OUR VOICES

A diverse artists' guide

Our Voices : A Diverse Artists' Guide
Culture Collective

Contributors

Matt Hickman – He/Him
Culture Collective Engagement Lead

Maya-Rose Edwards – They/Them
Project Co-Lead

Jess Brough – They/Them
Editor

Illustrators

Seán Casey – Any Pronouns

Jade Montserrat – She/Her

Max Alexander – He/Him

Maria Stoian – She/Her
Design and Front Cover

Shirin Karbor – She/Her
Intersectional Working Day
Live Illustrator

Intersectional Day Contributors

Nina Doherty – She/Her

Salma Faraji – She/Her

Rebecca Livesey-Wright – They/Her

Faith Young – She/They

Indra Wilson – They/Them

Kate MacKay – She/Her

Milo Clenshaw – He/Him

Moira Salt – She/Her

Elaine Cheng – She/Her

Dr Sonia Allori – She/Her

Mina Heydari-Waite – She/Her

Notes from

Rachael Macintyre – She/Her

Fiona Evans – She/Her

Marta Adamowicz – She/Her

Indra Wilson – They/Them

Mina Heydari-Waite – She/Her

Robert Motyka – He/Him

Dr Sonia Allori – She/Her

Milo Clenshaw – He/Him

Salma Faraji – She/Her

Miwa Nagato-Apthorp – She/Her

With thanks to Culture Collective's Queer Peers, Diverse Artists' Group, Disabled Artists' Group and The Culture Collective Lead Team for their input and support.

Foreword by Matt Hickman

Through my role as Engagement Lead for *Culture Collective,* I have met and worked with many incredible artists, together representing a range of different communities in Scotland. It has been an honour to hold this position, which started with a focus on supporting BIPOC artists but has since grown and developed to include supporting the diverse needs of artists within our network. During my time here, our team has started a number of different peer support groups that reflect the needs of the members of the network. There are currently 26 projects spread out across the whole of Scotland with over 500 artists across this network.

When asked about what I wanted my legacy project for the collective to be, I suggested creating a guide for arts organisations, to represent the voices of the incredible artists that I have had the pleasure of supporting during my time with the Culture Collective. We organised *a day of intersectional co-creation*, for artists, creative practitioners and illustrators to come together and discuss what should go in this guide and how it should be presented. What you see here is the result of those important discussions.

This work is intended to give space to the often underrepresented and unheard voices within the network. Those of us involved in creating the guide acknowledge that we do not speak for everyone. These are simply our experiences as artists from a range of different backgrounds and experiences, and trusted representatives of our peers. We hope that our words will lead to improvements within arts organisations, as well as resonating with the artists for whom it is intended to help.

In this guide, you will find testimonies from different peer groups. These include 'The Diverse Artists' Group', which support artists from a Global Majority Background, 'The Queer Peers', supporting artists from the LGBTQ+ community, and 'The Disabled Artists' Group', who support Disabled artists within their network. We have also drawn on the expertise of artists who are neurodivergent, artists who are parents and carers, and Care Experienced Youth. These artists have given their experiences and expertise to help shape a guide that provides important representation for marginalised artists, which can be used by organisations wanting to learn how to meaningfully support artists at these intersections of identity.

Please note that language is ever-changing, and so the terminology used in this guide to refer to different groups and issues is a marker of what was considered helpful at this particular moment in time. The terminology used within the guide has been agreed as the appropriate terminology to use by the different support groups. For the Diverse Artists' Group, we felt that the term Global Majority was most representative of our members. Although many people choose to use BIPOC or BPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour), we have preferred to use Global Majority referring to anyone of Black, Brown, Asian or Indigenous descent.

The 'Queer Peers' group, who support LGBTQ+ artists, have decided to use queer to name their collective, although we understand that for some members of the community this will still be a contested term.

Within this guide, the term "lived experience" is referenced multiple times. This refers to the knowledge that a person has or can offer as a result of their direct experience of living through a situation, or as someone from a specific background. In contrast, someone who might be an expert in a particular social field through the means of study, but has not experienced a particular situation personally, would not count as having a "lived experience" of a particular issue.

Another term that will appear regularly is "Best Practice". Within the Culture Collective, we have strived to adopt some uniform approaches to access and inclusion that have been agreed as positive, person-centred practices within arts that we feel should be taken on across all organisations. For example, our access budgets cover childcare to remove barriers often faced in working environments for parents and caregivers. We also have a strict rule when running events or panels that they must not be all-White or all-male. We strive to put Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Access at the core of everything we do as a Lead Team

and creative network. In my experience of working with the Culture Collective, they are a fantastic example of an organisation with Best Practice. In this guide, you will also find references to other organisations, recommended by the artists in our network as examples of Best Practice in the arts.

We had initially organised this guide into categories based on our peer support groups, for instance, having different sections for 'Diverse Artists', 'Queer Peers', and so on. However, we later felt that taking this approach would put ourselves in the very boxes that we often fight our way out of. Instead, we have decided to take an intersectional approach that reflects the way this guide was created; a sharing of experiences and ideas between different groups with commonalities. Through discussions between Culture Collective and these peer groups, involving like-minded artists at different intersections, we found that we had more in common than that which divided us. Throughout this guide, you will see quotes gathered from these discussions, which are not assigned to one person because they reflect a shared perspective. A statement made by a queer artist, but which resonated with a Black or disabled artist, is presented as a statement from all. This guide uses our collective voice.

I am commonly asked by organisations, *"How can we be more diverse?"*. My answer is always, *"just ask"*. Put people first, ask them what they need and then work towards enacting meaningful changes that will make people feel valued, supported and included. I hope this guide highlights just how powerful it is to take this approach.

Thank you to Kathryn, Morvern, Arusa and Nina (the Lead Team at Culture Collective) for allowing me the space, time, resources and support to direct such an amazing project. And a big thank you to Jess for their hard work in editing the guide and bringing it all together.

Thanks also to Maya-Rose Edwards, who has not only been an incredible leader for the 'Queer Peers' Support Group but has co-lead this project with me. Your contributions are invaluable.

Thank you to Luna Issa and the team at the CCA Common Ground venue for the use of their space during our day of intersectional co-creation.

And finally, thank you to all of the incredible artists involved in this guide and in the collective. You are all inspirations and I am so grateful to have met you all.

Access

"people don't have 'additional' needs, we just have needs"

"Access is not just about needs; it is about possibility"

Access

What is "Access"?

