

Open Call for Artists and Artworkers

# Together We Will: Artworker Advisory Groups

Visual Arts South West calls for Artists and Artworkers in South West England to join advisory groups as part of its six-month sector support programme, *Together We Will*.

*Together We Will* is VASW's six-month pilot programme of sector support running from January till June 2021. The programme sets out to bring the regional visual arts community together to collectively formulate a sector-led action plan for achieving long-term systemic change within our professional field.

Whilst managing the far-reaching impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on arts and culture, our sector must also respond to a new set of economic and legal frameworks as a result of Brexit. The immediate economic effects of COVID-19 have already emphasised the inequity and unsustainable working

conditions within the sector. Alongside small organisations, freelancers and young people, primarily Black, People of Colour, disabled and neurodivergent artworkers are overrepresented in precarious employment and at the highest risk of losing their income. Due to this precarious employment and low pay, the visual arts also systematically favours those with a higher socioeconomic status. At the same time, established organisations still need to address long-standing institutional policies that allow the continuation of unfair treatment. Dismantling this structural inequality is an essential part of protecting cultural development in the UK.

These circumstances determine the priorities of *Together We Will*. The programme is rooted in establishing specialised Artworker Advisory Groups within our region-wide professional community. In collaboration with these groups, we will develop an action plan to increase equal access to and equitable working practices in the arts by addressing specific needs and barriers. This sector-led approach will bring an array of voices, lived experience and knowledge to the forefront of our work. The core aim of the programme is to ensure that values of care and collaboration lead us in the future.

We invite artists and artworkers in the South West region to submit a brief expression of interest to join one of four Advisory Groups:

- Black and non-Black Artworkers of Colour
- Disabled and Neurodivergent Artworkers
- LGBTQI+ Artworkers
- Young Artworkers

The aim of the advisory groups is to bring together different perspectives, knowledge and experiences to improve our sector for the equal benefit of all. Each Advisory Group will be committed to safer space principles and follow gentle online meeting practice. The meetings will be hosted by a dedicated facilitator, who will share the outcomes of the conversations with VASW. The outcomes will form the foundation of VASW's long-term programme calling for all arts organisations and practitioners in the region to set new standards for best practice. We acknowledge that producing an unanimous set of recommendations is an ambitious aspiration, and we extend this open invitation with strong faith in the generative potential of collective thinking.

If you identify with and would like to contribute to the conversations of more than one group, we warmly welcome you to express your interest in multiple groups. Please find below the full details on each Advisory Group, the terms of participation, how to express your interest and further information of the selection process and accessibility.

## LGBTQI+ Artworkers

We are looking for ten LGBTQI+\* artists and artworkers to join an Advisory Group focusing on structural challenges in our sector that disproportionately affect LGBTQI+ arts professionals and publics. The advisory group will meet online 24 March 2021.

The safety of LGBTQI+ people continues to be compromised by homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and/or heterosexism. Though cultural organisations have increased their focus on social justice and inclusivity, progress has been slow and major gaps in the knowledge and training of teams continue to result in unfair treatment of LGBTQI+ cultural workers – especially of trans and non-binary people.

The key objective of the advisory group is to outline what different sector bodies need to do to provide inclusive, safe and supportive environments for LGBTQI+ arts professionals and publics. The discussions within the advisory group may entail, but will not be limited to:

- what kinds of practical actions organisations and established professionals can take to create safe and inclusive work environments
- what constitutes an LGBTQI+ inclusive public programme from the perspective of artists, participants and audiences

- how different sector bodies can most effectively increase and maintain their knowledge of the diverse needs of LGBTQI+ people working in or engaging with visual arts
- what practical steps different sector bodies must take to advocate for and increase LGBTQI+ representation in visual arts, especially in positions of leadership

Based on the outcomes of the Advisory Group conversations, VASW will collate all recommendations and, as part of a long-term sector development initiative, pass these on to regional arts organisations.

Each Advisory Group member will attend one meeting on 24 March 2021, and receive a stipend of £75 for their participation. The meeting will last approximately two hours and no preparation is required. The Advisory Group members will be able to decide whether they would like to be credited for their contribution or remain anonymous.

\* Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer, Intersex +

## Young Artworkers Advisory Group

We are looking for eight young artists and art workers of ages 20–25 to join an Advisory Group focusing on structural challenges in our sector that disproportionately affect young people. The advisory group will meet online on 1 April and 6 May 2021 to discuss what support mechanisms young cultural workers deem necessary in order to access the visual arts in a professional capacity.

Young people need increasing support to access visual arts career paths, as the role of the arts is nationally diminishing in school curricula. Yet encouraging introductions to the sector, possibilities to showcase work, access to studios, support with fundraising and meaningful professional development opportunities with established organisations remain limited. At the same time, leadership in our sector remains largely fixed, whilst diversification of the workforce happens at entry level and on zero-hour contracts almost exclusively among those with university degrees.

The key objective of the Young Artworkers Advisory Group is to outline how young arts professionals would like to see the visual arts sector tackle key structural challenges to increase access to career paths. The discussions within the advisory group may entail, but will not be limited to:

- how organisations and established professionals can most effectively enable young people to develop their

practice with regional, national and international opportunities

- how the sector can most effectively increase young professionals' knowledge of and equal access to funding, commissions and entry-level career opportunities
- what constitutes the conditions of a valuable and impactful opportunity for a young professional
- how the sector can most effectively bring young voices into leadership positions
- how different sector bodies can help those, who might not know to pursue a career in visual arts, to discover the sector as an exciting and viable professional prospect

Based on the outcomes of the Advisory Group conversations, we will develop a programme, in networked partnership with regional organisations, to increase cohesive and sustained youth provision across the region that is accessible to all and reflects the main concerns, needs and interests of young artists and art workers.

Each Advisory Group member will attend two meetings on 1 April and 6 May 2021, and receive a stipend of £75 per meeting for their participation. Each meeting will last approximately two hours and no preparation is required. The Advisory Group members will be able to decide whether they would like to be credited for their contribution or remain anonymous.

## Black and non-Black Artworkers of Colour

We are looking for ten Black and non-Black Artworkers of Colour\* to join an Advisory Group focusing on structural challenges in our sector that disproportionately affect Black people and People of Colour working in and engaging with visual arts. The advisory group will meet online on 22 April 2021.

The vast majority of visual arts organisations still need to take tangible antiracist action and to constructively acknowledge the legacy of structural racism within their operative structures. Institutional racism continues to manifest within our sector in how Black and POC cultural workers are underrepresented in positions of leadership, yet overrepresented in precarious work; in systemic marginalisation or instrumentalisation of Black and POC voices; in insensitive approaches to programming and collections that do not acknowledge violent colonial histories; and in everyday racism and microaggressions.

The key objective of the advisory group is to outline what different sector bodies need to do to provide inclusive and antiracist environments in which Black and non-Black Artworkers of Colour can feel safe and supported. The discussions within the advisory group may entail, but will not be limited to:



- what kinds of practical actions organisations and established professionals can take to create safe, inclusive and anti-racist work environments
- what constitutes an inclusive and anti-racist public programme from the perspective of artists, participants and audiences
- how the sector can most effectively increase equal access to funding and career opportunities
- what tangible steps different sector bodies must take to increase the presence of Black and non-Black Artworkers of Colour in leadership positions
- what are the most urgent policy changes that are essential to building an anti-racist sector

Based on the outcomes of the Advisory Group conversations, VASW will collate all recommendations and, as part of a long-term sector development initiative, pass these on to regional arts organisations.

Each Advisory Group member will attend one meeting on 22 April 2021 and receive a stipend of £75 for their participation. The meeting will last approximately two hours and no preparation is required. The Advisory Group members will be able to decide whether they would like to be credited for their contribution or remain anonymous.

