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arts connect

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ONLINE // 9 MAR 2021

Leading in this moment with energy and
fairness for a healthy cultural ecology

**ARTS
CONNECT
LEADERSHIP
CONVENTION**

01 //

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WITH ENERGY AND FAIRNESS

01

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P U R P O S E

In providing the cultural leadership programme and supporting the sector, we aim to empower people to make a difference. We know they will only be successful when they start to own and exercise their leadership and encourage and support senior leaders to open up the opportunities for distributed leadership, making the cultural sector more diverse and democratic.

Our interest through holding these events is to explore the relationship between cultural practice and leadership. This purpose is more prevalent as we navigate the transition into post-COVID-19 pandemic life and the impact on our sector, staff, partners, collaborators, and, more importantly, our communities.

1 . 1 //

The reason and reach of the Cultural Leadership Programme

CONVENTIONS

5

OPEN SPACE
EVENTS

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COHORTS
OF
LEADERS

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MASTER'S
DEGREE
CONVERSIONS

5

LEADERS
DEVELOPED

128

CULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- Personal leadership, self-awareness and working with others

- Leading through influence

- Change management and resilience

- Political skills; understanding the political context and relationships

WIDER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Creating space to connect newly empowered leaders, alumni and leaders from the wider sector

'The Convention' and 'Open Space Seminars' serve as a way to reflect, collaborate and inspire agency through shared leadership parity.

There is an open invitation to leaders to extend the conversations and host 'What next?' activity



Oliver
Scott

Founder Artistic Director &
CEO
Mercurial Dance



Liam
Smyth

Creative Producer &
Cultural Researcher
Creative Black Country



Nikki
Genner

Business Development
Manager
Creative Academies Network



David
Durant

Associate Director
The Courtyard Arts Centre



Chris
Ansell

Head of Participation and
Learning
National Memorial
Arboretum

This is the second Leadership Convention, of which the themes and objectives are determined by a curated team.

This year the Senior Leaders Master's Degree Apprenticeship (Arts and Culture) students curated the themes and speakers as a source of inspiration and agency that would respond to the challenges faced by the cultural sector during this time.

Leadership Programme Facilitators

The cultural leadership programme and wider development opportunities are facilitated and strategically structured by the programme facilitators. This ensures continuity and support for each curating team.



Susan
Goodwin

Associate
Director:
Cultural
Partnerships
Arts Connect



Munia
Thobani

Leadership
Consultant Equality,
Justice and
Transformation

Many Perspectives

Opening out the event curation to current Senior Leaders Master's Degree Apprentices (Arts and Culture) ensured that the event would be representative of different cultural organisations, art forms, and challenges

'The shape of it was so different because it came from a group, hive mind. It was much fuller and felt like a more wide variety of experiences and lived experiences which provided a greater understanding and exploring of different topics. If fewer people had curated it, would it have had that breadth? – you don't know what you don't know.' - Nikki Genner

'The programme was a good demonstration of inclusion driving innovation. We weren't addressing a funder need or specific agenda. The radical thinking and innovation came out of having more people in the room and more voices heard from a wide panel of speakers. I was struck that it came across as a coherent package considering it was curated from different perspectives.' - Liam Smyth.

It democratised the role and purpose of the event to mirror the energy and realities of the cultural leaders at this time.

'You don't have to go via traditional platforms to make an event like this work. I've never been involved in terms of planning or otherwise in an event like this – I feel more confident in running things online, using new technology and approaching things differently. My takeaway was to be BRAVE, just because it's new doesn't mean it won't work '- David Durant.

'It's made me more confident in public speaking. Now I have more confidence, and I'm doing another speaking engagement' - Chris Ansell.

Empowering the SMLDA students to take the lead and realise a challenge they feel passionately about also created the opportunity for personal learning and growth.

'I'm never going to do a conference where only Munira and I organise it. A group will always design it - students from the programme or others that we invite in - democratic processes and opportunities for all, the value of your analysis of the sector was really valuable, the risk-taking and courage that you showed that I was running alongside rather than leading, we could never have achieved that without you.'

- Susan Goodwin

Leading in this moment with energy and fairness for a healthy cultural ecology

O B J E C T I V E S O F T H E D A Y

- Draw inspiration from radical shifts in thinking and practice leading to innovation in the sector - Creating new digital/hybrid places
- Reflect deeply on the vital signs of the arts and cultural eco-system in the West Midlands and emerging questions for leaders and leader/practitioners on renewal
- Examining learning on Cultural Democracy - supporting and sustaining leadership from the grassroots/'Finding our Voice' for diversity and inclusion
- Understanding and re-finding resourcefulness of leaders/resilience re-energising your leadership practice/connecting with others

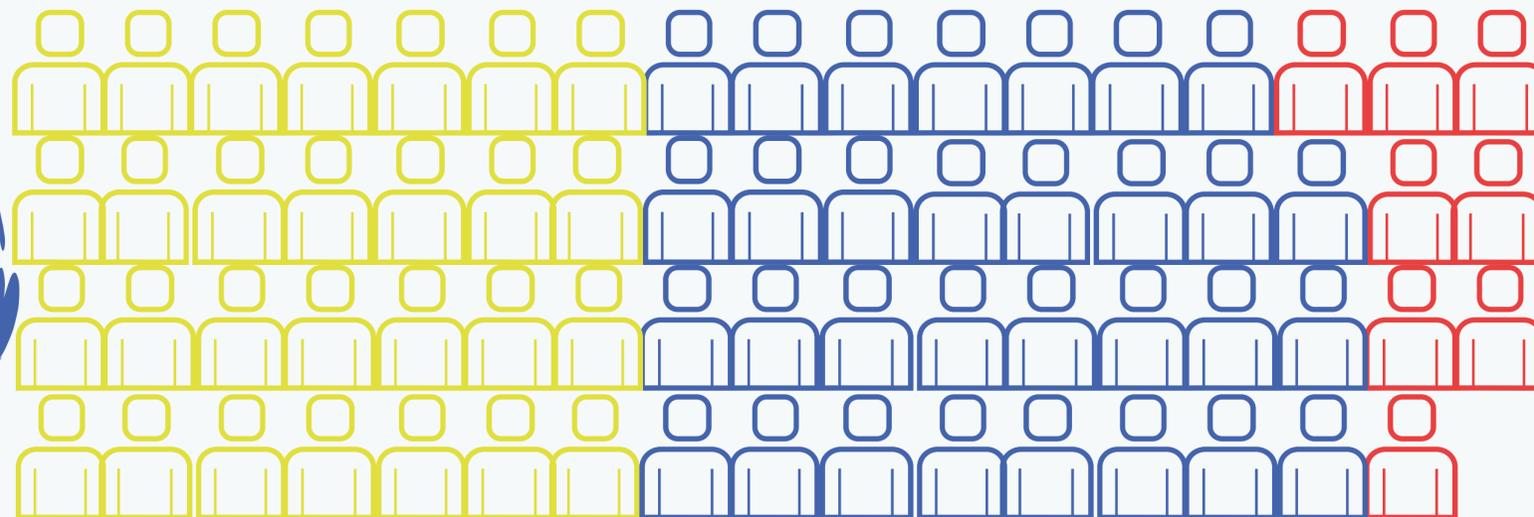
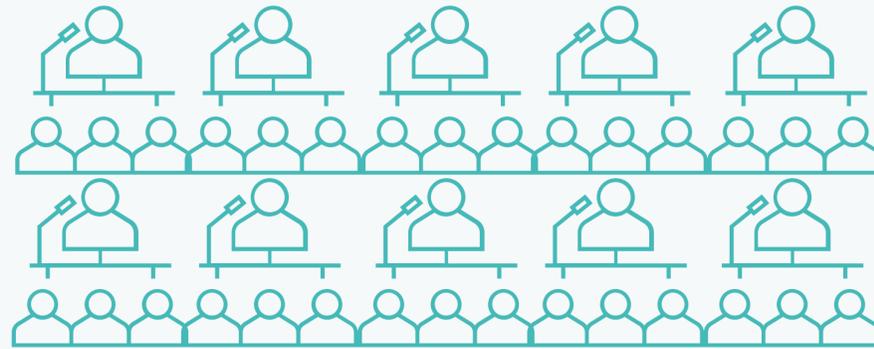
P L A N N E D O U T C O M E S O F T H E D A Y