Access is a commitment to removing barriers for people employed within or engaging with an organisation, or ensuring they were never there in the first place. We all have access needs, which are likely to differ from person to person.

Access is a broad term, often used in conversations around physical access to spaces. However, it may also refer to other types of barriers, such as language, race, sexual identity, socio-economic factors or gender presentation, to name just a few. Access can impact positively and negatively on an artist's ability to participate in work or events.

Access can also act as a vehicle for creativity, or a prompt for creative solutions enabling people to engage to their full capacity in the required role.

Representation is an access issue, and is made possible by having employees from a diversity of backgrounds in an organisation at all levels. Without particular lived experiences or expertise, it may be tricky for someone within an organisation to navigate sensitive subjects from an informed approach.

First and foremost, access is important because it allows individuals equity and agency within their chosen fields. In many spaces, access requirements remain unspoken or taboo. The more someone vocalises their needs, the more normalised it becomes to have those needs.
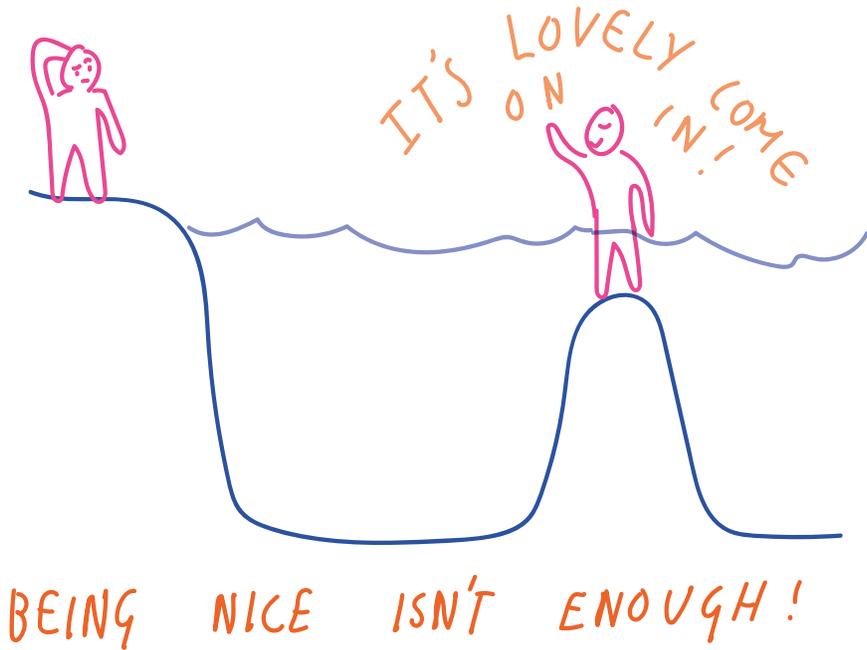
Access should be embedded from the start, as a core building block of every organisation's structure and policy making. Doing so removes the onus on the artist to advocate for their needs and allows them to focus on their art. Freelancers do not always want to be in the role of the pioneer or advocate.

Access is often a requirement of securing funding from organisations but may be put in practice without consultation or engagement with those who it seeks to help. As a result, poorly-considered approaches to access run the risk of becoming an act of tick-boxing, often falling short of the mark. It is essential that access is constantly considered and continuously updated.

Illustration by Max Alexander

"There is no such thing as additional needs. Just needs."

How is access embedded?

There are a number of ways an arts organisation may choose to embed access into their work culture, so as to create a safe and meaningful working environment for artists. One of these methods is encouraging and welcoming the provision of *access riders* from artists.

An access rider is a document that lists an artist's needs, and is intended to be used to help them do their work properly. It allows the artist to highlight their needs from the outset of a new contract, commission, or other type of project, facilitating an early dialogue and an open and inclusive way to work. Riders are most effective when they are taken as part of a flexible discussion around the needs of an artist or employee, rather than a closed and impersonal one time agreement.

An access coordinator role could be hugely beneficial, especially for large organisations. Access coordinators should be required to handle access budgets and hold consultations with those with lived experiences, ready to embed these creative solutions throughout their structure.

When applying for funding, incorporating accessibility into budgets is an essential requirement for arts organisations and should be approached in the same way an organisation budgets for any other key aspects of the project. The percentage dedicated to access will differ depending on the organisation or project, but establishing this proportion from the outset should be at the forefront of planning, to ensure access is considered a core element. Meaningful and impactful access is costly and organisations need to be supported through making appropriate changes.

Testimony

Rachael Macintyre on Queerness and Rurality

I am a Culture Collective artist, part of the Combine to Create collective with Findhorn Bay Arts. My residency started in October 2021 and its focus has been working with LGBTQIA+ young people across Moray. Since March 2022, I have been directly engaging with various individuals as part of school or youth worker groups, but essentially I have been creating an LGBTQIA+ community of young people where before there was none. Moray has no queer spaces for young folk and it has been a journey of facilitating space and time, to connect LGBTQIA+ young people from various parts of Moray through creativity.

The aim has been to encourage creativity and artistic expression and, primarily, to provide a space for participants to be themselves. Our spaces are indoors or outdoors, wherever we make them, and we have gotten to know each other over cups of hot chocolate and crafts, to joyous celebrations such as queer circus cabarets or the first ever Pride in Moray in 2022.

Illustrations by Seán Casey
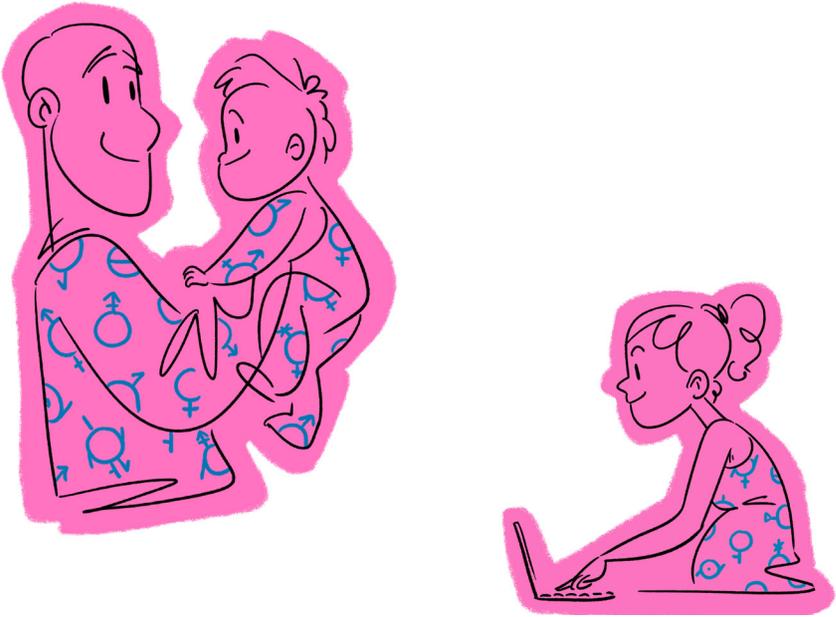
The biggest thing I have learnt from this residency is that providing transport is essential for connecting with rural communities. Taking time to build trust and relationships with participants is very important, and being consistent in showing up and running sessions to allow that building of relationships is key to making that happen.

