

## **Let Artists Be Artists**

### **Discussion and planning day write up**

13 artists and 16 people from partner organisations took part in a day of discussion (in person and online) to start planning ***Let Artists Be Artists***.

The topics for discussion came from all the questions we had been asked by artists and organisations, as we shared the original idea.

The artists were nominated by organisations involved in the project using this brief.

The write up below includes **all the themes and common suggestions that came out of the discussion and an outline for how this could be applied. This will directly inform the next steps of the project.**

The headings below are the areas where the group felt decisions were needed to move things forward and where practical suggestions were made for how to approach the next steps.

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## **Parameters**

It's important to be really clear and transparent about any agenda or criteria from Strike A Light or the partner organisations. No opportunity can be for everyone- there will be some people this opportunity is right for in terms of their career, their work etc, and some people it will not be right for and that's OK.

What is important is that artists can decide if it's right for them based on their career and their work and the opportunity on offer, not rule themselves out because there are barriers to access in the process.

### **Who are these roles for?**

- Artists who recognise that the way the arts industry works needs to change and what we do and how we do it is going to develop and change

dramatically over the next year as we negotiate the COVID/ post-COVID world

- Artists who are excited about the possibility of developing their work in this brave new world, trying new things and would relish the chance to have a year to explore what works and what doesn't
- Artists who work in artforms that lend themselves well to a collaborative process, both in the creation and sharing. For example someone who creates a performance piece, seeking feedback or involving communities and audiences as it is made and then shared, rather than someone who writes a script in isolation and then submits it to an agent. For example a visual artist who creates installations or participatory work which responds to the people of a place or involves a community, rather than someone who paints alone in a studio and then a gallery shows their work.
- Artists who have an idea of who their work speaks to, is for or is created with. Artists who are interested in working with communities as part of their work. This can be communities of geography, interest or other common factors and how, when and why this engagement happens is decided by the artist.
- Artists who work in artforms that the partners could provide effective support for e.g. partners have knowledge of networks, support, opportunities etc for the artforms they themselves programme or produce.  
[See full list of partners](#)
- Artists who want to base their work in Gloucester and/or Bristol. This does not mean that the artists cannot work elsewhere or work nationally over the year, but this opportunity is for artists who are excited about working in these places and want to focus their work there.
- Artists who work in a self-directed way, create their own projects and have a clear creative vision and practice. This vision and practice can still be developing but the artistic work of the year will be driven by the artist.
- Artists who are interested in the research/ documentation aspect of the project and are happy to share and articulate their experiences. This does not mean they have to take on all responsibility for documentation (see evaluation for more details)
- Artists who want to use this year to build things which can support the sustainability of their career in future

- Artists who feel that Strike A Light's [7 principles for ways of making work](#) are a good fit with their own ethos, values and way of working
- Artists who are excited about the possibilities of this way of working, have a commitment to the process and are excited about working with us.

### **What do the partner organisations want to get out of it?**

The partners want to try a different way of working. They want to understand what experiences the artist has over the year, what works for them and what doesn't, how they make work (or don't) in a COVID/ post-COVID world.

This can then support organisations to think about how they work with artists, employ, commission, programme etc in future. This is NOT about the artist providing a solution for the organisations but IS about their experiences and ideas being listened to by the organisations and the active research process this experiment provides being of interest to and useful to the organisations.

The partner organisations understand that the artist is not working for them in terms of delivery or programme. Instead the partner organisations benefit from seeing how this process works and what doesn't work. The partners need to be comfortable with experiment, risk and failure.

The success criteria is that artists are employed and everyone involved learns from it. Success is not measured by output of work, projects, engagement or product. The focus is on the 'how' not the 'what'. (See 'Evaluation' section for more detail)

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## **Recruitment**

The recruitment process should be devised by artists who are paid for their time to do this. It cannot be a traditional recruitment process and shouldn't be a written application. It could involve workshops and conversations.

The recruitment process should include:

- Conversation and two way relationship building- is this artist right for the project as well as is this project/ these organisations right for the artist?