- Develop a stronger sense of a community of leaders in difficult and challenging times and together to navigate and inspire each other towards new ways of thinking and new ways of working
- People growing their leadership and agency in a time of uncertainty, shock and complexity by leaning into well-being and resilience
- Learn about new pathways to expand quality and access to bigger and more diverse audiences
- Create a manifesto and practical pledges to take action to make a difference to inclusion and leadership practice

1.4 // ATTENDEES

The curatorial team doubled for this convention to ensure a sector wide relevance of content and issues addressed.

The numbers of leadership alumni present increased by 5%, and the numbers of freelancers able to attend doubled. This is unsurprising with the convention being held on Zoom. This increased the accessibility of the event for freelancer and flexible attendance. Attendance doubled by over 52% on the previous convention as there were no capacity restrictions.



Why did attendees sign up for the conference?

Understanding personal motivations for attending and baselining current cultural leadership levels amongst attendees enables us to assess the relevance of the conference in meeting sector needs.

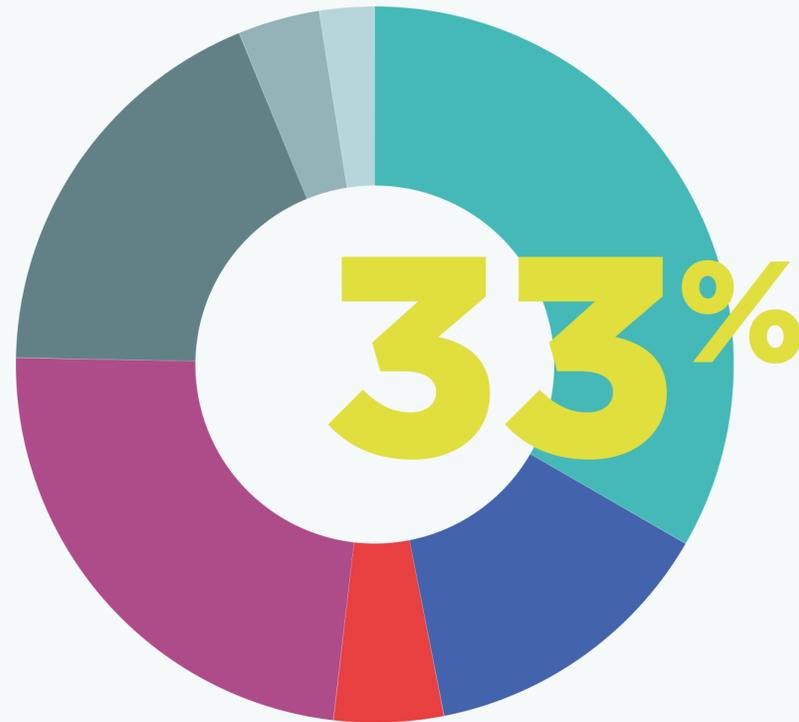


CHART ONE

INSIGHT	33%
INSPIRATION	23%
INFORMATION	18%
CONNECTION	13%
MOTIVATION	5%
REFLECTION	3%
PROVOCATION	2%

SOUGHT INSIGHT: WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON SHIFTING SPACES, AUDIENCES, EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Peer learning and sharing is a key component of the day. Curating relevant speakers to address current challenges and thinking creates the opportunity for the attendees to be a challenge and reflect.

The shared commitment to a vibrant Midlands Cultural Sector and the opportunity to connect strategically with peers fosters growth and a renewed energy for attendees to initiate change and deliver against their missions.

How are they finding leadership at this time?

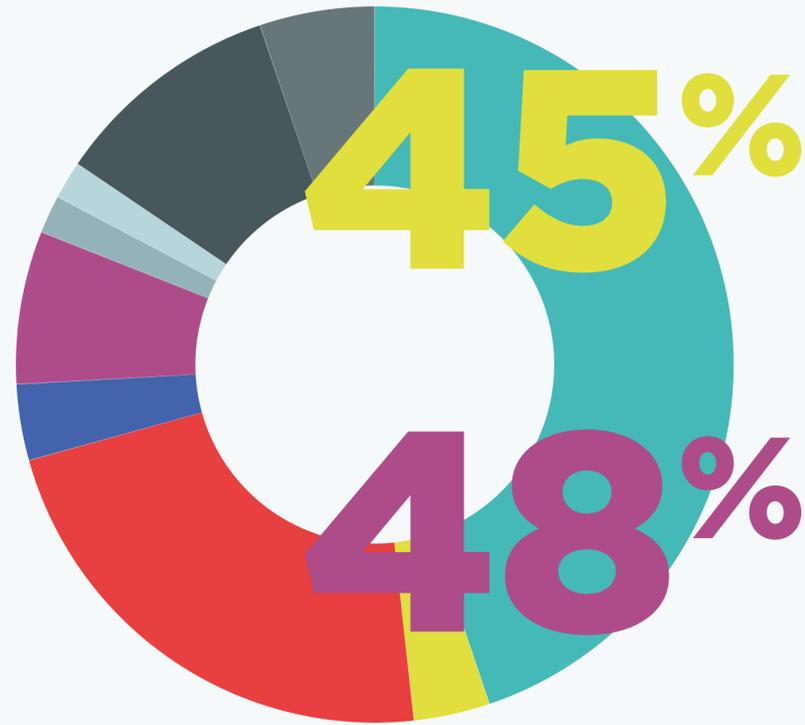


CHART ONE

CHALLENGING 45%

OPPORTUNITY

COLLABORATIVE

CONNECTION

MOTIVATION

REFLECTION

PROVOCATION

FIND LEADING A CHALLENGE IN THE CURRENT CLIMATE

HAVE FOUND POSITIVE OUTCOMES IN LEADERSHIP

Leadership has faced a spectrum of challenges between changing national restrictions, the impact upon audience engagement and programme delivery, the decimation of income streams, furlough and home working.

These challenges have brought opportunities, innovation, review and revision against vision, mission and values.

2020 has highlighted the need for leaders with a clear vision, tenacity and resilience who can be responsive decision-makers.

02 // THE PROGRAMME

The curatorial team developed a full-day online conference, combining webinar and Zoom facilities alongside a postal conference pack as an anchor to in-person tangible engagement.

This event provided a day of provocative, inspiring and exploratory content to absorb, question and reflect upon.