\* Conversation on terminology is ongoing. In this instance we apply terminology used by our Steering Group member Dr Nazneen Ahmed and her collaborator Dr Pathik Pathak. Ahmed and Pathak write in

*Beyond the Black Square: The Triple Lens of Racial Equity:* “We consciously and deliberately use the term Black and non-Black people of colour. We separate Black and non-Black to emphasise the primacy of the former, and we always capitalise Black because it is the recognition of a global ethnic identity and act of reclamation. [...] We reject BAME because it is a state-manufactured term which flattens and depoliticises the global solidarity between people with a lived experience of racism, as well as being recognised only in the United Kingdom.”

## Disabled and Neurodivergent Artworkers

We are looking for ten disabled and neurodivergent artists and artworkers to join an Advisory Group focusing on structural challenges in our sector that disproportionately affect disabled and neurodivergent arts professionals and publics. The advisory group will meet online on 29 April 2021.

Although knowledge of inclusive and accessible practices is increasing in the visual arts, we are yet to see a sector where all work environments are safe and supportive to disabled and neurodivergent artists, and readily take into account diverse health and access needs. Accessibility is not limited to the formats in which we share our work or the spaces in which we gather, but also includes the ways in which we interact and pace our work, considering one another's boundaries and capacity. The sector's increasing reliance on online platforms also warrants broadened understandings of accessible working methods and public programming.

The key objective of the advisory group is to outline what different sector bodies need to do to provide inclusive, sensitive and supportive environments for disabled and neurodivergent artworkers and audiences. The discussions within the advisory group may entail, but will not be limited to:

- what kinds of practical actions organisations and established professionals can take to create inclusive and sensitive work environments that readily acknowledge varying access and health needs
- what constitutes a public programme inclusive to disabled and neurodivergent artists, participants and audiences
- how the sector can most effectively increase equal access to funding and career opportunities
- what tangible steps different sector bodies must take to increase the presence of disabled and neurodivergent artworkers in leadership positions
- what are the most urgent policy changes that are essential to building a visual arts sector inclusive to disabled and neurodivergent artworkers and audiences

Based on the outcomes of the Advisory Group conversations, VASW will collate all recommendations and, as part of a long-term sector development initiative, pass these on to regional arts organisations.

Each Advisory Group member will attend one meeting on 29 April 2021 and receive a stipend of £75 for their participation. The meeting will last approximately two hours and no preparation is required. The Advisory Group members will be able to decide whether they would like to be credited for their contribution or remain anonymous.

## How to express your interest

If you would like to join an Artworkers Advisory Group, please send us:

- Your CV
- A brief statement (max. 150 words or a video/audio recording of max. 2mins) explaining:
  - Which Advisory Group group you would like to join
  - What is motivating you to join this Advisory Group
  - Where in South West England you are living and/or working
  - What knowledge, experiences or perspectives you would like to bring to the discussion

Please send your expression of interest to [recruitment@vasw.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@vasw.org.uk) by 10 March 2021, at 12pm (noon).

If you would like to express your interest in more than one group, please note this in your statement. If preferred, you can also submit separate expressions of interest for each group.

If you would like to discuss your access requirements before expressing your interest, please contact Nella Aarne at [nella@vasw.org.uk](mailto:nella@vasw.org.uk). For further access information, please see the Accessibility details below.

## Selection

The selection will be made by the VASW Team and Steering Group. In our selection process, we will consider the applicant's motivations and what they would like to bring to the conversation. At the same time, our aim is to include a broad range of perspectives in each group to help generate nuanced and multi-faceted conversations.

The selected Advisory Group members will be contacted during the week commencing 15 March 2021.

## Accessibility

All Advisory Group meetings will take place online. They will be hosted on Zoom and live captioned with otter.ai. The facilitators will follow gentle online meeting practice:

- Participants can choose for themselves whether they feel comfortable turning their camera on.
- To minimise background noise, microphones will only be kept on at the time of speaking.
- Participants can join the conversation by speaking and typing.
- An outline of what will take place during the meeting (including break times) and any presentation materials (if applicable) will be provided in advance.
- A meeting recording, a computer generated transcript and the contents of the associated text-based chat will be available for all participants after the meeting.

If you have any specific access needs that you would like to discuss with us, please contact Nella Aarne at [nella@vasw.org.uk](mailto:nella@vasw.org.uk) and we will do our best to support you with your requirements.