/partners and that asking for ‘freebies’ from artists or students isn’t acceptable.

It was also acknowledged that the above ‘we plan to’ statement doesn’t include diversity and it is key that we include this.

A draft policy will be drawn up for consideration and comment. The group suggested looking at the TUC Cultural manifesto and ArtQuest to start this.

Angelica said she would be happy to share research undertaken by Site around diversity and ethical policy.

David said he would be happy to share Bloc policies too.

Anna suggested looking at Birmingham Eastside Projects *Policy Show* – who led a series of events, commissions and exhibitions around policy development/reviews involving artists - making this a much more open and inclusive process. See link here - <https://eastsideprojects.org/projects/policy-show/>

Angelica also mentioned possible ‘unconscious bias training’ that Site have been looking into and the possibility of this being delivered to a group which includes VAP members.

Actions:

Angelica to share ‘unconscious bias training’ information to consider.

Janet to research models of codes of conduct and to discuss specifics individually with group members to start to draft a document for consideration.

2. Seek funding for a centralised database and notice board to enable more opportunities to be shared.

There was a discussion around two different databases

- a ‘noticeboard’ which lists what’s on, artists opportunities, arts news etc as well as including links to resources – not dissimilar to the MW newsletter.
- A database which represents and promotes artists working in the city, which would be open and accessible to everyone and where artists could effectively list themselves

Noticeboard - This is relatively simple to manage and discussion is already underway with Human to re-skin the Making Ways website to move this away from the MW funded activity model is used to be. It will become a portal/listing site for useful things for visual artists in Sheffield. Funding is already in place for simple revisions and this will start to happen soon. This will form a central hub which signposts to trusted partners.

Artists profiles – This is a bit more complex – we need to consider how its managed and how content is developed – to ensure that it is representative and open but also is useful and looks good. We need a clear understanding of what we are trying to achieve – who is it for?

It is seen as an opportunity to potentially

- showcase/promote Sheffield’s artistic community on a wider stage.
- look at representing artists differently than existing models, providing regular profiles for artists who need it.

Things to consider going forward -

- Can artists upload their own content? This could allow it to be populated quite quickly and cheaply, although there was concern that not all artists have skills to upload images and text and might need assistance with this

- Existing databases - It was acknowledged that various databases exist (Yorkshire Artspace, Creative Guild, OFP Meet the Locals etc.) but these are currently not 'open/accessible' as they are specific to members of each organisation or those who are selected. Creative Guild is hoping to offer new free profiles, alongside memberships however and Rebecca is funding free bursaries to enable people to join.

Do we support existing models to expand, rather than duplicating these, or create a unique central and accessible database which is focussed specifically on visual art?

is it worth surveying artists to see what they want/what they consider most useful?

Actions:

Janet to talk to Oriana from Creative Guild to find out plans – and if this might fit for Visual Artists in the city. Also, to research other models.

Take forward remodelling of existing MW newsletter to create a Noticeboard.

3. Encourage dialogue with universities to consider research collaborations and initiatives.

[Please note – Sara Unwin was unable to attend this meeting and as such the discussion was very much from a Sheffield Hallam point of view at his stage.]

Universities are open to organisations to propose research, although as researchers already have their research interests these would need to fit within these. Hallam also work to deliver placements, summer schools and professionalise students with workplace and real-world links.

It was agreed that collaboration should be more than just about research.

Universities need long lead in times to plan activity and even discussions between departments can be clunky.

It was suggested that we may need to stage an event which bring different organisations and departments together to discuss the potential for cross-disciplinary collaboration. UoS host the Ideas Bazaar every 2yrs in the lead up to Festival of the Mind (FotM). Could this be used to build on?

This needs to go further than just organisations and consider artists and be more accessible to greater numbers of artists, and not just those who have graduated from Hallam.

example of existing models:

Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) and Teesside University / Laura Sillars & Sarah Perks

University of Sheffield – Festival of the Mind

Action:

Discuss FotM/Ideas Bazaar with Sara Unwin and see if there is the potential for an event which brings together both universities with arts organisations and artists to share ideas in collaborative working.

4. **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.**

Meanwhile spaces are used for studios a lot although this can be damaging as artists get established in a space, but then buildings are redeveloped and studios closed. Plans need to be more strategic and have longevity.

Whilst in the statement it says 'support organisations, such as CADS', it was acknowledged that CADS probably didn't need support and it was other organisations such as Access Space, Dina, Union Street and Fronteer – who are either losing spaces or looking for space that might actually need help.

How can VAP help with this? It might be that we can help champion organisations and write letters of support, support connections with the right people to talk to, gain a better understanding of studio/meanwhile models and ensure Sheffield City Council or other landlords understand/appreciate the value of and need for artists' studios.

Suggested models outside the city include Castlefield, Manchester and East Street Arts, Leeds. These provide both income generation for arts organisations as well as studio spaces for artists and have stemmed from working relationships with the city. ESA is currently developing an Art Hostel and working with artists to commission work for this, as well as developing strong links with the community they are based in.

Rebecca noted that Sheffield Local Plan is currently being consulted on. This will guide the future of the city by setting out how and where development will take place up to 2038. It can be found at the link below

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/planning-development/emerging-sheffield-plan-draft>

This is an opportunity to input into meanwhile use.

Actions:

Everyone – Read and feed into the consultation for Sheffield Local Plan

5. **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.**

It was agreed that this would be discussed at a future meeting as currently any additional access to SHU is not possible due to Covid.

6. **Develop an equipment library for arts professionals to access and share.**

Note - The Creative Guild were originally planning to set this up, but had ACE applications rejected.

There wasn't time to discuss this further in this meeting.

Panel participants were asked to send thought via email to Janet to share more broadly and for discussion in the next meeting. These are attached below.

Action

Everyone - If you have further thoughts on the equipment library idea please send these prior to the next meeting, so they can be shared in advance.

Dates

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

Initial questions for discussion at the next meeting

- Develop an equipment library for arts professionals to access and share.

- What provision currently exists? (South Yorkshire Film Network)
- Do we pool existing resources from orgs or seek funding to purchase new equipment?
- Library model (fee) or hire model (pay for)?
- Would it be possible for Hallam to provide some kind of extended offer to its facilities for artists in the city and or alumni in the first year or so post-education while people establish their practices in the 'real world'.
- YAS are at any early stage of discussing developing a shared facilities resource for non-tenants.
- Need to consider maintenance and insurance of equipment. Any library can't be free.
- now that Sheffield Print Club has closed, there are no open-access spaces for any printmakers to use in Sheffield. SPC only really focussed on screen-printing, but was a very useful space, and had a lot of take up from established artists, new printmakers and graduates (as well as being a home to the homelessness organisation/charity 'Printed By Us'. Could YAS provide a home for something like this?

Note

Covid restrictions make it impossible to offer access to SHU facilities at present. Social distance measures mean the university is stretched for space across the board. This means that most teaching is online for the year and access to workshops for our students is limited by a booking system. They are also limiting numbers into any buildings, temperature checks etc are required, and all student and staff access is on a rotational system. As you can imagine, safety requirements would add to the complexity of offering workshop access. As it is, Covid restrictions mean that they are also looking for additional spaces and facilities.