'The innovation is in the accountability and consistency of having these conversations, to pick up on and keep them going. The convention offers a consistent space to ensure they are taking place - we're in a situation where we can be open about not having the answers and seeking solutions together as a sector.'

- Chris Ansell



Erica Love
CEO Culture Central

Erica has worked in the arts and cultural sector for over 14 years, becoming Director of Partners in Creative Learning (PiCL) in 2012. PiCL is a founding consortium member of the flagship Creative People and Places programme Appetite in Stoke on Trent, with Erica delivering the role of Project Director in 2019. Erica has been the CEO of Culture Central since Oct 2019.

Erica set the tone for the day by exploring the West Midlands response and Culture Central's role in leading active dialogue for cultural recovery.

Themes

Cultural recovery is a new term in our language.

'it's an interesting word - in many forums, it's a lifetime endeavour, but do we recover or evolve and grow?'

The Cultural Response unit is an action-oriented sector-led initiative to enable the sector's visibility and viability by creating an equitable and open space for disseminating information, challenging conversations, support and collaborative working and across the region.

The Cultural Response Unit delivered:

- 5 regionally led online festivals
- conducted research
- lobbied MPs and policymakers
- provided training and support
- developed a mentoring programme
- facilitated engagement with 'More than a Moment' pledge.

'We built an open collective to move quickly, to inspire, learn and create more impact.'

Erica's leadership approaches that are key to cultural recovery:

- Why? Have clarity of purpose, mission and values
- Be authentic
- Ensure an open, non-exclusive and equitable space for collaboration
- Give genuine credit and appreciation of others work
- Resilience requires flexibility and responsiveness
- Embrace change and innovation
- Embed and act upon learning
- Importance of kindness and empathy
- Build genuine partnerships and value difference

Good leaders empower others to take their ideas forward.

FUTURE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

'There are going to be significant challenges around public confidence, potential austerity and public cuts, unemployment health and well-being, but these are opportunities we can turn into positive action.'

We need to increase the inclusion, equity and quality of experiences of those from all walks of life who encounter our work and organisations and make them kind, safe and welcoming spaces for everyone.'

- Erica Love

'Erica has brought warmth and openness to her role that has sustained a collaborative collective endeavour with great meaning for the arts and culture sector and their audiences. Erica has led the cultural response unit with great energy and humour to reimagine the role Culture Central has as a regional force.'

- Susan Goodwin



Martin Green CBE

Chief Creative Officer
- Birmingham 2022

Accomplished leader and architect of major events in the UK and abroad. Highly skilled negotiator and ambassador in public and corporate arena. Analytical approach to operational issues, having the ability to conceptualise and think laterally, developing and implementing cultural strategies, leveraging existing opportunities and introducing innovative and fresh ideas.

Themes

As a leader working on high profile and globally visible public events over short term contracts; Martin Green has the challenge of delivering in new landscapes, to win over new communities, under great scrutiny. Sharing his experiences through a Q&A with leadership consultant Munira Thobani provided leadership nuggets for a culturally democratic leader.

On organisational teams:

'Protect and work with those people who are making the work. You are only as good as the team that you build and those around you, You do not have all of the answers but your team do...Reflect the world we are working in – representation!'

Devolved models of decision making and a culturally democratic approach to programming ensures relevance to audiences and intersectional perspectives on the work you're making.

'The real judges of your success or failures as a leader are the people you work with not yourself'

'Making work in the public sphere with multi-stakeholders is the worst environment to make work in. You need to take them on the journey, keep people on side, maintain the integrity of work and maintain vision,... You don't do it by bulldozing but by taking them on a journey and explaining why'

On accountability and action in leadership:

'Making a decision is announcing the intention to act – it wasn't because I couldn't do it it was often fear. It's genuinely terrifying, if you care deeply about it it really matters.... You find out in moments of crisis that you're a leader'

On recovery and action:

'Back to normal is signal that we have beaten something, The more we can act and be like we were at the beginning of 2019 the more we'll feel we've beaten this thing and it's backed by political rhetoric and yet we need to reflect on what we've learned'

It requires bravery and risk and active choice to grow and not just recover. Creating a talent pipeline that values and recognises talent and transferrable skills will enable a more diverse and presentative ecology to flourish. Empowering your team, nurturing their confidence and enabling their ambition to flourish creates growth in the sector.

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

'Rely on networks that give you the audacity to think big!'

'How do we create small pockets of action? Who holds the picture to the jigsaw we're making?'

- Martin Green

Attendees

'Encourages a focus on looking for those signs of life that we can build upon in leading in recovery'

'Martin has established a positive outward-facing, legacy focussed working culture which is open to and supportive of and collaborating with the wider, regional and national ecologies'

- Susan Goodwin



Gaylene Gould

Creative Director
- The Space To Come

Gaylene is a Creative Director, broadcaster and writer who designs interactive art projects and spaces that generously connect us with ourselves, each other and the world. She explores the healing and growth potential of sharing space, stories, ideas and knowledge through her artistic, writing and consultancy practice. She believes the transcendent moments that art and culture can create change how we are in the world.



Corey Campbell

Strictly Arts Theatre Company
and Co-Artistic Director
- The Belgrade Theatre

Strictly Arts is a multidisciplinary company incorporating members with a unique interpretation of theatre, aiming to turn conventional theatre on its head by creating work that is engaging, thought-provoking and accessible to audiences around the world. Corey leads the company to achieve its mission to give voice to untold stories through performance, highlighting experiences that, often forgotten communities, can connect with.

Conversation

Nikki Genner cocreated the conversational panel between Gaylene and Corey. It centred on the personal experience of two Black creatives entering and working within the cultural sector.

Gaylene and Corey reflected upon the changes that could have improved those experiences and needed an environment to thrive. The conversation invited attendees to reflect upon their own personal and organisational practice in ensuring representation and diversity can flourish.

To create a point of greater reflection, the session was closed with a new piece of spoken word by Birmingham's Poet laureate, Casey Bailey.

This session style was crafted to ensure the appropriate space and opportunity for attendees to listen and reflect upon our commitment to anti-racism, building a diverse workforce and the actions needed to sustain the more than a moment pledge.

Context

It is important to acknowledge that this conversation considered only one area of diversity and inclusion and through the insight and perspective of two very personal experiences.

'As soon as I knew this was an arts conference, I knew there wouldn't be many people like Corey and me here, and it requires energy to enter that kind of space, so how can we make these spaces generative for us rather than a space in which we are always giving? And trying to fix things that are not for us to fix.'

'I've worked in the sector for 30 years but have worked inside and outside established cultural spaces... I don't find them comfortable spaces to exist within, and I'm much more interested in and would rather imagine new spaces.'

- Gaylene

'Once I graduated, I made that conscious decision I needed to create my own spaces to work, even throughout drama school, even with an amazing mentor, there was never that comfortability or ability to be my true self. I was very aware that I had to dumb down my true form in order to exist in a lot of these spaces, and in some way, I still do.'

Me going from creating my own space to going to be Co-Artistic Director at the Belgrade has been quite a thing in terms of natural existing red tape but also the idea of being an individual in an organisation with an infrastructure that has existed since WWII. The fear of change in this industry and that any suggestion is radical.'