- Creating selection criteria which reflect the parameters above and which are about the artists' values, way of working and artistic work, not about their ability to do an interview or fill in a form
  - Opportunity for artists to share their ideas and creative vision- this does not have to be a sparkly project but more what they would like to explore or how.
  - Payment for artist time for applicants in the recruitment process
  - Access and diversity considered throughout in the process and the make up of the panel. This should be reviewed by artists and by those who have experienced barriers in recruitment processes.
  - Transparency in the process- be clear about what the process is, publish questions, panels etc in advance
  - Possibility of a two stage process, to save a large investment of time from artists at the first stage
  - Open calls and nominations
  - Community members and artists on the panel
  - Reassurance on a process which focuses on care, respect and wellbeing
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## **Contract**

There will be one full time and one part time role (2-2.5 days pw) and a part time role for a multidisciplinary artist to document the process (see evaluation).

- The roles will be offered as PAYE roles, one fulltime and one part time, but the specifics of the contract will be created with the artists and tailored to them e.g. if it needs to be a different kind of contract, if the number of days needs to be adjusted. There are possibilities for job share or reducing the hours to extend the role over a longer period of time, or 12 months of pay which can be non-consecutive rather than 12 consecutive months. Flexibility and a bespoke contract are key.
- We are interested in the potential of the experiment- "what happens if you employ an artist full time for a year?" because it's different to what normally happens where roles are very short term, limited time, not secure etc. Flexibility to make this work for the artists is important but we do not want

to turn this into a standard bursary or residency where it is seen as a project and is one project of many- this is about what happens if artists have enough paid time and brain space to work on their own practice. The contract needs to be mutually agreed to allow for them to have that space and for this to be a priority.

- The artists will have the same benefits as SAL staff on PAYE e.g. holiday pay, pension, expenses reimbursed, IT, HR support and can use the office space as wanted.
- As with all PAYE staff, all working time e.g. planning, creative thinking, meetings etc are paid work. If you've had a busy intense period you take back time in lieu or take it more gently following this.
- As with SAL staff, the artist will be trusted to manage their time and their hours. The full time role is about being able to focus your working time on the role of being an artist. It does not mean if you work 35 hours one week you have to make up 2.5 hours the following week. As with existing SAL staff this will be a 2 way discussion, commitment and trust e.g. the artist dedicating themselves fully to the role, making the most of the time available but not having to do timesheets or account for their whereabouts on a minutely basis.
- The job description will be created with the artists and follow a similar format to a job description for a development role e.g. it is not task orientated but about exploring, developing, testing and sharing ideas and/or work. It will be based on the parameters above focusing on their own practice and exploring what works and what doesn't in the current context.
- The artists will have a line manager. This will be someone from Strike A Light for all three artists or for one or two of the artists could be someone from one of the Bristol partner organisations if that was the best fit and could provide the best support for the artist and could be offered by the organisation. The line manager's role is one of support and facilitation for the artist to be able to deliver their job description. Like good line management should be, this is not about checking up or micro-management. The line manager's role is to work with the artist to create and deliver their support structure and to be a sounding board for them to do their work to the best of their ability. (see working practice for more detail)

- If the role isn't working for the artist, or the organisation feels the artist isn't engaging with the role then the first step is to identify whether this is to do with the format of the role. Learning what does and doesn't work is a focus of this project and so it's fine to adjust, change, try different ways of working to try and improve the situation. Projects not working, risk and failure are all part of this experiment and so these things in the activity over the year are not a failure of the artist to do the role. We will explore the idea of a probation/ opt out period with the artist at contract stage. The artist is entitled to resign from the role as with any other post and equally if the artist is not doing the work of the job description i.e. they are not working on their own creative practice this could be addressed as a management HR process if the process above doesn't work. Trust, respect and communication need to underpin this way of working.
- The contract needs to be easy to read and any terms used explained
- The contract needs to include that the intellectual property of any work created remains with the artist
- The start date should be flexible to allow people to finish other projects or prepare
- The contract will include an agreement between the artist and SAL about what work can be completed under this contract. The role is for the artists' own self directed practice, within the parameters above. As with other PAYE contracts the artist would be free to do additional work (whether PAYE or freelance) on top of this if they chose and it didn't impact negatively on this work. We would be flexible to incorporate existing commitments as mutually agreed while the contract is being put together. The intention is that this role is about the artists' own practice and therefore would encompass what they would normally do and for which their time might normally be funded through grants or commissions. It's not a separate project from their practice. Most work then would fall under this contract. We would need to work out with the artist if they could apply for funding to increase their own fees/ salary, if they were applying for funding to deliver a project or offered a commission and how this would work. If the artist was offered work through another organisation and it was part of their own practice or would be good CPD this could fall under this contract. If it was a different/ separate kind of work e.g. non-arts with no linked development benefits or not within the parameters above e.g. taking 2 months off to film