LGBTQIA+ young people, particularly in rural areas, need a space to be themselves and to feel represented and understood amongst peers and with the facilitators of that space. Providing opportunities to connect and share through creativity brings them together over their queerness and cultivates relationships and solidarity, creating communities.

RESOURCES

LGBT Youth Scotland – www.lgbtyouth.org.uk

On Connection by Kae Tempest

Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire by Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands

Testimony

Fiona Evans on Class

Many people do not have the freedom to create or even engage with theatre, since poverty is a significant barrier in the arts. Even if working-class people were to feel that theatre is for them, which many do not for a variety of reasons, how many could afford tickets to visit the theatre, let alone engage in its creation?

There should be initiatives to overcome this, whether that be free admission to dress rehearsals, previews or 'pay what you can' shows. This type of accessibility should be a requirement with all publicly funded venues and theatre companies.

The problem we have is in education and opportunity. Since further and higher education is now effectively privatised, trying to reverse this will be like turning a tanker. As an industry, we need to act now and act quickly. If you pay people, they will be able to eat, pay the bills and create.

Bill Dawson wrote a play for our youth theatre. He was from Liverpool, had an accent and wrote plays. He inspired me to write. I thought "if Bill can do this and he comes from a similar background to me, then so can I." If we have working-class playwrights embedded in communities, who knows what might happen... Whether theatres will be able to cope with the realities of supporting an artist who has possibly experienced multiple deprivations, or are prepared to stage their work without judgement, is another thing.

Class is finally creeping onto the agenda, which is a move in the right direction. I have been talking about class and particularly the class-gender bias in theatre for years and I have either not been taken seriously, or have been met with an unspoken hostility.

We are constantly told that in a meritocracy talent will hold out, but you only have to read the works of Lynsey Hanley *(Respectable: Crossing the Class Divide and Estates)* and Pierre Bourdieu *(The Field of Cultural Production and Distinction)* to know that this argument doesn't hold. I'm not just saying that this isn't a level playing field – as a working-class playwright, it feels like we're playing football on the side of a mountain. Not only is it exhausting, it's virtually impossible to score.

Being outside of cultural networks can become especially apparent when you compare yourself to those whose careers progress rapidly, often because they are London-based and move in social circles with key artistic decision-makers. A redressing of the balance needs urgent attention. It should go hand in hand with some urgent fully funded PhD research – preferably conducted by a candidate from a socially disadvantaged background!

RESOURCES

Poet Fran Lock has written brilliantly about the curation of class in her discipline

BEST PRACTICE ★ ★ ★ ★ "safe spaces aren't declared, they are created"

"Sometimes you feel like a tick-box, filling in an organisation's quota."

Best Practice

What is "Best Practice"?

"Best Practice" is a person-centred approach motivated by equality, access and diversity. It enhances people's ability to engage at all levels, from organisation to artist, participant to audience.

Best Practice is about power distributions within an organisation, meaning that artists are able to hold progressive dialogue regardless of their role or level. Removing traditional hierarchical power dynamics in favour of a person-centred approach facilitates the agency of employees and artists at all levels and creates a fairer, safer and more progressive working environment for all.

Organisations that are beacons of Best Practice are reflective, exploratory, relational, responsive and self-critical. They are not afraid to get it wrong or to receive criticism and avoid seeing suggested changes as an attack, especially if they are coming from those with lived experiences of a particular important issue. Fostering an equitable and responsible working environment is all about expressing openness and consideration.

It is important to remember that representation is not advocacy. Representation at all levels is a vehicle for change and a move towards true diversity within organisations. However, it is not an artist's responsibility to advocate for changes and organisations should never exploit people's lived experiences to fulfil funders' tick-boxes.
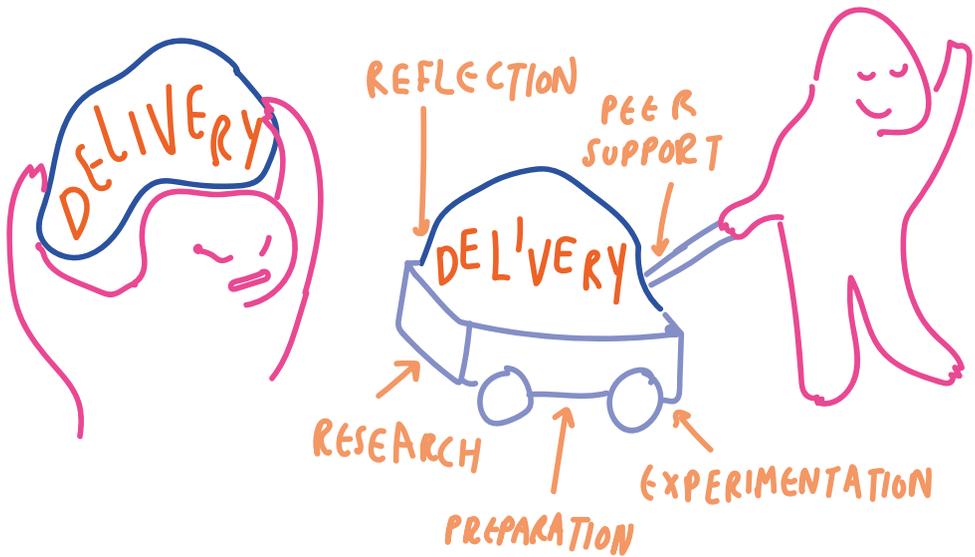
Artists who have been marginalised by their race, ethnicity, gender, disability, class or sexuality may feel undervalued or unwanted working within organisations who are only interested in what these identities and experiences mean on a surface level. The Lead Teams of many organisations within the arts remain typically White, male, middle-class and able-bodied. When the working output of these organisations centres around other marginalised identities such as Blackness, queerness, and neurodivergence, it is important that these organisations have employees or hire freelancers with these specific identities. A key marker of Bad Practice is when an organisation seeks to support marginalised groups without any individuals from these groups involved meaningfully in the organisation itself.