Really simple changes are radical thinking, but it's simply the thinking that allows me to create or the risk of taking a show where it's political or socio-economic...we began to adopt all that and started talking about our company as risky or a BAME company. Still, we completely reject all that, but they were words that allowed us to move into this infrastructure, but it doesn't work for us, and we have to move forwards.'

- Corey

Themes: Factors to foster a positive, productive, inclusive and diverse environment.

This list of factors for a positive and diverse environment are those that Gaylene and Corey discussed and identified to support them personally to feel more broadly accommodated in the cultural sector. We invite you to reflect upon these factors within your own organisations and working practices.

GROUNDING

Create a space that enables people to contribute and share that is generative for them.

REASONING

Invite discourse and explore ideas.

LIBERATION

Provide freedom from structures and conventions, shake off what binds us.

ABILITY TO FAIL

Remove the pressure and burden of expectation and delivery for all future Black artists from the current artist you are working with.

RIGHT TO EVOLVE

Give the process time and space.

INNOVATION & DYNAMIC EXPLORATION

What next instead of how it's always been done.

FUTURE FORMS

Allow new expressions. Purpose-driven creative outputs shouldn't be limited by convention but considered by their intent. There are new ways.

INVITATION TO ALL

Don't limit the target audience.

ACCESS

Ensure the inclusivity, accessibility and welcoming of your space and output for everyone on their terms.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Ensure other voices and perspectives are represented. Expand ideas collectively.

SPACE FOR IDEAS TO BREATHE

Be process-driven and not output led.

QUESTION AND ENQUIRY

Provocations should inform the work and not identity.

INTERROGATION WITH AUDIENCES

Enable dialogue and co-creation to push work forward.

RADICAL THINKING

It is responsive and immediate thinking and not risky decision making.

AUDIENCE LED DECISION MAKING

Be audience focussed and make decisions with integrity.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Be accountable over partnerships and funders and consider what their relationships are with your audiences.

INTERRUPTION AND DISRUPTION

Art should provoke and challenge. Be dangerous and not just a nice thing to do.

HAVE THE URGENT CONVERSATIONS

Create work that holds a mirror up to society and act as a catalyst for dialogue.

CHANGE HEARTS AND MINDS

Create change through creativity.

Money where my mouth is...



Casey Bailey

Writer, educator,
performer:
Birmingham Poet
Laureate
2020-2022

From a young MC to poetry, theatre and community engagement, Casey's work is unified by a commitment to reducing inequality, delivering messages with meaning and impact. That young people from disadvantaged backgrounds can discover their potential by access to opportunities.

When the bricks tumble to the ground,
And the grit of cement scratches at your teeth
Do not cry. Do not mourn as you watch
All that you have ever known crumble.

Sometimes the most constructive thing
You can do is dismantle everything
That stands before you. This is how it's
Always been can feel like a cheap excuse

How a blade to the spine can feel like
A pat on the back when the person behind
You is supposed to be on your team.
If they are more worried about how long the walls

Will take to rebuild, than they are about
How long you have been crushed by the
Building, then understand this. It's not
That they think you belong at the bottom. No.

They have never cared about where you
Belong, it is because they feel they
Earned their seat, never saw how the finish
Lines raced towards them while the start line

Tripped you before you ran. Of course
They didn't see that part. For these systems
To change people will have to look at
Themselves first, it is not about pity and giving

It is about self-reflection and acceptance.
It is easy to want to help, harder to want to fall
But what if you are supposed to. The time
For talking is crumbling like the walls.

People have been talking about what's right
And we have been telling them to put their
Money where their mouth is. And they have
Every penny put where their mouth is, maybe

That's why they have energy for talk but not hunger
For change, maybe that's why I am tired and starving.
Maybe it's time that somebody else oversaw the portions
The people whose ideas are often taken and rarely credited

I understand that I am taking up your time but we need more

More than token gestures, and half-cooked plans,
More than two djembes on stage in October
More than an afterthought, more than an acknowledgement,
More than "hard to reach", "voiceless" and "disengaged".

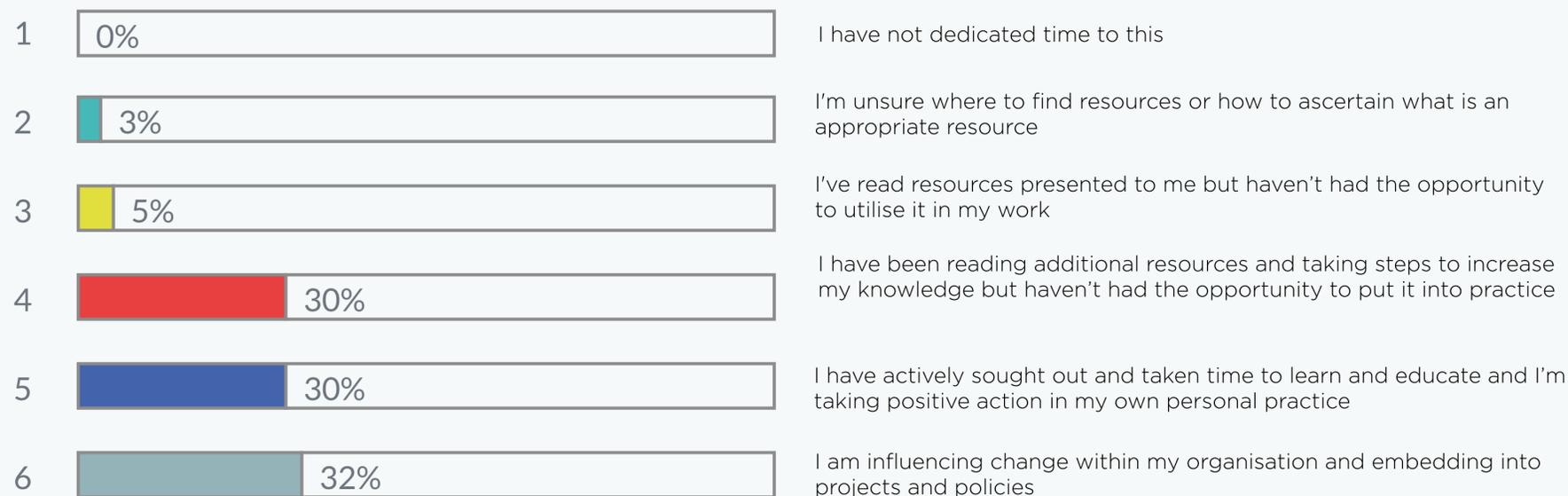
I understand that I am taking up your time but it's my time now

And we need more. More than a moment.

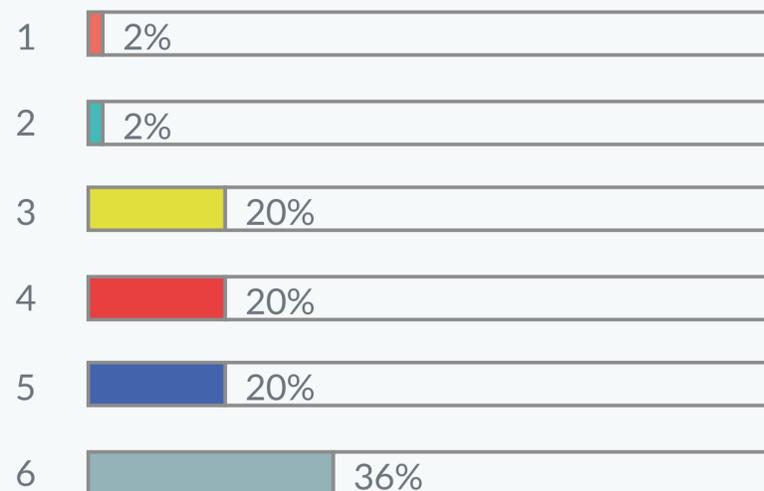
Finding Our Voice Polls

Attendees were asked a series of polls during the Zoom to capture a snapshot of how they were feeling about their own agency in operating in an anti-racist capacity within their organisations.

