

# EXPLORERS

## RADICAL THINKING AND DYNAMIC CREATIVE PRACTICE

*“From the fact that people are very different it follows that, if we treat them equally, the result must be inequality in their actual position, and that the only way to place them in an equal position would be to treat them differently.”*

Justice. Edited by Michael J Sandel. Oxford University Press, Inc. 2007

## DIFFERENT PEOPLE

Collaboration between cultural organisations and marginalised groups must reverse the entrenched power dynamic associated with inclusion. Equity in collaboration can provide genuine opportunities for people to represent themselves in cultural programming and audiences. By working together, we can model the adjustments that society must make, and create a replicable methodology that can be implemented within and beyond the cultural sector. We are all part of neurodiversity.

## EXPLORERS 2022-2023

Now in the second iteration, EXPLORERS is a partnership programme of art and action that aims to dismantle attitudinal and systemic barriers to representation and rights in art and society. Neurominorities are made vulnerable by the precarious and often adversarial systems of care in the UK. Many autistic and learning-disabled people live in inappropriate clinical and residential settings that separate them from their communities. EXPLORERS and its alliance of people and organisations will provide opportunities, resources and support to promote equity and representation for neurominorities. Together we will change the discourse of how neurodivergent people are positioned and described in culture.

## EXPLORERS 2017-2020

*“I have spent much of my life not feeling represented at all and being unable to identify with others. The representations I see which are meant to represent me or people like me are usually such stereotypes it can be frustrating. However, with reflection I can see that it has brought me something like a trail to follow to try and find others like me.”*

Support worker & person with lived experience

*“So much of our culture is accessible to a few and only represents a few. Representation is vital, with representation we can change access. We can change the ‘culture’ we produce and consume and choose to celebrate. When we broaden representation, we include voices that have been marginalised and excluded from our national collections. This exclusion has made us all poorer. We are missing ideas. We are missing perspectives. We are missing a large part of our society. We are not whole. We are missing a piece.”*

Gallery worker

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*“Museums and galleries have the power to make a difference to people’s lives and to society more broadly. They have a civic duty to not only reflect, but to represent the lives and lived experiences of all citizens.”*

Gallery worker & person with lived experience

## THE COALITION

This project provides a creative programme and framework for increasing the visibility of neurodivergent artists and communities in contemporary visual art. It responds to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on disabled people and will harness the collaborative momentum of EXPLORERS 17-20 to generate change. In collaboration with new and established partners we will publish critical texts and deliver specialist artist residencies, encounters, exhibitions and a new national network of people and organisations invested in neurodiversity in contemporary art.

## PROJECT PARTNERS

ActionSpace | Autograph | BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art | Intoart | MK Gallery | Outside In | Photoworks | Project Art Works | Venture Arts

## OUR PLEDGES

It is critical that this work is owned and led by people from neurominorities. We acknowledge that many essential contributors would need to have support to facilitate self-advocacy, so it is vital that we create space for their voices to be heard in the shaping of this project.

## GOING FORWARD WE WILL

- Create space for neurodivergent artists to represent themselves and their work in mainstream programming, without the label of ‘outsider’
- Acknowledge neurodivergence as a starting point for engaging all audiences – if we reach the most marginalised people, we reach everyone – this means accessible buildings, exhibitions, information and attitudes
- Promote neurodiverse leadership: representatives at institutional board level, champions, people who can advocate for others, and neurodivergent people in paid positions
- Promote neurodivergent decision making in culture with the necessary support and information structures in place to enable equity of participation and influence
- Build relationships between neurominorities, caregivers and institutions, to better understand the context of support in our local areas and invite them in to our spaces
- Work with supported studios and arts groups to develop local networks of support and understanding

## IN 2022-23 WE WILL

- Promote acquisition of 10 works by neurodivergent artists by permanent art collections
- Support 18 individual neurodivergent artists with studio or gallery residencies
- Develop 6 new co-commissions by or with neurodivergent artists for exhibition in 2023/24+
- Create a national network of neurodivergent artists, supported studios, social care and cultural organisations
- Deliver peer-peer learning events via national conferences and digital creative practice
- Commission and publish 6 critical texts and artist monographs to address cultural invisibility and inequity
- Promote digital platforms for neurodivergent artists

**EXPLORERS**project



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