Organisations can't just talk the talk, they must walk the walk. They must pay artists for their consultancy, for their time and for their expertise. There may be times when artists are asked to share or work from difficult experiences, or to relive trauma. Working with specialists in EDIA (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Access) or engaging with advocates from marginalised backgrounds before starting a project, or employing an artist from that background, is a marker of Good Practice. Transparency is crucial. An artist should never have to question why they have been invited to work with an organisation, or to question their expectations.

Illustration by Max Alexander

It is essential that arts organisations are doing this important work for the right reasons, not just to tick boxes. When an artist feels that they are only ticking a box for an organisation, it can leave them feeling undervalued, underappreciated and even underqualified. It is important for those artists to know that they deserve to be there – that they are enough and that their creative practice is of great importance.

Best Practice should be embedded all the way through an organisation to prevent freelance artists from having to self-advocate without a regulatory body.

BAD PRACTICE
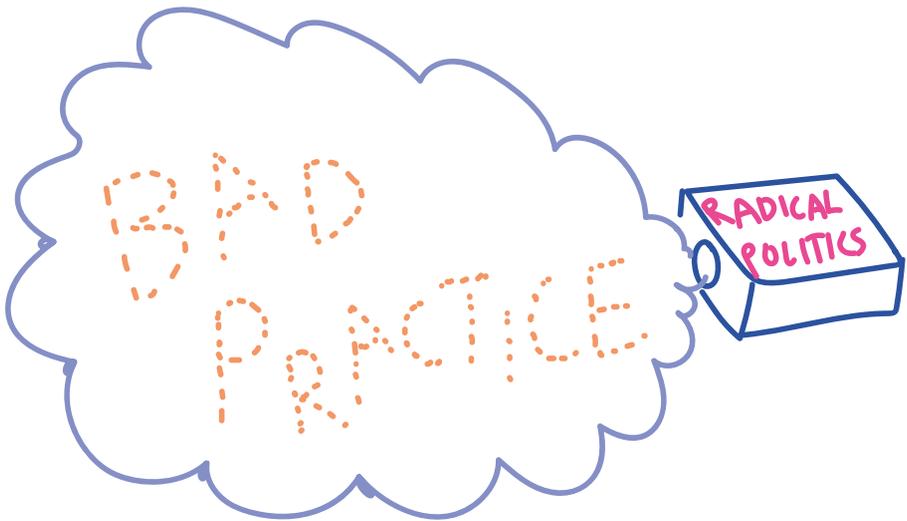
RADICAL POLITICS

RADICAL POLITICS FOG MACHINE

Actioning Best Practice

1. Organisations need to have a formal policy on safeguarding and safe spaces. They should also put in place effective training, embedded throughout the organisation, from those in leadership roles to freelancers (depending on their length of stay with the organisation and their role), to ensure that strong values are shared and communicated.

2. Fair pay should be a top priority for all organisations. They must expect, and be accepting of, freelancers quoting and working to their union rates. This creates a fairer landscape, increases the value of the work and avoids difficult discrepancies about payment. Paying travel, interview, expenses and preparation time should be regarded as an expectation, rather than an unreasonable request from freelance artists, whose time is as valuable as any other employee in any other profession. Covering these costs also removes barriers for artists who would struggle to be involved without this support. For invaluable advice on freelancer rights and support, especially when creating working contracts, we recommend the resource *"The Illustrated Freelancer's Guide"* by Heather Parry and Maria Stoian.

3. Organisations must be transparent about expectations. They should trust artists as the experts in their role and be willing to create an open dialogue for both parties to communicate needs and expectations.

4. Funding should be allocated for research and development, including periods of consulation, both prior to asking an artist to join a project and during the project's undertaking. The organisation's budget should allow for some degree of flexibility to support these periods.

5. Organisations lacking the correct representation within their workforce can make use of steering and advisory groups to allow for proper advocacy, and must compensate them for their expertise.

6. Artists and other freelancers should receive the same duty of care as PAYE employees. This may include providing training and development opportunities for artists, providing access riders and safe spaces, and fostering an accessible working environment.

7. Recognise that an artist is there to make or facilitate art. Artists and other freelancers should not be expected to contribute to an organisation's workload beyond what they have been contracted for, including providing advice on equality and diversity, aiding with funding or providing background knowledge and research about communities that has not otherwise been stated as part of their role. Artists are experts on their practice. They should not be used by organisations as the conduits for all things related to their characteristics.

In an ideal world, organisations would work with a regulatory body that can advise against potential Bad Practice in arts organisations. Individual unions and mediation service providers can be relied upon for providing support. A regulatory body for the arts could provide peer support for both organisations and freelancers and share resources for increasing Best Practice across projects.

We asked the artists on the *day of intersectional co-creation*, as well as the different peer support groups who have engaged with Culture Collective in forming this guide, what organisations they felt were great examples of Best Practice.

RESOURCES

Examples of best practice are modelled everyday throughout Scotland, but not often signposted. Here is a list of organisations recommended by our consulted artists:

Queer Peers recommend:
Dance North Scotland
Bonjour
Sanctuary Queer Arts
Buzzcut
Rumpus Rooms
Independent Arts Projects (IAP)
The Stove Network
LGBT Youth
Better Lives Partnership
Imaginate
NEUK Collective

Disabled Artists' Group recommend:
Gorgie Collective
Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS)
Greenspace Scotland
Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop

Diverse Artists' Group recommend:
The Pier Arts Centre
Creative Dundee
Alchemy Film & Arts
We Are Here Scotland
The Teapot Collective
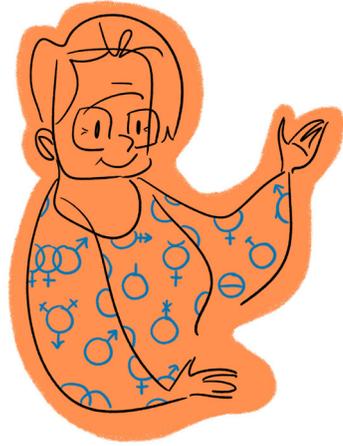
Testimony

Indra Wilson on Working in Recovery

Through the Culture Collective programme, I had the privilege of collaborating with Inverclyde Culture Collective, Your Voice Inverclyde and the Beacon Arts Centre to create a devised performance with four local men; Johnny, Brian, Kevin and Kenny. The show explored their autobiographies of recovery through the lens of the rise and fall of a rock band, unpacking why rock stars can be honest with their recovery journey, but people from local communities are often shamed for it.