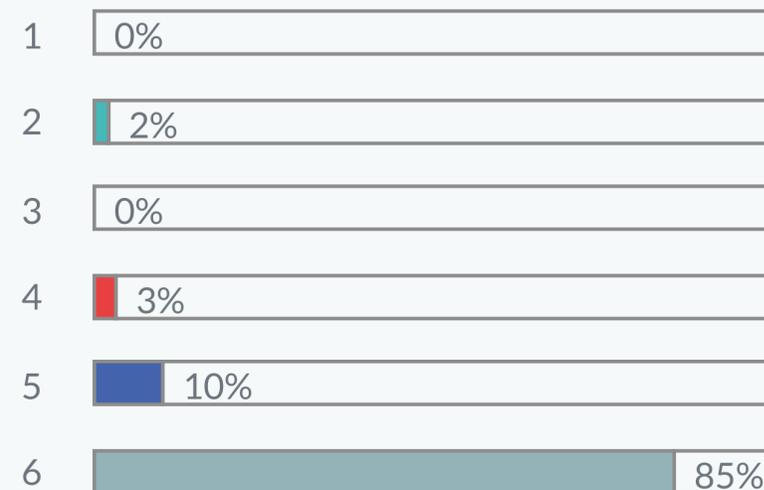
Q 1: To what extent have you spent time learning and taking anti-racist practice into your daily work over the last year?



Q 2: On a scale of 1-6 where 1 is not at all and 6 is actively taking steps, to what extent is your organisation committed to taking steps to more broadly support our Creative Black Workforce?



Q 3: On a scale of 1-6 where 1 is not at all and 6 is improve dramatically to what extent do you think that committing to anti-racism within your practice will contribute to a healthy cultural ecology?



The West Midlands cultural sector has actively committed to anti-racist action through the 'More than a Moment' pledge. These polls show that individual leaders are making commitments and learning to improve the broader ecology. However, 24% feel that their organisation isn't actively taking steps to more broadly support and foster our Creative Black Workforce highlighting the need for more conversations to take place, active steps to challenge and increase access to opportunities. More significant collective action is needed to develop the talent pipeline and welcome transferrable skills and commitment over experience as a way to remove barriers and increase representation in our workforces.

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

'Why are cultural organisations based on business organisations?

No work is made that way. We are being imitative and not innovative.

How do we change the whole structure of an organisation, so it focuses on what we are feeling? What are we trying to make people feel?

'I'm not going into any space unless the team is representative of the world I want to go and live in. It has to be expansive culturally otherwise, the conversation won't be robust or exciting.' - Gaylene

'How important is access? Is it access for everyone? Is it just a few? Is the theatre space for the few to feel welcome and safe?...

Redefine what our spaces mean; the scale is just about seat number and not the quality of work created. Get rid of the nonsense of pre-determined spaces that are there to keep things in a specific order. Start again with some of the languages that defines specific communities to specific spaces and that only once they've launched out of that space can they be recognised as a real artist.'

- Corey

'Sharing our acknowledgement and appreciation of your time, honesty, energy and emotional labour you went through today and letting us listen and giving us that space to sit and think and give our hearts as food for thought in taking any next steps in what is appropriate.'

- Nikki Genner

ATTENDEES

'It's made me think about the spaces I am in. Also about the spaces I create when working with communities. Lots of valuable wisdom to take away from this powerful and much-needed conversation.'

'We don't do enough, and what we do well in arts orgs simply isn't open enough to all. It's so important to raise the challenge that exists that arts organisations respond to funder agendas which results in work being created that doesn't. As leaders of cultural organisations, we have a responsibility to challenge this and push for how we believe this can evolve to enable us to do the work that must be done.'

'Just to say these conversations are really important and I would welcome getting them in front of boards, CEOs and directors who are inserting themselves into the sector and don't have the background of dialogue that leads to long term and sustained changes'

'The fourth wall was broken as Nikki sets the tone to a relaxed and captivating conversation for delegates to engage/re-engage with important themes/topics of the Black Identity in the 21st Century.'

- Jerrel Jackson

John Holden Paper: IS THERE LIFE ON MARS?

'What are the vital signs of a healthy arts and cultural ecology and how do leaders in the sector respond?'

'Here are some thoughts on what cultural leaders and their organisations need to be doing right now in response to the threats to life that parts of the cultural world face:

1. The long-term survival and health of whatever you do depends upon a kind of cultural homeostasis, meaning that cultural life in its present form has to self-regulate, and regulate its own environment, in order to survive. Practically this means lobbying, influencing, marketing, and putting energy into the maintenance of relationships with funders, audiences, artists and so on because those in turn enable the organization or activity to continue.
2. Think through the long-term aspects of survival, the most important of which is the continuation of cultural education (no education = no audience and no artists = no culture as we know it). There are many other long-term issues: building audiences, finding money to invest in buildings, people, technology and so on.
3. The input of energy through innovation and creativity. One important job for cultural organisations right now is to enable and encourage creative work during a time that is particularly difficult for artists.
4. Experimentation with new interfaces. If you can't travel in one direction, you have to set off in another. Covid has really speeded up a shift to trying out new ways of building the bridge between performer and audience.
5. Develop antennae to spot the stresses, strains and weak links in your current way of doing things. Where are you, or your people, or your income streams most vulnerable? What can you do about it?'

-Excerpt from John Holden's Paper

John Holden, who wrote The Ecology of Culture A Report commissioned by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Cultural Value Project in 2015, was invited to comment on What are the Vital Signs of a Healthy Arts and Cultural Ecology and how do leaders in the sector respond? His paper in response IS THERE LIFE ON MARS? inspired and informed the session.

Oliver Scott led this session with support from David Durant and additional leadership alumni group facilitation. It presented the provocations of the John Holden paper. It invited attendees to explore them in the context of their own goals, reality, options and willingness to identify an action of small change to take.

Q. What is important to cultural leaders right now?

It enabled attendees to connect over a year of getting things done, building bridges, listening, non-hierarchical approaches, experimentation and a return to the DIY movement of the 70s and 80s. This time armed with digital platforms as a resource for communication and connection and not just paper and photo copiers.

Three areas emerged as priorities; how we were leading, the means of engaging audiences effectively and the role of culture in the education of young people.

Young People

- Talent Pipelines
- Putting arts back on the curriculum
- Support young people to enjoy learning again
- How do we support teachers?

Audiences

- Hybrid models
- Increase public confidence in being in back in venues
- Increase engagement and accessibility
- Grow a national and international audience through digital reach
- Digital access and confidence

Leadership

- WHY?
- Legacy and sustainability
- Collaborating
- Representation in staff, role models, content
- Refocus, re-emergence after this period of reflection
- Being open to change
- Funding opportunities
- Partnerships working
- Creating safe, innovative and welcome spaces
- Leading with innovation, humility, clarity
- Climate change and our environmental contribution
- Being responsive to opportunities
- Training in digital delivery

This session provided an opportunity for attendees to connect about their leadership realities and challenges.