advertises for Specsavers, then it could be negotiated whether this was turned down, undertaken whilst on annual leave or whether there's a secondment or break in the contract.

The aim would be to find an artist where they could make the most of and focus on this opportunity, but we acknowledge that over a year life happens!

- Salary will be £27000 per year (pro rata for part time role). This was benchmarked based on a combination of: roles within partner organisations, union rates, Joseph Rowntree Foundation research on income standards, average salaries in the South West and average artist freelance day rates in the South West adjusted for PAYE benefits and regularity of work.

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## **Working environment**

- The artist can't be answerable to numerous partner organisations.
- SAL will manage the relationship with the partners and work with the artist and organisations to create an effective way of communicating updates to the project and also for the artist to be able to build relationships with the partners where relevant.
- The organisations, including SAL, should approach it from the perspective of how they can support the artists' work, not the artists working for them.
- The artist should be included in SAL team meetings and where relevant meetings with partner organisations so that they can feed into the organisations and their perspectives are valued and included.
- As outlined above the artist will have a named person at SAL (or a Bristol organisation if agreed) as their line manager, point of contact and support. They will work with the line manager to create a structure of check ins, meetings and a plan for their work and time which the artist feels will best support and facilitate their work. No structure at all could lead to inertia and therefore a tailored, relevant, useful structure will be created and continually reviewed by the artist with their line manager.
- We will work to create a basic resource budget for things like room hire for meetings etc to support the development of work and projects. Projects and artworks themselves would need separate funding which the artist

would be supported to apply for. Partner organisations could also share funding opportunities, commissions etc with the artist. SAL and partner organisations will support this with introductions, facilitating partnerships etc as wanted by the artist.

- The artists will have a separate, independent artist mentor who can provide a sounding board and pastoral support that is separate from the partner organisations
  - One point to clarify would be how the artist could apply for ACE project grants in their own name if they were employed by SAL.
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## **Evaluation**

- We would like to be transparent and generous with the process and findings of this project. We will document and share as we go along, including this write up, with the aim of encouraging change in how artists work and are valued in the industry
- We will document both the artists' work and their journey
- There will be a paid role for an artist to document the project. The full time and part time artist roles and their job description will include sharing and recording their work and journey but this will be supported and facilitated by the artist documenter so it doesn't become onerous
- Strike A Light will structure and deliver a project evaluation using material from the artist documenter and the artists involved in the project themselves. This will include working with the partners to disseminate to the wider industry, ACE and funders. The documentation, sharing and evaluation will be a continuous process
- This will need to include input from artists, partners, communities
- There will be a focus on sustainability- what comes out of this project that could support more artists being paid to be artists?
- The artists can work with their mentor and with other partner organisations who are artist led and have offered to support evaluation, to evaluate their own experience. This will facilitate honest feedback
- There is not a predetermined outcome, aside from a genuine evaluation of what worked and what didn't about this project and about paying artists in

this way, and for the artists' what the impact was- if any- on them, their work and practice. One approach could be to think about 'most significant change'- so rather than evaluating against particular outcomes, documenting what happened and then evaluating where change happened and what it was. This allows for the unexpected, for revolution, for no change etc.

*Notes compiled and prepared by Christina Poulton, Strike A Light, November 2020.*