The following are some examples of Good Practice from my experience:

1. Use their language. Academic spaces often use different language around recovery. However, a massive gap often exists between the people using this language and the communities with this lived experience. Discuss with the group about the language they want to be described with. For instance, by asking if someone prefers the term "people on a recovery journey" or "people with lived experience of substance dependency."

Illustrations by Seán Casey
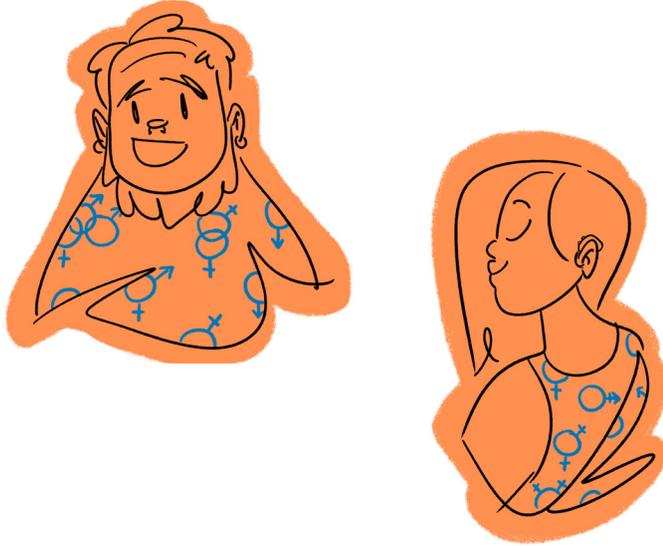
2. Be firm on the rules of the space, with compassion and without shame. I have a rule in drama workshops that you can't participate if you are under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Drama workshops can be intimidating and, as a society, we often rely on substances to combat nerves. When having this conversation, I focus on the fact that I can't hold the space safely for everyone without this rule in place.

3. Understand that different medications and life situations might create obstacles that make it difficult for participants to take part, even if they really want to. Leave the door metaphorically open for people to dip in and out and let the group know that it's all just offerings, not a demand.

RESOURCES

LGBTQ+ & Recovery

GLAAD

Illustration by Jade Monserrat

CARE and SUPPORT

"Empathy is our strenth, our super-power"

"A value-led approach makes a huge difference to organisations and artists."

Care and Support

What is "Care and Support"?

Care and support should be seen as a fundamental starting point for all arts organisations. On a basic level, this means there should be a duty of care towards any and all artists employed by organisations. Within this, organisations must consider the physical and mental health of artists, in addition to accessibility and the provision of support.

Mental health should be given the same recognition as physical health. One way to conceptualise this is to consider that there would never be a workplace without someone trained in first aid. The same consideration should be given to the provision of mental health training. Meaningful support of artists from diverse backgrounds involves recognising that the type of care required by an artist may differ depending on the individual's background, culture and history of mental health.

Care and support can be built into policies and structures within organisations. Embedding them into the workplace brings confidence, a sense of value and agency, and reduces the likelihood of imposter syndrome. When an artist is supported by an organisation, this will positively affect their work and they will carry this experience into future projects.

"Empathy is our strength, our superpower. Without mediation, support and clear boundaries it can become a burden."

Artists often bring their whole selves to their work, which can be incredibly rewarding but can also be exhausting, leaving them feeling like they are "pouring from an empty cup". Their work may be steeped in emotions and, for artists from marginalised groups, trauma can often inform their practice and outputs. Having appropriate care and support from the organisations they are working with is essential.

Care may come in the form of healthy working hours and demands, mental health support, or in having open and safe communication with organisation leaders or other employees in counselling roles. Care may also take the form of peer support groups, for artists to share their experiences with other artists and freelancers with similar backgrounds. However, peer support groups should not be used in place of actual structural support from the organisation itself. Expecting vulnerable workers to care for themselves communally places additional labour and emotional demands on groups of people who may already be struggling.

With community arts organisations, artists are often on the ground working with vulnerable people. At times, the art may come second to the emotional support they must give participants. It is essential that safeguarding is in place and a system of support is there for those artists from the organisations employing them to work with communities.

As freelancers based in the UK, artists do not have paid leave, sick pay, or accumulating pensions. Supporting the wellbeing of these artists can have a large effect on their ability to undertake work within an organisation.

Illustration by Max Alexander

"Taking on the trauma of communities, you become a therapist, a counsellor and a social worker."

WE SEE YOU — TAKE YOUR TIME

YOU DON'T HAVE TO ACCEPT DISCOMFORT

YOU DESERVE WARMTH

EVERYDAY ACTS OF CARE

Support is an important consideration for improving access. As discussed above, riders can be a helpful tool for access. However, organisations should not only rely on access riders, since they force the responsibility on the artist to know what they need, often in a space or within an organisation they have not worked in before. This is an example of having to self-advocate, which can be an exhausting process for an artist who has experienced oppression and marginalisation. Instead, the responsibility of care and support should fall with the organisation, which could be done through consultation or training prior to creating roles or commissions. It is important to embed access as a core principle throughout an organisation's whole structure.

Rather than relying solely on artists providing their own access riders, arts organisations could develop their own *contracts of care.* Such a document could list the access they can provide when advertising a role, for instance. Organisations should also be encouraged to ask what artists might need, so as to avoid making assumptions or missing important insights into a person's needs.
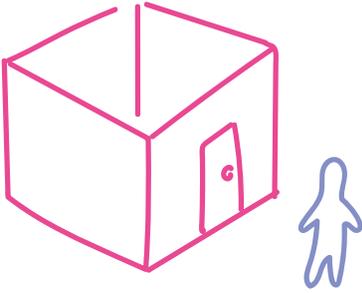
WHEN I ARRIVE
AT THE ROOM
I DON'T NEED
THEM TO LOOK
LIKE ME

I NEED THEM
TO PROCESS HOW
THEY FEEL ABOUT
ME
I NEED THAT
PERSON TO BE A
PART OF THE ROOM

Illustration by Max Alexander
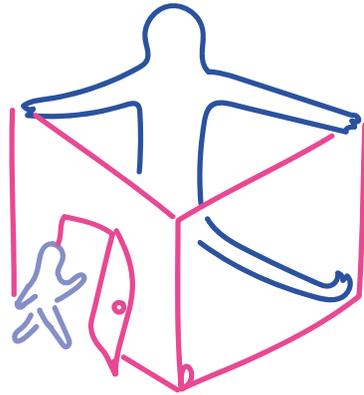
"Safe spaces aren't declared, they are created."