Q. How do we address these themes?

Through identifying their realities and priorities, the attendees highlighted binding actions, but not always small. With a priority focus on audiences and the willingness to engage in peer learning undertaking an action research approach to programming, delivery and organisational change could increase the innovation and collaboration across the sector locally. Having identified how the ecosystem has shifted, the need to bring lasting change and achieve these actions has been flagged as the biggest challenge.

Actions

Arts Ecology

- Support freelancers as well as audiences

Audiences

- Identifying the best model for engagement- the balance of quality, access, integrity, meaningful connections.
- Being prepared to let go of old models of engagement
- Offer a hybrid model of engagement
- Audience led programming
- Co-creation

Leadership

- Capture the energy of the last year
- Reemergence
- Rebuilding relationships
- Seek broader funding opportunities
- Equity and access
- Training
- Rewrite the future
- Dream Bigger
- Stay Focussed

This session was an action-focused discussion providing a structure for attendees to consider how to break down current goals into achievable tasks.

Restore more equitable Roles that Reopens a Reconnected Revolution (with a hint of artistic Rioting) to build a fairer ecology! - Jerrel Jackson



Andre Reid

Founding Director
- KIONDO

Andre Reid is the founding director of KIONDO, a design research studio that grows relationships with organisations to embed citizens in co-design, design research, innovation, participatory placemaking and urban regeneration. He is passionate about making the world we live in more interesting, fun and fulfilling by embedding local people in the design and making of their local areas.



Foka Wolf

Subversive Birmingham
Street Artist

Foka Wolf is a prolific activist and satirical street artist from Birmingham whose work has gained significant traction over the past five years. Foka Wolf's creative interventions have become a regular fixture in the cityscape of Birmingham. Artworks are humorous, provocative and frequently political in nature; semi-permanent artefacts that confront themes such as gentrification, fake news, conspiracy theories and class divisions.



Harmeet
Chagger-Khan

Creative Director
- Surfing Light Beams

Harmeet Chagger-Khan is an artist and producer who uses immersive digital technology within socially engaged practice to explore different modes of storytelling through games and interactive installations that cultivate resilience. Harmeet's work examines how society has access to culture, change and reform and attempts to unpick how deep systemic change and transformation can lead to more equitable societies.

Inspiring Practice

This line-up of panellistes shared the values that define their practice. Offering examples of inspiring practice to contextualise their leadership challenge questions. Liam Smyth curated this line-up because of how each artist holds, explores, reflects and asks questions of public spaces.

Andre Reid

Themes

- Expand opportunities for those who want to make an impact on the world
- Join hands and create something that is passed down and builds community
- Create places for belonging filled with equity
- Change starts closer to home - be active on your own doorstep
- Help people to organise simple solutions
- Ask three simple questions; --
 - How do I help?
 - How can I start?
 - How do people survive the journey of change?

'We all have the ability to create, our ability to create is matched only by our intention to destroy'

Foka Wolf

Themes

- Change your surroundings
- Lure the audience in with humour and accessible/familiar imagery
- Create a point for exchange and interaction
- Invite cultural commentary
- Celebrate the power in public art
- Utilise the power of subversion to convey a message
- Utilise all available public space and don't be constrained to formal exhibition spaces.

'There is power in public art, the impact of a piece of paper, it could be huge structures like a Martin Creed in NY or a Despo piece in Brooklyn or pallets in the street'

Harmeet Chagger-Khan

Themes

- Redefine cultural spaces
- Be open to unexpected outcomes
- Undertaking a process-driven, research practice allows for failure
- Challenge your why through a series of questions
 - How are you the bastion of creativity?
 - How can you disrupt the status quo?
 - What are you shifting?
 - What value can you add?
- Recognise that the world is a user experience designed for neurotypical people

'Think big and work with people you admire. This world demands the qualities of youth - not time of life but a state of mind'

How are we using physical and digital spaces – new frontiers for space and audiences?

Each panellist set a leadership challenge related to changing spaces for attendees to explore in break-out groups. It enabled attendees to engage the hive mind of different skills, experiences, resources and ideas to troubleshoot the next steps of public engagement.

1. How might we use new/emerging technology to enable mass participation and social change?

Experience

- Combining pre-event-digital engagement in advance of a live experience
- Hacking Facebook and giving the power to "real" communities. What would happen if people could only see positive comments?
- Use technology to gamify stories and engage people in learning
- Use it to create empathy and share lived experiences
- The use of escape room technologies to explore stories and also to take this into specific spaces

Infrastructure

- Donate spare tech to public spaces
- Create immersive experiences by building accessible technology into public spaces and parks
- Place the technology where people are or where they gather rather than expecting participation from home
- The merging of technology and public spaces, e.g. projection mapping and sensory spaces, to encourage equitable opportunities

Challenges

- Concerns over the safety of these spaces and their moderation without stifling expression
- Remember that digital access and confidence is still a barrier, often by the least culturally engaged, and so should always be combined with an in-person, physical distance engagement offer.
- Finding a balance between innovation and simplicity when there is so much digital possibility and content available.
- Increase the need for sector funding and training in this area.
- Digital device numbers per household to enable engagement
- Finding a balance between innovation and simplicity when there is so much digital possibility and content available.

Two of the three leadership challenges focussed upon the role of communities within public cultural spaces. One sought to identify how we can work with people whilst the second sought to identify how exhibition opportunities could bring a public benefit. The intent of these queries are closely aligned and shares the same challenges.

2. How might we work with local people to co-design cultural spaces in a post-Covid world?

- Combine with the strides in digital engagement in how we co-design with people
- Develop hyper-local and hyper-relevant opportunities with people to limit barriers to access and engagement
- Meet people in the places they are
- 'Be a local person' - look to create work on your doorstep
- Work with local people to identify and develop spaces they feel 'safe' in and explore how these can be reclaimed

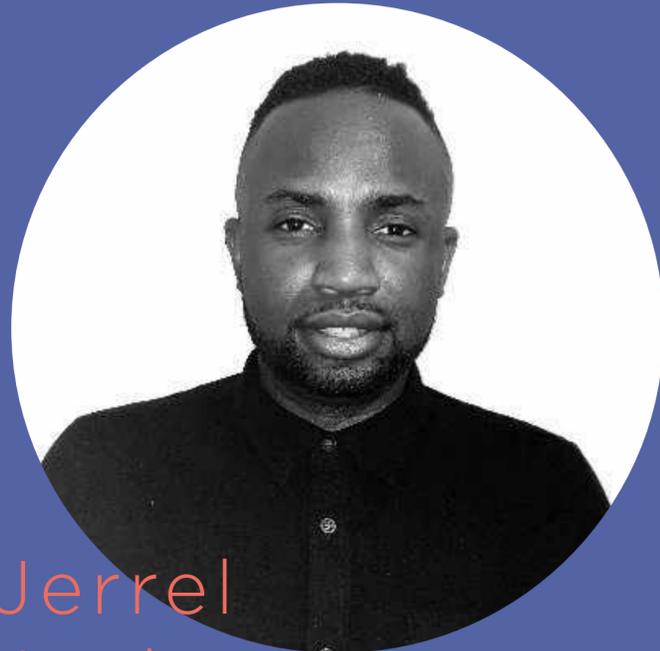
3. How might we create new spaces to exhibit public artworks that benefit the local area?

- Is public art a physical thing, or can it be digital?
Augmented reality sculptures could create a new space for interaction.
- Ensure artwork has local relevance.
- Co-create artwork with local people
- Identify community spaces for an exhibition that connect with the artworks.
- Identify spaces that could benefit from art.
- Create collaborative / co-creative art which relies on people being in the space at the same time.

Challenges

- Will people want to go back to cultural spaces?
- Traditional cultural spaces are often inaccessible for many for physical, social or cultural reasons
- What if you create work only for a niche segment of a wider community you want to feel welcome?

2 . 6 / / T A K E A W A Y S



Jerrel
Jackson

Creative Academies Network

'Overarching keywords from the day:

- Respect
- Remind
- Responsibility
- Reopen
- Repair
- Realise
- Reclaim
- React
- Reconnect
- Reshaping
- Resource
- Regeneration
- Rebalance
- Reach'



Orit
Azaz

Independent Artistic Director

'It was cultural democracy in practice – a programme co-designed by a number of leaders to include the questions and themes that they feel most urgent and relevant to consider. Each in turn then invited others, including previously unheard and diverse voices, to share their thoughts and provocations in a variety of conversational formats – inviting all of us to participate in the intense, wide-ranging, challenging conversation - I have loved it!

Having attended as co-host and co-conspirator last year, I am impressed by the continued development and maturity of this leadership community – listening, 'reasoning', sharing, enabling, supporting.'



Munira
Thobani

Leadership Consultant

'The themes of the moment need to carry us into the future.

The conditions of the ecosystem have changed.

We need to recalibrate and shift the environment.

It showed that leadership comes from so many different places; when we had artists talking about their work, they led it. It created a richer picture of leadership in the sector; we are so used to looking for that one leader in an organisation; so many came through and shared it through their practice. It shows how diverse the leadership is.'

3 . 1 / / I M P A C T

Attendees were asked how strongly they agreed with the below statements on the scale of 1-6, where one equals strongly disagree, and six equals strongly agree. The below numbers reflects those that agreed and strongly agreed with the statements.

79%

I feel proud to be a leader shaping cultural democracy in the West Midlands

100%

I feel inspired by the possibilities to lead more innovatively, drawing upon shifts in thinking and practice

90%

I feel a renewed sense of resourcefulness to lead within my organisation

100%

I feel even more committed to leading my organisation to be anti-racist

The current climate has drawn out a tenacity and determination in cultural leadership. The case studies and the opportunity to connect with like-minded peers in challenging conversations have inspired a renewed energy to lead authentically. A total of 11% of attendees openly stated the convention was inspiring and re-energising in the Zoom chat. An increase of 11% of attendees feeling a special sensibility within the West Midlands can be attributed to an increased conversation and the democratisation of culture through digital and hybrid delivery models. The thoughtful curation considered the format of the day; ensuring the opportunity to reconnect so many leaders in one safe and strategic space enabled a more honest and earnest conversation about personal agency and responsibility as leaders.

Did the convention increase the feeling of a leadership community and agency in leading at this time?

28% of attendees completed the post-event survey

Attendees were provided with a conference pack with resources to capture reflections and pledge an act of personal change. 16% of respondents offered observations or returned a pledge postcard. This postcard used the GROW coaching method utilised in the Vital Signs session to create a point of action from the day. The following summaries the

Grow

- **Share learning and innovations of the last year.**
- **Focus on where I can do the best work with more creativity and collaboration**
- **Embrace change, challenge and opportunities.**
- **Look out for leadership equality and inclusion.**
- **Step into a leadership role**
- **Connectivity balanced with digital**
- **Change how we view core audience**
- **Grow gravitas - shake off what binds us**
- **Be confident about skills and ability**

Reality

- **Shared realities centred on the beginning of journeys and projects and the stasis of activity due to national restrictions.**
- **Personal challenges highlighted the ability to delegate and the need for reassurance and affirmation of skills.**

This snapshot of individual goals is a broader reflection on the impact of national restrictions on cultural leaders. There were two extremes of the spectrum. For some leaders, it created an opportunity for reflection, refocus, innovation and greater connectivity and understanding for their audiences. For other leaders, the isolation and self-doubt created by the distance from the work and staffing furlough held them in stasis until in-person activity and staff returns could happen. The leadership convention provides a check-in for cultural leaders to reignite, re-set and reflect on refocusing and thriving.

"You are doing ok; you are listening and putting into practice actions that will make a long term impact."
- one thing that stays with an attendee

Options

- **Clarity**
- **More conversations**
- **Commitment to learn**
- **More energy**
- **Collaborate**
- **Trust**
- **Achievements**

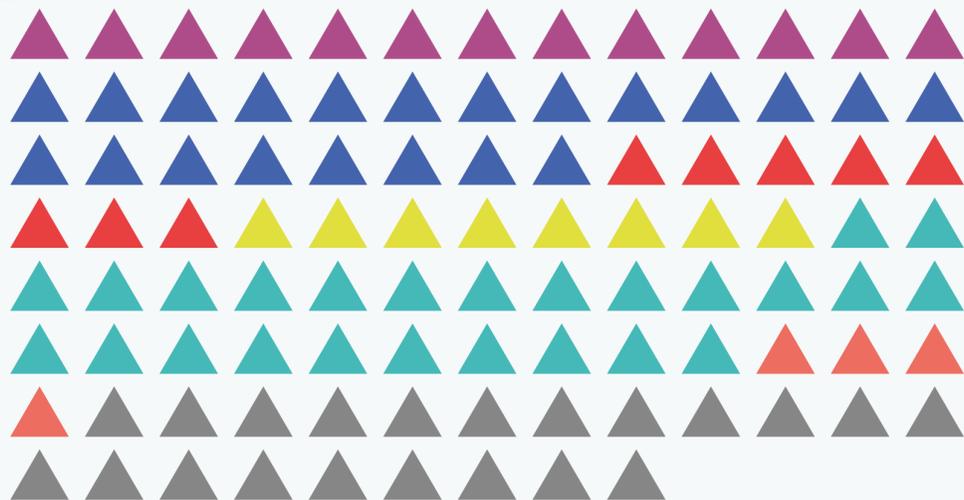
Will

- **Stay focussed**
- **Be committed**
- **Increase offer**
- **Reflection**
- **Speak up**
- **Advocate**
- **Do!**

Were attendees able to grow their leadership and agency in a time of uncertainty, shock and complexity by leaning into well-being and resilience?