Embedding Care and Support

In order to foster a good culture of care and support, organisations should offer regular, direct opportunities to connect with those working on projects and a chance to give feedback. It should be clear who the point of contact is within this organisation for such communication.

Organisations may find that more than one skill set, and therefore multiple people, are required for the implementation of care and support. This may not always be possible, especially within smaller organisations. However, by considering *before* starting a new project what types of needs may arise through working with artists, it may be possible to incorporate this requirement for a dedicated support team, rather than an individual solely in charge of equality, diversity and inclusion, into budgets at an early stage. In this way, organisations would be investing in the changes they want to make and see.

Managers or team leaders should offer check ins, 1 to 1's, and open spaces for continued dialogue. Genuine support is possible with strong, informed policies and structures that have room for flexibility, revision and new, informed ways of working.

Testimony

Mina Heydari-Waite on Contracts of Care

How can we use compassion as a working method? How can artists and the organisations they work for care for one another? A contract of care is a written or spoken contract that starts a conversation about how we can ethically practise care in a work setting. Instead of the sole onus being on the artist to *demand* what they need to do their work through an access rider, a contract of care acts as a relational tool for organisations to ask what practices need to be put into place so that everyone can most effectively work together.

This particular conception of a contract of care arose from a Working Group project run by GAMIS (Glasgow Artists Moving Image Studio) over 2021-2022. Through experimental workshops and public talks, the project sought to create a meaningful opportunity for both local residents and the wider arts community to contribute to shaping GAMIS's organisation structure, starting with the questions: What barriers to inclusion are there within the arts? How do we, as a newly formed organisation, build inclusion into the fabric of our programming methodologies?

Illustrations by Seán Casey
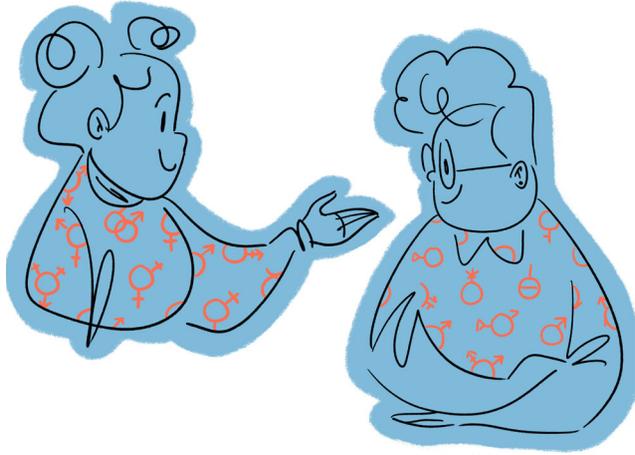
A contract of care might cover things like privacy, scheduling (flexible hours/ days), childcare (financial/organisational support), travel (financial/organisational support), communication preferences (including language, sign language, audio description, email/phone/whatsapp), working environments (IRL, blended, online, comfort breaks, break out spaces, cameras on/off, captioning) and written materials (format, in advance). Informed by a 'Principles of Working Together' workshop led by Teresa Cisneros for the GAMIS Working Group, the contract could also include prompts like:

Through taking part in this work, I want to _____

When I collaborate with others I want them to know that I _____

When a problem arises I like to _____

When I think about accountability I think it means _____

If someone says something offensive I would _____

If I feel there is an issue I would like for it to be dealt with as follows ____

Testimony

Robert Motyka on Community as Safety

One of the stereotypes Polish people face is the "hard-working Pole", which makes us feel like we are only seen as useful labour, rather than as a diverse community who want to participate in Polish arts and culture while living in Scotland.

Parents of mixed nationalities want their bilingual children to experience art and creativity in their first language. In this way, the language won't only be associated with visits to Poland, but will also be associated with creativity and art in the Polish community in Scotland.

According to research by Polish Charity in Scotland Feniks, a large number of Polish people in Scotland feel isolated. Polish men in Scotland are twice as likely as Scottish men to be at risk of committing suicide, with difficulties linked to language barriers. Creating open, safe and regular meetups gives an opportunity for isolated members of our community to go out and meet people who can understand them.

One of our participants said:

> *"These workshops with Marta and Robert were a great break, a meeting with compatriots from outside my circle. I met new people and then I also joined other Polish community groups. These meetings were also good for my mental health – it was easier for me to open up among my compatriots. I knew that Poles would understand my dilemmas, as they also have similar problems here. I felt such a boost of energy and motivation to leave the house and do something. I hope there will be more of such events which could reach all Poles in Scotland."*

RESOURCES

Polish men living in Scotland face suicide risk – The National

Suicides within the Polish Community in Scotland – Feniks

Illustrations by Seán Casey

Testimony

Dr Sonia Allori on Evolving Disability

Working at a time when you are experiencing an increasing and evolving level of disability to that which you started a project with brings unique challenges, both to you and to those you are working with.

It took me many months to learn how to articulate this and one feature of the Culture Collective was the ability to explore this and the repercussions on practice, within a supportive and flexible environment. I know of no other employment where this would have been possible.

The time I have spent analysing this and the conclusions I reached is something I now take into my future working life, which is something to both celebrate and be grateful for.

IDENTIty "Don't define me SEE me"
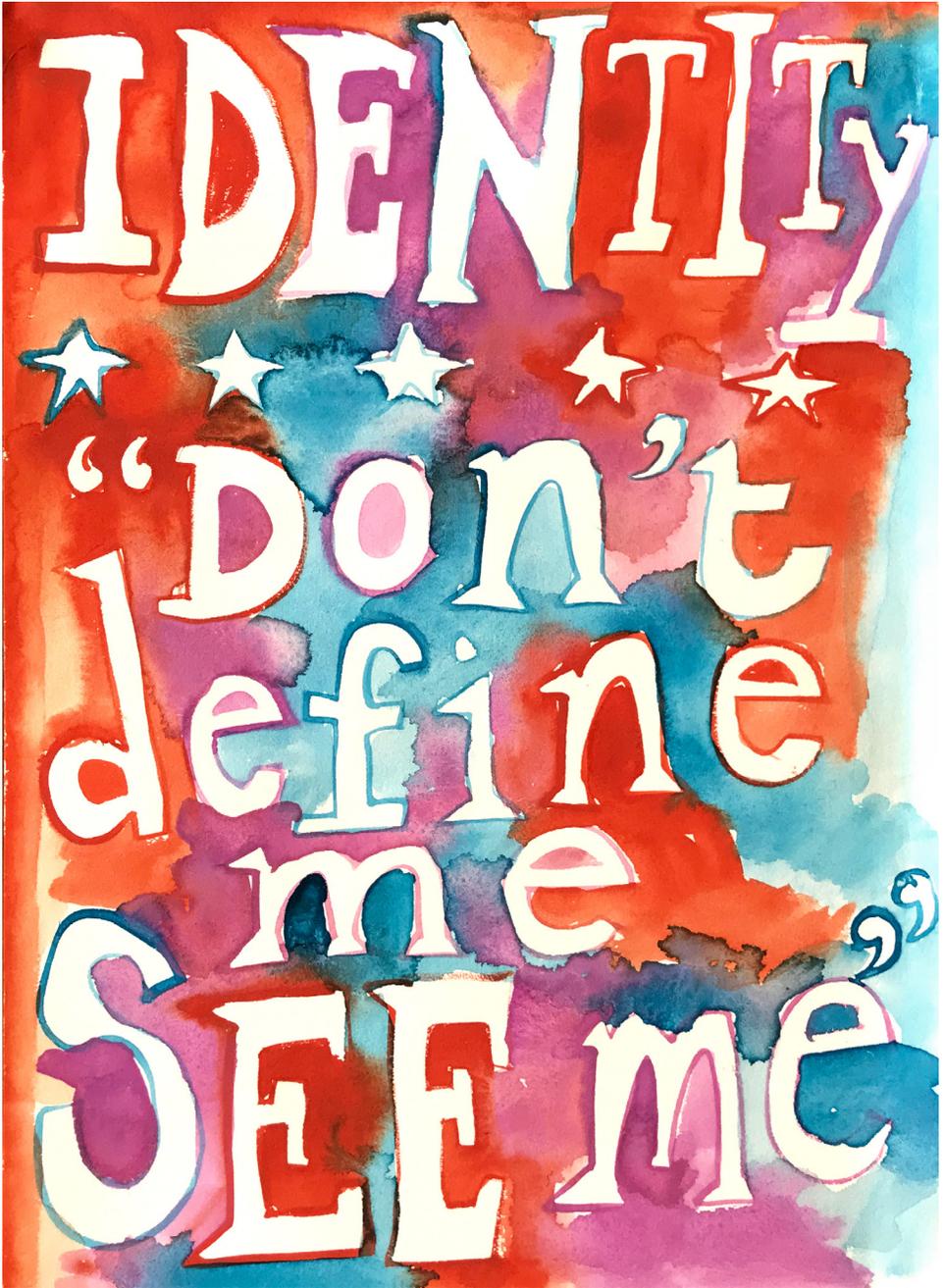
Illustration by Jade Monserrat

"Identity is how I make sense of myself in a world that demands categorisation"

Identity

What is "Identity"?

Identity is relational and constantly in flux. Below are some quotes from our group members, on what identity means to them.

"Don't define me, SEE me"

"Identity is a survival technique"

"Identities are a collection of things and characteristics to create a current true self."

"Birth, growth, evolving"

"Identities can be rooted in self, community or societal structures."

"Many parts of our identity are unseen"

"Identity is Multifaceted"

Identity is how we categorise different social groups (for better or worse). Many groups that are protected by anti-discriminatory legislation suffer from social stigmas.

We have already referred to the practice of "tick-boxing" in this guide, which can be an unwelcome result of poorly-considered diversification within organisations. If identity is being centred, be that during a recruitment period or in the development of a new artistic project, it should be done so with an understanding that identity and self-definition is a complex and highly meaningful issue for many artists, and not just a tick in a box.

"We should all have the right to be proud of our identities, but the freedom to not be defined by them."

"Society imposes shame on identity because it is marginalised. From a disabled perspective, you often feel as if you can't be proud of being disabled, or whether you can even claim it as an identity.'

An artist's identity may be in conflict between how they define themselves and how others identify them. It can often be part of a complex journey for the individual, and different artists will have completely different relationships to their identities. Having safe and supportive working spaces are important for that journey. Furthermore, different parts of an artist's identity may be in conflict with each other. For instance, an artist may be queer, but they may also come from a culture that does not embrace, or even actively rejects this part of their life. This may affect how this artist engages with or celebrates their cultural heritage. On the other hand, the same artist may struggle to vocalise the love they have for their culture with others in their queer community who may not understand this internal conflict.

Identity can be a tough and isolating journey of self-discovery, even before entering a workspace dynamic. Therefore, organisations should not see "identity" as a way to score bonus points within their team, but should consider how each artist contains multitudes that may, on the one hand, contribute to their creative practice in a positive way, but on the other hand, may make certain working conditions or situations difficult.

"We do not want to be labelled"

"Tick-boxing is a way of hiding class issues in the arts"

"There is often a feeling that as artists from Global Majority Backgrounds, part(s) of our culture need to be left at the door. Or the opposite happens – we become over-racialised or fetishized."

"We should be allowed to choose how much of our identities we want to share, as representation can be a burden as well as a joy."

Illustration by Max Alexander

FRIEND

ARTIST

LEADER

BLACK

AUTISTIC

QUEER

CARER
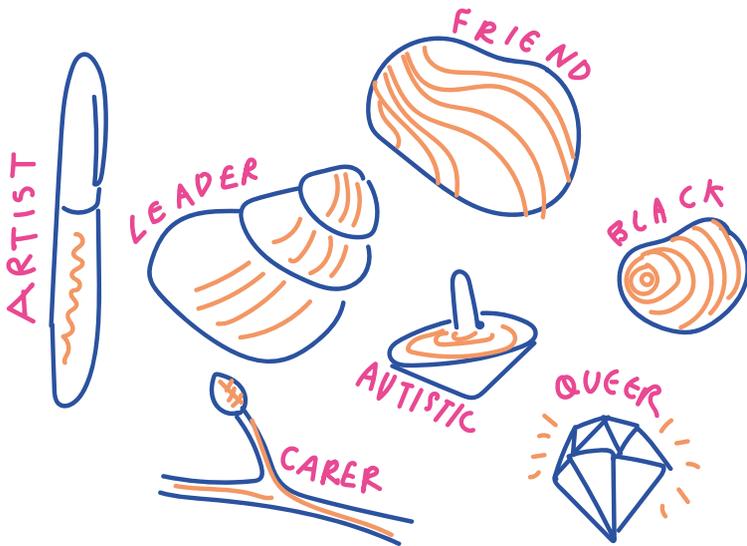
A COLLECTION OF THINGS THAT MAKE YOU UP. SOME CLAIMED, SOME INHERITED, SOME GIVEN, SOME FORGED

GET IN!