Point Out: Leading authentically



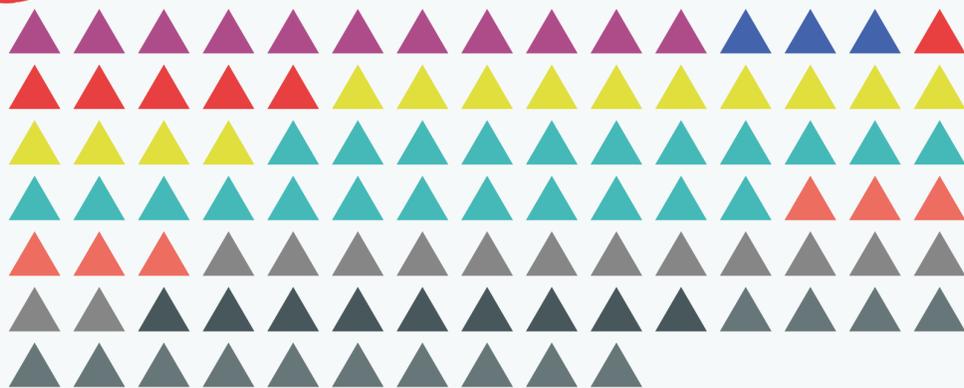
- Clarity (12.5%) ■ Validity and belonging (20.83%)
- Connection (8.33%) ■ Motivation (8.33%)
- Reflection (25%) ■ Inspiration (4.17%)
- Commitment towards change (20.83%)

Leading with authenticity became a theme throughout the day. So we asked attendees, 'How, if at all, has the event helped you to reflect upon your leadership skills and ability to lead authentically?'

The range of challenges covered meant that we wanted to understand the personal difference across various leadership types. The space that the convention provides cannot be underestimated in maintaining the well being and clarity of attendees as they share, unburden, question and identify collective action.



Point Out: Leading empathetically



- Commit time (11.43%) ■ By passion (2.86%)
- Through reflection (5.71%) ■ Be open (14.29%)
- Listen (22.86%) ■ Honestly (5.71%)
- With bravery (14.29%)
- Getting involved with communities (8.57%)
- Distribute power (14.29%)

Addressing the need for more empathetic leaders and better listeners in our positions of power and influence is a step towards enabling change. We asked our attendees how they felt we could achieve this. Listening and distributing power were the key factors that show a commitment to leading with greater cultural democracy.

Did the convention increase the feeling of a leadership community and agency in leading at this time?

ATTENDEES:

"This is what I have been reflecting on the most.

My leadership and being authentic to myself and not feel under pressure to emulate someone else."

"It gave me space to consider and reflect on my leadership which is an opportunity I don't usually have.

Hearing inspirational speakers made me think about what I may like to take on board or change moving forwards."

"I have been thinking about this a lot since the event, and one key element stood out for me: making sure I explain the 'Why?' not just the 'How?' - which in turn will ensure I have fully reflected on the Why? and can keep referring back to this to ensure we haven't lost our authenticity."

ACHIEVEING THE OUTCOMES

OUTCOME 1

Develop a stronger sense of a community of leaders in difficult and challenging times and together navigate and inspire each other towards new ways of thinking and new ways of working

100% of post-event survey respondents felt it is important to attend a sector-wide leadership development day with their peers.

"Confidence you get from connecting with peers."

"honest, open conversations with inspiring leaders"

OUTCOME 2

People growing their leadership and agency in a time of uncertainty, shock and complexity by leaning into well-being and resilience

Reflection, connection and inspiration.

The opportunity to reset, share and challenge in a safe space enables better leaders.

"As a freelancer, my 'organisation' is the sector, and there is significant progress to be made, but events like this that connect people to each other and create platforms to share ideas aid this greatly."

OUTCOME 3

Learn about new pathways to expand quality and access to bigger and more diverse audiences

Finding our voice - explored the environmental factors that enable Black creative workforces to thrive

Vital signs - connected attendees to explore the current cultural ecology and positive action

Shifting Spaces - activated attendee hive mind to respond to leadership challenges set by public realm artists

ATTENDEES:

"I have a better understanding of the landscape and it was great to see how supportive everyone was"

"The event gave me a strong sense of what I was doing right and how to lead with kindness over the things I am still learning about"

"Increasingly part of a community as I'm figuring out how I fit into it all. Still waiting for things to align to step up into a role which matches my aspirations."

"Encouraged me to consider pulling work together into a coherent strategy/narrative and build a team with ecology in mind. Also, consider how I can innovate."

"Reconnecting with peers at this time in lockdown was much needed. The day has reignited my confidence in what I do and enabled me to believe in myself and what I do. Lockdown has depleted this confidence and built a sense of self-doubt whilst not being able to engage personally with colleagues in the sector."

3 . 4 / / W H A T N E X T ?

Create a manifesto and practical pledges to take action to make a difference to inclusion and leadership practice

One of the intended outcomes wasn't achieved by the event.

The event was structured to create points of action for attendees. Attendees were also invited to set their own personal goals for change. The conference provided a platform to recognise that a radical shift has occurred and that the current systems and structure doesn't work for a diverse workforce.

The need for continued conversations has resulted in a programme of targeted open spaces to address this further.

"It has helped me acknowledge that I don't need to have all the answers and that I need to use my privilege more strategically."

"We try and do too much, and this makes us overlook some really important stuff that it is time to shine a light on so we can find a new way forward."

The role of the conference has shown that there is a need for structure to continue to ensure accountability and change.

'An accountability and consistency about having these conversations, to pick up on and keep them going, we're not relying on the participants to have those conversations but offering a consistent space – we're in a situation where we can be open about not having the answers – I don't know how we're going to tackle Covid or inclusivity.

'The people we are working with at this level will go onto bigger things, create space with others, and create agency with responsibility. The other thing is to make that leadership much more diverse than it is at the moment. Power is concentrated – long gain is for that power to be much more distributed and exercise responsibly and with more accountability.

An achievable manifesto for this community of cultural leaders would be a commitment to personal leadership development to ensure continued participation in conversations, learning and action that can create change. The accessibility of the Arts Connect Cultural Leadership offer ensures inclusive participation and limits barriers for continued engagement in a positive culture of learning and progressive leadership practice. This enables the West Midlands leadership alumni to continue to grow in diversity and disseminate positive leadership practice with their organisations.

CURATORIAL TEAM:

'Reflecting on the kind of content we had is reflective of some of that radical thinking in the sector; the whole spaces thing was about how we're having to do things differently.'

The context has had a radical shift in people's practice and quicker than you would think in the pandemic.'

We reflected the radical shifts in the event. We've acknowledged and reflected and hope they continue to resonate in the sector.'

'The event put important questions in the frame - the radical shift and current infrastructure doesn't work for BME artists, so once that is picked up and thought about a bit more...'

we've provided the platform for people to say there is a need to shift.'

'I feel privileged at seeing leaders like you and our future leaders acting with purpose.'

Accountability and responsibility need to become much more alive in our language.'

It's a pleasure seeing you step up to take those risks, be accountable and initiating this dialogue'

'So good to tune into audacious inspiration!'

'Audacious leadership!!'

'A few definitions of audacious:

showing a willingness to take surprisingly bold risks (and also)...

showing an impudent lack of respect.'

'How can greatness be in all of us?'
- Harmeet Chagger-Khan

Create:

- Connection
- Inspiration
- Insight
- Space
- Opportunities
- Equity

Lead with:

- Honesty
- Transparency
- Integrity
- Vision
- Energy
- Passion
- Empathy
- Authenticity
- Adaptability
- Accountability

Invite

- Respectful disagreements
- Honest conversations
- Questioning with kindness and sincerity
- Intersectionality

Seek:

- Renewal
- Opportunity
- Evolution
- Reinvention
- Innovation
- Collaboration
- Co-design
- New Spaces
- Expansion

BE

AUDACIOUS

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