FOR YOU!

YOU'RE WELCOME!
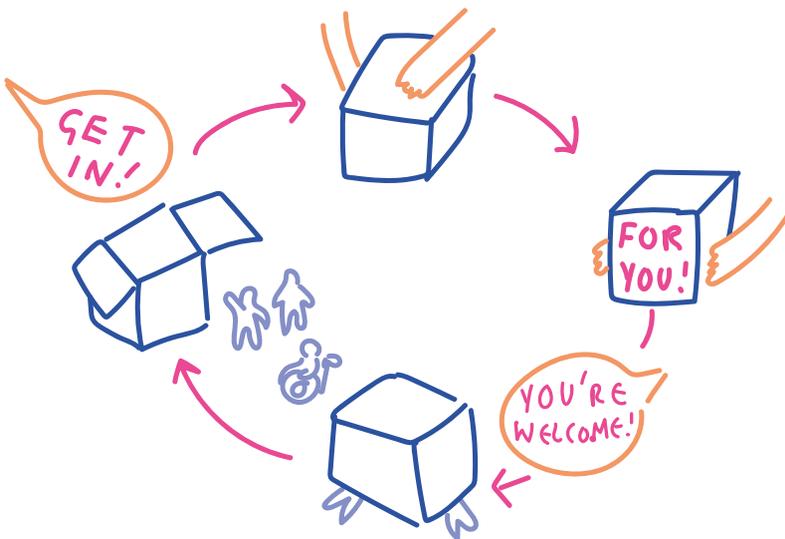
BOXED IN FOR WHOSE BENEFIT?

Celebrating different identities

At the recruitment stage, or during project reports, organisations are sometimes required to collect demographic data on the people who work there. When conducting surveys, it is Good Practice to use open questions, where possible, which allow for open answers. Self-identification is a good way to foster an acknowledgement and acceptance of different identities and backgrounds. For instance, quantitative, multichoice questionnaires that involve an "other" option when the first options are unsuitable could instead be re-worked as requiring a qualitative response, such a "How would you define your gender/sexuality/race?".

Aspects of a person's identity can feel enhanced and nourished when they are around others who they can share this with. This is where peer support groups can be an amazing resource and support.

"Peer support networks work! Important to have safe spaces and community."

"There is a drive to normalise a national identity so we follow suit in not rocking the cultural underpinnings of our country"

"We want support to bring our identities to communities and into the workplace, and the option to leave these at the door. We want to choose what to reveal, with no pressure to disclose."

Some examples of being inclusive of diverse identities:

- Open questions in surveys collecting demographic information.

- Normalising asking people for their pronouns (and sharing yours), so as not to assume anyone's gender before you know them.

- Celebrating the backgrounds and heritages of people in your workspace and beyond. For instance, by acknowledging and celebrating annual events such as Pride month and Black History Month.

Illustration by Seán Casey
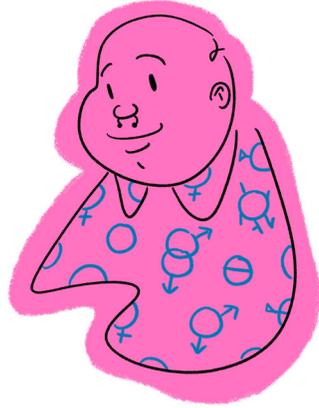
Testimony

Milo Clenshaw on Trans Identities

Trans inclusion in an arts setting, similar to the inclusion of other minority identities, pivots on respect and access.

Organisations need to do the work to understand the current political landscape for trans people, so that those workers and participants are not called upon to be educators or to shoulder the burden alone. There are simple ways trans people can be supported. This includes not assuming someone's trans/cis status or pronouns, creating safer spaces where people can feel free to discuss issues or concerns, and ensuring all staff, particularly those with public-facing roles, have adequate training.

RESOURCES

Sanctuary Queer Arts Sanctuary Spaces Policy

Stonewall – www.stonewall.org.uk

Gendered Intelligence – genderedintelligence.co.uk/professionals/resources.html

Scottish Trans Alliance – www.scottishtrans.org

Scottish Trans Alliance Non-Binary Guidance – www.scottishtrans.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Non-binary-guidance.pdf

Testimony

Salma Faraji on Blackness

My conversations about Race are exhausting because people see me as a Black woman, a queer woman, a colour before they see me as a Human Being. My identity is generalised into one category, one voice that represents all people who look like me. I am an Individual.

For example, I was once asked what I would prefer to be called, *"Black, Coloured, or Queer?"* I responded , *"By my name".* I can only identify with who I am when I can be seen and respected.

I find it difficult to specify my identity and ticking boxes sometimes makes me question where I belong or if I am welcome in a space. I am constantly being asked, *"Where are you from?"* I answer, *"Glasgow". "Where are you really from?"* *"Glasgow",* I reply.

"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognise, accept, and celebrate those differences". (Audre Lorde, from Sister Outsider)

Testimony

Miwa Nagato-Apthorp on being a Mixed-Heritage Artist

While not necessarily making work about heritage, it is unlikely that, as artists from diverse backgrounds, we are able to separate our heritage thematically from our work, since this dictates the creative relationships we form and how we move in the world. For artists with mixed heritage, there is a level of complexity where exploration of identity brings us into contact with systems of categorisation, in which we both fall within and without, and has the potential to make questions around belonging complex and often painful.

I often experience this as a tension, as though I'm being pulled in opposite directions at once. But with support and solidarity I have, in moments, been able to reimagine this dynamic as a series of meeting points and recognise that a space where one thing meets another, this becomes a space of its own. Yet, there is still a timidness in speaking from that place because the experience is so niche that it's easy to imagine that its relevance to anyone else is insubstantial.

It has taken an environment of deep listening, adaptability and solidarity for me to begin to share from that place. It is also key that there is a clear distinction between listening to my perspective and recognising when it's time to bring paid educators in. (Artists are there to make art, not to be Diversity Officers).

Whether we like it or not, making art brings us face to face with ourselves. If you're asking artists to "go there" to make work, be prepared to support them through what comes up as part of that process. Don't be surprised if it is really difficult for them. Please also recognise that "safe spaces" can be years in the making and seconds in the breaking. It is an aspiration that requires constant work and re-evaluation, not a point of arrival.

OUR VOICES

A diverse artists' guide